Review

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REVIEW OF PAWEŁ GRABARCZYK'S
DIRECTIVAL THEORY OF MEANING: FROM SYNTAX AND PRAGMATICS TO NARROW LINGUISTIC CONTENT

SUMMARY: This paper is a review of Paweł Grabarczyk's latest book, *Directival Theory of Meaning: From Syntax and Pragmatics to Narrow Linguistic Content*. I focus mostly on two concepts constitutive for the directival theory of meaning—that of linguistic trial and that of meaning directive. These two concepts, while ingeniously developed by Grabarczyk, are not free of problems and somewhat controversial assumptions. I start with describing the basis of Grabarczyk's proposal, as well as of the historical background from which it originated. Then, I move on to the analysis of the notion of linguistic trial. After that I focus on the concept of meaning directive, criticising certain assumptions that come with it. The conclusion is that while Grabarczyk's version of the directival theory of meaning is an interesting proposal, most of its shortcomings stem from the fact that for a theory that is supposed to work well on natural languages, too many examples pertain to artificial languages. Until an analysis of a natural language in the style of the directival theory of meaning is conducted, it is not possible to properly judge the value of this theory.

KEYWORDS: directival theory of meaning, inferentialism, holism, molecularism, compositionality.

1. Introduction

In his latest book, *Directival Theory of Meaning. From Syntax and Pragmatics to Narrow Linguistic Content*, Paweł Grabarczyk undertakes an ambitious goal of resurrecting and reformulating a semantic theory created by Kazimierz

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Ajdukiewicz (1931). This goal is ambitious for several reasons. First of all, the original version of this theory was developed by Ajdukiewicz in the 1930s, against a vastly different philosophical background. Furthermore, its development was halted by a counterexample provided by Alfred Tarski and Ajdukiewicz himself abandoned the theory. The result is that philosophers of language, during the development of this discipline, have not really engaged in any dialogue with the directival theory of meaning.[1] This means that both the background philosophical assumptions of the theory, and the language in which it was formulated are in need of examination and reformulation. Second, the theory is molecularist. Both molecularist and holistic semantic theories are under significant scrutiny since Fodor and Lepore's argumentation against them (Fodor, Lepore, 1991; 1992). Lastly, the theory is non-referential and rather humble in its explanatory aims, which can, and according to Grabarczyk should, be read as its advantage, but which also calls to question whether it would not be more beneficial to adopt a theory that could explain a more broad range of phenomena related to natural language.

The aim of this paper is to review the ideas put forward by Grabarczyk in his book. Due to the fact that a vast range of subject is covered in said book, including the comparison of the directival theory of meaning (in both its original and new version) to other semantic theories, I will not concern myself with every claim that Grabarczyk makes, but rather limit myself to the most substantial ones or the ones that might seem controversial. However, in order to better explain said substantiality and controversy, I will start with shortly presenting the main tenants of the Ajdukiewicz's version of the directival theory of meaning and the weak points that Grabarczyk identifies within it, and later tries to amend in the new version of the directival theory of meaning (hereafter nDTM, following the author I will also use DMT when talking about the directival theory of meaning in general). The plan for the remainder of the paper is the following: After a brief description of the DTM I will focus on the notion of semantic trials and the assumptions that Grabarczyk makes with regards to them. It is one of the two most important notions in the DTM, so it should come as no surprise that afterwards I will turn to the other one—that of meaning directive. I will consider this notion with regards to the structure of meaning directives, meaning I will concern myself with both how are they structured internally and the properties of the structure the set of them once they are collected. I will finish with some general remarks about the nDTM, its scope, as well as advantages and disadvantages presented in the book.

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[1] At least on the face of it; as Grabarczyk notes, the semantic theories of Wilfrid Sellars and Robert Brandom both bear striking similarity to that Ajdukiewicz. While it is possible that some of this similarity boils down to the fact that all those theories are non-atomistic, the degree of similarity is still quite striking.

