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MAKING MEANING OF *MORALITY* AS AN AXIOLOGICAL PHENOMENON

Summary. The article provides a comprehensive view of the axiological phenomenon of **morality** from the perspectives of philosophy, ethics, cultural linguistics; it analyses its conceptualized form as a lexical concept MORALITY, examines its meaning, dynamics and peculiarities of its verbalization within the context of the poem *The Great Hunger* by Patrick Kavanagh. The claim of the research is that the meaning of a lexical concept is dynamic, versatile, culture-specific and context-dependent. Principle of lexical decomposition is used to determine the basic internal structure of the concept. Next, the paper uses the approach of cognitive semantics and Cognitive Metaphor Theory to attempt and examine the meaning and dynamics of the lexical concept MORALITY in the context of literary text.

Key words: lexical concept, componential analysis, meaning, representation, context.

Formulation of the problem. Many linguists adopt the view of a language as analogical to the atomic structure of matter (i.e. exercising the idea of larger formations consisting of smaller parts). If we accept the premise that a natural language consists of meanings of its lexical units then by the same principle the meaning of a lexical unit consists of its constituents – semantic components or semantic features. Componential approach allows us to examine the meaning of a word by breaking it down into smaller constituent semantic units or analyzable monads [1, p. 239].

The principle of lexical decomposition has been extensively criticized for several reasons. One of them is that the significant proportion of vocabulary cannot be analysed in this way. The other consists in the fact that this analysis leaves much semantic knowledge undisclosed, as the established two-dimensional correlations do not provide full analysis of the meaning of a word [1, p. 240]. In other words, the set of components' meanings pertaining to a certain verbally represented phenomenon does not necessarily equal the meaning traditionally associated with the phenomenon itself.

Extensive research in the fields of social psychology, cognitive psychology, cognitive linguistics, interactional sociolinguistics and computational linguistics has proven that modelling meanings of words in terms of compositionality cannot be seen as sustainable [4, p. 491]. A considerable number of scholars believe “that the meanings associated with words are flexible, open-ended and highly sensitive to utterance context” [4, p. 1]. Therefore, we believe it is possible to provide a comprehensive analysis of the meaning of a phenomenon only by looking at its conceptualized form in the context of its use. In our case, the concept MORALITY will be examined from the perspectives of philosophy, ethics, cognitive linguistics and cognitive semantics.

Analysis of the recent research and publications. Extensive research in cognitive linguistics in Ukraine and Russia has been dedicated to the study of concepts. Conceptology in these countries is represented by but in no way limited to such scholars as O.V. Vorobyova, E.S. Kubryakova, V.Z. Demyankov, Yu.S. Stepanov,

V.I. Karasik. One of the most significant publications of the recent years is a monograph *Linguoconceptology* (2013) containing contributions of the most influential scholars of Ukraine, Russia and Belarus [13]. It examines basic tendencies in the development of the field; reviews results of the research of the dynamics of concepts and conceptual systems, specificity of their interaction in the aspects of linguosemiotics, Cultural linguistics and Social linguistics [13].

The work of Western Cognitive linguists, semanticists and Cognitive semanticists is represented in the paper by A. Cruse, G. Leech, J. Saeed, R. Jackendoff, G. Lakoff, M. Johnson, U. Eco and V. Evans. We believe that combination of different approaches will provide a broader perspective into the study of a lexical concept MORALITY.

The aim of the paper is to provide a comprehensive view of the axiological phenomenon of *morality* from the perspectives of philosophy, ethics, cultural linguistics; analyse its conceptualized form as a lexical concept MORALITY, examine its meaning, dynamics and peculiarities of its verbalization within the context of the poem *The Great Hunger* by Patrick Kavanagh.

Presentation of the basic material. While it is suitable to examine a single word based on dictionary definitions, it can prove to be completely inconsistent with contextual meaning. Cruse states that areas suitable for analysis are kinship terms, binary oppositions and terms referring to young/adult/female/male animals and humans [1, p. 247]. The restrictions of this method are clear and it seems plausible that some vocabulary items can present quite a challenge. In general human terms the meaning of the phenomenon *morality* is instinctually clear, but a closer look at its verbal representation in a culture specific format puts additional questions.

