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TELOS-BASED REFLECTIVE CONSTITUENTS OF MEANING IN POLITICAL DISCOURSE

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Over the last two millennia the Aristotelian category of purposefulness “Telos” has firmly established its status as an ultimate meaning defining essence. Political discourse mirrors motives and goals of interacting individuals and institutional entities. The notion of the final purpose (Telos) in the given account is viewed as the speaker’s subjective and idealised mental representation of reality to strive for. The main contention in this inquiry is that teleological investigation of political discourse is linguistically valid. The idea propounded in this research is that teleology and pragmatics are both focused on the phenomenon of purposefulness, and may complement each other. However, the status of Telos as a final goal supervenes on pragmatic principles and transcends pragmatic conceptual horizons. Linguistic representations of facts of reality in political discourse may serve as a basis for teleological reflection, judgement and, correspondingly, for construal of meaning on the principles of moral teleology. Teleologically-based reflective constituents of meaning in political discourse may be expressed explicitly, may be implicated as intended speaker’s meaning, or may be unintended by the speaker, but ascribed by the addressee. The priorities in this research are rather shifted from the juxtaposition “what is said and what is meant” to “what is said and what is recovered”. For various reasons utterances in political discourse are subject to teleological reflection. Teleologically-based reflective constituents of meaning are the outcome of the speaker’s or addressee’s subjective appraisal of moral and ethical propriety of an utterance. Teleological reflection is instrumental in bestowal on an utterance of the addressee’s reflective sense, which goes beyond what the speaker intended to convey and in addition to what the utterance refers to. The principal idea upheld in this account is that teleologically-based reflective constituents of meaning are an immanent component of the semantic content of an utterance with overt or covert teleological assumptions. Teleologically-based reflective constituents of meaning incorporate teleological explanations and teleological reflective sense representations.

ТЕЛЕОЛОГІЧНІ РЕФЛЕКСІЙНІ КОНСТИТУЕНТИ СМISЛУ В АНГЛОМОВНОМУ ПОЛІТИЧНОМУ ДИСКУРСІ

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Стаття присвячена ціннісно-цільовому аналізу лінгвістичної репрезентації телеологічної рефлексії у сучасному англійському політичному дискурсі. Поняттєвий і термінологічний апарат телеології як науки про доцільну діяльність у цьому дослідженні застосовано з урахуванням утилітаристських поглядів на мету як критерій моральної оцінки певної події або вчинку. Актуальність розвідки зумовлена потребою виявлення причинно-цільових та лінгвістичних закономірностей актуалізації телеологічних рефлексійних конститuentів смислу висловлення у політичному дискурсі. Дослідження виконане на основі науково-методологічних принципів моральної телеології та утилітаризму. Як гіпотезу висунуто тезу про невіддільність телеологічної рефлексії від процесів смислоутворення у політичному дискурсі. У моральній телеології телеологічна рефлексія і телеологічне рефлексійне судження слугують засобами споглядання, самопоглядання, оцінки і самооцінки щодо моральної і етичної виправданості доцільної дії або події. Евристичну природу смислопродукування відображає введене новітнє поняття «телеологічний рефлексійний смисл». В англійському політичному дискурсі телеологічні рефлексійні конститuentи смислу висловлення здобувають актуалізацію у вигляді телеологічних пояснень, телеологічних дескрипцій та доданого адресатом телеологічного рефлексійного смислу. Розробка і введення у науковий обіг поняття телеологічного рефлексійного смислу узгоджені з композиційною теорією смислу у сучасній семантиці і прагматиці, котра припускає інтуїтивне приписування пропозиції висловлення умов та значень істинності. Теоретичним підґрунтям для введення зазначеного поняття послугувала також теорія поглибленого витлумачення висловлення (deep interpretation) у психології та психолінгвістиці.

Problem statement

Moral teleological assumptions in political discourse

Moral teleology postulates the idea of virtuous purposefulness, according to which any human action is supposed to be undertaken for the sake of the common GOOD as the final purpose. Teleological reflection is posited as a purposive act and viewed as a form of *evaluative reflection* in I. Kant's iconic work "Critique of Judgment" [Kant, 1987, pp. 329, 361]. Moral aspects of purposefulness in present-day political discourse require detailed scrutiny for various reasons, not least because the notion of the final purpose appears to be "proverbially" opaque, as biblical allusions testify: "*The purposes of a person's heart are deep waters*" [The Holy Bible, 2011, p. 655].