2. Directival Theory of Meaning—The Basics and the Problems With Them

Grabarczyk himself starts his book by presenting the obvious starting point for the development of his own theory—the DTM as it was formulated by Ajdukiewicz. It is worth noting that already at this stage he modernises the vocabulary and the formal apparatus that the theory was originally expressed with. His discussion focuses mostly on the formal layout of the theory, as its motivations are of secondary importance in the modifications.[2] The key concept to the DTM is that of meaning directive. In order to understand what meaning directives are, it is prudent to start with the notion of semantic trial. As Grabarczyk points out, the assumption about language that can be considered to be foundational for DTM is that there is a set of sentences, platitudes, that a person must accept (either unconditionally or under certain conditions) in order to be treated as a member of a linguistic community by said community. Furthermore, every expression of a given language appears in some of the sentences belonging to this set. A semantic trial is a situation in which a person's belonging to a given linguistic community is tested by checking if she accepts a sentence belonging to this set. As said above, this acceptance might be conditional or unconditional. To follow Grabarczyk's examples—if a person's linguistic behaviour is such that people in the community are suspicious of whether she uses the word "table" in the correct way, for example she claims that tables are really friendly and she enjoys talking to them, they might test her by asking the question "Are tables pieces of furniture?". This is due to the fact that a sentence "Tables are pieces of furniture." belongs to the set of platitudes that have to be unconditionally accepted by every member of the linguistic community. If someone is suspicious of whether a person uses the word "cold" correctly, they might hand her an ice cube and ask the question "Is this cold?". This, one the other hand, is due to the fact that a sentence "This is cold." belongs to the set of sentences that have to be conditionally accepted by the members of linguistic community, under the condition that they are presented with a cold object. The set of meaning directives is defined as a set of rules that specify under what conditions a person has to accept what sentence in order to be considered a member of a given linguistic community. What is important to know is how the semantic trials function and what is the structure of meaning directives, as this is the heart of DTM.

Having explained the concept of meaning directives, it is possible to define the notions of meaning, synonymy and translation. Meaning is relativised to the structure of the set of meaning directives[3] and is defined as an ordered pair

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[2] Grabarczyk does in fact provide an extensive analysis of the philosophical motivations and the background against which DTM was created, however, since he rejects most of the assumptions and motivations endorsed by Ajdukiewicz in creating his version of DTM, I will omit this analysis in my review.

[3] According to Grabarczyk, the best way to represent this structure is in a table which contains the representation of a situation in which a given sentence has to be accepted, said sen-

whose first element is said structure and second element—the set of places that are occupied by a given expression in this structure. Synonymy is classically understood as sameness of meaning of expression, so its definition should not be surprising—two expressions are considered to be synonymous if they are interchangeable within the set of meaning directives without changing this set. The definition of translation is perhaps most puzzling, due to its rigidity. Two languages are considered to be translatable into one another if it is possible to structure the set of meaning directives of the two in the same way. The translation of a given expression in one language is considered to be an expression in the other language that has the same distribution in said structure. As I have mentioned, this definition might seem overly rigid. It becomes clear why it is so when we realise that Ajdukiewicz meant for his theory to apply only to closed languages, i.e., languages that contain every possible meaning—no new meaning can be added to them on pain of generating an inconsistency within the language. It is one of the shortcomings of the original DTM rightfully noted by Grabarczyk. His solution is to simply ditch the assumption that DTM is only suited to deal with closed languages. Let us now take a look at other weak points of the original DTM that Grabarczyk identifies and his solutions to them.

