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Vienna Doctoral School of Theology
and Research on Religion VDTR



Beyond Language

International Conference for Young Scholars

SEMINAR AT THE
UNIVERSITY OF VIENNA

June 26–27, 2026

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS



LINGUISTIC PERSPECTIVE

Language, communication,
meaning-making and
linguistic diversity



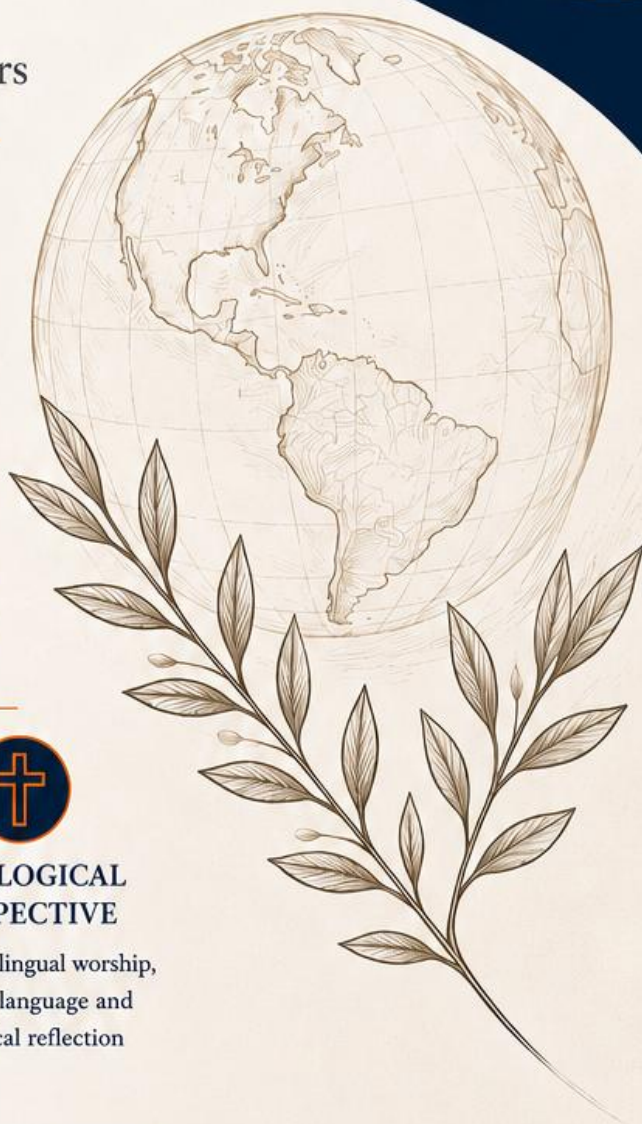
PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVE

Philosophy of language,
epistemology and the
nature of meaning



THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Faith, multilingual worship,
religious language and
theological reflection



Das Hauptgebäude der Universität Wien,
Universitätsring 1, 1010 Wien



Seminarraum 7

Welcome Note

Beyond Language 2026 emerged from a simple but increasingly urgent intuition: that meaning cannot be reduced to language understood merely as a system of signs, propositions, or information transfer. Across philosophy, theology, linguistics, media studies, political theory, and cultural analysis, we encounter forms of communication that exceed literal articulation and challenge purely technical models of meaning. Human beings do not merely exchange information. They inhabit symbolic worlds, construct identities, negotiate belonging, experience transcendence, and shape political realities through interpretive practices that are never fully reducible to formal language alone.

This seminar was conceived not as a conventional conference composed of isolated papers, but as an intensive interdisciplinary space of dialogue. The structure of the event intentionally prioritizes interaction: short presentations, immediate responses, small-group discussion, and collective reflection. The aim is not only to present research but to create a shared intellectual environment in which different traditions, methodologies, and disciplinary vocabularies can genuinely encounter one another.

The thematic structure of the seminar reflects this ambition. The panels move from questions concerning language and forms of life, through irony, spirituality, metaphor, film, music, and political discourse, toward broader issues of identity, epistemic injustice, migration, affect, and the construction of public reality. Throughout these discussions, a common thread remains present: the question of how meaning emerges within human practices, institutions, narratives, and communities – and whether some dimensions of human experience necessarily transcend propositional language itself.

The organizers are especially grateful that Beyond Language 2026 has brought together participants representing diverse academic cultures and geographical contexts, including scholars working in philosophy, theology, linguistics, political science, film studies, communication studies, and cultural theory. The presence of keynote speakers from linguistics, theology, and philosophy reflects the seminar's deliberately interdisciplinary character and its commitment to dialogue across disciplinary boundaries.

Finally, this seminar is also an experiment in academic culture itself. In a time increasingly shaped by acceleration, fragmentation, and performative forms of scholarly communication, Beyond Language seeks to recover the seminar as a space of attentive listening, intellectual risk, conceptual openness, and sustained conversation.

We warmly welcome all participants to the University of Vienna and hope that the discussions initiated here will continue well beyond the seminar itself.

Patryk Zając

Chair of the Scientific Committee
of the *Seminar* at the University of Vienna

UNDER THE AUSPICES OF



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Uniwersytet
Wrocławski

Seminarraum 7
Das Hauptgebäude der Universität Wien
Universitätsring 1, 1010 Wien

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Keynote Speakers

Linguistics

[Prof. Dr. Piotr P. Chruszczewski](#) (PL)

University of Wrocław

More Than Grammar:

How People Learn to Speak Like Members of a Culture

People do not learn language simply by mastering grammatical rules. They learn how to speak in culturally recognizable ways: when to speak or remain silent, how to frame authority or intimacy, and how words become actions within particular social situations. This opening reframes language not as an abstract system but as a form of social practice, drawing on insights from the ethnography of communication to show how speaking is learned through participation in patterned communicative events. By shifting attention from language as structure to language as interaction, this perspective offers a shared analytical ground for anthropology, sociology, and communication studies concerned with meaning, power, and social order.

