

Meaning, Representation and Meaning Grounds

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ABSTRACT

This paper addresses three different themes concerning Zalabardo's *Pragmatist Semantics*: Wittgenstein's representational theory in the *Tractatus*, with a focus on the Tractarian interpretation of semantic discourses and the concept of elucidation; second, a brief re-examination of the notion of acceptance and the capacity of Zalabardo's account to clarify the meaning grounds for semantic discourses containing vague predicates; and third, a discussion of the notion of grounding that underlies his account of meaning grounds.

KEYWORDS: *Pragmatism, Representation, Wittgenstein, Vagueness, Grounding.*

RESUMEN

En este artículo se plantean tres cuestiones relacionadas con el libro *Pragmatist Semantics* de J. L. Zalabardo. Por un lado, se atiende a la teoría representacional del *Tractatus* de Wittgenstein, prestando especial atención al tratamiento tractariano de los discursos semánticos que son objeto de estudio de Zalabardo, así como a la noción de elucidación. En segundo lugar, se ofrecen algunas consideraciones sobre la noción de aceptación y se presenta la vaguedad de algunos predicados como posible caso problemático para la concepción pragmatista de los fundamentos de significado. Finalmente, se discute el concepto de fundamentación que subyace a la noción de fundamentos de significado.

PALABRAS CLAVE: *pragmatismo, representación, Wittgenstein, vaguedad, fundamentación.*

Language appears to have the ability to represent reality, yet explaining this ability is far from simple. In his book *Pragmatist Semantics: A Use-Based Approach to Linguistic Representation* [Zalabardo (2023), hereafter Z], José L. Zalabardo raises the question of whether an expression can represent the world without being (the expression or its parts) in stand-for relations with entities in the world. His answer is positive. To demonstrate how this is possible, Zalabardo builds an argument that attempts to show that linguistic representation can be grounded in pragmatics. The standard view is that if there is indeed linguistic representation,

then its grounding must also have a representational character; that is, its grounding must be representationalist. In this paper, I intend to convey some ideas that the reading of this journey from semantics to pragmatics (and back!) has evoked. I will start by briefly presenting his theory and highlighting some of its values (Section I). Section II includes some remarks on Zalabardo's proposal and Wittgenstein's representational theory in the *Tractatus*. In Section III, I raise some doubts about the notion of acceptance and the capacity of Zalabardo's account to elucidate the meaning grounds for specific sentences containing vague predicates. Finally, I build upon Zalabardo's work to further develop the notion of grounding that underlies his account of meaning grounds (section IV).

I. PRAGMATIST SEMANTICS AS A HYBRID THEORY: VIRTUES OF THE ACCOUNT

The starting point of Zalabardo's investigation is the representationalist theory of meaning, which holds that the representational function of a sentence requires a representationalist explanation. Zalabardo refers to this thesis as RR:

RR: A sentence that performs the function of representing things as being a certain way must have a representationalist meaning ground [Z, p. 8].

Zalabardo aims at showing that RR is false, so that a sentence can perform a representational function in virtue of something other than a representationalist relation. Representationalist relations are *standing-for* relations, that is, relations in which words stand for things in the world. To reject RR entails separating what we could call the *what-question* (what does a sentence mean) from the *why question* (why does a sentence mean what it means, that is, what are its meaning grounds). Standard, or we could say, *pure* theories of meaning answer *what-questions* and their correlated *why-questions* in a similar fashion, so that a representational answer to a what question goes along with a representationalist answer to the corresponding *why-question*. And a pragmatist answer to a *why-question* entails a pragmatist attitude toward a *what-question*, that is, whatever we could say that a sentence signifies is not something it represents. Zalabardo's approach is, however, a *hybrid* one, in which the *what-question* receives a representational answer, while the *why-question* receives a pragmatist one. In particular, the pragmatist answer to the latter is that a sentence means what it means in virtue of the ways expressions are used, specifically in

virtue of the regulation procedures for the acceptance of sentences [see Table 1].

