

Symbol's Epistemological Analysis: A Rereading of the Tradition

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Abstract

One can explain the symbol in light of its meaning, values, internal mechanism, and ontological and epistemological significance. Among them, the ontological and epistemological traditions of analysis are of importance. Since the former has already been explored in another study, the present article addresses the epistemological aspects of the symbol. The investigation of approaches and the fundamentals of symbol analysis, in an epistemological reading, is possible only through accepting the equal and unequal epistemological aspects of the language of science and the language of art. In this regard, by rereading the tradition of epistemological symbol analysis, the present study aims to clarify the following issues: What arguments qualify the symbol as elements that contain meaning and value? And how does integrating or separating the language of science and the language of art affect our explanation of the symbol? In this respect, as the present article critically rereads the tradition of epistemological symbol analysis, it endeavours to clarify the adopted approaches, in the said tradition, regarding the symbol in light of its concept, place, and function. This study illustrates that in the first tradition, the main purpose is to balance the epistemological aspects of science and literature, whereas the second tradition, while differentiating between the two languages, aims to explore their internal mechanisms and fundamental characteristics.

Keywords: Epistemological Analysis, Ontological Analysis, Symbol, Language of Science, Language of Art

Extended Abstract

1. Introduction

One can define symbols as phenomena that signify a broader meaning than themselves. Since explaining the symbolic meaning, value, and aesthetic and epistemological aspects are in accordance with specific theoretical schools (psychoanalysis, divinity, hermeneutics, aesthetics, anthropology, and mythology), the scope of this study is limited to the epistemological aspects. In this respect, this

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study explores the epistemological tradition of symbol analysis and its manifestations.

2. Methodology

The present article employs a historical approach to investigate the dominance of the epistemological tradition of symbol analysis in different time periods. In this regard, by rereading the epistemological tradition of symbol analysis, the study clarifies the orientation of tradition toward symbolic conceptualisation, placement, and function.

3. Theoretical Framework

Unlike the ontological tradition of symbol analysis, which regards the symbolic language as original and fundamental, and the positivist approach, which discards metaphysics in favour of the language of science, the epistemological tradition aims to explain the rupture between symbolic language and the language of science. In this respect, we encounter two different traditions of thought, both of which employ specific theories to solve the problem. This study investigates the equal and unequal epistemological aspects, theories, and traditions of the language of science and the language of art.

4. Discussion and Analysis

The epistemological analysis of the symbol revolves around two traditions: first, Ernst Cassirer defines the symbol as a cognitive form. In this respect, the symbol tends to represent abstract reality. The symbol, for Susanne Langer, is a cognitive form which is inclined to represent feelings and experiences. In the same line, Wheelwright regards the symbol as a cognitive form that creates meaning and content. These three, though slightly different, approaches address symbols from a Neo-Kantian perspective, which regards the symbol as a tool employed to rediscover and reevaluate the self and its surroundings; in the second tradition, however, in his *Grammar of Motives*, Kenneth Burke argues that when we attribute motives to others, we tend to rely on ratios between five elements: act, scene, agent, agency, and purpose. Similarly, Richards regards the symbol as a sign that interactively replaces something. This process, for Richards, takes place within what he calls the Semantic Triangle, which has three parts: the symbol or word, the referent, and the thought or reference.

5. Conclusion

First, this article investigated the equal epistemological aspects in the language of science and the language of art; next, the approaches of three contemporary thinkers regarding the symbol were explored in light of the differentiation between the language of science and the language of literature. These three, though slightly different, approaches address symbols from a Neo-Kantian

perspective, which regards the symbol as a tool employed to rediscover and reevaluate the self and its surroundings; third, the study investigated the equal epistemological aspects in the language of science and the language of art. In this section, informed by the approaches of Richards and Kenneth Burke toward the symbol, the study illustrated that Burke regarded the symbol as a symbolic action which facilitates human interaction with and interpretation of truth. For Richards, on the other hand, symbols are tools to access abstract concepts. The synthesis of these views point to the fact that language functions on two levels: referentiality and psychological drives.

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