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Semiotics of the Image

A Study of the Form of Meaning in Media Spectacles

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Chapter 1
Introduction: From Image to Spectacle

1.1 The Image Age and Theories of the Image

Picture theory per se is not new to us, as the human consciousness of the image is as old as the history of civilization. Visual consciousness is essentially humankind's act of viewing things with human consciousness. However, in ancient academic circles, where subject classification was not sufficiently sound, "image" was not studied as a separate science. Instead, it was usually studied as some form of art, such as painting, sculpture, or architecture, as a part of a religious ritual, as a totem, or as a utensil. Such pre-sixteenth century research could be referred to in general as "pre-iconography", in which image studies were focused on explaining the motifs and contents of images primarily according to people's life experience. The motif of the image comprises the events and objects formed by the elements of painting, such as line, color and volume. By comparing the experience gained from studying the image with the actual experience of life, people could not only understand the image but also extend their life experience. Beginning in approximately the sixteenth century, image studies entered the stage of iconography. At that time, people focused their studies on images, stories, and fables rather than on real life experience. Moreover, iconographic analysis required the interpreter to possess the background knowledge of specific themes and concepts in order to obtain necessary information, such as the story and language of the picture. In the nineteenth century, iconography studies developed a lot—works were analyzed with mutual references of paintings and religious literature. In such analyses, works of art often became footnotes to a specific religious text.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Aby Warburg founded the Warburg School and developed a new method for image studies of art. Erwin Panofsky, one of Warburg's followers and another founder of modern iconography, gave a name to this novel method of iconological studies—the classical iconology—by which art images are interpreted through the study of the intrinsic meaning of the world of symbolic values (潘诺夫斯基 [Panofsky] 1987). Afterward, iconological studies moved closer to semiotics of the image. As one of the founders, Panofsky is under

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the title of the "Saussure of modern iconography". Since then, iconography and semiotics have become more closely related. For example, Ernst H. Gombrich later devoted a specialized chapter to "patterns as symbols" in his book *The Sense of Order: A Study in the Psychology of Decorative Art*. In his view, if everything is regarded as a symbol, it is of extraordinary importance to reinterpret iconography (Gombrich 1979). Gombrich here suggested that the development of semiotics of the image would have a great impact on iconography.

In iconography which Panofsky represented, the research object is confined to the field of fine arts, but such limitations are being impacted by the current media culture and mass culture. Today, both the image and the field of art to which image used to belong have come to a turning point, wherein the overall relationship between serious art in its traditional sense and social culture is different from that of the Panofsky era. The social influence of art that develops by following exhibits in art museums, and its relationship with the era are being impacted by commercial art that is widely presented in mass media; in other words, the boundaries of art per se have become more complicated for us to define. The ways to connect art and society—the mode of production and the mode of communication—have undergone a general transformation under the influence of consumerization and medialization. In particular, art, though historically having only served for the aristocrat, has lost its monopoly on society as a whole as it has become ubiquitous in representing ideas or concepts in people's lives. The universalization of art is related to the rise of mass culture and the reproduction of art by media. Before the advent of sophisticated reproduction technology, the number of people who had the privilege of beholding the paintings of *Mona Lisa* or *Bunian Tu* was extremely small. However, reproduction has since unveiled the mysteries of art. The information barriers erected by art elites in traditional societies were bypassed via the new ways of communication, resulting in the diminution of the role of an art professional, who formerly served as Prometheus among enlightened spiritual leaders of the times. Even today, the personal creativity of a professional in art offers enormous gifts to society, particularly when that creativity is a more common representation of ideas or concepts using professional skills and is not confined to specific places such as galleries. Art develops in many creative industries: advertising, product design, software design, game development and spectacle design. In a broad sense, the cultural and creative design industry is open to the general public.

As a result of the changes described above, art that had been considered as a superior form has evolved into a variety of practical design languages. Moreover, artists' impulses toward self-expression have been transformed into creative achievements that meet the demands of the market, with such achievements mainly tested in the form of commodities. Pure art in its traditional sense still exists, but is no longer the only important way to represent ideas or concepts in this era, only relegated to a part of the spectacle industry. As a result, there are a large number of "art designers" in any industry. For example, Steve Jobs, who died in 2012, was hailed by global media powers including Bloomberg as "the greatest and most creative artist". This kind of praise is intended not just as an expression of courtesy for Jobs's reputation or as a metaphor, but reflects both the form and outcome of contemporary art as a

global commodity. Not only was Jobs himself a true artist, but Apple Inc, which he founded, hired the best group of design artists on the planet. Perhaps many people would refute this judgment based on the aimlessness of Kant's aesthetics about art. However, a review of the history of art helps us understand that the purposelessness of art is in fact a dual purpose without aesthetics. Kant's purposiveness without purpose means that art achieves a pure spirituality by transcending general practical purposes. Even this pure spirituality is not necessarily the original intention of the artistic text maker, or even of art itself. The spiritual purpose of all religious arts is to realize communication with the world of gods by means of art. Many art products, as art per se, are a result of another purpose, although the ultimate result emphasizes art's spiritual essence or aesthetics in subsequent interpretations. For example, if the Terra Cotta Warriors represent art, the craftsmen obviously did not create the warriors for purposeless "art"; if the pyramids or the Great Wall are art, they are obviously interpreted as art texts with non-artistic intentions. Intention in the historical sense is very different from viewing these as art texts today. By the same token, commodities and all kinds of practical things that have been designed today are not produced for purely practical purposes. Although they are made for practical purposes, the artistic elements in each of them embody more than practicality. The part that extends an object beyond its useful function is where art lies, and for a commodity, this part is the symbolic consumption that transcends its basic functional needs. Symbolic consumption has dominated the main content of consumer goods in this era of overcapacity. In other words, today's design, advertising and all the work applied to consumer goods are more or less artistic.

The endeavor to make "practical art" reflect its true nature began in the Industrial Revolution. With the rapid development of the Western economy, people were no longer satisfied with industrial products that functioned well but did not provide aesthetic appeal. As demand has increased for more beautiful and artistic goods, art has become popular, and more life-oriented art has developed into an important aspect of modern culture and civilization. Furthermore, over this period of time, the traditional art serving elitist has transformed itself into a populist one. Art has modernized in answering the call for "combining with technology" and opposing "art for art". In response to this trend, various Western design movements since the 1850s, such as Arts and Crafts movement, Art Nouveau movement, the Constructivism movement that led to the De Stijl movement and the founding of Bauhaus in the early twentieth century, have promoted practical art and reinforced the belief that art should serve the general public. This book views the image as an important aspect of contemporary society, focusing on the ways in which the dissemination of various images involves cultural operations and specific laws. To that end, the rules and principles summarized under the umbrella of these new perspectives and methods are suitable for the dissemination of commodity brands and images of individuals, enterprises, institutions, cities and even nations. In contemporary image studies, these fresh texts usually cannot be rejected. Therefore, in the current context of pan-artisticalization, image studies must include a general iconological study of contemporary media spectacle, that is, a study of communication based on image signs.

In recent years, the development of the theories (and the reality) described above has been boiled down to a key term—"pictorial turn"—that is closely related to W. J. T. Mitchell's admiration for images in daily life. But for the majority of people, the image age simply refers to a concrete manifestation of the vast size and broad impact of image production in this age. In fact, approximately 350 million pictures are uploaded every day on Facebook (Branka 2024), and more than 1 billion pictures are uploaded every day on WeChat, a Chinese social media platform (from the interview with Ma Huateng, the CEO of Tencent, on Fortune Global Forum, Guangzhou 2017). One could argue that people worldwide have produced and shared a feast of image dissemination. At a deeper level, this "pictorial turn" should not only be seen as an expansion of image size and quantity, but also not be limited to the theoretical interpretation of what Mitchell calls the image of daily life. Fundamentally, theories about images represent humanity's basic modes of thinking in which people seek to understand the world. Martin Heidegger regards the "pictorialized" world as an important manifestation of modernity. The key to the manifestation does not lie in the large number of images actually produced in the modern world; rather it lies in the unique manner of self-cognition in modern society, namely, employing image as the basic means of understanding and grasping the modern world.

1.2 Semiotics as the Methodology to Master Media Spectacles

From the perspective of the research object in this book—the media's cultural spectacles today, this book can be regarded as a result of the theoretical study of communication. Semiotics and communication complement each other in the external structure of the discipline. Many scholars have studied the compatibility of their internal practical references in depth, and some believed that communication was synonymous with semiotics in several aspects. Communication and semiotics as terms in disciplines are even interchangeable in some cases (Bouissac 1998). This view has been confirmed from different perspectives in traditions of both disciplines. In *Semiology* by French scholar Pierre Guiraud, semiotics and communication are almost treated as the same object. According to Guiraud, semiotics belongs to communicology, and the components of communication are also those of semiotics (吉罗 [Guiraud] 1988). In the first chapter, Guiraud defines the function of symbol as communicating concepts by information, and he regards Jakobson's model as an extension of the theory of communication (吉罗 [Guiraud] 1988).

The relationship between communication and semiotics has been discussed in detail by the author Hu Yirong in *Media Semiotics: A Theoretical Turn in the Post-McLuhan Era* (胡易容 2012). Although the current research object is the media spectacle, the discussion is not limited to theoretical studies of effect-oriented, general communication, nor is it limited to the general laws of the visual image as discussed in

terms of iconography. In fact, if necessary, we may regard the discussion as a consideration of the contemporary media culture framework by means of image sign cognition, and the research object includes all kinds of symbolic texts in modern media, even though its theoretical purpose is focused on cultural and analytical philosophy. The analysis in this book is form-oriented, so it is different from Frankfurt-style ideological criticism. Although the analytic logic of the symbolic form enhances the research object in this book, we can still find features of the symbolic form to deduce some characteristics of form in cultural patterns. In turn, we can verify and explain all kinds of cultural phenomena with common characteristics using these formal principles.

To ensure the clarity of the study's semiotic category, issues that semiotics is able to tackle must be defined in this book. In his popular book, *A Theory of Semiotics*, Eco asks whether semiotics is a discipline or a field. Pointing out that the research object of semiotics is "the whole culture", Eco argus that semiotics is in principle the discipline of studying everything which can be used in order to lie. Eco (1979) adds, when symbols intervene to represent other things, the attention of semiotics occurs, so semiotics is concerned with everything that can be regarded as a symbol. However, the ostensible other things may not have to exist. This shows that the starting point of semiotics is substantive difference, which is the origin of meaning. This book is based on similarity, and the author agrees with this proposition. When two things are the same, similarity disappears, and the symbolic relationship does not exist.

Zhao Yiheng (赵毅衡 2004) points out that semiotics does not deal with the relationships about signs and images. It cannot deal with the relationship between images and objects. Therefore, "marking" signs and "image" signs are not part of semiotics. That is to say, semiotics does not deal with the objective responses and physical transparency between signs and objects, which also belongs to the picture theory that Eco (1979) criticized as childish. This picture theory refers to the physical relationship between the object and the symbol. The author agrees with Eco's criticism of picture theory (Eco 1979) (although he made the same mistake in specific cases such as the mirror image) in terms of the issues in this book. Only when human beings explain the natural relationship between objects and symbols can these ideas enter the category of semiotics, and then what is considered to be a symbol has a presupposition instead of an implied relationship. John Deely (2003) points out that symbols are things that the object presupposes, and the abstract human being presupposes symbols. That is, the meanings involved in semiotics are used to discover meanings created by human beings rather than to discover the objective laws in natural objects.

Therefore, it is the author's belief that semiotics, as a "study of meaning", studies the creation of signification and explains the various relationships in creative signification, or, more directly, only creation can lead to signification. The external world itself does not enter human vision and does not have signification, so it is not the research object of semiotics.

The concept of "schema" used in the research is borrowed from Kant's idea of "schema". Piaget developed schema into a reflective model of cognitive structure, and modern cognitive psychology has tended to use the general concept of schema in relation to the ability to solve practical problems. Gestalt psychology developed the

overall effect of schema, and various teaching methodologies have constructed the training methods of memory integrity with schema. Therefore, the "schema" in this book is defined as a unique means to grasp intellectual experience or a unique type of understanding. In Kant's thinking, there is a process of understanding between perception of and reasoning about objective things. The knowledge concepts that are gained in the process of understanding and the objects are heterogeneous, and schema therefore is the category for this heterogeneous understanding. Kant (1933) interprets the schema of the concept as the form and pure sensuous condition to limit the use of concepts about understanding. In humanistic research, it is necessary for us to make clear that although the boundary of our own "knowledge and experience" is a way to look at the object, it is not the only way to grasp the world of media spectacles. In addition, Kant's concept of "schema" shows a characteristic of "overall grasp", which is precisely what early communication schools lacked in their focus on the analysis of specific social problems. This situation has been improved due to the research done by Toronto School. McLuhan and Innis constructed a picture of human civilization with media as the coordinate in the discussion of civilization, which is similar to the goal described in their research, that is, "to grasp the world by schema". The overall theory, which McLuhan and Innis borrowed from Toynbee, opened up thinking about the cognitive effect of "pattern" in media, and this was further developed into "pattern recognition" with postmodern characteristics in order to distinguish it from the thinking dominated by "linearity" and "classification" in the printing age. McLuhan, moreover, presented corresponding ideas on the understanding of communication methodology, arguing that very specialized knowledge cannot be used to deal with the complexity and diversity of communication. Therefore, in the process of research, he focused consistently on the relationship between different types of knowledge and demonstrated his opinions by exercising comprehensive knowledge of politics, economy, history, geography and other disciplines. In criticizing the natural science orientation of Western social science, Toronto School of Communication scholars proposed that the task of social science was in fact to discover and explain models and trends so that they can predict the future, rather than employing fine calculation to provide short-term forecasts for governments, industry and commerce.

Therefore, the term "schema" used in this book aims to show characteristics of formalism, and various kinds of features of media spectacles in this book are included to construct an understandable and operable form of experience. Even if they are independent of a specific case, laws of symbolic logic still validate the form experience.

1.3 Main Areas of Iconicity

1.3.1 The Importance of Iconicity (像似性)

The study of image communication and the understanding of "iconicity" as a basis for the world of media spectacle are of special significance. Both what Benjamin calls "mechanical reproduction" and today's more common "digital copy" involve extreme cases of "iconicity" which is one of the key words in understanding the spectacle of the media age. Iconicity is the most stable basic property of "image". We can see the iconic elements when we look at "图像", the Chinese word for "image (*tuxiang*)". In this construction, "图" is the object, and "像" means "being similar to", with an extended meaning of a way to make pictures or sculptures by simulating figures. With the development of culture and the enrichment of the connotation of the character, "图" gradually evolved from "drawing image" to include the meaning of psychological activity, but the use of "像" to denote the relationship between the object and its original meaning has not changed. It shows that "像" is a more stable connotation in the concept of image. Third, from a theoretical point of view, the relationship between symbols and objects reflected in iconicity is a fundamental and important topic that runs through the history of philosophy over thousands of years in the West, and it also has been one of the most basic issues discussed in modern semiotics for one hundred years. From the debate between Cratylus and Hermogenes in Plato's narration of pictorial turn, a very important issue is what constitutes the more basic problem of semiotics: "iconicity" or "arbitrariness".

In the related fields of semiotics after Saussure, several discussions of iconicity have been made in academic circles. Even linguistic semioticians must face the problems related to non-linguistic signs, problems that are especially prominent in contemporary media culture. Scholars who study image signs only as non-linguistic symbols are usually not from the field of fine arts, but from a larger field of cultural research. Their focus is not on the technical characteristics of image, such as perspective, psychology or figure-ground relationship, but on its cultural connotation in social and historical contexts. Cassirer, a semiotic philosopher, made an early attempt to study the visual culture in its modern sense, and one of his followers, Langer, promoted Cassirer's research and contributed to an important expansion of artistic perception and emotional form. The Prague School paid attention to the general signification of image, while French structuralists produced a more systematic interpretation of general picture theory. Barthes's book *Rhetoric of the Image* has exerted a far-reaching influence. Since then, Eco has exerted the greatest influence on semiotics of images. Eco himself conducted an in-depth study of architecture and art and taught in the University of Milan Academy of Arts for a long time. Further, film semioticians, represented by Christian Matz, have made in-depth studies of photography. With the more extensive involvement of these scholars in image research, the semiotics of images has expanded beyond research in fine arts.

However, there are limitations in linguistic semioticians' studies. The theoretical logic for explaining images which are considered as linguistic texts is that it is a

kind of "reading" rather than "viewing"—images are considered as unnatural or self-evident and must be deciphered in accordance with the rules given to them by visual language (Gombrich 1969). According to Mitchell (1995), this idea is based on philosophical history that was influenced by Richard Rorty's linguistic turn concept: Text form has become the ultimate pattern for everything, and even the unconscious is constructed in a linguistic way. Painting, sculpture, photography, and architectural monuments are full of "textuality" and "words". Mitchell's proposition of "pictorial turn" opened a new chapter in semiotics of images. Moreover, this turn is in line with the great impact on the new image spectacle in the current media. In Mitchell's view, the legitimacy of semiotics, constructed on a linguistic turn, has faced some crises.

1.3.2 Iconicity in Linguistics

The iconicity in language is a common topic in linguistic semiotics. Among the wide variety of fields involved in the study of iconicity, linguistics is the one with the most abundant examples and discussions. Since the 1980s, the study of iconicity in Western linguistic circles has been very fine and systematic. Beginning with the first session of syntactic similarity held at Stanford University in June 1983, there have been more than ten major international seminars on related topics. The results of these discussions have been aggregated into important literature on iconicity in language. For example, the *Syntactic Iconicity* was published after the first session, and the second session was held under the theme "Seminar on iconicity in language", and then *Iconicity in Language* was published in 1995. In the mid-1980s, the University of Amsterdam and the University of Zurich jointly established a project research team on the theme of iconicity, and the team has since become a permanent institution and a major center for the study of linguistic iconicity. The establishment of the institution contributed to the cyclical and continuous academic sessions of the conference, which was entitled "Seminar on Iconicity in Language and Literature" and was organized once every two years. The theme of the seminar has been extended from linguistics to the entire field of literature; thus, it primarily has an interdisciplinary nature. In his summary report, Lu Weizhong pointed out that the international conferences focusing on linguistic iconicity also included the Twelfth International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences in 1988 and the 15th International Conference of Linguists in 1992 (卢卫中 2011). Selected papers were read at both conferences; afterward, some of the papers were published in a special issue (Issue No. 1, Volume 22) of the *Journal of Pragmatics* in 1994 under the theme "metaphor and iconicity".

Beginning circa 1988, linguists in China embarked on a study of iconicity and arbitrariness. Xu Guozhang's article "Is Language a System of Arbitrary Signs? The Theory Reconsidered" (《语言符号的任意性问题—语言哲学探索之一》) is regarded as the first article in China to challenge the theory of arbitrariness. Xu Guozhang (许国璋 1988) demonstrated the iconicity of linguistic signs from the perspective of etymology and opposed the arbitrariness of linguistic signs. Since

then, Shen Jiaxuan (沈家煊 1993) absorbed John Haiman's linguistic thought and emphasized the motivation in the iconicity of linguistic reference from the perspective of syntactic structure. Shen's "A Survey of Studies of Iconicity in Syntax" (《句法的象似性问题》) has been extremely influential in China; in the article, he put forward three kinds of iconicity in syntax: distance iconicity, order iconicity, and quantity iconicity. Since then, linguists in China have found more examples on the basis of this expanded iconicity. Entering one of the three keywords "arbitrariness", "motivation" and "iconicity" in the search engine of China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI), the author finds the number of relevant articles in Chinese language is 7253, and that in foreign languages is 3203, so the total number is 10,456 (up to10:00 a.m., April 19, 2024). Wang Yin's *Selected Papers on the Study of Chinese Linguistic Iconicity* (王寅 2003) examines the research on linguistic iconicity in China at that time. However, his view of "iconicity being superior to arbitrariness" has not been recognized unanimously in academic circles. Guo Hong (郭鸿 2001), Hu Zhuanglin, and other scholars have refuted or questioned this point of view, holding that it is not necessarily the case that iconicity is superior to arbitrariness or vice versa.

Up to now, the discussion of linguistic iconicity in China has been very meticulous. The interface between this book and the discussion on linguistic iconicity does not center on the induction of individual examples of linguistic iconicity, but on the theoretical logic of iconicity and arbitrariness. At this level, there are still some limitations in the discussion of linguistic iconicity in China in terms of the visualization of Chinese characters as well as the abstraction of demonstration.

1.3.3 Verbal Icons in Literature and General Images in Contemporary Media

Language and literature form an academic continuum, with language being the basic unit for the production of literature, just as dots, lines and planes for painting, even though literature involves a complex and complete text. As discussed above, we can see within the topics on international iconicity, a tendency to view the discussion of linguistic iconicity has been gradually extended to iconicity in literature. In the 1980s which saw the rise of discussions on iconicity, the literature mainly focused on structural iconicity in language, such as the study of syntactic iconicity (1983, theme of the Symposium). In the second session in 1992, the topic was changed to the study of linguistic iconicity, which extended the research object of iconicity to the entire field of linguistics. In 1997, Zurich hosted the third session under the theme iconicity in language and literature. Linguists and writers jointly took part in the discussion at the session. Thus, the discussion on iconicity was extended to the whole academic continuum of language and literature.

A verbal icon is very important in modern literature. Wimsatt (1954) once claimed that a poem should become a verbal icon, and the viewpoint represented not only a trend within literary criticism, but also could be regarded as the ontological demand

of the art world at large in the early twentieth century. In *Theory of Literature*, Rene Wellek and Austin Warren developed four levels of classification of verbal icons in terms of abstractness and scope: speech image, metaphorical image, symbol, and mythological image. Zhao Yiheng (赵毅衡 1986) discusses the translation of the term "icon" and points out that in accordance with the working scope of New Criticism, it is roughly the same as the meaning of the image as discussed by the school of New Criticism. Tong Qingbing (童庆炳 1995) basically accepted this definition and basing his work on it, produced several levels of classification and definitions of verbal icons in literature.

In fact, since Tong's work appeared, not all the iconicity research can be said to be part of literary research because the study of iconicity, involving "vision", "image" and "music", reaches issues far beyond linguistics, with linguistics in its broad sense being not only extended to literature—the artistic form with language as a tool—but also to any text expressing meaning in today's daily life. At this stage, the research object about iconicity in linguistics has been transformed from structural iconicity by the external extension of sound, form, sentence and text to the abstract "verbal icon".

When the verbal icon formed in literature reflects the inner world and is shown in real social life, the pseudo environment becomes the entity that composes the real environment as well as the only way to present it. The "images" in literature, music, fine art, and so forth are all products of simulacra, which constitute the content of the pictorial age because they constitute a profound interaction with contemporary reality. This changes all the research into a kind of study of "media signs". In a sense, these "simulacra" have become the object and background of contemporary media culture studies, ranging from work on Plato and the vision-centeredness of the West to research on the being as image in the world in modern philosophy. Heidegger (1977) presented the view that the existence of *Dasein* is sought and discovered in the representation of the being, so the thing that the world becomes, an image per se, marks the essence of modernity and becomes a starting point of modern media spectacle. Aleš Erjavec's *Toward the Image* (艾尔雅维茨 [Erjavec] 2003) and Mitchell's *Picture Theory* have become specific declarations of pictorial turn and image declarations in media spectacle. In Mitchell's view, the twenty-first century was about the image. We live in a culture dominated by images, visual imitations, stereotyping, illusions, copies, replicas, imitations and fantasies. McLuhan's *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (1964), Guy Debord's *Society of the Spectacle* (1967), and Jean Baudrillard's *Simulacra and Simulation* (1981) are foundational works in the field of media. Following these studies, implosion, imitation, super-reality and other views have been themes in media spectacle research for decades.

The interest in the media spectacle and simulacrum in China has developed gradually along with media practice. Therefore, related topics often become the attendants of media culture research. These studies, then, include many practical explanations about such things as consumer desire and illusion, image construction, the authenticity of news, and communication with video. There seems to be a need to integrate these studies, as each of them is focused on a narrow field. At present, the huge

"image field" constructed by the media is the most influential text style of contemporary culture—a variety of media simulacra and imitations based on the "iconicity" mechanism. This book focuses on the symbolic mechanism and explains both what "*xiang*" (象/像) is and what its influences on cultural form is from the perspective of semiotics. "*Xiang*" (象/像), also an important cultural symbol in traditional Eastern and Western cultures, is particularly complex and needs to be explored. It not only includes all kinds of visible objects, but also includes abstract cultural logic, as in the so-called "*daxiang wuxing* (大象无形, the great form is beyond shape)". In order to avoid limiting "像" to the concrete and tangible "image", in this book, "iconicity" (像似/像似性, *xiangsi*/*xiangsixing*) is discussed in depth as a kind of mechanism of becoming.

1.4 Research Scope and Development

An interdisciplinary study of the "iconicity" mechanism of signs is conducted in this book, and this mechanism is applied to all aspects of media's cultural spectacle. On the whole, this book aims to break through research barriers with media and perceptual channels as the boundaries, attempting to establish a general theory—semiotics of media—so as to form a systematic theory with both spatial span and time dimension. Starting from image signs, this book belongs to the basic theoretical research of cultural symbols, aiming ultimately to construct a guiding explanation of the current problems. In addition, the book also addresses the wisdom and valuable heritage of Chinese traditional culture and explains the iconicity involved in classical cultural symbols such as Chinese characters, He Tu Luo Shu (Chart from the Yellow River and Book from the Luo River), the *I Ching* (*Book of Changes*), and the cultural thinking reflected therein.

The research objects of this book can be roughly divided into three levels, and they are 像 in the narrowest sense as a visual "icon", 像 at the middle level as a non-visual "icon", and 像 in the broadest sense as the general iconicity that is also embedded in "symbol" and "index". Moreover, these three levels constitute the main objects to be discussed in this research: the iconicity mechanism of signs and contemporary cultural texts dominated by visual images. It is a huge interdisciplinary and cross-cutting study, but it focuses on the field of sign-based communication. Taking the signs and the combination of signs (texts) in contemporary media culture as the main research objects, this book's choice of textual cases touches on specific "art images", "verbal icons" in literature, and their "spectacle presentation" in the context of contemporary media. The specific research questions are as follows. How is the image in personal perception intrinsically related to the cultural texture of society? How does individual psychological logic produce homology with culture as a whole? With the advent of digital media, how does the living state of an individual make an overall cultural relationship? There is a common internal thread running through these questions; that is, how the logic of individual perception constitutes the cultural

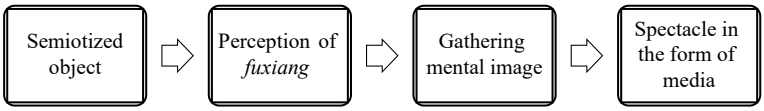

Fig. 1.1 The thread of the keywords of this study

logic of the media and even of the whole society, and this thread is studied among several keywords of this book (as shown in Fig. 1.1).

One of the important developments in semiotics in recent decades is the increased universality of knowledge about mankind's cultural symbols, derived from linguistic semiotics. As a kind of sign, image is completely different from language, and the research on image in the semiotics framework remains incomplete. Panofsky's iconological method, confined to specialized fields, has begun to limit iconography's powerful interpretation of current culture. In a sense, modern iconology is a history of image signs, which is not only reflected in the image itself as an image sign to be studied, but also in the theoretical paradigms of image theorists, as these can achieve a more systematic induction in semiotics. At the same time, semiotics of the image also needs to face a variety of new challenges and questions, such as those of the so-called "post-semiotics". In fact, when we try to claim that image is in the category of semiotics, we must define some basic concepts related to "image sign" and its boundaries.

This book starts with iconicity, but this entire book seeks to provide general theoretical evidence for the semiotics of general culture, involving linguistics, culture and art theory, as well as studies of journalism and communication. For example, the section related to art theory of iconology starts with the image theorists and the modern image theory they established at the end of the nineteenth century. The objects these image theorists analyzed include the history of painting and painting theory, and the object they refuted in that era was the image analysis method of the classical period. Researchers are required to understand classical art history and the history of the art theory they discuss; similarly, Gestalt psychology and the relationship between later psychoanalysis and images should also be understood in order to conduct an analysis of psychological formalism. Therefore, when applying the semiotics of images to contemporary visual culture, we must cover a wide range of fields, such as film, television, digital images, advertising, journalism, and industrial design. Obviously, the author of this book is not a universal expert in all of these fields, and the focus of this book is not on the technical research of each of the fields involved. Instead, the processing of the logic among their common meanings in order to construct a view of signs may help to develop an understanding of the characteristics of contemporary media culture.

In various disciplines, there is a lack of consensus regarding the terms and research objects coming under the theme of semiotics of images, with different terms used by Chinese and foreign scholars in their research. Panofsky borrowed the ancient word "iconology" from other fields (previously, the term "iconography" was more popular), and "iconography" has since been limited to studies of traditional fine arts.

Later theorists also used different terms. For example, Mitchell specifically used "picture theory" or "pictorial semiotics" (Paulsen 2000). In contemporary research, people tend to regard the research of image signs as visual communication in visual culture theory or media semiotics. The keywords of the literature directly involved are the semiotics of the icon, visual semiotics, picture semiotics (Sonesson 1989) and image semiotics. The extensive terminology not only increases the difficulty of literature combing, but also means that the research must become "a dispute about glossary of terms" to a great extent. In addition to the name for the discipline, the extensive terminology also involves the transfer of meaning brought about by the transformation of the context of academic history (such as "ekphrasis"), the analysis of translations of some polysemous lexicons (such as symbol and sign), and even the academic origin of some Chinese terms, such as "像似/像似性" or "象似/象似性".

In this book, with iconicity as the keyword, the abstraction of various concepts finally leads to progress in relevant theoretical studies. First, we shall look at the basic background for theories and concepts of sign. Based on the essential concepts of sign and icon, the classical achievements of semiotics are investigated to extract theories related to this book, which helps form a foundation for establishing contemporary image semiotics and a keyword "iconicity" to understand contemporary media culture. Moreover, this is a direction in which semiotics has expanded from linguistics. Second, on the basis of the systematic examination of the above theoretical achievements, typical texts in the current culture are taken into account, and some theoretical viewpoints at the meso-level are formed, such as those regarding language structure, iconicity of Chinese characters, universal language and perfect symbol, visual perspective ratio, cross-media rhetoric, media image, self-image, news and truth. Taking image, sign, and iconicity as the research objects, this book systematically examines the research methods and theories, and employs these methods to understand the visual image spectacle constructed by current media signs. Finally, the theoretical views described above are further abstracted, and sublimated to the macro understanding of the cultural spectacle. Here, the specific theories of the first two parts are studied in the grand context of cultural philosophy and cultural history. In the comparison of the differences between Chinese and Western civilizations, we can understand the differences of cultural thinking caused by the means of "similarity".

These three steps are gradually carried out in each of the relevant fields. The analysis is a progressive process, advancing, in turn, from concrete to abstract, from micro to macro, and from individual experience to cultural logic. Specifically, this book moves from precise visual pictures to the images in language and literature, and then it proceeds to some typical spectacles in contemporary media. Finally, from a macro perspective, this book investigates the overall cultural style composed of all kinds of simulacra and spectacles in the media world.

Chapter 2
Sign and Image

In daily life, Chinese speakers do not express iconicity (像似性, *xiangsixing*) by linking up the two Chinese characters 像 (*xiang*) and 似 (*si*), but rather tend to use 相似 (*xiangsi*) or 相像 (*xiangxiang*) or a single Chinese character—either 像 or 似—to describe two things that share common characteristics. Such usage is related to semiotics, but does not qualify as usage in the strict semiotic sense. As discussed in this study, 像似性 is a special term in semiotics. In addition to the theoretical presupposition in the discipline, 像似性 as a special term is a much more precise word than adjectives typically used in daily life. There are different modes of iconicity, different degrees of iconicity and so on. This chapter primarily aims to define "icon" and "iconicity" in the category of semiotics and to define the relationship between iconicity and the signification mechanism in the category of semiotics, which is called "'semiotics' conclusion". Therefore, this chapter begins with the working category of semiotics, makes a retrospection of the basic category of sign, and attempts to outline the concept and the category of icon in the general classification of signs, then deals with the internal relationship between pictoriality and semioticity in order to clarify some misunderstandings of the relationship between iconology and semiotics.

2.1 Sign and the Pedigree of Image

2.1.1 Sign

2.1.1.1 Clues in Pre-semiotics

It is recorded in the second part of *Xici*《系辞》(The Attached Statements, one of the Ten Wings which is the most influential early commentaries on the *I Ching*) that in ancient times, people used knot rope to record things for the governance of the world, and later saints used engraved characters instead. Moreover, in the second part

Y. Hu, *Semiotics of the Image*, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-96-4592-3_2

of *Xici*, Kong Yingda in Tang Dynasty notes that Zheng Kangcheng in Eastern Han Dynasty explains that people formed larger knots to stand for great events and smaller ones for smaller things. Ge Hong in Jin Dynasty argues in *Junshi of Baopuzi* (《抱朴子·钧世》) that if traveling by boat or car takes the place of walking on foot, and recording things with paper and ink takes the place of the knot rope, what happens later is recorded much better than before. Humankind's use of signs is as old as symbolic behavior itself, and it is far beyond the scope that the word source of signs can cover. If we accept the definition of humankind as "a symbolic animal" from Ernst Cassirer, human civilization is where human beings express meaning, as this provides the pluralistic evidence required for mankind to prove that human beings are different from other animals. From the perspective of textual research, we are unable to find a single symbol as a mark in the process of human evolution, but the use of signs is undoubtedly very powerful evidence. The way of using signs to record civilization from earliest recorded history includes, for example, recording things with knot rope in primitive society and the handprint rock paintings made by the Neanderthals more than 40,000 years ago. The great function of these verifiable signs is to record and inherit civilization. It can be imagined that humankind's use of signs would likely have begun earlier than these more verifiable histories. The use of signs is of great significance to human civilization, for it plays an important role in the inheritance of civilization. The evolution of most organisms depends on genes—the biological means—and parents' demonstration, but demonstrated experience cannot be accumulated. For the development of human civilization, only through records and inheritance of signs can knowledge and experience be accumulated quickly. Therefore, in the past ten thousand years or so, while humankind's biological function has remained essentially unchanged, human civilization has made great achievements. In this sense, Cassirer's statement that man is a symbolic animal can be further understood to mean that the human cultural civilization is built on the basis of the symbol system, which is another important element of Cassirer's philosophy of cultural symbols.

Here, it is necessary to delve into the structure and the origin of sign (符号, *fuhao*) in Chinese. The Chinese 符号 employs two synonymous Chinese characters. 符 (*fu*) is a phonogram character dating back to the Hufu characters coined in the state of Qing during the Warring States period, and it is interpreted as a credential, which is made of bamboo, measuring about 6.7 cm in the Han Dynasty, and divided into two parts (谷衍奎 2003) in *Shuowenjiezi*《说文解字》(*Explanation of Script and Elucidation of Characters*) written by Xu Shen in Eastern Han Dynasty. In early official script writing, the upper part of 符 was sometimes written as the upper part of 草, meaning grass, because 符 at that time was made of bamboo. There was carving on 符, which was divided into two equal parts, with the left half given to the executor, and the right half the issuer. If these two parts matched, it would mean that the holder was trustworthy. Such credentials were commonly made of bamboo, but some at that time were also made of copper, wood, or jade. They were used in feudal society, typically by the royal court, in granting titles, entering gates or as strategic passes, sending imperial edicts, deploying troops, and so on. In the Han Dynasty, when Taoism emerged, 符 referred to magic figures drawn by people such as Taoist priests and

witches to expel spirits. In *Modern Chinese Dictionary* (《现代汉语词典》, *Xiandai Hanyu Cidian*), the general interpretation of 符号 includes the following: (a) marks; (b) signs worn on the body to indicate occupation and identity (中国社会科学院语言研究所词典编辑室 2005). As the explanation in the dictionary is usually based on daily uses, 符号 can be roughly regarded as a kind of reference. This is where its daily use differs from that of semiotics. As will be discussed later, in semiotics, sign is regarded as a binary or ternary complex, while in daily use, signs often refer to things that represent other things, such as digital symbols, marks, indicators, and symbols. These things are the carriers of signs, called "the signifiers" by Saussure, while Peirce called them "representamen", which has since been adopted by semioticians.

The word "sign", as used in modern semiotics, originated in the West. Although the use of signs is as old as human beings, the conscious study of the history of signs takes place in a highly civilized world. In Western academic circles, it is generally believed that people consciously began to take the principles of linguistic and non-linguistic signification as research objects in ancient Greece. The word "sēmeion" was used in Plato's dialogues to indicate "sign", "clue", and "evidence", and the Stoics discussed the general semantic relationship of "sēmeion". The corresponding judgment and induction of patients' "symptoms" made by Hippocrates, the ancient Greek medical scientist, is in fact an exploration of the systematic rules in the sign's function of indication. In ancient Rome, Claudius Galenus of Pergamum, the doctor and philosopher, wrote a book on medical symptoms entitled "Semiotic", and the word "semiotics" is believed to have been used for the first time in history in this book (俞建章 and 叶舒宪 1988). Later, Aurelius Augustinus used the word "signum" to refer to something that makes thinking go beyond the sensory impression (李幼蒸 1999). Aurelius Augustinus's definition of sign began to show that sign is both a kind of object and a psychological result, having dual attributes.

2.1.1.2 Signal

"Information", "signal", and "sign" are three terms that are easily confused. The three terms are not strictly defined even though they have been used in daily life. In dictionaries and reference books, a sign is usually defined as "a thing such as a pattern or a letter that transmits information", and is used to represent a person, object, attribute, quantity, or relationship. For example, a code is a sign used in telegraphic communication (董大年 2007). This example actually represents the concept in a way that is likely to lead to misunderstanding. In fact, information is a content variable, and the differences between signal and sign can be analyzed from the three aspects detailed below.

First, signal is more connected than sign to the elements of process, and this leads to accurate quantification because it does not require interpretation; however, sign is more inclined toward the recipient's perception because it focuses on interpretation. Signal is the basic unit of information, and the concept of information comes from the physical idea of "entropy"; therefore, people usually say "information is negative entropy". In 1948, Claude Elwood Shannon, the American mathematician

and founder of information theory, points out in *A Mathematical Theory of Communication* that information is used to eliminate random uncertainties, and it can be accurately calculated using mathematical formulas. "Entropy", in physics, refers to the quotient of heat energy divided by temperature, indicating the extent to which heat is transformed into work. Though it is a function often used to describe and characterize the degree of confusion of a system in science and technology, the entropy concept is also used in social sciences to describe the extent of certain states of human society. In biological research, entropy entails biological affinity. Scientists have invented ways to measure entropy as the degree of disorder, which also refers to the degree of chaos, or the total amount of internal structural disorder. Shannon first introduced the concept of entropy into the theory of information, and in turn, entropy became the pairwise concept of information and the basic concept in communication, and it represents the uncertainty and disorder of a situation. Sign, however, is "perception with meaning" (赵毅衡 2011b), that is, the dimension of "carrying meaning". Since the beginning, semiotics has been set apart as a "meaning interpretation", which goes beyond the physical level. Saussure understood sign as the combination of the signifier and the signified (as the combination of sound and meaning in his writings). In other words, a sign needs an interpretation, and its interpretation defines a sign more clearly as the existence of a relevant meaning. As a result, semioticians define semiotics as the theory of studying activities of meaning (Peirce 1931–1958). However, signal usually does not emphasize the meaning itself, but rather emphasizes itself as the "carrier" beyond meaning, and it implies objective reality as well as something in itself. A signal may not be received. If a sign is beyond perception and interpretation, it has no referential relation at all.

Second, signals tend to be mandatory and incur fixed reactions, but the interpretation of the sign must be open. In transmission, a signal is often regarded as an immutable objective existence, which is a certain intention provided by the sender. Even if there is a decoding process, this is the realization of the issuer's intention. The semiotic system is a whole system based on symbolic arbitrariness (Saussure 1966). Here the essential attribute of the sign lies in its "arbitrariness", which indicates that the meaning of a sign depends on its use by human beings. Furthermore, the motivation for its use necessarily annihilates the initial motivation of symbolic creation. A sign may have a certain motivation at the moment of its birth, but this motivation gradually becomes unverifiable in the process of being used, gradually losing the need for textual research.

Third, "signal" belongs to information theory, and "sign" belongs to humanities as it is related to the study of meaning. Communication research with information as the main research object has developed its own method of "information communication theory", constructed on the way of understanding information. It specifically refers to information theory among the three scientific theories of the twentieth century and the research methods and variants (such as cybernetics) established on this basis. Information, resorting to the real world, is expressed as the third major element that is interrelated with material and energy, and it manifests as objective existence. In distinguishing signal from sign, Eco (1979) makes it clear that signal is studied by confining information theory to the narrow form of the term. John Fiske agrees that

information theory, as a mechanical theory, is used to measure the total amount of information transmitted by given information channels, and it seeks to maximize the process' transmission efficiency. In the field of information theory, information is the physical form of signal, rather than its meaning (O'Sullivan et al. 1994).