The concept of morality viewed from a teleological standpoint remains to be "an open question" and is as contentious as ever [Moore, 2017, pp. 13, 43, 44; Horgan, Timmons, 1999; Thompson, 2016].

The need for further research of purpose-based meaning becomes especially obvious, when we have to answer the question: How do we square the teleological requirement for moral validity of political rhetoric with "messy realities" of inherently calculative and, at times, devious, mendacious and violent political debate? This quandary evokes the problem of the subtlety of the correlation "between virtue and right action", "natural and moral teleologies" and "a comprehensive moral order" [Auxter, 1982].

With reference to human beings, teleology is focused on the will to live and survive by virtuous

means [Aristotle, 1998; Kant, 1998]. Staying alive against the odds and at the same time being virtuous is really the epitome of the Aristotelian *Telos*, particularly when it comes to the dilemma of life and death. Existential “life and death” issues are inevitably associated with the basic ideas of purposefulness, causality and consequences that make up the conceptual foundations of teleology. The eminent philosopher S. Neiman highlights the importance of Kant’s moral theory for the modern turbulent world and stresses that “just and moral life is possible – and that’s relevant everywhere <...>, the way the world ought to be” [Neiman, 2024]. However, politically motivated decisions are at times grounded on the tacit assumption that “morality requires behaviour that is essentially immoral” [Coady, 2007, p. 533]. Thus, it is only natural that the purpose-based concept of meaning underpins the process of human morally viable social, political and cultural interaction. Attempts to unravel the infinitely complex conundrum of meaning embodies the hope of individuals and nations to understand each other on their path to that common GOOD.

We uphold the idea that the meaning of an utterance in political discourse is ultimately determined by *Telos* – the final purpose (whatever subjective import of this notion may be conceived by the speaker or by the addressee). With regard to human society, *Telos* is about purposeful virtuous existence, moral propriety, development and “flourishing” [Falcon, 2023; Brentari, 2020; Ruse, 2004; Uexkull, 2010]. Unfortunately, for various reasons, and not least because of becoming increasingly oblivious of the universal moral canon, human society nowadays is more concerned not so much about flourishing as about survival. Teleology relies on the extensive conceptual basis of philosophy, metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, pragmatics, phenomenology, ontology. In the domain of teleology, the sense of human rational activity can be heuristically explained using the ultimate criterion – the final goal (pursued or “alleged to be pursued”) [Encyclopedia Britannica, 2024]. Alluding to this fact, A. Woodfield contends that covert teleological assumptions are embedded in all the basic physical concepts such as “object”, “state”, “event”, “consequence”, “action”, “power”, “energy” and argues that purposeful activity is regulated by the principles of immanent (ontologically inherent) teleology [Woodfield, 2010, pp. 5, 32]. The analysed empirical material shows that these covert teleological assumptions in political discourse can be explicated, implicated or ascribed.

Teleological reflection and unarticulated reflective constituents of meaning in political discourse

In our inquiry we refer teleologically-based reflective constituents of meaning to the class of intuitive truth-values. In the focus of this account are teleologically-based reflective constituents of meaning, which may be intended or unrelated to the author’s

or speaker’s intent, but ascribed to an utterance by the addressee on the basis of teleological reflection. The notion of reflection in this inquiry is supposed to bridge the gap between morality and politics and is to be concerned with “the extent to which “reality” is “reflected” in a representation” and “whose realities or values are represented and whose are erased” [Chandler, Munday, 2020, p. 410]. In this research we are dealing rather with meta-teleological reflection, or in other words, with reflection about moral validity of somebody else’s reflection.

This reflective thinking is latent by nature and, hence, in political discourse it may be unarticulated. The term “unarticulated constituents of meaning”, as defined by F. Recanati, denotes “the intuitive truth-conditions” ascribed to an utterance [Recanati, 2003, p. 142]. Incidentally, the modern era of digital technologies has demonstrated critical importance of reflection, self-reflection and intuition for meaning creation, which artificial intelligence is so far unable to handle. According to J. Locke, intuition is as important as reason and sensations for acquiring knowledge [Russell, 1983, p. 591].