Another problematic assumption that Ajdukiewicz makes has to do with the fact that his theory was in fact created in order to give more gravity to his views about philosophy of science, namely the position of radical contextualism. Since Grabarczyk's goal is to reformulate DTM in such a way that it can be useful for the analysis of natural languages, here too he simply abandons this assumption and the consequences it has for the DTM. However, there is one preconception of Ajdukiewicz that does not seem so easy to deal away with. It has to do with one specific kind of directives, empirical directives. The part of the directive that has to do with the circumstances under which a person is required to accept given sentence contains an empirical part. Recall the example with the sentence "This is cold" and presenting one an ice cube. The directive "When presented with an ice cube, accept the sentence 'This is cold'". contains a part which describes an experience of being presented an ice cube. Grabarczyk notes that Ajdukiewicz hesitates as to what language to choose for the description of this empirical component of certain directives, leaning towards the psychological notions, such as motive. And regardless of the choice of the language, there seems to be no way to avoid DTM's commitment to some theory of either mind or external world. Grabarczyk, however, seems to find a way to do so. As any other part of meaning directive, the part of each empirical directive that pertains to the subject's experience occupies a certain place in the structure of all the directives. Therefore, Grabarczyk notes, we can base the identity conditions for the empirical parts of meaning directives on this structure, and look at them in a purely functional way—the experience x is the experience that has this-and-this distribu-

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tence, and each of the parts of this sentence. However this is not the only possible way of structuring meaning directives, so here I will present it in full.

tion in the structure of the directives. This choice of identity condition does not preclude any theory of mind nor external reality; it could be compatible with any approach to those questions. This is in fact characteristic of the author's approach, as what he seems to be doing is ridding the DTM of the majority of ontological or other philosophical assumptions. It would seem as he wishes to present it as a "pure semantics", which has a very limited scope, and relegate any other job to other philosophical and scientific theories. Hence, the requirement that nDTM is neutral in many aspects is crucial, for only then such relegation is possible.

The last fault of Ajdukiewicz's theory of meaning that I want to mention here has to do with the implementation of his theory to natural languages. The first problem with it is connected to what is mentioned above, namely the assumption that DTM is only suited for the analysis of closed languages. Clearly, no natural language can be considered to be a closed language. Ajdukiewicz circumvents this by claiming that every language is some stage of development of closed language and that one can assume that every language will eventually become closed. Grabarczyk abandons this assumption altogether. A more practical worry concerns the following questions: how are semantic trials to be recognised? And how is the linguist to proceed in order to create a DTM-style theory of a given natural language? The answers that the author gives to these questions is neither simple nor uncontroversial, so I will devote the next section to the analysis of them.

3. The Status and Role of Semantic Trials

The process of discerning semantic trials among other linguistic behaviours and collecting meaning directives is dubbed the *pragmatic part* of the theory, as opposed to the *syntactic part*, which consists in parsing the sentences present in the meaning directives and structuring the set of meaning directives itself. Grabarczyk remarks that there is little to none said about the pragmatic part in the works of Ajdukiewicz, and since his goal is to create a theory that can be actually applied to natural languages, he has to fill this void. Let us now look critically at the solutions that he proposes.

First, there is the problem of collecting meaning directives. The author of nDTM is adamant that his theory is not a theory of radical translation, as for a linguist to be able to detect semantic trials she has to have the ability to recognise the semantic trials and correctly judge whether the person undergoing the trial succeeds, i.e., she has to be able to distinguish the acceptance of a sentence from a rejection of a sentence. However, this is not enough—she also has to be able to discern semantic trials from all other sorts of linguistic behaviour. Grabarczyk is conscious that the criteria of identity of semantic trials are by no means obvious. One cannot claim that semantic trials consist of asking platitudinal questions, for it is not clear if certain sentences figure in meaning directives because they are platitudes or if certain sentences are platitudes because they figure in meaning directives. Grabarczyk proposes two features that are supposed to be distinguishing of semantic trials—the use of semantic vocabulary: words

such as "meaning", "reference", "sense", etc., and the fact that a person failing a semantic trial is not treated seriously, that her statements are regarded as nonsensical, and that her acceptances or rejections of given sentences cannot be treated as basis for predicting her future behaviour. The latter requirement is designed to capture the difference between semantic trials and other situations in which a person does not conform to the linguistic norms of acceptance of certain sentences. Grabarczyk provides an example of a person failing to accept the sentence "Do not smoke in the mining shaft". According to him, when a person fails to accept this sentence, this results in them being prohibited from entering the shaft, meaning that their future behaviour is predicted on the rejection of said sentence. Failing a semantic trial does not have such consequences.