	Meaning grounds for <i>s</i> <i>Why-question</i>	Meaning of <i>s</i> <i>What-question</i>
RR (Representationalist Representationalism)	Representationalist (<i>stand-for</i> relations)	Representational (states of affairs)
Pragmatism	Pragmatist (ways expressions are used)	There is no <i>something</i> that <i>s</i> represents
Hybrid (Pragmatist Se- mantics, PS)	Pragmatist (ways expressions are used: regulation procedures for the acceptance of sentences)	Representational (states of affairs)

Prima facie, the hybrid theory (hereafter PS) is strange: how can a sentence represent a state of affairs, if it (or its parts) are not in stand-for relations with the world? However, Zalabardo starts by convincing the reader that RR should be abandoned when it faces problems to account for the representationalist meaning grounds for particular sentences.

Consider the following sentences:

- (1) José Zalabardo is a philosopher.
- (2) To take seriously *Pragmatist Semantics* is **morally right**.
- (3) “José Zalabardo is a philosopher” **is true**.
- (4) Huw Price **believes that** José Zalabardo is a philosopher.
- (5) “Jose Zalabardo is a philosopher”, as it is understood by Huw, **means** that José Zalabardo is a philosopher.

(1) is a paradigmatic example of a sentence for which RR finds a plausible answer to *what* and *why-questions*. However, sentences (2), (3), (4) and (5) raise interesting problems for the defender of RR, and constitute thus a natural motivation for Zalabardo’s enterprise [Z, Ch. 2-4]. The crucial insight to solve those problems is hybridization, that is, to separate the *what* and the *why-question*. Zalabardo offers a pragmatist solution to the latter: the meaning grounds for a sentence are accounted for in terms of regulation procedures for its acceptance [Z, Ch. 5]. This move, Zalabardo

argues, is sufficient to solve those problems given that the new account can be applied to target discourses (sentences (2), (3), (4) and (5)) [Z, Ch. 6-7]. However, once hybridization has taken place the *problem of harmony* arises. The problem of harmony is the problem of uniting again the *what* and the *why-question*. How can a sentence with pragmatist meaning grounds successfully perform a representational function? Zalabardo offers a complex solution to this problem [Z, Ch. 8]. The crucial requirement is that the pragmatist meaning grounds be a *sufficient condition* for the sentence to represent what it represents. And Zalabardo argues that this requirement is satisfied since there is a strategy to identify the referents of predicates and the states of affairs represented by sentences by means of abstraction principles based on the synonymy conditions determined by the pragmatist meaning grounds (for the case of referents) and on the acceptance procedures (for the case of represented states of affairs). Finally, Zalabardo addresses the question about the extent to which his approach can be generalized to other discourses [Ch. 10].

The most important value of *Pragmatist Semantics* is that it gives a *non-relativist pragmatist* solution to the problematic cases (2)-(5). For those whose intuitions are non-naively realist, Zalabardo's proposal is very welcome. It is welcome because it is *realist*: those sentences *do represent* the world, and therefore they capture some interesting features that are represented in them, whatever that feature may be. And it is welcome, because in being pragmatist, it is *non-naively* realist, that is, whatever those captured features are, they do not look like items to which linguistic expressions are linked in order to ground the meaning of the sentences in which they appear. It is precisely the peculiarity of the features captured by those sentences (ethical features, semantic relations, cognitive attitudes) that raises problems for RR, and thus an appeal to pragmatism might be welcome, in particular if it avoids the relativism that is usually associated with pragmatism. This midway between realism and antirealism is not a surprise in someone like Zalabardo, whose intellectual trajectory is marked by this search for, so to say, third ways, as it is shown in his *Concepciones de lo real. Realismo y antirrealismo en Semántica y Metafísica* [Zalabardo (2012)] up to his most recent work, Z.

II. PRAGMATIST SEMANTICS AND WITTGENSTEIN'S *TRACTATUS*

PS is a use-based account of meaning. As it is well known, this is Wittgenstein's proposal in the *Philosophical Investigations* (PI). In fact, the recognition of Wittgenstein's philosophy as the inspiration of PS is ex-

plicit in Z. Section 5.3 contains such recognition. But it also contains a particular view of the way in which such use-based theory works, by appeal to the procedures by which assertion is regulated, without building an epistemic dimension (justification) into the account. This view is also supported by a particular reading of PI §354 [Z, pp. 90-91]. Therefore, the debt of PS to PI is clear and explicitly described in Z.