Reflection is a purely human faculty. The inability of artificial intelligence to assign intuitive truth-values to utterances in natural language processing and machine translation makes human “fine-tuning” of the artificially processed material indispensable (albeit for the time being). Arguably, teleological reflection is required both in ordinary language and in AI processing for the agreement “between the human judgments and the automatic” processing and for the alignment with “cultural norms” [Stasimioti, 2024]. The above considerations provide some pre-emptive stimulus to our pursuit to prove the plausibility of our contention that teleologically-based reflective constituents of meaning, articulated or not, are an immanent component of the semantic purport of an utterance.

Political discourse and morality

Political discourse is viewed in this inquiry as a complex, adaptive open-ended system. It exhibits specific semantic properties susceptible to analysis on internalist and externalist principles. The notion of *Telos* as the product of teleological reflection is notoriously nebulous. The final purpose is not always explicated in political discourse, but intuitively taken into account in accordance with moral principles *a priori* “instilled” by “tacit consent” [Woolhouse, 1994, p. 151], and in accordance with ingrained political considerations, religious affiliations, momentary dispositions, personal preferences, etc. by both the speaker and the addressee.

Scholars, investigating morality of politics, acknowledge that political discourse “involves the transcendence or violation of ordinary morality”; this moral transgression may allegedly be dictated by “circumstance” or “station” and can be “recon-

cited” by the moral principle of utility [Coady 2007, pp. 532, 533, 534]. Contrary to universal norms of morality, to a substantial degree, coercion is viewed as the “essence” of modern political discourse [Thames, 2021]. The cynical principle “the end justifies the means” is not always obvious in political discourse, but it remains to be predominantly tacit, persistent and embedded in the public conscience. Current mass-media may testify to this fact: *There has been a real shift in a political ethic, from one of principle to a kind of “ends justify the means”* [The Financial Times. 2023. 23 June].

Jeff Shesol, a speechwriter for President Bill Clinton, recalls historian Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr. saying that political speeches are “a particularly low form of rhetoric” [The Washington Post. 2016. 23 September]. Barry Tomalin points out that in a manipulative way the purposes in modern political rhetoric have been misplaced: “New policies are put forward to match what the public would like to hear <...> rather than what actually needs to be said” [Tomalin, 2017, p. 110]. Professional journalists note that the *pathos* of political rhetoric has been transformed: the political debate “has turned cruder, ruder, more polarised and less anchored in facts (and) increasingly infantilised” [The Guardian. 2016. 4 September]. So, the undying Shakespearian metaphoric expression, picturing this kind of oratory as “glib and oily art” [Shakespeare W.], is still apt.

Apart from personal flaws of politically engaged orators, there are objective realities and natural trivia of political rhetoric with its innate unpredictability, with different values among people, with outcomes that are not predetermined [Hauser, 1991, p. 11]. The notion of *Telos* in political discourse is not getting less opaque, because the question of moral responsibility is seriously “muddled”, political objectives may sometimes “legitimately override the most serious moral considerations” [Coady, 2007, pp. 532, 533, 534, 538].

Routinely, political reasons are brought home to listeners or readers as morally acceptable. But it is up to the addressee to question the underlying values and beliefs, and it is this moral judgement as “a ruling rightly given” [The Holy Bible, 2011, p. 661], which remains to be open to reflection, often unarticulated, but intuitively felt or explicitly asserted in commentaries, letters, analytical articles, etc. Political upheavals and the spectre of military conflicts of global magnitude underscore the topicality of scholarly pursuits concerning moral issues of the meaning intended and the meaning recovered in present-day political rhetoric. Keeping this in mind, the hypothesis in this research needs some additional clarification and substantiation.

The hypothesis

The hypothesis to be proved in this account is that teleologically-based reflective constituents of mean-

ing, explicated or not, are an immanent component of the semantic content of an utterance. Teleological reflective judgement is instrumental in the bestowal on an utterance of “additional” teleological reflective sense. The inquiry into the problem of purpose related meaning creation and meaning recovery in political discourse requires addressing, apart from rational reasoning, also intuitive aspects of comprehension for several reasons:

(a) in logical terms, causes and effects as dependent and independent variables, necessary to support this hypothesis, are the notions of a very uncertain character;

(b) in teleological domain, human aspirations and consequences of human actions are regarded as exceptionally fuzzy variables involved in the cause-and-effect relationship;

(c) the dynamism and fluidity of the subjective dispositions in communication and objective unpredictable trends and developments in discourse as a complex open-ended system require probabilistic methods of analysis and necessitate the reliance on approximations, insights and fuzzy concepts.