Grabarczyk is conscious of the fact that it this is not enough a requirement, hence claiming that the use of semantic vocabulary is another marker of semantic trial. However, it is rather easy to imagine a situation which fulfils both of the requirements and yet intuitively it is not clear at all whether it should count as semantic trial. It is important to remark that nowhere in his book does Grabarczyk claim that linguistic behaviour is substantially different from any other sort of human behaviour. So, when he talks about the acceptance or rejection of given sentence as not being able to provide basis for prediction of future behaviour of a given person as a mark of semantic trial, this extends to linguistic behaviour. Let us now imagine a scenario in which language user suspects that the person she is talking to uses the word "green" in bizarre fashion, raising her suspicion as to whether the person she is talking to is a competent language user. She sets up a semantic trial by saying "I'm not sure we mean the same thing by the word 'green'", fulfilling one of the requirements for semantic trial. Further, she asks the person, pointing towards a patch of grass "Is this green?". The person rejects this sentence. So far, it seems like a perfect example of a semantic trial. However, the language user might find it puzzling why the person she was talking to was perfectly able to communicate all the thoughts and that the only problem appeared with regards to the word "green". She might further test this person by pointing to a red bench and asking "Is this green?". Suppose the person accepts this sentence. She might then assume that, for whatever reason, the person uses the word "red" when people normally use the word "green" and vice versa. She might test this suspicion and come to the conclusion that it is true. This is the only bizarre thing in the idiolect of this person, so it does not preclude communication. Therefore, the prediction of the future linguistic behaviour might be drawn from it—the language user simply has to assume that when the person says "green" they mean what she means by the word "red" and vice versa.[4]

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[4] This is perhaps reminiscent of Davidsonian radical interpretation, and understandably so, but it is important to remember that unlike Davidson, Grabarczyk does not make any assumptions about the cognitive layout of the language users nor about their psychological preconceptions. The situation described here is to be read in this way, i.e., as a third-person perspective account of what might happen after a person seemingly fails a semantic trial.

If this example seems too far-fetched, consider a community of specialists existing within a certain language. It is possible that different meaning directives set the boundaries of the language when it is spoken among those specialists, and different ones when it is spoken to a person of which they thought that she belonged to the specialists but turned out not to. In the latter case the specialists might simply adjust the language they use when they realise that the person they are speaking to is not a specialist herself. Of course one might in turn claim that the act of realisation that she is not a specialist is actually the same as denouncing her as a non-member of a given linguistic community. However, this would lead to the conclusion that each of the English-speaking specialist group actually does not speak English among themselves but rather different languages, physicist-English, electrician-English, English-teacher-English, and so on. While one might bite the bullet and say that it is in fact the case that these are all different, albeit similar, languages, such statement seems quite counterintuitive. It might also lead us down a slippery slope towards the solipsistic claim that every person speaks slightly different language, even in they are similar to each other. This claim, apart from also being rather counterintuitive, contradicts one of the tenants of the DTM, which is that it is a theory of environmentally narrow, but socially broad meaning.

Last point pertinent to this matter that I want to touch on here is the question of how the notion of metalinguistic negotiation (Plunkett, 2015) relates to that of semantic trial. According to Plunkett, "A metalinguistic negotiation is a metalinguistic dispute that concerns a normative issue about what a word should mean, or, similarly, about how it should be used, rather than the descriptive issue about what it does mean" (Plunkett, 2015, p. 828). From the examples provided above it should be clear that the same words uttered under exactly the same situations can serve as both semantic trial and a start of metalinguistic negotiation. The effects of the two are different, but the similarities between them are not coincidental—since meaning directives determine the boundaries of the language, it would seem likely that metalinguistic negotiation is one of the ways to change these boundaries. However, since Grabarczyk wants nDTM to be a theory that can actually be used to analyse natural languages, I believe that he needs a more clear-cut distinction between semantic trials and other linguistic behaviours in order for the nDTM to be useful in this regard.