What about the *Tractatus*? I think that the description of linguistic representation as in RR in Z is also inspired by Wittgenstein, in particular, by the *Tractatus*. The way in which Zalabardo replies to the *what-question* on behalf of the RR defender is inspired in the *Tractatus*, since a sentence represents that a state of affairs obtains. And the way in which he replies to the *why-question* on behalf of the RR follows also a Tractarian line. Of course, such replies are given according to Zalabardo's interpretation of the *Tractatus* [Zalabardo (2015)]. He thus elucidates what a sentence represents, the obtaining of a state of affairs, as the instantiation of a property by an object, and he explains why it represents what it represents in terms of the connecting relations between the predicate and proper name in the sentence with the property instantiated and the object that instantiates the property respectively. In previous work, I have tried to show that this is not a precise reading of the Tractarian approach to language [Cerezo (2019)]. The notion of instantiation is alien to the Tractarian picture theory and when it comes to the application of this theory to the functioning of natural languages, Wittgenstein has recourse to a specific Tractarian notion, the notion of *expression* [*Ausdruck*, T 3.3]. In any case, it is not my purpose to show here this point that is not crucial for Z. All that I want to show now is that the Tractarian ideas, as understood by Zalabardo, are behind the way he formulates RR and the way he formulates the reply to the *what-question*.

In what follows, I want to develop two ways in which the *Tractatus* could be compared and used to illustrate some ideas in Z, and maybe reinforce some of them. I will first revise the Tractarian account of (2) to (5) above. Secondly, I will offer some comments on the Tractarian notion of *elucidation* (*Erläuterung*) [T 3.263] in order to suggest some similarity with the idea that reference can be identified by abstraction principles [Z, ch.8].

II.1 The Tractarian Account of the Target Discourses

As we have said, the motivation in Z is that sentences (2) to (5) above raise important difficulties for RR. If we look at the *Tractatus*, sentences (2)-(5) receive a general verdict (either explicitly or implicitly): they

are pseudo-propositions, that is, they are nonsensical expressions. The reason for such nonsensical character, however, is not only that some of their terms lack reference. The reason is also that they attempt to say (to assert) what cannot be said (asserted). According to the picture theory, facts depict facts. Sentences are propositional signs, which are facts, and depict the facts of the world. The way in which Wittgenstein accounts in particular for the nonsensical character of (2)-(5) is, although related, different. (2) is an ethical pseudo-proposition [T 6.42-6.423]. Wittgenstein denies that there are ethical propositions because whatever an ethical proposition attempts to say, in being related to higher values, cannot be a fact in the world and, therefore, it cannot be depicted.

Wittgenstein also rejects the idea that a proposition can assert of itself that it is true (case (3)) [T 4.42]. Since truth and falsehood are not properties [T 6.111], but rather relations in which propositions stand to the world, what (3) attempts to describe is not a fact of the world. What is operating in Wittgenstein's explanation of the nonsensical character of (3) is the relation of truth with judgment (assertion). To judge (assert) a content is, in Fregean terms, to present it as true. But Wittgenstein corrects Frege: the factual character of the propositional sign is sufficient for saying what it says, without any further element to account for judgment. "A proposition *shows* how things stand *if* it is true. And it *says that* they do so stand" [T 4.022]. Thus, there are no propositions whose verb (whose predicate, in Z terms) is 'is true' or 'is false', but rather "that which 'is true' must already contain the verb" [T 4.063]. In other words, since true and false are relations in which propositions stand to the world, they have a role in explaining assertion, since a proposition says (asserts) that things stand as the proposition represents. But then, to utter (3) is nonsensical. If the relation to the world (truth and falsehood, aiming at truth) regulates what assertion is, then "'s' is true" cannot be asserted.

Case (4) is dealt with by Wittgenstein in T 5.54-5.5423. According to Wittgenstein, (4) should be analysed as (4*)

(4*) "José Zalabardo is a philosopher" says that José Zalabardo is a philosopher

But (4*) attempts to say what cannot be said, since the depiction relation (the correlation of facts by means of the correlations of their objects) is not a fact. (4) is thus nonsensical.¹

Let us now turn to (5). Two preliminary remarks are important. First, Wittgenstein is not concerned about how linguistic expressions are understood by particular speakers, but rather about how the sense of a proposi-

tion is determined. Secondly, Wittgenstein considers that only names have meaning (*Bedeutung*) while propositions have sense (*Sinn*) [T 3.144]. We can use “represent” or “say” to express what “means” captures in (5).² So that we would have (5*)-(5**):

(5*) “Jose Zalabardo” **means** José Zalabardo.