From the philosophical standpoint, phenomena are appearances as opposed to reality. In Immanuel Kant's philosophy, phenomena are what appears to the mind, defined as things-as-they-appear or things-as-they-are-represented. They are a synthesis of sensory and conceptual forms of objects-as-known [5]. In epistemology, phenomena are treated as “the starting points in building knowledge”. In a general sense they are “whatever we observe (perceive) and seek to explain” [5].

The phenomenon of *morality* represents itself in a certain form of generally accepted culture specific behaviour. It originates from the knowledge of ethical standards (elaborated later in course of the paper) which gives one the right to speak of its axiological nature. Conceptualized information of what is deemed as appropriate behaviour reflects people's knowledge of the abstract notion of rightful conduct, i.e. the concept MORALITY.

In a strictly philosophical view “concepts are intersubjective, independent of particular people, languages, and even whole cultures” [10, p. 70]. In cognitive linguistics, however, the term “concept” is treated differently.

In a review of the accomplishments of Cognitive Linguistics of recent years Vorobyova O.P. states that due to the research of Rus-

sian scientists Kubryakova and Stepanov based on previous publications by A. Wierzbicka and R. Jackendoff it has become accepted that concept is the basic unit of consciousness, a constituent of “the collective unconscious”, an operative content-bearing unit of memory, a unit of mental or psychological resources of our consciousness, a building block of conceptual system [13, p. 15]. According to Stepanov it is also a “coagulate of culture”, a mental picture of what cannot always be expressed verbally, but can be seen, felt, heard, known, remembered [14, p. 15].

Western Cognitive linguistics has a somewhat different take on the theory of concepts. According to Vyvyan Evans, “concept (also representation) is the fundamental unit of knowledge central to categorisation and conceptualisation. Concepts inhere in the conceptual system, and from early in infancy are redescribed from perceptual experience through a process termed perceptual meaning analysis. This process gives rise to the most rudimentary of concepts known as an image schema. Concepts can be encoded in a language-specific format known as the lexical concept” [3, p. 31].

Synonymy of the terms “notion” and “concept” might be misleading. Notion is an agreed upon unit of knowledge, constructed by a language community with the purpose of having a “common ground”. Concepts are intersubjective, exist independently of a particular language community (a common point with William G. Lycan), reconstructed with a certain degree of (un)certainly [12, p. 45]. Therefore, in order to avoid misunderstanding the paper will deal with the lexical concept MORALITY verbalized in the context of a poem *The Great Hunger* as the object of research.

In a generally accepted view *morality* is ascribed basic goodness and undoubtable virtue, a standard, according to which one must live his live or a law according to which all deeds will be measures. It can exist irrespective of religion, and it constitutes a universal for all cultures. The caveat being that the constituents of morality may differ, but the standard of behavior is the key element.

In philosophy, the notion of *morality* is used in two broad senses: descriptive and normative. In descriptive sense, it refers to particular codes of conduct established by society or a group or accepted by an individual as his/her behavior. In a normative sense *morality* denotes code of conduct that all rational people will put forward in specific circumstances. A “moral agent” is a person who accepts the code of conduct and meets certain volitional and intellectual conditions, including rationality [5].

Definitional analysis of the lexical unit *morality* demonstrated three distinct patters. In the first sense, *it is a set of principles/standards or beliefs concerning distinction between good and bad*. In the second sense, *it is a code of moral conduct that distinguishes right and wrong*. The third concerns *the degree, quality or extent to which something is considered good or bad* [15–19]. It must be mentioned that some dictionaries provide wider descriptions. Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, for instance, includes *virtue* in the notion of conduct and *conformity to ideals of right human conduct* as a separate entry. By means of componential analysis based on 5 dictionaries we have established that the semantic features of the abstract notion include “*code of conduct / behaviour*”, “*principles/standard/system*”, the scale of “*right and wrong*” and “*degree/quality/extent*” [15–19]. By bringing together the units of meaning and unifying results, we believe the concept MORALITY can be described as follows:

Morality: [SET OF PRINCIPLES] [RIGHT] [CONDUCT]

This seems like a simplified definition of a complex multifaceted phenomenon. According to Cruse “It is possible that some as-

pects of meaning are inherently not amenable to specification by means of a finite set of components” [1, p. 257]. It can be said that the later meaning is prototypical in our understanding of morality, which is supported by the philosophical view. While the result of componential analysis is clear it still remains a question whether it is compatible with the meaning of the concept MORALITY represented in context of a poem by Patrick Kavanagh.