Theology

[Dr. David Bennett](#) (UK)

University of Oxford

Philosophy

Prof. Dr. James Tartaglia (UK)

Slovak Academy of Sciences

A Foundation Beyond Language

Richard Rorty's pragmatism was both anti-foundational and post-foundational: he did not think human knowledge could be founded on the nature of reality and so proposed a new basis for solidarity and cooperative rationality in sympathy and usefulness. Rorty justified his anti-foundationalism on the grounds of a "ubiquity of language": developments in 20th-century philosophy of mind and language had persuaded him that it was impossible to know something that does not possess its own linguistic structure, such that words can never land on objects, only on objects-as-put-into-words. Rorty considered Plato the father of foundationalism; he often just calls it 'Platonism', and yet, according to mature Platonist metaphysics, and very plausibly Plato himself, the ultimate reality is indeed beyond language. Thus, Rorty's critique assumes that the impossibility of knowing ultimate reality is the fatal flaw to foundationalism, when in mature Platonist metaphysics it is its key strength. It is of the utmost importance to philosophers from Plotinus to Proclus that words cannot capture the ultimate reality, because otherwise we would be unable to account for why there is something rather than nothing. Without a comprehensive metaphysical understanding founded on something beyond language, we could only irrationally speak of the "fact of things" without knowing their reasons, as Proclus put it. In this talk, I shall argue that the contemporary materialist status quo leaves us in exactly that situation, since by taking the physical world as the ultimate reality, or just rejecting metaphysics, materialism makes all facts stem from one inexplicable one, either the Big Bang or a beginningless physical universe. This is avoided by the foundationalism of Platonist metaphysics, a foundationalism untouched by the concerns of anti-foundationalists like Rorty.

Scientific Committee University of Vienna Section

Chair

Patryk Zając, University of Vienna, VDTR

Members

David Bennett, University of Oxford, UK

Piotr Chruszczewski, University of Wrocław, PL

Johann Pock, University of Vienna, AT

James Tartaglia, Slovak Academy of Sciences, UK

KNOW HOW

Beyond Language 2026 is conceived not as a traditional conference of isolated papers but as an intensive interdisciplinary seminar grounded in dialogue, discussion, and collective reflection.

Each thematic panel follows the same rhythm:

- presentation: 15 min
- immediate short response by another participant/speaker: 1 min
- pair/group discussion: 4 min
- collective discussion after the whole panel: 20 min
- coffee break after the panel: 10 min

The aim is to create intellectual interaction between different perspectives rather than a sequence of unrelated papers.

Information about Panels:

Panel 1. This panel explores whether language reflects reality, structures reality, or constitutes the conditions under which reality becomes intelligible.

The speakers intentionally contrast:

- Wittgensteinian ordinary language philosophy,
- formal semantics and logicity,
- linguistic relativity and epistemology,
- Western and non-Western approaches to meaning.

Panel 2. This panel investigates forms of meaning that exceed literal language.

The speakers compare:

- irony and metaphor,
- spirituality and formal methodology,
- human interpretation and artificial intelligence,
- indirect meaning and computational processing.

Together, the panel asks what remains irreducibly human beyond algorithmic language.

Panel 3. This panel explores forms of communication that operate beyond direct propositional meaning. Bringing together perspectives on games, film, music, and political discourse, the speakers examine how meaning is shaped through affect, immersion, symbolism, participation, and discursive environments.

The panel compares:

- artistic and political meaning-making,
- interpretation and participation,
- symbolic and affective communication,
- media as spaces of reality construction.

Together, the panel asks whether meaning depends only on language in the strict sense, or also emerges through broader cultural and communicative forms.

Panel 4. This panel examines language as a marker of belonging, exclusion, and collective identity.

The speakers compare:

- diaspora and postcoloniality,
- linguistic identity and epistemic injustice,
- migration and representation,
- minority voices and structures of exclusion.

The central question concerns who is recognised as credible, visible, and socially legitimate.

Panel 5. This panel investigates language as a mechanism of normativity, manipulation, and political construction.

The discussion intentionally moves:

- from interpersonal language to mass political discourse,
- from ethics to propaganda,
- from speech acts to affective governance.

The panel asks how language shapes public reality and political perception.

DAY I – FRIDAY – 26 JUNE 2026

Language, Meaning, and Transcendence

08:30–08:50 Registration & Morning Coffee

08:50–09:00 Vorstellungsrunde / Introduction Round

Short participant introductions: name, affiliation, one question or theme that brought them to the seminar.

09:00–09:10 Opening Remarks – Patryk Zajac – *Beyond Language: Why Meaning Exceeds Communication*

09:10–10:05 KEYNOTE – LINGUISTICS

Prof. Dr. Piotr P. Chruszczewski
(University of Wrocław)

10:05–10:30 Open Discussion

10:30–10:40 Coffee Break

PANEL I Language and Forms of Life

(1) 10:40–10:55 Abdul Rahim Afaki (University of Karachi, Pakistan) – *The Mutuality Nexus of Lingual Meanings and Form of Life*

10:55–10:56 Immediate Response

10:56–11:00 Pair/Group Discussion

(2) 11:00–11:15 Veronika Myronenko (John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin) – *Between Information and Affect: Telegram as a Space of Political Meaning-Making in Wartime*

