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Meaning. Are the tools of rhetoric useful in studying the matter?

From the gods come all the means of mortal exploits;
thanks to the gods are men wise and brave and eloquent
Pindar, *The Pythian Odes*[1]

Introduction[2]

The quote from Pindar which opened this discussion says only this much: from the beginning of our reflection regarding the seemingly trivial issue of *What is meaning?* we have been mostly helpless and that he preferred to leave those matters… in the hands of gods (i.e. admit his lack of knowledge). I shall not discuss the state of research in this matter. That has already been done several times and I shall refer to those studies. Those include the works by Gottlob Frege, the summary article

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1 Pindar, *The Odes of Pindar*, ed., transl., comm. J. Sandys, The Loeb Classical Library, Cambridge Mass., London 1915, p. 159. Cf. Pindar, *Wybór poezji*, selection, introduction, trans., comm. by A. Szastyńska-Siemion, Wydawnictwo Ossolineum, Wrocław et al. 1981, pp. 71–91. The quoted fragment in Adam Naruszewicz's translation: *Z rąk Boskich, od nich ludzkie swój początek biorą // Cnoty i dokonanie: z ich łask wymowa // Zdobi język, moc ramie, mądrze radzi głowa.* Greek text: ἐκ θεῶν γὰρ μαχαναὶ πᾶσαι βροτέαις ἀρεταῖς, καὶ σοφοὶ καὶ χερσὶ βιαταὶ περίγλωσσοί τ᾽ ἔφυν. ἄνδρα δ᾽ ἐγὼ κεῖνον.

2 I believe it is worth quoting the opinion which opens the entry *Meaning* in the online version of the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: "Word «meaning» has played a somewhat marginal role in early contemporary philosophy of language, which was primarily concerned with the structural features of sentences and showed less interest in the format of lexical representations and in the nature of the word-level input to compositional processes. Nowadays, it is well-established that the way we account for word meaning is bound to have

by Andre Lalande, the study by Jerzy Pelc, as well as the dictionary entry by Peter Prechtl.[3]

Those are philosophical and logic discussions, yet the matter applies mainly or at least mostly to linguistics. Once again, allow me to indicate studies which summarised existing research in the matter – those include works by both Polish and French scholars who referred to the approaches by F. de Saussure, L. Bloomfield, Z.S. Harris, J. Apresjan, and Russian scholars who, similarly to Polish scholars, apart from discussing other issues, also differentiated grammatical and lexical meanings;[4] apart from the already-indicated scholars, one should also refer to: Gołąb, Heinz, Polański, Dubois et al., and Szulc.[5]

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a major impact in tipping the balance in favor or against a given picture of the fundamental properties of human language. This entry provides an overview of the way issues related to lexical meaning have been explored in analytic philosophy and a summary of relevant research on the subject in neighboring scientific domains. Though the main focus will be on philosophical problems, contributions from linguistics, psychology, neuroscience and artificial intelligence will also be considered, since research on word meaning is highly interdisciplinary […]" (L. Gasparri, D. Marconi, "Word Meaning", [in:] *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Spring 2016 Edition, ed. E.N. Zalta, https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2016/entries/word-meaning/ [accessed on: 16.01.2019]).

3   The most complete a summary (though omitting the works of, e.g. Polish scholars) was offered in the article: L. Gasparri, D. Marconi, *op. cit.*; G. Frege, *Sens i znaczenie* (*Über Sinn und Beduetung*, 1892), trans. B. Wolniewicz, http://sady.up.krakow.pl/antfil.frege.sensiznaczenie.htm [accessed on: 17.07.2018]; *Logika i język: studia z semiotyki logicznej*, selection, trans., introduction and notes J. Pelc, Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, Warsaw 1967; A. Lalande. *Vocabulaire technique et critique de la philosophie*, PUF, Paris 1972; P. Prechtl, *Leksykon pojęć filozofii analitycznej*, trans. J. Bremer SJ, Wydawnictwo WAM, Krakow 2009, pp. 19, 21, 98, 155–156, 192–193, 211, 232, 262–264.

4   I indicated this issue as it was, in the subject study, discussed at length. Russian scholars conducted a concise analysis of the state of research into lexical meaning. Cf. *Jazykoznanije. Bolszoj Enciklopediczeskij Slovar'*, ed. V.N. Jarceva et al., Izdatelstvo Bolszaja Rossijskaja Enciklopedija, Moscow 1998, pp. 262–263.

