Scheffler, I. (1997). *Symbolic worlds: Art, science, language, ritual.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 214 pp. (Hardcover).

Human beings are symbolic animals. They are creators and creatures of culture because they are able to construct and use symbolic systems – systems of action and interaction, of communication and thought, of imagination and memory. Language is the hub of human symbolisms, but it is neither the only symbolic, nor the only discursive system. Myth, science, religion, and the arts – from music and dance to painting and architecture – are equally constitutive systems of action and meaning. Moreover, we mostly live in various symbolic (and, that is, semiotic) modes simultaneously; it is this that makes the symbolic worlds of our culture – and with them, our minds – so incredibly complex.

Since Aristotle, this view is all but new. However, in more recent times, it has been further sharpened, among others, by neo-Kantian semioticians and symbol theorists like Charles S. Peirce and Ernst Cassirer. Similarly, Nelson Goodman in his books *Languages of Art* and *Ways of Worldmaking* has highlighted both the constructive nature of human world-making and the plural structures that shape our symbolic worlds. Israel Scheffler's book is in the same camp as Goodman, with whom he has shared for many years, topics, methods, and style of analytic and pragmatic philosophy – as well as the academic affiliation: both are Harvard Emeriti – Scheffler as a professor of education and philosophy.

Like Goodman, Scheffler claims to further the theory of symbolism by rejecting the restrictions of analytic philosophy to logic, science, and linguistic propositions. In conceiving symbolisms as encompassing a wide range of linguistic as well as nonlinguistic phenomena, Scheffler wants also to take into account creative phenomena like art, child's play, and religious ritual. "Such worlds," he writes, "embrace not only literal description, but also metaphorical innovation, and whether linguistic or pictorial, they include the ambiguous as well as the straightforward representation" (p. 5). Human nature as suggested by this approach is ever active and symbol-forming: a

project of manifold options that could be likened to the "open texture" of language, to use a notion by F. Waismann to whom Scheffler refers. A promising vision.

However, even in widening the field of phenomena beyond the usual limits of analytic philosophy, Scheffler insists on obeying what he calls the "strict methodological canon." In fact, the book is about all about problems of semantic analysis. In discussing the conceptual semantics of the "symbolic function," it focuses along the line of mainstream analytic philosophy on issues of reference and denotation – for example, on terms with null denotation, ambiguity, and multiple meaning.

This is, of course, all but "methodological strictness;" it is a full-blown definition of the phenomena at stake – a definition not in terms of "method," but of content. There is neither a method nor a definition of a subject matter without conceptual presuppositions and an underlying theory. The theory underlying Scheffler's "methodological strictness" is the theory of cognitive representationalism. Its essentials are that symbolism is a matter of the individual mind or, more precisely, that there are clusters of categories or terms in the mind – Scheffler calls them "symbolic systems" – that fulfill the function of (ostensible) reference. In this view, thus, the symbolic function is primarily a referential function. And as a consequence, issues of mental and representational denotation are central to this theory (in logic and semantic, the "denotation" of a term refers to the particulars or features of the world to which the term can correctly be applied). While in this way all attention is dedicated to the representational function of the mind, the communicational function – that is, that symbols and signs also (and one even can argue, first of all) serve as means or modes of communication and interaction – is entirely absent in this book. Absent too is the specific material construction of symbols, their social forms of use, their "life forms," as well as the historical and cultural dimensions of symbolism. Consider, for example, the case of religious rituals. In focusing on what Scheffler regards as the primarily denotative effort of religious ritual, every analysis of such effort necessarily means "abstracting from the social and historical context of ritual in order to concentrate on its semantic functions ... [and] cognitive roles ... [is]" (p. 9).

Based on this decontextualizing "analytical abstraction," Scheffler's book certainly lives up to the standards of the traditional canon of semantic analysis and logic of terms, a canon set up among analytic philosophers between the 1950s and 1970s. For those who find themselves within this canon, Scheffler offers interesting discussions – for example, on the creative role of metaphorical utterances, which are described as serving "as probe for connections that may improve understanding or spark theoretical advance" (p. 87). If one views, however, this "canon" as the epistemic and institutional framework of a historically very specific academic culture – which also includes the Harvard philosophy of those years – then the map of the symbolic worlds that are announced under the demanding title of this book appears altogether rather parochial. Parochialism of this kind in philosophical inquiry (as well as in psychological and educational thought, to which the book also wants to contribute) turns out to be all the more rigid if it aims to deal with phenomena that fall outside the purview of logical and linguistic discourse – the traditional domain of mainstream analytic philosophy – and extend it to the reality of symbolic worlds like the arts and religion: because here it faces a reality that is highly contextualized and culturally situated. If this reality becomes subject of the "analytical abstraction," that is to say, if it is taken out of the context of its concrete cultural and historical fabric, it dissolves. The remains are "semantic."

Over the last two or three decades, the cultural reality of symbolisms and symbol use has been the subject of a great number of new studies on the symbolic worlds of language, art, science, religion, and other social practices. These new investigations distinguish themselves from the neo-Kantian tradition in repudiating the "analytical abstraction." I think, for example, of discourse studies in the wake of Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*, Vygotsky's conception of "symbolic mediation," Foucault's historical semiotics of the symbolic worlds (the "epistemes") of modernity, as well as of works by Geertz, Habermas, Eco, Latour, Bakhtin, Bruner, and many other philosophers and cultural theorists investigating the nature of human symbolisms and their various "cultural grammars." None of them is mentioned in Scheffler's book. Viewed in the light of

this new literature on what makes up the symbolic fabric that binds minds into culture, Scheffler's book reminds one of those good old days when symbolic worlds could still be closed by "strict methodological canons."

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Hurster, M. (1997). *Communicable and non-communicable disease basics: A primer.* Westport, CT: Bergin and Garvey, 168 pp. (Softcover).

In a discussion regarding the prevalence, severity, and impact of childhood chronic illnesses, Newacheck and Taylor (1992) stated that approximately 31% of children are affected by some kind of chronic health condition. Examples would include asthma and allergies. However, of the 31%, Newacheck and Taylor suggested that 5% would have an illness severe enough (i.e., cancer or diabetes) to interfere substantially with daily activities. These more serious illnesses can have a very serious impact on the physical and psychosocial development of children and adolescents (Falvo, 1991). Therefore, given the prevalence and severity of childhood illnesses, it becomes clear that educators and other youth professionals need to understand the basics of disease.

In her book *Communicable and Non-Communicable Disease Basics*, Madeline Hurster provides a simple yet comprehensive overview of human and community responses to diseases. Designed primarily for the undergraduate fields related to health and/or education, Hurster states that the purpose of the book is to:

> Provide a framework for understanding the disease process in humans ... [so that] the reader will become aware of the basic differences between communicable and non-communicable diseases with respect to their genesis and the body's response to them, as well as how the individual, community, and government can assist in the