

## Summary

A. V. Smirnov. *LOGIC OF SENSE*

*Theory and Its Application*

*in the Analysis of Classical Arabic Philosophy and Culture*

One of the ways to summarize the book is to say why it was written and what its author claims to have achieved. To my mind, Foreword and Conclusion serve this purpose best. Thus the English-speaking reader can get acquainted with the very beginning of the book and its end; the rest simply lies in between.

This Summary avoids any mention of contemporary philosophers and linguists, like Russel or Wittgenstein, Quine or Chomsky, Austin or Sepir. However, the views of these and many others were treated in the book, and their relation to the logic of sense was analyzed. I have to admit that many of their ideas served as a source of inspiration, but none as a source to draw upon. This does not deny a rapport between my position and contemporary philosophy and linguistics. It rather means that I had to explore the domain which these bright minds left unattended.

### Foreword

What is sense — something we discover behind things and after them, or something that makes our discovery of things conceivable, preceding them as the basis of their possibility? It might be true that we look for sense and seek it where it does not exist; yet this very expression might be senseless, if even the plumb nonsense is made possible only by plumbing the depths of sense, if plain no-meaning makes absence of its meaning plain only because it somehow makes sense. Is *making sense* a metaphor, or should this expression be taken in its direct meaning? The quest for sense looks like chasing a phantom which escapes right when we are about to catch it. Isn't it so only because we have no other hound to hunt it but itself?

It is common to consider the sense of words to be conventional. It depends upon our agreement<sup>1</sup>: if we agree that a language sign stands for a certain thing, or a certain idea, or a combination of other language signs, we thus define its meaning. Our common agreement binds the sign and the signified together and gives the sign its sense. This sense can be transmitted to anyone who knows the agreed-upon meaning of the sign. Thus the sign itself is devoid of sense; it is, so to say, ‘empty’ without our agreement which gives it all its meaning.

This concept, ancient as philosophy itself, has not basically changed nowadays. Even if we are unable to define the sign’s meaning precisely, even if it is woven by an interplay of mutual references and connotations that come and go but never stay, — yet this indefiniteness *is* only because it is measured against the ideal certainty of meaning which is considered as such (and hence is still theoretically necessary) but not reached. In the past the common agreement was believed to be a way of setting the meaning of language signs precisely, whereas today we doubt the effectiveness of such an agreement and the clarity of signs’ meaning comprehension provided by it. But to doubt the completeness of ability does not mean to doubt the freedom to exercise that ability, however incomplete. This leaves us still at ease with setting the meaning of language signs arbitrarily, at our will.

It is this belief in the basic possibility to set the meaning of the language signs arbitrarily that this book puts to question.

Is it true that only our agreement, albeit transformed by tradition and other external factors out of our control, defines the meaning of the language sign? And is it true that we are basically free to give the signs their meanings, thus turning them into language signs? That is the problem this book addresses.

The doubt expressed by these questions does not imply that I presume that the nature of the sign has any bearing on the signified. It rather means that I am trying to call attention to the domain *between* the sign and the signified. It is this domain that links them together, and it is this domain that is traditionally considered to be fully under our control, so that we are able to tie the one to the other in one step. This is why the relation of the sign to the signified appears *simple*, as illustrated by an arrow or a straight line. In place of this simplicity (shifted towards the horizon, sometimes endlessly, rather than

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<sup>1</sup> I use ‘agreement’ here in the widest possible sense to embrace as much of the relevant theories of meaning as possible. E.g., we can say that when a child learns his or her mother tongue, he or she ‘agrees’ to use certain sounds as the adults around him or her do. When I learn a new word or a new meaning of the word, I ‘agree’ to use it as prescribed by dictionaries or indicated by common practice; and so on.

eliminated by some of the modern semantic theories) I propose the concept of a process, which is, firstly, complex; secondly, logically consistent, that is, subject to formalization; thirdly, allowing variable realizations; fourthly, accountable, at least partially, for the formation of meaning.

I called the theory developed from this standpoint ‘logic of sense.’ It has nothing to do with what Gilles Deleuze meant by the same expression used for the title of one of his books, and the reader will have an ample opportunity to ascertain the difference between my position and that of the French philosopher. I started using this expression to denote my investigations long before Deleuze’s influence could reach me, and therefore I consider myself free to treat it as my own. It was important to keep ‘Logic of Sense’ as the title of this book because, firstly, it reflects the place the category ‘sense’ holds in my metaphysics, and, secondly, suggests the possibility to analyze the sense as a logically consistent entity.

