

Sofya Mustetsova

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RESEARCH PROFILE

I hold a Bachelor's degree in Philosophy from the University of Vienna (2021–2025). Throughout my studies I worked across the domains of history and philosophy of technology and science, epistemology, philosophy of mathematics and logic, media theory, critical studies, aesthetics, political philosophy, and philosophy of religion.

Across these fields I developed a consistent interest in the political and economic implications of phenomena, propping the central question driving my research inquiry: how are complex processes organised and how can they be reorganised? My current trajectory is preoccupied with the application of theory to practice, while paying attention to the inevitable processes of reduction and compression: what constitutes those processes and what is being lost through this. Thus the inquiry into loss and how it shapes modern subjecthood, following an apophatic logic imported from theology.

I wrote ten papers in the course of my studies, two of which were bachelor theses.

The first, written in 2023 under the supervision of Wessel Reijers, was an analysis of cybernetic concepts in Elena Veduta's work. It traces the history of cybernetics in the Soviet Union and examines how that tradition is being rethought today, mostly through reductionist frameworks that do not manage to grasp the very reason why cybernetics failed at achieving its goal of automating the planned economy. Several earlier papers, written in 2021–2022, preceded and fed into this research strand, tackling questions of scientific responsibility and the problem of collective human endeavours, namely what human endeavours cannot be planned, and where *emergence* is necessary and inevitable. This thread opens directly onto questions about decentralised economies, the failing frameworks of emancipation via decentralisation and how they might be re-evaluated, as well as where their potential can be redirected. It connects to the present transformation of labour markets under rapid AI development, to questions of what redistributive frameworks like UBI could mean in this context, and to the deeper question of the relationship between labour and the economy in becoming. I am convinced there are insights from the Soviet experience and experiments that can be reappropriated and redirected toward these questions.

The second thesis, written in 2025 under the supervision of Evan Sandsmark, is titled "The Limits of Immanence: Kenosis and Algorithmic Temporality." It reconciles theological material, specifically theological phenomenology, with media studies, investigating immanentising frameworks and how they affect the very idea of change on a theoretical level and feed into learned political helplessness on the practical level. Concretely, it deals with the rhythms that emerge through affective flows in the Borromian knot of user–interface–content interaction, treating the three as an inseparable constellation. The weight of the interface design is largely undervalued but is in fact determinative of the window of possible interaction between humans and technology. Drawing on older and more contemporary frameworks in media theory, the thesis asks: What do new types of interfaces do to human subjectivity? What are the co-produced limits of emancipation? What new forms of cooperation and competition do they engender? More broadly, how do they alter conditions of possibility? Through this work, I moved toward the idea of transcendental cybernetics, which I currently investigate on both theoretical and practical levels.

These two strands converge in deeper questions about future educational frameworks, as well as future economies that we might or might not affect consciously.

EDUCATION

BA Philosophy — University of Vienna 2021 – 2025

Vienna, Austria

Grade: 1.75 — with distinction in Philosophy of Science, History of Philosophy, and thesis work.

BA Computational Linguistics — HSE University Moscow 2018 – 2019

Moscow, Russia · Not completed

Coursework in quantitative research methods, field studies, and data analysis. Skills directly inform current work on experimental interfaces and coordination systems.

BA Graphic Design — HSE University Moscow 2016 – 2018

Moscow, Russia · Not completed

Coursework in visual communication and interface design. Design practice informs ongoing research in cultural institutions.

RESEARCH & PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Initiator & Convener — Vienna Circle 2.0 Reading Group Dec 2025 – present

Vienna, Austria

Initiated and leads a weekly philosophy reading group with PhD students and independent researchers. Developed focus on transcendental cybernetics, category theory, and experimental coordination frameworks.

Independent Researcher & Artist — ELSIE · elsie.world 2025 – present

Vienna, Austria

An independent research project investigating coordination under complexity. Currently developing an installation and a gamified experimental economic environment as a site of inquiry into governance and collective decision-making.

Collection Management Assistant — Private Collector Jul – Sep 2025

Vienna, Austria

Organised art collection documentation, catalogued metadata, researched pricing and provenance.

Research Assistant — Central European University & WU Vienna May – Aug 2025

Vienna, Austria · Multidimensional Social Mobility project

Data management and analysis using R, STATA, and SQL on large-scale entrepreneurial datasets (ORBIS/FIBU). Prepared datasets for hypothesis testing on economic mobility.

Qualitative Researcher — Open Future Lab, ERSTE Foundation Jul – Aug 2025

Vienna, Austria

Conducted interviews on individual and collective futures and attitudes towards social investment. Thematic analysis, research documentation, and internal coordination.

