

符号学基础

(第8版)

John Deely

BASICS OF SEMIOTICS

Eighth Expanded Edition

Select Works of Eminent Contemporary Semioticians
Series Editors Jie ZHANG and Hongbing YU



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Basics of Semiotics (8th Edition)

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Preface to the Series

Semiotics

Another Window on the World

Jie ZHANG and Hongbing YU (Eds.)

The intelligentsia nowadays is characterized by diversity in ways of knowing the world. Facing the vastness and complexity of society, nature and the universe, humankind has a deeply-felt sense of their tininess and powerlessness, but on the other hand, humans have always been actively exploring new ways of looking into the world. Since ancient times, there have been two major paths of human intellectual inquiry. One is constantly extending and deepening social studies; the other is using theoretical and logical reasoning to examine and even predict the laws of nature and the universe. It is precisely along these two paths that contemporary semiotics proceeds and progresses. The first five English monographs that are included in this book series of *Select Works of Eminent Contemporary Semioticians*, published by Nanjing Normal University Press, represent these two paths and thus reflect the latest trends in current semiotic inquiry. These books may afford not only revelations in the ways of knowing and the dimensions of thought, but also new perspectives for interpreting contemporary socio-cultural phenomena and their developments.

We would first like to introduce *Basics of Semiotics* (eighth edition), written by the late American master philosopher and semiotician John Deely. Since its first edition, this book has been a well-known classic in semiotics, and various editions have been published in different languages. However, the last edition in English was the fifth edition, which is no longer available, as it sold out in 2015. This up-to-date eighth English edition is long overdue. The book highlights two overarching issues concerning the entire enterprise of modern semiotics. One is the differences between semiology and semiotics; the other is the scope of semiotic inquiry. Deely points out that semiology, to wit the “minor tradition” traced back to Ferdinand de Saussure, confines sign studies to the limited fields of human cultures centering on language, whereas semiotics, namely the “major tradition” following Charles Sanders Peirce and upheld by Charles William Morris and Thomas Albert Sebeok among others, has enlarged the scope of semiotic inquiry to include not only linguistic signs, but also the biology of semiosis. Stressing the differences

between the two traditions, Deely is manifestly against equating semiotics with semiology. Moreover, in this most up-to-date edition of *Basics of Semiotics*, Deely grasps theoretically the full extent of the action of signs. Inheriting Peirce's formulation of semiosis that the essence of signs involves a triadic relation between representamen, object and interpretant, none of which needs physical existence in the semiotic process, Deely further argues that physiosemiosis is an action of signs that precedes and stays free from life. The action of signs features its involvement with nonbeing. In Deely's own words, the sign "must exist in order to convey an object signified to or for some third (be it a person or not). But what is conveyed may not exist, and similarly the 'third' to which it is conveyed may not yet exist." In addition to the above two issues, Deely also distinguishes between source date and access date by means of what he calls "historical layering," for which the *raison d'être* is "No one writes after they die." According to Deely, the source date must and can only be a date from within the lifetime of the author of the given text, whereas the access date is the date of the translation, or edition, used to access the source.

In both the scope and the quality of research, *Basics of Semiotics* has made considerable progress, which is why in 1990 the late American Paterfamilias Semioticorum Thomas Sebeok praised the first edition of the work as "the only successful modern English introduction to semiotics...a clear, creative, and provocative synthesis of major trends, past and present." Although entitled "*Basics of Semiotics*," the book is different from other general introductions to semiotics in that it not only introduces to its readers crucial masterpieces of semiotics and master semioticians, covering significant topics ranging from the historical development of semiotic thought to current institutionalization, subject matters and prospects of semiotics, but also showcases Deely's own theorizing and academic viewpoints.

By comparison, *Signs in Society and Culture*, written by the renowned American media critic & theorist Arthur Asa Berger, has something significant in common with Deely's *Basics of Semiotics* (eighth edition): adding the epistemological breadth and depth of semiotics. However, in terms of their writing styles, *Signs in Society and Culture* is somewhat different from *Basics*, in that the former highlights the connections between semiotics and modern ordinary life, whereas the latter focuses more on theoretical interpretations. In vivid and humorous language, Berger manages to apply semiotic concepts to the analytical and meaningful interpretations of socio-cultural phenomena and emphasizes theory-practice integration that is grounded in current social media and folk arts. The book can stimulate its readers to think deeply about socio-cultural phenomena and emphatically embodies the social value and effects of semiotics as a methodology. Perhaps this will be a cross-disciplinary tour de force that brings a novel reading experience to its readers. One of the

main reasons that this book is included in the series is that we want to make it clear that semiotics, as a methodology of research, is not merely something exclusive to metaphysics. It can also be a potent way to understand and interpret daily life situations, appreciate folk arts, and shed light on communication media, etc.