Given all that, the logic of sense differs from numerous systems of formal logic. The latter proceed from the assumption that the form can be totally detached from its content, and on this basis investigate the laws of form irrespectively of the content. They are therefore compelled to treat as abstract those things which in fact are not devoid of concrete content (I mean first and foremost copula, negation and affirmation), and consequently might call for further abstraction and formalization. It is this premise that the logic of sense gets rid of. The possibility of doing so will be explained at length.

The **Introduction** sheds light on the relation between the views developed in this book and approaches to similar problems in modern philosophy and linguistics, providing in the end a general outline of the category ‘sense’ as understood here and of the possibilities it opens for philosophical inquiry. **Chapter I** investigates samples of ordinary language usage in classical Arabic culture. The method of *contrasting conception* helps to answer the question whether the verbal structures under consideration can be satisfactorily analyzed and explained by the existing theories of meaning and what theoretical assumptions are to be accepted in order to make up for the paucity of means of comprehension provided by modern philosophy and linguistics. **Chapter II** develops further the logic of sense theory on the basis of evidence provided by classical Arabic theoretical, chiefly philosophical, thought. **Chapter III** describes the ultimate intuitions that constitute the foundation for the meaning generation. It also provides the finalizing overview of the line of argument for the whole book and offers rigorous proof for validity of theory developed in it. The **Conclusion** summarizes the logic of sense theory. The Subject Index guides the reader to the main categories discussed in the book and its chief

ideas. The Biobibliographical Dictionary contains brief information about classical Arabic thinkers and minor schools of thought and sects mentioned in the text; for in-depth explanations the reader will have to refer to special literature on the topic.

### **Conclusion**

This Conclusion provides a resume of views developed in this book, bringing together insights and ideas of its various parts.

The book sets down foundations of the theory which explains laws of language signs meaning generation. Making an important reservation, I need to say that the generation of meaning had been explained so far only partially, and not 'ex nihilo.' That is to say, a sort of 'raw material' is still needed for this theory to show how it is 'processed' into what is realized as the meaning of our speech. Yet even the domain of these laws, let alone the laws themselves, has never been described before or even perceived as a subject of theoretical investigation. I gave an account of these laws and analyzed them down to their intuitive foundation which makes it possible for the meaning to emerge as a transformation of certain evidences recognized as valid by our consciousness.

The basic feature of this theory is its ability to show various possible types of meaning generation laws. The hypothesis offered on the basis of empirical evidence analyzed in the book suggests that different cultures may follow different types of such laws. The number of these types remains unsettled until future investigations that ought to determine it.

As described so far, this theory might be qualified as semantic. Its implications, however, reach far beyond the scope of semantics as such, and by good reason. To make a long story short, it happens so because I treat the meaning not as assigned but as being generated; the conditions of this generation and its logic are the subject of my interest.

To comprehend the foundations of meaning generation, I had to question the traditional understanding of world's objectiveness and of our cognition of it, and to discuss the notion of 'thing' and its relation to our knowledge. This is why the proposed theory has a general philosophical bearing, and it is no exaggeration to say that it cannot be adequately comprehended without taking this aspect into consideration.

Accordingly, the central concept of this theory is not purely semantic or semi-otic, although its content without doubt encompasses these spheres. Logic of sense, as 'sense' is understood here, addresses those general philosophical issues, and on the basis

of their proposed solutions it proceeds to investigate semantic or semiotic questions. This is why possible associations with what is meant by ‘sense’ or ‘meaning’ in modern linguistics and philosophy of language might be misleading. The basic reason for that is that the domain of meaning generation as described in this book does not fit within the framework of premises and concepts that distinguish those disciplines: it constitutes a new sphere that has until now remained beyond theoretical inquiry.

My terminological choice was determined by these considerations. When speaking of my own position, and not discussing those of others, I confined myself to ‘sense’ avoiding ‘meaning’ as much as possible, except for a few contexts where the last term is justified or even necessary. I called the process in which the sense is generated ‘sense-setting.’ Since sense-setting follows certain strict rules which determine the generated semantic content, I called my theory ‘logic of sense.’