Gallery Assistant — WAF Gallery & UA26 2022 – 2025

Vienna, Austria

Gallery sitting, visitor engagement, administrative tasks including accounting and invoicing.

Curator & Event Organiser — Independent 2021 – 2025

Vienna, Austria

Conceived and produced interdisciplinary events combining experimental media, sound, and performance. Brought international artists and scholars to Vienna, including Open Secret screenings and a lecture by Robin Holt (Professor of Strategy, University of Bristol).

UX/UI Designer & Frontend Developer — Freelance 2019 – present

Vienna, Austria

Designed and developed responsive websites and digital infrastructure for cultural organisations, NGOs, galleries, festivals, and private clients. Full project lifecycle from concept to deployment. CMS: TYPO3, WordPress, Elementor. Stack: HTML, CSS, JS, Git.

Artist & Performer — Various Contexts 2020 – present

International

Experimental sound and media work screened at 30+ festivals and venues internationally. Live performances at Ars Electronica and Vienna experimental music spaces. Fiction writing published in international anthologies. Work created under various pseudonyms.

SKILLS & TOOLS

Languages Russian (native), English (C1), German (C1), French (A1), Polish (A1)

Research Qualitative & quantitative methods, thematic analysis, interview methodology, R, STATA, SQL

Technical HTML, CSS, JS, Python, Git, TYPO3, WordPress, Figma, Adobe Suite, Jira, Excel

Management Project coordination, budgeting, documentation systems, cross-functional team coordination

Academic Papers

Philosophy of Logic and Language

- "From Truth-Conditions to Inference: Rethinking Meaning in the Age of LLMs" (2025) Seminar paper, Universität Wien
- "Analysis of Dummett's argument against Putnam's realism" (2022) Seminar paper, supervisor: Iulian Toader, Universität Wien

Philosophy of Technology & Epistemology

- "Analysis of cybernetic concepts in Elena Veduta's work" (2023) BA thesis, supervisor: Wessel Reijers, Universität Wien
- "Logical structure of cybernetic phenomena and human reasoning" (2022) Seminar paper, supervisor: Arantzazu Saratxaga (trained by Peter Sloterdijk), Universität Wien

Media theory & Philosophy of Religion

- "The Limits of Immanence: Kenosis and Algorithmic Temporality" (2025) BA thesis, supervisor: Evan Sandsmark, Universität Wien

Political Philosophy & Critical Theory

- "Political efficacy of art in contemporary Russia" (2023) Seminar paper, supervisor: Erik M. Vogt, Universität Wien

History & Philosophy of Science

- "Cybernetics, value-neutral science and scientific responsibility in the United States and the Soviet Union" (2022) Seminar paper, supervisor: Christian Damböck, Universität Wien
- "Functional account of translation procedure in Kuhn's Structure of scientific revolutions" (2021) Essay on theory choice and incommensurability
- "'Different worlds' in philosophy of science and anthropology" (2021) Essay examining Kuhn's concepts through the ontological turn

Sensory Studies & Philosophy of Religion

- "'Sacred' or 'magic' musicality and supremacy of hearing" (2023) Essay on theosophical approaches to sound and Ultra-Modernist composers, supervisor: Anna Kvicalova, Universität Wien

Media theory & Philosophy of Religion

The Limits of Immanence: Kenosis and Algorithmic Temporality (2025)

BA thesis, supervisor: Evan Sandsmark, Universität Wien

Abstract

This thesis examines how contemporary media and affect theory describe subjectivity under algorithmic conditions, arguing that these frameworks remain bound to a horizon of immanence that forecloses orientation beyond circulation. Drawing on the theological concept of kenosis (divine self-emptying), the thesis reads algorithmic temporality as the latest manifestation of a kenotic logic. It further reinterprets Taina Bucher's kairologic time of the algorithm feeds as a kenotic kairos: the opportune moment reduced to operational fit and reformatted as predictive optimization. Within this configuration, kenosis reveals its structural ambivalence. Following Marion, Vattimo, and Nancy, the thesis distinguishes between *operational kenosis* (exhaustion, equivalence, continuation) and *generative kenosis* (opening, differentiation, renewal). The work outlines an ethical trajectory grounded in the descriptive insights of media and affect theory that reorients attention within immanence in order to make generative kenosis perceptible.

