

- LEONARDO CERAGIOLI, FRANCESCO MONTESI, AND ANTONIO PICCOLOMINI D'ARAGONA, *A survey of two strands in proof-theoretic semantics*.
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Since Schroeder-Heister introduced the term “proof-theoretic semantics” (PTS) in 1991 [82], many diverse ideas and results have been said to belong to the PTS field. Also, what Schroeder-Heister’s expression refers to was already there well before 1991. The birth of PTS traces back to the early 1970s, with papers by Prawitz [65, 66], or maybe to the 1930s, with Gentzen’s seminal works [30, 31].

In our talk, we focus on PTS as it is *currently* conceived, and try to provide an overview of the most relevant steps and achievements in the development of two distinct strands in today’s researches in the field. We call these the *From Semantics to Rules* (SR) and *From Rules to Semantics* (RS) approach, respectively.

We do not pretend that SR plus RS amounts to the full PTS field, nor that SR and RS are completely kept apart from each other. Still, it seems to us that these two perspectives are not often, or not clearly distinguished, and that this may lead to confusion on what PTS is, or should be expected to do. Besides focusing on the differences between SR and RS, however, we also insist on some principles they share.

One of these principles is Gentzen’s tenet that logical meaning is determined by introduction rules in Natural Deduction, while elimination rules can be somehow shown to be consequences of this semantic determination—or unique functions of the privileged proof-principles [31]. The differences between SR and RS stem from how the Gentzenian principle is understood, from the role it plays with accompanying assumptions in the given overall approach, and from the purposes it is taken to serve.

In the SR framework, Gentzen’s tenet is subsumed to a notion of *global* validity of proof-structures, i.e., derivation-trees in the Natural Deduction format. A proof-structure is valid if it reduces to one which ends by introduction. The reduction procedure results from proof-rewriting functions associated to non-introduction rules—approaches which prioritise elimination rules are available too [35, 53, 78, 95], but we leave them aside. The validity of a non-introduction rule is *not* given by its proof-theoretic balance over the introduction rules, but by the fact that it preserves the validity of the proof-structures it gives rise to [50, 83]. This has three important consequences.

First, a non-introduction rule needs not be associated to just *one* rewriting function, as it may require *no* rewriting function, or *many* rewriting functions—even for rules others than that at issue. Second, the rule might not show *any* balance relative to the introduction rules. Third, validity of a proof-structure is *not* equivalent to *normalisability* of a Natural Deduction derivation, so usual counterexamples to validity of rules based on non-normalisability—e.g., Read’s *bullet* [69]—might be of *no use* to show that given rules are invalid in the SR sense.

SR looks at PTS as a semantics which, while proof-theoretic in spirit, is “operationally” similar to model-theoretic or Kripkean semantics: given a formal language \mathcal{L} , one defines a proof-based notion of consequence for (sets of) formulas of \mathcal{L} , and then one proves standard results for given logics Σ over \mathcal{L} relative to the consequence relation at issue (one also provides “models” for the non-logical dictionary of \mathcal{L} in terms of atomic proof-systems). To attain the intended generality, hence, the consequence relation cannot coincide with that of derivability in some specific Σ . The question is

not whether or how the rules of Σ give meaning to the logical dictionary of \mathcal{L} . Rather, the task is giving validity criteria for *arbitrary* non-introduction rules on \mathcal{L} , even in the presence of a Σ which is proof-theoretically well-behaved.

In the SR tradition, hence, the research has focused on such topics as functional completeness and categoricity of connectives [67, 79, 81, 84], (Prawitz’s) completeness (conjecture) [4, 15, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 63, 77, 88, 89, 90], theory of atomic proof-systems [61, 62], criteria of acceptability of reductions and of identity of proofs [14, 101, 103]—possibly in connection with λ -calculus [1, 3]—and (completeness-related) applications to bilateralism [2, 5], bunched implication [39, 34], category theory [68], ecumenic logic [6], linear logic [7, 9, 37, 38], modal logic [23], negation-as-failure [32], phase semantics [96], and reductive logic [33, 36].