The aim of this study

The purpose of this inquiry is to identify teleologically-based reflective constituents of meaning and the ways of their manifestation in political discourse.

The object of this study

The object of this investigation is teleologically-based reflective meaning creation in modern political discourse.

The subject is the specificity of linguistic representations of reflective constituents of meaning and teleological constraints of their actualization.

The empirical material

The corpus of the empirical material for the purpose-based meaning creation research in political discourse was formed on the basis of leading mass media resources – newspapers, magazines, radio, the internet – covering the period from 2022 to 2024.

The methodology. Discourse analysis was used for addressing the problem of meaning creation in discourse as an open-ended system. Complementary reliance on methods of minimalist and contextualist approaches was deemed relevant in this account. The principles of minimal semantics together with basic methods of symbolic sentential logic were used to establish a propositional formula of the variety of teleological explanations. The tenets of contextualism were used in virtue of inevitable reliance in the analysis of an ordinary language on non-linguistic sources of knowledge. The integrated minimalist and contextualist treatment of the meaning phenomenon warranted the application of the teleological method of meaning creation investigation. The teleological method is based on the analysis of deductive, inductive, inferential and intuitive meaning construal factors resulting from teleological reflective judgement

[Kant, 1987]. The teleological method is proposed by I. Kant to assess the morality of an action by good or bad consequences or motives. The elements of deontological approach in teleological methodology were used with the focus on motives rather than consequences. The application of the teleological method relies on moral criteria of common good, truth, morality, sincerity, integrity. The teleological method is essentially heuristic. Specifically, covert teleological assumptions, opaque, misplaced goals or uncertain potential consequences served as an added impetus for heuristic contemplation. Purpose-based propositions with reference to the future potential facts of reality were treated in this account as non-factual. Hence, it warranted the involvement into the scientific reflection, along with truth-values, the notions of uncertainty, vagueness, approximation, probability.

Presentation of the main material

In the current account the notion of reflective constituents of meaning is viewed from the teleologically-based and linguistically relevant semantic, pragmatic and teleological perspectives. Admittedly, the listed aspects of this inquiry may have overlapping areas, though each of them has specific horizons and conceptual apparatuses of dealing with the problem of purposefulness.

The semantic perspective

The intractable problem of “true” meaning

Modern linguists are aware of the complexity of the problem of meaning creation in discourse and suggest different approaches covering an extensive theoretical spectrum: minimal semantics, ideas of compositionality of meaning, pragmatics, contextualism, intuitivism [Borg, 2005, 2008; Recanati, 2005]. In the acclaimed book, aptly entitled by C.K. Ogden and I.A. Richards “The Meaning of Meaning”, the authors stressed that a meticulous analysis of the relationship between words and facts of reality is essential in the theory of meaning. The semantic inquiry will inevitably require logical, philosophical and psychological underpinnings, because words cannot be used “as though their meaning were fixed” [Ogden, Richards, 1989, pp. 2–3]. No wonder then, scholars dealing with the referential ties between words and facts of reality are doomed to grapple with the eternal problem of “truth” and equally intractable quandary of “true” meaning.

The factors that make the “definitive” solution of this daunting semantic problem practically unattainable are: (a) the compositionality of meaning [Jaszczolt, 2005, 2023; Pietroski, 2018; Szabó, 2000]; (b) specifics of relationship between ontologically different signs [Peirce, 1992; Chandler, 2007; Wang, 2020]; (c) contextual constraints [Stalnaker, 2014]; (d) teleological constraints [Alexander, 2009; Woodfield, 2010; Shevchenko, 2014]. The empirical evidence shows that we can only strive in a tentative heuristic way to

come closer to the ever-elusive truth as the final end. Hence, in the province of uncertainty the investigation of teleological constraints of meaning creation in political discourse takes on added significance.

The purposefulness of meaning

Traditional definitions of meaning reflect the complexity of this semantic notion. In dictionary definitions we confront at the outset the antinomy of language and speech, of a word and an utterance with some nod to the idea of purposefulness in communicative interaction. In “The Oxford Companion to the English Language” meaning is defined as “the *purport* or message conveyed by words, phrases, sentences, signs, symbols, and the like” [The Oxford Companion to the English Language, 1992, p. 647]. “The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Linguistics” offers some cautionary observation that there should be “a distinction between the meaning of a sentence, independent of any context, and the meaning that it will have as an utterance on a particular occasion”, that “the meaning of utterances <...> are in the domain of pragmatics” [Matthews, 2014, p. 239].