11:15–11:16 Immediate Response

11:16–11:20 Pair/Group Discussion

11:20–11:40 Collective Discussion

11:40–11:50 Coffee Break

PANEL II Metaphor, Irony, and Spiritual Language

(1) 11:50–12:05 Adam Lalák (LMU München, Charles University in Prague) – *The Epistemic Function of Irony in Spiritual Language*

12:05–12:06 Immediate Response

12:06–12:10 Pair/Group Discussion

(2) 12:10–12:25 Nikita Nalivko (John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin) – *The Architecture of Passivity: Constructing Political Inaction through Russian State Discourse*

12:25–12:26 Immediate Response
12:26–12:30 Pair/Group Discussion

(3) 12:30–12:45 Chang Liu (Shanghai Jiao Tong University) – *A Norm-Constitutive Theory of Insult Words*

12:45–12:46 Immediate Response
12:46–12:50 Pair/Group Discussion

12:50–13:10 Collective Discussion

13:10–14:00 Lunch Break

14:00–14:45 KEYNOTE – THEOLOGY

**Dr. David Bennett
(University of Oxford)**

14:45–15:00 Open Discussion

15:00–15:10 Coffee Break

PANEL III Beyond Propositional Language

(1) 15:10–15:25 Piotr Szelejewski (University of Wrocław) – *Tinkering as a Hermeneutic Practice: Player Interpretation and Game Modification in Video Games*

15:25–15:26 Immediate Response
15:26–15:30 Pair/Group Discussion

(2) 15:30–15:45 Weronika Janiec (University of Wrocław) – *Between Two Languages: Diegetic and Non-Diegetic Communication in Film*

15:45–15:46 Immediate Response
15:46–15:50 Pair/Group Discussion

(3) 15:50–16:05 Kewin Ignasiak (University of Wrocław) – *From Theseus's Ship to Strings of Symbols: The Problem of Textual Identity*

16:05–16:06 Immediate Response
16:06–16:10 Pair/Group Discussion

(4) 16:10–16:25 Miranda Kerrigan (San Francisco State University) – *Discussion of Linguistic Characteristics in Music and Means of Communication*

16:25–16:26 Immediate Response
16:26–16:30 Pair/Group Discussion

16:30–16:50 Collective Discussion & End of Day I

DAY II – SATURDAY – 27 JUNE 2026

Language, Power, Identity, and Community

08:45–09:00 Morning Coffee

09:00–09:45 KEYNOTE – PHILOSOPHY

Prof. Dr. James Tartaglia (UK)
(Slovak Academy of Sciences)

09:45–10:00 Open Discussion

10:00–10:10 Coffee Break

PANEL IV Language, Identity, and Marginality

(1) 10:10–10:25 Yousef Khasho (University of Vienna) – *Arabic as a Language of Identity: Middle Eastern Christian Diaspora Churches in Württemberg-Germany*

10:25–10:26 Immediate Response

10:26–10:30 Pair/Group Discussion

(2) 10:30–10:45 Vjosa Cakiqi (University of Klagenfurt, Austria) – *Speaking from the Margins: Epistemic Injustice and the Portrayal of Ghanaian Pidgin English*

10:45–10:46 Immediate Response

10:46–10:50 Pair/Group Discussion

(3) 10:50–11:05 Ting Lei (University of Warsaw) – *Rewriting the Frontier: Transnational Solidarity and Otherness in The Ballad of Little Jo*

11:05–11:06 Immediate Response

11:06–11:10 Pair/Group Discussion

11:10–11:30 Collective Discussion

11:30–11:40 Coffee Break

PANEL V Language, Normativity, and Political Reality

(1) 11:40–11:55 Olena Pavlenko (Mariupol State University, Ukraine) – *Unmasking Ethical Narratives through Greenwashing Markers in English-Language Eco-Discourse*

11:55–11:56 Immediate Response

11:56–12:00 Pair/Group Discussion

(2) 12:00–12:15 CP Hertogh (Independent Researcher) – *Metaphor and Formal Methodologies*

12:15–12:16 Immediate Response
12:16–12:20 Pair/Group Discussion

(3) 12:20–12:35 Ilenia Amitrano (Università degli Studi di Siena) – *Being Oneself. On Self-Reference in Logicality*

12:35–12:36 Immediate Response
12:36–12:40 Pair/Group Discussion

12:40–13:00 Collective Discussion

13:00–13:10 Coffee Break

13:10–13:50 FINAL SEMINAR ROUND

***Beyond Language?
Meaning, Community, and the Future of Interpretation***

Final collective seminar discussion with all participants.

Themes include: language and transcendence, AI and meaning, identity and migration, epistemic injustice, political affect, religion and symbolic mediation, and the future of shared meaning in fragmented societies.

13:50–14:00 Patryk Zając – Closing Remarks

14:00–14:15 End of Seminar

14:30– ∞ Lunch & Informal Networking

DAY I – FRIDAY – 26 JUNE 2026

Language, Meaning, and Transcendence

PANEL I — Language and Forms of Life

(1) 10:35–10:50 Abdul Rahim Afaki (University of Karachi, Pakistan) - The Mutuality Nexus of Lingual Meanings and Form of Life: Later Witt-genstein and the Classical Arabic Lexicologists