Apparently, it is from the perspective of semiotics that both Deely and Berger set out on their quests for new approaches to the world, each with their own new mythologies, new interpretations, and new routes, in theory (*Basics*) and in practice (*Signs in Society and Culture*).

Logic as a Liberal Art, another Deely book in the series, and *The Way of Logic*, written by Canadian philosopher Christopher S. Morrissey, a managing editor of *The American Journal of Semiotics*, mainly use theoretical and logical reasoning to examine and interpret the mystery of the universe and the complexity of human societies. In the inadequacies of our human capacity to exhaust the subjects of the vast universe and our capricious human societies, logic often seems to be an ideal route to theoretically construct and interpret them.

A major contribution of Deely's *Logic as a Liberal Art* is that it lays the theoretical foundations for logical analyses in contemporary semiotic research and thus restates the fundamental value of logic in liberal education. Using the theoretical framework constructed in his *Basics of Semiotics*, Deely manages to reinterpret the philosophical root of logic in the entire field of semiotics and provides the foundation for the logical reasoning of semiotics. His theoretical treatment of the subjective world is quite unique and affords a contemporary interpretation of classical ontology and epistemology. Deely proposes that the mission of logic is to use clear and workable rules to turn invalid arguments into valid arguments, so as to interpret the world from the viewpoint of semiotics. The logic Deely has built is extraordinarily constructive and it is a new development of term logic and propositional logic. Moreover, Deely also associates logical analysis with liberal education, arguing that the purpose of a liberal education is to enable the freedom and liberation of thought, in which process logic plays a critical role. Deely had encountered this in the Greek and Latin philosophical traditions, which he strongly advocates reviving. Therefore, whether we consult it to know the world from the perspective of philosophy and logic, or whether it is used to improve liberal education, this book can come as a great source of revelations to its readers. It is doubtlessly a cross-disciplinary classic.

Morrissey's *The Way of Logic* starts with the problem of existential import, a fundamental philosophical topic in philosophy, to strive for an ideal path of logical analysis within the frameworks of philosophy and semiotics, and to provide an effective "way of logic" for human understanding. The author proposes adopting *term functor logic*, which he developed from Aristotelian term logic. He also points out that mainstream

first-order logic, namely predicate logic, is limited by the existential condition imported and encoded in the syntax and therefore unable to show traditional logic in its entirety. While following the classical logic system, the author introduces two basic functors, + and -, and the only rule of calculation, DON. On the one hand, this has returned logic to pure propositional reasoning; on the other hand, it gives logical reasoning more concise mathematical forms. This book provides an in-depth analysis of the problem of existential import and proposes a third solution between term logic and first-order logic. It is a classic that integrates tradition and innovation.

It can be said that Deely's *Logic as a Liberal Art* paves the way for logical research in contemporary semiotics, whereas Morrissey's *The Way of Logic* affords an effective research method for concrete logical analysis. The common feature between the two books is the present-day adaptation of ancient knowledge, coalescing Hellenic and Latin heritages with contemporary semiotics and opening another window on today's world.

Among the five academic monographs in the series, *Marshall McLuhan: The Unwitting Semiotician*, written by another North American master semiotician Marcel Danesi, seems to feature little theorizing concerning semiotics per se. Nor does it use many daunting and abstruse terms. Indeed, this book is intended mainly to be a pertinent and semiotically based close reading of the author's former teacher, Marshall McLuhan, an internationally famous scholar who was not a declared specialist in semiotics but actually an "unwitting" semiotician, as is shown in the book title. However, unlike many other books on semiotics, despite its seemingly un-academic interpretation, Danesi's portrait of McLuhan the semiotician is profoundly significant: Semiotics exists in everyday real-life situations as a way to perceive and understand everyday life. The term "semiotician" can even extend to the ordinary living people around us. With his usual liveliness and wit, Danesi narrates the dynamic ideas of a visionary theorist, in a way akin to a tireless spinning of a soothing yarn. This quasi-orality writing style can bring the readers a unique experience of reading, lighthearted yet of depth and insight. In fact, *Marshall McLuhan: The Unwitting Semiotician* is not only an excellent case study concerning semiotic interpretation, but also a wonderful source book for many areas, including communication, media studies, cultural semiotics, and so on. To the readers who take a particular interest in the evolution of human communication, this book will prove an especially great revelation.