The last term has two meanings. On one hand, it denotes this theory as a conceptual reflection of sense-setting laws in our consciousness. On the other, it signifies those laws as such, as constituting the basis of sense-setting objectively and regardless of being grasped or ignored by our mind. Referring to the second meaning, I spoke about different logics of sense that distinguish different cultures.

The sense-setting was described as a procedure, the last word being understood according to its generally adopted meaning, that is, implying its independence of the content which is ‘treated’ and which emerges as the result of the procedure implementation. It is this procedural aspect that makes the sense generation subject to explicable laws, because the semantic content which emerges as the result of the procedure can be ‘calculated.’

The semantic content generated under different logics of sense can be analyzed as contrasting. The concept of ‘contrast’ is closely related to the methodology which helped to discover the logic of sense. By saying that semantic structures formed under different logics of sense (that is to say, by different cultures) are staying in contrast to each other, I mean the following. Every category, every term, every word stands in certain relations to other words which form its semantic ‘aura’; every word presupposes such relations as logically consistent. Those are not just *any* relations and *any* ‘close’ or ‘neighboring’ words; not just *any* semantic aura. I am speaking here about logic-and-meaning relations, which are relations of negation, affirmation, and copula.

Thus any word, in addition to its ‘ordinary’ meaning (which in the simplest case, regardless of other differences between mentalistic and non-mentalistic semantic theories, is determined by relation to an independent external object or to an idea), also

possesses what can be called its ‘sense-setting’ meaning. The latter is never formed as a reference to a signified external object, mental image or idea independent of the signifier. The sense-setting meaning appears to be constructed as if from inside the word itself, — more strictly speaking, from inside the *sense*, for anyone who takes the pain to think through all the necessary metaphysical implications of the position described (they are touched upon occasionally throughout the book and elaborated in Chapter III) will see that what I understand by ‘sense’ fits both inside and outside the verbal and mental spheres. As already stated, I cannot at this point show that the meaning of language signs is *entirely* reduced to the sense-setting meaning; I demonstrated, however, that to a considerable degree it is *determined* by sense-setting procedure.

It is for that reason that the Foreword doubted whether we are in principle free to *assign meanings* to language signs. The meaning attached to this or that language sign is determined not only by our will to relate it to this or that object of external reality or to this or that idea of our mind, but also by the sense-setting meaning which the verbal expression thus defined inevitably bears in itself, — simply because no assignment of meaning can be free from the sense logic factors.

This is why I kept stressing that semantic structures created under different sense generation logics (i.e., by different cultures) are staying in contrast to each other, for even if the two cultures deliberately strive to assign the same meaning to certain language signs (the ultimate case of which is embracement of foreign teachings, and the classical Arabic civilization is a good example of it), a *definite* difference will *inevitably* be imbedded as well if those cultures follow different logics of sense. This very difference was called ‘contrast.’ If linguistic meanings deliberately assigned to the language signs coincide, the contrast is originated only by sense generation procedures and boils down to differences of ‘sense-setting’ meanings; on the other hand, the very presence of contrast of that type testifies to the existence of what I called sense generation logic.

It means that such contrast can be demonstrated as regular. This demonstration, the most detailed example of which the reader can find in Chapter III, is represented by objective data and is based on formal logical criteria. This is why such contrast of the two verbal structures created under different logics of sense (but not necessarily expressed in different languages, for there is no specific correlation between sense generation regularity and any concrete language) can be demonstrated by any given researcher or to any given researcher. No special ‘hermeneutic’ training is needed to comprehend sense generation law (although it might be necessary for its discovery), for after that law had

been explicitly described, its demonstration becomes totally objective and requires no 'penetration' into a different culture.

Factual data which provided the basis for this research deserve special note. Firstly, examples analyzed in the book do not exhaust by far the instances that illustrate sense generation logic relevance for correct understanding of classical Arabic theoretical thought. I confined myself to a few points a list of which does not represent all the spheres of theoretical culture, let alone an exhaustive description of them. However, numerous examples of that kind were collected in course of my work on the book; and rather it was them that actually stimulated my work, as they emerged one after another within my research horizon and drew my attention with insistence increasing over years. I selected some of them for the book proceeding from the inner demands of its text development rather than from desire to present an overall picture of sense generation logic factors operation in classical Arabic culture. This book describes the theory and argues for its validity more than it applies it. This approach seemed to me only natural, because the views described here are too uncommon to start with their application without in-depth exposition and argumentation. Other examples of this theory application and its validity for correct understanding comprehension of classical Arabic culture phenomena are to be provided soon; their analysis, however, will hardly deviate from the path trodden here.