Thus, with reference to utterances as purposeful actions the concept of meaning inevitably relies on the purpose, implicated or declared. Apart from that, let’s not forget that the addressee may perceive an alternative purpose in the utterance concerned. Even more so, the addressee may treat an occasional innocuous word or a phrase on the part of a speaker as a speech act fraught with meaning. Words “*purport*”, “*pragmatics*”, “*utterance on a particular occasion*” in the listed definitions evoke the idea of rational or intuitive purposefulness of the intended or recovered meaning. Conventionally, semantics is treated as “pertaining to the meaning of the sentence rather than utterance”, while pragmatics is concerned with ambiguities and the problems of opacity and transparency [Jaszczolt, 2012, p. 308].

However, we hold that the conceptual and methodological apparatus of pragmatics will not be enough to handle all ambiguous, opaque and intuitive aspects of meaning creation, especially those reflective senses that are unarticulated, unintended by the speaker, but ascribed by the addressee. These reflective constituents of meaning transcend the boundaries of the intended meaning of a certain speech act. It should be emphasized that within the scope of externalist meta-ethical theories reflective meaning is also taken into account [Silk, 2017].

The pragmatic perspective

Teleology and pragmatics:

the issue of boundaries delineation

The problems of intuitive, default aspects of meaning creation are especially prominent in compositional semantics and pragmatics [Borg, 2005; Jaszczolt, 2005, 2010]. Teleology and pragmatics are both concerned with the idea of purposefulness, but

there should be observed delineation requirements. The meta-categorial status of *Telos* as an ultimate goal, the methodology and the conceptual apparatus of teleology arguably supervene on pragmatic tenets and transcend pragmatic theoretical horizons.

Some scholars allege that in pragmatic domain the concept of understanding is “over-intellectualized”, hence they question the Gricean reduction of “speaker meaning to speaker intentions” [Daly, 2013, p. 174]. Appealing to the compositionality of meaning, they claim that this kind of treatment of meaning and understanding has a debatable plausibility, because it presupposes quite complex intentions on the part of a speaker, though, in fact, understanding may occur “without any process of conscious inference” [Daly, 2013, pp. 174, 176]. The occasional absence of “conscious inference”, as we understand it, elicits intuitive, automatic assignment of truth-values to the propositions of utterances.

Pragmatists try to unravel the problem of complexity of intentions relying on pragmatic compositionality principles [Jaszczolt, 2009; Recanati, 2003; Unnsteinsson, 2014]. However, we maintain that *Telos* as an ultimate goal is instrumental enough to supersede purely pragmatic conceptual and methodological apparatus (Figure 1).

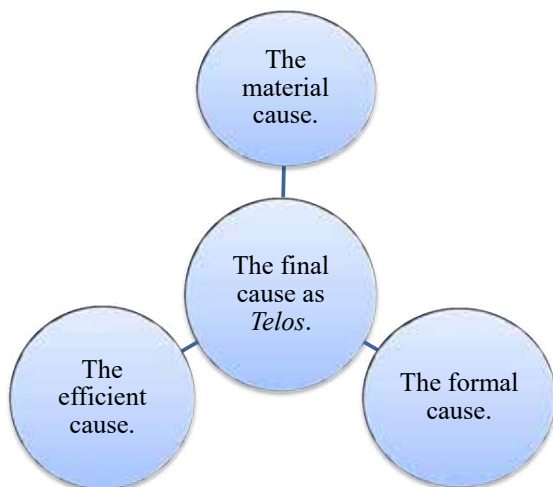


Fig. 1. Telos and subsidiary purposes

Telos serves as a supreme tool exposing and explaining the innermost overt and covert motives and, correspondingly, meanings of what is said and done, and how it is done and why. Our view falls into line with the ethos of behaviourist application [Rachlin, 2021] of Aristotle’s metaphysics, who distinguished material, formal, efficient and final causes. With a certain degree of a daring analogous abstraction we would view material, formal and efficient causes as correlated with and subordinated to the final goal. Incidentally, within teleological domain I. Kant distinguished final (ultimate) objectives and

dependent on them supplementary ones. He argued that supplementary objectives are dependent on the final goal and are instrumental in attaining the ultimate end [Kant, 1998; Auxter, 1982].