The concept of MORALITY is abstract, ill-defined and general (terms by Cruse) and encyclopedic knowledge about this construct may be of little help in interpreting the literary text.

Umberto Eco states that “Texts are the loci where sense is produced. When signs are isolated and removed from the living texture of a text, they do become spectral and lifeless conventions. A text casts into doubt all the previous signification systems and renews them; frequently it destroys them” [2, p. 36]. In text interpretation figurative language, in Eco’s words, operates by “killing” senses.

Understanding text requires a set of semantic-pragmatic rules, which establish how the reader is bound to collaborate in order to actualize the intended meaning of the text. In his words “<...> sememe is a virtual text; the text is the expansion of the sememe” [2, p. 43–44]. Semantic information is encoded in text and proper reading means to maneuver the encoded meaning by activating some portions of it, “narcotizing” other and engaging their combination.

In this respect, cognitive linguistics provides methods for the analysis of figurative language of literary text. Cognitive linguists view language as a cognitive activity, similar to learning or reasoning. The distinction between linguistic and encyclopedic knowledge from this perspective is blurred or altogether dissolved [11, p. 354]. Knowledge of objective world is conceptualized and represented in mental structures. In other words, experienced processes and objects of the actual world are stored as concepts in the minds of people. In cognitive semantics the accepted position is that meaning is based on conceptualized structures. [11, p. 35]. Cruse also agrees that “meaning is in essence conceptual” [1, p. 43]. Jackendoff states that “A central view in cognitive semantics is that semantic structure, along with other cognitive domains, reflects the mental categories which people have formed from their experience of growing up and acting in the world” [6, p. 540].

For instance, the concept of TIME includes reference to days of the week or names of months, but the boundaries of these time periods are not perceptual, yet people build their schedules according to these constructs [6, p. 543]. The same refers to abstract notions or moral values that constitute the pivot of legal system or moral system of humanity (in social institutions like marriage or school, or organized physical regiments like sports competitions etc.)

Generally speaking, many linguistically expressed concepts are purely mental formations, but they are experienced as real and meaningful by all the members of a linguistic community. In fact, they are strong enough to shape behavioural patterns of individuals and in case of a moral conflict of some sort create an imbalance strong enough to cause physical symptoms of distress. This is exactly the case of the concept MORALITY, which, being an intersubjective abstract phenomenon, has a strong hold of a community’s conduct, judgement or acceptance / rejection of facts or people, but has no physical representation in form of a manual or a documented case. Not uncommonly, conflicts may arise between what is legally allowed and morally acceptable.

In context of a literary work complex abstract concepts are often presented in metaphorical form. The reason for this phenomenon is

the need to describe a complex notion in terms of something that can be perceived experientially. In Conceptual Metaphor Theory introduced by Lakoff metaphor is accepted not as a merely rhetoric device or a figure of speech, but as an underlying scheme of thought. In CMT correlations are established among conceptual domains so that a simpler, usually concrete concept helps to understand a more complex one. The starting point is called a target domain and the one that provides analogy – source domain [8]. Saeed illustrates this point by referencing to Lakoff and Turner: “Metaphors allow us to understand one domain of experience in terms of another. To serve this function, there must be some grounding, some concepts that are not completely understood via metaphor to serve as source domains (Lakoff and Turner 1989: 135)” [11, p. 371].

As a lexical concept, MORALITY includes such semantic features as *faithfulness, virtue, goodness, good behaviour, righteousness, rectitude, uprightness, morals, principles, honesty, integrity, propriety, honour, justice, fair play, justness, decency, probity, chasteness, chastity, purity, blamelessness* [15–19].