In the RS framework, Gentzen’s tenet is taken *literally* into account, so that the main issue becomes which *criteria* rules must satisfy to confer logical meaning. Instead of global validity of proof-structures, hence, the RS tradition focuses on the local and analytic validity of inference rules, imposing restrictions on the shape of both introduction and elimination rules.

The *criteria* for the introduction rules are usually less controversial—but see [22, 49, 69]—so we focus on the elimination rules only. The justification of the latter is sorted out in different ways: availability of local reduction steps (one for each rule) [12, 13], criteria for their general form (general-elimination harmony) [28, 69, 72], or considerations of proof-theoretic strength of rules and formulas [91, 98, 100]. The shared aim is proving that given elimination rules are neither too weak nor too strong with respect to the deductive import of the corresponding introduction rules.

The focus on rules as meaning-conferring led to broad investigations into various formalisations of deduction, such as multiple-conclusion systems [69, 74], sequent-calculi [99], rules introducing connectives in subordinate positions [11, 48] and labelled calculi [71]. Each of these extensions is controversial and contested by other logicians working in the same framework—see, e.g., [76] for sequents, [25, 93] for multiple conclusions and subordinate positions, and [64] for labels.

This approach fades the distinction between PTS strictly understood and the wider field of inferentialism influenced by structural proof theory, sometimes making it hard to establish a clear non-arbitrary boundary [52, 100]. The connections with inferentialist theories of meaning also stimulated the application of RS methodologies for studying fragments of natural language [26, 27]. Moreover, the eventuality that more than one system of logic satisfies the criteria of analytic justification is sometimes discussed in the RS tradition, with both pluralist [42, 44, 75], and strictly monist [70] conclusions.

Other topics which have been investigated in the RS tradition are: harmony for classical logic [48, 51, 69]; harmony and conservative extension [10, 41, 86, 92, 98]; distinction between flattened [22, 28] and higher-level [73, 80] general-elimination harmony; completeness of the proof-theoretic characterization of negation [45, 46]; acceptability of bilateral systems [24, 26, 29, 46, 47, 76, 87]; debate on how to define strength of rules and formulas [16, 100]; harmony and structural rules [40, 41, 54, 98, 99]; proof-theoretic treatment of paradoxes [85, 97, 101, 102, 103].

Beside Gentzen’s tenet, both the PTS trends we identify hark back to Dummett’s philosophy. Dummett’s general interests lie in the study of meaning broadly conceived. However, his investigations into the *theory of meaning*, i.e., the inquiry into the general principles and form that a systematic study of language should adopt [21], and into *meaning-theories*, i.e., the construction of such a theory for a given language [20], as well as into the nature and justification of deduction [19], can be also said to provide or inspire many of the relevant notions of PTS. We concentrate on two specific concepts—and on their many facets [17, 43, 94]: *harmony*—that we already mentioned—and the

fundamental assumption.

Harmony—balance of two aspects of the use sentences, i.e., asserting and drawing consequences—is as known interpreted by Dummett either as a global requirement of *total harmony* in terms of conservativeness [8], or as a local requirement of *intrinsic harmony* for a set of rules of a particular logical constant—complemented by a symmetrical counterpart called *stability*. These are what allows for the systematicity of the analysis of meaning itself, but also for the possibility of critique and revision of the use of language [18], and for the justifiability of semantic systems [20]. Correspondingly, the assumption that, for any valid argument for a complex sentence, we can construct a valid argument for it which ends with an application of an introduction, grounds both the proof-theoretic justification procedure, and the meaning-theoretical account of the molecular character of language.

In the analysis of both sides of such concepts, Dummett sensibly relies upon insights from structural proof-theory, based on which he outlines a notion of argumental validity much in the spirit of the SR one, while insisting on the inherent semantic character of proof-theoretic balance, thus coming close to the RS approach instead. So, in Dummett’s philosophy, aspects which were later picked up separately, appear instead as harmoniously articulated, and constitute a sort of “neutral and natural” field for the evaluation and assessment of the differences and similarities between the SR and the RS approach, respectively.¹

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