(5**) “Jose Zalabardo is a philosopher” **represents/says** that José Zalabardo is a philosopher.

We have already dealt with (5**) in examining Wittgenstein’s analysis of (4), since he reduces (4) to (5**). With respect to (5*), it attempts to express the reference relation, the relation between a name and the object it refers to [T 3.203]. This relation (the correlations between the elements of the picture and those of the depicted fact) *is part* of the depiction relation, and thus cannot be represented either [T 2.1513-2.1515].

But it is important to notice that, in the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein not only characterizes those cases as nonsensical, but he also offers an account of how what they attempt to say can be expressed in language. His distinction between *saying* and *showing*, and his doctrine of formal concepts that are expressed in logical notations by recourse to variables [T 4.12-4.128] are provided for this purpose. We have then an example of how a representationalist account of meaning can solve the difficulties raised by (5). Since (4) must be understood as (5**), the Tractarian representationalist can also account for it. As we have seen, (3) is dissolved by revising the nature of truth and falsehood. We are left only with (2), which for Wittgenstein has a nature different from the other cases as is shown in his recourse to the mystical to illustrate such a nature.

II..2. *Elucidations, Use and Reference*

Zalabardo’s project in Z is to account for meaning grounds in pragmatic terms, and also to argue that a representational function of language is possible given those grounds. He argues for the possibility of identifying the reference of some representational predicates by means of abstraction principles of the form:

C For all representational predicates P, Q, the referent of P = the referent of Q iff P and Q are C-synonymous [Z, p. 172].

According to Zalabardo, if the pragmatist meaning ground for a predicate determines C-synonymy conditions independently of C, then C

could be used as definitions by abstraction of predicate reference. According to PS, for some predicates, their meaning grounds determine C-synonymy conditions independently of C, and thus C provides a way to identify the properties to which the predicates refer. In particular, the regulation procedures that regulate the acceptance of (2)-(5) determine C-synonymy conditions independently of C, allowing C to define by abstraction the properties to which the relevant predicates refer. Now, in order for the account to be truly pragmatist, it is important that the crucial reading of C is a right-to-left reading; otherwise, sameness of reference would be explaining C-synonymy. This is why definitions by means of abstraction principles do not entail a betrayal to the pragmatist project and a return to representationalist meaning grounds.

Consider now the following problem in the *Tractatus*. According to Wittgenstein, in order to solve classical Fregean and Russellian problems of failure for reference of some expressions, propositions must be analysed into simple signs, names, through which language connects with the world, so that reference can be guaranteed. Signs usually signify through their definitions, but names cannot be defined, they are *primitive* signs [T 3.26-3.261]. This absolute simplicity of names and of the corresponding objects named by them presents a difficulty to *explain* the meaning of those names, because names do not have expressive power. Wittgenstein appeals to use to account for what seems to be left unexplained. This is the Tractarian notion of elucidation:

T 3.262: What signs fail to express, their application shows. What signs slur over, their application says clearly.

T 3.263: The meanings of primitive signs can be explained (*erklärt*) by means of elucidations. Elucidations are propositions that contain the primitive signs. So, they can only be understood if the meanings of those signs are already known.

Elementary propositions are concatenations of names; their function is to represent states of affairs. But insofar as they are used to explain the meaning of those names, they are elucidations. Notice that elucidations of names are not any sort of representations of them. Wittgenstein's idea seems to be that the use of names in propositions is what allows one to identify the reference of those names. By giving all the propositions of a language in which a name occurs, one is showing how that name is used in language, and that is the way in which its meaning can be explained.