There were two literary forms of expression whereby the classical Arab mind could manifest the eloquence with perfection namely oratory (khaṭabah) and poetry (shi'r). These were not merely two literary forms for them rather two lingual spheres encompassing the whole chivalric tribal life-form of the Arabs manifesting their chivalry (furūsīyyah) and freedom (ḥurriyyah) with certain lingual requisites namely the glibness (dhalāqah) of tongue, the purity (naṣā'ah) of style, the elegance (anāqah) of dialect and the spontaneity of intuition (ṭalāqat al-badīhah) etcetera. Owing to the mutuality of chivalric life-form and its lingual objectivations both in prose and poetry, the classical Arab and non-Arab lexicologists used to discipline themselves in accord with the cultural lifeworld of the native Arabs emphatically the Bedouin lifeworld wherein all meanings had been embedded in the mutual terms of language and life-form. They, therefore, knew that an ordinary language is not simply a systematic medium of communication wherein the meanings are fixed with the application of grammatical rules; instead, in case of an ordinary language the lexicologists had to interpret the meanings of lingual signs and expressions in the nexus of the respective life-form while compiling a lexicon of that ordinary language. This paper argues that if a contemporary philosophical mind goes through the classical Arabic lexicons like Al-Jauharī's *Ṣiḥāḥ*, Al-Azharī's *Tahdhīb* or Ibn Manẓūr's *Lisān*, it becomes ponderable for such a mind to compare their considerations with Later Wittgenstein's philosophy of ordinary language pivoted around the notion of language game that he construes in the mutuality nexus of lingual meanings and form of life. According to Later Wittgenstein, the fundament of learning one's native or primary language is the 'ostensive' way of mutually relating the lingual signs and their meanings. In this ostensive learning of words, the teacher utters a word simultaneously pointing to an object related to the word as its meaning. So the learner understands the association between a word and its meaning in terms of the ostensive action of the teacher. Learning to speak an ordinary language in a

life situation is virtually the same as playing a particular language game whereby the lingual meanings are determined in the nexus of the given situation as a part of a specific form of life. Hence, this argumentation attends to making a comparative philosophical analysis between Later Wittgenstein and the classical Arabic lexicologists in the mutuality nexus of ordinary language and the respective life-form.

Keywords: Later Wittgenstein, the classical Arabic lexicologists, language game, the mutuality nexus of language and life-form

Biogram Abdul Rahim Afaki is professor of philosophy at the University of Karachi. He has been affiliated with the same university for more than two decades. Areas of his research interest are Islamic and Western hermeneutics and South Asian studies. He has authored research papers on the issues mutually semantically shared both by Islamic and Western traditions of thought. His many works on such themes have been published in various philosophy journals of international repute like *Analecta Husserliana*, *Phenomenological Inquiry*, *Islamic Philosophy* and *Occidental Phenomenology in Dialogue*, *Transcendent Philosophy* etc. He has presented his research works at many world renowned universities.

(2) 10:55–11:10 Veronika Myronenko (John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin) - Between Information and Affect: Telegram as a Space of Political Meaning-Making in Wartime

Abstract: This research examines wartime communication on Telegram as a space where political meanings are constructed through the interplay of information and affect. It focuses on selected official Telegram channels of Ukrainian authorities and applies qualitative discourse analysis to explore how language shapes perceptions of socio-political reality. Particular attention is paid to the use of personal pronouns and their role in constructing credibility and collective identity. This study argues that linguistic choices on Telegram don't merely transmit information but actively produce political meaning and shape emotional response. In this context, Telegram functions both as an important channel of wartime communication and as a discursive arena where language and power intersect, shaping public understandings of war and reinforcing symbolic boundaries.

Keywords: Telegram, wartime communication, political discourse, personal pronouns, emotion.

Biogram Veronika Myronenko is a second-year PhD student at the Doctoral School of the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin in the discipline of Political Science and Administration.

PANEL II — Metaphor, Irony, and Spiritual Language

(1) 12:05–12:20 Adam Lalák (LMU München, Charles University in Prague) -The Epistemic Function of Irony in Spiritual Language

Words are among the most powerful means of preserving spiritual insight. Yet any attempt at articulating such insight in language faces a challenge: whereas spirituality is concerned with the Ultimate or the Absolute as an undifferentiated totality, attempts to capture its object in language tend to present it only under one aspect, and therefore fail. How can we speak of spiritual matters without allowing them to elude us? In this talk, I am going to argue that the best way to speak of such matters is through irony. Irony is a form of speech which exploits the ambiguity of language in order to communicate a message indirectly. Drawing upon the work of the German romantic philosopher Friedrich Schlegel, I am going to argue that ironic speech allows us to affirm statements while simultaneously distancing ourselves from them. Irony should thus be treated as a quasi-assertion: it pretends to be asserting a statement while using that apparent assertion to point towards something else. It achieves this due to its essentially negative structure which enables it to undermine its own content. Applying Schlegel's insights to contemporary debates on spirituality, I aim to show that in irony, language manages to point "beyond itself" and thus articulate spiritual insights in an indirect manner. Unlike metaphor, irony employs the technique of distancing; as a result, it is a more appropriate method for capturing the distance between the finitude of linguistic beings such as ourselves and ultimate reality. I am going to explain how the concept of irony can help us understand some contemporary spiritual practices, such as neo-Paganism. In this context, I will show how it differs from rival theories such as religious fictionalism, which tries to understand spirituality as a complex form of play. Drawing upon the theory of ironic spirituality developed by the contemporary philosopher Sharon Welch, I will conclude by considering the ethical import of my position and its potential in fostering religious pluralism.

Keywords: Irony, spirituality, language, play, insight.

Biogram Adam Lalák is a PhD candidate at the Chair of Philosophy of Religion, Ludwig-Maximilians University in Munich, and a junior lecturer at the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies at Charles University in Prague. He is interested in philosophical debates surrounding contemporary spirituality. He holds a BA in Philosophy and Psychology and an MPhil in Philosophy from the University of Cambridge.