The value of this series extends beyond semiotics itself in that it also provides methodological guidance for studies in the fields of the humanities and social sciences, opening a semiotic window on the world, that is, using semiotic approaches in our attempts to explore and know the world. As we recall, Kalevi Kull emphasized at the 33rd Annual Meeting

of SSA in 2008 that we study semiotics to make the world pluralistic. It is for the same purpose that we publish this book series, using an intrinsically pluralistic method of academic inquiry to understand our pluralistic world. As a matter of fact, natural sciences aim chiefly to search for regularity in the bewildering complexity of the world, that is, to simplify what is complex, whereas the humanities and social sciences, in addition to their own necessary search for regularity, can “complicate” what seems simple. It is in the latter that the genuine significance of semiotic inquiry as a methodology lies.

Since late 2015 when it was first prepared, the final publication of this book series has taken more than two years. In this process, many have offered their kindhearted help. Besides the authors of the books in the series, the book editors, and the authors of Chinese guides to reading for the five books, we would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to the president of IASS-AIS Professor Paul Cobley for his professional suggestions and constant support, and to the director at Nanjing Normal University Press Ms. Chun Zhang for her devotion to the series. Very special thanks go to our dear old friend John Deely, who had spared no effort to support Chinese semiotics in the international arena since we made our first acquaintance. Alas, John passed away on January 7th 2017. To this international master semiotician, we dedicate his two posthumous swansongs *Basics of Semiotics* (eighth edition) and *Logic as a Liberal Art*.

Each book in the series is complemented by a Chinese guide to reading. The authors of the guides are prime scholars in the semiotics team at the School of Foreign Languages and Cultures of Nanjing Normal University. They have thorough training in semiotics and relevant fields and long-term involvement in research. Their efforts will better prepare the series for Chinese readers, paving the way for a more comprehensive engagement with the content. Their devotion to the project has made the series more reader-friendly.

Society, nature and the universe are vast and boundless in that society is temporally inexhaustible while nature and the universe are spatially bottomless, so to speak. Human intellectual inquiry is similar to a small boat sailing on the sea, and semiotics is merely another window opened on this boat.

Suiyuan, NNU
October 2017

总 序

符号学——人类认识世界的又一扇窗口

张 杰 余红兵

当今知识界对世界的认知方式是形形色色的。面对浩瀚复杂的社会、自然和宇宙,人类一方面深感自己的渺小和无奈,另一方面又积极地探寻认识世界的新方式。自古至今,人类知识的探索之路通常有两条:一是不断拓展社会研究的广度和深度,二是以理论逻辑的推演来考察甚至预测自然和宇宙的法则。当代符号学的掘进正是沿着这两条途径展开的,符号学家们努力为人类认识世界打开了一扇新的窗口。“当代国际符号学名家文库”首批所选择的五部英文版专著是较具代表性的符号学著作,能够较为明显地反映出当代符号学家们探索的最新趋向。这些著作不仅可以在认知方式和思考维度上给人以启示,而且为当今的社会文化现象及其发展提供了新的可阐释的视角。

首先介绍的是已故美国哲学家、符号学大师约翰·迪利(John Deely)的《符号学基础》(第八版)。该书自首版问世以来,一直就是符号学界的著名经典,且有众多译本。上一个英文版是第五版,早在2015年就已售罄,其后出现了几个译本版本,可以说这第八版是久违的最新英文版。本书突出了两个纲领性的问题,关系到现代符号学的整体:其一是符号学与符号论之间的区别,其二是符号学探索的范围。迪利指出,源自索绪尔(Ferdinand de Saussure)的“小传统”符号论(semiology)把符号本身完全限定在人类的文化范围内,并且主要论及的是语言符号;起自查尔斯·桑德斯·皮尔斯(Charles Sanders Peirce),其后由查尔斯·威廉·莫里斯(Charles William Morris)、托马斯·阿尔伯特·西比奥克(Thomas Albert Sebeok)等人所秉承的“大传统”符号学(semiotics)则把符号的研究范围由人类语言的探索,拓展至生物符号的领域。他反对把符号学与符号论相等同,注重这两者之间的差异。不仅如此,迪利在自己的著作中,还从经验