5   Z. Gołąb, A. Heinz, K. Polański, *Słownik terminologii językoznawczej*, Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, Warsaw 1968, pp. 650–652; J. Dubois et al., *Dictionnaire de linguistique*, Larousse, Paris 1973, pp. 436–437; A. Szulc, *Podręczny słownik językoznawstwa stosowanego. Dydaktyka języków obcych*, Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, Warsaw 1984, pp. 265–267; *Jazykoznanije…* Yet I also wish to note that the issue also appeared in, e.g. the theory of speech acts. Cf. J.L. Austin, *How to Do Things With Words*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1962; R. Grzegorczykowa, "Problem funkcji języka i tekstu w świetle teorii aktów mowy", [in:] *Język a kultura*, t. 4: *Funkcje języka i wypowiedzi*, eds. J. Bartmiński, R. Grzegorczykowa, Wiedza o Kulturze, Wrocław 1991, pp. 11–28 (overview of subject lit.) Also: J. Szymura, *Język, mowa i prawda w perspektywie fenomenologii lingwistycznej J.L. Austina*, Wydawnictwo Ossolineum, Wrocław 1982.

Even a browsing of the above-specified sources clearly indicates that the issue is extremely complex, while the term:[6]

> Reference – representative content included in a linguistic sign. Since the term is extremely general in nature, it is necessary to analyse it and specify its components. Currently, in terms of the reference of a linguistic sign, linguistics operates the following special notions: designation (indication), significance (reference), reference--based or lexical value (specific reference); additionally, there exist lexical and grammatical reference.

can be treated as a good preliminary description of the research field.

Are the matters also discussed in the theory of rhetoric? A positive answer to that must entail a reservation that in order to fully answer the question, one must apply its specific definition. I applied the definition by Quintilian, but the one from Book V; please consider:[7]

> (Rhetorica est ars bene dicendi scientia, aut per partes, ut) Rhetorice est inveniendi recte et disponendi et eloquendi cum firma memoria et cum dignitate actionis scientia [(Rhetoric is the science of speaking well, or in detail, such as) Rhetoric is the science of correct conception, arrangement and utterance, coupled with a retentive memory and a dignified delivery, English version: H.E. Bulter, *Institutio Oratoria*, Loeb, 1920]

I have chosen this particular definition because it implicitly assumes the existence of a stable reference/references of words. They may, of course, become distorted. Therefore, the problem is whether one can prevent that.

Definition of the problem

Thus, the problem seems quite simple, and since it has been analysed well, in theoretical terms, in Prechtl's dictionary, I shall, once again, only indicate the specific fragment of said work.[8]

In the most simplest terms, from the theoretical point of view, the problem is as follows:

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[6] Z. Gołąb, A. Heinz, K. Polański, *op. cit.*, p. 650 [unless indicated otherwise, quotations in English were translated from Polish].

[7] QUINT.V.10.54 = M.F. Kwintylian, "Kształcenie mówcy", [in:] St. Śnieżewski, *Terminologia retoryczna w* Institutio Oratoria *Kwintyliana*, Wydawnictwo Księgarnia Akademicka, Krakow 2014, pp. 113–148 (Book V).

[8] Prechtl, *op. cit.*

When one considers the issue of meaning, there inevitably also emerge such issues as: reference, intention/extension, and the meaning criterion. The final element states:

   i.   All chains of linguistic signs are either meaningful or meaningless,
   ii. Only descriptive, tautological, and contradictory sentences are to be treated as meaningful.

Discussions resulted in the establishing of a view that ***meaning depends on the method of its verification***. Yet that position has also been challenged; that is because ***context*** plays a major role for reference, that is ***reference must be inquired about in the context of a sentence*** (the opinion of G. Frege, repeated by W. van Orman Quine). The latter argued that ***theory functions as a carrier of reference***.[9] At the same time, one must remember, though, that van Quine was the author of the theory of the *infinity of references*. I believe that the final remark may be applied to issues related to interpretation, i.e. the reception of a work of art[10], i.e. a culture text.

However, as Chantal Delsol pointed out, already in antiquity there existed the phenomenon which is being discussed here;[11] it was the intentional violation of an established reference, i.e. the meaning of expressions or utterances. She quoted examples from the works of Thucydides and Sallust:[12]

[…] the references of various words were changed at will. **Incomprehensible impudence** has been considered as **courage** full of dedication to friends, **cautious austerity** as **cowardice** in search of fine pretence, and **moderation** as concealed **anxiety** […]

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9   In other words, it means that "[...] instead of asking whether gnomes exist, we ask whether a "gnome" plays a meaningful role in a theory". Cf. Prachtl, *op. cit.*, p. 231 (note 156). That remark is close to the views of, on the one hand, Owen Barfield and, on the other, J.R.R. Tolkien, the author of the *On Fairy Stories* study. Cf. O. Barfiled, *Poetic Diction. A Study in Meaning*, Faber & Gwyer, London 1928; J.R.R. Tolkien, *On Fairy Stories*, ed. V. Flieger, D.A. Anderson, Harper Collins, London 2008.

