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**ON GOING BEYOND THE LITERAL:
THE DEVELOPMENT OF SENSITIVITY TO ARTISTIC
SYMBOLS¹**

INTRODUCTION

To the extent that they have been cognizant of the realm of symbols, psychologists have tended to lump together all symbolic forms.² By the same token, to the extent that an interest in symbolization can be found among psychologists concerned with the processes of development, characterizations are again restricted to an undifferentiated view of the semiotic realm. At most, reference is made to a 'pre-symbolic' and to a 'symbolic stage'; or a distinction is drawn between 'conditioned responses to a stimulus or sign' and 'knowledge of a symbol (or symbols).'³

While, from a historical perspective, any interest among psychologists in problems of reference represents progress, such 'one-dimensional' views remain clearly inadequate. At least since the time of Peirce,⁴ linguists and philosophers concerned with symbolization have been aware of, and distinguished among, various forms of symbolic reference. Sometimes the emphasis has fallen upon a well-defined taxonomy of forms of reference; at other times, semioticians have directed their attention to qualitative differences among families of symbols. In either case, however, the inadequacy of a single category of symbols (or signs) has been made clear. Accordingly, psychologists interested in this domain must confront the likelihood that all symbols are not necessarily 'of a piece'; by implication, different classes of symbols may well entail discrete sets of psychological processes.

Of recent attempts to codify forms of symbolic reference, few have been as clearly formulated as Nelson Goodman's inquiry into the symbol systems of the arts.⁵ Bent initially upon capturing differences between such artistic symbols as paintings and poems, Goodman has arrived at a set of criteria which can differentiate among the familiar symbol systems of our culture, whether or not they be drawn from the arts. Without passing judgment on the value or utility of any particular system, Goodman has specified five criteria of notationality: those symbol systems which meet these criteria –