(2) 12:25–12:40 Nikita Nalivko (John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin) - The Architecture of Passivity: Constructing Political Inaction through Russian State Discourse

Abstract: Most propaganda theories assume that the goal of state media is to brainwash people into active support. However, modern autocracies often use discourse as an architecture of passivity. It organizes the informational environment so that political engagement feels risky, costly, and ultimately irrational. This study analyzes how RIA Novosti managed the meaning of the war between 2022 and 2023. Using Robert Entman's framing theory and discourse analysis, the research shows how the state makes dissent feel socially and mentally "too expensive." I found that by offering safe narrative roles (like "The Defender"), the media builds an "ontological cocoon" for the public. This makes doing nothing feel like a logical and legitimate survival strategy. Ultimately, Russian state discourse works as a technology of depoliticization. It maintains regime stability by normalizing the conflict and making silence the standard social response.

Keywords: architecture of passivity, political inaction, Russian state discourse, RIA Novosti, ontological security.

Biogram Nikita Nalivko is a PhD Candidate at the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, specializing in the analysis of disinformation and state-sponsored influence operations. His research investigates how institutional infrastructures are weaponized to restructure the identity and perceived reality of populations.

(3) 12:45–13:00 Chang Liu (Shanghai Jiao Tong University) - A Norm-Constitutive Theory of Insult Words

Subject matter: Philosophy of Language. In particular, the social-political power of language. **Research perspective:** Analytic Philosophy

Racial, gender, and religious slurs have become one of the most widely discussed issues in recent philosophy of language debates. However, are insult words (e.g., “Asshole,” “Jerk”) the same kind of expression as slurs (e.g., “Wop,” “Bitch,” “Bible thumpers”)? Theorists such as Hom (2012) and Potts (2007) often lump insult words and slurs together and provide a unified explanation for both as “pejoratives” or “expressives.” However, insult words should be differentiated from slurs because they have distinct features. Hay (2013) points out that insult words lack “descriptive detachability” and “agent-centeredness,” and I will argue that they also differ in “displaceability” and the “target of derogation.” For instance, the derogatory force of insult words targets individuals, while slurs target all members of a group; calling someone an “asshole” derogates this particular person instead of all other “assholes.” The aim of this paper is to propose a “norm-constitutive theory of insult words”. The meaning of insult words consists of what I call “norm-constitutive properties,” i.e., properties created and constituted by constitutive rules.

Keywords: Insult word; Slur; Norm; Speech act; Philosophy of language

Biogram Chang Liu is a Tenure-track Associate Professor of Philosophy at Shanghai Jiao Tong University. His research focuses on the intersection of Philosophy of Language and Political Philosophy.

LUNCH



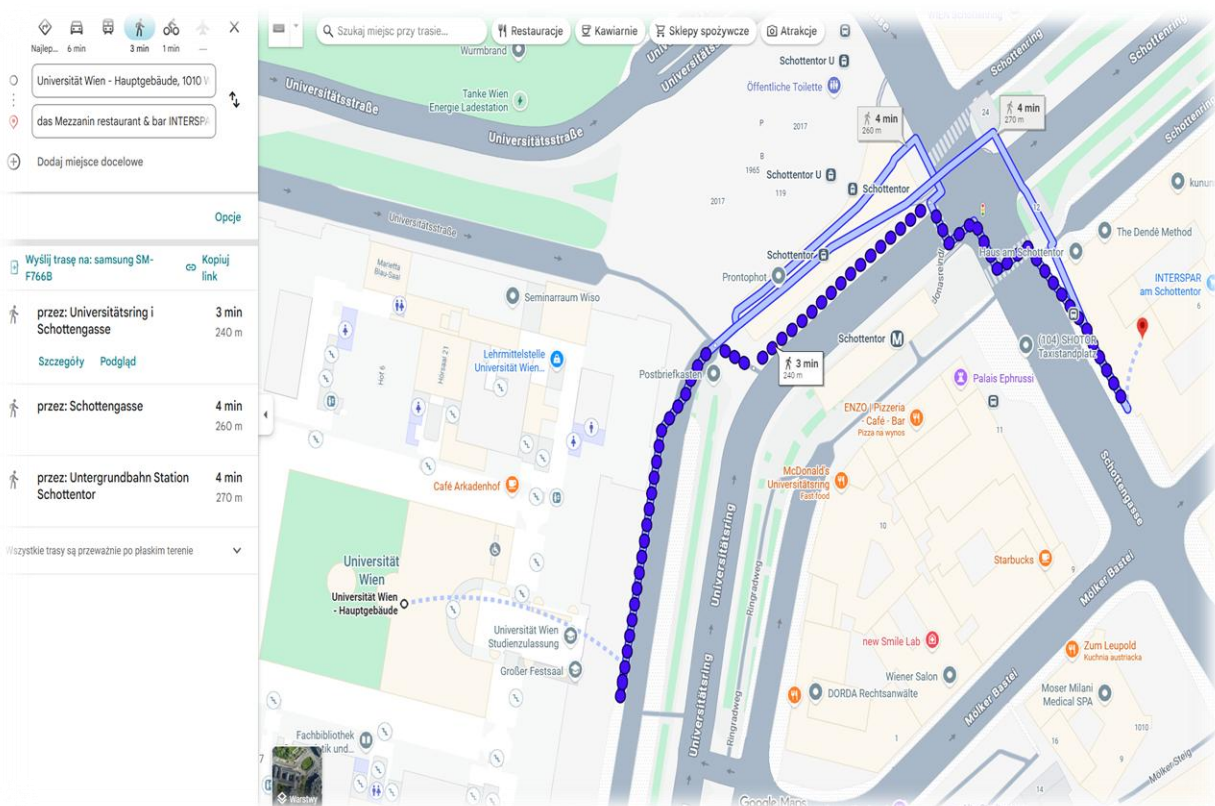
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LUNCH (26.06.2026 – 13:30)