4. The Structure of Meaning Directives—Inside and Out

Meaning directives lie at the heart of DTM, as the name of the theory suggests. They are constitutive of the boundaries of language and allow to distinguish meaningful discourse from mere gibberish. According to Grabarczyk, creating this distinction is the primary task of any semantic theory, so it is no wonder that he looks at the notion of meaning directive with great scrutiny. He distinguishes four kinds of meaning directives, adding one to the list proposed by

Ajdukiewicz, who only defines three.[5] First, there are empirical directives, which require language users to accept a given sentence provided they are in certain internal state (described functionally). Second, there are inferential directives,[6] in which the language user is expected to accept a sentence provided that she accepts some another sentence or sequence of sentences. Third, there are axiomatic directives, according to which a language user is to accept a given sentence under any circumstances. Finally, and these are Grabarczyk's own addition, there are promotive directives, which require the language user to perform some action, understood as bodily movement, upon encountering some sentence or a sequence of sentences. The example of such directive could be a situation when a language wants to check if the person she is taking to understands the one is required to stop after hearing the command "Stop!". Of course Grabarczyk is aware that not every instance of uttering such command should count as a semantic trial. However, the way he deals with this issue is problematic, as he claims that "The point here is that once the user recognizes that she is to take a semantic trial and accepts the command, she is expected to act in a certain way." (Grabarczyk, 2019, p. 160). The requirement that a language user is supposed to recognise given situation as a semantic trial seems to be not only inexistent for other directives but also in contradiction to Grabarczyk's insistence that language users do not have to understand directives, they only have to conform to them. One might say that the notion of semantic trial and that of meaning directive, although interconnected, can be understood independently, but such claim would warrant further explanation and evidence. For a theory that strives not to assume anything about the cognitive structure of language users, the requirement that the tested person should recognise the situation she finds herself in seems really strong, especially if other directives work just as well without it. This begs the question what is so special about promotive directives. Well, the biggest difference between them and all the others is that the other ones require the tested person to either accept or reject certain statement, while promotive directives require the tested person to perform much wider class of actions, non-linguistic ones to that. The differences between promotive directives and all the other ones seem to be quite substantial, and I believe that the promotive directives either require another definition or this notion should be abandoned completely. This is however a minor point, since, as it already has been mentioned, the choice of directives depends on the decision of a researcher.

Let us now turn to the question of the structure of the meaning directives. It is of utmost importance to the nDTM, as the notions of meaning, synonymy and translation are defined in relation to this structure. There are multiple ways of structuring meaning directives, although it is clear that the structures have to

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[5] Both of them, however, claim that this list is not exhaustive; Grabarczyk remarks that the choice of kinds of directives suitable for an analysis of a given language is also a matter of empirical investigation.

[6] Ajdukiewicz calls these directives deductive, Grabarczyk changes the name for the sake of clarity, but the content of a directive remains the same as in Ajdukiewicz's work.

fulfil certain requirements—the directives in them have to be adequately parsed and cannot be ordered. If the former was not fulfilled then it would not be possible to structurally identify the meanings of single words, and if the latter was not fulfilled, even the slightest change in the order of the directives in the structure in one of the two fully mutually translatable languages would render them untranslatable or only partially translatable. Since the meaning of an expression is determined by its place in the structure of the (parsed) meaning directives, the theory has a strong holistic component.[7] For the reminder of this section, let us consider how it bears against the objections against holism—the problem of compositionality, and against molecularism—the problem of analytic sentences, starting with the latter.