Based on the description above, we can see that the internal orientation of communication based on the signal is different from communication studies of signs based on meaning interpretation. Cassirer (1944) defined human beings with symbols, believing that symbols make human meaning out of "Plato's cave" and find the way to the "the world of ideas" composed of religion, philosophy, and science. In particular, he points out that the difference between humans and animals is that animals can only make conditioned or reflex responses to "signals" (he calls them signs), and their relationship with nature is direct, while humans know how to create "symbols". According to the empirical experience of communication research, in order to maintain the "neutrality" of a certain value, the interpretation of meaning is often omitted, which invisibly leads to the degradation of "signs" into "signals". Because the most important difference between signs and signals lies in the openness for the meaning of a sign and the definite target of a signal, such degradation also leads to the limitation of research methods in empirical studies of communication. Although early communication studies, dominated by empiricism, focused a great deal on signs, such studies did not really introduce semiotics theories into communication. Fiske refers to the traditional communication research paradigm as "process school", as the traditional communication research paradigm is based on information theory, with empiricism as the main method, and it is countermeasures-and-effects-oriented. Of course, it may be further understood as a theoretical paradigm based on "signal communication". At the same time, Fiske creates the label, "communication of signs", for the research style that regards signs and their interpretation to be the main elements of communication. Fiske regards them as two basic schools of communication. Moreover, Eco (1979) points out that the signal as the research object of information theory is not sign per se because it is "independent of its meaning and only has dual value". Although Eco recognizes the difficulty in choosing the signal as a semiotics threshold for concern, his view shows that the sign should be related to the meaning, and the relationship should be a fixed dual one. (Eco developed "seven conditions of signs" on this basis). There is a difference in disciplinary structure between sign and physical signal (Eco 1979). In fact, we might as well consider signal and sign in the thinking of the parallel universe. The parallelism between disciplines does not mean that they are far from each other in physical space, but it suggests that they reflect the fundamental difference between perspective and methodological logic. Thus, their disciplinary natures and targets are completely different. Even if we compare them, the fact that this is an interdisciplinary comparison instead of a comparison of two synonyms in the same category should also be clear.

First, the signal is more inclined towards the elements of process, leading to accurate quantification because it does not need to be interpreted, but the sign is more inclined towards the recipient's perception because it needs interpretation. In the terminology of information theory, information is a measure of randomness (胡易容 2012). Thus, semiotics has been set by itself as a "meaning interpretation" beyond the

physical level. Physical existence does not provide the existence of meaning because perception and interpretation do not depend directly on this physical basis. Second, signal points to the fixed reaction (Eco calls this the "dual" value), while sign points to the uncertain interpretation because of its essential "arbitrariness" and finally leads to infinite semiosis. In the process of signal transmission, signal is regarded as an immutable objective existence, but the semiotics system is "the whole system based on symbolic arbitrariness" (Saussure 1966). Third, signal belongs to the discipline of information theory, and the systematic science related to information theory and information is expressed as the third element that goes hand in hand with matter and energy. Its mode of existence must be the objective existence of the physical form (O'Sullivan et al. 1994). Thus, John Fiske argues that information theory is a mechanical theory used to measure the total amount of information transmitted by a certain information channel and to seek ways to maximize the efficiency of this process. In the field of information theory, information is the physical form of signal, not its meaning. However, semiotics, the study of meaning, belongs to the humanities, and the sign is an invisible and intangible psychological mechanism under social conventions.

Thus, this shows that Eco's "universe of signals" and "world of signs" do not need to collide when viewed from the same perspective. When the concept of sign is used, a humanistic perspective on "meaning interpretation" is created automatically, and when the concept of signal is used, the perspective of information theory and its related science is adopted. The intersection of disciplines is inevitable, but if the perspectives on which concepts depend are confused with others, chaos will ensue. Therefore, we can draw the following basic conclusions about the concept of sign: a sign is not a thing, or medium, nor is it a perception of itself; a sign is not a signifier, a signified, or the essential element of any isolated existence; it cannot even be confined to strictly conditioned synonyms such as information in daily life. A sign is a group of relationships extending around meaning. Therefore, iconicity needs to be defined in "this group of irreducible relationships within sign".

2.1.1.3 The Meaning of Sign in Modern Semiotics

In modern semiotics, few scholars have defined the concept of sign, not only because it is difficult to define but also because its theoretical meaning is not easy to distinguish from its meaning in daily use. Sign in daily use usually refers to something that represents something else. Since the inception of modern semiotics, the definition of sign has been studied within a group of relationships. Saussure is the founder of the linguistic semiotics tradition, which is one of the starting points of modern semiotics. His main research object in the *Course in General Linguistics* is linguistic signs. Saussure (1966) points out that linguistic signs do not connect "names" and "things", but "sound-image" and "concept". He uses the two concepts—signifier and signified—to stand for the two concepts of meaning reference, and he defines sign as "a combination of concept and sound-image". Saussure's definition is different from the simple conclusion of "one thing stands for another one" in daily use. In his

opinion, sign is not about the relationship between things; moreover, the signifier "image" and the signified "concept" are psychological. Therefore, a linguistic sign is a kind of double-sided psychological entity. Saussure's concept of sign laid a solid foundation for later studies of structural linguistic signs because "the relationship between the signifier and the signified is built on the system of relational rules" (Eco 1979). Saussure's definition also provides the basis for the judgment that semiotics is "the study of meaning". Saussure points out that when we talk about a sign in daily life, it often refers to the "signifier" of a sign, but in fact the concept is an indispensable part of a sign. Without the concept of signified, there is no signifier at all. The objects and examples in Saussure's study of signs are within the scope of linguistics, and in studying the function of signs, Saussure focused on people's strict use of man-made signs for communication. However, Saussure clearly points out that there should be a "more general" principle in defining sign.

Peirce did not communicate directly with Saussure, so neither of them knew the other's system, but their insights coincide with each other. However, compared with Saussure's binary structure, Peirce's focus on the triangular relationship to explain the semiotic structure is on the element of "interpretant". Peirce believes the sign is the subjective basis or in the basic position of an irreducible ternary relationship (Deely 2003). Peirce (1931–1958) claims that nothing is a sign unless it is interpreted as a sign. According to Eco, one of the contributions of Pierce's claim is that the definition of sign can be explained in an "impersonal" way and Eco does not require the attribute that signs are produced and sent by man intentionally as part of the definition of sign, but does simply require that someone, such as the recipient, must interpret the sign (Eco 1979). In fact, Eco himself accepted and emphasized this concept of semiotics centered on interpretation. He gave his own advice about the concept that signs are based on established social habits, so they can be seen as things that represent other things. This definition is quite broad and is easily reduced out of context into "one thing to stand for another thing". In fact, a particularly important part of this definition lies in the socially conventionalized behavior "in accordance with established social habits". Besides, the definition also excludes the objective things not constrained by social conventions from the category of sign.

Different scholars base their work on different semiotics systems. Generally speaking, modern semiotics scholars tend to agree on one of sign's characteristics—interpretation—thus the term "sign" is defined from this perspective. For example, Zhao Yiheng has produced a very concise definition of sign, that is, sign is considered to be the perception with meaning (赵毅衡 2011b). This definition shows that human perception is a necessary condition for locking the relationship between the concept of sign and meaning. From the perspective of John Deely's (2003) theoretical research, a sign is defined as a thing set in advance by the object. This "presupposition" is the same as the definition "being thought to carry meaning" because both explain the basic premise of sign as interpretation.

2.1.2 Image

2.1.2.1 The Pedigree of Image

It is not wise to define the image carelessly; by classifying the image, we may find the inherent characteristics of the image from its pedigree, starting with its denotation. Theorist W.J.T. Mitchell (1986) uses this idea to make a classification of the image's denotation.

Figure 2.1 presents a group of objects serving as icons around the concept of image and its parallel concepts. However, Mitchell's (1986) classification is only based on the core discourse of the disciplines. Let's see the following examples. The spiritual image belongs to psychology and cognitive theory; the visual image belongs to physics; pictures, sculptures and architecture belong to art history; the word image belongs to literary criticism; the perceptual image is at a critical position in physiology, neurology, psychology, art history; and optics unconsciously cooperates with philosophy and literary criticism. This classification is a good indication that when the image is discussed in different disciplines, the focus is actually not the same, because what they focus on is simply about a mental conception held in common by members of a group and symbolic of a basic attitude and orientation. In fact, a classification based on too-specific disciplinary discourse is a cross classification, and it is impossible to exhaust the discourse boundary of a specific discipline—this is not conducive to clarifying the denotation of a concept. For example, images of physics and physiology may be inherently related, but they begin at different starting points. In fact, the perspective of any discipline is almost non-intersecting with that beyond the discipline, and their relationship is the same as that between 1 km and 1 ton. It may not be a helpful way to describe the denotation of image by gathering what it means in different disciplines. Therefore, it is better to extract special discourses in a specific discipline to understand the disciplinary classification of image in a universal way of knowing a universal meso-level way of knowing. Let us take scientific image and cognitive image as n example. The view of image in scientism is a hypothesis that is beyond human perception. We can negate the rationality of scientific cognitive image in philosophy, but we do not neglect the perspective when we are defining an object. That is to say, the denotation of image in humanities must be about the way in which human beings perceive and understand things.

In describing the denotation of the image family with a pedigree, the author prefers to establish the family pedigree (eight types of images) based on the cognitive schema or the media per se.

a. Visible objects

All kinds of visible objects (both artificial and natural), including matter and energy, lack a viewing purpose. These things do not have the intention of image, so they do not have the frame, boundary, or other formal characteristics that image usually has. They become images because the viewer perceives and understands them in a "way of image". People watch celestial phenomena at night not because they are

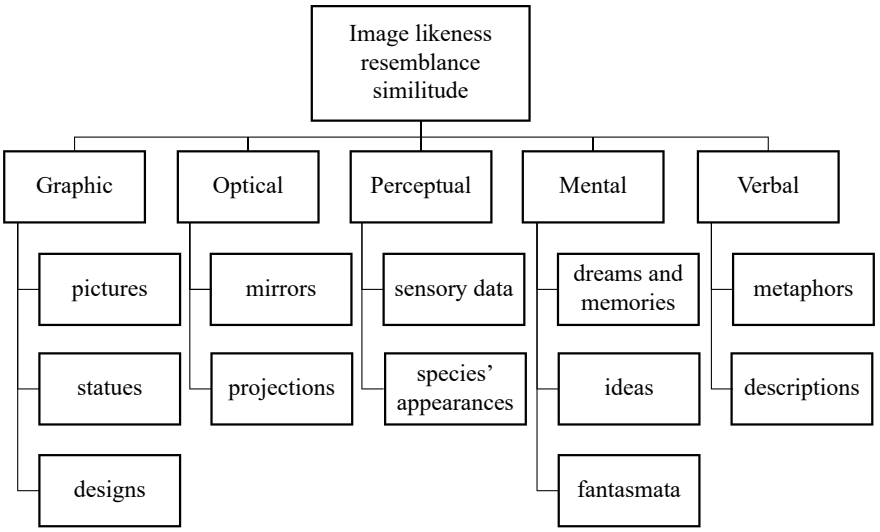

Fig. 2.1 The classification of image's denotation

images, but because these objects are likely to become images. Furthermore, what they lack is the "presupposition of schematic viewing and understanding". When people grasp the meaning through observation, the objects become images. Thus, it can be concluded that there are celestial phenomena in the sky, changes or movements in the water, and geographical features on the land. Visualization is the basic way in which matter and energy, which are the elements that make up the universe, are transformed into identifiable information, and the physical basis of visible objects is reflection or luminescence.

b. Invisible objects

Invisible objects herein refer to all kinds of invisible physical objects in the objective world. Through technical coding, invisible objects can be transformed into perceivable forms, such as ultraviolet light, infrared light, electricity, magnetic field, temperature and so on. When people "see" invisible objects, what people perceive are objects' forms obtained through schematic coding. For example, we cannot see the wind, but we obtain a visual coding of the wind through the fluttering flag. In fact, the invisible object image is not limited to light-like objects. Any kind of being may become an image if there is an appropriate form obtained through schematic coding. Let us take sound waves as an example. Through the visual coding of wavelength changes, we can see that the real audiogram-electrogram is the visible image that shows, for example, the amplitude or frequency of heartbeat.

c. Synesthesia

Synesthesia is a perceptual phenomenon in which stimulation of one sensory or cognitive pathway leads to automatic, involuntary experiences in a second sensory

or cognitive pathway. For example, the image formed through a poem is the linkage visualization of visual experience although people are already very familiar with this transformation process and therefore ignore such transformation.

d. Illusion

Illusion is more indirectly related to the physical world, as it neither needs a direct visual object, nor other senses to arouse it. For example, mental patients can see fabricated characters, events, or scenes, and most people can see lifelike things in their dreams. These scenes may not be a direct reflection of a certain external world, but they produce the same effect as if people really saw them. The reason these images in the brain still retain the forms of vision is that as a transcendental paradigm, acquired experience through visual cognition gives people the form of illusion based on vision.

e. Picture

Picture is a visible artificial object for viewing purposes. The perception of various artificial visual objects is the most basic image style, and its denotation includes any object that resorts to visual perception, such as a variety of visual arts, advertising, pictures in film and television, art installations, architecture, appearances of goods, and choices of dress. There are presuppositions regarding their own picturality. At the moment of their birth, they presupposed the "schematic visual relationship" with the audience.

f. Verbal icon

Linguistic logic, in a different way from image, is an important mode of expression. The reason the verbal icon, in particular, is regarded as a kind of image is that language and image are the two most important and basic ways to express meaning and understand the world. Language is useful for abstract logical signification, and image is appropriate for intuitive representation; but they also complement each other. In ancient Greece, the vivid representation of visual scenes through language was called "ekphrasis". Verbal icon is not directly formed by schematic experience in the transcendental process of human cognition; instead, it is the result of the cultural and historical accumulation of different signification systems' mutual penetration by human beings. Moreover, the translation among heterogeneous signs is also an important experience of the system of cultural symbols for human beings. In the current multimedia context, verbal icon has been extended to what is called *fuxiang* (符象). In fact, not only language, but also other forms of linguistic coding may be transformed into some kind of schematic perception.

g. Image/Figure

The words "image" and "figure" are sometimes synonymous with each other. It is difficult to define the terms image/figure because they are widely used in daily life, and they usually refer to the specific perceptible form or appearance of a thing. Image is widely used in literature and art as the image of an objective thing. But obviously, the art image can no longer cover the totality of meaning of image in contemporary media

culture. In the classification system for this book, image is defined as a kind of object-based schematic and synthesized impression of an individual, group (nationality, race, community, gender), institution (government, business, organization), city, or nation. Image is of great significance to media studies because it specifically refers to "brand image" in the current context of communicating positive images, and the fifth chapter will delve deeper into image.

h. Spectacle

Spectacle involves a comprehensive grasp of complex things, such as society and culture. It is not the representation or description of a single object image, but a comprehensive schematic grasp of complicated things. It is used for describing things with complex systematic characteristics, such as cultural patterns in media society, humankind's network structure, cosmic schema, humankind's knowledge structure pedigree, and so on. Moreover, it is not presented as a single image, but as a schema group with a common goal. Spectacle is a way to grasp a complex system, and one of the basic characteristics of a complex system is to refuse generalization.

The above eight types of images can be roughly classified into four categories according to their dominant tendencies. Among them, both visible and invisible objects are physical objects, and their dominant coding methods fall into physical science. Synesthesia and illusion are the perceptions formed by people's brain and body functions under certain conditions. Physical logic cannot explain the generation of such perceptions, so the code logic falls into life science. Visual images and verbal icons in the broad sense (including other artificially encoded visualized perceptions) are all kinds of artificial codes aimed at schematic perception. The most abstract are at the level of cognitive model. The figure and spectacle are not limited by the specific form of visual pictures, but are ways to grasp objects in "schema" with characteristics different from linear and single logic, in which the object of "figure" is more specific and clearer, and the object described in spectacle mainly comprises the gigantic complex system of cultural society. Of these four categories, the two subclasses of each category are "basic form" and "extended form", respectively. For example, visible objects are the basic form of physical objects, and invisible objects are the extended forms of visible objects. Synesthesia is the basic form of functional objects, and illusion is the advanced extended form of the comprehensive action of the nerve center. It is the same case with the relationship between picture and verbal icon, and the relationship between figure and spectacle (Fig. 2.2), which will be explained in Sect. 2.1.2.2.

2.1.2.2 Image and Schema

Viewed from the cultural history of the image, any type of image is formed based on the iconicity in representing an object, and this provides us with an important basis for defining image. From the literal meaning of image per se, iconicity is still the basic characteristic of image. According to Chinese dictionaries, 图像 (image, *tuxiang*) is formed by two Chinese characters 图 (*tu*) and 像 (*xiang*)—which are synonymous,

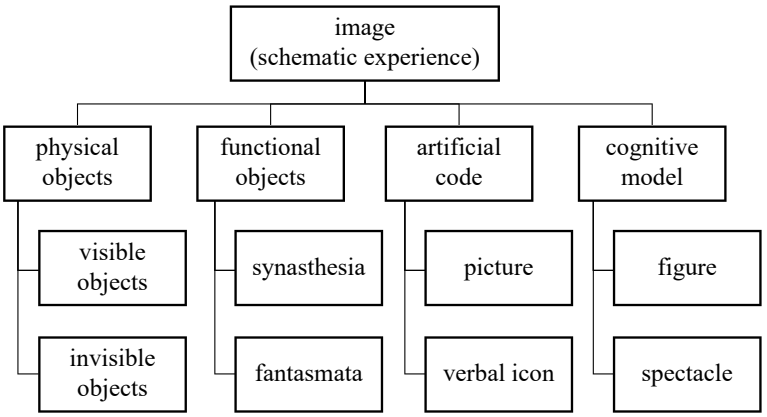

Fig. 2.2 Schematic experience of image

but the inherent meanings of the two Chinese characters differ. In bronze inscriptions (金文, *Jin wen*), the outer part of 圖 (图) is 口, similar to a capital city. The inner part of 圖 (啚) refers to a border area. Therefore, the inscription 圖 (图) means a map. Small seal script (小篆, *Xiaozhuan*) evolved from bronze inscriptions. Yang Shuda explains in *Jiweiju xiaoxue* (Little Learning) *shulin* (《积微居小学述林》): seeking meaning according to a character's shape, 图should be interpreted as a map; 口 is like a capital city. 啚is the origin of 鄙. Isn't an object with a capital city and border areas a map? (杨树达 2013) With the original meaning of "map", 图 developed to mean map or layout, that is, image described/printed, painting, description, reflection or plan.

It is difficult to give a philosophically and universally accepted definition of image. Image seems to be featured by being self-evident and directly perceived through the senses, which makes it difficult for us to distinguish it in some particular way rather than resorting to its basic properties. Viewed from the perspective of concepts of modern life and pan-science, the most common definition of image is "the general term for all kinds of graphics and photos". Scholars usually define image as a similar, vivid description or portrait of an object (贾永红 2003), highlighting the apparently inseparable association between image and iconicity. This is a clever way to define image because, from the perspective of its denotation, images are often difficult to generalize. Moreover, with the development of human cognitive ability, image's own medium continues to extend, and its scope as a perceptual approach continues to expand. Image traditionally has referred mainly to a two-dimensional appearance or picture that can be experienced visually, and it has been extended to include three-dimensional images and all kinds of natural scenes in the real world. However, defining the image only from the perspective of visuality is unreliable because different people have different vision, and the definition of human vision is constantly being updated. Even scientifically, it is impossible to determine exactly the impact of visible light on human beings. Ordinarily, people's eyes can sense

light with wavelengths between 400 and 700 nm, but some people can even sense wavelengths of about 380 to 780 nm. Human eyes with normal vision are most sensitive to electromagnetic waves with wavelengths of about 555 nm, and such electromagnetic waves belong to the green light of the optical spectrum. Bats can sense ultrasonic images, while pigeons can sense geomagnetism images, and snakes can sense infrared images, for example. Therefore, one might ask, do infrared light, ultraviolet light, and the magnetic field fall into the category of image? From the perspective of the narrowest traditional visual perception, entities outside the scope of human vision are not images because they are only visible with technological assistance. For example, infrared glasses, polaroid glass, and prisms enable us to see a wider range of light waves. How, then, do we define the images we see when we wear infrared imaging glasses? There is no doubt that we could insist that the images we see are merely translations of invisible objects rather than the invisible objects themselves. The image we see is simply the result of the visualization of the object.

However, we still perceive and understand these invisible objects as "what they seemingly see". The perception of objects through translation into images is a priori structure, based on human experiential knowledge, and this is different from linear structure. Let us take a paragraph for example. When we know the words of this paragraph, there will be a kind of motivation for us to read it thoroughly to grasp its meaning. Here, we also depend on vision to read the text, but perception and understanding are not realized through visualization. Nevertheless, if we do not know the words of this paragraph, perception will be completely different. If we use the "image features" of the text to perceive and understand it, what we get is image. For example, Westerners frequently refer to Chinese characters as "square-shaped writing", which is a way to understand things by translating them into images. Similarly, an illiterate child uses the images in his or her world of experience to describe the form and strokes of characters. In the contemporary art of calligraphy, there is a tendency to seek pure modeling only with pen and ink, without using Chinese characters, and this is also a way to understand things through visualization.

Therefore, we may say that image is not a self-evident object, but is an approach to conceptual construction of human experience. We distinguish an image from an object because images only exist in human understanding. That is to say, the image here is a kind of paradigm based on human beings' a priori understanding, which is called schema by Kant. The schema for Kant is the medium for knowledge and experience of objects, and it is categorized with overall human experience, in which there are different schemas. Among the schemas, the image is a special way of experiencing, and it is different from other ways of comprehending the world. Image is related to the survival of human beings, who have historically relied on vision, but this experience is not limited to vision. In the long-term evolution of human culture, image has evolved into a mode of perception and understanding with its own characteristics. The argument for image as a way of understanding is that, in the field of humanities, human perception must be different from that of animals—there must be, in a sense, acceptance. We may define the image as a perceptual form

of meaning—including visual metaphors and forms of metaphorical extension—in which the prototype is human visual experience and the basic characteristic is iconicity.

In the category of semiotics, all images are icons. On the one hand, it is undeniable that vision is the most original basis of image, but in the process of human evolution, "vision" has developed into "visuality", and is no longer limited to physiological vision, but is instead a kind of schematic perceptual form. On the other hand, the form of meaning perception in semiotics is equivalent to symbolic perception. On these bases, we may say that in the category of semiotics, image is a kind of icon. From this, we acquire a concept of image that not only shows its core quality but also demonstrates a certain openness: the visual image is visual icon, the auditory image is auditory icon, the literary verbal icon is the icon describing an object's image, and the media spectacle is the overall grasp of iconicity in contemporary media culture.

2.1.2.3 Biological Perception

It is necessary to further clarify the concept of perception because when we refer to the perception concept, we do not exclude the biological world beyond human beings. Here, for the discussion of the icon, the potential interference of human psychology and culture to objective attributes is first eliminated in order to discuss whether living things have that most essential ability in nature—the ability to resemble somebody or something. It is well known that not only advanced primates have the ability to imitate the environment, but chameleons, litter moths, and even plants have the ability to mimic the optical or physical properties of objects or surrounding environments. Through these imitations, creatures achieve their own survival. If there is no objective resemblance, why do deceived bugs fall into the trap of pitcher grass? There is no subject that can perceive in relation to the ability to imitate somebody or something in the plant world or in the imitation of optical physical properties in the environment (color, surface texture, shape) that is deployed by organisms in the process of evolution. Does this mean that iconicity is common in the biological world?

If the mechanism in evolution theory is taken into account, the conclusion will become slightly different. For example, we can think of the imitation of the environment serving as an aspect of natural selection. For example, individuals seemingly set apart from the environment are preyed on because they are easily seen and thus they fail to procreate their species. In fact, when we set the perceptual ability of predator as a subject of perception, we who do not have such perceptions cannot talk about resemblance. We can, however, assume a scenario to observe what happens in it.

Let us assume that there is an unknown mirror in the uninhabited wild (such as calm water, ice, or some kind of reflective rock). Then imagine a microorganism is blown onto the mirror by the wind, but, because the mirror is so smooth, the microorganism dies as a result of malnutrition. Therefore, the mirror is fatal to the organism. However, a grass grows tenaciously in the rift of the mirror, making the rift

even bigger. Then, a bug passes in front of this mirror, but the bug has weak eyesight and depends upon smell to hunt, so it fails to get any useful information from the mirror. That is to say, there is no mirror at all to the insect. Next, a cat passes in front of the mirror and sees itself, which is really exciting for the cat. At first it is surprising, but it does not recognize the being it sees. Soon, it seeks information through such abilities as taste, but it still cannot find any other information (smell) about the guy in the mirror, so the cat has to leave without knowing if the image in the mirror has anything to do with itself. Then, one day, a magpie flies in. After looking at the mirror, the magpie combs his feathers in the mirror! (Ratified experiments have shown that the magpie is the only bird known to humans to be able to recognize the mirror image as a reflection). Finally, there comes a human wizard, who sees this magical mirror that is so precious to her. She claims that the mirror is very powerful and that it is the God who gives her all. So, she declares to all the creatures that have just passed the mirror that they must obey her orders or else she will let the mirror deprive them of their lives. The result is familiar, just as follows. The microorganism emerges of itself and perishes of itself, and the grass withers in the cold winter because it fails to get enough soil, and even the magpie that sees itself in the mirror flies away in dismay. It seems that only the claim of the wizard, a human being, will work. Indeed, by virtue of this magical treasure, the wizard becomes the ruler of an unknown tribe and actually gains the power to wield absolute power.

Microbes and plants do not have any perception, and they do not control their simulations of nature by themselves, but these result from actions of their predators or from external power of perception. The chameleon's perception of the surrounding environment actually did not enter its system of brain and nerve perception, and its reaction at the cellular level of the skin is essentially the same as the mechanism of plants. In other words, even in the most objective sense, resemblance in nature requires a perceptual subject. Thus, we may construct a definition of resemblance in semiotics.

Resemblance is an association of proximity caused by the interaction between some physical properties and perceptual channels. For example, a frog has an especially keen sense only of dynamic objects, and some animals can only sense certain colors while others are color blind, and many animals have the ability to sense ultrasound in a certain frequency band. These phenomena belong to the category of the perceptual world. Thus, the next question is, can the resemblance of these creatures that is triggered by natural processes of imitation and evolution become a kind of icon? If we view this question from the category of biosemiotics, it must be based on perceptions of organisms. However, when we discuss biosemiotics or zoosemiotics, we must be clear about the essential difference between these and human semiotics. The difference is not a single "result of technical demonstration" but is rather a premise of work. In other words, we cannot define animal interpretation in the same way as human beings' interpretation, because animal psychology as explained through human science is not the original psychology of the animal world. This is the same case when we understand "being" and "Dasein". John Deely (2003) points out that signs are things preset by objects. That is, once animals are understood from a

human perspective, human values, ideas, and behavior patterns are actually presupposed. Animals have a perception of "resemblance" and will also either be deceived or will overcome deception through learning experience. However, these methods are the result of the interaction between the organism's perceptual functional mechanism and the object. Only human beings can interpret this case of resemblance as iconicity and make abstract the perception of different kinds of resemblance from vision, hearing, and touch into a kind of icon.

The icon is not imitation in the general biological sense, let alone the physical attribute of the objective existence of nature, but is the abstract achievement formed in the perception and psychological presupposition of human beings as cultural biological creatures. Here, the icon does not aim to maintain the particularity of human beings in the biological sense, but to say that the icon is the result of human psychological perception and cultural interpretation—a presupposition of the working category of human cultural symbols. Iconicity is not a purely physical attribute; it is a result peculiar to mankind's form of biological perception. The perceptual form of human being as an organism has also been influenced by social evolution. Therefore, a human's "non-human biological nature" is actually a contradictory proposition, and, to a degree, humans and some animals can only be compared in terms of the functional proximity in the biological perceptual structure.

We have found the proximity between them, which is still based on the subjective perspective of human beings. That is to say, we cannot deduce the existence of other things from the perspective of human beings; we acquire limited cognition about other things only through the existence of other things themselves. Here it is necessary to separate interpretation from perception for special illustration. As far as perception is concerned, human beings are of the same kind as some animals. Some semioticians are often puzzled about similarities between people and animals in treating certain suspected signs. For example, a primitive man who has not seen a television or mirror shows highly similar behaviors towards those objects, compared to a similar non-human primate. As far as this phenomenon is concerned, it is impossible to find a clear difference between human beings as symbolic animals and other non-symbolic animals because, at this time, humans perceive the object only by physiological function, which is not a typical kind of human explanation. In other words, the "man" in this primitive tribe then is not a real man, and his behavior cannot be used to illustrate the typical difference between human beings and animals. He is temporarily treated as an animal because the human is not defined as a biological mechanism, but as a complex of social acquisition and semiotization.

Where there are interpretations, there are signs, and where there are signs, there are human beings. Zoosemiotics, as an extension of semiotics, is helpful as a reference for semiotics to reflect on itself. We prefer to understand zoosemiotics and signs in its category as follows: zoosemiotics is actually a kind of reflection of the animal world and an exploration of cross-species communication by focusing on human beings' symbolic characteristics, and the word "sign" serves more of a metaphorical usage rather than the subversion of the original meaning.

Therefore, we may define iconicity with reference to the connotation of resemblance as follows. Resemblance is the association of proximity or misleading cognition caused by the interaction between some physical properties and perceptual channels. The perceptual form of resemblance is often featured by a single channel.

Iconicity is defined as the cultural acquisition interpretation about the traits of objects human beings perceive psychologically, and it is represented as proximity, analogy, and mutual association, and it has the potential to cause cognitive confusion. The perceptual form of iconicity is often trans-channel. For example, sharp visual shapes cause people to think of the sense of touch or fear.

In other words, the resemblance at the biological level occurs in perception or cognition, but the iconicity in semiotics from the perspective of human culture must be the result of cultural acquisition interpretation. One of the most significant differences between interpretation and cognition is that the former can be abstract with cross channels of perception. Animals can also be trained to perceive a certain resemblance across channels. For example, in Pavlov's experiment, the dog coveted the sound of the ringing bell by dripping saliva. Cassirer points out that this is a reaction instead of a response.

2.1.2.4 Icon

The word icon comes from the ancient Greek word "eikon", which means image, figure, representation, etc. In religious occasions and art history, the icon means the description of people and things in pictures. In computer terminology, the word refers specifically to all visual objects and graphical representations. As a term in semiotics, "icon" was used by Peirce (1931–1958), who divided signs into three categories according to the way the sign was directed to the object: the icon, index, and symbol. Moreover, the reason why the icon points to the property of the object is that the icon is similar to the property. This property, accordingly, is called iconicity.

As we know, Peirce's icon refers to the iconicity between representatum and its object, or their shared attributes. Sonesson (1998) points out that, according to Peirce's definition, it is necessary to further point out that iconicity is not only the relationship between the two independent things within the symbolic system (only as a direction), but also an inherent attribute of the two independent beings themselves. In other words, iconicity exists independently in representatum and object, and becomes the link between the two because of its commonality.

Morris (1971) developed Peirce's concept of iconicity by proposing that an icon and its object share certain properties. That is, there should be differences between an icon and its object; otherwise, iconicity becomes sameness. However, Morris's view was strongly criticized by Eco, who is one of the scholars who conducted the most in-depth studies in contemporary semiotics. He made a systematic study of iconicity from the perspective of semiotics. Based on Morris's view, Eco (1979) criticized six views about the icon. (a) A so-called icon has the same properties as its object; (b) A so-called icon is similar to its object; (c) A so-called icon is analogous to its object; (d) A so-called icon is motivated by its object; (e) A so-called icon is arbitrarily

coded; (f) A so-called icon, whether arbitrary or not, can be segmented into relevant coding units and may be subject to a multi-connection approach, as shown by word signs.

The first four views can be simplified into one question, which is "is an icon an objective physical property or a cultural convention of society". If it is an objective physical property, the referential relationship between the sign (actually referring to the representatum) and its object is natural. Eco believes that the view of "the objective iconicity of the image" is childish and ridiculous and justifies its conventionality.

Eco (1979) believes that an icon at most can substitute its object if it can share some attributes with its object. What we can draw from sharing some attributes is actually not a semiotic conclusion, but just a common sense that satisfies the senses of the general public. What is the essential difference between the common sense that satisfies the public senses and the conclusion in semiotics? Eco's semiotic conclusion is based on cultural meanings, not intuitive feelings at the biological level. Even if perception exists in the process of judgment about iconicity, it must be based on people's acquired experience in cultural life. Eco then took the picture of a beer advertisement as an example. There were neither cups nor bubbles, and condensed mist was on the paper. Then, he concluded that an icon and its object do not have any common physical properties. It is not the resemblance or similarity of the object itself that causes our desire for a false beer, but the psychological structure. Eco further points out that the root cause for us to produce the same reaction in the face of things that are completely different in physical components is the existing knowledge.

Eco adheres to the fundamental position of the sign's conventionality, and his point of view is very important in maintaining the integrity of the system of semiotics. We may understand Eco's argument in the following way. If iconicity is an objective property, then iconicity becomes a binary relationship only between the representatum and the object. Human interpretation is independent of the objective fact of iconicity, which is contrary to the intention of the sign. Moreover, when we look at the representatum and the object separately, and if the complete signification process of the ternary relationship of the sign has not been formed, how do we know if there has ever been iconicity? Therefore, the special relationship between the representatum and the object can be determined in the interpretant. In other words, when iconicity is involved in human psychological perception, it can become a kind of perceptual similarity. Paul Cobley (2010) points out that similarity alone does not make an icon. For example, twins who look alike do not form a sign for each other. Similarly, the image in the mirror looks very much like me, but it is not my icon (the mirror image will be discussed later in this book). Therefore, an icon must be the result of the agreement on similarity as a social convention in social practice. The iconicity of a sign seems to be a special type of similarity. It is abstraction based on conventionalization. It also shows that iconicity is not opposite to conventionality but is built on it.

Eco's firm belief in the basis of conventionality in semiotics has not been translated into a perfect demonstration. The picture of the beer advertisement that is used to illustrate similarity, for example, is not absolutely persuasive. Although the beer in the picture does not have the taste of real beer, it has the physical properties including

not only the material components of beer, but also its perceptible physical properties. Physically, the bubbling beer in the advertisement's picture does share some common properties with the real bubbling beer on the table, and this is not contrary to what Eco calls the sameness of perceptual structure. And this idea is even more evident in his example of sugar and saccharin—two substances with completely different chemical components that cause similar perceptual effects on people. In this way, Eco argues that iconicity does not share the sameness or similarity of physical properties. He says that only when it interacts with our taste is there a certain similarity. In fact, the similarity of taste is still objective and physical. Eco's attack on Morris is unfair because he replaced Morris's perceptual properties with physical or chemical properties of material constitution.

2.1.3 Motivation

2.1.3.1 An Introduction to Motivation

Iconicity and motivation are often understood as similar, or even the same concepts, as is shown in the previous review of linguistics. In fact, from the perspective of the logical relationship of comparison and contrast, the opposite of arbitrariness is not iconicity but motivation or transparency. The fact that iconicity is a symbolic motivation may be an irrefutable statement. On the other hand, it is not necessarily the case that motivation is equivalent to iconicity. However, in the demonstration and practice of motivation, examples of iconicity are often used to demonstrate the existence of motivation. The question that needs to be clarified in this section is that if motivation is not equivalent to iconicity, then what other types of motivation are included? What are their relationships with the motivation of iconicity? What is the position of iconicity in the signification pedigree from motivation to arbitrariness?

Since Saussure, who put forward the concept of motivation, has not defined it in detail, we can only analyze it from its opposite side which is arbitrariness. Saussure points out that arbitrariness is the first principle of linguistic signs. In Saussure's view, arbitrariness is unjustifiable, and it just shows that the relationship between the symbolic signifier and the signified lacks any natural connection in reality and is arbitrary (索绪尔 [Saussure] 1999). It shows that, for Saussure, natural connection is motivation and is the opposite of arbitrariness, which has existed in Western philosophy for thousands of years before Saussure. In Plato's *Cratylus,* there is a dialogue among Socrates, Cratylus, and Hermogenes. Cratylus regards a word as a natural thing, and that is later summarized as the Cratylism or transparency of signs. However, Hermogenes thinks that a word and its name result from an agreement or from the user's habit, and there is no natural connection between them. This view is summed up as Hermogenism later, and is the source of the philosophical discussion on arbitrariness, described by Saussure, that has become a much-debated problem in the history of philosophy from ancient times to the present.

In semiotics, a different view on this problem leads to a different basis for symbolic theory. Saussure's linguistic semiotics is a whole system based on symbolic arbitrariness. Although he does not deny the existence of icons, he insists that ways of expression based on completely natural signs (such as pantomimes) and any means of expression accepted by society are collective habits, or they may well be based on convention (Saussure 2011). Therefore, in Saussure's view, completely arbitrary signs are the ideal way to realize semiosis.

With countless examples of symbolic motivation in the past hundred years, the academic circle found that the scope of motivation is much larger than expected. For example, Stephen Ullmann (1962) puts forward three motivations for language: phonetic motivation, morphological motivation, and semantic motivation, and he finally draws the conclusion that every idiom has arbitrary words, and at least some of them are motivated—with transparent words. Even so, however, Saussure's view that arbitrariness cannot be demonstrated is still an important protection for the superiority of arbitrary signs. To overturn Saussure's argument, a large number of examples alone will not do, and it must also be demonstrated in abstract logic. Because of this difficulty, many scholars still believe that these universal motivations are accidental and that they do not constitute the root of the systematism.

2.1.3.2 The Main Components of Motivation

Peirce did not discuss motivation specifically, but his system of semiotics motivation is seen as the basic way in which the sign (representatum) points to the object in a specific type of sign. According to Peirce, there are three kinds of signs: icon, index, and symbol, among which the motivations for the icon and the index are definite, while the symbol is slightly the same as Saussure's sign based on social convention. The difference is that Peirce used the word "symbol" to mean conventionalized sign, while Saussure opposed the use of "symbol" as a sign in its strict sense (it is impossible to be completely arbitrary because of its cultural motivation). Therefore, motivation is completely introduced into Peirce's symbolic system. In Peirce's opinion, it is very difficult to find an example without any indexicality, if not impossible (Peirce 1931–1958).

The icon is part of Peirce's sign system, and it is also able to infiltrate into the other two types of signs (index and symbol). Peirce not only regards iconicity as the most direct motivation, but he also interprets index as a kind of motivated sign with causality. Peirce used rather difficult sentences to show the characteristics of index to the following effect. An index is such a sign that if its object is removed, it will lose the property that makes it a sign. However, without an interpretant, it will not lose that property (Peirce 1931–1958). What Peirce means is that the focus of an index is not on its interpretant, but on its object. Does this contradict Peirce's statement that every sign exists as a result of interpretation? In fact, there is no such contradiction. An index can be understood as a sign for which the interpretant largely describes its object well. The index's motivation, which does not depend on interpretation, is only a kind of potential motivation that must be realized by a signifying interpretation in

the end. When there is no interpretant, this group of semiotic relationships cannot be established.

Peirce did not detail the definition of this objective connection. Therefore, we may try to create an expanded yet precise supplement to the meaning of "index" so as to conclude three characteristics of "index". First, there is no obvious iconicity between a sign and its object; second, a sign indicates an individual unit, or a set within a unit, or a single continuous unity; third, the object of a sign is noticed through an arbitrary relationship imposed between the object and the index. Psychologically, designation depends on close association in time and space instead of similar association or intellectual activity. However, "index" can only be defined in terms of logical meaning. When it comes to a specific example, the boundary becomes blurred. Still, the index is commonly used in daily life. Here are some examples: names, proper nouns, possessive pronouns, relative pronouns, etc. in our languages; signs in public places, systems of corporate logos, meteorological vanes, knock on the door, instructions, calling for people, etc. in our daily life. The field of science witnesses much more uses, such as mathematical formulas, geometric figures, and tables of chemical elements. They all point to objects without explanation (胡易容 and 赵毅衡 2012). A careful examination of these indices shows that they are accompanied by conventionality or iconicity. Here are some examples: an index in a public place can be interpreted as the "iconicity" of a hand's indication of a direction; a geometric figure can be interpreted as the properties of a specific thing; and each kind of pronoun must result from linguistic conventions.

