

RESEARCH SUMMARY

During my fellowship at the Institute Vienna Circle (May – August 2026), I deepened my research into the early analytic period of US-American philosopher Susanne K. Langer (1895-1985). Although Langer is historically considered a philosopher of art or an “artists' philosopher”, my project aimed to understand her work better within the broader context of the analytic tradition. I sought to illuminate her intellectual ties to the Vienna Circle – particularly to Moritz Schlick, Rudolf Carnap, and the Unity of Science Movement (until 1939) – while remaining within the scope of her logic of ‘feeling’.

By tracing the mentions of Langer in Moritz Schlick's second version of his manuscript on “The Future of Philosophy” (1931), I reconstructed the impression Langer left on the founder of the Vienna Circle. Schlick had highly praised her book *The Practice of Philosophy* (1930) in a letter to the publisher Henry Holt in March 1931 after reviewing it (see Verhaegh 2022; 2024). This shows that, when revising a previous draft, he saw the need to publicly address and comment on the advanced scholar's book (Langer was 36 years old at that time). His 1931 manuscript reveals a sharp methodological divergence between Langer's proposed structural approach in logic and his own logical positivism. While he acknowledged Langer as a brilliant peer in their shared “pursuit of meaning” – and was possibly the first to identify the ‘analytic type’ of philosophy – he nevertheless objected to her proposition of turning logic into a rational science in its own right. A closer reading of *The Practice of Philosophy* shows that Langer understood that the turning point at which science and philosophy began pursuing separate paths – through logical analysis – was itself a symbolistic progression in the evolution of thought. Instead of limiting the scope of sensible meaning to science (discursive form), she opened the filters of reason to the presentational form in the arts, ritual and cultural expression without resorting to metaphysics.

In addition to my previously conducted research at the University of Vienna and the library of the IVC (2024-2025), I reviewed Vienna Circle minutes and transcripts taken 1930-1932 in the digital archive of Rose Rand Papers (Archives of Scientific Philosophy, Archives & Special Collections, University of Pittsburgh). At the start of my fellowship, however, I could only find one bundle digitised: “‘Wiener Kreis: Vorträge und Diskussion’ and ‘Thesen’” (pp 98), 1931-1932. Since then, a significant amount of additional archival material has been digitised, which would be worthwhile to review for traces of Susanne K. Langer and her book, includes: ‘Minutes and Transcriptions from the Vienna Circle,’ 1931 (pp. 99); ‘Notes, Transcriptions, and Minutes: A-L’ 1930-1931 (pp. 206). In his letter to Henry Holt, Schlick expressed the wish for his students to access the book.

It appears that Schlick's rejection of Langer's proposal to turn logic into a rational science could have also been influenced by his critical reading of Russell's mathematical philosophy and his concept of identity. This was evident when comparing Rose Rand's transcripts of Schlick's ideas 1931-1932 with Langer's early papers 1926-1929, her dissertation from 1926, and *The Practice of Philosophy* (1930), all of which made heavy references to Bertrand Russell's philosophy of mathematics.

I conclude this research with a recognized need to further explore Langer's relation to Russell's formal analyses. Furthermore, evidence suggests that Russell attended meetings of the philosophical circle Langer hosted at Harvard in 1929. Consequently, material illuminating their relationship may likely be found in the Bertrand Russell Archives at McMaster University.

ACTIVITY REPORT

IVC Reading Group // April-June

Beginning in April 2026, I attended the IVC Reading Group, Wednesdays 16:00-17:30 hosted at the Institute by Dr. Christoph Limbeck-Lilienau.

Reading list:

Eisenthal. 2022. 'Models and Multiplicities'. *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 60 (2): 277–302.

Schuringa. 2025. *A Social History of Analytic Philosophy* (Introduction, Ch. 5, Ch. 8). Verso Books.

Quine, Willard Van Orman. 1948. 'On What There Is'. *Review of Metaphysics* 2 (5): 21–38.

Verhaegh. 2018. *Working from Within: The Nature and Development of Quine's Naturalism*. Oxford University Press.

Thomasson. 2025. *Rethinking Metaphysics* (Ch. 1-4). Oxford University Press.

Langer. 1930. 'Insight'. In *The Practice of Philosophy*, 152 – 166. Henry Holt and Company.

Felappi. 2017. 'Susanne Langer and the Woeful World of Facts'. *Journal for the History of Analytical Philosophy* 5 (2): 37–50.

Organizer of the 2026 Susanne K. Langer Conference // 26.-29.05.2026, TU Wien

During my fellowship, I organized – in collaboration with the Institute Vienna Circle, University of Vienna, and the Research Unit Architecture Theory and Philosophy of Technics ATTP, TU Wien – the 2026 Susanne K. Langer conference. The meeting was hosted at the Technical University. Emphasising its transdisciplinary approach, this third biennial Langer Circle Conference was structured around the trajectories of ARTISTIC ANGLES, PHILOSOPHICAL CIRCLES, POETIC DOTS, AND TECHNICAL LINES, thereby highlighting Langer's own pluralist conception of the symbol.

