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Abstract: In "Why brains matter: an integrational perspective on The Symbolic Species" Cowley (2002) [Language Sciences 24, 73-95] suggests that Deacon pictures brains as being able to process words qua tokens, which he identifies as the theory's Achilles' heel. He goes on to argue that Deacon's thesis on the co-evolution of language and mind would benefit from an integrational approach. This paper argues that Cowley's criticism relies on an invalid understanding of Deacon's use of the concept of "symbolic reference", which he appropriates from Peirce's semiotic. Peirce's analysis as well as Deacon's appropriation will be examined in detail. Consequently it will be argued that an integrationist reading would add very little to Deacon's core thesis.

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