10   That issue was also indicated by Ingarden when he spoke of specification. Cf. R. Ingarden, *O dziele literackim. Badania z pogranicza ontologii, teorii języka i filozofii literatury*, trans. M. Turowicz, Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, Warsaw 1960.

11   Ch. Delsol, *Nienawiść do świata. Totalitaryzmy i ponowoczesność*, trans. M. Chojnacki, Instytut Wydawniczy PAX, Warsaw 2017, pp. 68–85.

12   THUC. III.82 = Tukidydes, *Wojna peloponeska*, trans. K. Kumaniecki, Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, Wrocław et al. 1991; SAL., LII = Salustiusz Krispus, "Sprzysiężenie Katyliny", [in:] ibidem, *Sprzysiężenie Katyliny i Wojna z Jugurtą*, trans. K. Kumaniecki, Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, Wrocław 2006.

We have long lost the true references of words. That is because **thriftiness** from someone else's pocket is called **generosity**, and **audacity** in ill actions is called **courage** […] (emphasis – J.Z.L.).

One could say that the quoted fragments refer to a *change of reference*, yet that is not completely valid. Please consider that notions are accompanied by explanations which usually play the role of epithets. In other words, even if condition (i) exists, condition (ii)[13] exists only to that extent that the result is a pair of *contradictory sentences*. At the same time, which must be stressed, the quoted examples carry another contradiction: between lexical and the grammatical references![14]

Yet the violations can be of a different nature – I am referring to the speech delivered by Martin Luther King Jr. on 28 August 1963 at the Lincoln Memorial, Washington D.C. Allow me to quote the beginning of the speech (with a minor insignificant omission):[15]

Five score years ago, / a great American, in whose symbolic shadow we stand today, / signed the Emancipation Proclamation. / This momentous decree came /as a great beacon light of hope to millions of Negro slaves/ who had been seared in the flames of withering injustice. / It came as a joyous daybreak / to end the long night of their captivity/.
[…]
In a sense we've come to our nation's capital to cash a check. / When **the architects of our republic / wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, /** they were signing a **promissory note** / to which every American was to fall heir. / **This note was a promise that all men, /** yes, black

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[13] For this discussion it is irrelevant whether one accepts the quoted concept by Carnap or not.

[14] Those issues also emerge, e.g. in the case of applying eristic in various understandings, sadly including the legal understanding, though they are mainly used for specifying opposites, e.g. in works of art (the most apt example exists in the form of Iago in *Othello* by Shakespeare, though a similarly poignant example is offered by Matteo in G.M. Lewis' novel *The Bravo of Venice*). Cf. J.Z. Lichański, *Filologia – Filozofia – Retoryka. Wprowadzenie do badań* (*nie tylko*) *literatury popularnej*, DiG, Warsaw 2017, pp. 54–76, cf. Aneks 2 (the quoted fragment of the novel with commentary).

[15] The omitted fragment: "But one hundred years later, / the Negro still / is not free. / One hundred years later, / the life of the Negro is still sadly crippled by the manacles of segregation / and the chains of discrimination. / One hundred years later, / the Negro lives on a lonely island of poverty / in the midst of a vast ocean of material prosperity. / One hundred years later, / the Negro is still languished in the corners of American society / and finds himself an exile in his own land. / And so we've come here today /to dramatize a shameful condition/." Text is available at https://www.americanrhetoric.com/top100speechesall.html [accessed on: 7.06.2019].

men as well as white men, / would be **guaranteed the "unalienable Rights" of "Life, Liberty / and the pursuit of Happiness."** / It is obvious today / that America has defaulted **on this promissory note, insofar as her citizens of color are concerned. / Instead of honoring this sacred obligation, / America has given the Negro people a bad check, / a check which has come back marked "insufficient funds."**/ [emphasis – J.Z.L.].