Secondly, this factual data is far from exhausting the sphere of sense generation theory applicability. It is true that this theory emerged out of necessity to give an accurate and exact description to those classical Arabic culture phenomena which stay in irreducible contrast to 'our' hermeneutic strategies. But it is true as well that it does not boil down to the account of one culture's specificity of thought. Moreover, this theory seems to escape the well-known necessity to divide our knowledge into sciences that study nature and disciplines that study culture. Objects of culture and objects of the external world can both be treated as 'sense,' hence they both are subject to the logic of sense generation. Objects of the first type were dealt with in Chapters I and II, whereas Chapter III was dedicated to the second.

Logics of sense differ because they provide different implementations for the same sense-setting procedure. I described the sense-setting procedure as a way to actualize the logic-and-meaning relations. The logic-and-meaning relations are actualized in different ways in various logics of sense while keeping their nominal identity.

The possibility of these different actualizations is provided by diversity of the basic sense-setting intuitions. Those are intuitions of ordering, which differ in the two logics of sense investigated in the book as intuitions of 'concurrence' and 'replacement.'

Metaphorically I called them intuitions of ‘space-time relations.’ They were treated at length throughout the book.

The logic-and-meaning relations may acquire different names many of which were used in the book. The language most close to philosophy describes them as relations of unity, multiplicity, opposition, etc. The language close to the theory of sets describes them as union, intersection, and other operations. They can be denoted by general analytical terms like ‘to embrace’ or ‘to consist of,’ because ultimate interpretation of these terms presupposes reference to the logic-and-meaning relations. Finally, the most concise way to describe them is to refer to them as to the meaning of ‘and.’ Discussing the last case, I had an opportunity to show the difference between what I called ‘content-based’ and ‘procedure-based’ semantic approaches: contrast between comprehension strategies illustrated by Drawing 6 and Drawing 7 is a contrast between content-based approaches to the comprehension of ‘and’ within the same logic of sense, while the contrast between Drawings 6/8 and Drawing 9 results out of diversity of sense generation logics.

Logic-and-meaning relations constitute a complex unity which can be made explicit in many ways, and one of such possibilities is to build upon them a line of discourse or argument. The unity of these relations means that none of them can be changed leaving others intact. This complex and in that sense indivisible unity of logic-and-meaning relations in its full form was called logic-and-meaning configuration. Different logics of sense provide a different set up for the logic-and-meaning configuration. In the last analysis this set up is defined by the intuitive foundation of sense-setting.

The logic-and-meaning configuration describes relations between meanings which in a more developed form can be reflected by diverse theoretical models (whole-part, genus-species, generic-individual), the foundation for which is equally constituted by sense-setting relations. Dealing with the general philosophical topics, I argued that the reference can be established only to an aggregate logic-and-meaning configuration, but not to what is believed to be a ‘single object’ of the external world, even when the circumstances make us believe that such simple reference is possible. I also analyzed the consequences of this standpoint for understanding of what the ‘external thing’ is and how the notion of ‘object’ is to be modified in the new perspective.

Another point is worth attention. It seemed to me utterly important to make explicit the heuristic potential of sense generation logic. If this is indeed a theory explaining laws of semantic entities generation, it is supposed to demonstrate a priori what semantic content can and what cannot be formed (adopted, preserved, invented, etc.) under limitations of the given logic of sense. The first half of the book describes and analyzes



the ‘raw material data’ and thus follows empirical evidence, but starting with § 1.4.5. of Chapter II I adopted approach which corresponds to the above mentioned task. By that moment the main concepts of the sense generation theory had been introduced, so I could start applying them instead of describing and arguing for their relevance. Therefore the second half of the second chapter and much of the third are an example of a sense generation theory application for the analysis of semantic content.

While getting acquainted with that part of the book the reader could see that the logic of sense theory permits to present the content of philosophical doctrines as a result of development of a limited number of concepts which I called ‘procedural.’ Those are unity in its relation to multiplicity, opposition, negation, affirmation, and copula. Procedural concepts are closely linked to the logic-and-meaning configuration as they reflect its constitutive procedure. Those concepts form a complex unity since the logic-and-meaning configuration is a unity in which no element can be changed without changing thereby all the rest.