Through the comparison between iconicity and index, some formal features of iconicity and index as well as their overall relationships with motivation can be obtained. (a) The icon and index are mainly where motivation is; (b) the way an index points to the object focuses on the close association in time and space, while the icon depends on the association of similar traits, structures, etc.; (c) the index focuses on the object to which it points, while the icon focuses on the object substituted; (d) all signs have indexicality, which does not mean that every sign must be an index but that in any semiosis there must be its referentiality.

2.1.3.3 Motivation of Use in the Symbol

Indexicality is a general property of signification. In addition, the motivation of symbolic reference mainly falls on icons; in turn, iconicity has become the most typical form of representation for motivation. However, we should not rush to equate motivation with iconicity because there is also motivation in symbols. In fact, Saussure (2011) realized and considered this problem. As he said, Cassirer also regards the symbol (which he understands as an "emblem") as a kind of sign, which is in violation of arbitrariness to some extent, because symbolization is never completely arbitrary; the sign is not empty either, as it has a bit of natural connection between the signifier and the signified. For example, the balance that symbolizes the law generally cannot be replaced by something else, such as a car. In fact, this involves the polysemy of the word symbol and its Chinese version. The word symbol means both

sign and emblem. Peirce also regards symbols as one of the three categories of signs, so a lot of confusion ensues. For example, in the Chinese version of John Fiske's *Introduction to Communication Studies: Process and Symbol*, symbols are rendered as symbolic signs (象征符号, *xiangzheng fuhao*), resulting in obvious contradictory expressions. For example, Fiske summarized Saussure's view as follows. As a linguist, Saussure only cares about symbolic signs (费斯克 [Fiske] 2008). This contradicts Saussure's opposition to the inclusion of symbol into the objects for sign studies. The reason Saussure opposed it is based on the motivation of the special sign, which is symbol as an emblem. Gao Mingkai pointed out in particular in the Chinese edition of *Introduction to Communication Studies: Process and Symbol* that the expression "symbols are rendered as symbolic signs" refers to Cassirer seeing the symbol as a kind of sign. This shows that Saussure does not view symbol as a sign, and his concerns is with what he calls signs which Peirce calls symbols.

Saussure notes that symbols (or symbolic signs) are motivated. Zhao Yiheng points out that symbol is not only a special sign, but is also a secondary rhetorical device when metaphorical motivation reaches a certain extent. In terms of its realization process, symbol results from repetitive social use. Therefore, Zhao Yiheng believes that the viewpoints in the Chinese edition of Cassirer's *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* seems to be more appropriate (赵毅衡 2011b).

Symbol per se is not a category of signs, but a result of accumulating its social meanings involved in both motivation and conventionalization. Therefore, we cannot simply classify symbols into conventionalized signs, because it means that a conventionalized sign is motivated. In turn, the motivation of a conventionalized sign cannot be entirely covered by an icon because sometimes the motivation resorts to an association of a relationship of proximity.

The motivations of the icon and the index themselves already exist at the time of the occurrence of the symbol; these are generative motivation or primary motivation. Saussure found that motivation is not limited to symbol, an extremely special aspect of sign, and it is often found in all forms of sign, including conventionalized signs. Such motivations, formed in the use of signs, result from the accumulation of social culture and conventions and are called "pragmatic motivations" in linguistics. However, Saussure actually refused to include those things with pragmatic motivations as signs. This fact will, the author suspects, cause a limitation in the scope of denotations of signs because signs with use motivations are also essentially conventionalized signs. Since then, scholars have found that the scope of pragmatic motivation is very wide. Saul Aaron Kripke (1980), the founder of semantics of modal logic, found that the use of language and vocabulary leads to the accumulation of meanings, and the final result is that a name signifies not because its meaning per se plays a decisive role (to form meaning), but because its origin and its history of use constitute a causal (historical) chain… When a proper name is passed from link to link, the way that the reference of the name is fixed is of little importance to us, provided that different speakers may give it the same referent. That is to say, naming—words in the historical context of use—constitutes a meaningful basis for the future development of words and is not completely arbitrary. This kind of pragmatic motivation is so common that it is impossible to describe it as sporadic or scattered. Thus, the linguist Winfried

Nöth (2001) defined this linguistic motivation of use as the "exophoric", which is different from primary motivation, and exophoric is the representation of "universal linguistic iconicity".

In fact, there is a more powerful constraint than the accumulation of a word's meanings: cultural convention. Cultural convention is a kind of overall cultural environment, and its restriction on the arbitrariness of signs is invisible when it does not exert an effect. However, once such a restriction occurs, it has a definite or even mandatory effect. There are several different relevant situations. Positively speaking, there is a "matching effect" between the carrier of a sign and a certain object under a cultural convention, such as Saussure's example that balance is more suitable for symbolizing the justice of law. This kind of matching effect is more obvious and fixed in a certain cultural context. For example, red symbolizes festivity in China, while the Kilin (麒麟) symbolizes auspiciousness. This motivation constrains not only symbols that have undergone accumulation of social meanings, but also ordinary signs that are affected by this kind of cultural convention. For example, in a period after the founding of the People's Republic of China, citizens often gave their children such names as "Zhonghua" (中华), "Ruihua" (瑞华), "Guohua" (国华), "Zhenhua" (振华), "Guoliang" (国梁), "Guodong" (国栋), "Jianhua" (建华) and so on, because these names are related to the founding of the People's Republic of China, and this results from a cultural influence during a specific historical period in China. This kind of names, in view of the context of the times, is appropriate. During this period, the names such as "Shi Yu" (诗雨), "Jin Rong" (金荣), and so on, may be inappropriate according to cultural convention because the former engenders a petit bourgeoisie sentiment, while the latter suggests a sense of bourgeois worship of money. In fact, such cultural influence is not specific to a particular period of time. That is, when a sign's reference violates a certain social convention, it may be considered to be "mismatched". There are taboos for ancient emperors' titles in history, and ordinary people also have taboos in names. In China, we do not call elders by their names, which is a kind of restriction. In such cases, the use of signs is not only not arbitrary, but rather mandatory or culture oriented.

The initial arbitrariness of conventionalization results in the use of an arbitrary signifier to refer to an arbitrary object. For example, there is no inevitable reason to refer to visible light with a reflection wavelength of about 647–700 nm as "red". We may say that the arbitrariness of the sign can be realized in an ideal situation without any established cultural background. However, conventionality has a cumulative effect and will gradually restrict new conventions: the motivation of cultural convention. When such restrictions occur, convention is self-contradictory. Then, conventionality is not only an incomplete expression of arbitrariness, but it is an effective restriction on arbitrariness.

2.1.3.4 Universal Motivation

Motivation, as a common relationship in signs, constitutes the following restrictions on arbitrariness: (a) restriction on physiological perception—iconic motivation; (b) restriction on logical association in space and time—indexical motivation; (c) accumulation of ways of using signs—pragmatic motivation; (d) macro-cultural convention and restriction—cultural motivation.

As a result, "icon", "index", and "symbol" cannot be distinguished in terms of motivation because each type of sign has motivation, and the difference lies in the specific kind of motivation. Among them, motivations of icon and index are more inclined to individual psychological perception than social culture, and they have some kind of naturalness that we may call "natural motivation". And because pragmatic motivation and cultural convention are formed in the use of signs in society, they can be classified as "social motivations". Moreover, these two motivations constitute restrictions on "arbitrary" from different aspects. The word "arbitrary" is a Western term with two meanings: random and arbitrary. Zhao Yiheng (赵毅衡 2011b) believes that arbitrariness may include "illogical connection" and "no need for motivation" at the social and psychological levels. From the above analysis, we may know that iconic motivation based on physiological perception and indexical motivation based on space–time relationship constitute the opposite of "illogical connection", while pragmatic motivation and cultural motivation constitute the opposite of "no social psychological basis". Thus, we can categorize arbitrariness into those without natural motivations and those without social motivations. "Without natural motivations" means people/things in such aspects as iconicity, causality, and space–time correlations do not have logically natural connection; "without social motivations" means people/things in such aspects as pragmatic motivation and cultural convention do not have the social and psychological basis.

Social motivation is a man-made convention, and it may be regarded as a restriction on arbitrariness, while natural motivation has a neurobiological basis for some kind of objective perception, and is a "purer" objective motivation. In natural motivations, the most direct one is "iconicity". Therefore, iconicity may be regarded as the opposite of abstract arbitrariness, and we may examine Peirce's three categories of signs in this group of social and natural motivations. Pure iconicity and pure arbitrariness are set as two extremes of motivation, and the signs with both motivation and arbitrariness are regarded as the part between these two extremes. Thus, most signs are between these two extremes.

2.2 Image as an Icon

As mentioned earlier, iconicity is the most basic property of the image. Then, can we say that any sign with iconicity is in the category of image? Two questions are involved here. One is whether the icon also includes other types of non-iconic signs, and the other is whether the universe of image may be included in the category of

sign. The argument between these two propositions is a concrete demonstration of the definition that the image is a kind of icon in the category of semiotics.

2.2.1 An Icon Not Necessarily an Image

It is almost unnecessary to demonstrate whether all icons are images. Literally, there are many meanings for the icon, including idol, portrait, and statue. Some scholars have translated the icon into the iconic sign. In Panofsky's view, iconology means the study of image, and the root for iconology is icon; while in Peirce's classification, the icon is one category of the sign. Accordingly, iconicity is rendered 图像性 (*tuxiangxing*) in Chinese. Therefore, when discussing image signs, *xiangsixing* (像似性) and *tuxiangxing* (图像性) are often synonymous. However, icons include not only image signs, but also any non-image sign with iconicity. The icon and the image sign are actually two types of signs, defined from two different perspectives. Image is, in the classification of a medium that includes language, characters, sound, and touch, the opposite of non-image. However, iconic signs, not limited to a kind of perceptual channel, are pure conventions and psychological perceptions. There are different types of iconicity: linguistic iconicity, iconicity of sound, iconicity of touch, iconicity of taste, and iconicity between two different senses. For example, a certain color may lead to the iconicity of taste; in turn, signs of visual image are not entirely iconic, and they may be either indices or symbols. Signs of image partially overlap with icons because a sign itself has diverse attributes. At the very least, it is certain that signs of image and icons are not exactly the same semantically.

If icon and image are completely mixed, there will be obvious logical contradictions. For example, in the Chinese edition of Eco's *A Theory of Semiotics*, icon and iconic sign in the section "Critique of Iconicism" are both rendered as 图像符号(*tuxiang fuhao*) in Chinese, which is literally correct but imperfect upon examination of some specific textual contexts. An example is as follows: "所谓图像符号，无论任意与否，都可以分节为相关的编码单位…..正如语词符号所示" (艾柯 [Eco] 1990). Here, it is obviously contradictory to use 语词符号 (*yuci fuhao*) as an example of "图像符号" (image signs). Sentences such as "根据莫里斯的观点，符号是图像性的" and "cock- a-doodle doo/公鸡啼叫之间的图像关系非常松散" are not clearly expressed. However, if the expression "像似" (*xiangsi*) is used in them, they will be clearly understood. An example is as follows: 公鸡与啼叫之间存在的应该是一种 "像似" 关系; and 所谓 "像似" 符号，可以分节为相关编码单位。

The second question, as to whether signs may cover the universe of image, is much more difficult to answer. Many semioticians, including Eco, have removed some of the images from the family of signs. A more serious consequence is that if these images are not signs, it means that semiotics as a methodology is not able to deal with the research object—image—which means that iconology itself needs our post-semiotic thinking. The consequence, according to the author and the advocator of the concept of "pictorial turn", W. J. T. Mitchell, is that semiotics is no longer able

to deal with current image-related research because images are based on iconicity. Based on this, Mitchell proposes that no matter what the pictorial turn is, it should be clear that it is not to go back to the correspondence theory of naive imitation, copy, or representation, nor is it a metaphysics of updated images' presence, but rather a post-linguistic, post-semiotics rediscovery of images. Mitchell (1995) cites Jean Umiker-Sebeok and Hubert Damisch, saying that semiotics constructed according to the pattern of linguistic turn may not be able to deal with images based on iconicity, because an image does not have to be a sign.

The view that an image does not have to be a sign has two interpretations. First, images are not necessarily dealt with by methods in semiotics, which is beyond critics; second, even within semiotics, it is impossible to deal with many image-related problems because these images are completely constructed on the basis of iconicity. Then the focal question is that under what circumstances semiotics is not able to deal with image-related problems based on iconicity. Similarly, to reduce it to a key issue, under what circumstances does an image constructed on the basis of iconicity not have to be a sign? Based on the discussions within semiotics, metaphorical iconicity and diagrammatic iconicity are unquestionably regarded as signs because of their remarkable abstractness. Only the image of imaginal iconicity is often considered to have no attributes of sign because of its sense of concreteness. Therefore, this book focuses on imaginal iconicity, especially the most controversial and extreme cases, such as the absolute icon, the mirror image, and the replica, among others.

2.2.2 Degree of Iconicity

Imaginal iconicity is highly controversial in semiotics. In *A Theory of Semiotics*, Eco (1979) criticized Charles Morris's discussion of the degree of iconicity, in which Morris reduced iconicity to a definition of common sense rather than semiotics. Eco even refused to admit the fact of iconicity, which he believes does not exist between signs and their objects. The "childish picture theory" he criticized actually treats iconicity as an "objective property" beyond human consciousness. Therefore, Eco excluded such signs from the field of signs, along with "objective great iconicity" as the mirror image and absolute icon. The author agrees with Eco's criticism of objective picture theory but disagrees with his conclusion in completely refuting iconicity. In the category of signs, iconicity is the most prominent formal characteristic of images. Iconicity does not change as a result of the objective and physical styles. For discussion purposes, this section focuses on the most questionable extreme cases of iconicity: absolute iconicity, mirror image, replica, the relationship between replicas, and the relationship between signs and their originals.

2.2.2.1 Relativity of Absolute Iconicity

Absolute iconicity is often generally defined as the highest degree of iconicity, such as what we usually call realistic painting, photos, and so on. In fact, the category does not seem to be truly absolute, and it is simply a historical category. The definition of absolute iconicity varies greatly from period to period. For example, due to technical factors such as perspective, the so-called lifelike ancient painting is not necessarily an example of absolute iconicity today. Taking the scientific perspective as the standard test, mistakes can be found easily in perspective, anatomy, and proportion in those lifelike paintings from classical times. With the maturity of anatomy and scientific perspective during the Renaissance, the realism of painting began to reach a very high level. Since then, iconicity technology continued to develop to a higher level, with the invention of photography dealing a blow to French court portrait painters at the time. After watching a dynamic film, people would rarely if ever think that a photo restores all the truth, and that film is just a thin slice of video. We have reason to believe that there is no technical end to realism or to absolute iconicity. The technology in every era makes people think that it has achieved perfection in this regard, just as Giovanni Boccaccio praises Gito's painting in "Decameron" by saying that it is so real that it makes people seem to have at times mistaken the figure in the painting as the original. Similarly, in Eastern China, we use "Wudai dangfeng" (吴带当风, which describes the painted stripes which are like being blown by the wind) to praise the great lifelike quality of Wu Daozi's painting.

2.2.2.2 Mirror Image

Even in absolute icons, there are few specific cases of mirror image. Painting is far less lifelike than mirror images, and photos cannot continuously reflect the original objects. Moreover, while film and live broadcasts are rich with human factors such as lens and angles, they do not appear as faithful and natural as a mirror image. Therefore, Eco believes that mirror image should be excluded from signs, as it has all the characteristics of an object. He believes it is the double that is present with its object, and he listed "seven sins" as to why a mirror image is not a sign. Li Youzheng, Zhao Yiheng, and other scholars refute this. Both Li Youzheng and Zhao Yiheng believe that a mirror image is indeed a sign, with Li Youzheng focusing on the establishment of the significant relationship between a mirror image and its original object and Zhao Yiheng refuting in detail the seven items put forward by Eco. Zhao Yiheng (赵毅衡 2011a) argues that the object and meaning represented by a mirror image still need to be explained, so the semiotic relationship is established.

According to Zhao Yiheng, Eco's mistake in his argument about the mirror image is that he overestimates the degree of coincidence or overlapping between a mirror image and its original object, and underestimates the symbolic ability of a mirror image. A mirror image is actually not the double of its original object; it only represents the cold and untouchable visual part of its original object, rather than the "full nature" of the original object. Because of the overestimation of the coincidence of

the mirror image with the original object, Eco believes that a mirror image cannot lie, which, in turn, underestimates the symbolic ability of a mirror image. Although Eco attempts to assume a zero-degree mirror image by eliminating distortions from such things as magic mirrors, it is clear that it is not because of absolute iconicity that a mirror image is unable to lie, and it is also clear that the mirror image is good at deception because of its absolute iconicity. The refractive theater, as described by Eco, is in fact a semiotic means of operation. In fact, the removal of all accompanying texts of the refractive theater to look at an isolated mirror image has become a physical fact, which Eco refers to as the non-semiotic conclusion. In our daily life, we often see narrow fruit shops that have mirrors on the walls, creating a sense of larger space. Then, the objects of the signs of the mirror image are "space" and "fruits", but the interpretant may be "open".

Eco's mistake in his argument that "a mirror image is non-sign" also stems from his view of the semiosis, neglecting the context for semiotic generation, especially the subject of semiotic interpretation: human beings. The zero-degree mirror image that such abstraction attempts to obtain has deviated from his basic logic, which is "symbolic perception as a kind of sociocultural psychology". In fact, not only mirror images, but also any physical fact without human interpretation does not make a sign. Once human interpretation is involved, mirror images become a rich world of signs. For example, dressing up before the dressing mirror and that I don't know where I have got the white hair in the mirror represent the poets' different interpretations of signs of their own mirror images. Zhao Yiheng (赵毅衡 2011b) points out that "being perceived" does not make the sign return to the object itself. On the contrary, because the sign has to carry meaning, it forces the recipient to be one-sided about the perception of the object. Mirror image does not lack the one-sided process of signs, but presents the characteristics of the visual part of the object, and removes the temperature, texture, tactility, and many other elements of the object. Thus, its semiosis is intact. In fact, the mirror image is not the extreme of an absolute icon, and we will continue to discuss the more extreme cases of overlapping replicas and the relationship between replicas.

2.2.2.3 Replica and Symbolic Value

Replica, produced by copying, is a common way of being for contemporary image signs. As explained earlier, a mirror image is only the representation of vision, and it has a one-sided perceptual relationship with the original object. However, a replica, which may share the full quality of the original object, is a perfect example, to the extent that it completely overlaps. Thus, is there still a significate relation between the replica and the original object?

Eco made a special study on replication and found that the resultant meaning of replication is different in different situations. For example, the replication of words does not produce any economic value, while the replication of money produces material value. Eco may not have noticed that paper money is not a perfect repetition,

because each note has a different number. Instead, coins are technically closer to error-free replication, but coins are not really copied. The replication of coins is an illusion of individuals concerned with monetary structure. Coins, as semiotic currency, have lost the meaning of commodity with metal value and have become pure signs of value, and the total amount of money is based on the actual value the market needs. If only currency worth one million is needed, but currency worth two million is actually issued, the theoretical purchasing power (value) of the currency is only half the original. Therefore, if the whole monetary system is used as the sign carrier, the replication of signs cannot produce new value.

Eco recognized that money could not be copied infinitely. But he did not recognize that, in terms of the relationship between money and value as a whole, the replication of money could not produce economic value at all! Whether the currency is replicated does not depend on whether the object with this physical form has gone through a repetitive production process, but it depends on the different rules on which the interpreter bases the meaning. Economic value is only a potential value of a sign; the interpretability of copying leaves room for repetition as a sign. Eco also must admit that Michelangelo's perfect replica might also have semiotic attributes.

People may continue to ask when the replica and the original object are of complete iconicity, whether the signs disappear. Eco (1979) distinguishes a replica of part of an object from a complete replica of an object and calls the latter a "double", that is, a repetition, which is translated as overlapping (重合) by Lu Deping. Eco mentioned that, with the same material under specific technical conditions, we can theoretically establish the perfect double of the Mona Lisa. It is important to ask whether perfectly replicated signs that are technically possible have disappeared? It is obvious that, as far as the semiotics (the study of meaning) of double is concerned, it does not have a perfect repetition of the meaning, as there is a great difference in meaning between the replica and the original. It is not difficult to assume that producers of counterfeit banknotes can theoretically produce doubles that are not different from the real banknotes in physical properties. However, it must be illegal in the confirmation logic of market value. The perfect physical reproduction of a painting and a banknote cannot realize the commercial value of the original work, which shows that the meaning of a sign carrier is not copied synchronously with the physical form because the semiotic meaning is the result of a social convention. Banknotes are produced only by an institution authorized by national laws, while works of art are only the individual artists. In other words, signs cannot be proclaimed to exist in their isolated physical forms, and they cannot communicate meanings until they are given meanings under social conventions. Although the physical form of a sign carrier may be copied perfectly, the context of the sign cannot be reproduced.

Therefore, the reason the replica can still constitute a sign is that it provides an opportunity to explain the semiotic meaning. Its semiosis is the process of removing the original contextual elements it copies. That is to say, as perceptions with meanings, the meaning must be realized in a social context. The reason that counterfeit banknotes—even those that are completely the same as real banknotes in terms of manufacturing technology—are fake is that they are illegally produced, according to social conventions. Even if the imitated paintings exceed the original works in

terms of artistic standards, unknown painters still need to realize their paintings' semiotic meaning and commercial value by relying on the original author's fame. This precisely shows that complete iconicity can only produce/imitate the external features of the original object, but it cannot reproduce the text and contextual information accompanying the original object. Therefore, as long as we presuppose an original object in the semiosis of meaning perception, then a one-way semiotic relationship is formed between the semiotic representatum and the object, and we should know that a replica cannot become the double of the original object.

No matter how perfect a copy is, it can only be a signifying sign of complete iconicity instead of a repetition of the original object's meaning.

2.2.2.4 Relationship Between Replicas

Furthermore, compared with the copy of complete iconicity, the relationship between one replica and another is more difficult to distinguish. As discussed above, replicas of complete iconicity are similar to their originals only in external features, but are different in the context in which they are generated. When multiple replicas are born at the same time, however, both this contextual information and the accompanying textual information are highly similar, as observed in two photos printed at the same time, two books in the same printing, two identical cars, and two copies of data. In these cases, the differences between replicas, both in external features and contextual information, are extremely small. In this case, the question arises: does the sign disappear completely? In order to discuss this problem, it is necessary to mention Eco's iconic fallacy. There is no iconicity between the figure and its object, but there is iconicity between the figure and the previous cultural content (Eco 1979). If the sign is proclaimed untenable because of the degree of iconicity, it falls into the iconic fallacy. Since icons still work by cultural conventions, we should not in any case reject semiocity in iconicity research, that is, to rid ourselves of the possibility of meaning interpretation. Therefore, we are still trying to find a way of interpretation to explain the relation between replicas that are almost the same.

Zhao Yiheng (赵毅衡 2011b) discussed the "alternative sign", a special case in which signs between replicas are still valid: it is only when one of them is present and the other is missing (for example, at a car show) that it is an alternative sign. This book argues that the possible interpretations between replicas are far greater than only this alternative meaning. When one of the replicas is present, there is an alternative sign, and, even if multiple replicas are present at the same time, the semiotic interpretation relationship might still be established. When other replicas are missing, there are two kinds of semiotic substitutions: type substitution (type) and individual substitution (token). When multiple replicas are present at the same time, the semiotic relationship of type substitution does not change, while any other semiotic relationship of individual substitution is transformed into the semiotic expression of the number present. The meaning of a token has not disappeared. In fact, every car, every photo has become the signification of quantitative relationships: one dollar

at present and ten thousand yuan, ten million yuan at present are in no way meaningless. Unlike ordinary signs, the status of the type showing the relationship between replicas is often prominent, and the meaning of token is often ignored. According to Zhao Yiheng (赵毅衡 2011b), whether a sign is a type or a token depends on how the interpreter understands the relationship between it and other signs, so it is about intersemiosis. Therefore, the relationship between replicas does not deny the semiocity of image. Therefore, the super-high similarity relationship between copies(replicas)does not deny that images are still symbols, because the problem between multiple copies is not whether there is meaning or not, but the problem of meaning interpretation.

What is discussed above shows that we should not judge repetition only by the sameness in external characteristics because it is the internal result of social consciousness. Repetition may still be a completely iconic sign because the sign carrier repeats, but the meaning interpretation does not necessarily repeat; interpretation is the essence of a sign. Moreover, this is particularly important for understanding contemporary media culture as the digital technology of contemporary media has produced a large number of iconic signs such as icons, absolute icons, and complete icons. If their semiotic attributes are denied because of their great iconicity, semiotics will narrow its own research category—copying is a necessary step of sign dissemination. The digitalized communication of contemporary media is actually a process of expanding the order of magnitude between replicas. When the order of magnitude expands to a certain degree, its meaning is the semiotic meaning of an individual, and the grand meaning of the human way of existence is also affected.

In theory, we have two strategies to deal with signs of replicas generated by the media. One is the traditional semiotic strategy, which usually regards replica as an extension of the same sign of the original sign in space and time. As a result, the sinsign retreats and the legisign is highlighted, leaving only the type substitution relationship. However, in many cases, this strategy cannot be applied in an individual case in signification. Let us take the monetary sign mentioned above, for example. It has both the function of a sinsign and the function of a legisign. As a sinsign, its purchasing power is specific and individual, with the individual meaning of the monetary quantity being highlighted. The other strategy is to regard the process of sign replication and communication as the intersemiosis and to attach importance to the replica, providing it with semiotic meaning. This would clarify the individual substitution relationship and type relationship. This may be more beneficial to the cultural reality with a large amount of simulation, hyperreal images, and large-scale replication under cognitive digital media. Every show or every replication is full of significance because it produces a wealth of interactions and new meanings in different contexts and in the face of different individuals.

2.2.2.5 Original Object and Hyperreal

Eco's criticism of "childish picture theory" is mainly aimed at an objective relationship based on iconicity. In this relationship, there is a constant and objective

original object, causing the iconicity relationship to be among different levels of iconicity that can only be constructed around the original object. If the role of the original object is constant, it constructs a traditional structure of concentric circles, but it cannot construct what Peirce calls infinite semiosis. In Peirce's triangular relationship (interpretant-object-representatum), any of these three elements has only a temporary meaning under a specific intention, and any of them can be transformed into another one in another process of sign interpretation. For example, the tree as a representatum represents the object—tree—and its interpretant is the kind of plant species in biology. On the other hand, 树 (tree) can be used as a representatum to express the meaning of being ever lasting, or 树 can be used as a representum. Meanwhile, the tree serves as an object in the interpretant of linguistic translational meaning, and the semiotic relationship can be inversed. That is to say, the structure of infinite semiosis is possible only by eliminating the special status of the original object from the theoretical structure and making the original object play the role in the mutual interpretation of signs. Therefore, we need to ask whether there is a real original object.

John Deely (2003) points out that signs are things presupposed by the object. Moreover, the signification relationships involved in semiotics aim to discover the "signification created" rather than the "discovery" of objective laws of natural objects. The original object is the object temporarily presupposed when people engage in signification. In other words, at the moment of our presupposition of this object, the original object is no longer the ultimate object that is high above; rather, it is the object that we can describe, signify, and explain. We have semiotized it-it is the way of meaning expression known as the original object. In Wittgenstein's way, the meaning of the original object is the original object's conceptual meaning described. Along with interpretant and representatum, it expresses a concept at the moment when it is communicated. It is obvious that the original object does not have any objective reality beyond the process of signification. In other words, the original object itself is not necessarily born before the sign that represents it.

For example, people often evaluate the degree of a portrait being "lifelike" by comparing it with the original person's appearance. In this instance, the portrait is regarded as a representatum, and the original person is regarded as the original object. In this group of relationships, the interpretant is "the painting evaluation represented by the degree of resemblance". However, as the basis of the evaluation, the original person is actually a vague concept. It is not based on the whole "original person" of the original person, but on what the original person looks like. Furthermore, this cannot be what the original person looks like at any time, but it is more similar to what the original person looks like when the portrait is being painted. In many cases, one cannot evaluate the lifelikeness of the portrait by comparing it with what the original person looks like. For example, at the time when the original person looks older, or at the time when the original person becomes drunk, or indeed at any other moment other than the time when the portrait is being painted. Here, we find that if the original person can only be the original object when he or she is as close as possible to the portrait at that time, doesn't that mean that the original person also needs some kind of imitation to become an original object? The evidence at that

time was borne by the portrait retained at that time. Here is another process of icons. In this new round of relationships of icons, the portrait becomes the object for the original person at this time to imitate the original person at that time. That is to say, the portrait has changed from a representatum to the original object in this process of signification, while the original person has become the representatum.

Such cases are not accidental. For example, some people often sigh before the mirror, saying, "I am not what I used to be". In fact, they presuppose a better state of "me" as the original, and, at the moment, the person in the mirror is haggard and unable to represent the original "me" very well. As a result, photos or other icons about "me" are likely to be more like "me" than the "real me". In other words, the representatum of the media can be more real in signification logic than the original object that people often regard as real. The following chapters will also deal with the concept of hyperreality and other concepts in the media world, and its argument is similarly based on the fact that when an original object is regarded as a semiotized description at any moment, it becomes an icon, and there is no perfect limit to the degree of iconicity. Each means of iconicity shows a dimension of the original object. As a result, any icon can be hyperreal.

Therefore, is this contrary to the conclusion that "a sign must mean that one object substitutes another one" in semiotics? In fact, the most profound misunderstanding caused by this conclusion statement would be to regard the relationship between one object and another object as one in physical reference. Semiotics is the study of meaning, and the key to distinguishing one object from another lies in "the presupposition of their different meanings". Ordinarily, "I" may be used as a sign of "I" in a sense. Here, we use the expression original object because this distinguishes it from the object relative to the representatum, and it is not the abstract ultimate existence.

Summary: The Self-Adjustment of Semiotics and the Pictorial Turn

Based on the discussion in this section, we have determined the answer to the following question. Is it the case that semiotics may not be able to deal with images based on iconicity because an image is not necessarily a sign? The reason an image does not have to be a sign is not because it is based on iconicity. Replicas at different levels (icon, absolute icon, and double)—or even the original object, as long as we can identify its signification relationship—will inevitably fall into the framework of semiotics. Iconicity does not violate social conventions because of its formal characteristics. As far as the connotation is concerned, a sign is the projection of meaning under certain social conventions on the carrier of the perceptual object. Its denotation is any perceptible thing and object. Therefore, any aspect of the carrier's relationship in characteristics of physical appearance cannot remove the semiocity of the carrier, because people's pursuit for meaning interpretation of signs will never end.

In fact, we may have misunderstood that Mitchell opposes the legitimacy of images in semiotics. In accordance with his real intention, "post-semiotics" may be understood from the following two aspects thereof.

First, what Mitchell calls post-semiotics is actually post-linguistic semiotics. It is a "backwash and challenge" to the "linguistic turn" and a challenge to the position of language as "meta-signs". In his view, the mediocrity of modern research on image lies in that images must be understood as a language (Mitchell 1986). Mitchell pointed out that early iconology and semiotics were mixed together obviously because of limited linguistic patterns, and the conceptual scheme then was to interpret works of art according to the rules of language and to interpret this process as "reading" (曹意强 2005). Pictorial turn means that image per se is in a sense reborn. At the beginning of *Toward the Image*, Aleš Erjavec declared that he never read, and he just looked at pictures (艾尔雅维茨 [Erjavec] 2003). Therefore, this requires the establishment of a discipline—semiotics of images—to show more respect to the characteristics of picturality rather than interpreting images entirely based on linguistic patterns. Thus, Mitchell's term, post-semiotics, should be more accurately expressed as post-linguistic semiotics.

Second, another important value of the proposition of pictorial turn is that the conceptualization of the theory of iconic signs of post-linguistic semiotics should not be limited to the field of fine arts research. Mitchell believes that picture theory must be involved in the study of daily life and mass culture in the field of mass communication. Therefore, his book *Picture Theory* adopts the daily picture theory instead of the iconology employed by Panofsky. In this sense, today's semiotics of images results from the two clues mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. One is iconology established by Panofsky, Gombrich, Wölfflin et al. on the basis of fine arts history; the other is the tradition of studying nonverbal signs from Peirce et al. The two research paths have penetrated each other in the pictorial turn. Nowadays, semiotics of images has gradually become a study of visual cultural signs with the production of media signs as the object, which belongs to contemporary cultural semiotics in its general sense.

Summary of This Chapter: The Domain of Signs, Based on Iconicity

In this chapter, the relationship between iconicity and images is discussed, and the aspects in which they overlap are explained in the framework of semiotics. From these discussions, we find that the icon is a kind of sign, but iconicity extends to the universe of signs. This means that it may not be appropriate to deal with the three categories of Peirce's signs separately. In fact, Peirce himself points out that any of the three categories of signs is a combination of "mixed motivations". When a sign is defined as a sign of convention, it is a nonexclusive reference. In this case, it only shows that the sign is conventionality-dominant, or the sign mainly shows its conventionality. The reality is that there is no dispute when we say that all signs should have conventionality and indexicality, but it is unacceptable to say that all signs have iconicity. The reason for this is that iconicity is often defined as direct and intuitive perception; it is the cognition of resemblance about iconicity at the sensory level of organisms. If iconicity is elevated to a kind of cultural motivation (typical of symbolism), or even to the symbolic world in which it is regarded as the

concrete projection of the abstract idea, iconicity will become a general, inherent characteristic of semiotic representation.

Then there comes the important conclusion, that is, the characteristics of the three categories of signs generally penetrate one another. From the perspective of the three types of iconicity, first, the imaginal iconicity of objective nature is intuition at the level of biological perception. Moreover, this has been defined by many scholars, and there is no need to repeat it here. In fact, it is difficult to distinguish indices from iconic signs. As one of the definitions of index cited earlier—the direct association of non-iconicity—it is a way of mutual definition. All we can say is that an index is not an icon, but an index full of iconicity. Many indications and diagrams can be regarded as abstractions of concrete iconicity, which make them structurally related and close to a kind of diagrammatic structural abstraction. Spatial proximity and temporal relationships can be a kind of psychological sense of proximity caused by geographical position—an iconic relationship of proximity.

Finally, what is the relationship between conventional sign and iconicity? This is the most difficult proposition to understand. One might ask, is the conventional sign not the opposite of the icon? Iconicity of conventionality needs to be understood by the deduction of human cultural logic. As a special conventional sign, the symbol listed earlier shows obvious iconicity, which is called sociocultural motivation in the previous argument. As mentioned above, this universal pragmatic motivation exists not only in symbols—typical in explicit conventional signs—but also in ordinary conventional signs. We may say that the iconic representation of conventional signs is a kind of iconic motivation under social and cultural interpretations. Almost the metaphor and analogy constitute an explicit iconic relationship that does not actually exist, for example, the phrase "to be up to one's neck in debt (债台高筑, *zhaitai gaozhu*)", "to feel an upsurge of emotion (心潮澎湃, *xinchao pengpai*)", and "to pass a day as if it were a year (度日如年, *duri runian*)". Peirce calls this iconic relationship that cannot be directly obtained at the biological neural level "metaphorical iconicity". Metaphorical iconicity always exists in conventional signs, and it results from the interpretation of a kind of convention. Two things that do not resemble each other become magically connected to each other through interpretation, such as in Chinese anthroposcopy, Western constellations, and astrology. Actually, it is also in line with the definition of iconicity in this book, as iconicity refers to the cultural acquisition interpretation regarding the traits of objects that human beings perceive psychologically. Iconicity represents itself as proximity and analogy, thus having the potential to cause mutual association and cognitive confusion. We may extend different degrees of iconicity to the universe of signs. Such iconicity results from the accumulation of conventions, which causes humans—and Pavlov's dogs—to produce a close association between two things that are not related by natural motivation. In fact, Gombrich (1968) argues from a perceptual psychological perspective that all signs may have iconicity. In his view, any perception has a form that works on one's sense, so we can find iconicity between any perception and something else. In fact, the concept of iconicity in Wittgenstein's family resulted from the deduction of this iconicity. This shows that the classification of iconicity with closed thinking has its own limitations, while in a relatively open thinking mode, regarding iconicity

as a schema of signs may help us find the potential iconicity in all signs, regardless of classification.

According to the above logic, image signs (icons) may be any of the three categories of Peirce's signs (icon, index, and symbol). In other words, all signs may be established according to the semiosis of iconic relationships. According to the degree of abstraction, Peirce divided the semiotic iconicity into the following: imaginal iconicity, diagrammatic iconicity, and metaphorical iconicity.

Imaginal iconicity is a kind of intuitive feeling, and it is a sign with the most direct feeling (赵毅衡 2011b). In the above settings, an icon may be used to refer generally to an object in any iconic relationship. Among them, imaginal iconicity is an iconic relationship in a narrow sense, and it is most prominent for its iconic loyalty, so it may be regarded as the basic type of iconic relationship. Due to the rapid development of technology, today's media has created iconicity at a higher level, including absolute icons and even hyperreal images, and the discussion of imaginal iconicity is of great significance to explaining these phenomena.

Diagrammatic iconicity, resorting to construction, is mainly about the psychological feeling of homology caused by a sign carrier's shape, outline, position, weight and rhythm, and its object. Diagrammatic iconicity is not as easily perceived as imaginal iconicity, and it is quite possible that people know it is false through seeing. For example, line drawings and cartoons are two-dimensional, but it does not affect people's understanding and perception of them. Diagrammatic iconicity is related to index because the ways that they associate with the object are achieved through some kind of abstraction of image simplification. For example, the wind vane's indication of the wind does not resort to the wind's imaginal iconicity, but to the iconic simulation of its kinetic potential, direction, and degree of magnitude.

Metaphorical iconicity is the most abstract means of similarity. Here, signs are only similar (or adjacent to) some abstract quality of the objects, and almost all images in metaphorical iconicity may be understood as a potential symbolic sign, and one becomes a symbol that is actually accepted in social culture through the accumulation of meanings. All kinds of religious rituals, such as Taoist magic figures and abstract art, are some kind of ritual, and they can be metaphorical iconicity and texts of symbolic signs at the same time.

Chapter 3
Transparent Languages

Historically, linguistic signs have been—and remain—the greatest and most complete semiotic system created by human beings. Volume 8 of *Huainanzi* (《淮南子》) describes the origin of written language. When Cang Jie created Chinese characters, there came millets from the sky and ghosts cried at night. Zhang Yanyuan of the Tang Dynasty explained the origin of written language like the following. Cang Jie had four eyes to look at the celestial phenomena. According to the patterns of the tortoises, he created the Chinese characters then. After that, no secrets could be concealed in the world, so there came millet from the sky like rain in the daytime; and the spirits and ghosts could not hide their forms anymore, so they cried at night. These examples show that linguistic signs, as essential tools in transforming the world, are an expression of human integrity and self-transcendence. Through linguistic signs, human beings even have the power of gods to a certain extent, in that they leave "no secrets concealed in the world". Linguistic signs represent the largest and most complete system of human beings so far, and linguistic semiotics is the most mature discipline of semiotics. It is also the field in which iconicity is most fully discussed. This may be because iconicity is a self-evident phenomenon for image researchers. For a language, the heterogeneity of image and text results in great expressiveness of signs between them. Therefore, this chapter combs the existing discussions of iconicity in the circle of linguistics from the perspective of language and character, and, taking the unfinished discussion in academic circles as a new starting point of theoretical abstraction, it aims to provide a universal basis for semiotic iconicity.

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3.1 Terms and Concepts

Semiotics in China is an imported discipline, and most of its basic theories derive from translated works. At present, the standardization of terms in semiotics has yet to be completed. The iconicity discussed in this book is a typical case in semiotics. Since the late 1980s, linguists in China have begun to focus on iconicity in language. At that time, iconicity was rendered as 象似性, which has since become a fairly established translation in academic circles. But in recent years, 像似 has been increasingly popular. Based on the comprehensive investigation of these two Chinese characters from the perspectives of word origin, etymology, word-formation grammar, and term-generation environment, the author argues that the uses of 像 and 象 need to be re-examined in semiotics. The translation of terms in semiotics shown in this book is only one example of cases in which terms in semiotics are not uniform. Taking this opportunity, the author calls on researchers in academic circles to strengthen communication and coordination in the translation of terms, and to promote the standardization of terms, as this is of great significance to the development of semiotics. Meanwhile, a semiotic investigation into the development of 象 and 像 illustrates the evolution of typical types of signs, which also confirms the self-consistency of the meaning of 像似.