In this case, the author referred to *the proper references of notions*, yet he confronted them with something which was no abstraction for his audience (with all due respect, the *Emancipation Proclamation* and the *Declaration of Independence*, as well as the *Constitution* are, de facto, abstractions or, to put it more cautiously, general notions), and something concrete (a ***promissory note***). The device used was simply a *simile*, possibly a *metaphor*, but there did not occur a change of the reference of the primary notions, only a *broadening of their extent of reference* (the question whether that was allowable, positive, etc. is, at this moment, irrelevant).

Analysis

The violations applied in the works by Sallust, Thucydides or Lewis violate the meaning/reference of notions and entire utterances change their nature. However, a violation is a case of either a conscious application of notions which either polysemous or of changing their reference. Sometimes that leads to contradictions, yet that does not, of course, annul meaningfulness.

In Martin Luther King Jr.'s speech, the emphasised fragments pointed to those elements thanks to which the speaker referred to a sense of community, i.e. they constituted the basis for *linguistic identification*. That occurs because the speaker referred to

- i. the experience of each and every one of us when we go to a bank to cash a check/ promissory note and suddenly it turns out that the account is empty.
- ii. What is more, he indicated specific elements: the Lincoln Monument, the *Emancipation Proclamation*, as well as the ***Constitution and the Declaration of Independence***.
- iii. Apart from the Lincoln Monument, the remaining elements were both physical but also symbolic, and according to the orator *they were signing a **promissory note** to which every American was to fall heir*.
- iv. Moreover, those symbols suggested something more – they were a promise, as he pointed out, that **This note was a promise that all men,** / yes, black men as well as white men, / would be **guaranteed the "unalienable Rights" of "Life, Liberty / and the pursuit of Happiness."**/

Regardless of van Quine's opinion, it offered a confirmation of Frege's view regarding the role of an opinion for the constitution of the reference of a word. Though the first three examples included indefinite references, which could have confirmed van Quine's suggestion, the final one contradicted it.

Therefore, the question is: where is meaning hidden and can we somehow find it?

Discussing the results

Can rhetoric save us? Or rather: can it, at least in the quoted examples, help clarify the indicated difficulties and aporias?

First, it is necessary to separate literary/artistic utterances from all other.[16] That is purely heuristic, i.e. when one analyses Zbigniew Herbert's poem *Do Marka Aurelego*[17], grammatical matters, e.g. syntactic, are significant for grasping the meaning of words and sentences.

What good can rhetoric do here?

Please recall that I indicated the waypoints of this discussion in the form of the definition by Quintilian[18] and the practical analytical proposition by Sonja K. Foss.[19] She explained:

> […] the aim is to teach students how to think rhetorically – i.e. ask questions on the nature and function of symbols. The course is based on three main questions which students/critics should ask: "What is the relationship between rhetoric and its context?" "How a message constructs a specific reality for the audience and the speaker?", and "What does rhetoric suggest about the speaker?"
> […] the questions are posed to develop knowledge on the rhetoric process: «The study and the evaluation of rhetoric acts and artefacts in order to understand rhetoric processes»."[20]

The object of the analysis is both the rhetoric act itself and the artefacts (those could be literary texts, public presentations, advertisements, films, architecture,

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[16] A problem immediately arises: does a statement in a work of literature, i.e. a culture text, have the same status as any other linguistic statement? I shall discuss this issue further in the study.

[17] Z. Herbert, *89 wierszy*, Wydawnictwo A5, Krakow 2008, p. 44, cf. Aneks 1 (text by Z. Herbert).

[18] M.F. Kwintylian, *op. cit.*, pp. 113–148.

[19] S.K. Foss, "Rhetorical Criticism as the Asking of Questions", *Communication Education* 1989, vol. 38, issue 3, pp. 191–196 [trans. into Polish with commentary in: *Forum Artis Rhetoricae* 2016, no. 4(47), pp. 70–87].

[20] Cf. S.K. Foss, *Rhetorical Criticism: Exploration and Practice*, Waveland Press, Prospect Heights, Il. 2004, p. 5.

statues, etc.): generally speaking, as Kenneth Burke wrote, symbols which we use throughout our lives.[21] What procedure does Sonja K. Foss propose:[22]

> The first question emphasises the context or the environment which produces a rhetoric artefact: "What is the relationship between rhetoric and its context?" That relationship is, of course, the subject of the debate around which communication is focussed. Some critics posit that contexts or situations shift strictly rhetoric problems towards existential issues, while others argue that a situation and how it is being defined depends on the points of view held by the persons engaged in the debate. An intermediate position holds that the situation is not the only factor impacting the conduct of a speaker, though a speaker does not possess (during the debate) sufficient freedom to choose at their own discretion how to influence the situation (or even create it).[23]