方面考察符号作用,从而通过分析确定符号存在的形式内涵。迪利继承了皮尔斯关于符号活动(semiosis)的核心观点:符号的本质是一种三元关系(符号、对象、解释项),而且,在符号活动发生时,这三项不必都有物质的或物理的存在。他认为,物理符号活动(physiosemsiosis)是一种先于且不依赖于生命的符号作用。符号作用的特点是涉及非存在(nonbeing):当意指对象通过皮尔斯所说的“符号”(或“再现体”)被传达给第三方时,被传达之物未必实际存在,其传至的“第三方”也未必实际存在。除了以上两个重要问题,迪利还在本书中特别提出将参考文献的“来源日期”与“访取日期”区别开来,即参考文献的历史层次问题。其依据是,“没有人在死后还能继续写作”。来源日期只能是文本作者在世时的某一日期,而访取日期是用来访取来源的译文或者出版日期。

无论在研究的范围还是在层次上,《符号学基础》均有所掘进,因此已故美洲符号学领军人物托马斯·西比奥克在1990年评价本书初版的时候,就称其为“唯一一部以现代英语撰写的成功的符号学导论,是一部文理清晰、富于创见,综合以往与当今主要趋势的发人深省的著作”。此书的书名虽然是《符号学基础》,但它不同于一般的符号学入门导读,它不仅向初学者介绍了一些重要的符号学著作和符号学理论家,从介绍符号学思想的发展到当今学科划分、课题和前景等,而且还展示了迪利的理论创见和学术观点。

相比较而言,当代美国著名媒介批评理论家、社会学家、符号学家阿瑟·诶萨·伯格(Arthur Asa Berger)撰著的《社会文化中的符号》与迪利的《符号学基础》有着重要的共同之处:它也从广度和深度上拓展了符号学认知世界的空间。然而从写作风格上来看,伯格的新作《社会文化中的符号》与迪利的《符号学基础》(第八版)有所不同,前者更注重符号学与日常生活之间的联系,而后者则更侧重理论阐释。通过生动风趣的语言表述,伯格努力把符号学范畴概念运用于社会文化现象的分析诠释与意义解读,注重理论与实践相结合,立足当今社会的传媒和通俗艺术,能够激发读者对社会文化现象的深层思考,着力体现了符号学作为方法论的社会价值与效应。这或许是一本会让读者有另类阅读体验的跨学科力作。本丛书选择伯格的这部新作,主要是想表明,符号学作为一种研究的方法

论,并非只是“形而上”的专属品,它同样可以是理解和阐释日常生活现象,欣赏通俗艺术和揭示传播媒体等的有效途径。

显然,迪利和伯格都是从符号学的视角出发,分别从理论和实践的不同侧面,为人类认识世界开拓了新的空间,尝试了新的方法,进行了新的阐释,提供了新的路径。

迪利在本丛书中的另一本专著《作为通识学科的逻辑学》,以及加拿大哲学家、《美国符号学杂志》(*The American Journal of Semiotics*)编辑部主任克里斯托弗·莫里西(Christopher S. Morrissey)的《逻辑之道》,主要从理论逻辑的推演来考察和阐释宇宙的奥秘和社会的纷繁。当人类无力穷尽浩瀚无垠的宇宙和变化万千的人类社会时,逻辑推演往往是一条理论构建和阐释的理想之路。