Keywords: media theory; affect theory; algorithmic temporality; immanence; kenosis; kairos; cybernetics; intentionality; perceptual ethics; feedback; platform capitalism

Philosophy of Logic and Language

From Truth-Conditions to Inference: Rethinking Meaning in the Age of LLMs (2025)

Seminar paper, Universität Wien

Abstract

This paper examines the question of meaning in the philosophy of language in light of recent advances in generative artificial intelligence, particularly transformer-based large language models (LLMs). Building on Arai & Tsugawa (2024), I argue that these systems challenge longstanding representationalist assumptions, especially truth-conditional compositionality. I show how LLMs exhibit “quasi-compositionality” and inferential patterns more consistent with Brandom’s inferentialist semantics than with truth-conditional frameworks. Since inferential semantics is grounded in norms of inference and shifting contexts of discourse, it is well suited to capture the contextual sensitivity of LLM outputs. An intentionalist objection, exemplified by Searle’s Chinese Room and the charge that LLMs are “stochastic parrots,” insists that semantics requires understanding and intentionality. I respond by drawing on late 20th-century philosophy of technology, which reconceives the Kantian a priori in historical and technological terms, to argue that meaning is shaped by media and discursive conditions. Even if LLMs are not intentional agents, their integration into discourse alters the conditions under which both linguistic and existential meaning are produced.

Keywords: philosophy of language, LLMs, transformers, inferentialist semantics, distributional semantics, truth-conditions, representationalism, anti-representationalism, technological a priori

Political Philosophy & Critical Theory

Political efficacy of art in contemporary Russia (2023)

Seminar paper, supervisor: Erik M. Vogt, Universität Wien

Abstract:

This paper applies Jacques Rancière's framework of politics and aesthetics to the Russian contemporary art scene, with a focus on the question of whether and under what conditions art can constitute a genuinely political act. Engaging with Rancière's three regimes of art and his concept of the distribution of the sensible, the paper critically assesses the claims made by Morozov, Reshetnikov & Gaufman (2022) regarding the political character of artists IC3PEAK and Shortparis. It argues that the applicability of Rancière's framework, which was developed primarily in a Western European institutional context, requires significant qualification when transposed onto a context of active censorship and suppressed epistemic infrastructure, as in contemporary Russia. The paper concludes that the representative regime of art, often dismissed as politically inert, may function as a necessary condition for the redistribution of the sensible in contexts where access to information is institutionally foreclosed.

Keywords: Rancière, distribution of the sensible, regimes of art, political efficacy, Russia, metamodernism, aesthetics and politics, censorship

Philosophy of Technology & Epistemology

Analysis of cybernetic concepts in Elena Veduta's work (2023)

BA thesis (2), supervisor: Wessel Reijers, Universität Wien

Abstract:

This paper examines Elena Veduta's account of Soviet economic cybernetics, with particular focus on her conceptual use of "control" and the "digital project." Drawing on Vincent August's analysis of Foucault and cybernetics and Antoinette Rouvroy's notion of algorithmic governmentality, the paper argues that Veduta's conceptual apparatus is inconsistent with the non-technocratic reading of cybernetics she implicitly endorses. While Veduta situates both capitalist and socialist digital projects within a shared paradigm of cybernetic economy, her deployment of "control" reverts to a mechanistic, linear model at odds with the circular, self-regulatory understanding central to cybernetic theory. The paper suggests that this inconsistency is historically conditioned, reflecting a broader pattern in which cybernetic terminology was absorbed into Soviet discourse without adequate reflection on its foundational epistemological premises.

Keywords: cybernetics, Elena Veduta, planned economy, algorithmic governmentality, control, Soviet Union, network rationality, Foucault

Sensory Studies & Philosophy of Religion

'Sacred' or 'magic' musicality and supremacy of hearing (2023)

Essay, supervisor: Anna Kvicalova, Universität Wien

Abstract:

This essay examines the relationship between sound, spirituality, and the hierarchy of the senses through the lens of the theosophical movement and American Ultra-Modernist composers of the early twentieth century. Drawing on John M. Andrick's work on Futurist dissonance and theosophical transcendence, the paper traces how figures such as Dane Rudhyar, Henry Cowell, and Cyril Scott attributed a "sacred" or "magical" quality to music, positioning it as a vehicle for spiritual elevation and universal brotherhood. Situating this argument within the broader context of the sensory turn, the essay questions whether the claimed supremacy of music in the hierarchy of arts implies an ontological supremacy of hearing over other senses. It further situates the Ultra-Modernists' project as a counter-ocularcentric intervention — a rebellion against the Enlightenment's "devocalisation of the universe" and its privileging of vision as the epistemologically reliable sense. The essay concludes by outlining further questions regarding the boundaries of theosophical sound theory and its entanglement with the history of technology and science.