There are two contexts of Herbert's poem: the situation in which Marcus Aurelius fought with barbarians, and the situation in Poland after 1945. It is, as Foss indicated, clearly debatable whether a situation (= context, circumstances) *impact more or less the behaviour of a speaker*; in other words, whether an orator has during a debate any influence on the situation. It seems that, contrary to appearances (e.g. the fixed framework of a poem), a speaker may, through their text, influence (though I agree that indirectly) the situation (e.g. by specific use of epithets, the opposition between the classical and barbarian cultures, etc.)[24]

The second question is important:[25]

> The second question during the course is: "How a message is constructed in a specific reality for the audience and the speaker?" In this case critics mainly focus on the message itself and that what happens within its reach as it produces a special perception of the world in those who are engaged in the process of creating and conveying said message.

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[21] K. Burke, *Language as Symbolic Action. Essays on Life, Literature, and Method*, California University Press, Berkeley et al. 1966.

[22] S.K. Foss, "Rhetorical Criticism..."

[23] Ibidem. Therefore, the item one should define first is the context or rather the circumstances in which a rhetoric expression emerges or which impact(s) the subject of the debate. That item, clearly identified, constitutes the centre of the process of communication. Hence the importance of, e.g. the differentiation between pieces of information and commentary in media communication, or the extremely precise definition of the subject of a debate, e.g. parliamentary debate, presidential debate, etc.

[24] The examples from the works by Thucydides, Sallust and Lewis featured exactly that: a shift in the discussion of the reference of notions to existential issues and ones which are defined in negative terms from the beginning!

[25] Ibidem.

Sonja K. Foss stressed the vital problem of *the impact of an expression on the perception and interpretation of the world* both by a speaker and the audience. Herbert's poem organises our perception and interpretation of the world. At the same time, it indicates (*give me your hand!*) the continuity or at least a sense of continuity of culture – regardless of the power of the barbarians.

Allow me to refer to Plato's remark that Homer was the educator of Hellada; it indicated that through Homer's works people organised their world and defined their place in it. That results from the obvious fact indicated by Kenneth Burke when he spoke of the relationship between the meaning of, e.g. words and persuasion.[26] In the case of Herbert's poem, there occurs a confrontation between the classical tradition, barbarity, and something which he referred to as an *element*. Is that the so-called *inevitable historical process*?

Finally, the third question:[27]

In some cases, critics are mainly interested in the specific features of an artefact or in an artefact as a manifestation of a speaker's expressiveness. Such a focus on the speaker results from the question: "What does a rhetoric artefact say about the speaker?" A critic who is interested in an artefact as a reflection of the views of its creator usually tries to discover how speakers/authors perceive and interpret the world, what their internal lives look like, and how their points of view motivate them to specific actions. Rhetoric symbols provide hints helping one answer those questions.

That issue is particularly important, and an excellent example of such an analysis is the famous Kenneth Burke's analysis of *Mein Kampf*.[28] The quoted speech by Martin Luther King Jr. shows that if a speaker wishes to find *common grounds* with a recipient, the meaning of the speaker's text does not need to be distorted (intentionally or by mistake).[29] Therefore, it is a question of the *attitude*[30]

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26 In the examples which refer to the works by Thucydides, Sallust and Lewis there exists that exact will to exert a negative influence on the audience so that they observed and interpreted the world as the speakers suggested!

27 Ibidem.

28 Cf. K. Burke, "Retoryka Mein Kampf", [in:] *Nowa Krytyka. Antologia*, selection H. Krzeczkowski, trans. M. Szpakowska, PIW, Warsaw 1983, pp. 344–377 (it is a chapter of Burke's book, *The Philosophy of Literary Form*, The University of California Press, Berkeley et al. 1973, pp. 191–220).

29 That would offer an example of a very appropriate usage of variable lexical references; a different approach was applied in the works by Thucydides, Sallust and Lewis.