The problem of analytic sentences in molecularist theorists was put forward by Fodor and Lepore (1992). It boils down to the following claims: First, molecularist theories posit that meaning of a given expression is dependent only on a subset of the meanings of other expressions, not their entirety. Second, there is a way to distinguish the set of expressions (sentences) that are meaning-constitutive. From this they assume that the only such set could be the set of analytic sentences. But, as they claim, since the Quinean critique of the analytic-synthetic distinction (Quine, 1953), one cannot reasonably use it in the theory of meaning. Hence, since molecularist theories are based on this distinction, they are unwarranted without it. Grabarczyk claims that this objection is applicable to Ajdukiewicz's version of the DTM, however the nDTM escapes it. If one was to take "analytic" to mean "true in virtue of language rules" then, since nDTM does not assume any conception of truth, it could not apply to the sentences enclosed in the meaning directives. In fact, as Grabarczyk points out, there might be sentences which are plainly false but nevertheless are enclosed in axiomatic directives in a given linguistic community. The only thing that the nDTM can tell us about truth is the meaning of the predicate "is true" in a given linguistic community, as it is distributed in the structure of the directives. Moreover, as the author claims, even if we adopt a meta perspective on the language, the notion of truth is still only relativised to a given language, so even if it is so that according to the directives of this language if one accepts the sentence p one should also accept the sentence "p is true", we are still talking about the notion of truth as relativised to this language. I believe this line of argumentation to be correct, however, I think that there is another possible way to look at the meta perspective which is worth considering In principle, it is perfectly possible, and perhaps even favourable, to describe the directives in the metalanguage not as input-output scenarios, but rather in sentential form. This might be especially useful in the

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[7] Thorough his book, Grabarczyk calls his theory molecularist, rather than holist, but sometimes writes holist/molecularist. Molecularism is considered a more moderate version of holism, so most of the objections against it apply to fully-fledged holism as well. Moreover, under certain definitions of holism, his theory could be considered holistic, as although the meanings of expressions are not determined by the totality of the expressions in a given language, the meanings themselves are interdependent.

early stages of collecting the meaning directives for a given language, as it would simplify the description of the parts of the directives.[8] This way, we could say that sentence such as "When having an experience of a cold object, one has to accept a sentence "this is cold"." or "Under any circumstances one has to accept the sentence "Chairs are pieces of furniture"." are descriptions of the meaning directives in a (primitive) metalanguage. Are these sentences analytic in the metalanguage? Since in this language we can, in principle, speak of truth per se, it is an option worth considering, however here too a lot seems to depend on the choice of metalanguage by the researcher.

Let us now turn to perhaps the most famous objection against holistic semantic theories, first put forward by Fodor and Lepore as a counterargument to the conceptual role semantics (Fodor, Lepore, 1991), and later developed in their book (Fodor, Lepore, 1992). According to semantic holism, the meaning of an expression is determined by its relation to other expressions. According to the principle of compositionality, the meaning of a complex expression is determined by the meaning of their parts along with the way they are composed. On the face of it the two seem incompatible, although there have been attempts to reconcile them (e.g., Block, 1993; McCullagh, 2003). Peter Pagin claims that the conflict between these two theses boils down to the question of priority—in holistic theories, the meaning of the whole comes first, while in accordance to the principle of compositionality, the meaning of simple expressions comes first (Pagin, 1997). In this regard, it would seem that nDTM endorses the holistic claim, and therefore is incompatible with compositionality. However, Grabarczyk proposes a way out of this conundrum. In order to evaluate it properly, it is necessary to start from explaining what it means for an expression to figure in a meaning directive in essential manner. Grabarczyk defines what does it mean for an expression to figure in a directive in an essential manner in the following way: "An expression figures in a sentence in an inessential manner if it can be replaced in the sentence by any other expression of the same syntactical category without changing the set of directives. Otherwise it figures in the sentence in an essential manner." (Grabarczyk, 2019, p. 170). This notion is important not only in understanding what does it mean for a language user to know the meaning of an expression (she has to conform to the meaning directives in which this expression figures in an essential manner), but also in order to understand Grabarczyk's solution to the problem of compositionality. He rejects the claim that nDTM should account for strong compositionality, understood as providing a way to create novel meaning directives for complex expressions. Instead, he proposes to introduce a different way to generate meanings of complex expression. In this he claims to endorse a weak version of compositionality—a claim that the meaning-securing mechanisms are different for simple expression and different for complex expressions. In order to define the meanings of complex