Keywords: sensory turn, theosophy, Ultra-Modernism, sound, hearing, ocularcentrism, sacred musicality, dissonance, spiritual elevation, Dane Rudhyar

Philosophy of Technology & Epistemology

Logical structure of cybernetic phenomena and human reasoning (2022)

Seminar paper, supervisor: Arantzazu Saratxaga, Universität Wien

Abstract

This paper examines Brunella Antomarini's argument for a non-causalistic epistemology grounded in Peircean abduction as the logical structure underlying both cybernetic phenomena and human reasoning. While abduction and the logic of effectors offer a productive framework for the pragmatic functioning of cybernetic systems, I argue they cannot be extended to human reasoning. Central to this critique is Chaitin's claim that compression is equivalent to comprehension: human cognition is permeated by causality, habit, and processes of abstraction and compression that introduce irreducible structure. Deduction and induction remain indispensable as modes through which stable epistemologies are maintained and the cognitive labour of compression is economised. The renunciation of causal relations Antomarini proposes is ultimately untenable as a general account of mind.

Keywords: abduction, cybernetics, causality, compression, Peirce, epistemology, retroduction, habit, Antomarini, Chaitin

History & Philosophy of Science

Cybernetics, value-neutral science and scientific responsibility in the United States and the Soviet Union (2022)

Seminar paper, supervisor: Christian Damböck, Universität Wien

Abstract

This paper examines the entangled histories of cybernetics, scientific freedom, and social responsibility in the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War. Tracing cybernetics from its initial rejection as bourgeois pseudoscience in Stalinist Russia to its eventual absorption into Soviet institutional discourse, I argue that rather than liberating Soviet science, cybernetics merged with the prevailing ideological apparatus, replacing Stalinist "newspeak" with what Gerovitch termed "cyberspeak." Drawing on the American debate between Bridgman's doctrine of value-neutral science and emerging frameworks of social responsibility, I suggest that the absence of an analogous metaethical discourse in the USSR was a structural condition that limited the emancipatory potential cybernetics carried. The paper concludes with case studies of dissident thinkers who deployed cybernetic reasoning to advocate for systemic reform, illustrating the tension between individual scientific agency and ideological constraint.

Keywords: cybernetics, Cold War science, Soviet science, value-neutrality, scientific responsibility, Gerovitch, newspeak, cyberspeak, dissidents, scientific freedom

Philosophy of Logic and Language

Analysis of Dummett's argument against Putnam's realism (2022)

Seminar paper, supervisor: Iulian Toader, Universität Wien

Abstract

This paper examines Michael Dummett's argument in "Is Logic Empirical?" (1976) against Putnam's realist interpretation of quantum mechanics. I reconstruct and assess Dummett's central claim that realism requires bivalence, which in turn requires the introduction of truth-functional connectives, which quantum logic cannot accommodate. I argue that Dummett's argument is largely built on his own definitions rather than engaging Putnam's framework on its own terms, and identify a problematic move in the transition from premise 3 to premise 6 of the reconstructed argument. The paper also examines the roles of truth-functionality, meaning-constitution, and the analogy to intuitionism, concluding that the debate is in part a collision of divergent frameworks rather than a direct refutation.

Keywords: Dummett, Putnam, realism, bivalence, quantum logic, truth-functionality, distributivity, intuitionism, philosophy of logic

History & Philosophy of Science

Functional account of translation procedure in Kuhn's Structure of Scientific Revolutions (2021)

Abstract:

This paper challenges Kuhn's account of the translation procedure as a mechanism of persuasion and conversion between rival scientific theories. Drawing on the concept of incommensurable "different worlds," I argue that the competitive framing Kuhn ascribes to theory choice is internally inconsistent: genuinely incommensurable worlds cannot compete, as competition presupposes a shared standard of measurement. I propose instead a cooperative function for the translation procedure, one oriented toward mutual benefit rather than the zero-sum displacement of one paradigm by another. A secondary argument draws on the psychology of rational scientific agency to suggest that awareness of incommensurability makes competitive theory choice untenable for a reflective scientist.

Keywords: Kuhn, incommensurability, theory choice, translation, paradigm, cooperation, philosophy of science

History & Philosophy of Science

'Different worlds' in philosophy of science and anthropology (2021)

Abstract:

This paper examines the justification for Kuhn's concepts of "incommensurability" and "different worlds" by drawing a parallel with the ontological turn in anthropology. Noting that Pickering explicitly identifies Kuhn as a precursor to the ontological turn, I apply criticisms leveled at that movement to Kuhn's framework, arguing that the introduction of "different worlds" functions primarily as a methodological reorientation rather than a genuinely new ontological claim. The concept does not carry sufficient analytical weight to justify its introduction and, without further elaboration on how it functions within the theory, risks remaining a rhetorical gesture rather than a theoretical contribution.

Keywords: Kuhn, incommensurability, different worlds, ontological turn, anthropology, philosophy of science, Pickering