In the poem *The Great Hunger* by Patrick Kavanagh the concept MORALITY is activated mostly in figurative language and verbalized in a series of metaphorical expressions. We believe the conceptual metaphor that can encompass the whole context of the poem is MORALITY IS A BURDEN – verbalized in the following linguistic metaphorical expression: *In the gap there's a bush weighted with boulders like morality* [7, p. 103].

It should be indicated that the lexical unit MORALITY is used only twice throughout the poem. But the concept is activated through the use of language that constitutes its content. Consider the following example:

*Maguire was faithful to death:
He stayed with his mother till she died
At the age of ninety-one.
She stayed too long.*

Being *faithful* involves taking care of the mother, which in its own forms an incongruity – one is expected to be faithful to a life partner, not to the mother. The word *too* is used to emphasize longevity and creates another conflict in the meaning of *faithful*. We believe it indicates that the way to resolve this incongruity is to suggest that such a dedicated care was in fact a burden.

In context of the poem we single out three institutions that act as the imposers of the basic rules of conduct presented as MORALITY: CHURCH, MOTHER (who is the embodiment of society as a whole) and FARMLAND (physical labour in the fields). Being a good son, a good Christian and a good farmer are the primary virtues of a peasant. Although following these principles of MORALITY creates an imbalance in the internal belief system:

*Religion, the fields and the fear of the Lord
And Ignorance giving him the coward's blow,*

Every aspect of a farmer's life that constitutes the basic value is seen as an agent of aggression, giving blow or a hit. The phrase *coward's blow* sets up an inference to an unexpected attack, possibly from behind or from someone who/what was an unlikely to be an aggressor. We believe this scenario implies that the expected embodiment of virtue and basic goodness in the narrator's perspective turns against him.

In the context of the poem we observe that the *just world hypothesis* is set up to shape the life of an average farmer. This hypothesis – to behave in a righteous way and expect to receive according to your deeds – is imposed by two agents: CHURCH and society embodied in the MOTHER. Basically, they are the institu-

tions that impose the rules of conduct. That implies following the main principles: **commit no sin, take care of your mother, work in the fields.**

In the following example we observe activation of several conceptual domains – CONFESSIO, CHURCH, LIE:

*“Now go to Mass and pray and confess your sins
And you'll have all the luck,” his mother said.
He listened to the lie that is a woman's screen
Around a conscience when soft thighs are spread*

Activation of the *just world hypothesis* and reference to CONFESSIO in the first two lines is the primary rule that constituted the scale of MORALITY in this context. Immediately established correlation with another conceptual domain LIE indicates that the promise of justness is a deceit. Allusion to sexual intercourse verbalized in the phrase *soft thighs are spread* refers to the concept of SEXUAL DEPRIVATION recurrent in the poem.

The search of natural human pleasures is opposed to the notion of MORALITY in this context. Sexual relations with a woman constitutes the SIN in religious belief and the essence of *immorality*:

*And he was then a young and heated fellow.
Too earnest, too earnest! He rushed beyond the thing
To the unreal. And he saw Sin
Written in letters larger than John Bunyan dreamt of.*

The same statement can be confirmed in the following example:

*If he opens his eyes once in a million years –
Through a crack in the crust of the earth he may see
a face nodding in
Or a woman's legs.
Shut them again for that sight is sin.*

Further in the poem the reference to unrealized sexual intercourse is presented in several conceptual metaphors:

For the strangled impulse there is no redemption.

IMPULSE IS A PERSON; PHYSICAL PLEASURE IS A SIN.

Strangled impulse obviously refers to an unrealized intercourse, but the use of a lexical unit *redemption*, common for the religious reference to the penance for the sins, changes the nature of the impulse and brings it from the concept of IMMORALITY to MORALITY. By this point we can observe that the concept MORALITY has developed. Its dynamics indicates a radical change in its content – what was originally considered immoral is later turned into a natural moral value. The same process can be further exemplified in the following lines:

*Religion's walls expand to the push of nature. Morality
yields
To sense – but not in little tillage fields.*

In the phrase *morality yield to sense* we observe a conflict between moral and natural or rational behaviour. It once again proves our original point that the principles of moral conduct exclude the possibility of having a natural relationship with the opposite sex. What is considered natural is immoral.