It is at this point that the dependence which I called dependence of the semantic content on the procedure of its generation becomes most clear. Conceptualization, that is to say, filling procedural concepts with concrete content, is directly determined by the particular set up of the logic-and-meaning configuration. This dependence can never be eliminated: at the higher levels of sense generation it only becomes less obvious but never disappears altogether, and the analysis of semantic content in any act of comprehension can finally be reduced to this basic level. It is this dependence that I was demonstrating throughout the book using examples from different spheres of culture. My goal was to show that the irreducible and non-analyzable remainder of any analysis of semantic content is represented by these procedural factors which by that virtue constitute the basis for semantic content generation at any level and in all spheres of culture.

This is why the sense generation factors are more fundamental than the semantic content, that very content on the surface of which our attention usually glides and slides, the content which is discussed in the books on history of philosophy, and which the philosophers are busily producing. What is true for philosophy, is true for any other area of theoretical activity. And not only theoretical, for any structure which we perceive as ‘making sense’ can be *deduced* from sense-setting description. This is what distinguishes my book from many others, among them those which seem to treat very close subjects and use similar, and sometimes even the same, terms and concepts. The theories developed by their authors remain on the same semantic level as the content analyzed, for

they do not care to demonstrate this content as an objective outcome of a limited number of standard sense generation procedures.

There is another aspect of that direct dependence of procedural concepts on the logic of sense. It implies that none of these concepts may be regarded as purely formal. On the contrary, as long as the specific content of each of them is constituted by this, and only this, logic of sense (let me remind that I talked about the two in this book), it is a priori suitable for structuring, which is normally called ‘formalization,’ of that and only that semantic content which is produced under the same logic of sense, and is not capable of structuring (i.e., formalizing) adequately the semantic content formed under a different logic of sense. However, the procedural concepts are those used at the basic level of formal logic; they lie at the core of the ‘nucleus’ common to the multitude of the systems of formal logic developed by logicians. My position implies that parallelism of sense generation logics entails parallelism of those basic levels of formal logics. A new ‘nucleus’ for a new set of formal logics corresponding to a non-Western logic of sense needs to be constructed.

In this book I described two logics of sense while analyzing a concept of a logic-and-meaning configuration. Questions hitherto settled demand new ones to be asked. The logic-and-meaning configuration is a complex unity which can be expressed in an extremely concise form (e.g. ‘and’) as well as developed explicitly in the form of discourse. However, the possibility of building up the discourse is not limited to an isolated logic-and-meaning configuration. The sense-setting potential of an individual logic-and-meaning configuration anticipates the development of an argument, deduction, inference, etc., which embrace two or more logic-and-meaning configurations. This aspect has not yet been studied.

Another research is to be undertaken to answer the question whether the methods of proof and argumentation that prevail in this or that culture are determined by logic of sense, and if yes, in what way.

However, already now it is evident that interpretation of at least some of the formal logic laws is dependant on the logic of sense. Those laws are found among the semantic structures which emerge as a development of sense logic configuration. The logic-and-meaning relations determine the way in which copula ‘operates’ and, consequently, they determine how the predication is organized and what formal logical criteria it should comply with to be qualified as rationally sound in this or that culture. I kept stressing that parallelism of formal logical evaluations of the external world is entailed by parallelism of the logics of sense (I understand ‘parallelism’ as absence of subordination coupled with

impossibility of intersection, that is, impossibility of immediate conflict which may take the form of contradiction) and implies the possibility of our parallel relations to 'the same' object which is treated differently under different logics of sense and nevertheless retains its identity. Only glimpses of the relation in which logic of sense stands to formal logic were given here. Its detailed investigation, as well as development of parallel systems of formal logic, is to be undertaken in future, although already now it is basically clear how this relation is constituted and how the logic of sense determines the system of formal logic which our reasoning follows.

The logic of sense theory makes it possible to discover diversity of content where nothing but invariability of form was always perceived. Thus the non-formal character of the main categories which constitute the nucleus of formal logic is unveiled. This applies to copula, negation, and affirmation. Not content-free, they presuppose possibility of an alternative content, which entails alternative character of the formal logic laws formulated on their basis. This book focuses on copula and pays less attention to negation. I did not engage methodically in detecting the influence of logic-and-meaning relations on formal logic laws, although I showed how the understanding of the law of the excluded middle in classical Arabic thought was determined by the logic of sense. A more systematic investigation of the relation between logic of sense and formal logic is another topic for future researches.