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[8] This is mostly due to the fact that the functional description of the language user's internal states is available only after the directives have been collected and structured.

expressions, Grabarczyk proposes to consider a structure SD, which is a set of directives D plus all the directives resulting from the substitution of variables in the sentences enclosed in the directives in D. This means that in creating SD, one abandons the requirement that the expression in the sentences enclosed in the directives figure in them in an essential manner—SD is a set of all properly built sentences in the language. While this is true for the toy language that Grabarczyk bases his examples on, it might not necessarily be true for a natural language such as English. There is no way to guarantee that every possible grammatical structure of a sentence is exemplified by some sentence in the set of meaning directives, as discovering meaning directives is a matter of empirical investigation. It is in principle possible that it turns out that there are no sentences having a specific structure. I fail to understand how generating the set SD secures the meaning of every complex expression—this, while certainly possible, is dependent upon contingent factors, and compositionality, even in its weak reading, is a necessary feature of a natural language. Moreover, I find the concept of figuring in a directive in an essential matter confusing—an example of what it means to figure in a directive in an inessential manner provided by Grabarczyk is an inferential directive for conjunction—regardless of what are the conjuncts, if one accepts both conjuncts, one has to accept their conjunction as well, regardless of what the conjuncts are. Inessential elements of the sentences can be represented by variables. It does, however, seem hard to implement this rule while collecting meaning directives, and the choice of whether certain expression figures in a sentence enclosed in a directive in an essential or inessential manner—one's rejection of the conjunction of the two accepted conjuncts could stem from the fact that she does not know the meaning of the word "and", or it could stem from the fact that she associates a specific meaning with the two conjuncts—she accepts both of them separately but not in conjunction with each other. The motivations for idea that certain expressions figure in the directives in an essential manner seems clear, but since nDTM is molecularist/holist, the line between inessential and essential manner is not as clear cut as it would seem at first glance.

5. Closing Remarks

As mentioned in the beginning, Grabarczyk sets rather ambitious goals for his book, most of which seem to be met. In this review I drew attention mostly to its controversial fragments, it is however worth remembering that the theory itself is an interesting proposal, especially against the background of existing semantic theories. What is interesting is that most of the features that prompted me to classify this theory as humble in its explanatory aims are also responsible for its uniqueness. In short, Grabarczyk's approach seems to be to abandon the controversial philosophical assumptions of Ajdukiewicz and at the same time preserve most of the features of the theory that were motivated by those assumptions, only motivating them otherwise. The nDTM is non-referential, it focuses on determining the boundaries of language rather than its internal features, it

does not assume any sort of cognitive structure of language users, it is socially narrow, it does not fulfil the requirement for strong compositionality, it embraces Tarski's challenge, and finally, it remains agnostic with regards to the definition of truth. Moreover, it is environmentally wide, assumes that syntactic structures are prior to semantic structures. When comparing it with semantic theories with a much wider explanatory aim and much more assumptions, such as that of Quine, Davidson or Sellars, Grabarczyk says that while they may possess many advantages over nDTM, the nDTM trumps them in one regard—those theories are thought experiments and as such are impossible to be implemented in linguistic practice, while the nDTM should be regarded as providing a recipe for the analysis of actual languages—either artificial or natural. The examples provided in the book are of artificial languages or merely fragments of natural languages—no wonder, as providing a nDTM-style analysis of most natural language in existence would be extremely laborious task that would require a lot of field research, psycholinguistic studies, and would take up a lot more space. However, I believe that in order to properly judge the value of nDTM as a recipe for an analysis of a language, it would be highly beneficial to see it in action, i.e., to see how can it be applied to a concrete natural language. I would be extremely curious to see such result and hope that will see them in the future.

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