Another metaphorical expression arising from this context is the perception of the CHURCH as the OPPRESSOR. This conceptual metaphor is activated by means of the use of lexical expressions *Religion's walls* and other implications of boundaries:

And the chapel pressing its low ceiling over them.

The conceptual metaphor CHURCH IS THE OPPRESSOR translates into further reading of MORALITY IS AN OPPRESSOR implication. The dynamics of this concept shows transformation of the virtue that is the aim of a peasant's life into a construct that loses its value in the end:

*The priest from the altar called Patrick Maguire's name
To hold the collecting-box in the chapel door
During all the Sundays of May.
His neighbours envied him his holy rise,
But he walked down from the church with affected indifference
And took the measure of heaven angle-wise.*

Conclusions. The concept MORALITY pertains to the sphere of human mentality that can only be understood from an interdisciplinary approach. As an axiological phenomenon it inheres in philosophy, psychology, is the subject of ethics. As a lexical concept it has verbal representation and constitutes a knowledge unit of a language community. Because of its nature we claimed that understanding its meaning would present a challenge. A combination of methods, such as componential analysis, Conceptual Metaphor Theory, descriptive, definitional and contextual analysis, has been used to accomplish the task of the paper. By means of lexical decomposition we have established the general interpretation of this construct – *a set of principles or a system of rules that establish a code of conduct and the degree of right and wrong*. With the help of componential analysis we have singled out the units of meaning or semantic features that constitute the concept:

Morality: [SET OF PRINCIPLES] [RIGHT] [CONDUCT].

Further in the research we adopted the cognitive approach that allowed us to analyse the process of verbalization of this concept in the context of the poem *The Great Hunger* by Patrick Kavanagh. We were able to determine that in figurative language of the poem the concept is activated in form of the conceptual metaphor MORALITY IS A BURDEN. It has a complex structure; it is activated by means of subtle implicatures and is intricately connected with other conceptual metaphors into a system that represents the narrator's scheme of thought. Our investigation shows that the concept MORALITY demonstrates internal dynamics, which denotes that its content is capable of change. Although the original definition can still be applicable in its respect. It provides a narrow understanding of meaning but at the same time serves as the "anchoring point", according to which contextual meaning is measured. We believe that even though lexical decomposition does not provide complete account of meaning of an abstract notion in literary text, it can and should be used in order to single out the basic meaning components.

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Вук О. Є. З'ясування значення аксіологічного феномену MORALITY (МОРАЛЬНІСТЬ)

Анотація. У статті пропонується комплексний розгляд аксіологічного феномену «моральність» із перспектив філософії, етики, лінгвокультурології; аналізується його концептуалізована форма у вигляді лексичного концепту MORALITY (МОРАЛЬНІСТЬ), досліджується його значення, динаміка та особливості вербалізації в контексті поезії Патріка Каванаха "The Great Hunger". Стаття стверджує, що значення лексичного концепту динамічне, багатовимірне, культурно-специфічне та зумовлене контекстом. З метою виявлення базової внутрішньої структури концепту використовується принцип лексичної декомпозиції. Далі у статті використовується підхід когнітивної семантики та теорія когнітивної метафори з метою дослідження динаміки лексичного концепту MORALITY у контексті поезії.

Ключові слова: лексичний концепт, компонентний аналіз, значення, репрезентація, контекст.

Вук О. Е. Определение значения аксиологического феномена MORALITY (МОРАЛЬНОСТЬ)

Аннотация. В статье предлагается комплексный подход к рассмотрению аксиологического феномена «моральность» с точек зрения философии, этики, лингвокультурологии; анализируется его концептуализированная форма в качестве лексического концепта MORALITY (МОРАЛЬНОСТЬ), исследуются его значение, динамика развития и способы вербализации в контексте поэзии Патрика Каванаха "The Great Hunger". Статья утверждает, что значение лексического концепта динамично по своей природе, многообразно, культурно специфично и контекстуально зависимо. С целью опре-

деления базовой внутренней структуры концепта используется принцип лексической декомпозиции. Далее в статье используется подход когнитивной семантики и теории когнитивной метафоры для исследования ди-

намики лексического концепта MORALITY в контексте поэзии.

Ключевые слова: лексический концепт, компонентный анализ, значение, репрезентация, контекст.