30 Alf Ross discussed the problem of differentiating attitudes from convictions and he indicated that one's convictions can be influenced and, possibly, changed, while attitudes are not susceptible to such activities. Cf. A. Ross, "Argumentacja i perswazja", [in:] *Metaetyka*, selection, ed. I. Lazari-Pawłowska, PWN, Warsaw 1975, pp. 163–183. That somewhat resembled Rudolf Carnap's attitude towards evaluations and norms as expression devoid of any meaning, cf.

of the speaker who even in a seemingly objective statement conveys some more or less covert intentions.[31] Herbert evaluated barbarians negatively, yet, allow me to reiterate, he did not bend the reference/meaning only "to have his way."[32]

Generally speaking, then, one could say that rhetoric can teach us the proper use of words/ expressions/ statements, also thanks to the fact that the emphasis of the negative elements of the description/interpretation of the world should occur though the application of a dialogue, i.e. a confrontation of various descriptions/ interpretations of the world.[33]

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ibidem, pp. 81–87: according to him, *beliefs* express some opinion about cognition while *attitudes* belong to the sphere of practical assuming of a position. The philosopher meant a differentiation between expressions of cognitive content and evaluative expressions. To put it bluntly: only the former possess any meaning; the latter may have some meaning, but it is mixed with emotions.

[31] Extremely important remarks in: R. Marlin, "The Rhetoric of Action Description. Ambiguity in Intentional Reference", *Informal Logic* 1984, issue 6(3), pp. 26–28: he indicated the fact that a speaker's *intentions* may change the meaning/reference of words/statements. He introduced the notion of "referential translucency of statements", which consists of using ambiguity. As van Quine commented: "[...] it can be taken as objectively stating a result of an action, and it can be taken as accusing the agent of intending that result" (W. van Orman Quine, *Różności. Słownik prawie filozoficzny*, trans. C. Cieśliński, Aletheia, Warsaw 1995, p. 176). The first three examples and, to some extent, Herbert's poem illustrate that statement well. However, contrary to what I have just said about Herbert's poem, one could indicate that the evaluation of barbarians is unequivocally negative (though it includes a referentially translucent statement as one cannot clearly state whether it will be barbarians who will destroy the classical world or whether that will be done by the so-called historical processes – in this case they were specified as the "unrelenting stream of elements").

[32] Once again, the examples from the works of Thucydides, Sallust and Lewis included intentional measures undertaken by the speakers to, while maintaining the pretences of an objective description of reality, create a negative image of either the antagonists or the modes of thinking (and action) of the antagonists. Allow me reiterate that the stylistic devices (?) used by Thucydides and Sallust, *in summa*, led to an extremely bloody civil war (in Greece and Rome). Nonetheless, the remark in the previous note might suggest that Herbert acted similarly to Thucydides, Sallust and Lewis. In reference to modern times (particularly in reference to examples taken from politics and the media), the issues were discussed to the fullest by Bruce McComiskey, *Post-Truth Rhetoric and Composition*, Utah State University Press, Ohio 2017.

[33] That is the general recommendation offered in treatises in rhetoric (*science about status*), which were best summarised by Richard E. Volkmann. Cf. R.E. Volkmann, *Die Rhetorik der Griechen und Römer in systematischer Übersicht dargestellt*, Teubner Verlag, Leipzig 1885 (repr. Olms Verlag, Hildesheim et al. 1987), pp. 38–92, 241–242.

Conclusions

It is difficult to conclude anything with full certainty. Considering the difficulty in defining the theoretical perception of the notions of meaning/reference (in most general terms: whether it is philosophical, logical or linguistic), the problem already arises at the level of the theory, and in turn, when choosing the principles of analytical procedure. The other difficulty is associated with the selection of analysis examples, e.g. the ones indicated in this text can be interpreted both as violations of meaning/reference and simply as misunderstanding resulting from the difficulties in elementary understanding of texts (sometimes that is a matter of unfamiliarity with the notions or expressions used by authors), as well as intentional recipient manipulation.

I believe that the use of the theory of rhetoric can help avoid the biggest difficulties described in the situations in the first three examples as well as the difficulties associated with the selection of both the theory and the analytical method. That is because the lead principle in rhetoric is to juxtapose *pro et contra* views.[34] Moreover, each of the first three examples is basically a textbook example of intentional "confusing" thesis with hypothesis and that which should have been proven, was provided as something obvious. Those matters, from the theoretical point of view, were best discussed by Volkmann.[35]

Does that bring us closer to explaining the problem of meaning? Only partly – rhetoric tools are more useful for studying whether a statement violates meaning/reference. The situation is worse when one wishes to use them for constructing statements which are not supposed to violate meaning/reference; then, one is once again faced with the problem posed by Frege and partly challenged by van Quine. In fact, it is necessary to consider both the context and the theory within which one is to discuss the meaning/reference of a statement.[36] I gather, then, that

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[34] Ibidem, pp. 38–92.

[35] Ibidem, pp. 38–57.