迪利的《作为通识学科的逻辑学》主要为当代符号学研究的逻辑学分析奠定了理论基础,并据此重申逻辑在通识教育中的基础性作用。迪利以《符号学基础》构建的理论为框架,努力重新阐释逻辑学在整个符号学中的哲学根基,为符号的逻辑推演奠定了基础。他关于客观世界的理论颇具特色,对经典哲学本体及其认识论做出了当代阐释。迪利提出,逻辑学的使命是要以清晰、可操作的规则,将无效论证转化为有效论证,从而在符号学视域下阐释世界。迪利构建的逻辑学是非常具有建设性的,是对经典词项以及命题逻辑的新发展。迪利还把逻辑分析与通识教育联系在一起,他认为,通识教育的目的是促使人获得思想上的自由和解放,而逻辑在其中起着非常重要的作用。他从希腊、拉丁传统中看到了这一点,从而大力提倡复兴这些传统。因此,无论是从哲学、逻辑学的视角来认识世界,还是提升对人本身的通识教育,本书都能给读者以极大的思想启发,无疑是一本跨学科的经典之作。

莫里西的《逻辑之道》以哲学的根本问题之一“存在性引入问题”为切入点,努力在哲学、符号学的研究框架中,探索理想的逻辑分析途径,为人类认知世界提供有效的“逻辑之道”。作者提倡使用其在亚里士多德的词项逻辑基础上发展而来的词项算符逻辑,并且指出,主流的一阶逻辑(即谓词演算逻辑)因受制于句法层面上的存在性表达而无法展现传统逻辑学的全貌。作者在遵循经典逻辑体系的同时,引入了“+”和“-”两个基本

算符以及唯一一条运算法则 DON,一方面让逻辑学回归纯粹的命题推演,另一方面让逻辑推演有了更加简明的数学形式表达。本书深度剖析了存在性引入问题,给出了介于词项逻辑和一阶逻辑之间的第三种解决方案,是一部集传承与创新于一体的经典之作。

可以说,迪利的《作为通识学科的逻辑学》为当代符号学的逻辑研究奠定了理论基础,而莫里西的《逻辑之道》则为当代符号学的具体逻辑分析提供了一种有效的研究方法。这两部专著的共同特点均是古为今用,把古希腊、拉丁文明的成果与当代符号学研究相融合,为人类对当今世界的认知又打开了一扇窗口。

在本丛书的五部学术专著中,北美另一位符号学大师马塞尔·德尼西(Marcel Danesi)的《麦克卢汉——无意而成的符号学家》仿佛并没有多少符号学研究的理论阐释,更没有太多让人望而生畏的生涩术语。确实,这部书只是作者对其老师麦克卢汉一次较为中肯的符号学细读,而且这位声名远播的老师并非一位专门致力于符号学研究的学者。正如书名所表述的那样,麦克卢汉其实是一位“无意而成”的符号学家。然而,与很多符号学专著不同的是,德尼西在本书中对符号学家麦克卢汉的论述看似是非学术性的阐释,却蕴含着极其深刻的意义:符号学就存在于现实生活中,符号就是人们感知和认识日常生活的一种方式,“符号学家”这个名词甚至可以扩展到我们身边每一个活生生的普通人。德尼西以其一贯的生动和睿智,讲述了一位前瞻式理论家的动态理念,娓娓道来。这种难能可贵的类似口头表达(Orality)的写作方法,可以给读者带来一种独特的阅读体验,既轻松明快,又不失深度。实际上,《麦克卢汉——无意而成的符号学家》不仅是一部符号学阐释的优秀个案研究,也是一部极好的多学科的资料集,跨越传播学、媒介学、文化符号学等等。对人类传播发展史感兴趣的读者,尤其可从本书大获裨益。

本丛书的研究价值也许并不仅在于对符号学本身的研究,更是为人文社会科学的研究提供了方法论的指导,打开了符号学认识世界的窗口,即用符号学的方法来探索和认知世界。记得凯勒维·库尔(Kalevi Kull)在2008年美洲符号学会第三十三届年会上强调,符号学研究就是为了让世界变得多元。我们选编这套丛书的目的也就在于此,用本质既已多元

的学术研究方法来认知我们这个多元的世界。其实,自然科学研究主要是在纷繁复杂的世界中探寻规律性,即把复杂的事情简单化,而人文社会科学除了必要的规律性探索以外,更可以把看似简单的事物“复杂化”。符号学研究作为一种方法论,其真正意义主要在于后者。符号学研究在认知世界的同时,更有助于人的思维能力的提升。