Peirce divides signs into three categories according to the way they point to objects, namely, icon, index, and symbol. Among them, the common Chinese for icon is 象 (像) (似符) (许国璋 1988; 沈家煊 1993; 王寅 1999a), 肖似符号 (李幼蒸 1999), and 图像符号 (艾柯 [Eco] 1990); and iconicity is translated into像 (象) 似性, 相似性, 图像性, and 形象性 (梅萨利 [Messaris] 2004). Peirce believes that an icon points to its object by "being similar to it". Other terms are easy to distinguish. For example, 相似性 is usually used in our daily life, so there are limitations to using it as a term. Moreover, 图像性 obviously cannot cover what Peirce means because iconicity includes iconic signs as well as iconic relationships of non-image such as language and sound. Therefore, the most appropriate term is probably 象 (像) 似性. Which, then, should be used, 象 or 像? This is not merely a question of discriminating ordinary word meanings. Answering this question is important, as it relates not only to the standardization and normalization of terms, but also to the normative use of 象 or 像. Through the analysis of these two characters, this book combs out "semantic sign logic" to correctly distinguish the three characters, 象, 像, and 相, the last of which is an unexpected gain.

Neither 像似 nor 象似 is used in daily life as each is a special term of semiotics. The earliest record that can be consulted is from 1988, when Xu Guozhang (许国璋 1988) translated the word "iconicity" into 象似性 in his "Is Language a System of Arbitrary Signs? The Theory Reconsidered"(《语言符号的任意性问题—语言哲学探索之一》), which gradually attracted the attention of Chinese linguists. Shen Jiaxuan, a linguist, later wrote an influential paper "A Survey of Studies of Iconicity in Syntax" (沈家煊 1993), which has been cited nearly a thousand times. Since then, 像似性 has generally become an accepted term in linguistics. By the end of April 19, 2024, the results of the CNKI retrieval show 2815 articles containing 象似 in

their titles. Moreover, two academic monographs published include Wang Yin's (王寅 2009) *Selected Papers on Studies of Linguistic Iconicity in China* (《中国语言象似性研究论文精选》) and He Nanlin's (何南林等 2013) *A Comparative Study of Iconicity between Chinese and English* (《汉英象似性对比研究》). Now, 象似 has almost undoubtedly become a fixed/accepted Chinese version of iconicity. So, is 像似 a phrase resulting from an error or mistake? The frequency of use of the words 像似 or 像似性 as terms of semiotics has begun to increase in recent years. According to the retrieval results of CNKI papers, by the end of April 19, 2024, there are 554[1] articles containing 像似 in the topics. In independent academic publications, Haiman's book *Natural Syntax: Iconicity and Erosion*, published in China, is entitled "自然句法—像似性与磨损" (Haiman 2009).

In view of the above situation, we will investigate and distinguish 像 and 象from two perspectives: the logic of etymology and the specific historical context of term translation.

3.1.1 The Semiotic Logic of the Word Sources of the characters "象", "像", and "相"

In fact, the story of the three characters 象, 像, and 相 (with the pronunciation of *xiang* for all of them in Chinese), especially the first two, has almost become an unsolved case. Based on reference books alone, it is almost impossible to use them correctly. For example, why do we use 像 in 头像 (head portrait, *touxiang*) and 相 in 面相 (face, *mianxiang*)? Why do we use 象 in 假象 (illusion, *jiaxiang*) and 相 in 真相 (truth, *zhenxiang*)? A closer look at them may help us find that the usages of these words are not standardized. In fact, 像 and 象 can be replaced with each other in ancient Chinese. Therefore, on the one hand, it is common in daily life for ordinary people to mix them up, and, on the other hand, the norms for their use had not been unified for a long time. In the process of standardizing Chinese characters in China, the process of distinguishing 象 from 像 also experienced twists and turns. In the 1950s and 1960s, 象 was used instead of 像 in the simplification scheme of Chinese characters, and 像 was regarded as the traditional character of 象. In the 1980s, 像 was once again defined as a standardized simplified Chinese character. This then has led to habitual confusion in the use of the two characters. This book is not about a specialized study of Chinese characters, and the purpose of involving these characters is to define the object and terms of this book. Therefore, it is important to understand both their differences and the influence of these differences on their comprehension and current use from the association between these characters and their signification. From the perspective of semiotics, this book sums up the evolution of meanings and the basic attributes of the meanings of the three Chinese characters of 象, 像, and 相.[2] 象 is originally used to refer to a specific animal, then extended to any object; although it can mean each of the three elements of signification, it refers to the object. 像 as an artificial object, is the symbolic world created by people to simulate objects;

it is in the category of a sign's representatum. 相 is the category of meaning generated by human observation, and it reflects the cultural mechanism of observation, a sign's interpretant.

According to this signification framework, 象 is the semiotization of natural objects, while 像 is the re-semiotization of semiotized natural objects, and 相 is the cultural interpretation of the semiotization of natural objects. In the history of Chinese characters, 象 precedes 像 and 相.

3.1.1.1 象 Originating from Nature and Extending to mean the Abstraction of Everything

Etymologically, 象 is a pictographic character, and it is originally used to mean 象, a thick-skinned mammal of the elephant family. First, let us look at the evolution of the character 象. At the first level of meaning, 象 refers to a very specific object, that is, elephant. In Oracle Bone Scrip, 象 is specifically an image of the shape of an elephant's side. The pictographic character 象, whether  in Oracle Bone Scipt or  in Chinese Bronze inscriptions, highlights an elephant's long nose. As described by *Shuowenjiezi*, the character of elephant denotes a Vietnam beast with a long nose and long teeth that gives birth every three years. It has a nose/trunk, teeth, four feet, and a tail. *Nanshanjing* (《南山经》), of the *Book of Shanhaijing* (《山海经》, the *Classic of Mountains and Seas*), records the fact that there are many elephants in the Daoguo Mountains (祷过山). The semiotization characteristics of pictographic characters capture one side of an elephant. This manner of semiotization is not accidental. It results from the fact that humans have historically faced the side of a wild animal and are much less likely to confront elephants face to face. The side outline of a quadruped is also easy to recognize, according to the characteristics of signs, especially the long nose, or trunk, which makes an elephant different from other animals.

The systematic, piecewise evolutionary force of linguistic signs has made the pictographic characters increasingly abstract over time. The meaning of 象 is abstracted from a specific reference to a kind of animal to something with common characteristics. By the time of the creation of Chinese bronze inscription, 象 was written as and had been weakened pictographically. In this environment, the embryonic order of the Chinese character system began to appear even though the Chinese characters were yet to be systematized with the quite obvious pictographic qualities and individual features of each character. According to some scholars, the study of the shapes of some graphic characters, used before the lesser seal character was created, should not use the technique of dividing them into different layers. They point out that the study of characters should use a relatively general method that takes the whole character as a unit (黄亚平 & 孟华 2001) because the Chinese character system had not yet been established in that early period, and the common, regular relationship between two different characters was unclear. After the unification of China in the Qin Dynasty, 象 was further weakened pictographically, and the lower segment, 豕 of  was appropriated as a common aspect of characters for similar kinds of animals. Since then, the semiotic motivation of Chinese characters, mainly based on iconicity,

has lost its dominant position, and conventionality has played a central role. This has become an important node in the history of Chinese characters. In other words, the motivation of iconicity gradually wanes in the use of signs of characters, and the motivation of iconicity at the beginning of sign generation gradually gave way to the convenience of using the whole system of characters. Further, such convenience is called "motivation of use" or "re-motivatedness"[3]; in fact, it is "non-motivation" relative to the generation of motivation. As a sign of a character, 象 has so far become a conventional sign (symbol).

The second stage for the development of the meanings of 象 witnessed the expansion and generalization of the object it denotes. Over time, 象 has come to be used to mean the shape and appearance of an object besides the elephant. An example of this appears in *Shisanjing zhushu* (《十三经注疏》), which cites *Kong zhuan* (《孔传》) that 象 means to try to carve the image of the person in one's dream. Since then, the denotation of 象 has naturally and rapidly extended to include the phenomena of all things. It is said in the first part of *Xici* that "zai tian cheng xiang, zai di cheng xing (在天成象, 在地成形)". The meaning of 象 in this sentence is somewhat abstract. Later, the character 象 had a stricter abstract meaning, and it could signify an object in a highly semiotized way through metaphor, synecdoche, symbolism, and so on. For example, it is written in *Chengdi ji* of *Han shu* (《汉书·成帝纪》, *Annals of the Chengdi Emperor* in the *Book of Han*) (the fourth volume) that "wuxing ju dongjing, de tianxia zhi xiang ye (五星聚东井, 得天下之象也)". Here, 象 implies a sign.

Then, 象 had two completely different meanings. One refers to a non-functional object by further abstraction. For example, in *Jielao* of *Hanfeizi* (《韩非子·解老》, *Explicating the Laozi* of *Hanfeizi*), there is the expression "gu zhuren zhi suoyi yixiang zhe, jie wei zhi xiang ye (故诸人之所以意想者, 皆谓之象也)". The 象 here means man's imagination from within, and it is a psychological world/mental image that can transcend the external objective world. With further abstraction, 象 cannot be perceived by visual sense, and even the image of the object in people's mind is removed. Ultimately, the meaning became the ultimate wisdom (道, *Tao*) that can accidentally be grasped by means of understanding and knowledge. The use of 象 in *Laozi* (《老子》) is significant, such as in the expression "zhi daxiang, tianxia wang (执大象, 天下往)" (see Note 3). The 象 here means Tao, which is the invisible 象. The other meaning of 象 explains the mechanism of the formation of the omen or sign, that is, to simulate the original object in the way of iconicity. Therefore, 象 had the meaning of resemblance, for example, the expression in the second part *of Xici* "shigu yi zhe, xiang ye; xiang ye zhe, xiang ye (是故《易》者, 象也; 象也者, 像也—Therefore, the *I Ching* records 象 [principles], which should be imitated.)". And in 象形 (pictograph, *xiangxing*) and 象声 (onomatopoeia, *xiangsheng*), the 象 means to imitate. At that time, almost all the meanings of 象 in Chinese characters were initially established. Since then, there have not been many changes to them in terms of meaning.

To sum up, 象 originally referred to an animal, then it was borrowed to mean form or appearance, and later it was used to mean abstract things that are all-inclusive and invisible. The evolvement history of 象 demonstrates that although the reference scope of 象 as a noun has gradually been expanded, its core meaning still signifies

some kind of object. When 象 is used as a verb with simulation as the meaning, it cannot be used alone, and its function of expressing this meaning is incomplete. It also shows that the core meaning of 象 still focuses on the meaning of the object, which is the element of the object in semiotics. The object, as a thing unto itself, does not constitute a sign, but it is an indispensable element of signification and a call to signs.

3.1.1.2 像: A Sign Generated by People's Simulating Objects

The sign 像 is a pictophonetic character. Xu Shen's *Shuowenjiezi* explains it like the following. 像 (*xiang*), with the part of man (人, *ren*) on the left as the semantic part and the part of 象 as the phonetic element, means to imitate. The construction demonstrates the way in which 像 is closely related to man, and this, in turn, shows that it has the significant property of "being artificial". As a noun, the term has historically referred to a thing made by simulating the appearance of a human being, such as a portrait, clay statue, a god's statue or a picture, or an idol. Since then, the reference of the meaning of 像 has extended to include all image objects created by simulating people or things, from which the usage of "image" is derived. From the perspective of the signification process, 像, as a noun, no longer means the original object. Rather, it is the representation of the object. In other words, the term 像 refers to something that is simulated, copied, remade, and/or drawn by artificial means. Thus, it is equivalent to the representamen in Peirce's classification of signs. Therefore, 像 is the semiotized result of 象 with the fundamental element of humans, and the objective 象 becomes the semiotized 像. The basic way of semiotization of 像 is 像似, such as, artificial simulation, imitation, reproduction, and so on. This clearly explains why 象 is used in 景象 (scene), and 像 is used in 图像 (image). Moreover, this is probably because 景象 refers to objects and phenomena, while 图像 results from the simulation and reproduction of objects.

With the principles described above, even phrases that are difficult to distinguish can be better understood and used properly. Some characters can be combined with both 像 and 象 to form a phrase, although with slightly different meanings, and the shades of meaning can also be distinguished by the role recognition of the above signification process. For example, 幻象 (illusion, *huanxiang*) and 幻像 are both pronounced as "*huanxiang*" in Chinese Pinyin and are correctly written. Furthermore, their frequencies of use can be roughly observed in Baidu (a search engine), by the end of April 19, 2024, about 17,700,000 幻象 and 85,200,000 幻像 were found, and the number of retrieved academic papers with the phrase 幻象 was 2440, and there were 221 articles using 幻像. The phrase 幻象 (*huanxiang*), which is included in the *Xinhua Dictionary* (《新华字典》), *Modern Chinese Dictionary*, *The Great Modern Chinese Dictionary* (《现代汉语大词典》, *Xiandai hanyu dacidian*), and *A Great Thesaurus of Modern Chinese* (《现代汉语分类大词典》, *Xiandai hanyu fenlei dacidian*), is interpreted as "the image in fantasy or illusion". In philosophical terminology, 幻象 is also translated into 假象 (illusion), and it originated from the Latin word, *illudere*, meaning deception and confusion. The word "Maya" in Indian

philosophy means illusion, and it is held that the known world came from Brahma and that it is actually only an illusion.

Let us now take a look at the phrase 幻像, which is not included in the *Modern Chinese Dictionary* but is still frequently used as a technical term. In the *Jianming Sheying Dictionary* (《简明摄影辞典》), 幻像, also known as 幻影 (*huanying*), refers to the secondary image formed by the reflection of each surface of the lens inside the photographic lens. In addition, many reference books, such as *A Chinese-English Dictionary of Aero-Engine Engineering Technology* (《汉英航空发动机工程技术词典》) and *A Classified Chinese-English Computer Dictionary* (《汉英计算机分类词典》), also include the phrase 幻像. 幻像, which means optical imaging in all these dictionaries, is related to technology. The online *Xinhua Dictionary* interprets 幻像 as 幻化虚像 (*huanhua xuxiang*) and cites an example that is more difficult to distinguish, that is, "Explorers are attracted by an illusion of a northwest corridor". Furthermore, it actually goes beyond the technical level. Taking the books and audio-visual products published in recent years as examples, there are academic monographs, such as《镜头定格的 "真实幻像": 跨文化语境下的 "中国形象"构造》(李娅菲 2011), whose titles may be explained as the technical vision caused by the lens. In another book《幻像与生命—〈庄子〉的变异书写》(夏可君 2007), 幻像 is not a technical term, and it can be replaced by 幻象.

The subtle differences between 幻像 and 幻象 are difficult to distinguish by their dictionary explanations and definitions after the expansion of their scopes for practical use. However, if we look at the attribute differences in signification between 象 and 像 put forward in this chapter, we may properly use them according to specific needs for signification. Here, 象 is the object of signification. That is to say, when what we call 幻觉形象 is used to emphasize a kind of object, the character 象 should be used, similar to 象 in 假象 and 现象, usually used to mean a thing that objectively exists, for example, 海市蜃楼是一个幻象 (a mirage being an illusion). When the context leads to meaning bias and to the sign carrier, based on the iconic relationship, it is a kind of virtual image as opposed to reality, and 幻像 is used. The 像 here is the same as that in 仿像 (simulation) and 拟像 (simulacrum). In this way, we can understand and use them properly. The film《幻像》made by Huayu Daye Culture Media, released in 2012, portrays a series of experiences in both games and reality of different people who indulge in online games. In the film, the title "幻像" refers mainly to the scenes in the film, that is, the virtual online game space. In this sense, the virtual scene generated by online games is a virtual image (幻像) as opposed to real life, instead of an illusion (幻象) born out of thin air. Therefore, it has been used accurately.

Therefore, phrases such as 拟象 can also be distinguished from 拟像 in this way. As a figure of speech, 拟象 refers to the object for simulation, so 象 is used in 拟象, and it originated in the *I Ching* from the observation of objects for simulating what they are; however, 拟像 is a unique product of the media spectacle. The past absence of the word 拟像 in Chinese is mainly because of the historical context of the image age. In Baudrillard's social theory, simulacrum is an important core concept, and, in fact, media society is perceived as the world grasped in a schematic perspective. This is similar to the use of 物象 (*wuxiang*). 物象 was originally an explanation of

the origin of 意象 (*yixiang*) (images in the *I Ching*), but the cognitive process of 观物取象 (imitating the sensual images of concrete things in nature and social life, and establishing symbolic trigrams) inspired later generations to explore the laws of literature and artistic creation. Then 物象 becomes the image and atmosphere of things in literature and art. For example, Yuan Zhen says in his "Tang gu gongbu yuanwailang du jun mu ximing bing xu (《唐故工部员外郎杜君墓系铭并序》)" that Li Bai's poems depict grand sceneries and images with unrestrained hyperboles and his Yuefu (乐府) ballads are comparable to those of Du Fu (杜甫) in Tang Dynasty. Similarly, in the theory of painting, the physical appearance of natural and objective things is described in the painting. In Hou (Later) Liang of the Five Dynasties (五代后梁), Jinghao (荆浩) says in his *Bifaji* (《笔法记》) that a painting is what a painter creates. Only through careful observation can a painter gain the spirit and essence of an object. These quotations employ the extensions of object and atmosphere. In communication, the term 舆论崇拜物像 represents artificial objects including the types of objects and statues that represent loftiness, or parks and streets named after celebrities and historical events. This concept carries out the plan of a few people, so that the worship of the object image of public opinion changes from primitive and simple spontaneous behaviors to conscious applications (刘建明 1993). In ophthalmology, 物像计 (eikonometer) is a medical tool for recording objects' images. The term 脉象 (pulse manifestation, *maixiang*) in traditional Chinese medicine is also easily mischaracterized as that other tool in geomancy. In the *Chinese Terms in Traditional Chinese Medicine and Pharmacy* (《中医药学名词》) approved by the Committee for Terms in Traditional Chinese Medicine (中医药学名词审定委员会 2005), 脉象 is interpreted as the manifestation of pulse beat felt by doctors' fingers. In the *Hanyu tongyun dacidian* (《汉语同韵大词典》), it is interpreted as "the speed, strength… of the pulse shown in traditional Chinese medicine". And *Zhongguo fangshu dacidian* (《中国方术大辞典》) interprets 脉象 as one of the *Si Xiang* (四象) of *fu* (浮), *chen* (沉), *chi* (迟), and *shu* (数). The interpretations in the three reference books above clearly show that 脉象 is a kind of situation or image belonging to a kind of object in traditional Chinese medicine and geomancy. Therefore, it may be clearly judged that 脉象 is a correctly used word, yet 脉像 in simplified characters is misused because the issues of pulse and Feng shui are not signs formed by resemblance and they are themselves objective objects in nature.

3.1.1.3 相: An Interpretant Generated by Other's Examination

If we look at the usage of 相, we could ask why 象 is used to form the word 假象 (false appearance/impression) and 相 is used to form the word 真相 (truth)? Furthermore, why is 像 in 头像 and 相 in 面相?

In terms of word-making, 相 is an associative compound. In oracle bone inscription it is written as  , which is similar to  in bronze inscriptions, and 相 has not changed much in writing since the invention of the small seal character. It may also be the case that primitive motivation is still reserved in the Chinese character. In *Shuowenjiezi*, 相 means examination and is formed by combining two parts: 目

and 木. In the explanation of 相, another version of examination is introduced, and it is explained as follows. 相 means to accept things according to the emperor's wink. Thus, it is no longer the binary relationship between the semiotic representatum and the object; rather, it refers to the observation of such things as "outlook and appearance" from other people's perspectives. This shows that the meaning of 相 as a noun results from the action it implies. The regular object of the action of 相 is a person, so 相 has the meaning of appearance. Because it is a subjective judgment, its meaning often carries the aesthetic conclusion of beauty and ugliness. For example, according to *Li Jiangjun Liezhuan* of *Shiji* (《史记·李将军列传》, *Biographies of General Li Guang* in the *Records of the Grand Historian of China*), when General Li Guang was at a low point in his career, he asked himself "does my appearance determine that I should not be conferred to a rank of nobility and become a minister". In addition, in "Gushi wei Jiao Zhongqing qi zuo" (《古诗为焦仲卿妻作》) in *Yutai xinyong* (《玉台新咏》, *The Original Poetic Compositions in The Jeweled Palace*), Jiao Zhongqing confessed to his parents that he did not have the appearance to enjoy a high salary. These judgments on appearance match a certain socialized value system.

Relatively speaking, 像 does not have the meaning of evaluation, and it only presents the signs created according to the objects, such as images, avatars, and Buddha statues. Now let us get back to 真相 and 假象. 假象 is not what people want to see, but it is the appearance and phenomenon of things that deceive people. It refers to the state of an object, therefore 象 is used in 假象. However, 真相that a viewer wants to achieve, focuses on the position of the interpreter. It results from the actions of the third party, so 相 is used in 真相. Similarly, the 相 in 面相 results from the 相 (examination, *xiang*) of the 相面 (examining the face, *xiangmian*), and there must be an explanation for the examination. Therefore, in the tripartite semiosis, 相 is the interpretant. In fact, taking the verb usage of 相 into consideration, the characteristics of this process become clearer. Since then, the meaning of 相 has extended to "where there is a handover between each other, it is called 相". Moreover, according to *Shuowenjiezi Zhu* (《说文解字注》), the person who supports others is the 相 in "相瞽". Here, 瞽 means blind, so a blind man who cannot see things needs a person to help him see. Then, the person who helps him see is 相, so 相 contains the meaning of assistance and help. Therefore, 丞相, 宰相, 相国, and 相公, were formed with the help of other meanings, with the first three meaning the prime minister.

Since then, in the process of signification, 象, 像, and 相 have their own scope of usages, and there is no finite time sequence. There is only a logical connection among them. 象 refers to the object of a sign; 像 refers to the representatum and derivative rules generated based on iconic rules; and 相refers to the psychological and cultural mechanisms of viewing and interpretation. The meanings of these characters may also reflect the main purpose of this book, which points to a semiotics system of 像 that can include all signs.

3.1.2 Word Formation and Terminology Generation

3.1.2.1 A Comparison Between 像似 and 象似 from the Perspective of Word Formation

The common interpretation of iconicity in reference books is 形象性/图像表示 (image representation, *xingxiangxing/tuxiang biaoshi*), and the root for iconicity is the noun, icon (including idol, portrait, and statue, etc.). In other words, the Chinese characters for the word "icon" seems to show the meaning of the word image. From this perspective, 像似 is a better Chinese version of iconicity than 象似. According to the previous analysis, when 像 means being similar to, its ability to communicate meaning is stronger, and it is also more in line with the original meaning of the word "icon".

From the perspective of the collocation of 像/象 with 似, the methods of word formation for 象似 and 像似 are different. In expressing the meaning such as "being similar to" or "being close to", 似 can be interchangeable with 像. Both 似 and 像 can be used to explain them to each other. In the *Modern Chinese Dictionary* (fifth edition), 似, when used as a verb, is interpreted as 像, such as 相似 and 相像 (See Note 3). The combination of 像 and 似 is a compound word formed by two synonymous characters, and the two morphemes are in an equal position. Furthermore, this kind of compound word has a characteristic in that either of the two morphemes can still express meaning similar to the original word, such as 道路 (road), 头绪 (ideas), 攻击(attacks), 生产 (production), 智慧 (wisdom), and孤独 (loneliness) (北京大学中文系现代汉语教研室 2004).

The examination of 象 and 似 reveals that the differences between the two characters in meaning and usage are obvious, especially in terms of part of speech. Although 象 has the meaning of simulation and imitation, it can only form a compound word with other morphemes, such as 象形 (pictograph, *xiangxing*), 象声 (onomatopoeia, *xiangsheng*), and 象征 (symbol, *xiangzheng*) (中国社会科学院语言研究所词典编辑室 2005), which mean to simulate shape, sound, and sign of things, respectively. The problem is that when 象 and 似 are used together, because 似 is not a noun, it is impossible to form a verb-object structure with 象. In addition, the method of word formation for 象似 is different from that of words such as 象征 (*xiangzheng*) and 象形 (*xiangxing*), and no case for reference may be offered here. Since the difference between 象 and 像 in usage has been made, only one case has been found for 象 as a verb to form a verbal phrase with another verb. Therefore, there are good reasons to suspect that 象似 may result from the not-so-definite standardization of simplified characters in the 1980s when 象 and 像 were mixed up.[4]

3.1.2.2 On 象似 and 像似 from Translation and Their Context for Use

Through the analysis of data about the word 像似 (data are from the translation of the word in the 1980s), the author supports the above judgment. The study of 象似

in China's linguistic circle starts from Xu Guozhang's translation. Analyzing the full article reveals that 象 and 像 were used in Xu Guozhang's article when no definite criteria for these two characters had been established. Among them, the 象 in 拟象, 正象中国的主流哲学一样 (paragraph 2, p. 9), and 图象文字 (paragraph 3, p. 9) (许国璋 1988) should in fact be composed as 像, according to rules for using simplified Chinese characters. Xu Guozhang's article was published in 1988, just before the norms for the usages of 象 and 像 were reformulated. It was not until 1990 that the China National Committee for Terminology in Science and Technology standardized the usage of 象 and 像in scientific and technological terms. Besides, there are still a number of adjustments in the 1990 version, and one of them is the following. 象 is used when it is seen as a noun morpheme or means shape to form a compound word, such as 图象 (image), 录象 (video, *luxiang*), 摄象 (photograph, *shexiang*), etc. (全国科学技术名词审定委员会 & 国家语言文字工作委员会 2001) However, different from this rule, 象 was replaced with 像 in several authoritative Chinese dictionaries that were revised and published in the mid and late 1990s. Since then, some scholars have calculated word frequency in the literature of *People's Daily*, and the results have supported the use of 像 as a noun morpheme to form a compound word.

Nevertheless, due to the habits of citation and inheritance, academic circles did not make the necessary adjustment in time, according to the new standard for using Chinese characters. For example, Shen Jiaxuan explained in his influential article "A Survey of Studies of Iconicity in Syntax" (沈家煊 1993) that he used the term 象似 by following Xu Guozhang's translation, and he did not further explain his reasoning. Judging from Shen Jiaxuan's use of 象 and 像, the word 象 is used 145 times in the article, while the word 像 is used only twice, namely, in the cases of 图像 (icon) and 映像 (image, *yingxiang*). In the above article, the word 图像 (象) appears four times, including 图象 appearing three times. We are unable to prove that it is a slip of the pen or an editorial omission, but it might reflect that there were no norms for using 像 and 象 in that period, or it might mean that the terms can be intermixed. Furthermore, there is a similar case with Du Wenli's article "Linguistic Iconicity" (杜文礼 1996) in which there is not even one 像 used, and only 象 is used. Many uses of 象 included in this article should be 像, according to the 1990 terminology standard. Such uses include 拟象 (in the last line but two in paragraph one, among others) and 图象 (in the last line but two and the last line but four in paragraph one). Ultimately, Professor Wang Yin should be considered the most representative of those who wrote articles on the discussion and naming of 象似性 (iconicity). His article *Translation and Definition of Iconicity* (《Iconicity 的译名与定义》) (王寅 1999a), finalized this term by discussing the determination of the term's translation in the discipline. However, in Wang Yin's article, as in the above literature, there is no 像 used at all.

It is safe to say that there is nothing wrong with the usage that was popular at that time. According to Wang Yin (王寅 1999a), there are five meanings for 象, with reference to the 1979 edition of the *Modern Chinese Dictionary*: (i) shape, appearance; (ii) imitation, simulation; (iii) similarities in image or with some commonalities; (iv) as if; and (v) for example. However, in the 2005 edition of the *Modern Chinese Dictionary*, there are only two meanings for 象 other than its use to refer to an animal,

the elephant: (i) shape, appearance; (ii) imitation, simulation; and the third, fourth and fifth meanings have been included in the meanings of 像. Thus, it shows that the process of standardizing the simplified Chinese characters in China led to the confusion of 象 and 像. And it is natural that in the linguistic environment, there would be nothing wrong with the use of 象似性 at that time. However, with the development of simplified Chinese character norms, it has become a different case. Therefore, it is a pity that citation and inheritance in the academic community has led to the relative lag of standardization of the term 象似性.

Although the meanings of this term have been clearly analyzed, there are still many difficulties in dealing with this kind of situation. The first involves conventions formed in the academic community itself. In the field of linguistic semiotics, a great deal of discussion and research about iconicity has been carried out. The author believes that the general principle for the standard for Chinese simplified characters should be that they are treated as norms applicable in the whole country, as this is of much greater significance than the use of terms in the specific field of linguistics. Obviously, the translation of iconicity into Chinese should also follow this general rule of use. In particular, after the terminology norms at the national level are clearly promulgated in the form of meetings and reference books (全国科学技术名词审定委员会 and 国家语言文字工作委员会 2001), the meanings of 像 and 象 have been adjusted in authoritative reference books such as the *Modern Chinese Dictionary*. It is necessary for the academic circle to abide by the norms for the use of the terms correspondingly.

In addition, academic articles, studies, and publications in which 像似 is used are on the rise, and this also shows that as 象 and 像 are sorted out and discussed in academic circles, the exact distinction between them has gradually gained more recognition. In the fields of semiotics and linguistics in China, it is necessary to adjust the term to keep pace with the times. However, due to tendencies toward continuity and habit in the use of terms, especially in academic citations, it is usually not appropriate to directly change the terms used by the original author. The author suggests that at present, we should accept both 像似 and 象似 at the same time, and, further, we should gradually promote 像似 as a new normative usage. In particular, in order to play a guidance role as role models, professional dictionaries and theoretical reference books that are influential in academic circles should promote the normative system of terminology.

3.1.3 Major Discussions of Linguistic Iconicity

In the field of linguistics, terminology is the starting point for discussion, but this leads to other central issues for analysis or debate. After all, linguistic semiotics is the field of semiotics where iconicity is discussed the most. Iconicity in language is one of the topics of common concern in the field of linguistic semiotics internationally, and indeed there are similar characteristics and orientations in the discussion of iconicity in the linguistics field at home and abroad.

One of the manifestations of this broad interest is that the discussion of the concept of iconicity itself is not precise enough, as "iconicity" is regarded as almost equivalent to "motivation", at least on the surface.

This inadequacy of precision is mainly reflected in the fact that the central logic of discussion in linguistics is the dispute between iconicity and arbitrariness. For example, Haiman's *Natural Syntax: Iconicity and Erosion* roughly equates iconicity with motivation for study. Chinese scholars have basically continued this path of discussion, either taking iconicity as a challenge to arbitrariness (王寅 2009), or directly studying the demand regarding them as two opposing extremes to determine which is more prominent than the other (王寅 2003). In fact, motivation, including the association between any sign (including iconicity) and its object, is greater than iconicity. Iconicity is simply intuition derived from image, and the original meanings of the two words are different. Regarding the subtle conceptual differences in academic circles, Hu Zhuanglin (胡壮麟 2009) points out that iconicity and motivation, strictly speaking, are two different concepts. The former is a natural relationship of resemblance between a signifier and the signified, although Saussure tends to believe that a signifier specifically refers to "sound image"; while the latter aims to explain that the semiotic relationship between a signifier and the signified is motivated and justifiable. On this basis, Hu Zhuanglin believes that in the light of the above-mentioned additions by Saussure, he seems to want to make it clear that arbitrariness is not entirely equal to motivation, or that arbitrariness allows for a certain degree of motivation. In fact, Hu Zhuanglin's understanding reveals the dislocation of the concept of the debate in the field of linguistics. To further rationalize the argument, it is necessary to better clarify the concept.

In the previous chapter, the concepts of iconicity and motivation were distinguished, but the discussions in the field of linguistics need to be revisited here. Motivation is the opposite of arbitrariness, while iconicity is one part of motivation. In Peirce's classification of signs, an icon points to the property of an object because there are similarities between them (Peirce 1931–1958). Such a property, accordingly, is called iconicity. However, in linguistics discussions, iconicity is primarily treated as an example to oppose Saussure's principle of arbitrariness. This means that, logically, the concept is replaced by—or even equated with—iconicity, which is regarded as the only manifestation of linguistic transparency. Saussure proposes the general principle of arbitrariness of linguistic signs, arguing that the semiotics to be established is a whole system based on signs' arbitrariness. He defines arbitrariness as the "first principle" of signs, believing that this principle cannot be demonstrated. And the principle, as the classical law of linguistic semiotics, has been observed for nearly one hundred years. In fact, Saussure simply sets the opposite of arbitrariness as a sign with some kind of natural association. For example, he once supposed that a symbol was related to natural association and that therefore it should not be included in signs. In addition, he asserts that even if semiotics in a more general sense would be established in the future, and even if objects based on natural signs, such as pantomimes, were included into the group of signs, it still would be based on arbitrariness.

Peirce and Saussure are positioned at different starting points of semiotics, and these two giants have not communicated with each other directly, but because the concepts they put forward have some correspondence, it often leads to their dialogue across time and space. Scholars often regard Peirce's iconicity as the opposite of Saussure's arbitrariness. For example, in *The Origin of Speech*, Charles Hockett (1960) lists 16 features of human information transmission, one of which is arbitrariness, and interprets "arbitrariness" as "non-iconicity". Therefore, iconicity and arbitrariness of language have become a pair of opposite categories. In the view of linguists, iconicity itself refers to the natural relationship between a signifier and the signified of a linguistic sign. And this natural association makes the combination of the two justifiable, so it is motivated (沈家煊 1993). Similarly, the lack of investigation into the abstract concept of iconicity itself is another sign that demonstrates the lack of in-depth study of iconicity in linguistic circles in China, particularly while there is a focus on examples to demonstrate imaginal iconicity and diagrammatic iconicity.

The initial examples of iconicity in language mainly focused on onomatopoeia, as Saussure's examples above have shown. Saussure believes that this intuitive onomatopoeia is accidental rather than systematic. In terms of Peirce's classification of different degrees of iconicity, intuitive onomatopoeia should belong to imaginal iconicity. However, there is almost no such imaginal iconicity in linguistic signs aside from onomatopoeia. Therefore, the examples discussed in the field of linguistics must extend the discussion of iconicity to including the field of structural iconicity. For example, iconicity in word form refers to structural iconicity, which not only includes iconicity in word form but also comprises iconicity in grammatical structure in later research. Olga Fischer (2010) views iconicity in grammatical structure as a kind of diagrammatic iconicity, which is based on grammar, as a kind of structure, and this means that it has the corresponding characteristics of the homotype. In addition, Haiman's research has investigated iconicity of syntactic structure.

Xu Guozhang translated iconicity into 象似性 but did not define 像似 in his article "Is Language a System of Arbitrary Signs? The Theory Reconsidered" (《语言符号的任意性问题—语言哲学探索之一》). Shen Jiaxuan (沈家煊 1993) generally regards the iconicity in language as a kind of cognitive structuring and points out that the iconicity of linguistic structure means that the conceptual structure directly reflects man's conceptual structure, and not just generally embodies the conceptual structure. Yan Chensong's (严辰松 1997) definition is also structural. In his view, iconicity means that the linguistic structure reflects, to some extent, the world structure experienced by people. Wang Yin's view is more representative because he defines the iconicity of linguistic signs as the reflective similarity between language and its reference in sound, form or structure (王寅 1999b). These definitions specify the object of iconicity, but the meaning of iconicity itself is based on the vague statement of "reflective similarity". What then is reflective similarity? From Wang Yin's study, we know that he absorbs Shen Jiaxuan's view and extends it. In *Iconicity of Linguistic Symbols* (《论语言符号象似性》), Wang Yin extends and summarizes the iconicity from three aspects—pronunciation, word form, and structure—and further defines iconicity of distance, iconicity of quantity, iconicity of sequence

and iconicity of mark (王寅 1999b). As we can see, these kinds of iconicity are all specific forms of structural iconicity. More recently, research in linguistics has been basically concerned with the search, for examples, for imaginal iconicity and structural iconicity in the directions mentioned above.

In fact, from a purely theoretical perspective, in academic linguistic circles, the scope of iconicity has been found to extend beyond this direction. Stephen Ullmann (1962) has made remarkable achievements through his studies of phonetic motivation, word form motivation, and semantic motivation in language. Among them, phonetic motivation mainly refers to onomatopoeia, that is, the so-called phonetic iconicity. The motivation of word form mainly refers to structural iconicity, while semantic motivation, including figurative rhetoric, is more extensive. Shen Jiaxuan (沈家煊 1993) also points out that iconicity may be very broad in scope, and the degree of similarity only increases or decreases gradually, so there is no absolute boundary between the two different kinds of iconicity. Among them, in terms of the degree of similarity, image, diagram, and symbol decrease continuously. In fact, Shen Jiaxuan's classification of iconicity, which is very close to Peirce's definition of the degrees of iconicity, may be in line with Peirce's imaginal iconicity, diagrammatic iconicity, and metaphorical iconicity, respectively. Although Shen Jiaxuan has noted the broad scope of iconicity, he did not further discuss metaphorical iconicity, and his illustrative examples primarily focus on the diagrammatic iconicity of syntactic structure relations. There is little discussion of metaphorical iconicity in Chinese linguistic circles as a whole. One of the reasons for this is that if metaphor is included in the discussion of linguistic iconicity, it will go beyond specific linguistic problems and enter the wider scope of textual rhetoric and narrative, and this would require the transformation of perspectives from a corpus study to a broader literary study.

Summary: Multi-Level and Comprehensive Linguistic Iconicity

As far as the classification of materials for linguistic iconicity is concerned, there is still room for improvement in China's linguistic research. Due to the excessive influence of Western linguistics, China's linguistics studies tend to focus on pronunciation, morphology, and grammatical structure, while neglecting the fact that Chinese characters still reserve the primary visual motivation as part of the most widely-used written language in the world—Chinese language. The neglect of Chinese characters in Western linguistic circles is obviously due to a deficiency in the linguistic environment.

Chinese scholars have conducted a great deal of motivation-based research on the motivation of Chinese characters. As a symbol of human civilization's ushering into a certain stage, written language should be regarded as an important object of the study of linguistic iconicity. As far as disciplinary structure is concerned, philology is also an important part of linguistics. Therefore, the study of the visuality of Chinese characters needs to be included in the study of linguistic iconicity. In fact, Chinese character signs are closer to the primary motivation than to the motivation of use demonstrated in current academic communities, or at least there is a more obvious consistency of examples that is maintained in some Chinese characters.

Based on this consideration, we can add an important content to language iconicity in the sense of "material examination". That is, according to the degree of abstraction, analogies in language can be summarized into three categories.

The first category of iconicity is "imaginal iconicity", which represents the most intuitive form of iconicity, encompassing both phonetic iconicity (onomatopoeia) and visual iconicity (Chinese characters and texts that still retain visual cues). The issue of visual iconicity in language has gradually gained attention in linguistic circles in recent years.

The second category is "diagrammatic iconicity", which lies in the middle of the spectrum of iconicity. For instance, structural iconicities, such as character creation, lexicology, syntax, and morphology all fall under diagrammatic iconicity. The relationships they exhibit typically involve sequential, quantitative, and spatial relationships.

The third category is "metaphorical iconicity", which represents the most abstract form of iconicity, encompassing language rhetoric, symbolism, and all non-explicit linguistic components of iconicity.

We may say that there is diversity in 象 (appearance) and iconicity for language itself. The area of structural iconicity which focuses on diagrammatic iconicity is one of the advantages in today's research, and is also a reason why one sees that there is something neglected in the universe of iconicity. Onomatopoeia does not serve as a good example because it is too concrete and easily perceived by human senses. Metaphor, as it involves the extension of linguistics, is not a good example, either. Fortunately, linguistic semiotics itself is also evolving into a more pluralistic study, about which Saussure demonstrated excellent foresight. He holds that language is nothing more than a special semiotic system, and he envisions a science that studies semiotic life in social life, and this will form part of social psychology and therefore part of general psychology. We call it "semiology", which comes from the Greek "sēmeion"; and language is only one part of the field of study within this discipline (Saussure 2011).

Linguistics, as a central focus of study, has resulted in many derivative categories, from spoken language to written language, from handwriting to printing, from daily communication to aesthetics, from recording history by knotting rope to profound philosophy, as well as to any side branch of what is known as the humanities. In none of these cases did an area fail to develop because language was one of the sources of human civilization. In recent years, the broad field of linguistics has been born as a result of language—a particularly important semiotic system, reflecting the whole human culture and even historical civilization, and it shows the comprehensive development trends of current disciplines. In a sense, neither literature nor semiotics belong to linguistics, but one must admit that human culture, based on the special semiotic system of language, has given rise to many sign types and disciplines in the field of culture. Therefore, they are often inextricably linked to linguistics, and, as Saussure says, their research results may apply to linguistic signs themselves.

Viewed from the perspective of semiotics, it seems that semiotics has entered the field of literature after breaking through the technical analysis of linguistics. Literature is defined as a form of linguistic art without exception. There is no doubt

about the close relationship between them, but literature has brought about another vast theoretical system because of its artistic purpose. Once iconicity enters literature and art, the focus must go beyond the existing general category of linguistics study.

