BOOK REVIEW

Israel Scheffler, *Science and Subjectivity* (2nd ed.). Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1982. 176 pp. $17.50 cloth, $6.95 paper.

Although Israel Scheffler's re-issued book is once again entitled *Science and Subjectivity*, it will be abundantly clear to even a cursory reader that the favored subject matter is really objectivity and that the chosen approach is clearly philosophical. As a philosopher of objectivity, Scheffler sees his book's main purpose as "the reinterpretation and defense of the ideal of objectivity in the light of recent criticisms...." Subjectivity is for him a "massive threat."

In effecting his defense, Scheffler uses argument and verbal assault against what he calls Charles Peirce's standard (objective) view of science as well as contrarily against Thomas Kuhn, whose views get characterized as subjectivistic, mystical, and contradictory. Otto Neurath and Moritz Schlick, the Vienna Circle philosophers, are also brought head to head after 50 years to show that neither's position --coherence or certainty--is a rational philosophy of science.

A point missed by many reviewers and commentators for the first edition is that Scheffler himself does *not* espouse the standard objective view, which he nevertheless explicates quite fully in the preface and opening chapter. This view, he recalls, contains the notion of a fixed observational given, a neutral descriptive language, a shared methodology, and a rational community engaged in a public enterprise that formulates permanent truths about the natural world. Feeding from this standard view, says Scheffler, are the main 20th century successors to Kantian speculative idealism: Realism, pragmatism, and logical positivism, all of which in some form hold that observation supplies the observer with hard data independent of his or her conceptions and assertions.

Next to this view of science, in which the objective world shapes human observation while scientists merely apprehend it (albeit imperfectly), Scheffler places his version of Thomas Kuhn's thinking as appropriated from *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* and other works. Kuhnian paradigms, the psychosociologically organized viewpoints from which scientists supposedly work, are then argued to be hermetic isolating cells of subjectivism which separate the scientist's group from other groups of the same field as well as the scientist from his world of observation. Closed paradigmatic communication is the resulting reality, Scheffler charges Kuhn, and thereby there could be no science and no scientific revolutions.

To navigate to his own position between these objective and subjectivistic extremes, Scheffler raises three paradoxes--those of categorization, common observation, and common language--and employs them in subsequent chapters against major opponents.

Scheffler's sparring partner in his "Observation and Objectivity" chapter is C.I. Lewis and his 1929 book, *Mind and the World Order*, which strongly defends the given as an independent control over conceptualization. In "Meaning and Objectivity," he takes on the slightly more complex two-tier, objective-control-over-reality views of Ernest Nagel and the subjectivistic/relativistic conceptions of Paul Feyerabend. "Change and Objectivity" is reserved for the main non-strawman of the entire book, Thomas Kuhn, a historian of science, not a philosopher. Initial chapters set the stage so that Neurath's coherence-of-propositions subjectivistic philosophy of science can meet up with Schlick's objective certainty which is attained by implausible confirmation statements. This contest between equal absurdities leads in the "Epistemology of Objectivity" finale to Scheffler's setting up his own philosophical doctrines that ultimately accept the possibility of error in perception, the methodological fallibility of scientific knowing, and the unavoidability of human psychological pre-selection.

Two appendices have been added to this second edition, the first summarizing the body of displea-

sures the author feels for Kuhn's work and remonstrating with him over the inadequacies and inaccuracies of post-*Structure of Scientific Revolutions* attempts to set Scheffler's mind at ease. The other appendix praises cognitive emotions, promptly breaking them off into a bewildering range of *a priori* categories.

From the point of view of a philosopher, Scheffler does perhaps a masterfully literate job of *arguing* his way to a point of view that is not so unlike those of Charles Peirce, Thomas Kuhn, and other 20th century evolutionary thinkers. Along the way, however, he does continue the canard of ignoring Peirce's mature thinking on abduction and his "law of mind" in favor of the widely misconstrued early Peircean writings that mistakenly seeded the ground for positivism. Likewise, Scheffler transmogrifies Kuhn--despite all protestations--into a blathering dolt who supports scientific mob rule, arbitrary and mystical paradigm choice, and non-progress in science. Yet, Scheffler manages to come out near the actual positions of these careful thinkers.

This is a poignant denouement, indeed, and one broadly anticipated by Peirce himself in 1877: "... metaphysicians do get the right ideas at last," he wrote. "Hegel's system of nature represents tolerably the science of his day; and one may be sure that whatever scientific investigation shall have put out of doubt will presently receive *a priori* demonstration on the part of the metaphysicians."

For the reader of *Operant Subjectivity*, the more germane question is perhaps, *How* does Scheffler unwittingly co-opt the position of his chief intellectual adversaries?

Testing that leads to what Stephenson calls "dependable operations" is at the heart of the scientific process. And though Scheffler, like so many other philosophers of science, recognizes something of this necessity for scientists and for the acquisition of worthwhile knowledge, he does not levy the same requirement on his own philosophy/subjectivity. Employing *argument* and carefully constructed attack, Scheffler manages to side-step his "responsible control over assertion" dictum and turn to words without

ever bringing to bear on them the fair testing that science demands. Without such procedure, any words will do so long as they are "agreeable to reason." Really, it is a marvellous piece of footwork to defect to the opponent's camp while escaping one's own petard.

As for abduction, the law of mind, and Kuhnian paradigms--or for that matter Stephensonian subjective structure--Scheffler operates through such without any awareness that his choice of arguments must well up from somewhere. It is perhaps the great irony of Scheffler's work that the subjectivity he so vociferously rejects could help account for his very ability to write this book while simultaneously falling in--however obstreperously--with just those persons he publicly reviles. Equipped with Q methodology, Israel Scheffler (possibly with the aid of Thomas Kuhn) could, through single case procedures and dependable operations, scientifically account for the operant structure of his own subjectivity, communicate across the paradigmatic divide to Kuhn, and thereupon become a scientific philosopher, rather than a philosopher of science.

'Tis a consummation devoutly to be wished.

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The methods we describe clearly open to our operational regard much that has hitherto been called "subjective": the only distinctions we can accept between what is subjective and what objective rests upon whether reliable operations are possible or not. (William Stephenson)