The concept of causality was one of the principal devices employed in discussions regarding
demarcation of the individual scientific fields in the 19th century. Recognition of the individual
domains of knowledge as scientific was to a certain degree tied precisely to the applicability and
form of the concept of causality with respect to explanation of the phenomena of the given slice of
reality. The contemporary disputes regarding differentiation between natural and moral science
represent a reflection of these processes as well as evidence of the growing efforts of natural
sciences to restrict the term 'science' to refer solely to their own domain of explanation of reality. It
is no coincidence that the contemporary linguistics strove to define its scientific identity and at the
same time find its place in the education system by means of active participation in these debates.
Several decades later, the Prague Linguistic Circle (PLC) built its self-presentation on principal
criticism of the 19th century general linguistic theories, whereas the base of this criticism was an
idiosyncratic linguistic project which rejected the concept of "mechanical causality" in explanation
of linguistic phenomena as completely inadequate. The PLC associated the causalistic explanation
mainly with the approach of the so-called Neogrammarians. The present paper analyses the
perception and criticism of the concept of causality as it is found in the texts of the PLC, against the
backdrop of the aforementioned disputes regarding the standing of linguistics among sciences in the
second half of the 19th century. We shall use a selection of texts to serve as an example of the form
and role causal explanation had in the linguistic thought of the 2nd half of the 19th century
(especially in relation to the term 'linguistic law'). We shall then use their confrontation with a
selection of text by the PLC to show the degree to which it is possible to understand the use of this
term by the PLC as being adequate to the related contemporary extra/linguistic notion (a the degree
to which the use is closer to being metaphoric). This will also allow us to reconstruct the alternative
definition of science proposed by the PLC in their critiques, as well as the motivation behind it.

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