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MENU



SMOKED TROUT

cucumber / salted lemon / avocado



BELUGA LENTIL SALAD

balsamic vinegar / organic root vegetables



BEEF TARTARE

capers / chives



BRAISED SWEET POTATOES

parsley / radishes



BRAISED BEEF SHOULDER

celery cream / zucchini

or

GUT DORNAUER CHAR

orange chicory / cauliflower

or

RICOTTA RAVIOLI

young spinach / Grana / Blumauer cherry tomatoes



RICOTTA CREAM

raspberry sorbet / mint



PANEL III —

Beyond Propositional Language

(1) 15:40–15:55 Piotr Szelejewski (University of Wrocław) - Tinkering as a Hermeneutic Practice: Player Interpretation and Game Modification in Video Games

Research perspective: Video games, as an interactive and highly responsive to the player medium, possess a distinctive poetics that calls for its own theory of interpretation. Yet the hermeneutic processes involved in actively altering games by the player remain underexplored. This presentation introduces the notion of “tinkering” to describe accessible ways players modify games in line with their interpretations, and examines its hermeneutic implications. Drawing on Umberto Eco’s aesthetics of openness, the presentation examines practices of game modification as interpretative acts that are no longer purely discursive, but procedural and material. Possibility of tinkering raises critical questions for players, making their engagement part of the interpretive process while enabling them to inscribe their readings directly into the game itself. I argue that tinkering is a practice intertwined with interpretation in video games, representing a distinct qualitative variant of Eco’s concept of open work.

Keywords: Interpretation, hermeneutics, videogame, game modification, tinkering

Biogram Piotr Szelejewski is an MA student in philosophy at the University of Wrocław and holds an MEng in computer science from the University of Warwick. Their research interests include aesthetics, hermeneutics, and video game studies. Their current work focuses on the dynamics of the relationship between audience and artwork.

(2) 16:00–16:15 Weronika Janiec (University of Wrocław) - Between Two Languages: Diegetic and Non-Diegetic Communication in Film

Every movie operates on two distinct narrative levels at the same time: the internal logic of the world and the external language that operates for the viewer exclusively. There are many theories describing diegetic/non-diegetic distinctions in film theory, however there is little philosophical literature regarding how these distinctions affect each other by creating something structurally inseparable — the movie as a whole. In this presentation, I will investigate how this act

of balancing between the two conversations manifests in the surreal, oneiric works of David Lynch in comparison to a classical Hollywood movie such as *Casa-blanca*. I argue that in the act of viewing, the two narrative levels create a whole that is neither purely external nor purely internal, but something existing in-between the two levels of communication. This presentation will attempt to answer a question that could extend our understanding of how art communicates and where the limits of language in art itself truly lie.

Keywords: Cinematic Language, Diegetic/Non-Diegetic, Art as Communication, Ontology of Film, Dialectics

Biogram Weronika Janiec is a MA student in Philosophy at the University of Wrocław. Her research interests lie at the intersection of continental philosophy, film theory, and cultural studies. She is currently exploring cinematic language as a form of philosophical communication, and runs a series of film-philosophy open lectures.

(3) 16:20–16:35 Kewin Ignasiak (University of Wrocław) - From Theseus's Ship to Strings of Symbols: The Problem of Textual Identity

Texts often exist in multiple distinct forms, yet are treated as interchangeable despite differences in their underlying strings of symbols. This invites a comparison with the classical identity paradox of the Ship of Theseus, where an object undergoes successive transformations while raising questions about its persistence. Similarly, a text can be subjected to a wide range of transformations, producing distinct strings that may still be treated as “the same”. This work aims to compare this problem with the Ship of Theseus and to present the key differences between them, highlighting how identity is formulated differently in the case of material objects and transformations of strings.

Keywords: identity, textual identity, Ship of Theseus, philosophy of language, string transformations

Biogram Kewin Ignasiak is a student of philosophy at the University of Wrocław, with an engineering degree in computer science from Wrocław University of Science and Technology.

(4) 16:40–16:55 Kerrigan Miranda (San Francisco State University) - Discussion of Linguistic Characteristics in Music and Means of Communication

Music has its own unique way of communicating that is not tied to any specific culture or language. Beyond its aesthetic appeal, music possesses inherent char-

acteristics that enable it to function as a language, conveying emotions, ideas, and narratives. Just as words are combined to form sentences and paragraphs in language, musical notes are combined to form melodies, harmonies, and rhythms. These notes, rhythms, and melodies of music can be understood and appreciated by people from different parts of the world, regardless of the language they speak. Language is defined as a system of conventional spoken, manual (signed), or written symbols by means of which human beings, as members of a social group and participants in its culture, express themselves. The functions of language include communication, the expression of identity, play, imaginative expression, and emotional release. Music is also composed of written symbols and these symbols allow for expression of identity, imaginative expression, emotional release and communication. This paper explores the ways in which music is a language in its own right, through discussion of how we utilize music to communicate, tell stories, protest, as well as the relationship between music and rhetoric.

Biogram Kerrigan Miranda is currently a graduate student at San Francisco State University. She will be graduating with her Master of Arts in Philosophy in May 2026. She has taught undergraduate courses in philosophy of art and critical thinking. She completed her undergraduate studies at Pacific University in Oregon, earning degrees in both philosophy and music.