3.2 A Universal Language

In Plato's *The Republic*, the dispute between Cratylus and Hermogenes focuses on whether language is transparent. In terms of degree, iconicity is a form of transparency in language. One of the benefits of the transparent language is that there are no barriers to communication. What we know, however, is that non-transparent language is becoming increasingly developed. The non-transparency of language means that language learning requires more time. Besides, the division between different languages has also led to the differentiation of civilizations and to many disputes.

If there were no language differentiation, would there be much less misunderstanding in communication? With this as our presupposition, we can see that human beings have never stopped creating perfect kinds of signs to bridge the cultural division caused by the language gap and to remove the communication barrier of language itself. Things have changed, for example, since various Esperanto programs failed. Media technology has led to the implosion of international information into a global village, and reading pictures has become a symbol of this era. Image language has become a more important sign intermediary for communication in the era of post-linguistic centrality. Moreover, we would naturally ask ourselves: will it become the way for us to achieve perfect signs by creating a universal writing system? This section discusses the value and limitations of perfect signs by analyzing the basis of the sign of image: iconicity. We have drawn the conclusion that any language of signs, including images, cannot be an alternative to the existing natural language because signs are only another semiotic system formed in a highly semiotized contemporary civilization, rather than a meta-language that ranks above other languages. Furthermore, a universal writing system has already been realized in a variety of forms.

3.2.1 Symbolic Evolution

Semioticians define the unique symbolic ability that separates human beings from other animals as the competence of convention, which is believed by the linguistic semioticians represented by Saussure to be the most essential force in human beings' symbolic world. Nearly a century's semiotics research since Saussure embarked on his study of signs shows that motivation is becoming an indispensable element of signs and is not subject to arbitrariness. Signs are not randomly conventionalized because they are appropriate to specific contexts. For example, some signs are

frequently considered to be more concise, efficient, and therefore more easily spread. In other words, arbitrariness logically becomes an overall presupposition of system, while motivation is a set of rules based on the efficiency of communication and signification in its social use, and both restrict signification. Peirce introduced the element of semiotic motivation into his semiotic theory and posited the idea of perfect signs.

Peirce categorizes the sign into three types: icon, index, and symbol. Peirce believes that if the three forms of signs "are mixed as evenly as possible, it will lead to perfect signs" (Peirce 1931–1958: 448). Peirce's view of perfect signs reflects the understanding that there are defects in any single form of sign. Given the realities of society and culture, we may interpret Peirce's perspective in the following way.

a. Signs with excessive iconicity

The lack of distance in interpretation between signs of excessive iconicity and their objects will restrict the freedom of interpretation. Eco opposes the mirror image because, although there is still room for interpretation for such extreme icons, the freedom of interpretation is nevertheless limited. Against the background of the rise of mass culture, many cultural critics point out that the pursuit of clarity and sensory stimulation in contemporary art represents the tendency toward the signifying ability of a sign, and it lacks room for interpretation.

b. Signs with excessive indication

Such a sign, whose intended interpretation is realized through a short process, often rejects the bifurcation of meaning and tends to be interpreted in a unitary manner, with signal as the extreme form. Therefore, there is also considerable debate about whether a signal is a sign. In terms of the structure of signification, an index completely rejecting the bifurcation will lead to the failure of infinite semiosis, finally causing people to lose the free imagination of artistic image, and thus losing the diversity of culture. As a result, a thousand readers would have only one interpretation of a clear reference to an object.

c. Signs with excessive arbitrariness

Any kind of sign that abandons the motivation of use and inheritance is often not conducive to experiential cognition and mastery. Saussure has noted that law is appropriately symbolized with a scale instead of other arbitrary signs, as a scale showing the connection between a sign and its object is not completely arbitrary, and there must be historical motivations.

People have preferences for different types of signs in different historical stages. In *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, Cassirer regards the evolution of human culture as a process of continuous transformation of the types of signs. This process consists of three stages: first, the icon stage, dominated by iconicity and replication; second, the abstract logic sign stage, dominated by causality; third, the purely independent sign production stage. The first stage is the stage of icon, the second is the stage of index, and the third is the stage of symbol. From Cassirer's vertical division of the process of human civilization, we can see that human civilization in childhood is dominated by transparent signs and as human civilization has developed to its advanced stage with

the cumulative motivation in the use of signs, the degree of primary transparency has been gradually reduced and the motivation of use is gradually enhanced. This results in the primary motivation gradually giving way to the motivation of use.

3.2.2 The Utopia of Language

The differentiation of language not only exists in the ancient Babel Fables, but it also represents the reason for the differentiation of human civilization and its many disputes, including, for example, the language conflict after the founding of Pakistan and the language boundary behind the genocide in Rwanda. However, humankind has never stopped filling the cultural divisions caused by the language gap. Although translation may appear to be the easiest way to bridge such gaps, the translation always involves a process of misunderstandings and recreation because the cultural contextual differences behind language cannot be translated. Therefore, the establishment of a common world language that does not need to be translated is more appealing; that is the ideal of the so-called "universal language".

To realize this ideal, we must eliminate the following aspects: differentiation within the writing system; the potential inequality of common language; and, finally, the social and cultural conventions in the development of writing systems. The more thoroughly the differences of cultural individuality are eliminated, the closer they are to the ideal of a universal language. There are two strategies to eliminate cultural individuality. One is to eliminate it from the culture per se, and the other is to separate it from the signs of a written language. To achieve the former strategy, there are many cases to follow in history. For example, the unified writing system in the Qin Dynasty was a compulsory unity of state power for a common language. It succeeded in eliminating cultural differences, but at the cost of dominating other languages with one natural language. However, this kind of unity is mandatory and oppressive, and the violence and power behind it are no longer acceptable to modern civilization. In addition to creating unity with force, cultural power will lead to a similar result. Here is an example. In European churches, Latin was once used, while the socialist faction once attempted to render Russian a common language so as to distinguish it from the capitalist faction. Most of these attempts are the products of ideology, and often they only make an existing language acquire the status of a super language by occupying the so-called dominant position.

Unity through force and ideological assimilation is the most direct and effective way, because it unifies not only the language, but also the cultural context on which the language depends. In modern civilization, people sometimes turn to a non-existent language for the pursuit of a universal language. In idealists' perspectives, there should be a new language that is culturally neutral to achieve true equality. For example, Thomas More, an English humanist, made an early attempt. When he created the fictional land of Utopia, he created a Utopian language. He even created literary works and music in the Utopian language. From a technical perspective, his utopian language is not a completely new language but is a system in which 22

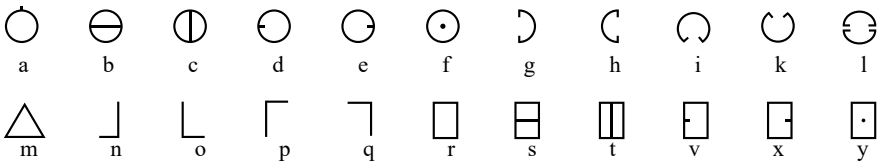

Fig. 3.1 More's Utopian alphabet (More, 1955)

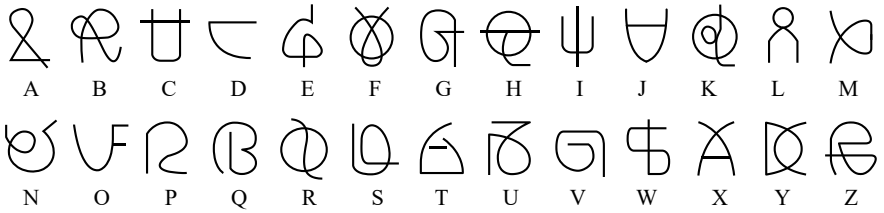

Fig. 3.2 Zentlardy: The Alien Writing System in *The Super Dimension Fortress Macross* (*Source* https://www.omniglot.com/conscripts/zentlardy.htm)

letters (Fig. 3.1) seem to be different from other commonly seen letters, but which actually were borrowed from Latin and Hebrew. More did not really conduct in-depth research about language; therefore, this kind of utopian language also became a pure symbol of language utopia—merely a kind of virtual language.

Because of the limited number of letters needed, it is not difficult to create a virtual language. Virtual languages often appear in a variety of fictional works, such as an alien writing system called "Zentlardy" from the famous Japanese cartoon, *The Super Dimension Fortress Macross*, in the 1980s. The letters are from English and the numbers are Arabic (Fig. 3.2).

More complex virtual languages also need alphabetic signs, and they also require systematic grammar rules. For example, the famous Old English professor, J. R. R. Tolkien, created a variety of languages in his The *Lord of the Rings* novel series, including Elvish, Hobbit, Quenya and so on. Several of these languages are so well made that they can be used for communication, and some Tolkien fans even write in these languages. However, after all, the languages that appear in these literary works are still virtual languages.

Unlike the virtual languages in these literary works, people also attempt to create universal languages for practical purposes, such as Volapuk, Ido, and Novial. Among them, Esperanto, which has lasted for a hundred years, still exerts certain influence. Its creator, Zazarz Ludwik Zamenhof, an idealist, sought an equal language, aiming to eliminate misunderstanding in communication. One hundred years later, Esperanto was successful as an example of group-performance art, but, in practice, it has undoubtedly failed to replace what serves today as the real-world language: English.

Even in terms of language itself, Zamenhof's Esperanto is not absolutely "cosmopolitan" because the Esperanto he created is based on Indo-European languages. Therefore, the kind of "Putonghua [common language] of the world" is actually still the "Putonghua of the West". Up until now, Esperanto has become a veritable "minority" language. In this sense, Esperanto has been a failure.

However, the failure of Esperanto is not necessarily due entirely to its deviation from cultural neutrality as a result of its basis in Western natural languages. The creation of Esperanto would still need to be achieved through political or other means, rather than by relying entirely on the accessibility of tools of communication themselves. If there is no political force to promote the use of this language, these artificial languages cannot compete with natural languages that enjoy rich expressiveness. Therefore, its overall strategy is flawed. Lojban, created in the 1950s, tends to emphasize the neutrality of culture. Lojban is based on predicate logic and eliminates the cultural tendency in grammar. In order to achieve cultural neutrality as much as possible, it borrowed words in sourcing vocabulary from the following six languages in the world, including Chinese, Indian, English, Spanish, Russian and Arabic. Even so, Lojban has not become a common language for the general public; rather, it has become an experimental language game for a small number of people.

This failure may be caused by its standardization without the cultural context of a natural language, so it can only become the "standard language" of a special place.

Tolkien created many virtual languages but was pessimistic about international auxiliary languages, asserting as early as 1956 that artificial languages, such as Volapuk, Esperanto, Ido, and Novial, are doomed to wither and even to die far more thoroughly than ancient languages that are not used today, because there are no myths in these languages. "Without myths" means that there are no cultural conventions formed through use as there are in natural languages. As Zhao Yiheng (赵毅衡 2009) points out: "wenhua zhe, wen er hua zhi; wenming zhe, wen er ming zhi; wentan zhe, wen er tan zhi-naneng lidekai yi ge 'wen' zi (文化者,文而化之;文明者,文而明之;文坛者,文而谈之—哪能离得开一个 '文'字)". Culture is of great significance in educating and enlightening people, and in exchanges. It is true that a writing system without culture is a skeleton without flesh and blood.

In the tripartite process of signification, artificial languages lack the cultural process of sign interpretation, and focus on the mapping process pointing to the object. It is just like a set of passwords or signals, a set that does not directly generate cultural meaning. Only when it is transformed into a natural language in the context of culture does it produce rich meaning. Therefore, artificial language is not a "super-language" but a "sub-language".

Compared with the uncertainty of natural languages, artificial languages have the strength that they are most suitable to become standard codes without ambiguities, enabling artificial language to be interpreted in a standardized and accurate manner. If we adopt the concept of "broad language" and regard it as a set of commonly used signs for communication as well as a means for expression and the processing of rules, we will find that human beings have created a great many common languages that go beyond cultural conventions. Here are some examples. With mathematical language, we can accurately realize modeling and arithmetic; chemical formulae can

help us achieve perfect material generation results in theory; and with C language or Java language in computer programming, we can accurately transmit information and realize zero error decoding. This is the case not only in the fields of science, but also in the fields of humanities and art. For example, musical symbols can be represented to produce the same music in theory anywhere in the world. Similarly, with the color model established according to the Munsell color system, we can achieve error-free color reproduction. These precise languages have a common feature—no matter what field they are applied to, in essence, they are a scientific language—featuring encoding and corresponding decoding. In a sense, they are all universal languages.

Obviously, these accurately encoded scientific languages are different from the language utopia described above. Although we want to build an artificial language, we are unsatisfied with it as a set of codes for simple communication. However, we hope it will enter everyone's daily life and become a part of our culture. Is that possible? To answer this question, we must return to the differentiation of a natural language in order to understand the reasons for language differentiation and whether it is possible to create a common language.

3.2.3 Language Differentiation

Cassirer's argument that there are different stages for using signs in human civilization is quite influential in language research. The early signs of writing systems are almost all related to image and all of them were motivated. However, over time, their motivations became untraceable. Semioticians focusing on modern languages regard the association between signs and their objects as arbitrary, and they see arbitrariness as the fundamental rule. Arbitrariness shows the freedom of signification, which is the exact truth of a synchronic system, but it cannot generalize the process of evolution of signs. Image and writing systems have not been two completely different structures of sign systems since the time they were conceived. For example, the meaning of "Tu" and that of "Shu" in He Tu Luo Shu are the same. There is a famous view in Chinese calligraphy and painting art history, that is, calligraphy and painting originated from the same thing, with He Tu Luo Shu as the earliest proof. In fact, the origins of early writing systems, such as the ancient Egyptian writing system, the Sumerian writing system, the Mayan writing system and so on, are based on iconicity. That is to say, they are all icons with clear motivations, but they have gradually evolved because of writing inefficiency or other reasons. Since then, the pictographs in the West have been replaced by phonetic alphabets. In the development of signs of Chinese characters, there has gradually developed a complex "Liushu" (the six categories of Chinese characters), and pictography is only one of them. This seems to give an intuitive impression that the more mature a writing system is, the weaker its iconicity. As Zhao Yiheng (赵毅衡 2011b) points out that Chinese characters actually evolve from icons to indices and then to symbols following Peirce's tripartite classification of signs. If this is true, Western writing systems featuring letters only finished this evolution earlier. However, it does not mean that the early

writing systems were non-regulated. In fact, in specific usage contexts, all words must be symbols.

It must be pointed out that not only in the use, but also in the process of inventing words, all signs of a writing system must be symbols; otherwise, the goal of communication by inventing words cannot be achieved. The pictographs vary from civilization to civilization, and this is caused by the differences in their living or cultural environments. For example, 女 (female, *nü*) is written as  and is depicted in Chinese oracle bone inscriptions as a woman who kneels. In the Egyptian writing system, female is written as  and emphasizes a woman's profile including such elements as long hair. In Mesopotamia's Semitic language, it is written as  , an icon formed by the shape of the lower part of a female's belly (a triangle) and the external sex organ. Thus, the difference already shows various conventions in different cultural contexts. Ding Ersu (丁尔苏 2012) thus believes that iconicity and motivations do not contradict each other, which is more clearly shown in image signs. In Peirce's tripartite classification of signs, image signs are the same as icons and properties of images as symbols are not denied. In other words, ancient writing systems such as icons do not reduce the fundamental properties of symbols. The belief that motivation and arbitrariness do not contradict each other does not mean that a writing system composed of images is easier to be widely cognized, and the fundamental differences between them lie within the internal structure.

Conventionality, as the social and psychological basis of semiotics, is acknowledged to be a property of both writing and the icon, and they each have the properties of iconicity, indexicality, and conventionality. The difference between image signs and signs of a writing system lies in the fact that the former is characterized by iconicity, while the latter is indexicality-biased. This does not mean that writing must be pure indices, but, in a broad sense, writing signs refer to the objects or concepts through a kind of mapping. Ideograms, ideogrammic compounds, and phono-semantic compounds result from different indexicalities formed by proximity or causality in the "Liushu" of Chinese characters, except that pictographs show iconicities (赵毅衡 2011b). Letters of an alphabet and alphabetic writing can also be regarded as a kind of broad index because the important role of a writing system is to help construct the order of the world. When the index is used, a relationship of mapping with the object is actually established, and such a relationship is not limited to the pronouns and nouns listed by Peirce. The only difference is that a verb indicates an action rather than a static fixed object, while an adverb or an adjective refers to a more abstract degree and situational description. That is, they are object indication and concept indication, respectively.

The iconicity-biased image and the indexicality-biased writing system led to the great difference in their development paths. No matter how image signs based on iconicity change, they present a certain kind of macro space–time continuity and some competence for transcending cultural context because they cannot be completely separated from iconicity. Iconicity, then, is still easy to understand with an image sign from a completely different cultural context from one's own. For example, one of the controversial interpretations of Egyptian hieroglyphics is whether the written

language is completely pictographic or whether it contains phonetic elements. If we recognize that ancient Egyptian writing is a pictographic writing system, it will not be so difficult to interpret. As a result, the linguistic differentiation caused by conventionality is limited under the premise of iconicity and thus can be easily broken through. As mentioned above, in the hieroglyphics stage, ancient hieroglyphics are different because of their different cultural backgrounds, but this difference is obviously much smaller than that between the modern Chinese writing system and the Western writing systems of the Latin alphabet. For example, the Sumerian hieroglyphics which mean water and sun are written similarly to those of Chinese oracle bone inscriptions. After writing systems moved toward indexicality and abstractness, iconicity was quickly annihilated against cultural background and convention so that in the long process of development, the motivation in the early stages of creating a writing system became minimal. Thus, the alienation between a writing system and its spoken language results from social conventions.

From the above, we know that the language differentiation caused by social conventions is due to the fact that language is separated from the primary motivation, iconicity, and an icon may surpass its social conventions to a certain extent and obtain the corresponding cross-cultural recognition effect. Does this imply the necessary path to realize the ideal of a universal written language? In other words, in order to realize it, do we have to turn to a writing system made up of image signs just as humans created writing systems at the beginning? To answer these questions, we need to do analysis at the technical levels of communication of signs, code type, and communication efficiency.

3.2.4 Perfect Signs

3.2.4.1 Different Kinds of Codes and the Advantage of Communication

In terms of its efficiency in communication, a sign (a language in a broad sense) that can be used for all mankind should be efficiently and extensively communicated. In addition to the external forces mentioned above, communication efficiency can also be driven by the coding of the sign itself. The entire process of recognizing signs in a writing system can be regarded as a process of encoding and decoding. In order to effectively communicate a kind of code, there should be a low barrier and a high decoding rate from the perspective of the communication strategy of code, with the former pointing to the simple encoding process itself with great openness to the sender, and the latter's great openness resulting from the high success rate of decoding. Great openness improves participation, thereby leading to an increase in the user population. Therefore, we need two pairs of terms to explain how to achieve efficient communication.

The first pair is elaborated code and restricted code. These two terms put forward by Basil Bernstein, a sociolinguistic semiotician, are mainly used to study the relationship between language acquisition and social class. Characterized by explicit

description and less dependence on communication context, elaborated code deals with more complex problems. To acquire it, there must be systematic education and training. Thus, in communication, its higher "entropy" can provide information more effectively. However, the restricted code depends on the commonality of the speakers involved, and what is organized in the conversation is not grammatical logic, but friendship (a kind of communication). From the perspective of Jakobson's theory of communicative functions, restricted code tends to be communicative, so there will be significant redundancy in its communication. For the broad establishment of a language that is easier to spread, elaborated code's advantage is that it does not rely on the common cultural background of a small group, but its drawback is that the coders need to receive good education or training because it poses a higher barrier in meta-linguistic ability. Restrictive barriers are not completely without advantages, for the communicative function of simplifying characteristics and forming relational ties is also an indispensable part of languages. An ideal universal language should be able to integrate these advantages—with a lower cultural background dependence and without the need for complex education to acquire experience.

The other pair is comprised of wide broadcast code and narrowcast code. Whether a code is an elaborated code or a restricted code is determined by the coding characteristics, while whether a code is a broadcast code or a narrowcast code depends on the mix of the audience. The broadcast code is universally communicated to a heterogeneous audience, while the narrowcast code is aimed at a specific group. If the broadcast code is easy to spread, as compared to a pop song, the narrowcast code is comparable to a highbrow opera that can be appreciated by only a relatively small number of viewers. Although there is an association between the elaboration/restriction and the broadcast/narrowcast of the code, it is not a simple correspondence.

As far as the clarity of expressing meaning is concerned, elaborated code helps to overcome the cultural barriers and can be broadcast to a large audience, but the elaborated code is often encoded through a complex process, which is quite demanding for the coders. Thus, it is often communicated to a limited audience. However, the restricted code is easy to communicate to a large audience because there is a simple demand with no special requirements for meta-linguistic ability.

3.2.4.2 Coding Characteristics and the Advantage of Signs' Mixed Motivations

To create a perfect universal language with the coding characteristics mentioned above, we need to find a code that has a low barrier for coding and decoding and has the ability to clearly express meanings. Moreover, we can compare Peirce's three types of signs to see which type has the most advantages.

First, symbol, which is close to the elaborated code in coding, is characterized by accurate expression of meanings, but it makes greater demands of the coder. Furthermore, because the receiver is required to be involved in the convention system when decoding, it is close to the restricted code. For example, "dog" was arbitrarily used to mean a dog; therefore, a decoder who does not enter the semiotic system of

English is not able to achieve effective decoding. However, conventionality provides the most accurate direction for communicating meanings. Otherwise, to explain why "dog" is used to mean a dog, we must resort to less efficient motivation references.

Second, "index", as a means of reference with motivation, is a type of sign that points to but does not describe the object. The reference of the sign depends on the establishment of order or relationship, which can be proximity, causality or trace. The index makes a lower demand than the symbol in terms of encoding. Let us again take a dog as an example. Using the paw prints on the snow, a hunter is able to find his own hound. In this process, the hunter does not need to participate in the social cultural conventions because his own acquired experience and understanding of the certain characteristics of the dog enable him to acquire the decoding ability of the index. Moreover, the ability refers to the capacity of an animal and even an organism to capture and decode signals. We may say that index, with a high coding efficiency, is a good choice for achieving a universal language.

Third, the motivation of an icon is easier to see more intuitively than that of an index, so the requirement for educational and cultural background for encoders and decoders is the lowest, and it is usually the most representative type of sign that can cross cultural boundaries. Whether it is a cartoon dog or a high-definition photo of a dog, people from different cultural backgrounds can easily decode it effectively. However, an icon's coding efficiency is low, and the information is highly redundant. For example, the picture of a dog used to convey the message of a dog is obviously not economical because merely a picture of a dog's head is enough. So, could it even be reduced to just a dog leg or a dog tail? Or could merely the representative part of a dog—such as an ear—be enough? Abstraction and convention appear in the process of simplification/reduction. In fact, a sign generally combines each of the three properties.

Therefore, we have found that any of these three types of signs has its own advantages in the process of signification. Zhao Yiheng (赵毅衡 2011b) made the following summary. Iconicity makes signification vivid and intuitive; indexicality makes a set of objects orderly; and conventionality makes signification accurate and effective. Finally, he concluded that if there were an ideal universal language in theory, the type of sign should combine the three semiotic characteristics, and a certain balance should be struck among them. Then it is in line with Peirce's principle of perfect signs because he believes that the most perfect sign results from mixing the three kinds of relationship as evenly as possible. It is difficult for us to know exactly how to balance them, but we are sure that signs with three characteristics can achieve good results in the universality and efficiency of signification, and they are most likely to make an ideal universal language.

3.2.4.3 Difficulties in Achieving a Universal Language and Its Development

As far as a natural language, especially an alphabetic language, is concerned, the conventionality is too prominent, and the two motivated signs are in a position that

is too weak. According to the above principles, it is necessary to turn to motivation to construct an ideal language. The intuitive way is to partially return to the original stage of the development of the writing system, when picture and writing had not yet differentiated. At the time, the writing system was still weak in arbitrariness but strong in motivation, with a high degree of indexicality and iconicity. For example, Egyptian hieroglyphics feature greater iconicity, compared with oracle bone inscriptions or the Sumerian writing system. Moreover, the hieratic built on hieroglyphs is no longer completely pictographic because of the increase of phonetic scripts, and it is more difficult to recognize it. The difference between it and the Chinese oracle bone inscriptions thus increased. In turn, it can be inferred that the more thoroughly the conventionality is eliminated in the process of cultural development, the easier it is to recognize the signs of a writing system.

The reason for partially returning to the original stages of the development of the writing system is that the fundamental property of conventionality must be retained. Relying entirely on a higher degree of iconicity does not directly lead to higher decoding efficiency. In terms of the intuitive impression, the Egyptian hieroglyphics enjoy a greater iconicity than Chinese oracle bone inscriptions and the Sumerian writing system, but the exact meanings are not necessarily easier to explain than those of oracle bone inscriptions due to the gap in the process of inheritance of the writing system, with the loss of a kinship language for reference. The same is true of ancient Sumerian hieroglyphs. Most pictographic writing systems will be seriously misread during interpretation. In the twentieth century, Ezra Pound invented the ideogrammic method according to Chinese characters' iconicity which is no longer practical in use. In his view, compared with the Western alphabetic letters, Chinese characters retain their iconic motivation, more or less, that is left by word-making. However, from the results of its interpretation, there is no doubt that it is a kind of misunderstanding because conventionality is an inherent property that is difficult to discard for a sign.

From the above, we can see that the advantages and disadvantages of a writing system's graphical strategy are obvious. On the one hand, visual language is still effective as it is close to a natural language because of its iconicity, illogicality, openness, and naturalness. However, it is inefficient to communicate meanings with abstract concepts by returning to the image itself with all cultural conventions eliminated. The Dongba writing system, which is still in use today in Yunnan province, China, is an easy-to-interpret original pictographic language. However, in practice, the complexity of abstract concepts that can be communicated is not comparable to that of modern languages. The same is true of the picture writing still alive today, the Poya Songbook of Yunnan Province in China which is listed as a cultural heritage site. It shows that returning to graphic writing does not mean actually eliminating cultural conventions, but rather it requires enriching and strengthening the visualization and vividness of abstract written language with the help of image, designation, and other factors of semiotic designation.

Social public visual signs are a universal human language. An image language is different from a language with a writing system. In a sense, an image language has never undergone a fundamental change similar to that of a language with a writing

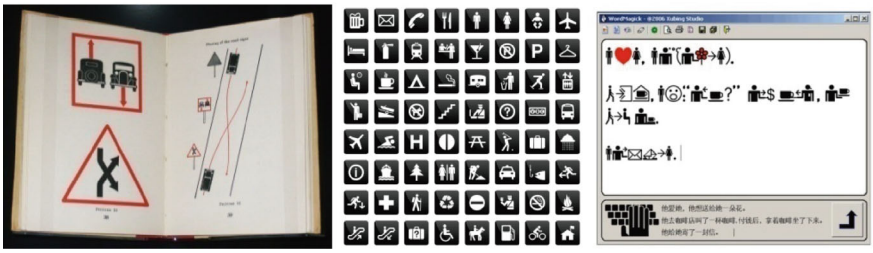

Fig. 3.3 Examples of Art Signs (*Source* Pictures [a], [b] and [c] are separately from Otto [1936], website https://www.pictograms.info/html/Org_AIGA_E.htm, and 徐冰 [2012])

system because of its motivation, and it is consistent. The totem symbols of primitive tribes are similar to today's corporate logos in nature and use; the indices in the most primitive road signs are not very different from the arrows used as road signs in today's Olympic venues. Although today's binary code is not directly inherited from the practice of knotting rope to record history, they are nevertheless structurally the same. It is obvious that semiotic information with motivation is often more able to withstand the impact of time, space, and culture.

So far, the most typical system of universal visual language is ISOTYPE (International System of Typographic Picture Education), published in 1925. At Otto Neurath's initiative, the entire team in Vienna made a landmark contribution to the system. Although the team was dispersed due to the Second World War, the design files of the system had been preserved through the 1970s in the Department of Typography and Graphic Communication of the University of Reading in the United Kingdom, laying the foundation for the design of pictograms and infographics at present. The system was designed to realize public communication with graphics as a standard universal language. Although it was designed originally for an educational purpose, the system dominates the design of public icons in practical application and provides the base of unified graphic design for public affairs, transportation and communications, public places, and so on (Fig. 3.3).

Today, many public signs in public places such as subways, buses, and planes can be regarded as having evolved from the visual language system. *Di Shu* (《地书》, a book made up of art signs), published by artist Xu Bing (徐冰), is an artistic practice based on the ideal of a universal language. By collecting and sorting out a set of public signs, the author finished *Di Shu*. It seems that almost anyone can understand the meaning through his image signs. However, it is not difficult to see that the set of signs still has many limitations in expressing complex abstract concepts because it does not rely on complete iconicity or designation. Instead, it depends on the common signs that people have used in relation to public life or community service, and these can be regarded as an attempt at a paralinguistic narrative using the ISOTYPE system. On the premise of not denying its artistic value, we can determine that the attempt is actually to promote the weaknesses while avoiding the strength of image signs, because the signification of an image sign is not a linear logical structure, but an

overall pattern recognition. The creator cannot overcome the defect because it is one of the inherent defects of the perfect sign: image sign itself.

Recently, some scholars have tried to create a new perfect language by making use of both machine language and graphic language. It may be asserted that this remarkable task still faces the basic situation that the writing system composed only of icons cannot replace the natural language per se. Any so-called perfect sign has its own defects, or each sign is relatively perfect. A universal language cannot be achieved by simply making use of the original hieroglyphics, nor can it be achieved by directly replacing the natural language with a modern language composed of image signs. It can only be achieved by employing another member of the existing family of language signs in a broad sense and becoming an indispensable component of the human signification system, of culture itself. The only perfect aspect is the abstract culture as the whole signification system.

Summary: A Hybrid Language—Transformation of Language Category

From the perspective of communication, it is impossible to create an absolute alternative to existing languages. Ultimately, the created language is bound to slip into the paradox of being in common use and actual use. All the artificial languages mentioned above are created by following the fundamental principle of creating a set of code-like universal codes, which is necessarily a synchronic system, to achieve the goal of being universal and easy to master even though the natural language we use is a diachronic, open, and dynamic system. In the publishing house, paper versions of the well-known *Encyclopedia Britannica* have been replaced with online versions because of the rapid emergence of new vocabulary in the Internet Age. Language signs constitute a typical complex system that cannot be summarized by induction and reduction. In other words, all our efforts in making artificial languages will finally lead to what is against our will. Natural languages are increasingly complex in use, with the meanings increasingly determined by the context of use and with constantly new ideographic words being created. We try to create artificial languages through a process of de-complexity in relation to the existing natural languages, which only become what Tolkien calls “dead language”.

In fact, this involves how we define today’s languages and how we look at the political and cultural significance of a universal language. We have already developed technologies to try to achieve a universal language in richer forms. The contradiction between being in common use and actual use also brings out another paradox, either standardization or culturalization, in achieving a universal language. A standardized language should be deculturated, but in reality, a language is developed in cultural contexts. We can only achieve the preservation and resistance of culture through the game of culture. However, a standardized artificial language does not bring about cultural and political equality, so it is wrong to realize political utopia by language utopia. In terms of the technical standardization of de-culturalization, the ideal for a universal language has been realized. The language of the binary system has the ability not only to represent all the characters, but also to represent images, and for

machine reading, they are "characters that aliens can read". A "QR code", which has been in common use, is also a common language. The characters' input can be quickly converted into QR code and can be recognized by telecommunication terminal equipment at any time; thus, a machine language is cross-system and cross-cultural. In terms of the type of codes for culture and the languages for human communication in a broad sense, they are roughly divided into three categories: Indicative codes in science and technology—scientific language (mathematical language, music, chemistry, physics, Lojban, the Munsell color systems, phonetic systems, etc.) and machine language (C language, Java, binary systems, QR code, etc.); Cultural conventional code—natural language (image, natural language, network-generated signs, language for artistic creation, etc.); Code with mixed motivations—language for communication (public sign system, sign language, flag signal, various indicative signs, language with image elements, musical symbols, etc.).

There are different ways for these three categories of codes to be commonly used internationally. The codes in science and technology are relatively pure indices, which tend to point to the reference of the object and to reject cultural interpretations. The way commonly used internationally is to carry out world conventions directly, as there are no obvious cultural differences nor are there geographical or cultural attributes. Cultural conventional codes, the source of which is the most mixed, are communication signs that have emerged from different cultural and subcultural groups and are globalized through cultural game, self-preservation, and resistance. The code with mixed motivations between the previous two is what Peirce calls the perfect symbol, which can obtain the most effective recognition in the public domain. Because it is a sign combining iconicity, indexicality, and cultural conventionality, it is not as arbitrary as a cultural symbol, nor is it as consistent as code in international science and technology. On the one hand, therefore, we can see the differences in cultural background between the icons for sporting events in the London Olympic Games and those in the Beijing Olympic Games. On the other hand, we can see that all these icons are easily recognized because they have similar motivations with clear and consistent designations.

Summary of Chapter 3: Signs of Irrevocable Contracts

Breakthroughs have been made in the coding of human language systems, and this is realized through the aggregation of many scientific and technological languages. The further deepening of the division of labor in human society will inevitably result in a professional divide between these languages. For example, a set of medical terms may be as difficult for a physics expert as alien writing. In the global village, natural languages in human cultural life will not simply be standardized but will become increasingly personalized and complicated. This would result in an unstable and pluralistic hybrid language from languages such as graphic language, multicultural language, computer language, and minority language in a subcultural circle, because life itself cannot be simply conventionalized.

Notes

1. Search time: April 19, 2024: https://www.cnki.net/.
2. Laozi inherited and developed the tradition of 象 thinking in the *I Ching*. 象 is different from 形 (shape), which is tangible and can be seen and touched; 象 is invisible, can neither be seen nor be touched, but can be felt.
3. "Natural motivation" is not "physical" but refers to the "objectivity and nature" based on the nerve and perception of human beings as an organism, compared with pure social and cultural conventions.
4. However, from the perspective of word source, the origins of the two are different: 象 is a human imitation of the object, and it is about a relationship between humans and nature; 像 is a simulation and reflection of internal abstractness, and 似 tends to be an objective comparison of external things, which will be discussed later.

Chapter 4
Verbal Icon

From the previous chapters, we know that human beings have always been pursuing universal communication, but have ultimately failed to achieve a "universal language", and this may be explained, in addition to the lack of technology and the obstacles of real life, by the impulse of the sign itself to create "meaning". Of course, it may be a demonstrable proposition, that is, when there is no homogeneity between signs, there will be an impulse for interpretation and signification between them. The impulse initiator of interpretation here is not the inanimate sign itself, but the organism—the human being that creates and uses the sign. Thus, it is similar to a rhetorical metaphor although it lacks the novelty of comparing two similar things in a rhetorical metaphor. On the contrary, a certain connection between things that are distant from each other can be interesting and might lead to many new interpretations. The same is true of the impulse to interpret heterogeneous signs. For example, a beautiful painting ignites the impulse to create a poem for it rather than another painting to explain the beauty of the painting. Such an impulse is everywhere in our daily lives. We are used to describing buildings with music, comparing airbuses to planes and land cruisers to off-road vehicles. This plasticity is the "symbolic libido" of the impulse for interpretation.

McLuhan noticed this heterogeneity from the perspective of media form. He once pointed out that the content of one medium is another medium, as a novel is the content of a TV series, but one is not an equivalent translation of the other, and they are completely independent of each other. From the perspective of semiotics, we know that the independence of heterogeneous signs comes from the characteristics of the signs. There are a great many such libidos for signification and interpretation between image signs and language.

Y. Hu, *Semiotics of the Image*, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-96-4592-3_4

4.1 A General Introduction to Verbal Icon

Although linguistics and literature frequently fall into different subject areas based on form analysis, they can be regarded as a subject continuum, and there is no strict boundary between them. As a result, the discussions of iconicity in linguistics and literature share similarities even while preserving differences. As described in previous chapters, the discussion of iconicity in linguistics focuses primarily on the external similarity, that is, on what is known as imaginal iconicity and on diagrammatic iconicity. However, it does not mean that iconicity is discussed in linguistics without being related to semantics and metaphor. For example, the Fifteenth International Congress of Linguists held at the University of Laval, Canada, in August 1992 included a topic for the discussion of metaphor and iconicity, in which seven related papers were submitted. Later, these papers were published in the first issue of the *Journal of Pragmatics*, vol. 22, 1994. The discussion of iconicity in linguistics has its inherent limitations, which lead to it being confined to discussions at only one level. Obviously, the international academic circle met with such limitations when promoting the iconicity discussion, and we may witness the gradual expansion of the discussion from language to writing system by studying the topics of the iconicity discussion in international academic circles. At the beginning of its rise in the 1980s, the theme of the first symposium in 1983 focused on the structural, diagrammatic "Iconicity in Syntax"; in the second symposium in 1992, the topic was changed to "Iconicity in Language", which extended the research object of iconicity to the field of linguistics. Furthermore, the third symposium on iconicity, held in Zurich in 1997, defined the theme as "Iconicity in Language and Literature". Linguists and writers discussed iconicity and jointly carried out interdisciplinary iconicity research.

In fact, since then, even the study of iconicity in pure literature has been unable to cover all the research involving iconicity. Iconicity research involves such topics as vision, image, and music—far beyond the scope of linguistics. Broad linguistics has developed not only to encompass the art form for which language is a tool—literature—but also to cover any ideographic text in daily life today. Although language in a broad sense is only used metaphorically, it has a more appropriate name—cultural semiotics—in which literature is one of the most important links and one of the most important stages of self-externalization for linguistics. At this stage, the research objects in linguistics iconicity studies are actually transformed from the external "structural iconicity" of sound, form, sentence, and discourse to the abstract verbal icon.

The verbal icon can be traced back to spoken rhetoric in ancient Greece: "ekphrasis". In Greek, it originally meant "to speak out, fully describe (a scene)". Its root, "phrazein", means "to show, inform or explain", and "ek" is a prefix used for emphasis. Ekphrasis shows obvious colloquial features in Greek. Therefore, ekphrasis with "ek" as the prefix meaning "emphasis", is used to refer to all kinds of lifelike descriptions in words (Kelly 1998). The rhetorical skill of ekphrasis represents the ability to represent visual things orally. The original rhetoric, which focused on debate and speech, was a part of oratory or polemics. Therefore, ekphrasis has

become an important part of "progymnasmata" to classical rhetoric learning. As an oral skill, it emphasizes and tries to transform the listener into the viewer—and this kind of viewers' feeling is known as "the icon in words". In the classical sense, the rhetorical tradition of ekphrasis may be called *Yuci Fuxiang* (语辞赋象), which takes into account the original meaning of the term in ancient rhetoric "to speak out, fully express through language". Moreover, at the same time, it can also convey the meaning of vivid representation of ekphrasis—the so-called *fuxiang* (*fuxiang* in this chapter all referring to 赋象). The 象 (*xiang*) in words is a kind of visual representation relative to characters and syntax.

The concept of the verbal icon in modern literary criticism is not a direct inheritance from the rhetorical tradition of *fuxiang*, so we can only say that there is a commonality between what they discussed in both fields. In modern literature, the word "形象" (*xingxiang*) is equivalent to the word "image" in English. Because the word "image" and the word "形象" in Chinese are polysemous, they can be easily misunderstood in context, symbol, character, description, metaphor, and other usages. In addition, there are psychological connotations, so all these complexities result in confusion among their usages. Therefore, the word "形象" has been deprecated in literary criticism, with William Empson and other literary theorists even resisting its use (赵毅衡 1986). Therefore, this book aims to clarify the meanings of 象 at different levels as opposed to eschewing its use. However, when it comes to a specific situation, it is necessary to define the meaning clearly to decide which one should be employed.

New Criticism uses the word "icon" to refer to 形象 (image, *xingxiang*) produced by language practice in literary works. Wimsatt calls this "verbal icon" and discusses it in his book *The Verbal Icon: Studies in the Meaning of Poetry*. In the preface to the book, he specifically introduces the term icon, using it to indicate, first, that speech signs are similar to the objects they refer to or, second, that they share, to an extent, certain attributes with the objects to which they refer. Visual image is the more commonly used meaning of the word, especially in relation to religious symbols: The verbal image realizes its speech ability to the fullest, because it is not only a distinct picture (in the commonly-used modern meaning of the term "image"), but also contains the interpretation of reality in metaphor and symbolism. Therefore, the book is entitled *The Verbal Icon* (Wimsatt 1954). According to the main content of the book, Wimsatt emphasizes the independence of the text, so that what he refers to as a verbal icon can also be understood as the image in the text, rather than the subjective mental image of the author and reader.