Intentions and the final goal

The debate of advocates of pragmatic compositionality and default/non-default semantics is still in progress. It may have direct relevance to teleological reflective constituents of meaning in political discourse owing to the fact that they are impalpable, fluid, intuitive and often irreducible to a strict logical scheme. We contend that “*intention*” as the basic concept of pragmatics denotes a purpose of a different scope compared to that of *Telos* as the final goal. Presumably, the notion of “*intention*” is constrained by the pragmatic boundaries of a speech act.

We argue that conjointly intentions of conceptually and thematically correlated speech acts are subordinated to *Telos* as the supreme morally viable regulatory final purpose, which supervenes on subsidiary intentions. The addressee tends to pass teleological judgement on the intended speaker’s meaning of an utterance with reference to the ultimate goal as the “culmination of a series of events” [Matthen, 2009, p. 336], which goes beyond the intention of a specific speech act. We regard subsidiary pragmatic forces as partitioned proposition sets whose conjoint teleological relevance can be determined heuristically.

Let’s look at the following passage. The separate utterances, though conceptually united and thematically consistent, will be staggered to make the illocutionary purport of each and every utterance more palpable:

- *A war is always a human tragedy, and the war in Ukraine is no exception.*
- *The war, in all its dimensions, has exacerbated a global cost-of-living crisis unseen in at least a generation, compromising lives, livelihoods, and our aspirations for a better world by 2030.*
- *The largest cost-of-living crisis of the twenty-first century has come when people and countries have a limited capacity to cope.*
- *Hundreds of thousands of people, including children, have been forcefully deported.*
- *Over six million (at the time of writing) have had to flee Ukraine; many more have been internally displaced* [Global Impact of the War in Ukraine 2022].

According to pragmatic criteria suggested by J.L. Austin, all the utterances in this passage can be formally referred to the group of a *statement* type speech acts because they state that something is the case [Austin, 2013, p. 299]. They fulfil truth-conditions assignable to statements about certain actual facts of reality. J.L. Austin admits that the pragmatic force of a statement type speech acts may be “weakened” in a sense that they can perform collateral functions of other speech acts [Austin, 2013, p. 299].

In the listed examples the original pragmatic force of a statement is not so much weakened as complemented by subdued urge for action. We argue that the intentions of the listed utterances are conjointly subordinated to the final purpose (*Telos*), which supervenes on them as subsidiary purposes and adds tangible contours to that urge.

All the utterances in this passage point to negative facts of reality that ought to be dealt with. Presumably, they form the basis for the addressee's teleological reflective judgement. In political discourse teleological judgement of the addressee is inherently tacit, save for commentaries, digressions or analytical materials to the text. Further on in this text the outcome of teleological reflection is explicitly represented in the form of a traditional teleological explanation identifying the putative final purpose: *Everything possible must be done in order to stop territorial expansion by force, thereby averting a war similar to the one that ravaged Europe 80 years ago* [Global Impact of the War in Ukraine, 2022].

We maintain that compared to subsidiary pragmatic intentions of individual *statement* type speech acts the truth-conditions assignable to the final purpose *Telos* indicated in the teleological explanation are of a very special calibre. They can only be regarded as non-factual because in case with *Telos* truth-conditions are pertaining not to actual, but to potential facts of reality with reference to the future. A different criterion can be applicable to the potentially attainable final goal, and that is *felicity* or *infelicity*.

The teleological perspective

The "overt" teleology: linguistic representations of explicated purposefulness.

In political discourse purpose-based assertions are subject to reflective thinking procedures: reassessment, skeptical scrutiny, justification, etc. Reflective constituents of meaning of an utterance are treated in this account as the outcome of teleological reflection. We hold that propositions, which indicate the purpose to be attained, are non-factual. Arguably, unless the goal is reached, assignment of truth-values to a non-factual utterance seems implausible. Truth-values can hardly be assigned to purpose-based reflective constituents of meaning for reasons of their being only in potentiality. Once the goal is attained, it becomes actual as a tangible consequence, and the utterance acquires the attributes of a truth apt proposition.