DAY II – SATURDAY – 27 JUNE 2026
Language, Power, Identity,
and Community

PANEL IV — Language, Identity, and Marginality

(1) 10:25–10:40 Yousef Khasho (University of Vienna) - Arabic as a Language of Identity: Middle Eastern Christian Diaspora Churches in Württemberg-Germany

Middle Eastern Christian migrants, especially from the Levant and Egypt, have established new church communities across Europe with organized pastoral structures. Despite the traumatic associations of Arabic with the conflicts that often caused migration, despite Arabic lacking the central theological status it holds in Islam, despite migrants' growing proficiency in host-country languages, and despite the non-Arab ethnic roots of many of these churches, Arabic has remained the dominant language of worship and community life. This persistence raises important questions about language choice in diasporic Christianity. While twentieth-century Arab nationalist policies likely shaped earlier linguistic identities, migrants have shown limited interest in replacing Arabic in exile. Using a case study from Württemberg, Germany, this paper argues that Arabic functions primarily as a marker of migrant identity and communal continuity rather than as a purely religious language.

Keywords: Arabic Language, Migrant Communities, Christian Diaspora, Identity Formation, Württemberg

Biogram Yousef Khasho studied Computer Engineering in Syria, Master of Divinity in Lebanon, and Master of Religious Studies at Ruhr University Bochum. He is currently pursuing a PhD in New Testament at the University of Vienna. His focus is on mission in the New Testament as well as in the perspective of World Christianity. Parallel to his academic track, he worked as an assistant pastor in Lebanon, Syria, and Württemberg in Germany.

(2) 10:45–11:00 Vjosa Cakiqi (University of Klagenfurt, Austria) - Speaking from the Margins: Epistemic Injustice and the Portrayal of Ghanaian Pidgin English in Amma Darko's *The Housemaid* and *Faceless*

This paper examines the portrayal of Ghanaian Pidgin English (GhP) in Amma Darko's novels *The Housemaid* (1998) and *Faceless* (2003) through the philosophical lens of epistemic injustice, as theorized by Miranda Fricker (2007).

Drawing on discourse analysis of selected passages, the paper argues that Darko's literary representation of GhP reflects a broader social reality in which pidgin speakers are systematically denied epistemic credibility. Their voices are dismissed, stigmatized, and rendered less authoritative solely on the basis of the language variety they speak. The analysis identifies three recurring patterns across both novels: GhP as the language of the socially marginalized, GhP as a marker of "otherness" reinforcing class-based hierarchies, and GhP as an occasional site of resistance and cultural pride. Characters who speak Standard English consistently occupy positions of power, while GhP speakers, including housemaids, street children, and the urban poor, are ridiculed and excluded from legitimate social discourse. These dynamics illustrate what Fricker terms testimonial injustice: the deflation of a speaker's credibility due to identity prejudice. At the same time, Darko resists a purely negative portrayal. Moments of humor, wit, and explicit pride in GhP suggest that the language also functions as a form of counter-identity, a refusal to surrender linguistic selfhood to colonial and class-based hierarchies. This paper thus contributes to philosophical and epistemological discussions on linguistic diversity, arguing that the legitimacy afforded to a language variety is never merely a linguistic question, but always also one of power, identity, and justice.

Biogram Vjosa Cakiqi is currently a master's student in English Linguistics at the Department of English and American Studies at the University of Klagenfurt, Austria.

(3) 11:05–11:20 Ting Lei (University of Warsaw) - Rewriting the Frontier: Transnational Solidarity and Otherness in The Ballad of Little Jo

This paper reexamines *The Ballad of Little Jo*, directed by Maggie Greenwald, through the lens of transnational film theory. While previous scholarship has largely interpreted the film through a feminist lens, this study argues that it fundamentally reconfigures the American Western as a transnational contact zone shaped by migration, racial marginalization, and gender performance. Drawing on theories of transnational cinema proposed by Will Higbee and Song Hwee Lim, as well as Homi K. Bhabha's concept of the "Third Space," the analysis focuses on the relationship between Josephine Monaghan and Tinman Wong. The study contends that their interethnic alliance destabilises settler-colonial and masculinist myths of the frontier and proposes a vision of belonging grounded in shared precarity and negotiated identity. The film thus rewrites the West as a space of transnational solidarity rather than as a space of national purity.

Keywords: transnational cinema; American Western; interethnic solidarity; Third Space; deterritorialization

Biogram Ting Lei is affiliated with the University of Warsaw. Their research interests include transnational cinema, migration, identity, and contemporary film theory.

PANEL V — Language, Normativity, and Political Reality

(1) 11:55–12:10 Olena Pavlenko (Mariupol State University, Ukraine) - Unmasking Ethical Narratives through Greenwashing Markers in Eng-lish-Language Eco-Discourse

This study investigates the linguistic mechanisms of “greenwashing” within modern English-language advertising, focusing on how environmental rhetoric is employed to create deceptive ethical narratives. As global brands progressively adopt ecological vocabularies, the research methodically examines the semantic erosion of ethically-charged terms such as “sustainable”, “carbon-neutral”, “zero-sugar”, “additive-free”, and “non-GMO”. By applying a critical discourse analysis, the paper identifies specific lexical markers and rhetorical patterns used to bridge the gap between commercial interests and genuine environmental ethics. Rather than merely listing lexical units, the study moves beyond descriptive observation to explore the anthropological shift in consumer-brand communication, where “green” terminology functions as a modern cultural myth. The perspective involves investigating how these discursive practices reshape the boundaries of public trust and redefine the communicative potential in a digital, eco-aware society. The research contributes to a deeper understanding of the appropriation of ethics in the evolution of modern English eco-discourse.

Keywords: eco-discourse, greenwashing markers, ethical narratives, linguistic manipulation, cultural patterns.

Biogram Olena Pavlenko is Doctor of Philological Sciences and Professor at the Department of English Philology and Applied Studies at Mariupol State University (Ukraine).