[36] In the quoted poem by Herbert, two theories of the world are described: the classical (Stoic) and the barbarian; however, please consider that despite the poet *preferred* the former, he did not condemn the latter – he only expressed his regret that the former was subsiding. That might have been caused by his (covert) application of a third theory which talks about progress, development, etc., in most general terms: evolution of the theories which describe the world. Cf. Ch. Delsol, *op. cit*. Then, the inevitable outcome of such an attitude would also be an evolution or rather transformation of the references of words. Yet, at the same time, it would be a confirmation of previously referenced suggestions by van Quine (the contextuality of reference and, at the same time, their entanglement in a more general theory, e.g. social theory, applied by the speaker). It is possible that the application of the theory of speech acts could also enable one to capture the formation and transformations of the references in Herbert's text.

one can study *language usage*; it is much more difficult to develop a theory which would enable one to *avoid* such violations of meaning/reference.

Thus, the result is poor, however, it all depends on the intentions of the speaker whether they will ensure the clarity of their statement, i.e. *unambiguity of meaning/reference*. The theoreticians of rhetoric considered speaker intentions as a major issue regarding the moral preparation of the one who spoke. As Richard E. Volkmann argued:[37]

[rhetoric is…] the basis of true democracy. One's familiarity with its [rhetoric's – J.Z.L.] principles prevents the situation that power in a state is gained by demagogues and charlatans, who cover the void of their thoughts with the tinsel of words.

What a shame those words were mere *wishful thinking*! That is why already Pindar indicated in the *First Pythian Ode* that speech/eloquence is morally entangled.

Warsaw, 20.08.2018

Annex 1

Poem by Zbigniew Herbert *Do Marka Aurelego*, http://www.fundacjaherberta.com/tworczosc3/poezja/struna-swiatla/do-marka-aurelego, [accessed on: 21.08.2018]; also Z. Herbert, *89 wierszy*, Wyd. A5, Krakow 2008. [English version: Herbert Z., *The Collected Poems 1956–1998*, Atlantic Books, Kindle Edition].

> *To Professor Henryk Elzenberg*
> *Good night Marcus put out the light*
> *and shut the book For overhead*
> *is raised a gold alarm of stars*
> *heaven is talking some foreign tongue*
> *this the barbarian cry of fear*
> *your Latin cannot understand*
> *Terror continuous dark terror*
> *against the fragile human land*

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[37]   R.E. Volkmann, "Die Rhetorik der Griechen und Römer", [in:] *Handbuch der klassischen Altertumswissenschaft*, 1st. ed. von Müller, Beck Verlag, München 1901, Bd. 2, Abt. 3, p. 61 [Polish trans. in: H. Cichocka, J.Z. Lichański, *Zarys historii retoryki. Od początku do upadku cesarstwa bizantyńskiego*, Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, Warszawa 1993, pp. 109–233 (quotation of the fragment omitted in the Polish edition!)]. In the Polish edition, the fragment was inserted into a different place of the study.

begins to beat It's winning Hear
its roar The unrelenting stream
of elements will drown your prose
until the world's four walls go down
As for us? – to tremble in the air
blow in the ashes stir the ether
gnaw our fingers seek vain words
drag off the fallen shades behind us

Well Marcus better hang up your peace
give me your hand across the dark
Let it tremble when the blind world beats
on senses five like a failing lyre
Traitors – universe and astronomy
reckoning of stars wisdom of grass
and your greatness too immense
and Marcus my defenseless tears

Annex 2

Fragment of the novel by M.G. Lewis, *The Bravo of Venice*, and a commentary after: J.Z. Lichański, *Filologia – Filozofia – Retoryka. Wprowadzenie do badań* (*nie tylko*) *literatury popularnej*, DiG, Warsaw 2017, p. 63.

During a discussion between the protagonist (Abellino = Rosalvo) and the antagonist (Matteo), the following words are uttered (M.G. Lewis, *Postrach Wenecji*, trans. L. Owczarzak, WP, Poznań, pp. 23–24, 25–26 [English version: Zschokke, Heinrich. *The Bravo of Venice*; a romance. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform. Kindle Edition]):

[1] „Fool! know, the bravo must be above crediting the nurse's antiquated tales of vice and virtue. What is virtue? [2] What is virtue? [3] What is vice? [4] Nothing but such things as forms of government, custom, manners, and education have made sacred: and that which men are able to make honourable at one time, it is in their power to make dishonourable at another, whenever the humour takes them; […] [5] And what, then, is the thing called HONOUR! [6] ‚This a word, an empty sound, a mere fantastic creature of the imagination! […] [7] I followed the bent of my genius, yet count I not my studies thrown away, since they taught me more philosophy than to tremble at phantoms created by my own imagination.