However, that doesn't mean that the alleged "truth" of the utterance about the achieved goal will be universally accepted. This is yet another teleological reflective judgement issue, which begs a number of utilitarian questions: (a) How does the achieved goal agree with the idea of the common Good? (b) To what degree is the attained goal felicitous? (c) Who benefits from the consequences? (d) Who are the losers? The answers to these questions are essential

for the ascription of teleological reflective sense to an utterance because they add variables to grapple with. Apart from that, there is no getting away from these questions for all concerned because they may turn out to be existentially important. In our view, the above considerations are supportive of the hypothesis suggested in this account. We argue that, since teleological reflection is based on universal human moral canons *a priori* embedded in human conscience, teleologically-based reflective constituents of meaning can be treated as an immanent part of deductive, inductive, inferential or intuitive meaning construal.

Teleological reflective semantic content of an utterance in political discourse can be explicitly expressed with the help of teleological explanations possessing a classical syntactical and lexical setup. A teleological explanation, which "appeals to a goal or a result" [Matthews, 2014, p. 402], is the key means of expression of teleological reflection. In an oblique way descriptive teleological explanatory digressions may also perform this function (Figure 2). Overt and descriptive teleological explanations are instrumental in the identification of dispositions of speakers with the help of "reflective" or "self-reflective observation" (the term is taken from [Locke, 1975, p. 22]).

According to the minimalist semantic tradition an utterance, which explicitly indicates the purpose of an action is supposed to have a minimal proposition "specifying literal meaning" [Borg, 2006, p. 461]. The notion of a minimal proposition falls into line with the Fregean principle of compositionality, which states that "the meaning of an expression is determined by the meanings of its parts and the way they are syntactically combined" [Ball, Rabern, 2020, p. 6]. In terms of teleology, an explicit indication of a purpose is tantamount to a canonical propositional formula of a teleological explanation. A classical lexical and syntactical setup of a teleological explanation should contain the so-called "teleological language" [Woodfield, 2010, pp. 15, 119]. Teleological language incorporates words and expressions denoting purposefulness: *in order to, so as, with the aim of, because, the infinitive particle to* etc., as is shown in the following examples: *The purpose of a leaders' debate is to interrogate our future Prime Minister on their policy positions for vital issues so the public can make an informed choice about which candidate will do the best job for their country* [The Daily Mail. 2022. 27 July]; *The science shows clearly that in order to avert the worst impacts of climate change and preserve a livable planet, global temperature increase needs to be limited to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels* [The United Nations, 2022].

In terms of classical sentential logic [Forbes, 1994, pp. 12–13], the sentential setup of an overt teleological explanation can be symbolically expressed with the help of a propositional formula

denoting purposefulness: “if A, then B” or $Aa \rightarrow B$, where A – *the purpose to achieve* (explanandum), B – *the means to achieve the purpose* (explanans).

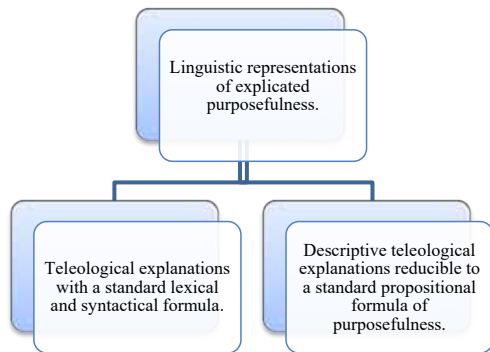


Fig. 2. Linguistic representations of explicated purposefulness

Descriptive teleological explanatory digressions specify the final purpose and perform the function of a teleological explanation in an indirect way. As is shown in the following example, the somewhat “fuzzy” linguistic representation of the final purpose makes additional descriptive elaborations necessary: (a) *The key to survival is location, location, location*; (b) *When a nuclear bomb makes an impact, it sends a shockwave that can extend about half of a mile from the target* [The Daily Mail. 2023. 20 October]. In the first utterance of the listed example (a) *Telos* is implicated and in the second utterance (b) the causal underpinnings of final purpose are indicated in the form of a descriptive teleological explanation focused on potential consequences. The premise here is that appropriate actions need to be undertaken for survival. In this case the whole utterance can be tentatively reworded and reduced to a minimal proposition: *In order to survive a nuclear attack, location is vital*. By making a further logical step to answer the question about possible ways of preventing the undesirable consequences, the suggested propositional

structure serves as a model of a teleological explanation formula. Accordingly, in this instance the expression “*in order to survive a nuclear attack*” performs the function of a standard component of a teleological explanation – **explanandum**, and the expression “*location is vital*” – of an **explanans**.