从2015年下半年开始筹备,直至如今最终出版,本丛书历经了两年多的光阴,这期间得到了很多人的热心帮助,除了每本书的作者、责编和导读作者之外,我们还要感谢国际符号学协会会长保罗·考布利教授(Paul Cobley)对本丛书编纂过程给予的建议和支持,感谢南京师范大学出版社张春主任为丛书所付出的辛劳。另外一位需要特别感谢的学者是我们的老友约翰·迪利先生。从我们最早相识以来,这位学者便不遗余力地支持中国符号学在国际学界的发展壮大。不幸的是,约翰在2017年1月7日故去,他的《符号学基础》(第八版)和《作为通识学科的逻辑学》也成了遗著和绝响,我们谨以这两本书来纪念这位国际符号学大师。

本丛书的每一分册均配中文导读,由南京师范大学外国语学院符号学团队的优秀中青年学者撰写。他们长期从事符号学或相关学科的研究,具备了良好的理论素养和知识储备。他们的努力,为中文读者的阅读做好了一些必要的准备和铺垫;他们的付出,使得本丛书更具可读性。

人类社会和自然宇宙是浩瀚无边的,前者在时间的维度上是难以穷尽的,而后者在空间的维度上则可以说是无法触底的。人类的学术探索就如同一叶小舟行驶在无际的大海之中,符号学也仅仅是在这叶小舟上打开的又一扇窗口。

2017年10月于南师随园

导 读

王永祥 王新朋

符号学诞生以来,其自身的发展经历了多元模式的摸索。既有索绪尔的语言学模式,也有皮尔斯的逻辑—修辞学模式。前者引领结构主义数十年;后者通过符号意指三分式,走向无限衍义。还有先后以洛特曼和卡莱维·库尔为领军人物的莫斯科—塔尔图学派,坚持用符号学研究社会文化,在符号学界地位凸显。当代符号学的发展日益与其他学科融合并广泛应用于具体研究,如哲学、语言学、诗学、艺术学、美学、传播学、人工智能、心理学、认知理论等,都与符号学有着水乳交融般的联系。作为意义之学的符号学,因其强大的诠释力,一直被当作人文学科的方法论,是人类意义探寻活动的一个有力支架。

相较于以往的符号学著作,《符号学基础》(第八版)是已故美国哲学家、符号学家,北美符号学派领军人物约翰·迪利(John Deely)的遗著之一。自1990年《符号学基础》(第一版)以英语和葡萄牙语同时出版以来,作者多次对其内容进行修订和扩充,迄今已先后出了七版。北美著名符号学家西比奥克在此书初版时称其为“唯一一部以现代英语撰写的成功的符号学导论,是一部文理清晰、富于创见,综合以往与当今主要趋势的发人深省的著作”。虽然名为《符号学基础》,本书却不同于一般的符号学入门作品,它不仅仅向初学者介绍重要符号学著作和符号学理论家的观点,还从介绍符号学思想的发展延伸到当今学科划分、课题和前景;此外,迪利在对前人的思想进行梳理和继承的同时,还表达了自己的理论创见和学术观点。

迪利在致第八版读者的信中特别强调了三个要点:符号学与符号论之间的区别;符号学探索的范围;参考文献的历史层次。

以索绪尔为代表的符号论(Semiology)认为,符号本身完全出现在人类文化范围内,且主要是语言符号;以皮尔斯、西比奥克为代表的符号学(Semiotics)则认为,符号绝不限于人类文化的范围,在动物的生命世界里

同样存在符号。迪利希望消除将符号学与符号论等同的谬误。

迪利提出,自然符号活动(Physiosemissis)是一种先于且不依赖于生命的符号活动。符号活动的特点是涉及非存在(Nonbeing):当意指对象通过皮尔斯所说的“符号”(或“代表项”)被传达给第三方时,被传达之物未必实际存在,其传至的“第三方”也未必实际存在。迪利从理论上把握完整意义的符号活动,他认为:符号学有别于符号论,不仅仅是它不限于人类物种所特有的文化,它还从个体体验入手考察符号活动,从而通过分析确定符号本身的形式内涵。

迪利特别提出参考文献历史层次的区分问题,要求将参考文献的“来源日期”与“访取日期”区别开来。其依据是,“没有人在死后还能继续写作”。来源日期只能是文本作者在世时的某一日期,而访取日期则是指访取来源的译文或者出版日期。