(2) 12:15–12:30 CP Hertogh (Independent Researcher) - Metaphor and Formal Methodologies

As sequel to informal literature studies of metaphor (see e.g. (Abstract) Metaphor, Identification, Analysis, and Interpretation of Metaphorical Indicative Sentences of Subject-Predicate Form), we would like to introduce two formal methodologies to study of metaphor. First, semantic analysis of metaphor themes with help of metaphor operator M , e.g., next metaphor theme of meta-phorical field 'X is a fox', resorting under cultural concept 'humans are animals' M (Alex is a fox) (context) which operator will vanish when 'system of common-places' (Max Black 1954/62, 1977/79), SC, of both subject and predicate are ex-plicated.

Second, metaphor diagram surveys featuring metaphor diagram questionnaire, a two-dimensional perpendicular graph, informal coordinate system, including a vertical line, to which a set of metaphor themes are listed as discrete coordinates, and a horizontal assessment line of plausibility values.

Finally, a note on applications and limitations of formal and quantitative methodologies in philosophy and science.

Keywords: metaphor, metaphor theme, metaphor operator, system of commonplaces, metaphor diagram, plausibility value, quantitative research

Biogram CP Hertogh studied Philosophy at both Amsterdam universities, specializing in Philosophy of Language. He has participated in numerous international seminars and conferences, including UNESCO World Logic Day and the European Forum Alpbach.

(3) 12:35–12:50 Ilenia Amitrano (Università degli Studi di Siena) - Being Oneself. On Self-Reference in Logicality

1. Framework. This work is situated in the field of Philosophy of Language and draws on a well-known idea in contemporary Linguistics, namely the Logicality of Language Hypothesis. The Logicality holds that the linguistic system defines the domain of grammaticality by integrating two components: a generative computational apparatus and a form of natural logic internal to the system itself.

2. Research question. The character of the indexical “I” confers upon the statement “I am the speaker” a form of pragmatic validity: an a priori truth, yet not logically necessary. On the other hand, if both occurrences of the indexical in “I am who I am” have the same character, the sentence should collapse into a trivial logical identity.

3. Argument. The paper investigates whether “I am who I am” is pragmatically acceptable despite its apparently tautological structure and proposes an interpretation based on pragmatic modulation and the RESCALE re-pair strategy.

Keywords: First Person; Self-Reference; Logicality; Indexicality; Pragmatics vs. Semantics

Biogram Ilenia Amitrano is a PhD candidate in Philosophy of Language at the University of Siena. She completed a research stay at Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne University and has presented her work at international conferences including Formal Philosophy and Pragmasophia.

Practical Information

Venue

Seminarraum 7

Das Hauptgebäude der Universität Wien
Universitätsring 1
1010 Vienna, Austria

Public Transport

Nearest stations:

- **Schottentor (U2)** — approx. 3–4 min walk
- **Schottentor / Universität** (Tram lines 1, 37, 38, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44)
- **Rathausplatz / Burgtheater** — approx. 7 min walk

WiFi Access

Participants may use the University of Vienna guest WiFi network:

- **Network:** u:guest
- Browser login required after connection.

Eduroam is available for participants affiliated with partner universities.

Lunch & Informal Networking

Friday, 26 June 2026 — 13:30

Das Mezzanin Restaurant & Bar

Schottengasse 6–8
1010 Vienna

Approx. 4 minutes walking distance from the University of Vienna.

Emergency Information

General emergency number in Austria: **112**

Additional emergency numbers:

- Ambulance: **144**
- Police: **133**
- Fire brigade: **122**

Nearest pharmacy:

- **Schotten Apotheke**
Schottengasse 14, 1010 Vienna

Contact

For all organizational questions regarding the seminar, certificates of participation, accessibility, or logistical matters, please contact:

Patryk Zając ✉ patryk.lepus@gmail.com (private); +48 690 949 649 (private)

During the seminar days, participants are kindly encouraged to contact the organizer directly on site in urgent cases.



Beyond Language

International Conference for Young Scholars

Poznań – Warsaw – Wrocław – Berlin – Lublin – Lviv – Rome – Bucharest – Sosnowiec – Kraków – Łódź – Vienna
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SEMINAR AT THE UNIVERSITY OF VIENNA

June 26-27, 2026

Held under the auspices of:



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Vienna Doctoral School of Theology
and Research on Religion VDTR

Venue:

Das Hauptgebäude der Universität Wien, Universitätsring 1, 1010 Wien – Seminarraum [1–8]

THEMATIC FOCUS 2026 – University of Vienna

The Vienna seminar foregrounds theological, philosophical, and epistemological perspectives on linguistic diversity, cultural identity, and minority communities, integrating the mission of Beyond Language 2026 with the academic profile of VDTR.

Theology

religious and liturgical languages; multilingual worship and diaspora communities; language as a medium of faith, memory, and lived religious identities

Philology & Linguistics

minority and endangered languages; textual and oral traditions; translation and interpretation; linguistic heritage, contact, and revitalisation

Philosophy, Philosophy of Religion & Epistemology (Analytic & Continental Perspectives)

religious meaning and understanding; interpretation and experience across languages; testimony, authority, credibility; epistemic (in)justice and the socio-political power of language

Full schedule, aims, and thematic scope: <https://blconf.uwr.edu.pl/>

REGISTRATION FOR SPEAKERS

Please submit: • Abstract: 100–150 words • Keywords: 5 • Language: English, German • Presentation length: approx. 10 minutes

• **CfP Deadline: April 25th, 2026**

Submit abstracts to: [Monika Piechota](#) and [Patryk Zajac](#)

No conference or publication fee will be charged.

PUBLICATION OPPORTUNITY

Selected papers may be considered for publication in:

Academic Journal of Modern Philology <https://ajmp.uwr.edu.pl>