In Zhao Yiheng's book, *New Criticism: A Unique Literary Theory of Formalism* (《新批评—一种独特的形式主义文论》, *New Criticism* for short), about the discussion of the translation of the term "verbal icon", his viewpoints are as follows. According to the scope of the work *New Criticism*, the New Critics focus on verbal icon instead of iconic words… Therefore, we can roughly say that the word "语象" (verbal icon, *Yu Xiang*) is almost equivalent to the word "image" discussed by New Criticism in meaning (赵毅衡 1986). Professor Tong Qingbing accepted this definition and divided literary language into three levels: pronunciation, grammar, and verbal icon (童庆柄 1995). Furthermore, he defined the verbal icon as the image

at the level of language, including descriptive verbal icon, metaphorical verbal icon, and symbolic verbal icon. In modern literary criticism, the verbal icon is of great importance. Wimsatt once claimed that a poem should be a verbal icon, which not only represents a trend of literary criticism, but also the ontological demand of the art world in general in the early twentieth century.

In *Theory of Literature*, René Wellek and Austin Warren classify verbal icon into four levels, from concrete to abstract, and from micro to macro: verbal image, metaphor, symbol, and myth. We may examine the generation mechanism of the image at these four levels from the perspectives of the object of 像似 (iconicity) and the ontological relationship. On the one hand, we are going to determine the precise levels that are similar to others. On the other hand, we are going to determine the type to which each belongs.

4.1.1 Descriptive Verbal Icon

James J.Y. Liu (刘若愚) refers to verbal image as descriptive language image, meaning a simple statement without metaphor or symbolism, but the definition leaves people with distinct sensory impressions. According to Zhao Yiheng (赵毅衡 1986), a typical example of this kind of verbal image can be found in so-called physical poetry, but this imagism in poetry is not a widely used term. These poems are perceptual and avoid words that do not contribute to expression. Verbal image requires a distinct, accurate, implicit, and highly concise image (in fact, it requires the verbal icon) to vividly show things; it opposes comments and exclamations. In Pound's view, imagist poetry is characteristic with rejecting these images as ornaments, or as symbols of grandeur, because images themselves represent language (Brooks 1976). Therefore, this kind of image in imagist poetry is not metaphorical in nature, and is in fact simply a "language image" and the basic type of verbal image: descriptive verbal image.

Imagism resonates in ancient Chinese poetry. Zhao Yiheng (赵毅衡 1979) points out that imagism has derived the following influences from ancient Chinese poetry, "complete image", "disconnection", and "image superposition". Complete image means a poem is full of images, and this helps the readers feel as though they were in the situation depicted in the poem. This is bound to reduce non-image components, including a variety of modifiers and connectives, and it leads to what Zhao Yiheng calls the second skill, disconnection. This is an important difference between poetic language and prose language, and it is especially true for Chinese classical poetry. Because of the strict rhythmic restrictions, the writer is very economical in the use of words as if they were gold. Therefore, a poem is full of images, and this is especially promoted by imagism. Zhao Yiheng believes that in translating ancient Chinese poetry with disconnection, those missing grammatical parts should be supplemented so as to make the translated version more faithful to the original, and nouns alone do not make natural English poems.

However, the pursuit of imagism is obviously not grammatical correctness, but to omit as much as possible; what it pursues is not the connecting effect, but the image's juxtaposition. Moreover, the third skill, image superposition, refers to the pursuit of a pure juxtaposition in order to avoid the interference of grammatical connection. For example, researchers often compare Pound's "In a Station of the Metro" with Ma Zhiyuan's "Tian jing sha (Tune: Sunny Sand)·Qiu si (Autumn Thoughts)" (《天净沙·秋思》). Both poems are typical examples to show that the directly-juxtaposed images result in the superposition of perception. Therefore, these two popular poems, shown below, have become near-perfect examples of illustrating the direct superposition of images.

In a Station of the Metro
The apparition of these faces in the crowd;
Petals on a wet, black bough. (Ezra Pound)
《天净沙·秋思》
马致远
枯藤老树昏鸦，
小桥流水人家，
古道西风瘦马，
夕阳西下，
断肠人在天涯。
TUNE: SUNNY SAND
AUTUMN THOUGHTS
Over old trees wreathed with rotten vines fly evening crows;
Under a small bridge beside a cottage a stream flows;
On an ancient road in the west wind a lean horse goes.
Westward declines the sun;
Far, far from home is the heartbroken one. (cf. 许渊冲 2012b, p. 45)

The natural juxtaposition of these kinds of verbal images is not uncommon in ancient Chinese poetry. For example, in Wen Tingyun's poetic lines—鸡声茅店月 (the cock crows as the moon sets over the thatched inn) (cf. 许渊冲 2012a, p. 173), 人迹板桥霜 (footprints are left on wood bridge paved with frost)—there is no grammatical or cohesive relationship because 鸡声, 茅店, 月, 人迹, 板桥, 霜 are all nouns. Let us look at two more poetic lines in which there is an obvious relationship of statement: 两个黄鹂鸣翠柳 (two golden orioles sing amid the willows green) (cf. 许渊冲 2012a, p. 87), 一行白鹭上青天 (a row of white egrets ascends into the blue sky) (cf. 许渊冲 2012a, p. 87), with the second separate language image (翠柳/青天) constituting the geographical location of the first one (两个黄鹂/一行白鹭). *Cuiliu* (翠柳) is the place where golden orioles sing, and the 青天 is where the white egrets fly. However, different interpretations may be obtained if we deal with the hierarchical relationship of language images differently. If 黄鹂鸣翠柳 is regarded as a whole language image, then it does not result in a relationship of statement with "白鹭上青天, 西岭千秋雪", or 东吴万里船 of which the latter two

are images in the following two poetic lines “窗含西岭千秋雪, 门泊东吴万里船” which mean “my Window frames the snow-crowned western mountain scene; my door oft says to eastward-going ships Goodbye” (cf. 许渊冲 2012a, p. 87). That is, the “disconnection” between one language image and the other is necessary at some levels. Whether or not the content generates a direct situational relevance, the image “overlapping” will occur because of a relationship of form. The New Criticism’s emphasis on “text” while removing subjective intention has encountered some theoretical difficulties here, because any single object image, whether 枯藤 (rotten vines) or 人群中的脸 (faces in the crowd), cannot become a poem, nor can it result in aesthetic appreciation. The formation of this kind of aesthetics benefits from two kinds of form plasticity. One is the external spatial form plasticity; and the other is the internal motivation that is forced out by the external plasticity of the form.

Saussure once expressed a belief that there are two basic principles for language signs: arbitrariness and the linear nature of the signifier. Saussure’s principle of linearity is applicable to both speech and writing in emphasizing the “principle of linearity”. And his main points are as follows. The signifier, being auditory, is unfolded solely in time and it is a line; its elements are presented in succession, forming a chain. This feature becomes readily apparent when they are represented in writing and the spatial line of graphic marks is substituted for succession in time (Saussure 2011). In fact, only when these linearly arranged verbal icons are projected into “readers’ perception” and then form “overall artistic conception”, can beauty be produced. The phrases 西风 and 瘦马 (夕阳 and 断肠人, 小桥 and 流水) do not go hand-in-hand in the text but appear one after another. That is, when the reader absorbs the latter verbal icon and abandons the previous one, such linear coherence will be gone. Therefore, all verbal icons must coherently constitute the text of the poem, and these images are not linear in the reader’s perception, let alone disconnected. The images of the whole poem realize superposition and juxtaposition in the succession in spatial linear plasticity among different verbal icons.

Second, is this juxtaposition motivated? Is there some inherent logic between 枯藤 and 老树 (old trees)? Are they connected in some way and is such a connection motivated? Is there such a relationship between two unrelated object images? In the view of imagists, the juxtaposition of verbal icons is a rejection of rhetoric and various metaphors. Therefore, if these verbal icons are motivated, the motivation should be a pure, non-rhetorical, and semantic one. Even if there is some kind of motivation clue, it is very weak. The images 枯藤, 老树 and 昏鸦 (evening crows) do not have the relationship of causality and do not resemble each other in appearance, but they do have one kind of proximity in artistic conception. That is, we obtain this kind of iconicity only by taking people’s acquisition experience of literary aesthetics into account. Even if there is a certain degree of imaginal iconicity between 枯藤 and 老树, still, 昏鸦 only enjoys a purely non-causal similarity to both of them, in artistic conception. Moreover, it is the same case with 小桥流水. Today, when Ma Zhiyuan’s *Xiaoling* (小令， a short tonal poem) is stored in the literary aesthetic experience acquired and fixed, 枯藤 and 昏鸦 become similar, creating a case of re-motivation.

Zhao Yiheng also discusses the decline of motivation in art. In his view, there is indeed a "pure thing" that does not carry meaning in poetry. As to whether there is motivation in such a pure thing, he provides two methods to test it: substitution and explanation (赵毅衡 2011c).

In Pound's poem, one asks whether there is any similarity or connection in content between "the apparition of these faces in the crowd" and "petals on a wet, black bough". From these two tests, although there is a similarity between petals and faces to Chinese who have already been impressed by the poetic line, "人面桃花" (the young woman's face and the peach blossom, *renmian taohua*), there is no inevitable causality between them. However, from the perspective of substitution, a causality is possible because the emotive effect of the poem cannot be objectively evaluated after the substitution. For example, the "face" in the crowd may be "eyes", while the wet bough may be "black mud". However, it must be admitted that, even in this case, it is still justifiable that there is one kind of motivation of use or re-motivation[1], and even motivations in artistic conception in the second test—these faces in the crowd and the petals on a wet, black bough—are looming and have some kind of connection in artistic conception.

Let us look at another example: many scholars think that there is no motivation in *tuowu qixing* (托物起兴, the method of saying one thing to trigger association of another thing for an article) in ancient Chinese poem composition because there is only phonological relevance and no semantic motivation in it. However, this idea depends on how we define motivation. There is an implied meaning to the employment of *tuowu qixing* in many poems. For example, in "孔雀东南飞 (Southeast the lovelorn peacock flies), 五里一徘徊 (At every mile, she falters and looks back)", 五里 (*wuli*) may be understood as a Wuli pavilion, a place used in the past to welcome and see off guests, and it was the most obvious and clear boundary sign with the shortest distance to where people lived at that time. Additionally, in "关关雎鸠, 在河之洲", 雎鸠, which is interpreted as a pair of birds in love with each other, is used metaphorically to mean a harmonious conjugal relation, as is explained in writings such as *Mao Zhuan* (《毛传》), *Zheng Jian* (《郑笺》), and so on.

This kind of linear juxtaposition of verbal icons in poetry may remove motivation of causality and direct motivation, but it often presents a kind of overall harmony in cognitive experience. If we regard this phenomenon as a kind of motivation, although motivation sometimes is reduced to a point with a very weak correlation, it is still common in poetry. Thus, at its base, this is subject to the style and atmosphere of the field of poetic meaning. The linear arrangement of verbal icons also suggests that there is a potential for mutual penetration between language and image. The so-called *huamiangan* (画面感, the internal neurological representation of the images), created by imagist poetry, is an excellent example of the pictorial in language.

4.1.2 Metaphor and Symbolic Verbal Icon

Description, metaphor, and symbol are verbal icons set up for a target artistic conception in literature, but the descriptive verbal icon is used to achieve the artistic conception through images without comparison with a third thing. Different from a descriptive verbal icon, both a metaphorical verbal icon and a symbolic verbal icon entail the connection between two different target images. The similarities and differences may be distinguished from the relationship between verbal icons. Slightly different from descriptive contextual analysis, the former studies whether there is some inevitable connection between verbal icons or not. Metaphorical verbal icons and symbolic verbal icons mainly look at whether there is a similarity or other connection between the tenor and the vehicle.

Traditionally, metaphor as a rhetorical device has often been used to emphasize the similarity between two things, that is, to compare a thing with another thing which is similar so as to make it more vividly shown (中国社会科学院语言研究所词典编辑室 2005). However, such emphasis on resemblance is based on the similarities of two different kinds of things (谭学纯 2010), which is a kind of similarities in differences. New Criticism attached particular importance to the heterogeneity, with Ivor Armstrong Richards calling metaphor a deal between contexts, which means that when metaphor goes beyond the scene of speech, the heterogeneity will become greater and the effect may be improved, or it might even be contrary to the laws of logic. Surprisingly, further studies may help us find that the importance of heterogeneity may transcend similarity. According to Richards, when we put two completely different things together in a sudden, amazing way… The most important thing is to try to connect these two. It is precisely because of the lack of the link clearly stated that we must put it into a relationship while interpreting it and that is the main source of the power of poetry (赵毅衡 1986). According to this logic, any similarity that does not need to exist between the two images—the tenor and the vehicle—is based on certain mandatory conventions from the user of the metaphor at the time.

Any objects can be juxtaposed by iconicity and assigned with metaphorical meanings. Conversely, the more closely related things are in customary cognition, the less possible it is for them to be compared metaphorically. We may use the 心 (*xin*, meaning heart) as the object for comparison. That is, if we compare two things that are very similar, we are merely making a common statement that is without metaphorical meaning. For example, if a Turkestan rose is compared to a Chinese rose, a white cloud to cotton and milk to soybean milk, there is generally little rhetorical value in such comparisons. It could be argued that a comparison between any two objects may be interpreted metaphorically under the pressure of meta-language. In fact, in the absence of contextual setting, it is difficult to imagine that the object of metaphor may possibly be limited. On the other hand, the heterogeneity between the tenor and the vehicle has become an inevitable element of such a comparison, and "similarity in differences" is based on agreement. In other words, the elements of iconicity do not exist between metaphor and rhetoric objectively and originally; rather, they are

purely conventional behavior. It is in this sense that we agree with Eco's criticism of Morris, who defines iconicity as "sharing some of the properties", because it is easy to create some "pre-existing" and "objective" illusion.

Therefore, the rhetorical device of metaphor does not rely on the existing primary motivation such as imaginal iconicity and diagrammatic iconicity, nor does it necessarily rely on the existing social conventional connection (motivation of use) between the two. It may be temporarily conventionalized in the process of the user's literary creation, and the motivation may be so weak that it is quite close to nothing.

Saussure refused to include the symbol within the category of sign because it has some connection and does not meet his requirement that signs should be arbitrary. Today, we have long abandoned that stereotype, but the connection of a symbol is still worth our further study. We know that symbolic sign is equivalent to symbol, which creates confusion that was explained by Zhao Yiheng (赵毅衡 2011b); Zhao Yiheng wrote a special article for reference, but it is not discussed here. The consensus has been reached that symbol is a special conventional sign with highly cumulative motivation of use. Let us take the number as an example. In the different historical contexts in various countries, numbers have come to be fixed and strengthened as they developed certain relationships with some images over time. At first, the connections occurred in general semiotic phenomena, but with the repeated accumulation of meaning, it could lead to a special "symbol worshipping". For example, the number 七 (*qi*, meaning seven) symbolizes sanctity, mystery, and magic in China. In archaeological research of early Chinese characters found in the Banpo site and in inscriptions on bones or tortoise shells in the Yin Xu (殷墟) and other ancient sites, records featuring the number seven have been found. In the earliest systematic symbol classic—the *I Ching* in China—seven, as the number of days, is of great significance. According to some later religious legends and classics, Sakyamuni, in Buddhism, attained Enlightenment after *qiqi sishijiu* (七七四十九, seven times seven giving forty-nine) days' meditating. We also have *qixing* (七星, seven stars) in the sky, *qiqing* (七情, the seven emotions), *qise* (七色, the seven colors), *qiyin* (七音, the seven notes of the ancient Chinese musical scale), *qiyan* (七言, a form of pre-Tang poetry having seven characters to each line), *qijue* (七绝, septasyllabic quatrain with a strict tonal pattern and rhyme schemes), and *qilüshi* (七律诗, septasyllabic regulated verse) in Chinese poetry. In addition, we have *qiqiao* (七窍, seven apertures in the human head) and the Qixi Festival (七夕节, Chinese Valentine's Day) (胡易容 2011). In brand naming within the modern market economy, we can witness the economic value of symbolization with the help of this repeated accumulation of meanings. For example, all totems are symbols beyond general signs. Logically speaking, a totem should also go through the sublimation process from an ordinary sign to a symbol. Claude Lévi-Strauss believes that a totem, which results from analogical thinking, aims to distinguish itself from other groups. This distinguishing function may initially be very common and similar to road signs as indicative symbols. However, in repeated use, with the erosion of its primary motivation, it has been gradually sanctified, mystified, and culturized, and finally it has become a symbol in a strict sense. A good example is 华表 (*Huabiao* in Pinyin, ornamental columns erected in front of palaces, tombs, etc.). Huabiao was originally a road sign

and has become a special symbol of the Chinese nation through the accumulation of meanings over thousands of years.

Symbol is not only a single sign, but also can constitute a large-scale sign symbolic text with a complex sign chain. Celestial phenomena, for example, symbolize social unrest or change. In Chinese, 象征 may be a special sign, and, when it refers to symbolism, it has a close relationship to metaphor as a rhetorical device. According to Zhao Yiheng (赵毅衡 2011b), 象征 is not an independent figure of speech. Furthermore, with its initial rhetorical mechanism being a metaphor, it results from the metaphorical motivation rising to a certain degree, which is a feature that distinguishes symbolism from the general metaphor. Motivation is obtained because the social conventional meanings of some images constantly accumulate, so that some symbols and images are connected with special meanings. Therefore, the motivation in symbolism is a motivation of use. As mentioned earlier, the tenor and the vehicle of a metaphor do not depend on motivation. Nevertheless, symbolism does not have this freedom. For example, the cross is a sacred symbol of God in Christianity. However, an ordinary object such as air is generally not able to make a symbol, although it may constitute a metaphor in some contexts. For example, we may say, "the divine God is the invisible air, but always feeding and taking care of his lambs". In this instance, only an ordinary metaphor is used, rather than symbolism. In addition, symbolic images are usually abstract concepts such as power, quality, morality, etc., rather than physical objects because socialized abstract concepts are the result of accumulated meanings through continuous social conventions. Widely used examples include the scepter as the symbol of power, the balance being the symbol of law, and ochre as the symbol of Chinese imperial power.

Finally, let us examine whether symbols must have some primary connections. As Saussure said, the balance, which would not be suitable for replacement by something else, symbolizes the justice of the law. In fact, we only need a little textual research to know that such suitability is only a convention within a cultural group, rather than a cross-cultural, original, or inherent connection. In Western legal culture, Themis, the blindfolded goddess of justice with a scale and a sword in her hands, is the personification of fairness. This symbol of "balanced judgment" can be traced back to ancient Egypt's myths, where the heart of the dead was balanced against the white feather of truth on a great golden scale in front of Osiris. However, in China, where there is no such myth or cultural background, a completely different set of symbols is used. It is said that in the ancient *Yamen* (衙门, government office in feudal China), an animal called *Xiezhi* (獬豸) symbolized fairness. *Cihai* (《辞海》) says that *Xiezhi* is the name of a legendary, strange animal that can tell right from wrong. When it sees people fighting and hears people quarrelling, it will drive wrongdoers with its sharp horns, and it will bite troublemakers with its mouth (cf. *Yiwuzhi*《异物志》). Furthermore, it is written in *Yu Fu Zhi* of *the Book of Later Han* (*Hou Han Shu*) (《后汉书·舆服志》, *A Record of Systems about Land, Ceremonial, Dress,* etc. *of the Eastern Han Dynasty* in the *Book of Later Han*) (the second part) says that *Xiezhi*, a divine sheep, can distinguish right from wrong, and the king of the Chu kingdom got one *Xiezhi* and made a crown similar to it in form. Later, the term also referred to law enforcers. There is the expression in *Yu Jing Tai* (《玉镜

台》, *The Tale of the Jade Dressing Table with Mirror*) written by Guan Hanqing in Yuan Dynasty that before he died, he was not afraid of the *Xiezhi* headgear (law enforcers). This tale shows that the motivation of symbolism is a pure motivation of use, rather than an intrinsic connection. From this perspective, Saussure really does not need to exclude symbols from the sign family. There is no inherent objective similarity in symbolism and metaphor, which are only the result of the motivation of use through cultural conventions and accumulated meanings. Relatively speaking, symbolism needs greater power for cultural accumulation, but metaphor requires much less motivation in the cultural experience.

The fourth kind of verbal icon is a myth. Myth, as a style, is very complex, and it not only transcends linguistic boundaries, but is also a socio-cultural discourse system that may transcend literary boundaries.

In modern Western literary theory, myth refers to the macro symbolic world or the world of symbolic system (赵毅衡 1986). In this regard, myth and symbol are not different in terms of the form of a verbal icon, with the latter being only the aggregation of the former and the product of a grand narrative.

Of course, myth has fairly complex meanings, and most of them are implied. To Barthes, myth is a language, a communication system, a message, a way of meaning construction, and a speech, so it does not refer to any single type of discourse. Special social and cultural conditions are necessary for a language to create myths. Myth is not defined by the content of its message, but by the way in which it utters this message… It is a kind of speech chosen through history: it cannot evolve from the "essence" of practice (Barthes 2009). Barthes's mythical speech is a two-level speech system: the first level is a language-object system, which is the basis for myth creation, and myth is at the second level, which Barthes calls "meta-language". Meta-language determines the actual signification at the first level and is the basis for interpreting the first-level system. The task of myth is to give a certain historical intention a natural justification, and make contingency appear eternal.

4.2 From Verbal Icon to ekphrasis (赋像)

Compared with the translation between different languages, heterogeneous signs are more nearly insurmountable obstacles. People cannot really represent a wonderful melody through verbal description, nor can they feel a wonderful painting through touch. However, human beings have never stopped building a semiotic Tower of Babel to cross the barrier because ekphrasis is such an unremitting effort.

Ekphrasis, a classical rhetorical term that is very difficult to translate, originally meant "to speak out, to fully describe (a scene)" in ancient Greece. Because of its ancient and rich context of use, people tend, in translation, to show one of its meanings while covering up others. The Chinese for the word is not standardized either, with some translating it into "fangxing" (仿型) (克里格 [Krieger] 1998), some *tushuo* (图说) (卡里尔 [Carrier] 2004), and some *shijue zaixian zhi yuyan zaixian* 视觉再现之语言再现 (米歇尔 [Mitchell] 2006). Fan Jingzhong, who emphasizes the theory

of art history, translated it into *Yigefuci* (艺格敷词), and Liu Jihui translated it into *Duhuashi* (读画诗). What is common in these translations is that they are based on the representation of the picture through language, and the rhetorical representation relationship they point to is unidirectional.

In the author's view, this ancient term—ekphrasis—may be translated into Chinese 赋象 (*fuxiang*). In ancient Greece, ekphrasis was mainly realized with "words or verbal description". Language was mainly used to provide readers with visual perception, and also used to generate a psychological object that was visually associated. With the popularity of images, visualization plays a more important role in the signification of information and the presentation of language. Thus, the opposite of "*fuxiang* in words", that is, the expression of language and other information with images, includes not only the visualization of non-visual information, but also the graphic of visual information such as characters. Of course, inter-sign representation is much more than the unidirectional representation of the image by language. *Fuxiang* is widely found in the mutual representation among various signs. As Goethe said, music is liquid architecture, and architecture is frozen music. Thus, we cannot just hold on to one aspect and give up on the other. On the one hand, the process of mutual representation and signification is not the patent of one language to the image; on the other hand, it does not mean that visual representation is the only form. Nevertheless, it is a complex signification between heterogeneous signs. Different sign carriers and forms express the meanings originally expressed by other sign carriers in complex forms under the impulse of interpretation and signification, while the fact that they cannot replace one another leads to the generation of new meanings. Thus, the meanings in the entirety of contemporary media society have achieved explosive growth, which does not resort to the expansion of external space but takes place internally. McLuhan refers to this as the implosion of meanings. Therefore, *fuxiang* cannot envelop all its new meanings. Next, we will look at how the ancient rhetoric of *fuxiang* has become the origin of the contemporary media implosion, and we will investigate how valuable it is for us to understand today's media implosion.

4.2.1 The Tradition and Meaning Evolution of ekphrasis

Vertically, the history of ekphrasis/*fuxiang* can be divided into three parts: the tradition of oral rhetoric in the Classical period, the tradition of literary rhetoric with written language as the medium, and the tradition of narrative mode in art history theory. The newest development may be regarded as the fourth tradition: *fuxianghua* (符象化).

4.2.1.1 From *Yuci Fuxiang* to *Duhuashi* 读画诗

Language is destined to be rhetorical because it is entirely the product of rhetorical art (尼采 [Nietzsche] 2001). Therefore, the first tradition of ekphrasis points

to the oral rhetorical skills in Aristotle's period of classical rhetoric, which is also the original meaning of the ancient word, ekphrasis, meaning "to speak out, inform or fully describe". Its root "phrazein" means "to show, inform, or explain", and ek is the prefix which means emphasis. *Fuxiang* (ekphrasis) in Greek shows obvious spoken language features, which mainly refers to the vivid description of things in words (Kelly 1998). Therefore, originally a rhetorical figure of speech, ekphrasis is the ability to orally represent visual things; it emphasizes and attempts to transform a listener into a viewer in order to achieve the effect of visual representation. The original rhetoric, which focused more on debate and speech, was considered a part of oratory or polemics. Therefore, ekphrasis has become an important part of *progymnasmata* in classical rhetoric learning.

In the sense of classical rhetoric, ekphrasis is realized mainly through words, so it may be called *Yuci Fuxiang*, which not only takes into account its original meaning of "speaking out and fully expressing in words", but also shows the meaning of visual representation of ekphrasis. Since then, with the development of civilization from spoken to written language, rhetoric has changed from focusing on oral argumentation skills to the modification of written language. Then, *yuci* (语辞) itself has broadened to cover both spoken and written language. Moreover, its two-way and vivid representation in literature and art naturally was formed. The views that "painting is silent poetry and poetry is painting which is able to 'speak'", or that "poetry is invisible painting and painting is tangible poetry" tell the same story from different points of view (painting and poetry). In fact, it is surprising that it is consistently expounded in both the East and the West (钱锺书 2002a).

The extension of ekphrasis from the spoken language to the written language is gradually becoming customary in literature. *Yuci Fuxiang* has gradually developed from an oral rhetorical technique to a specific literary style. For example, Homer's long description of *Shield of Achilles* in *The Iliad* is regarded as an early representative work of the tradition of *Yuci Fuxiang* in literature. Similarly, many descriptions in Virgil's *Aeneid*, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Dante's *The Divine Comedy,* and Shakespeare's *The Rape of Lucrece* are also classified as typical examples of ekphrasis. In such a way, ekphrasis becomes a specific literary rhetorical word, and obtains the specialized meaning in the literature. Liu Jihui translated this kind of ekphrasis, which has a stylistic meaning, into 读画诗 (*Duhuashi*) in order to show the poet's thinking in words when he 阅读 (reads, *yuedu*) "visual images and rewrites them". A vivid version of ekphrasis, 读画诗 combines elements of spoken language, written language, and visual image. However, this translation limits the meaning of *Yuci Fuxiang* to literature, and it is easy for people to take it only as a style.

In fact, Liu Jihui's discussion has already dealt with the signification of ekphrasis at a wider range. She expresses the following viewpoint. The poet's presentation of the visual image that is not present in a rhetorical technique, seems to be a dialogue with the quiet visual image in front of him/her in apostrophe as a rhetorical device, leading the reader to look at the details of the visual image and speaking for the silent object; however, behind the scenes of the written language's performance, the poet has actually imposed his own discussion on the object and tampered with its semiotic meaning. In other words, the rhetorical device of ekphrasis is not a kind of mapping

translation of meaning, but it results from the creation and expression of the author's subjective experience. This suggests that there is intertextuality between the sign texts of two different media, rather than the one-way, subject-object representation.

4.2.1.2 The Color of *Yigefuci* as an Academic Discourse

With the enrichment of the context of use, ekphrasis has further obtained some grand abstract meaning, instead of referring to a specific rhetorical technique, such as reproduction, description, "color scheme", or synesthesia. This combination of critical thinking and visuality naturally enables the ancient tradition of *Yuci Fuxiang* to enter the field of art theory. Ekphrasis' vivid description of visual objects can be best shown in art history theory. For example, in the fourth century, Kallistratos described a statue; in the sixth century, the Greek scholar Choricius of Gaza vividly described the decorative objects in the church; and Paulos Silentiarios, a rhetorician of the same period, praised the space, the lighting, and the colored marble in the Hagia Sophia. All of these have been regarded as ekphrasis by later scholars. Since then, ancient *Yuci Fuxiang* has become an important term in visual art; it could be called the tradition of art history theory of ekphrasis.

In 1395 AD, the Byzantine scholar Manuel Chrysoloras brought to Italy this writing style focusing on vivid presentation in art history theory so that ekphrasis became one of the important styles of art theory writing in the Renaissance. This style emphasizes the vivid presentation of art images, which is in sharp contrast to Heinrich Wölfflin's "hermeneutic writing". Universally recognized typical examples include literary works involving visual art and comments on the Salon painting exhibition by Giorgio Vasari, Denis Diderot, Baudelaire, and other scholars (葛加锋 2007). Fan Jingzhong calls this style of writing within art history theory 艺格敷词 (贡布里希 [Gombrich] 1990). The Chinese version of ekphrasis not only takes into account sound and meaning, but also shows classical elegance and flavor. However, like 读画诗, 艺格敷词 is likely to limit the meaning of ekphrasis to a specific historical context. With the expansion of the usage range of ekphrasis, the limitations of 艺格敷词 gradually reveal. 敷词 (*fuci*, equivalent to ekphrasis) is no longer limited to 艺 (fine arts). In the field of art history, 艺 has been extended to refer to multimedia text in contemporary life, and 艺格敷词 in the field of art history is not able to cover ekphrasis in non-art fields. After the pictorial turn, picture theory is opposed to the study of visual culture that is limited to art history theory, and visual culture has become an interdisciplinary research field.

From the discussion above, we know that *fuxiang* (ekphrasis) originated from *Yuci Fuxiang* in spoken language and became the *Duhuashi* (读画诗) in literature, before becoming the *Yigefuci* in art history theory. But no matter how the meaning changes, there are two basic clues running through it. One is the language-based perspective, and the other is the concrete visual perception as the main goal. However, both of them have new meanings in the contemporary rhetorical generalization movement. On the one hand, as rhetoric goes beyond language to universal semiotic rhetoric, language-based perspective is no longer absolutely important. Especially after the pictorial

turn, *Yuci Fuxiang* itself cannot fully show a wealth of contemporary meanings. The visualization of words gives way to the vivid mutual representation between any signs, and therefore, verbal icon is changed to *fuxiang*. On the other hand, the concrete visualization gradually changed to grasp things in an abstract way. The essence of the Image Reading Age (读图时代, *dutu shidai*) is not the geometric growth of image in quantity. Rather, it is the image world we have been seeking since Heidegger's time: the way to visualize the world. In fact, the concrete image has become a metaphor that is likely to produce ambiguity. To grasp the visualized world does not mean we have to present a concrete image in picture form, but we need to pursue the creation of a cultural and mental image by resorting to a mechanism of inter-semiotic transformation. Therefore, the concrete graphic images must also be abstracted into the image of the sign to match the current progress based on the semiotic rhetorical mechanism.

4.2.2 Cross-Media Rhetoric

4.2.2.1 Revisiting *Fuxiang*

For most of the twentieth century, *fuxiang* was rarely discussed in the field of language rhetoric. One reason for this is that *fuxiang*, with a strong metaphysical color, is not operable technically. At the same time, more detailed technical terms have been developed in rhetoric to fill the gap at the operational level. The study in traditional language rhetoric, therefore, is limited to the refinement and revision of the ancient *Yuci Fuxiang* in the existing framework, which lacks sufficient challenges and appeal. The obvious fact is that the study of *fuxiang* derives primarily from the discussion of *Yigefuci* in the field of art history. However, changes have arisen in the field wherein the generalization movement of rhetoric, especially the rise of image rhetoric, has triggered the re-exploration of this ancient term.

The generalization movement of rhetoric changed its object from language in a narrow sense to language in a broad sense, and it tends to recognize the importance of non-verbal rhetoric. Earlier, broad rhetoric only covered the problems of language, register, and style (郝荣斋 2000), and later rhetoric in a broad sense was so general that it was completely different from what it covered before (谭学纯 & 朱玲 2001). Rhetoric itself and semiotics are beginning to have a closer relationship. In fact, today's rhetoric can no longer exclude problems in text forms of multimedia such as advertising, movies, television, and games. Charles A. Hill (2004) points out that scholars dedicated to visual analysis largely ignore the fact that their work is actually about rhetoric and not exclusively about cultural studies or semiotics. Arguably, rhetoric is not only one of the main sources of semiotics, but it is also an important component of contemporary semiotics. It is precisely because of the emergence of a large quantity of non-linguistic text and extra-linguistic text that today's *Yuci Fuxiang* shows an even broader *fuxianghua.*

Let us look at representatives from the semiotician Roland Barthes and his disciple Jacques Durand. Roland Barthes's *Rhetoric of the Image*, published in 1964 with the advertising picture as the research object, analyses three kinds of message of the image. He observes that image rhetoric and language share "general characteristics" (Barthes 1977). However, Barthes and Duran still approach the image as the "correlative" of language rhetoric and pursue its "general characteristics" of rhetoric. Their focus on interpreting the connotation of the image in the way of language symbolism leads to Barthes and Durand not emphasizing the unique mechanism of inter-sign signification in the process of *fuxianghua.*

Barthes's limitation in structuralism linguistics becomes particularly obvious in the theoretical context of Pictorial Turn. The rise of semiotic rhetoric not only expanded the scope of rhetorical research, but also promoted the attention to the relationship between signs. *Fuxiang* no longer refers specifically to the *Yigefuci* in the theory of art history, nor is it only a kind of *Duhuashi* in literature or poetry. With the further development of semiotic rhetoric, especially the renewal of paradigm since the Pictorial Turn, theorists have increasingly redefined this term from different positions. These definitions themselves also express their theoretical starting points. For example, the definition of *fuxiang* as the description of poetry in artworks of painting or sculpture (葛加锋 2007) bears with it the tradition of art history, which is in line with *Yigefuci*. Murray Krieger's definition of ekphrasis as the picture-making capacity of words in poems (Krieger 1992) tends to focus on purely literary tradition, and James A. W. Heffernan likewise regards ekphrasis as a kind of poem (Heffernan 1993). Claus Clüver (1997), from whom a great deal more may be borrowed in contemporary semiotic rhetoric, defines ekphrasis as the verbal representation of a real or fictitious text composed in a non-verbal sign system. Siglind Bruhn (2001), on the other hand, extends ekphrasis to musical ekphrasis and regards the imitation of poem or painting by subjective music as the manifestation of ekphrasis. These studies and their definitions demonstrate that ekphrasis has developed a broader contemporary meaning; that is, neither spoken nor written "words" today are the only means to obtain the 象 (*xiang* as imitation) as a way of perception, which is widely found in the rhetoric of heterogeneous sign forms. Then the problem of visual representation in words as the carrier of visual form becomes the question of how heterogeneous signs can obtain a common inter-text mental image by transcending signs. Based on this, ekphrasis has completely evolved from *Yuci Fuxiang* to the problem of *yifu leixiang* (异符类象, a similar neurological representation of the image with heterogeneous sign forms).

Yifu leixiang is the contemporary meaning of ekphrasis, embodying the rebellion of modern semiotic rhetoric against language centralism. It presents the intersemiosis of multimedia texts: the inter-sign equivalence and the cross-boundary sign representation. The inter-sign equivalence refers to the fact that non-linguistic signs represented by the image have gradually gained the same importance as linguistic signs, and they are no longer considered secondary texts with language as the metasign. Mitchell (1995) points out in *Picture Theory* that viewing (watching, staring, scanning, observing practice, monitoring, and visual pleasure) may be as profound as

forms of reading (deciphering, decoding, interpretation, etc.) and visual experience or visual reading and writing cannot be explained entirely in the pattern of text.

To sum up, *fuxianghua* is not a substitute for the previous stages, but an abstraction and summary of them. The appellation *yifu* (异符) means the heterogeneity of signs. First, it refers to the heterogeneous signs that extend beyond sensory channels, for example, the novels which are turned into films or TV dramas. Second, it refers to the cross-media heterogeneous signs which are the same in sensory channels. For example, both written languages and pictures are obtained through vision, but the sign carriers of the two are heterogeneous. Moreover, it is very common in the current craze for mutual adaptation among movies, television, or online games. A popular movie will soon be adapted into games, and vice versa. *Leixiang* (类象) refers to the evoking of common *xinxiang* (心象, mental image) by heterogeneous signs through perceptual mechanisms, and *xinxiang* is a cultural common image that transcends the physical form of signs.

In the field of semiotic rhetoric, the basic goal of *fuxianghua* is to arouse the common cultural mental image, which can be realized by means of the plasticity of the relationship between signs. Mitchell once pointed out that *fuxianghua* encompasses three intertwined and fascinating situations: namely, ekphrastic indifference, ekphrastic hope, and ekphrastic fear in the process of *fuxianghua.* Further, these three special qualities are in line with three kinds of relationship mechanisms of intersemiosis.

4.2.2.2 Ekphrastic Indifference Between Heterogeneous Signs

Ekphrastic indifference reveals the independence of signs. It shows that heterogeneous signs are "non-coincident", meaning that no matter how vivid the description is, even the simplest depiction cannot be achieved. Just as Xunzi, an ancient Confucian philosopher, says that we cannot achieve mutual replacement among a man's ear, eye, mouth and nose, the visual image described in writing is inaccurate and unreliable. In *A Dream in Red Mansions* (《红楼梦》 1791), the author, Cao Xueqin describes heroine Lin Daiyu's appearance very vividly, yet even in this novel, different characters have different images of Lin Daiyu. In Jia Baoyu's eyes, Lin Daiyu "had dusky arched eyebrows which were knitted and not frowning and speaking eyes which held both merriment and sorrow; her very frailty had charm…-more delicate than Xi Shi" (cf. 曹雪芹 & 高鹗 1999, trans. 杨宪益 & 戴乃迭). This description shows the morbid and delicate Lin Daiyu, but it may not be possible to judge directly from this paragraph whether Lin Daiyu is beautiful or not. And Wang Xifeng marveled at Lin Daiyu's beauty by saying "This is the first time I've set eyes on such a ravishing beauty" (cf. 曹雪芹 & 高鹗 1999, trans. 杨宪益 & 戴乃迭)—which is praise of her appearance. And as to Xue Pan, a bully, "he was so enraptured by her charms that he almost melted on the spot" (cf. 曹雪芹 & 高鹗 1999, trans. 杨宪益 & 戴乃迭). According to Xue Pan's standard of beauty, Lin Daiyu should be quite amazing in appearance. However, we are not able to know how beautiful she is through Xue Pan's description in words; indeed, a thousand

readers may have a thousand different images. However, the TV series only requires a photo to equate the shape of Lin Daiyu to the actor depicting her, Chen Xiaoxu. Even if Chen Xiaoxu wins with a delicate appearance, Wang Wenjuan, who played Lin Daiyu in the previous Yue drama, *A Dream of Red Mansions*, is still recognized by many viewers and has become a celebrity endorser for the Lin Daiyu character. This is what cannot be achieved through the vividness of the language.

This inter-media divide is obvious. Each type of sign system is a separate set of articulation systems. Although each type of sign and other forms of signs are and will be unrelated, in their respective systems, they can cover all the fields in the entire world. For example, the Munsell color system is the perfect color sequence of all visible light, including all the physical phenomena of color, while red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo and purple in the language system, but it cannot present any physical facts in the color system. Moreover, this is something that cannot be transcended by different sign forms. Even such famous lines from ancient poetry as "*caocao qieqie cuoza tan, dazhu xiaozhu luo yupan*" (嘈嘈切切错杂弹, 大珠小珠落玉盘—"when mingling loud and soft notes were together played, you heard large and small pearls cascade on a plate of jade" [cf. 许渊冲 2012a]) are actually unable to represent any melody. What signs can arouse is only existing experience, but they cannot represent the semiotic facts of heterogeneity, so for readers who do not have musical experience, "'large and small pearls cascade on plate of jade' you hear" only means a noise. The so-called *leixiang* can only be an analogy, a similarity, and a resemblance to a certain extent. That is, we can only seek some kind of connection between heterogeneous signs, which may constitute a sense of iconicity in our cognitive experience. It should be added that the iconicity of heterogeneous signs is not a specific imaginal iconicity (Peirce 1931–1958). Imaginal iconicity relies on the homogeneity of semiotic perception channels. In this sense, the description of a visual image by language cannot represent the visual image. Cross-sign rhetoric cannot build imaginal iconicity. Thus, a painting may look like a sculpture, but it will not look, visually, like a melody.