Let me now depart a bit from Wittgenstein to show how one could think of abstraction principles for the definition of the reference of names. The departure is innocuous. We just need to accept for the sake of the argument that there might be two names with the same reference. Let a and b be two Tractarian names, and A and B be the two classes of all elementary propositions in which a and b can occur respectively. Then, if for every elementary proposition x in A containing a , there is an elementary proposition y in B that is identical to x except for the fact that b is in the place of a , and if there is no elementary proposition in B including b , other than the ones determined by this procedure, then we can say that a and b are C-synonymous. TC would be a general form of definitions by abstraction of the reference of names in the *Tractatus*:

TC: For all names a , b , the referent of a = the referent of b iff a and b are C-synonymous.

As in the case of Zalabardo's approach, the right-to-left reading of TC is the crucial one, since it is elucidations that explain the meaning of names. As we have seen, T 3.26-3.263 explicitly claim that the meaning of names is explained by elucidations. This should be sufficient to support TC as a form of definition by abstraction of name reference. However, the crucial support stems from a fair understanding of the picture theory itself. Wittgenstein conceives of language as isomorphic to the world, that is, they share their logical form. It is because the possibilities of combinations of names into propositions and the possibilities of combinations of objects into states of affairs are identical that names can stand for objects. Therefore, the relation of reference between names and objects depends on the identity of logical form. The outcome is that isomorphism *grounds* reference, and thus, the logico-syntactical use of the sign can explain its meaning.³

III. ACCEPTANCE: THE CASE OF VAGUE SENTENCES

There are several important theoretical issues in Z that deserve attention and discussion. One, for example, is Zalabardo's appeal to acceptance to play the crucial role in the meaning grounds for sentences. Zalabardo defines acceptance as:

a conscious, involuntary re-identifiable attitude towards the sentence consisting in the conviction that things are as the sentence represents them as being (...) I want to emphasize that I'm thinking of acceptance and rejection as *feelings*. Acceptance does not ascribe a property or concept to a sen-

tence or to its mental representative, nor is it the undertaking of a commitment of any kind. It is simply an involuntary feeling provoked by some sentences, as we understand them [Z, p. 92].

The procedures that regulate this attitude constitute the meaning grounds for sentences. Thus, when confronted with a sentence, the subject reacts with a feeling of conviction to say yes or no. As a feeling, acceptance is just a subjective experience, a sort of psychological sensation that is quite automatic and triggered by something, in this case, a sentence. Many questions arise here. How can something like this take on the role of grounding the meaning of a sentence? And if acceptance requires understanding the sentence (“as we understand them”), how can it really ground its meaning? Is this feeling, the acceptance of sentences always re-identifiable? I do not intend to answer these questions here. I just want to raise them, to express the direction in which I think the concept of acceptance requires further analysis.

A more specific worry comes from vague predicates. Suppose that Emilia is a Spanish woman, who is a paradigmatic borderline case of the predicate “blond” as it is used by Spaniards, for whom the predicate has a wide and vague range of application.⁴

Consider now the following sentences:

- (6) Juan **believes that** Emilia is blond.
- (7) “Emilia is blond”, as Juan understands it, **means** that Emilia is blond.
- (8) “Emilia is blond” **is true**.

According to PS, the meaning grounds for (6) are accounted for in terms of the acceptance procedure that is based on the success of the behaviour predictions that ascribing the belief that Emilia is blond to Juan generates. However, since Emilia is a borderline case of blondness, it is likely that this procedure is not sufficient to regulate the acceptance of (6). Ascribing the belief to Juan might generate behaviour predictions whose degree of success does not determine either the acceptance or the rejection of (6).⁵

Let us now turn to (7). According to the projection criterion interpretations must be selected “on the basis to the extent to which the beliefs attributed as a result of each interpretation agree with the beliefs the interpreter would have if she found herself in the speaker’s epistemic situation” [Z, p. 144]. Again, given the indeterminacy inherent in the application of the predicate “blond” to Emilia, it is very likely that even if the

speaker and the interpreter were in the same epistemic situation, they would not agree on whether Emilia is blond. This prevents the projection principle from playing its explanatory role in accounting for the meaning grounds for (7).

The way in which PS accounts for the meaning grounds for (8) finds similar difficulties, since the acceptance procedure for truth ascriptions depends on interpretation. According to Zalabardo, we ascribe “is true” to a sentence, as understood by a speaker *S*, if we interpret the sentence, as understood by him, as representing an obtaining state of affairs [Z, p. 50]. However, since Emilia is not a clear case of the predicate “blond”, we might be unable to decide whether our interpretation of the sentence “Emilia is blond”, as understood by *S*, represents an obtaining state of affairs.