全书共十四章。第一章讨论文学符号学与符号学说之间的关系。现代符号学有两大符号学传统,一是索绪尔的符号论,二是皮尔斯的符号学。索绪尔来自语言学领域,而皮尔斯来自哲学领域。显然,在第一章,迪利就开始探讨符号论与符号学的区别。欧洲现代符号学的成就主要是文学符号学和语言学符号学,遵循的是索绪尔符号论传统,迪利称之为“语言中心主义”。与索绪尔传统不同,皮尔斯继承了班索特、洛克的符号学思想,形成了班索特—洛克—皮尔斯传统。该传统不是将人类语言与话语当作主要的和唯一的启示,而是将符号活动看作一个更为宏大和更为根本的过程,将自然世界纳入人类符号活动,将人类这一物种的符号活动看作自然界符号活动的一部分。迪利认为,符号论与符号学之间是一种局部与整体的关系:符号学是整体,符号论仅为符号学的一部分。符号论的主题和研究对象是文学文本和主题以及用语言构成的一般现象,这些都属于拉丁时期的心存物(ens rationis)范畴。但根据拉丁时期的意思,该对象领域还被认为依赖于一个更为宏大的整体,即我们所经验的自然界。人类文化只拥有相对独立性;它超越自然环境,但又必须与其相融合,以其为基础;人类文化在一个更大的相互依存的网络(即生物符号活动)中与一切生物形式共享该自然环境。迪利认为,我们的全部任务是从符号活动出发,去理解这一更为宏大的整体。因此,正确理解两种传统,便可避免“以偏概全的谬误”。

第二章探讨符号学究竟是方法还是观点的问题。对于符号学的性

质,学界历来有争论。有人认为符号学是一种科学,有人认为符号学是一种方法论。迪利在本章要表达的核心思想是:与逻辑实证主义和行为主义一样,符号学是一种观点,而不是一种方法。但与此同时,符号学又不同于实证主义和行为主义,其学说基础不是那种能够伪装成研究方法但事实上又禁锢研究的意识形态立场。为什么符号学观点不可能真正还原为一种意识形态?迪利认为,符号学观点是一种视角,源于并遵循这样一种简单的认识:我们的全部经验,从其最原始的知觉上的根源到其最完善的理解力,都是一张用符号关系构成的网络。这种观点无法简约为某种意识形态,否则就丧失了其实质,因为它的界限恰是处于解释活动中的理解力的界限,而理解力的解释活动依赖于感知和知觉的同类解释活动而进行。

第三章的内容是“符号活动:符号学探索的课题”。符号学研究什么?迪利给出了一个简单的答案:符号的作用。长久以来,这种特殊的作用在哲学上被认为与研究各类物理的因果性相关。在1906年以前,符号的这种特殊作用从未被视为一个可供探索的独立领域,也未曾获得一个名称。皮尔斯则是分离出这个领域并给其命名的探索者。他将符号的作用称为符号活动(Semiosis)。皮尔斯认为,我们必须动态地看待符号的意指作用,并将其看作一个过程。迪利将符号活动(符号作用)分成生物符号活动和自然符号活动两大类,前者是在有机世界中形成,后者是在自然环境中形成。生物符号活动分为三大层次,其中最高层次是人类符号活动:在其他动物与人类之间,人类语言以及随之而来的一般的历史传统和文化的发展过程中,其符号模式形成了人类符号活动。第二层次是动物符号活动:在植物与动物之间、在动物互相之间,以及动物与自然环境之间的发展过程中,其符号模式形成了动物符号活动。第三层次是植物符号活动:在植物界内部,植物和物理环境之间的发展过程中,其符号模式形成了植物符号活动。迪利认为,不仅存在着一个生物符号活动的宏观世界,而且大量迹象表明,微观世界有着同样具符号性的分流。另外,还有一个包容更广的一般进化过程的宏观世界,迪利称之为自然符号活动,即通过星辰体系的最初沉积和随后出现的行星与亚行星体系,其符号模式形成了自然符号活动。

第三章“补篇”讨论了两个概念:解释项和作为符号的观念。迪利认为,解释项是皮尔斯提出的一个关键概念,这是继拉丁时期的成果以后当