However, there is still hope for us to realize cross-channel iconicity, which depends on semiotic mapping by acquired experience.

4.2.2.3 The Hope of Realizing Inter-Semiotic Representation

It is impossible for heterogeneous signs to produce imaginal iconicity directly, but this fact does not negate the idea that the mechanism of inter-semiotic iconicity still exists. The second stage, "hope", refers to the need for an instant semiotic representation to realize perfect representation by overcoming the barriers of heterogeneity. Mitchell, by borrowing the popular culture psychoanalysis term, calls it "sutured". Then, the differentiation between (visual) image and (language) text (or other heterogeneous signs) is temporarily overcome and replaced by a sutured, integrated form, a language image, or an image text (Mitchell 1995). And this comprehensive form is not the co-occurrence of the multimedia sign text, but it is the mapping of the common mental image in an abstract sense, which refers to achieving the same goal by heterogeneous

signs, including language, image, or other heterogeneous signs. Moreover, the form is due to the fact that the mental image we evoke through a *fuxiang* (符象) is the sum of all our socialized acquired experience and is not limited to a single perception. As a result, visual details (or details absorbed through other channels of perceptions) that cannot be represented in language may also be compensated for by our acquired experience.

This kind of acquired experience often results in synesthesia. In semiotic rhetorical devices, synesthesia is often regarded as a cross-channel icon. As discussed above, cross-channel representation cannot directly lead to imaginal iconicity. That a piece of music is black is not an imaginal iconicity in shape and texture; rather it is the result of a process of psychological transformation. Qian Zhongshu (钱锺书 2002b) found that synesthesia in literary rhetoric is often a customarily used word to express this experience in daily life because in signs of different channels, in terms of objective presentation, there is no iconicity, and the acquired experience results in a kind of cognitive mapping. The color red leads to the taste of spiciness because, in our life experience, spicy things are usually red, which is similar to Pavlov's dog's reaction to the ringtone. In this regard, synesthesia is not a profound cultural interpretation; it is a reaction to a signal. As the primary stage of synesthesia's physiological base, mapping is even non-cultural and only the perceptual basis of cultural interpretation.

When it is with a clear reference, the signal relation is a kind of mapping in the process of signification. Code cracking and restoration, perfect representation of geometric figures in mathematical language, and translation of binary codes into image information all require the assistance of the exact reference of the significant relation. In Peirce's tripartite semiosis, it is the relation between the representatum and the object. Therefore, the category of mapping is the counterpart of the signal level in the process of sign communication, rather than the cultural meaning interpretation relationship.

4.2.2.4 The Fear of Cross-Media Rhetoric

Once the heterogeneous sign texts are sutured, it immediately enters what Mitchell calls the stage of "fear". In Mitchell's view, it is a dilemma between possibility and impossibility, between hope and indifference that makes people infatuated with *fuxianghua*. Once the difference between heterogeneous signs disappears (for example, a wonderful poem replaces a great painting), "the whole game is ruined" (Mitchell 1995). Logically, this fear is unnecessary. For example, people do not reduce their enthusiasm for personally appreciating a beautiful girl about whose beauty they have learned from vivid descriptions, just as they do not think that it is pointless to go to the Vatican Museum of Art because they have read Lessing's wonderful interpretation of Laocoon. However, it is necessary to fear the perfect realization of *fuxianghua* because the fear allows the avoidance of regarding the mapping of heterogeneous signs as a closed correspondence or substitution. Substitution can only be incomplete, and, in correspondence, it is many-to-many. It then leads to an open interpretation relationship in which any sign can be a representatum of another sign. Such pluralistic

deduction finally approaches an infinite network of interpretation, which constitutes the "abstract cultural subject" that does not appear. And any single signification is subordinate to this cultural subject. Therefore, there has to be intertextuality of signs rather than the relationship between subject and object. Specifically, verbal signs, visual image signs, music symbols, and tactile symbols are the components of this abstract cultural subject, and any two of them can equally represent another one. For example, a poem could be a semiosis of a painting (or vice versa), and the poem can be made into a short film that triggers a practice of installation art… and this can go on and on. The dynamic process is subject to and will eventually approach the abstract cultural subject itself, infinitely. In this process, the sequence of time will not determine which is superior or inferior because they are equal and of intertextuality, and the whole semiosis is an open process of interpretation. However, the abstract cultural subject is not a closed process because it constantly evolves due to the creation of specific semiotic meanings.

The relation of infinite semiosis shows that the mechanism of inter-semiotic iconicity is a metaphorical relationship in the cultural system, and the metaphorical relationship is a common cultural mental image against the background of a certain cultural universe. Here, the mental image is no longer the result of the physiological perception of an individual person, but of the individual person's representation based on the universe of this culture.

Therefore, the realization of *fuxianghua* does not depend on the degree of imaginal iconicity; instead, it depends on obtaining the consensus of a specific cultural field. For example, Cao Xueqin's writing about Lin Daiyu has never changed, but the image of Lin Daiyu, recognized by the public, has been changing. Essentially, the change does not result from the failure of the transformation from textual Lin Daiyu to visual Lin Daiyu, but it results from the fact that the cultural mental image keeps changing its choice standard as the context develops and changes also. Thus, the *fuxiang* is bound to change as well. Therefore, Yue Opera (越剧) actress Wang Wenjuan as Lin Daiyu is the mental image projection, while Chen Xiaoxu or the new version of Lin Daiyu's image is another kind of projection for another era. As a result, we can find a more stable part of superposition for different readers' images of Lin Daiyu in a relatively definite cultural circle. This kind of consistent cultural identity is precisely the goal of *fuxianghua*—to evoke a common mental image; in turn, a thousand images of Lin Daiyu in the minds of a thousand readers constitute a cultural abstract Lin Daiyu in this cultural community. That is, different individuals' mental images and cultural images mutually construct one another. Further, this is very similar to the 2012 London Olympic Games' main torch structure. The main torch, composed of more than 200 petals, symbolized the participating countries of the world, but no individual petal torch constituted the main torch, which simultaneously is and is not a petal torch.

Summary: The Theoretical Significance of Ekphrasis in the Media Age

After looking at the historical evolution of *fuxianghua*, we know that the operational ability of concrete rhetorical techniques of ekphrasis has been gradually removed, but its metaphysical meaning has become richer in actual use: from a verbal "speaking out image" to a literary rhetoric, or *Duhuashi*. Moreover, the tradition of *Yigefuci* shows the art's object that is not present, and at the same time it makes the term more metaphysical. Indeed, the discussion of *fuxianghua* in rhetoric after the Pictorial Turn is no longer limited to the specific rhetoric of language or image; instead, it is a representation of intersemiosis. Therefore, the Chinese version of ekphrasis should not conceal its rich connotation development. In the sense of classical rhetoric, ekphrasis is *Yuci Fuxiang*; in the theory of art history, it is *Yigefuci*; and, in the literary field, it is *Duhuashi*. Based on the current development of broad rhetoric, it is bound to be transformed into the general summary of *fuxianghua*. Visualization is no longer the imitation and transfer of other channels by the physiological function of vision, but a cultural abstract sign of the ways in which the world is grasped. In other words, *fuxianghua* is no longer the translation of *fuxiang* at the technical level, but it tries to show the ancient rhetorical term's enlightenment on contemporary multimedia texts—an innovative interpretation and deduction based on the broad semiotic rhetoric sign movement.

In today's media era, inter-semiotic representation is becoming a broader *fuxianghua* behavior, which includes not only the visualized representation of visual objects by language, but also the heterogeneous signs' mutual representation: *yifu leixiang*, which is common in cross-media semiotic rhetoric. *Yifu* refers to different sign media and channels, while *leixiang* is the common mental image that is aroused. *Yifu leixiang*, then, is the connotation of ekphrasis deducted in today's media era. The *fuxianghua* is a process in which different sign carriers and forms express the meanings originally expressed by other sign carriers in intricate forms under the impulse of interpretation and signification. Moreover, the fact that they cannot replace each other leads to the formation of new meanings so that the meanings of the entire contemporary media society register explosive growth, which does not resort to the expansion of external space and takes place internally. McLuhan refers to this implosion as the transformation of the expansion mode when we enter the era of power. The inherent means of outward explosion in the mechanical age is the extension of the body in the scope of space, while implosion is the extension of the nerve center with the help of media. McLuhan points out that the inward explosion merges space and various functions, and the center specialized and disassembled in the era of mechanical civilization is reorganized into an organic whole…this is a new world in a global village (McLuhan 1964). Through the results of the implosion, McLuhan attempts to show that media technology exerts a decisive impact on cultural patterns and even on social civilization. Baudrillard extends the sociological significance of implosion and believes that only by means of modern media can human beings obtain the great richness of perception of the modern world. In this way, a meaning of implosion is produced there between the virtual world and the real world.

4.3 Cross-Media and Image Narrative

In the framework of classical narratology, narrative is a kind of theoretical research that takes literature, especially novels, as the typical theme in the preset genre, and then it forms a narrative of different genres that are carried out accordingly. For example, the study of image narrative is usually conducted by mechanically applying expressions in a paralanguage. To some extent, this research method comes at the expense of iconicity/pictoriality. At present, narratology has developed to become semiotic narratology, which includes various media narrative styles. Not only has the media form of narrative been greatly expanded, but also the genre of narrative has expanded from imaginary texts to factual narrative fields such as law, news, history, and so on. For these narrative forms from the perspective of cross-media form, narratology theory itself is expanding its capacity. There are two key points in this round of capacity expansion. One is the theoretical construction of factual narrative, and the other is the narrative of nonlinear language form represented by image.

In this section, with image narrative as a typical sample, the minimal narrative is examined to understand the boundary of contemporary narrative theory and to make it adaptable to the present situation of contemporary cross-media text. It should be pointed out in particular that the sign narrative beyond literary genres is not innovative. In fact, it returns to the fundamental category of narrative as the organizational form of human experience. Moreover, the narrative theory in this category is of great constructive significance and serves as a guide to various textual narratives in the contemporary media cultural spectacle.

4.3.1 Dilatation of Narratology

4.3.1.1 Narrative Turn

Narrative is not only created for literature because it has just realized its disciplinary incubation with the help of literature or language, a typical text carrier. Narrative itself, as an act to convey meanings, is as old as human beings, and it is a unique tool to organize human experience. Therefore, the necessity for narrative turn only represents the natural return of narrative intention. Tzvetan Todorov put forward the term “narratology”, which provided the most suitable place for this kind of research. Therefore, it quickly absorbed many important forces of literary research and developed into a relatively well-established subject in only a little more than ten years. Another reason for the rapid development of narratology is that classical narratology itself is organized and in conformity with rules. Just like Euclidean derivation, it has developed into an established subject step by step, and now it is still developing. Since the 1990s, the development of narratology has brought about two results. The first is the post-classicization of narratology itself. Just as David

Herman said that out of literary narration… it shows how post-classical narratology draws something from other surrounding research fields (赫尔曼 [Herman] 2002). The second and more far-reaching result is the narrative turn of various non-literary disciplines in the social sciences. In the course of their interaction, these two results promote each other into deeper development. Zhao Yiheng generalized the narrative turn in these disciplines into three levels. First, to take the human narrative as the object of study; second, to analyze the object of study with narrative analysis; and third, to present and explain research findings with narrative (赵毅衡 2008). The series of narrative turns in turn promote narratology's self-adjustment in order to form a universally broad narratology.

Just as Todorov put forward the subject term of narratology, the introduction of narrative in a broad sense is a natural process. A. J. Greimas and J. Courtes conceived the general grammatical knowledge of narrative in the 1970s; narratologist Mieke Bal distinguishes literary narratology from non-literary narratology; Jean-François Lyotard argues that human knowledge is composed of narrative knowledge in addition to scientific knowledge. After classical narrative theory, there appeared various theories that can be classified as post-classical narratology, and their common feature is the development of narratology from a literary study to a cultural study. The expanded narrative research took on a new look that is different from classical narratology in many aspects, such as style, media, and so on. Zhao Yiheng points out that the broad narratology, which aims to explore general laws for all narrative styles, is semiotic narratology, and holds that semiotic narratology is a comparatively independent branch of semiotics. The collision between the theoretical paradigm of sign narrative and the original views in many fields sparked new findings but also caused great controversy.

From the perspective of the category of subject logic, the general narrative sign material on which sign narrative is based contains any text style that can be used in narrative. The problem brought about by this expansion/dilatation is not only about the acceptance and application of the original theory to new genres, media, and semiotic patterns, but the problem is also brought about in relation to the category and the shift of the theoretical framework's focus in the new academic context. The linguistic basis of structuralism in the early stage of narratology gave way to post-structuralism, while linguistics to which the narrative turn was subject tended to give way to the pictorial turn.

Since postmodern theorists broke the subject into fragments, nothingness has become the characteristic of this era. The sense of self-liberation to break the structure is a sign of progress, but such nothingness at the same time offers the subject nothing to rely on. According to Zhao Yiheng (赵毅衡 2008), after the narrative turn, self returned to the center of the narrative. It shows that narrative gives the once-lost self a temporary fulcrum. Narrative reconstructs the channel leading to external experience for us. The self "from the back door" has at least more to depend on than the completely unsettled broken subject. However, narratology's reconstruction of the subject after this turn is obviously a return to the original structure that had been broken. Many changes have taken place in the world faced by the reconstructed subject, and pictorial turn is one of the most important changes. In some theorists'

view, pictorial turn is even the synonym of post-modernistic turn, which is the new way of grasping the world. At the same time, it is also a subject that semiotic narratology must face. In this new background, we especially need to re-examine whether and to what extent the narrative theory based on language or literary tradition is still effective, and we need to examine what the impact will be on the narrative boundary of the typical narrative style of non-verbal signs with image.

4.3.1.2 The Cognitive Limitations of Image Narrative

From the perspective of classical narratology, the analysis of narrative function of images is a theoretical adaptation based on linguistic narrative. Language is regarded as a temporal expansion, while the static image is regarded as a spatial entity. Therefore, the image narrative itself is always on the edge of the literary text. Narrative images are often limited to images that are formed by connecting multiple pictures or that have multiple concrete scenes, such as the Dunhuang murals and European classical religious paintings. Static images are often regarded as lacking narrative functions in narrative. And such deficiency seems to be made up only slightly by the flow of images. Therefore, film has naturally become an important style of image narrative, and film narratology has made great progress.

The combination of film art and narrative theory in the 1990s led to the following types of research: (1) the study of cinematic syntax and paragraphs represented by Christian Metz; (2) the study of image-centered coding by Warren Buckland and Eco, which is actually closer to general theoretical study of coding mechanisms in semiotics; (3) the rhetoric study in film narrative related to psychoanalysis, also known as the second film semiotics; and (4) the film narrative aesthetics by Jean Mitry and David Bordwell (李显杰 2000). The study of the narrativity of film images depends on connecting the picture's relationship with the montage and its paragraph "grammar" as a typical example. It is the common diachronic color shared by film image and language in structure. However, there comes a paradox that the prior development of film narratology precisely shows the negation of the narrative ability of the image itself in the theoretical circle. The narrative of film art is the dimension of time caused by the flow of images (later including sound, the medium closest to the original narrative), and a single still image is usually considered to have a lack of expressiveness. According to Mitry (2001), a film theorist, photographs are not a conventional language (a product of conventions and abstract signs), and a photo is neither such a "free" sign as a word, nor a sign of any other thing. An individual photo can show something, but it does not have another meaning. An image can have a specific meaning and the ability to mean something only related through its entirety. Thus, it obtains a unique meaning, which in turn gives the whole a new meaning (米特里 [Mitry] 2012).

There are two aspects involved here. One is the semiocity of images that include photo images. As the first chapter of this book details, an image will not lose its semiocity because of transparency. The other key aspect is the narrative function of the image (as a sign). According to Mitry's view above, in the film composed of

separate groups of moving pictures, a single static frame lacks the meaning required by narrative, so it is only an individual element without an independent meaning rather than a chain of narrative signs, as would be shared by many image scientists. John Szarkwski points out that photographic images themselves cannot narrate, and he notes that what happens in a decisive moment is a visual rather than a dramatic climax that produces a photo rather than a story (萨考夫斯基 [Szarkowski] 2003). Photographer Li Yuan (李元 2001) says that photo is what is recorded the moment the shutter release is pressed, and, positively speaking, what is recorded at that moment has a long-term significance. Still, on the other hand, it does not explain the cause or predict the consequences, so photography lacks narrative ability. Henri Cartier-Bresson (卡蒂埃-布勒松 [Cartier-Bresson] 2003) says that sometimes, a single picture that is rich and lively, with rich content, may also contain a complete event in a single photo, but it rarely happens.

In the above observations, "narrative" is not defined, but they all set a reference for "language narrative" in advance. According to them, the narrative is in time, while the image is in space (曼古埃尔 [Manguel] 2004). There is no doubt that understanding can easily make the Euclidean definitions in classical narratology applicable to images. This will lead to limiting that image as a way to "grasp the world" to an extremely narrow framework; a narrative image here is confined to a diagram of comic-strip oriented scene.

With language as the reference, it is not fair to images to define the narrative function. The image narrative constructed by seeking the proximity between image and language style actually sacrifices the iconicity of image, which is the most important characteristic of image as the core of contemporary visual culture. According to Mitchell, it must be recognized that viewing (watching, staring, scanning, observing practice, monitoring, and visual pleasure, etc.) may be as profound as the form of reading (deciphering, decoding, interpretation, etc.), and that visual experience or visual reading and writing may not be explained entirely in the pattern of text (Mitchell 1995). In addition, the narrowed application of this narrative theory based on literary narrative style obviously does not match the ambition of narratology in a broad sense, because the act of narrative and the way of image are among the most basic acts in conveying the meanings of human culture. Barthes pointed out in the 1960s that narrative exists in any era, anywhere, and in any society. It began with the beginning of human society, and there has never been a nation without a narrative. There is a narrative in any class and any group of people. Narrative is international and cross-cultural, running through human history. It is there, like life itself.

There should not be so little connection between narrative, which is the basic way of organizing human experience, and image, which is the way to grasp the world. Therefore, it requires the establishment of an image sign narrative theory that respects iconicity more, rather than constructing the image narrative entirely according to the language or literary mode. For semiotic narratology in a broad sense, to demonstrate the applicability of sign text of image, we must return to the basic definition of narrative, re-examine the bottom line of narrative in the context of semiotic narratology in a broad sense, and corroborate the general legitimacy of image narrative from the perspective of construction. The universal legitimacy

of image narrative is the most powerful support and enrichment of broad narrative theory, which covers all forms of media text.

4.3.2 Image and Minimal Narrative

4.3.2.1 The Minimal Narrative and Sign Text

The minimal narrative is the basic problem that narratologists must face. Todorov believes that narrative should have at least two basic principles. One is succession, narrative is the connection of discontinuous entities in a temporal and sometimes causal way; and the other is the principle of transformation, the transformation of the narrated entities from one state to another. Furthermore, there must be at least one transformation in any narrative (托多罗夫 [Todorov] 2001). With the rise of new narratology, narrative has gradually obtained a broader and more enlightening definition. Berger's view extends beyond human experience. He regards narrative and story as equal, and the story tells what has happened and is happening to people, animals, exotic life in space, insects, and so on (伯格 [Berger] 2000). Herman says in *Narratologies: New Perspectives on Narrative Analysis* that narrative is the representation of continuous events (Herman 1999). Similarly, Metz defined the following five conditions of narrative from the perspective of film language: (i) narrative has a beginning and an end; (ii) narrative is a double-time section; (iii) any narrative is a kind of discourse; (iv) the perception of narrative is the non-reality of the narrated event; and (v) a narrative is the whole of a series of events.

These definitions play an important role in understanding what narrative is, and their deficiency lies in the presupposition of literature, film, or a special text form. Therefore, for semiotic narratology in a broad sense, there is always one or another limitation. Zhao Yiheng (赵毅衡 2010b), an advocate of semiotic narratology in a broad sense, believes that the definition of narrative should be changed and expanded to cover all narratives. To this end, he presents a definition from the perspective of sign narrative, and he sets two conditions for the minimal narrative, including two narrative processes carried out by two subjects. First, the subject organizes the events involving characters into a sign chain; second, the sign chain may be understood by another subject as something having the dimensions of time and meaning.

In Zhao Yiheng's view, according to the above two narrative processes, all sign texts can be divided into "statement" and "narrative". The difference between them is that the object of the narrative is "plot", that is, the change with characters' involvement. If there is no change in the text or if there is a change without characters' involvement in the text, it is a statement rather than a narrative. At the same time, these two conditions cover eight elements, namely, (i) narrative subject; (ii) character; (iii) event; (iv) sign chain [basic of emplotment]; (v) subject of acceptance; (vi) understanding; (vii) time dimension; and (viii) meaning dimension (赵毅衡 2010b).

This definition breaks through the limitations of the previous concepts of narrative in many ways. First, the above two conditions not only subvert the past dimension of

narratology in time, but also abandon many limitations such as virtual reality, media, style, and so on. Can it, therefore, help us build an image narrative view that pays enough respect to iconicity? The sample selected here is image narrative because the image, as a special and main form of non-linguistic signs, is demonstrates clearly that the narrative form is different from the linguistic text. Second, for this "Age of Picture Reading", image narrative has the current interpretative power. Third, from a theoretical perspective, the research of image narrative based on pictorial turn should be closer to the theoretical value of cognizing "the world of image" as a way of grasping the world and organizing human experience. Therefore, this book aims to examine a specific sign narrative style from the new theoretical framework of sign narrative, and to test the theoretical framework itself.

In the disciplinary background for the above definition, narratology is regarded as a branch of semiotics, so the definition first defines the sign text and then the sign text is limited (narrated) to become the narrative text. The sign text, also known as a sign chain, is a broad definition of a combination of signs in post-linguistic semiotics, which is opposite to the narrow text. The text, with its original meaning of things woven, used to refer to a coherent stretch of language. With the development of semiotics, the text has gradually become a basic unit of culture, and it may be any cultural product or the object of understanding of a combination of signs. Therefore, in modern semiotics, the definition of the text is simplified to any interpretable and culturally meaningful combination of signs (胡易容 & 赵毅衡 2012). De Beaugrande (1980) points out that textuality should possess cohesion, intentionality, acceptability, situationality, intertextuality, and informativity. Eco, on the other hand, believes that the combination does not necessarily have an internal structure with certain cohesion. Therefore, the cohesion of textualization (the structure of a combination of signs) only results from the interpretation of the sign chain in the recipient, rather than in the presentation of the text itself. Interpretation with internal structural combinations is a process of textualization, which is a process of the sign's weaving of structure. This is a method for an isolated sign to obtain a definite meaning and is the basis of narrative. To Barthes, the text is an open structure relative to the work, not subordinate to the author's world.

Therefore, to judge whether a text structure is independent or not is a relative defining process based on its internal and external hierarchical structure. For example, when we interpret a Chinese character of which a component may be a radical or a stroke as a complete sign text, it makes no sense to use a separate stroke as an isolated sign. If we regard a single stroke as a complete text, the start, the writing process, and the end of each stroke can be regarded as its semiotic element. Therefore, the text is not the definite form of a certain object of sign, and there is no absolute minimum unit. The so-called minimum unit is relative to the textualized object of a given category, and it can only be defined relatively under given discourses. Therefore, when we take a film as a sign text with an internal structure, a shot, a line, or a scene becomes an isolated sign that lacks context. This explains why many theorists tend to regard a single still frame as an element that has a "lack of meaning".

The narrative text, which is not the narrativization above the sign text, is based on the general sign text, and it is a special way of textualization per se. The difference

lies in the narrative text having more special requirements than other textualized styles. The sign textualization of the non-narrative form only involves six of the eight elements of a narrative text, and as required by narrativization, the internal ways of these six elements are also different from those of the non-narrative text because they are all narrativized. Zhao Yiheng (赵毅衡 2008) says that the process of narrativization, which is the "narrative" construction of human experience, aims to find order, significance and purpose in the details of experience, and to construct them into a whole with inherent significance by "emplotment".

By analyzing the above elements, narrativization includes the narrativization of structure and the narrativization of semiotic elements. From the perspective of the elements, the difference between them is very obvious. The sign text may not have a sign sender, and a narrative text must have a narrative subject. Then, the sign text does not necessarily require characters and events involved, with its sign chain being a combination of arbitrary signs, while the narrative text requires an event of personalized involvement and a sign chain by emplotment of its elements. In fact, in addition to the increase of the above elements, other elements must also have undergone internal descriptive changes. The sign receiver can explain the sign text at will (even without any interpretation), and the sign text is still valid. The narrated subject's understanding must be in the framework of the sign chain of emplotment; otherwise, there is no attribute of the narrative text. The time of sign text is only a unity in meaning, and once it becomes a narrative text, its time becomes a recognizable dimension. Therefore, narrativization is not something that can be finished at a time, but it is a construction according to a certain agreed-upon narrativization rules. It is a special form subject to conventions of human cultural symbols. Furthermore, the elements of minimal narrative may be examined one by one from the perspective of semiotics.

4.3.2.2 Narrative Subject and Sign Sender

As far as the general sign text is concerned, the sign sender is optional, and all non-artificial sign text may be regarded as the text whose sign sender is absent. For example, the thick smoke in the crater is interpreted as "danger", so it becomes a readable sign text, but the volcano is not the sign sender because a volcano does not have the intention of sending a sign. That is, the subject that sends the sign might be missing, and this is the freedom of the general sign text. In the narrative text, the narrative subject becomes a basic presupposition, which is the source of narrative as a kind of discourse that it sets up.

When there is a sender for the non-narrative sign text, it often resorts to a specific sign communication process. The term "sign sender" emphasizes the subject's manipulation of semiotic media. The sign sender is the author of the text of artificial signs, such as a painter, a novel's author, a director, a playwright, or a photographer of a film. For these texts, the narrative subject includes two concepts, that is, the sign sender and the story narrator. The narrative text, as one of the styles of sign texts, also has a sign sender that sign texts may have. But the narrator is exclusive of the

narrative text. Only in a factual narrative text, such as an autobiographical novel, a documentary, a diary or a news story, can the narrator be the sign sender. In the absence of the sign sender in an imaginary narrative text, the narrator has no choice but to be present. For example, "volcano" is not a sign sender, but it may be narrated as an implementer of a "personalized" intention, that is, a narrator. In a narrative text, a volcano may be a tourist text narrator who narrates the volcanic landscape. Here, the narrative behavior of the volcano is bound to be the development of the landscape text of tourism. That is, the transformation of the sign sender into the narrator depends on the narrative structure of the text of artificial signs.

The subjects of image narrative have very different characteristics. The spoken language narrator is a specific individual. The text narrator is an abstract personality, and in a movie or a documentary, voice-over and other non-picture elements are often used to prompt the narrator's clues. Static images or single-frame images are often unable to prompt the identity of the narrator as a text narrative. They usually only provide certain changes in perspective, and the viewer can only construct the perspective of a narrator in his own imagination. The narrator therefore often becomes unpredictable, so that we have to use non-picture information to trace the narrator. Narrative, as a genre presupposed, rises to become a more important clue than the specific narrative in the corresponding text. Only when a text is designated as news photos or advertising can we interpret its narrativity.

Therefore, Cezanne's painting of "Mount Vesuvius" and the members' images from scientific expeditions and satellite records of the volcano Vesuvius are not different as sign texts from the volcano Vesuvius that is personally perceived. It is only when these texts are processed as narrative texts that the narrator of the image text can be recognized with the help of genre, context, and other accompanying texts, which is an important way to recognize the image text narrator. Its inspiration for the base of the narrative is that the narrative text is not self-presented in the static and closed artificial text. Moreover, it is a textualized approach that is conventionalized in the social culture.

4.3.2.3 The Emplotment and Personalization of Sign Chain

Fullerton (富勒顿 [Fullerton] 2004) once divided ancient Greek art into symbolic and narrative images, with the former showing the scene of an individual event, myth or story, and the latter being the presentation of the process of a certain event. Long Diyong (龙迪勇 2007) believes that this means that image narrative must first make temporalize space…It is the essence of image narrative. Logically speaking, temporalization is an essential element, but, in essence, emplotment seems to be a more accurate expression because temporalization is the self-contained factor of plot development. The criterion of emplotment is actually a kind of change. This is true of language narrative and image narrative. What is particularly important in the emplotment of change is the involvement of "man". If there is no human involvement, the minimal plot change may degrade to a kind of modal description.

Therefore, "man" is not only the key to the emplotment of sign chain, but also the key to judging whether it is a narrative text or not.

As to whether there must be characters, there has been controversy in narratology. In classical narratology, the involvement of characters is almost self-evident. In the five conditions for the establishment of the narrative put forward by Metz, although characters are not clearly designated as one of the conditions, events contain the role of human beings (麦茨 [Metz] 1996). In Mieke Bal's view, the narrated element itself is defined as a change in a situation caused or experienced by an agent (巴尔 [Bal] 1995). Prince (Prince 2003) observes that the shortest story tells only two states and one event. The first state precedes the event in time, and the event precedes the other state in time, causing its occurrence. The second state constitutes the opposite of the first state (or change, including the "zero" change).

Prince defines the narrative of the minimal unit in two parts, that is, (i) the narrative world of a single event, and (ii) a narrative that contains a single time connection. In his view, every story is a narrative, but not every narrative must be a story (for example, only some events are in chronological order but are nevertheless without causality). The definition of the minimal narrative given by Zhao Yiheng presents the broadest limitation to the element of character, which may only have human characters or be involved in human plot.

In narratology, which is about the way to organize human experience, "man" has become a key element when it is differentiated from non-narrative texts. In sign texts with language as the carrier, the presentation of personality may often be rhetorical. In one of Mao Zedong's *ci*s (*ci* 词 is a type of classical Chinese poetry), there are two lines as follows: "*dai dao shanhua lanman shi, ta zai cong zhong xiao*" (待到山花烂漫时, 她在丛中笑—when mountain flowers run riot for miles and miles, among them she will be all smiles [cf. 许渊冲 2020]). Smile, the word used here—originally used to refer to a human being's action—is used to refer to an object's action, which completes a process of personification that can be confirmed. However, these methods may encounter problems in the application of images. The specific character in the picture is easily seen, but how does his personality appear in the picture? The surreal pictures in Dali's paintings often seem to be empty, yet they are full of traces of human existence; in addition, the existence of personality is also influenced by ambiguous images. The "rabbit-duck illusion" or similar examples show that there is a sufficient textual basis for any kind of interpretation.

In other words, the abstract personality in the image may not exist explicitly in the text; instead, it is a kind of textual potential that can be interpreted as the existence of personality. A young child may make a highly situational interpretation of a graffiti work. So, is the graffiti text narrating, or is the child narrating without the text? If graffiti is narrating, what is the bottom line of the narrative text? If the young child is narrating, how do we define the text on which the words are based? A young child obtains the ability to interpret narrative from the model of narrative knowledge provided through education. In the face of an abstract text, a child's narrative interpretation is the narrative knowledge acquired in social culture, and the narrative text only serves as a "lead wire" which leads to the narrative. In the narrative, the existence of personality does not depend entirely on the text, but it depends on

the intersection of the infinite "narrative text against which other texts are checked", and the specific text in the young child—a process of choice and processing. Here, not only the text, but also readers and authors, are involved. That is, the fuzziness of the image text merely verifies that it is not enough to judge whether personality is involved in the activity or only the text.

4.3.2.4 Narrative Time and Dimension

The dimension of time is free for the general sign text, while the limitation on the narrative text's dimension of time is an important yardstick of the narrative text as a boundary of literary style. Classical narratology follows views existing since Aristotle's founding of science and regards narrative as a retelling of the past. In a broad sense, narratology breaks through the past time dimension of narrative, but has to admit that time is a necessary element of the story (龙迪勇 2007). At the same time, some scholars regard the lack of time dimension as an important reason to negate the narrative function of image. For them, image is regarded as a spatial entity, but the story is a temporal development.

In fact, when we talk about temporality or spatiality, we frequently do not know exactly what it refers to. A common misunderstanding about image spatiality is related to the spatiality of media carrying the image, including sculpture and architecture. The paradox is that we do not recognize that the text is its physical medium, but we use the physical form of the medium to judge the bias of the text to time or space. Unfortunately, the physical medium is still a problem that requires consideration. And this involves three links, that is, narrating, text medium, and acceptance.

From the perspective of narrating, the temporal process of oral narration is obvious, and this temporality is the same for the narrator (author) and the narratee (audience), and it must be the synchronous development of time. The book mainly compares image narrative and narrative of writing, because once oral narration is changed into narration of writing, the temporality of the narrator becomes the time of the creation process behind the text. The temporality of creation is flexible. For example, the high-speed exposure of the photo can solidify or stop the moving bullet, and it may also span a long time. The world's oldest surviving photo produced by the camera—the "View from the Window at Le Gras" was formed after eight hours of exposure. Long-time exposure has become an inherent means of photography, with photographers often spending days, months, or even an entire year for external light to leave imaging traces on film and other media. It shows that, from the technical perspective, a "critical moment" is a limited induction of a form of medium. However, the temporality of the narrating of images is often ignored.

The second understanding of image spatiality is related to the form of the medium carrier of the text. The narrative text does not refer to the material medium of the text (for example, the novel does not refer to a book, and the film does not refer to a disc of film); however, the process of storage and communication of texts cannot be separated from the intermediary. Therefore, the temporality of the text has become what communicologists have discussed about the physical characteristics of the medium.

In Innis's communicology view, the medium that relies on oral tradition is space-biased, while the medium that relies on written tradition is just time-biased: a time-biased medium is usually durable, while a space-biased medium is often light and can easily cross the barrier of space (英尼斯 [Innis] 2003). Thus, the bias of the image or the text does not depend on the text itself, but on the medium. Furthermore, it is different from the reference coordinate of temporality or spatiality that we often note. It shows that analysis of physical form in media studies cannot demonstrate the image's spatiality and language's temporality. In terms of external material form, a text must also have a spatial existence, but the reader's reading makes the spatial medium go through the transformation in time.

Therefore, the external temporality of the narrative text is finally based on the acceptance process and reading path of the narrative text. Usually, writing tends to result in a linear reading path, and image often leads to Gestalt. However, this does not mean that the image does not have a time sequence of reading. In viewing images, the temporality of the image and the temporality of the writing are the same because they are both forms of dimensional reading based on visual physiology and social conventions. The difference is that the written text is read from left to right (Chinese and other language speakers also read in the opposite direction), while the image text has different dimensions in visual language because visual language creates a concrete or abstract sense of direction through form, texture, light and shadow, space and color. For readers, the Gestalt is also an internal driving force of dimension. When this property of image texts is applied in narrative, the time dimension is realized in reading. Image reading may be regarded as the gradual advancement of multiple Gestalt experiences, from the whole frame/structure to the details. The heterogeneity of this reading order is indeed where language texts are different from image texts. Still, the difference does not determine the dimension of time. As a result, the image also has the ability to temporalize. This ability, like a novel's, a poem's, or another written text's, transforms the text's spatial existence into narrative time through the process of the reader's acceptance.

From the perspective of narration, sign texts, and acceptance processes, the temporality of the image exists in its own unique way, and the temporality is often obscured by the space that its physical form occupies.

4.3.2.5 The Subject of Acceptance and Moderate Interpretation

Among the elements of the minimal narrative, the subject of acceptance is an essential element of the narrative text. However, this is not the case for sign texts; for example, a painting that does not show a person, an undelivered letter, or an unpublished book. As far as the intention of the sign is concerned, the sign process is incomplete. Then, the interpretation of the sign is completed by the sign sender and so the subject of acceptance may be regarded as the sign sender. The sign sender has developed by itself a set of intentions to interpret the sign. In the narrative text, the subject of acceptance splits up into the reader and the narratee. To the narrated subject, the missing element could only be the reader instead of the narratee. Both the narratee

and the narrator constitute the starting and ending points of the narrative, respectively, and they are indispensable.

In classical narratology, the connotation of narrative is determined according to the text. With the transformation from structuralism to post-structuralism, neither the author nor the text can monopolize the right of interpretation. When acceptance aesthetics declared the freedom of interpretation in a way that served to overcorrect the wrong, the focus shifted to the "reader-centered" position. The study of Western literary theory has shifted from the so-called "author-centered" to the "text-centered" and then to the "reader-centered". Researchers do not have to use the details of a text as conclusive evidence for a lack of context. As Hu Yirong and Zhao Yiheng (胡易容 & 赵毅衡 2012) explain, textuality may be regarded as the receiver's attitude to the signification. Thus, the final choice only needs to be suitable for his/her interpretation: What is important to the composition of the text does not lie in the text itself, but in the way the sign combination is received, with the combination structure of the text itself only serving as a reference. A text only serving as a reference does not have to be a decisive boundary between narrative and non-narrative. However, the reference is an indispensable link because immoderate interpretation will make clear and correct textual research transform into relativism, which is very likely to slip into nihilism. Then we will not be able to confirm the existence of any text or narrative act. In fact, any kind of "centeredness" may lead to a monopoly over interpretation.

Summary: Image Narrative, the Narrative Text and Cross-Media Text

Using the image text to review the minimal narrative reveals that the function of the image narrative cannot be constructed completely in the form of narrow language texts or discourses. Since the postmodern turn, the return of formalism has offered a reconstruction of key formalist concepts in a new context. An image has to be an open mechanism for conveying meanings, which makes it impossible for us to determine the narrativity of an image with the help of the text alone, or for us to allow the interpreter to practice interpretation without any constraint, because it is too easy to lead to relativism and thus to cause formalism to lose its foundation. A testable standard must be maintained between over-interpretation and moderate interpretation, while avoiding returning to the narrow and text-centered classical narratology. Therefore, the boundary of the narrative text must be the result of a tripartite game. This is different from relativism in that it recognizes narrative genre and contextual information, incorporates accompanying texts, respects social conventions, and takes social culture as the largest "text against which other texts are checked" for providing narrative models.

In order to facilitate the discussion of the text problem emphasized in classical narratology, we may distinguish the narrow narrative from the broad narrative. Narrative in a narrow sense is based on the fact that we have agreed on a speech context for the text, so that we can limit the text and describe the narrative as the "sign text involved with characters, events and development of the plot in the dimension of time". This definition is a limited induction based on the current development of

narratology, and it points to the text rather than the narrative itself. Narrative in a broad sense is an abstract and open structure, and the narrative text occurs within the realization of the potential for interpretation. Therefore, narrative in a broad sense is not the self-presentation of the existing text; rather, it contains the potential for interpretation in the form of narration. Narrative in a broad sense does not negate the elements of narrative. It means that these elements do not exist in the text or in a certain interpretation in a static form. It is based on the consent and agreement of the preset context in a concrete speech based on probability. A specific context results from a social and cultural discourse operation. The individual differences reflect the respect for the human in the reconstruction of a subject by formalism.

When we agree on the indicators of minimal narrative, we need to point out that these indicators do not show the presentation of the text as a solidified closed structure, but they highlight the abstract framework of the elements of the narrative system. The indicators involve the assumption of the basic work of a broad narratology in the future. As far as image narrative is concerned, it does not need to be a specific picture, but it may be an illusion, a mental image, a dream, or music without lyrics. These acts, which lack direct textual evidence, obtain the sense of interpretation in the way of narrative, and then become narratives in a broad sense. The image perception in broad narratology is not only about the generalization of image narrative, but also the result of the joint efforts of the generalization of image itself and the generalization of narrative theories.

Compared with classical narratology, the breakthrough made by post-classical narratology involves genres (from novel to film, news, advertising, law, politics and other fields), media forms (from oral to written, visual image, psychology, and dreams), time dimension (restatement, past, and future), and research structures (not only on narrating, narrator, but also on the explanatory role of narrative discourse and the subject of acceptance). In this process, we must set a disciplinary boundary between narrative texts and narratology. As a branch of semiotics, it shows culture and meaning in the special text form of narrative.

Summary of This Chapter: Cultural Turn and Literature in Media Spectacles

Literary theories are far more mature than communication theories, so much of the theoretical knowledge can be used as a reference for the interpretation of contemporary media spectacle. One of the unsolved problems in the past stems from the fact that literature and communication are two completely different disciplines; therefore, much of the valuable output in literature studies lacks specific uses within communication studies. At the same time, because the social role of literature as an art form has undergone profound changes, the study of literary theories has generally tried to focus on one theory of culture. The cultural turn of literary theory is motivated primarily by the transformation of the form of medium, so cultural theory after the turn of literary theory has become nearly synonymous with the cultural research of media, which coincides with the theme of this study. However, there are diverse difficulties encountered in the process of transformation. In particular, the disciplinary

differentiation, to a certain extent, hinders the media research in absorbing the theoretical results of literary research. Fortunately, as an interdisciplinary methodology, semiotics is well-positioned to serve as an intermediary that not only takes language as the disciplinary foundation, but also takes the current media reality as the research object. The three sections presented in this chapter are an example of this research model, and they detail and analyze the impact of the cultural model of schema on the traditional literary form: the basic generation of verbal icons, the historical evolution of figures of speech, and the contemporary transformation of narrative structure. The result of this impact and expansion is bound to promote traditional literary research, which will be transformed into a theoretical tool to create a profound understanding of the contemporary media landscape. This is not only what the contemporary cultural turn of literary research must undergo, but also an important factor benefiting the study of media culture.