Reflective constituents of meaning may be actualised by assuming the form of a descriptive metaphorical linguistic representation of the final goal, as in the following example: *The US has sent additional weaponry to Israel and deployed a carrier task force to the eastern Mediterranean as a powerful signal to Hezbollah and Iran* [BBC News. 2023. 24 October]. The metaphorical expression (*a powerful signal*) obliquely indicates the putative final purpose of the action concerned, and as the outcome of teleological reflection it can be tentatively reduced to a minimal propositional structure of a standard teleological explanation: *Additional weaponry was sent in order to deter confrontation*. If constructed as a propositional formula [Forbes, 1994, pp. 12–13], a conventional teleological explanation can be represented in the following symbolic form: $A \rightarrow B$, where A – *in order to deter confrontation* (explanandum), B – *additional weaponry was sent* (explanans).

The “covert” teleology: latent reflective constituents of meaning.

Reflective constituents of meaning are essentially latent mental representations (Fig. 3).

In political discourse they can assume the form of covert teleological assumptions. In this research the term “covert teleological assumptions”, suggested by A. Woodfield [Woodfield, 2010, pp. 17, 216], is used to identify teleological reflective constituents of the speaker’s implicated meaning or the reflective sense associated with purposefulness and ascribed to an utterance by the addressee.

By right, covert teleological assumptions are about purpose related reflection. Covert teleological reflective constituents of meaning of an utterance may be

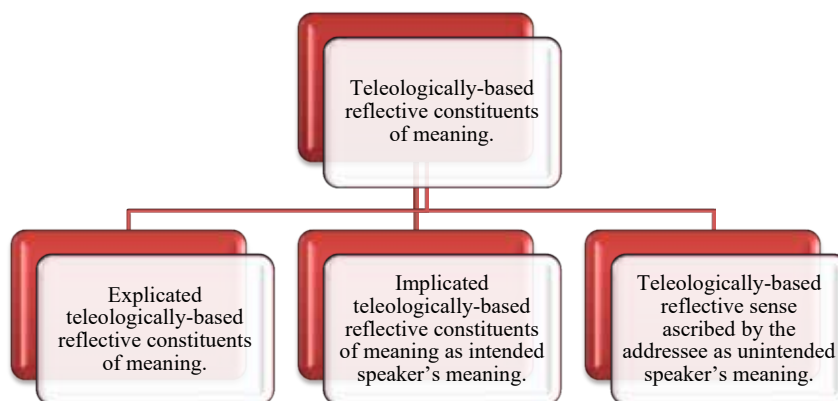


Fig. 3. Teleologically-based reflective constituents of meaning

subdued or left unarticulated, but intuitively noted by the addressee with possible awareness of their moral propriety or impropriety. The teleological reflective constituents of meaning may go far beyond the information given in the minimal proposition of an utterance. To be actualised they may require more than a standard teleological explanation.

Conclusions

– Teleological reflection in political discourse is a purposeful symbiosis of rational and intuitive appraisal of moral propriety of an utterance. This purpose related combination of semantically interconnected components of meaning is posited in this research as teleologically-based reflective constituents of meaning.

– Teleologically-based reflective constituents of meaning are an immanent element of deductive, inductive or intuitive meaning construal.

– Teleologically-based reflective constituents of meaning are linguistically represented as: (a) overt canonical teleological explanations; (b) oblique descriptive teleological explanations; (c) teleological reflective sense representations.

– A teleological explanation is linguistic or mental representation of the declared or putative final purpose.

– Telos-based reflective constituents of meaning may be expressed explicitly, implicitly, or ascribed by the addressee as Telos-based reflective sense in addition to what the utterance refers to.

– Both teleology and pragmatics, being goal-oriented, complement each other in the investigation of purpose pertaining aspects of meaning. However, the meta-categorial status of Telos as an ultimate goal supervenes on pragmatic tenets and transcends the pragmatic domain.

– Purpose-based propositions with reference to the future are posited in this account as non-factual. In the instance with Telos the assignment of truth-conditions not to actual, but to potential facts of reality can hardly be plausible.

The prospects for further research. Deeper investigation of the linguistic representation of teleological reflective sense and of implicated purpose-based intended speaker's meaning in political rhetoric looks promising and feasible. More detailed predicate calculus analysis of the relations between independent and dependent variables concerning reflective sense creation should be advisable.

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