That statement by Matteo is a bizarre mixture of views which together form a "beautiful" eristic argumentative construct. Please note that sentences [2], [3], and [5] are rhetoric questions, while the answer is seemingly true, cf. sentences [4] and [6]44. The author indicated how one can avoid a serious answer (while offering an illusion of it as, to some extent, he is right) to a very complex and important question. The entire argument does not even try to maintain the pretence of argumentation; moreover, sentence [4] intentionally, though covertly, introduces additional understanding. It is the equalling of such different categories as "forms of government", "custom", "manners", "education" as the explanation (?) of the origins of such categories as "virtue" and "vice". Please note that sentence [1] is an understatement, and the hidden fragment of the understanding equals the notions of "virtue" and "vice" with the contents of "nurse's antiquated tales".

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Jakub Z. Lichański

Sens: czy narzędzia retoryki są przydatne w jego badaniu?

Streszczenie

Przedmiotem rozważań są dwie kwestie: po pierwsze problem sensu, po drugie – czy narzędzia retoryki postrzeganej jako podstawowe narzędzie w komunikacji międzyludzkiej (obojętne czy codziennej, czy specjalistycznej), mogą być pomocne w odczytywaniu i interpretowaniu sensu. Sens jest rozumiany za G. Fregem: „Ustalmy teraz zwięzłą terminologię: nazwa (wyraz, znak, układ znaków, wyrażenie) wyraża swój sens, oznacza zaś swe znaczenie. Przez znak wyrażamy jego sens, oznaczamy zaś jego znaczenie". W niniejszych rozważaniach chodzi także o odpowiedź na daleko ogólniejsze pytanie: „czy, dzięki retoryce, możemy powiedzieć coś ważkiego o świecie, czyli jednak określamy jakoś tezę filozoficzną, czy tylko, z różnych perspektyw, ale szukamy najbardziej prawdopodobnej odpowiedzi na hipotezę".

Przedstawione założenie jest konsekwencją sugestii, jaką przedstawił Willard van Orman Quine: „Retoryka jest techniką przekonywania do dobrego lub

do złego" i wiąże się ona z czymś, co za Randalem Marlinem określamy jako „wyrażenia referencyjnie półprzezroczyste".

Hipoteza, jaką postaram się udowodnić, brzmi zatem: czy sens jakiegokolwiek wyrażenia można, przy pomocy narzędzi retoryki, można tak dookreślić, aby stał się tezą filozoficzną a nie hipotezą. Aby zarówno podmiotowo, jak i przedmiotowo uznać takie wyrażenie za prawdziwe. Wtedy i tylko wtedy możemy powiedzieć, iż takie wyrażenie ma/zawiera jakiś (a nie jakikolwiek) sens.

Słowa kluczowe: sens, retoryka, komunikacja, nauka, religia, metafizyka, teza, hipoteza, G. Frege, I. Kant, R. Marlin, W. van Orman Quine.

Meaning. Are the tools of rhetoric useful in studying the matter?

Summary

The discussion centres around two issues: the issue of meaning, and the question whether the tools of rhetoric viewed as the basic tool in interpersonal communication (be it everyday or specialist communication) can be helpful in reading and interpreting meaning. The author understands meaning after G. Frege: […] let the following phraseology be established: A proper name (word, sign, sign combination, expression) *expresses* its sense, *stands for* or *designates* its reference. By means of a sign we express its sense and designate its reference. The purpose of the discussion is also to answer a much more general question: *whether through rhetoric can one say something important about the world, so do they define a philosophical thesis or only, from various perspectives, one searches for the most probable answer to a hypothesis.*

The presented assumption is a result of the suggestion of Willard van Orman Quine: *Rhetoric is the literary technology of persuasion, for good or ill*, and it entails something which Randal Marlin defined as *referentially translucent expressions*.

Therefore, the hypothesis I shall try to prove is the following: can the sense of any expression be, using the tools of rhetoric, defined to such an extent so that it becomes a philosophical thesis and not a hypothesis? So that in terms of both the subject and the object the expression could be considered as true. Then and only then can one say that such an expression has/contains some (but not any) sense.

Keywords: sense, rhetoric, communication, science, religion, metaphysics, thesis, hypothesis, G. Frege, I. Kant, R. Marlin, W. van Orman Quine.

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