I think that we can see a common pattern in the three cases: the regulation procedures for the acceptance of (6), (7) and (8) inherit the indeterminacy inherent in the application of the vague predicate to the borderline case. The pragmatist might react by pointing out that since the belief in (6) is about a borderline case, and the sentences in (7) and (8) contain vague predicates, it is expected that the regulation procedures have these effects. Otherwise, they would not be meaning grounds for vague expressions. But notice that we are not speaking about the regulation procedures for the acceptance of “Emilia is blond”, but rather of (6), (7) and (8).

Standard theories of vagueness attempt to elucidate the phenomenon by this kind of move. A psychologist theory conceives of vagueness as a psychological phenomenon and has recourse to partial belief to account for it [Schiffer (2000), Eklund (2006)]. For the supervaluationist and truth-degree theories, vagueness is a semantic phenomenon, and the way to deal with it is by interpreting vague predicates by means of precisifications [Fine (1975)] or evaluating their truth with degrees [Edgington (1996)].

But the project of the pragmatist is different. The pragmatist in PS intends to ground meaning in use to account for the target discourses, so that in elucidating meaning grounds for (6), (7) and (8), she wants to account for their meaning. Given the difficulties described above, can the regulation procedures for the acceptance of these sentences ground their meaning? If they can, we need to know how they ground it. If they can’t, then we need another account of their meaning grounds.

IV. GROUNDING AND MEANING GROUNDS

My final remarks focus on another interesting concept in Zalabardo’s proposal, namely, the concept of *grounding*. Zalabardo intends to ac-

count for the relation between two facts: the fact that a sentence s has the meaning it has and the fact that explains why s has the meaning it has, which includes facts about s , speakers, contexts, and so on [Z, p. 2]. I will refer to this relation as R . Zalabardo conceives of R as a case of grounding: a sentence has the meaning it has *in virtue of* facts about the sentence, speakers, contexts, and so on. I am going to express this claim as G below, where “mg” abbreviates “the fact that explains why the sentence has the meaning it has, which includes facts about language, speakers, contexts, and so on”.

G : The fact that a sentence has the meaning it has is grounded in mg

Grounding has received significant attention in recent metaphysics. Defenders of grounding assume a basic intuitive principle to elucidate what grounding is⁶:

IC: *X grounds Y only if X plays a role in the explanation of Y, so that X is prior to Y.*

One important debate in the metaphysics of grounding is whether there is grounding at all. According to Wilson (2014), the explanatory role that grounding is invoked to play can be performed by other more precise metaphysical notions. Grounding would be just a general umbrella term to cover different species of relations of metaphysical dependence (*small-g* relations) that perform better work than grounding in explaining our metaphysical *explananda*, such as type or token identity, functional realization, classical mereological parthood, the set-membership relation, the proper subset relation, the determinable/determinate relation...among others.

A particular case of a relation to which grounding is sometimes reduced is metaphysical causation. In fact, Zalabardo often describes the meaning grounds for an expression as *what makes* the expression have the meaning it has. This way of describing R sounds close to assimilating it to a causal relation. Under this reading, mg causes sentences to have the meaning they have. At first glance, I do not find any reasons why this way of describing R using “what makes” instead of “what grounds” should be rejected, since it captures well the intuition behind Zalabardo’s claims.

In what follows, I am going to address the question of whether G is true, or in other words, whether R is a case of grounding. It is immediate

that R satisfies IC. Now, metaphysical causation also satisfies IC. To show that R is a case of grounding rather than causation, I am going to use Schaffer's analysis of the distinction between grounding and causation. Schaffer's analysis allows us to deploy three arguments to distinguish R from causation: the reality argument; the nature of relations argument, and the temporal argument.

