



Small Persuasive Forms: On the Rhetoric of the Sentence

Workshop of the CAS Research Focus “Scales/Maßstäbe”

Organization by Carlos Spoerhase (Munich) and Juliane Vogel (Constance)

9–10 February 2026

Program

Monday, 9 February 2026

9:00–9:30 Carlos Spoerhase (Munich): Introduction

9:30–10:30 Christof Rapp (Munich): Philosophical Perspectives

10:30–11:00 *Coffee Break*

11:00–12:00 Gilles Philippe (Lausanne): Dank u. Bitte: the Rhetorics of Ex-Votos

12:00–13:00 Kathryn Murphy (Oxford): Robert Burton

13:00–14:00 *Lunch Break*

14:00–15:00 Glenn W. Most (Pisa/Chicago): Friedrich Schlegel

15:00–16:00 Christian Benne (Copenhagen): Johann Gottlieb Fichte – Friedrich Nietzsche – Herta Müller

16:00–16:30 *Coffee Break*

16:30–17:30 Winfried Menninghaus (Frankfurt/Main): Gajus Julius Caesar – William Shakespeare – Paul Celan – Wilhelm Busch

17:30–18:30 Inka Mülder-Bach (Munich): Robert Musil

19:30: *Dinner at “Osterwaldgarten”, Keferstraße 12, 80802 Munich*



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Tuesday, 10 February 2026

9:00–10:00 Jeff Dolven (Princeton): Renee Gladman

10:00–10:30 *Coffee Break*

10:30–11:30 Zhiyi Yang (Frankfurt/Main): King Wen – Taizong of Tang – Mao Zedong

11:30–12:30 Elisabetta Mengaldo (Padua): Karl Marx

12:30–13:30 *Lunch Break*

13:30–14:30 Pauline Solvi (Munich): Montesquieu – Gustave Flaubert – Marcel Proust – Gérard Genette

14:30–15:30 Johanna Schumm (Munich): Baltasar Gracián

15:30–16:00 *Coffee Break*

16:00–17:00 Juliane Vogel (Constance): André Breton – and Outlook

End of the workshop

19:00 *Dinner at “Dhaba” (Münchner Freiheit), Herzogstraße 1b, 80803 Munich*

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Exposé

The sentence as a philosophical and literary form is currently experiencing a renaissance. But what makes the sentence so special as a small form? Can it indeed be considered a "miniaturized form" that enables thinking on a small scale? To explore these questions, an internal workshop on the topic of "Thinking in Sentences" was held in June 2024 at the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin. We now wish to embed the questions raised in this workshop within a broader rhetorical-theoretical context and examine the persuasive and performative dimensions of the sentence in an interdisciplinary workshop. The sentence reveals itself not only as a grammatical and syntactical unit, a vehicle for cognitive acts, a phenomenon of written media – shaped by punctuation – or a logical form, but also as a performative speech act in politics, theology, law, and administration, and thus as a carrier of rhetorical *energeia*.

The form of the sentence appears in a variety of persuasive contexts: for example, as a theorem in the sciences, as a slogan in political communication, or as a tagline in popular culture. The workshop will therefore focus on the question of the persuasive and performative dimension of sentences: How does the persuasive sentence relate to the statement, to the proposition? What role does the sentence play in the architecture of more comprehensive rhetorical structures? How are individual sentences integrated into complex argumentative frameworks within varying discursive contexts? Which rhetorical figures generate and increase the *energeia* of a sentence? How are sentence beginnings and endings dramatized in rhetorical constellations? How does a specifically sententious discontinuity arise that increases the authoritative effect of sentences? What persuasive power do aphorisms, maxims, and theorems possess, which, in the form of a sentence, claim to relate the particular to the general? An investigation of the historical evolution of sentence usage, from antiquity to the present, is essential to answering these questions. Further questions we wish to discuss are: Are there rhetorical virtuosos of the sentence? How does the sentence relate to other rhetorical units such as the period? In what tension does it stand to the discursive continuity of textual or oral articulation?