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## BABEL

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ORIGINS & ENDS  
OF LANGUAGE

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## FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 27TH

10:00 – 10:50 Ayers 4th Floor Conference RoomPHILOLOGOI: "Is there anything that language cannot express?" Open Discussion

Philologoi, Belmont's weekly philosophy student discussion group, will in this session address the question above as well as other related issues as proposed by the students themselves. For this meeting, following the usual format, a student will open discussion by asking an extended question related to Language, following which all members of the group and of the audience are warmly invited and strongly encouraged to actively participate in the ensuing open discussion.

WellCore Category: Social Wellness

11:00 – 11:50 Ayers 4th Floor Conference RoomDolittle's Discovery: The likelihood of non-human language.

In a 2017 article in BMC Biology, evolutionary biologist Mark Pagel explained, "Human language is distinct from all other known animal forms of communication...". Pagel extends his point by saying that "non-human animal communication is principally limited to repetitive instrumental acts directed toward a specific end." If you examine the offerings of this year's Humanities Symposium you will find that we seem to agree with Mr. Pagel that human use of language makes us special among all the creatures of the world. We see human language as a uniquely human superpower. This presentation explores the likelihood that the notion of human linguistic specialness is incorrect and is part of a larger, destructive, way of thinking about the role of humans in the natural world.

Dr. Jimmy Davis Department of Communication Studies

Well Core Category: Environmental Wellness

1:00 – 1:50 Ayers 4th Floor Conference RoomTo Escape the Singularity: A Personal Reflection on "Why Language?"

Depending on your perspective, you may find the notion of spending 5 days pondering the concept of language too much or too little, but either way absurd. Part of the purpose of this talk is to attempt to corral some of the topics and themes that have emerged over the course of the symposium, as we used to do on the Monday afterwards. But in truth I will be doing that in an attempt to answer my own question: why, when I struggle so hard to learn any language and generally with so little success, why am I so obsessed by language itself both in the abstract and in its myriad of specific iterations? My odd title is an attempt to begin to answer that question, not just in the way that language is about escaping the well of the aloneness of individuality but also about not being crushed into the infinite sameness of the monoblock, the universe's initial singularity of all matter and energy suspended in unmoving, unchanging oneness. As that sentence may suggest, some of the examples I will be looking at come from science fiction, one of the best genres for allowing reader and writer alike to ponder the essentiality of language.

Dr. Maggie Monteverde Department of English

Well-Core Category: "Is there anything that language cannot express?"

2:00 – 2:50 Ayers 4th Floor Conference RoomPolitics and Language in works by Donne and Austen: a Double Header"Political Violence, Sacred Freedom, and the Language of John Donne"

In an England dominated by a "divine right" monarchy, where citizens were commanded to swear allegiance to their king, John Donne finds respite through his poetry, imagining a world where emotional coercion exists in the soul's relationship to its Creator, God, and not to a political figurehead. His poetry is a challenge to all who dream of freedom. However, Donne's idea of freedom is not without its suffering. In fact, Donne challenges his audience to consider how the soul must be "battered" and "ravished" in order to be truly "free."

Claire Patton Master's Candidate, MA in English

"Jane Austen, Rhetorician: Her Guide to Noting and Resisting Deceptive Language, or Picking your Way through Bulls\*\*\*."

You might think that concepts such as gaslighting, fake news, mansplaining, "gish gallop" (look it up) and even rape culture are new, but you would be wrong. You might think that Austen's Northanger Abbey (drafted ca 1797, published 1817) is merely a bubbly story of a silly teenager and a predecessor to Bridgerton, but you would be wrong. Instead, the novel subtly offers warnings about the potential dangers of deceptive language. Through the analysis of a single scene in this novel (with audience participation!), we will note how Austen functions as an analyst of rhetoric.

Dr. Douglas Murray Department of English

Well Core Category: Intellectual Wellness offered at the end of the second paper

3:00 – 3:50 Ayers 4th Floor Conference RoomReading and Celebration of the Winners of the Sandra Hutchins Writing Competition

Each year in connection with the Humanities Symposium Belmont students are invited to submit poetry, short fiction, and creative non-fiction to the Sandra Hutchins Writing Competition. Writers of the top selections are invited to read portions of their submissions. For information and an entry form (submissions deadline is September 18th) please contact

Jennifer.buentello@belmont.edu

Well Core Category: Cultural Wellness

4:00 – 4:50 Ayers 4th Floor Conference RoomPoetry: Exploring the Limits and Potentialities of Language

In this, the closing session of this year's Humanities Symposium, a panel of three poets from the faculty of Belmont's English Department—Cara Dees, Gary McDowell, and Annette Sisson—will discuss the limits and potentialities of language use in poetry. Each one will draw and read from their own poetry to ground the discussion and illustrate the ideas. There will also be time at the end for Q&A.

Well Core Category: Cultural Wellness