Regarding *the reality argument*, Schaffer posits that the grounded inherits its reality from its ground, whereas the effect does not inherit its reality from its cause. When we search for the grounds for something, we are searching for the source of its reality. "But a caused entity *qua* caused entity still has intrinsic reality unto itself" [Schaffer (2016), p. 95]. Consider the relation between my typing on the keyboard and the writing on the screen, and compare it with R. Both are generative relations [Schaffer (2016)], but there is a sense in which meaning inherits its reality from mg, while this is not the case with the writing on the screen. In the case of R, all that meaning consists of depends on mg. In other words, if mg is not real, then meaning is not real either. This is not the case with trivial causation examples.

Concerning *the nature of relations argument*, Schaffer states that "causation is an external relation linking distinct portions of reality, while grounding is an internal relation operating within a given portion of reality" [Schaffer (2016), p. 76]. According to the standard account of internal relations, a relation between x and y is internal if and only if x and y cannot be thought of without being in such a relation. A relation is external if it is not internal. Consider now the relation between the fact that a sentence has the meaning it has and mg. Fixing the intrinsic nature of mg alone ensures that the expression has the meaning it has and possesses its specific intrinsic nature [Bennett (2011), p. 32]. It seems to be necessarily the case that if mg obtains, then the expression in question has the meaning it has.

Finally, another argument against R being a causal relation is *the temporal argument*. Schaffer holds that explanatory relations can be either causal or grounding relations depending on time and levels. If A explains B, and A and B are on different levels, this relation is one of grounding, not causation. However, if C explains D, and C and D exist at different times, this is a causal relation, not grounding [Schaffer (2016), p. 89]. It is not easy to determine which levels there are when we consider R. We could say that one is the level of meaning, while the other (mg) is not. Appeal to temporality also helps to show that R is a case of grounding, since the relation between meaning and mg seems to be synchronic.

Some of these arguments rest on complex intuitions, and maybe one could have recourse to more basic ones in order to illustrate that *R* is not a causal relation. A sentence has the meaning it has in virtue of *mg*, but we would not say that *mg* *produces* the meaning of the sentence. If this is sufficient to convince the reader that *R* is a case of grounding, we can leave aside Schaffer's complex considerations. But in any case, Schaffer's work will help those whose basic intuitions are not conclusive.

What about *small-g* relations? Can *R* fall under any of them? Let us recall the list of relations of metaphysical dependence that Wilson offers: type or token identity, functional realization, classical mereological parthood, the set-membership relation, the proper subset relation, the determinable/determinate relation...among others [Wilson (2014)]. I think it is quite immediate that *R* does not fall under any of them, and I leave the reader with the exercise of revising this point.

We can conclude that since (i) *R* satisfies IC, (ii) *R* is not a case of causation, and (iii) *R* does not fall under any of the *small-g* relations, it is reasonable to conceive of *R* as a case of grounding. Notice the scope of this conclusion. For the philosopher of language, PS provides valuable insight into accounting for meaning grounds of sentences. But PS has also provided the service of contributing toward convincing the sceptical that there is grounding.

We began our journey by delving into the history of the philosophy of language, starting with an exploration of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*, a work that has notably captured Zalabardo's scholarly attention in the past. From there, we gradually transitioned to more metaphysical considerations, broadening the scope of our inquiry. With this diverse journey I hope at least to have illustrated the richness and intellectual stimulation that reading *Pragmatist Semantics* offers.

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NOTES

¹ See d'Ors and Cerezo (1995) for more details on the analysis of these paragraphs of the *Tractatus*.

² Actually, there are two notions of *picture*, *representation* and the *sense* of a proposition in the *Tractatus* [see Cerezo (2005), Ch. 3 and 4, particularly pp. 122-

123]. I cannot dwell on this point on this occasion. For our purposes in this paper, we can ignore this distinction.

³ The debate on the issue regarding the use and reference of Tractarian names is an old one. For further details, see Ishiguro (1969) and Winch (1987). I deal with this issue in Cerezo (2005), pp. 120-122.

⁴ I take the example of “blond” in the sense of “rubio”, inspired by Zalabardo’s motivation for the familiarity criterion in Section 7.6.

⁵ See Schiffer (2000) for an account of vagueness as partial belief, and Eklund (2006) for a reply.

⁶ IC is not a definition of grounding, but just a necessary condition that any relation of grounding must satisfy. Grounding is usually elucidated by means of examples, intuitions, necessary conditions, structural properties (such as strict partial order), and differences from other notions.

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