The conference was supported by TU Wien, University of Vienna and the City of Vienna (MA 7 Wissenschaft).

Link: <https://www.attp.tuwien.ac.at/project/langer-conference-2026/>

Participant at the Conference 'The Formal Turn' // 08.-10.06.2026, University of Vienna

Attendance of Conference 'The Formal Turn: Formalism in Mathematics and Logic at the Turn of the 20th Century.'

I was particularly intrigued by Iulian Toader's (Universität Wien) presentation on "[Hermann] Hankel's Principles as an Anti-Kantian Program", and Hankel's notion of "aktuelle Zahlen" as an embodied perception of number – an *aisthêsis* of mathematics. This resonates with Whitehead's process ontology that hypothesises actual entities/actual occasions as the ultimate constituents of reality, which he in turn grounds in a relational network of 'feeling'. Langer extends this networking of becoming and folding into her concept of 'acts' and her natural philosophy of 'feeling'. In my view, becoming acquainted with Hankel bridged process thought with its actual mathematical roots. Toader's presentation highlights the critiques of transcendental idealism in my triangle of interest in Langer, Whitehead, and Cassirer.

I attended Dirk Schlimm's (McGill University) talk "The Emergence of Symbolic Logic and the Paradox of Adequate Formalization," whose discussion of the terminological foundations of symbolic logic highlighted how much Langer's nomenclature in *Philosophy in a New Key* (sign, symbol, and symptom) was in active dialogue with her European peers of the Wiener Kreis.

Furthermore, the conference allowed me to learn more about mathematics' understanding of isomorphism – particularly in a side conversation with Antonio Piccolomini d'Aragona's (University of Tübingen) "A Contribution to the History of the Curry-Howard Correspondence: Prawitz's 1968/1970 Homomorphism". Langer operates her theory of the art symbol on the isomorphy of the verbal noun 'feeling'. Her terminology is grounded in structural equivalence within meaning relations, albeit under different auspices (Floyd 2026). Phenomenologically activating the matrices of meaning through 'feeling', her philosophy takes root in Whitehead and Ernst Cassirer. Langer has historically been misinterpreted and criticized on the matter of isomorphism (Varela & Ferrara 1982).

IVC Colloquium // 18.06.2026, University of Vienna

For my presentation at the IVC Colloquium, I provided a more detailed analysis of Langer's 1927 paper, 'A Logical Study of Verbs', in which she investigates the discrepancy between grammatical syntax and logical form. Langer demonstrates that verbs must be understood as relational terms that organise and bind the structural pattern of a proposition. Thus, she foreshadows later relational and structural approaches in logic (Felappi 2026). Langer does this in dialogue with Russell's correspondence theory and his concept of assertion (–) in sentence structure by analysing the extra-systemic function of verbs.

CONCLUSION

Reading Langer's science critique more as a dialectical engagement with the Unity of Science Movement allowed me to better understand how her early structuralism forms the backbone of her later explorations of human expressiveness within her biological philosophy.

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Editor of the collected volume, *The Bloomsbury Handbook of Susanne K. Langer* (2024).

Open Access: <https://www.bloomsburycollections.com/encyclopedia?docid=b-9781350294660>.

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Feigl, Herbert to Moritz Schlick, 6 December 1930. *Moritz Schlick Papers, 1882–1936* (99/Fei-17). Haarlem, Vienna Circle Archive, page 5. (Extracted by Sander Verhaegh).

Felappi, Giulia. 2026. 'Saving Logic from a Metaphysical Limbo. Susanne Langer on Logical Assertion'. *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, February 5, 1–17. <https://eprints.soton.ac.uk/508423/>.

- Felappi, Giulia. 2024. 'Susanne K. Langer on Logic as the Study of Forms and Patterns of Any Sort'. In *The Bloomsbury Handbook of Susanne K. Langer*, edited by Lona Gaikis. Bloomsbury Academic.
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- Rand, Rose. 'Minutes and Transcriptions from the Vienna Circle'. Rose Rand Papers, 1903-1981, Archives of Scientific Philosophy, Archives & Special Collections, 1931. Box 10, Folder 9. VI. Rose Rand's Research Notes, Transcriptions, Manuscript Fragments, and Minutes, 1912-1978.
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- Varela, Charles, and Laurence Ferrara. 1982. 'The Nagel Critique and Langer's Critical Response'. *Journal for the Anthropological Study of Human Movement*, 2 (2): 99–111. https://jashm.press.uillinois.edu/2.2/2-2TheNagel_Varela&Ferrara99-111.pdf.
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- Verhaegh, Sander. 2022. 'Susanne Langer and the American Development of Analytic Philosophy'. In *Women in the History of Analytic Philosophy: Selected Papers of the Tilburg – Groningen Conference, 2019*, edited by Jeanne Peijnenburg and Sander Verhaegh. Springer International Publishing.