Notes

1. Specifically, re-motivatedness means to re-connect the characters with the objects they refer to in meaning by adding radicals of ideographic symbols to the characters whose motivations have been eroded. For example, the pictographic word "其" is like the shape of a dustpan, and if it is borrowed as a pronoun, it is demotivation. The word-coining society adds the meaning symbol of 竹 (bamboo) to form a 箕 (dustpan) and makes it re-motivatedness. The example is provided by Professor Meng Hua (孟华) of China Ocean University.

Chapter 5
Art Images

Artistic practice has been regarded as the most sacred cultural behavior in human society. Since the postmodern turn, perspectives have changed, as any certainty about art can be doubted and questioned. Artistic practice can even refer to art itself by extending beyond the expression and imitation of objects, leading to the boundary where art itself becomes the normal problem in artistic practice and theoretical discussions. Scholars have produced various studies featuring the relationships between artifacts and artistic concerns: art and daily life, art and form, art and value. These investigations and debates have resulted in myriad definitions of art.

Among them, "structural functionalism" regards art as serving a certain artistic function—the theories from this perspective more or less show the specific utility of aspects of art to a certain degree. The boundary of art is constantly being expanded, but the view that a certain function is an indispensable condition for art tends to be denied, so theorists finally believe that uselessness is the essential feature of art. In Expressionism, art is regarded as the concrete representation of inner emotion. However, Expressionism is limited by its inability to distinguish the fundamental difference between art and other emotional expressions. Among the many ways of defining art, "institutional history theory", which ascribes art to the creation of the "artist's identity", has attracted considerable attention. However, these three theories cannot distinguish art and non-art at the operational level, nor can they explain the formal driving force of artistic innovation. They need to find "art's formal characteristics" and its inherent laws from the perspective of formalism. Bell's "meaningful form" is particularly persuasive because he tries to provide a formal feature that lies in the art text. In formalism (art), "iconicity" is unique and important. Neither Plato nor modern art theorists have been able to ignore the relationship between art and the objective world. From the perspective of behaviorism, Morris (1971) views art as the combination of iconicity and value, so art for him becomes "the icon of value". Bensen, an artist, says the artwork is the iconic probability of the indexical reality (Nöth 1990). That is, indexicality is art's reflection of the real world, and iconicity is a way to reflect the real world. Moreover, probability emphasizes the fact that the

Y. Hu, *Semiotics of the Image*, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-96-4592-3_5

freedom of art is not a specific standard of iconicity but the probability of an open mode of resemblance.

On the one hand, this chapter defines the basic attributes of art as the object of humanistic research, and, accordingly, the technical relationship between the art text and the real world is discussed. On the other hand, this chapter further explores why modern art should take the initiative to pursue some kind of dissimilarity. Through the analysis of this chapter, such dissimilarity is revealed as the concrete presentation of the probability of similarity, and this chapter hence explores and pursues the possible ways of "similarity".

5.1 The Dimension of Humanities

5.1.1 Panofsky and Cassirer

From the introduction to Panofsky's *Meaning in the Visual Arts* (1955) named "The History of Art as a Humanistic Discipline", we know that art's place within the humanities is a self-evident matter of common sense. However, in terms of specific problems, it is difficult to assuage the doubts in people's minds over, for example, whether iconicity is inevitable between the art text and the object. This then is the main problem in this chapter. If we regard the art text as a sign, and if, according to Eco, there is no common physical feature between the sign and the object, what is the relationship between them? Can it be called iconicity?

To answer these questions, first, we need to clarify the sense that the humanities are not science, which is particularly important for understanding Panofsky's academic background. Panofsky is comparable to Saussure in terms of modern iconography, and his academic thought is deeply influenced by the "cultural semiotic philosophy" of Cassirer and other semioticians. The introduction to *Meaning in the Visual Arts*, "The History of Art as a Humanistic Discipline", emphasizes the humanistic nature of art history, and it is no coincidence that these themes share much in common with Cassirer's book, *The Logic of the Cultural Sciences.* Panofsky's early work, *Perspective as Symbolic Form* (Panofsky 1991), is more of a reinforcement of Cassirer's work in the field of iconography, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* (Cassirer 1965). In addition, because the word symbol includes the meanings of both sign and something that stands for something else, the misunderstandings resulting from translating the two books into Chinese are quite similar. Zhao Yiheng (赵毅衡 2010a) divides symbols in these two books into the categories of "general sign" and "special sign through an accumulation of social meanings" from the perspective of semantic generation. Between the two, the use of symbols to stand for something else refers to "the grand cultural symbol with a vague signifier", especially symbols that show the mythological spirit. Therefore, Cassirer's *Philosophy* studies the symbolic form in a "general sense" rather than the "symbol as something that stands for something else", and Panofsky's *Perspective* is a realistic abstract of the mechanism of iconicity.

This chapter will discuss whether the representation of space and the mathematical relationship of the entity in art are objective scientific representations or social conventions that lie in the perception of human beings. Therefore, it touches the boundary of the symbolic world as well as the boundary of art itself. For example, photography is regarded as a technology rather than an art because of representation accuracy. In fact, painting, historically, was also a technology. However, due to the accumulation of socially conventional meanings, the subjectivity of painting has been fully interpreted and constructed.

5.1.1.1 In What Sense Humanities Being Not Science

The significance of revisiting the humanities and science lies in the fact that the humanities today are facing strong pressure from the natural sciences. The rapid development of the natural sciences has brought about great changes within social life today. Further, the extension of its object has also provided the main texts for current humanistic research, so that the humanities must flaunt itself in the name of science. This will lead to a certain amount of interdisciplinary merging, but it will also cause side effects, such as confusion between categories through the crossing of different disciplines.

Natural sciences and humanities should learn from and promote each other. Over the course of recent generations, and especially in the past hundred years, the rapid progress of natural sciences has intensified the role of natural sciences in the promotion of the humanities. For example, Baruch Spinoza's analysis of society takes a geometric perspective; Herbert Spencer's view of social structure regards it as similar to an organism; in recent years, the rising popularity of widely controversial "memes" has resulted from biologist Dawkins's applying the concept of the "selfish biological gene" to culture. In semiotics, The Tartu-Moscow Semiotic School used physicist Prigogine's Dissipative Structure Theory to explain the cultural system rules and even to analyze creative thinking. Although there is not necessarily anything wrong with such applications, the legitimacy of the humanities itself has been questioned. However, natural sciences have gained more respect because of their utilitarian benefits, which obliterates an important substantive connotation. That is, the scientization of the humanities is not the submission of the humanities per se to natural sciences as much as it is a "two-way attraction". The concealed fact is that the natural sciences have to grasp nature by making enough assumptions in a philosophical way to suspend the contradiction that cannot be explained scientifically for the time being. Jiang Rongchang (蒋荣昌 1998) points out that the scientization of the humanities is not sought in order to make the humanities become "a science". The essence of the scientization of humanities is the ideologization or metaphysicalization of science itself. As Jiang Rongchang put it, even if science is able to produce things, it still does not mean that science has mastered "what things are". The subversion of classical physics, which once firmly constructed humanity's views on things, is undoubtedly an important reason why science must reflect on itself metaphysically. In other words, before the discussions in the visual technology of art about space, perspective, and

proportion, all of which are regarded as inherent common sense in science, it is necessary to reiterate that these unreliable elements of "scientific common sense at a certain level" are not meta-discourse or meta-science, as is the case with human perception.

5.1.1.2 Signs Being the Result of Human Perceptual Modeling

The humanities and natural sciences, as far as academic history itself is concerned, are not opposite to each other in a dualistic category. Even the distinction between humanities and science, does not, to some extent, constitute the major elements opposed to humanity as the core of the humanities. The concept of "humanity" in the classical period is opposed to "feritas" or "barbaritas". And, in the Middle Ages, the opposite of humanity became "divinitas".

Panofsky (1955) points out that during the Renaissance, the concept of humanities was based on the dual representation of these two opposites. In other words, there was no difference, let alone opposition, between the so-called humanities and the natural sciences in the academic sensibility of the Middle Ages or earlier. The distinction between humanities and natural sciences originated from the development of the subjective elements of humanity. What people call modern natural sciences is a set of typical models of scientific knowledge and its research is guided by Newton's classical physics. This model attempts to construct a set of cognitive systems that exclude the subjective elements of humans from the objective empirical world. In Panofsky's view, natural sciences are committed to transforming all kinds of chaotic natural phenomena into the so-called cosmos of nature, while the humanities, on the other hand, are committed to transforming various scattered human records into the so-called cosmos of culture. In this way, we can comprehend two completely different experiences of the cosmos.

However, natural sciences and humans are inextricably linked to each other at the root of science. Dawkins observes this in his speech regarding a scientific fact that violates general intuitions, that is, solid objects such as rocks are almost entirely made up of emptiness (the nucleus and electrons are to an atom what a table tennis ball is to a football field). But why does the rock look so solid, hard, and impenetrable? The reason is that this perceptual solidity is only based on the meso-world in the scope of human consciousness. The choice of the scope of perception is based on the evolution necessary for human survival, and it helps us to navigate in this world so that we will not die any time by avoiding running into a real-life stone wall. Therefore, our biological perception does not need to feel the emptiness in the middle of the atom. Dawkins said in a speech given in a TED talk in 2002 that what we see of the real world is not the unvarnished world, but a model of the world, regulated and adjusted by sense data, but constructed so to be used for dealing with the real world. The nature of the model depends on the kind of animal that we are. A flying animal needs a different kind of model from a walking, climbing or swimming animal.

The difference between man and other animals is always an important issue that cannot be avoided in humanities. Panofsky (1955) accepts the views of Cassirer et al.

and points out that man is the only animal that can leave a record behind him, because he is the only animal that can evoke in the mind with his work an idea that is different from the material entity of the work. Other creatures also use signs and structures, but they are not able to perceive the association of meaning. Panofsky believes that both humanities researchers and scientists face similar problems. Therefore, as a research object in humanities, art sign is a model based on human perception. In fact, the next topic is indeed related to the representation of two ways: the accurate representation of scientific objectivity and art's imitation of the so-called objective world.

5.1.2 Text of Art Sign

5.1.2.1 The Level of Artistic Representation

It is undeniable that Kant's "thing in itself" and the "mechanism for its interface with human beings" still constitute the background for discussions in this chapter. There is no confrontation between spirit and reality in the logical sense, and Cassirer (卡西尔 [Cassirer] 2004) introduced it to the cultural philosophy of symbolic form. He made a clear distinction between the object of humanities and the object of natural sciences, and defined the intersection of the two. In his view, the object in humanities does not go beyond the scope of the physical level. It only appears in time and space, yet it cannot be completely involved in its own physical existence. What matters most is that the meanings shown cannot be reduced to meanings in physics, chemistry, mathematics, or any other field. As far as physics is concerned, meaning is only embodied by and in the field of physics, and the meaning referred to in it is the common elements of all the contents of what we call culture. As a result, Cassirer produced three levels of being to summarize the characteristics of objects in humanities: (i) the level of physical being; (ii) the level of object expression; and (iii) the level of personality expression.

Cassirer used Raphael's oil painting—*School of Athens*—to explain where these three levels belong. Among them, the physical level is the medium in which the works of art can exist in physical time and space, and they are oil-colored pigments and linen canvas with some optical properties. The way of being for these materials is a necessary condition for works of art, but it has little to do with art. The key to distinguishing substances from other ordinary materials that have not been worked on is their subsequent two appearances. The color used in the oil painting has its "Darstelung" function because it refers to an object. In Raphael's *School of Athens*, the object people observe is the conversation between Aristotle and Plato in a specific situation, which constitutes what Cassirer calls "the level of object expression". But Cassirer (卡西尔 [Cassirer] 2004) believes that this is not the only real object of oil painting. It is not the two philosophers but Raphael himself who actually addressed us on the occasion. Cassirer tells us that the true meaning of *School of Athens* is the level of personality expression related to Raphael.

Cassirer stressed that the negation of any of these three levels will lead to the simplification of the dimension, which is not enough to highlight the real, deep dimension of human culture. However, these three levels are different in status. The first two levels are only the conditions and objects of art, and it is neither the object nor the object in the work (two philosophers in conversation) that makes art become art. It is Raphael's artistic expression of personality that makes art become art. As Emile Zola says, a work of art is "a corner of nature seen through a certain temperament". Here, Raphael's personality is the projection of "social culture and art" in this work. The reason Raphael became a great artist is that there is a "human" nature in his "personality" that is superior to that of ordinary people. The human nature here must be understood as the socially and culturally significant projection.

On the basis of the above discussion, we can see that when we discuss perspective as a means to realize iconicity, we seem to be discussing the first two of Cassirer's three levels. That is, we consider how to process the exact iconicity between the level of "object expression" and that of "physical being", particularly as they have nothing to do with artistic value. Panofsky observes that precise mathematical relationships do not seem to hinder the transmission of artistic freedom. As an expert in art history, he touched upon the interior of works of art in more detail than Cassirer. According to Panofsky, when perspective is regarded as a style, it constitutes an element of an artwork's value. That is, perspective does not directly influence artistic value when it is one of the elements of art; rather, it is only the mechanism for relating an object to its physical object. The ultimate significance of this topic derives from the fact that, when we discuss the overall relationship between "object expression" and "physical being", we bring to this relationship a sense of the "iconic probability" of a specific social culture while the artist creatively shows the "iconic convention" in his works of art in "personality". In short, perspective, as a means of iconicity, can become an effective constituent element of art when—and only when—it is expressed as a certain symbolic expression of social culture.

For Panofsky, the problem of perspective is transformed into how art, as an object in humanities, deals with the physical objective world. This necessarily leads back to the oldest and most interesting question in artistic philosophy, that is, how do signs in art imitate, represent, and reproduce the natural world?

Panofsky specifically translated these grand arguments into more technical issues. Especially when perspective laws are mature, this problem still represents the impact on the artistic means of the science and technology of certain artistic representations. The formalists in early art history focused more on the effect of the image and regarded it as one of the stylistic elements of the image. Wölfflin argues that the image effect is much more important than the image's faithful imitation of nature, while Riegl believes that the basic factuality in works of art is not its style in the sense of formalism. It is not a continuation of the objective object; instead, it is the embodiment of the artistic will of an era. Panofsky adopted a more accurate theoretical model—he attempted to solve the metaphysical problem of the former with the philosophy of "symbolic form" of a new Kantianism. He transformed the concept of the "thing in itself" into the abstract assumption of the knowable image in the artistic world. In other words, we must explore art and works of art in the sense

of knowability. At the same time, we do not take it as our "omniscient" proof, but rather to see the thing in itself as the foundation of everything.

In fact, it is not only true of perspective but also of proportion. Let us consider the human body as an example. It is not difficult to transform human beings into physical facts composed of several mathematical relations by getting rid ourselves of such puzzling arguments about subjectivity and transcendentalism. Panofsky calls such a fact "an objective fact that precedes artistic activity". What we need to ask is whether the objective fact "that precedes artistic activity" (referring in fact to what we usually call semiotic representation) constitutes the ultimate standard of semiotic representation. If it is a meta-yardstick, will the standard of humankind not be applied to it? Furthermore, there is another question raised by Panofsky, that is, what is the suitable standard and technical logic when we represent the proportion with a certain form of sign?

5.1.2.2 The Sameness of Artistic Representation

According to Cassirer, first, there should be an "objective object" to reflect "perspective" or "standard ratio". And when the object is semiotized by the artist in a special way, it becomes very attractive. Gombrich notes that art historians used clues to find places where Cezanne and van Gogh had set up their easels and photographed them so as to facilitate their comparison of van Gogh's and Cezanne's paintings. Such a move may be encouraging because we seem to be standing almost in the same position as the artists did. We can see what the artists saw. People often believe that they have the same "physiological visual function" as artists. As far as physiological science is concerned, the scene before us can form the same image on the artist's retina as on other people. The experience is exciting and attractive. It seems, unfortunately, to be a psychological motivation for people to be attracted to almost all "places of interest", which is illustrated well by the following two poetic lines from Meng Haoran: Various places of interest of the past dynasties were preserved well; we can pay visits to them now. Who would not want to be like those great souls at the creative moment and in the location where those great people once worked? Unlike their expectations, however, most suffer from delusions and self-deception. What we receive is still our own view and perspective—We cannot dispose of our own souls and then enter others'.

Most people cannot enter another person's creative moment, and neither can most trained people. German illustrator Ludwig Richter and his painting partners did their best to transcribe what they saw with absolute precision, but, to their great surprise, the paintings were quite different from the real things. Gombrich (1969) concluded that, in fact, there has never been a so-called scientific retinal image with which we can compare photos or paintings. In front of the painter is an endless series of images, which send out a complex stimulus pattern that passes through the optic nerve to the painter's brain. Even the artist knows nothing about it, let alone us. The question of how similar the image formed in his mind is to the photo is meaningless.

Cassirer (1944) pointed out a long time ago that when we say that the two painters are painting "the same" scenery, we are describing our aesthetic experience very improperly. From an artistic perspective, such a hypothetical sameness is entirely caused by illusion. Cassirer listed many of the "differences" of the same natural scenery, such as a scene in the dawn, at noon, on a rainy day, or on a sunny day… This is quite similar to what is implied in the saying that no man ever steps in the same river twice. Therefore, Cassirer believes that the view that "the sun is new every day" applies only to the "sun of art" rather than the "sun of science".

In fact, we can expand Cassirer's statement a little further. The objective object itself as a continuum cannot be achieved by any completely identical mechanical attempt. In other words, the view that "the sun is new every day" still applies to science. The so-called "new" means that the sun is a continuously moving body, changing in time and space, age and trait. Even as the object of science, today's sun cannot be the sun of yesterday, not to mention the sun in "consciousness". Cassirer (1944) distinguishes "aesthetic perception" from "sensory perception". He points out that in sensory perception, we are always satisfied with understanding some of the common and immutable characteristics of things around us, but the aesthetic experience is indescribably rich. It gives birth to the possibility that will never be realized in ordinary sensory experience.

Therefore, sameness cannot be distinguished in terms of the scientific category it belongs to, and neither can it be simply distinguished by the result of consciousness. It can be distinguished only when a sign's object is entitled with some meanings. Cassirer's "general perception" gives priority to its sameness because of the need for the classification of cognitive things, which is the same case with what he calls the sameness of the scientific object. In the process of sign communication, sameness cognition is the "selective" result of cognitive convenience. Once in the field of artistic objects, the key does not lie in whether the physical objects can be the same, but lies in that "non-sameness" is necessarily required for sign as an artistic dimension. Gombrich (1969) points out that it is impossible to give these things as objects. Any picture, always with visual imagination and supplement, may be understood. For viewers who have not acquired experience with cubism, they do not know the part they have not seen. Fortunately, the form of signs in art does not need to imitate the ready-made reality, but to discover the reality (Cassirer 1944). In other words, the fact of the object sought in the physical world has nothing to do with the ultimate truth, nor with artistic value. To be involved in the means of art represents the way one is related to art. It is only a tool for a purpose involving the construction of the sense of reality rather than the presentation of realness itself. Since it is a sense, we cannot discuss the perspective, proportion, or the object of any branch of the humanities alone without human beings involved and their perceptual system of signs.

5.2 Perspective and the Code of Proportions

Based on the analysis discussed above, perspective is a presupposed model of understanding for what we call an "objective" being in physical time and space, which is used as a coordinate to verify the "logic of visual consciousness". Therefore, the problem discussed here may involve perspective geometry in perceptual logic, but "perception" is an important logic, and we do not use mathematical logic to demonstrate the right and wrong of perception. In other words, it is still a concrete example of iconicity in visual and artistic logic, focusing on whether there is a mapping between the "expression level" and the "physical level" described by Cassirer.

5.2.1 "Perspective" as a Code: Self-Contained Codability of Decoding

Perspective originated from Latin, *perspicere,* which is translated as "to see through", and this is very much in line with its initial application in painting. However, perspective is closely related to the development of geometry. We might say that perspective results from the development of a certain stage of thought about the proportional harmony of numbers. "Proportion" and "perspective" are two different concepts. The former usually refers to the scale ratio of real objects, such as the human body, scene, or architecture, while the latter refers to a certain point of view and often emphasizes the overall relationship between void and emptiness. From the practical operation effect, people have long known that by seeing through side openings, the disproportionate "anamorphosis" of the two-dimensional plane can be reduced to a proportionate normal visual image (Gombrich 1969). This shows that proportion and perspective can be transformed. In essence, both concepts point to the composition of a mathematical relationship. The Pythagorean School believes that all things come from numbers and that a universal order can be constructed from them. Pythagoras studied the mathematical proportion of the sound of music. Pythagoreans also produced creative ideas in visual graphics. For example, they devised the "Tetraktys" and regarded it as a perfect symbol for reducing numbers into space and reducing arithmetic into geometry (Eco and McEwen 2005). Plato's *Timaeus* also concerns the idea of conceptualizing the world according to numbers. From the humanistic movement to the Renaissance, the idea of numbers was constantly implemented as an operable specification in the field of image. For example, Piero della Francesca wrote the first part of the *De Prospectiva Pingendi,* and Luca Pacioli wrote *De Divina Proporzione.*

Hence, the precise representation of perspective and proportion seems to be technically simpler, which makes it more necessary for the perspective in art texts to return to the humanities. When we take them as the research object in the humanities, the art text and its style must become codified elements of the sign text. The meaning of the text does not present itself; it only appears in the process of codification of

coding and decoding. As a kind of code for visual art, perspective presents the first problem that within the "input" of code in coding and decoding. Specifically, from the viewer's perspective, we are all information imputers. In fact, what we usually call perspective means that artists represent their input according to a certain rule of perspective. When people look at artists' representation, perspective is already "the shadow of the shadow of the objective world". In other words, whether or not we have established a set of rules about perspective or proportion, in most cases we talk about perspective through an artist's representation rather than basing it on what we see in nature with our naked eyes. In particular, the perspective that people usually consider is mainly about two-dimensional paintings.

From the discussion above, we derive the double coding links and two sets of coding rules about perspective: (i) natural scene—the viewer (self-coding, self-decoding); (ii) natural scene—artist (decoding, coding)— viewer (re-coding, re-decoding).

The natural scene is generally considered to be a kind of sign without a sender, and, accordingly, there is no coding process. Therefore, it is only necessary when interpreting the sign for the decoder to construct, in reverse, a sign sender that does not really exist. For example, *tianyi* 天意 (the Will of Heaven) and *guifu shengong* 鬼斧神工 (superior craftsmanship; literally, the ghost's axe and the divine workmanship) are two examples to illustrate a process of reverse construction of sending intention (赵毅衡 2011b). A large amount of natural scenery has no intention sender, so there is no subject for sending signs for certain ideas. However, the process of codification is still a complete one because the decoder embeds the coding process in the decoding process. Moreover, this process is not limited to objects that do not send signs, and it includes objects of artificial signs. Natural objects cannot be acquired as continuous and non-articulate things in themselves. That is, decoders do not decode what they receive according to the information provided by nature; decoders realize coding first in a "human" perceptual way, based on their own acquired socialized experience, and then it is possible to realize decoding. Abstractly speaking, such ability is not unique to the artist. Instead, it is the common ability of all sign recipients; otherwise, any sign is invalid. However, the ability of coding a certain sign varies from person to person. Therefore, there is no music at all for non-musical ears, and there is no scenery for non-aesthetic eyes.

5.2.2 Coordination of Perspective Code

According to the discussion above, perspective is divided into two sets of code mechanisms. One is the visual impression, which is based on certain viewing, specifically, the "sense of spatial perspective" acquired by audiences when they view the painting works. In this sense, perspective must first be an "illusion": a three-dimensional perception constructed on a two-dimensional plane. Gombrich (1969) even humorously regards "the skill of perspective" as "the most important skill in the armory of illusion art". If viewers do not have enough acquired experience in perspective, they

may not be able to effectively understand perspective. That is, they will not form a three-dimensional visual impression on a two-dimensional picture, as can be seen in toddler paintings or primitive art. According to some of Gombrich's selected papers compiled by Fan Jingzhong in Chinese (贡布里希 [Gombrich] 1987), Gombrich places special emphasis on the indispensable and important role of "good readers" in art.

Of course, illusion is a metaphorical term because there is no objective "true perception" in opposition to it. We can only judge whether it is true or not by geometric computing. It is the second set of code mechanisms within "perspective logic". As a presentation method based on geometric logic, the illusion has a grammatical structure that does not change with human perception. This structure is not based on an individual viewer's subjective perception. However, if we look at perspective geometry in the humanities, we will find that the geometric result of perspective is not a constant but a variable that changes according to the specific set of rules. When shooting objects with a wide-angle lens, we get an exaggerated perspective. The normal perspective results from viewing things at an angle similar to that of human eyes. Therefore, the camera lens with this function is also called a "standard lens". That is, no matter how objective the perspective is—and although it does not change according to human feelings—its results are still interpreted with human perception as a reference. Furthermore, it is not only in mathematical logic that geometric logic does not change according to human will. Once in perceptual logic, the two sets of codes will work on the image at the same level.

5.2.2.1 Incomplete Geometric Code System

Mozi notes that his observations regarding geometric projection and light's property of traveling in a straight line as follows: when light appears, there's no shadow at all. However, perspective, as a kind of theory, has developed in the West. Essentially, perspective both follows and applies the corresponding laws of geometry. The most direct process is to project light onto a plane and faithfully record the results. We can construct three-dimensional space effects in two-dimensional space by systematic operation according to mathematical relationships. The theoretical system of Euclidean geometry is believed to be the most influential model in mathematical theory so far. However, today we have some other references. For example, the Euclidean geometric axiomatic system does not contradict the non-Euclidean geometric axiom system, and therefore it is equivalent. Gödel's reflective study of the wisdom of prior generations illustrates the shift of regard for the mathematical system, that is, once regarded as perfect, it is no longer held as godlike in perfection (Hofstadter 1999). Nevertheless, it is necessary to make it clear that, even from the perspective of mathematical logic, Euclidean geometry is not an objective truth on which perspective can absolutely rely. We do not delve into the logical problem of Euclidean geometry for the time being, placing it rather in the signs of visual perception as a kind of working assumption. Even if this assumption is acknowledged, the incomplete systematic truth is not the only reference available in perceptual signs.

We can understand perspective not because of the objectivity of perspective, but because of our own imagination. Because light travels in a straight line, we cannot see the front and the back of an object at the same time in our daily lives, and usually we can see either of the two sides or part of both sides. The experience we acquire enables us to have the ability to imagine the other side, and this eventually develops into a gestalt. Alternatively, people need this acquired psychological ability to restore objects through the projection map. When an arrangement is different from general acquisition, there will be confusion in the restoration of the object. Therefore, people's ultimate reference for the ostensibly correct perspective is the acquired experience of people along with the imagination developed through that experience.

5.2.2.2 Perspective: A Restricted Visual Formula

Limited Spatial Perspective

Perspective does not present the omniscient point of view of cubism painting, but offers a limited point of view. A typical single-point perspective even declines the turn of the head, with the viewer looking at the scene through a peephole (Gombrich 1982). Countless different shapes, called equivalent configurations, can lead to one projection outline at a particular angle, making this projection deceptive. Gombrich (1969) cites Ames's chair projection effect, which uses the principle of equivalent configurations. The internal structure is made up of nothing more than messy but cleverly arranged wires, but the projection results in the visual psychology of the "chair". Ames's experiment shows that consciousness is not an interpretation. What we see through the hole is not what is there; it is in fact a condition for our association of acquired experience.

Limited Temporal Perspective

Perspective not only denies the movement of space, but also limits the passage of time. The object it sets is static. Once the change of an object occurs in perspective, everything will change. The "four-dimensional" painting mimics the temporary retention of visual consciousness, and even if the perspective is realized by overlapping multiple frames, the single picture is still a slice of the static state that does not exist at a certain time. For moving objects, there is no moment of absolute "stagnation", because if every moment contains stagnation, it is impossible to generate movement. In terms of the dimension of time, perspective is only a hypothetical work setup.

Simplification of the Formula

Perspective, with the original meaning of "see through", is certainly related to humans' natural visual perception, i.e., the image on a human "retina". We know that the retina in the eyeball is curved rather than a plane; therefore, to achieve the perspective effect, the image in perspective should also be formed on a curved surface.

As a result, it must be a "thin slice" of a concrete object's image in time and space. To be more precise, it is an abstraction and a limitation, a free viewpoint that limits space, and a result of casting off temporality and motility.

5.2.2.3 Paradoxical Consciousness in Geometric Perspective

Perspective seems to be a kind of geometric and mathematical relation independent of human subjectivity. Nevertheless, to withstand the test of visual results, a perspective needs to be firmly based on one's "customary viewpoint". Mathematical relations alone are not enough. When we incorporate perspective into the dimension of Panofsky's "symbolic form", we must consider the diversity of its meaning, or, as Gödel explains, the completeness and self-consistency of the system cannot be obtained at the same time. Perspective, on the basis of geometric logic, can form its own system that is believed to be universally correct because of its mathematical relationship. In the Renaissance, there was already substantial support for mathematical research in perspective theory. At that time, those artists who pursued accurate perspective believed that smart perspective was not only correct and realistic, but also a beautiful and pleasing model. Therefore, other works that did not conform to the rules of perspective were regarded as "primitive", and "ugly", and even not as artworks at all (Eco and McEwen 2005). Here, this perspective of "correctness" is applied in the art field of visual consciousness that transcends geometric logic. However, the study of visual psychology has shown that perspective is unable to cross the boundary. Even if the graph is drawn strictly according to the rules of perspective, it will result in a visual paradox. Gombrich cites such a simple example to illustrate this as follows: If columns are drawn strictly according to the rules of perspective, the columns that are farthest from the center look wider than the one in the center.

5.2.3 Artistic Representation and Transcendence of Perspective

5.2.3.1 Organic Theory and Relative Perspective Ratio

A strict geometric perspective is not the only standard followed in artistic creation because perspective based on mathematical logic has many limitations as a way to evaluate artistic perception. Perspective based on Euclidean geometry is often unimportant in art. However, any serious work of art follows its own spatial logic. Broadly speaking, perspective may be defined as "the rules of spatial construction followed in art images". There are some laws of spatial expression in works of art that constitute the perspective code rules in art. Even if the rule is free and irregular, it is still the meta-rule of the whole work.

In the early days, Egyptians segmented the surface of drawing material (such as paper) with a square grid before using it to represent the human body or animals. The length of each side of the square is equal to the distance from the sole of a man's foot to the ankle or the width of a fist, but such a standard is still uncertain in the study of artistic archaeology. For example, according to later Egyptian rules, a certain ratio is based upon the length of a foot (Panofsky 1955). From the point of view of semiotic representation theory rather than art history, we simply need to recognize the legitimacy of Egyptian art and consider that there is a rule of proportion. Renaissance artists' derogation of such a standard did not become an absolute reference for the lack of artistic value of Egyptian art; it aimed to show that there is almost no absolute proportion and correct perspective in art history. Greek sculptures were made with Egyptian artists' techniques, but the proportional relationship changed. Unlike Egyptian artists (sometimes referred to as stonemasons), Greek sculptors needed to consider "visual impression" and "how to express the flexibility of the character's body and the diversity shortened in line with perspective in the eyes of the artist, and even the specific environment of the work of art after it is completed" (Panofsky 1955). Polyclitus, an ancient Greek sculptor, demonstrated a perfect figure ratio of 1:7 in his sculpture. Thus, a treatise on creating and proportioning sculpture based on his sculptures is called *The Canon*, but in later Greek sculptures, the ratio gradually grew to 1:8. Vitruvius believed that the perfect ratio for a figure was as follows: the height of the figure was eight heads, which was applied to Renaissance art practice. This so-called perfect proportion is still employed in diverse forms of art. In contemporary art in fashion, this ratio is usually 1:9 or even 1:10, and, similarly, the fixed figure ratio is not followed in comics and games based on visual effects. In fact, in ancient Greece, people already recognized the shortcomings of this fixed ratio. Polyclitus's proportional standard is dynamic, depending on the movement of the body and the change of visual angle. He believed that the figure ratio should be adjusted specifically according to the position of the viewer. Thus, the upper body of the figure above the horizon should be moderately longer, and the opposite side of a three-quarter profile should be thickened (Panofsky 1955). Actually, these realistic

artworks are not in line with the modification of objective objects. This is consistent with the motivation of the nine heads needed for clothing painting, that is, the possible viewing conditions of the viewer are included in the forecast.

Panofsky (1991) believes that the question about whether the painters of the classical period could paint or wanted to paint in a certain way is a wrong one. What matters is not the painters' hands, but their desire to have a mandatory impersonalized force in aesthetics. Although classical painters did not have the opportunity to learn the Euclidean laws of geometry, to some extent they achieved linear perspective. In his view, there is no need to pursue and express the sense of space in plastic arts through Euclidean systematic space. As the person who expresses a *Kunstwollen*, the artist himself/herself is the presenter of the inner meaning of the times. For example, the arbitrariness in people's treatment of the distance and direction in modern art's image space reflects the knowledge system of this era. The aesthetic space and philosophical space of an era can completely reconstruct the consciousness space. Therefore, symbolic visual images are transformed into logical forms under different circumstances, and they disguise themselves as some kind of real perceptual form (Panofsky 1991).

5.2.3.2 Perspective and Artistic Value: Vitruvius's Accurate Model of Mathematical Relations

Marcus Vitruvius Pollio (Vitruvius 1874), a first-century A.D. Roman architect, produced an accurate treatise on the proportional relationship and perspective in diverse subject areas featuring geometric relationships, including human physiology, architecture, and others. In his masterpiece, *Ten Books on Architecture*, Vitruvius points out that the natural center of the human body is the navel. This is because if a man opens his hands and feet, lies on his back, and draws a circle with the navel at the center like a compass, his fingers and toes will come into contact with the circumference. In this way, not only a circle but also a square can be drawn over the human body. That is, if you measure the length of the body from the soles of the feet to the top of the head and measure the width from one tip of the middle finger to the other with arms and hands open to form a straight line, you will find that the height (length) and width are equal, just as a square is determined by a ruler on the plane. Centuries after Vitruvius, Leonardo da Vinci drew the famous *Uomo vitruviano* according to Vitruvius's description of the proportion of the human body, and it has become a model of the proportion of the human body.

According to Panofsky (1991), Vitruvius's statement of proportion is more about a mathematical problem than an artistic one. In the precise perspective ratio, art itself is absent, and the perfection of perspective does not lessen or increase the freedom of art. He points out that if perspective is not an element of value, it is obviously an element of style, and it is a symbolic form when the spiritual meaning is related to the material sign in concrete reality (Panofsky 1991). In other words, in Panofsky's view, the accurate mathematical relationship is logical and is not the artistic value itself. Only when it is involved in the symbolic form as an element of the semiotic

relation can it constitute an artwork's style, form and aesthetics, as classical Chinese painting has long recognised. Furthermore, it is precisely because of the recognition of the relationship between artistic value and perspective realism that Chinese painting has not been greatly impacted since the increased transmission of Western perspective. Chinese painting and Western painting are aesthetically different from each other. The theory of perspective relationships in Chinese painting is a summary of artists' acquired experience instead of an accurate measurement relationship in natural science. Therefore, Zou Yigui, a painting theorist in the Qing Dynasty, said after understanding the perspective law of Western painting that Western painters are good at drawing the line, so they emphasize precision on representing light, distance and space, through painting shadows of figures, houses and trees. The colors and painting techniques they used are quite different from those used in Chinese painting. The shading arrangement narrows according to the measurements of trigonometry. The palaces and rooms painted in this way are so real that people almost want to walk in to have a look. Painting students can be enlightened by even a little reference to these techniques. But in general, Western painting is not as wonderful as Chinese painting in drawing techniques. Although Western painting looks so neat and precise, it is not consummate in artistry, which is not in line with that of Chinese painting (邹一桂 1985). The comment on Western painting shows that although Zou Yigui was surprised by the "lifelikeness" resulting from the accurate perspective in Western painting, he did not accept this characteristic of Western painting at the artistic level. Instead, he believed that "a little reference to these techniques" is adequate, and this coincides with Panofsky's understanding of the role of visual perspective in art. This view of art, even today, is an important reference.

To sum up, the technicalization of perspective includes mathematical code logic, but this logic does not result in the dominant advantage of signs in art, or even the perfection of artistic "lifelikeness". True art is not the result of the coordination of geometry, mathematics, or some kind of text relationship. The artist and the viewer produce the game of interpretation power in the art text, with each party having a set of coding and decoding mechanisms. When we consider the whole process of producing, coding, and decoding of the author and the recipient, perspective or proportion must be a local means for a set of cultural codes in the artistic metalanguage. The perspective of artistic images, subordinate to artistic aesthetics and the expression of a *Kunstwollen*, is the realization of nature's probability of iconicity through art.

5.3 The Evolution of Art

Modern is a basic coordinate of art history where art history is roughly divided into three parts: pre-modern, modern, and post-modern. These three parts are not entirely temporal, but they show a comprehensive collection of space–time and cultural thought manifested by ways of artistic expression. Therefore, modernity is of particular importance to the discussion about art. The theory of art history,

which is based on modernity, has undergone great changes since Plato's time. Postmodern art often even appears as "dissimilarity", leading to a corresponding change in the ways of understanding and interpreting art. Among them, simulation theory and representation theory became popular one after another. Simulation theory is the most influential hypothesis on the origin of art. There has never been a definite answer to the origin of art as a "Sphinx Mystery", but at least from the perspective of art form, simulation theory has always been of special importance. Aristotle believes that art not only mimics the external objective world but also reflects the internal laws of things. Both the external image and the internal law are closely linked to iconicity. With the diversity and subversiveness of modern art, the perfectly precise representation in the Renaissance is no longer the only important reference for evaluating works. Not only that, modern art is often presented as "dissimilar" and "inexplicable". Accordingly, some scholars believe that art has transformed itself from representation to expression.

The question in this section is: Does the rise of the expression "theory" mean that representation and simulation have been moved away from art? Do art images still have iconicity? In this section, the art text is studied from the view of the motivation of iconicity to distinguish the concepts of *xiang* (像) and *si* (似). In so doing, we find that modern art realizes the *xiang* (像, image) of cultural symbols through *busi*不似 (dissimilarity) and "refusal to explain". This is not a negation of iconicity, but an affirmation of art as an iconic probability. The exploration of means of iconicity and possibility in modern art will finally expand the connotation of the representation theory of art signs through art freedom. In other words, expression is a more profound form of representation, and the semiotic possibility of a free art world will be explored through more possibilities of "similarity".

5.3.1 Semiotic Attributes of Artistic Images

5.3.1.1 The Coexistence of Three Semiotic Attributes in Art Texts

As explained in the previous chapters, convention, similarity, and indication are humanity's basic ways of signification. All of them exist in each sign. Therefore, depending on its dominant property, a sign is a symbol, an icon, or an index. Visual art can be regarded as an icon in terms of its intuitive characteristics. Within the category of semiotics, all images can be classified as icons. Therefore, iconicity is usually regarded as the most important semiotic property of art, and art is believed to emphasize thinking in images. At the same time, as a way of meaning reference, art must rely on a certain representatum (drawing, sculpture, screen, body, etc.) to point to its meaning. Bensen, by combining indexicality and iconicity, regards art as an iconic probability of the indexical reality (Nöth 1990). In the previous chapter, we discussed iconicity as a kind of motivation, but all motivation includes any arbitrary way of connecting the object being referred to, including the use of logical motivation, motivation of causality, motivation of contiguity, and others.

Art images, like other signs, follow the two directions of signification of human cultural symbols—motivation and convention. Any image can be regarded as an icon. However, even if it is the most similar sign—absolute icon—it also has some conventionalities. Otherwise, it does not fall into the category of the sign because it cannot help us recognize the sign and the referent. The image must be different from its prototype (艾尔雅维茨 [Erjavec] 2003); it is impossible to realize a complete icon in art signs. Therefore, any art or image must be conventionalized. The institution-history theory regards art as a certain historical or artistic context. It is the result of convention in a social context, which is often manifested in social behaviors such as declaration, display, and purchase.

The conventionality of art signs is very different from their information transmission in non-art forms. Signs focus on cognition, communication efficiency, and cognitive certainty. When a kind of sign is conventionalized in a cultural group, it then loses the inherent motivation to actively change the convention. Therefore, information communication in the form of non-art instrumental rationality is diachronically stable. The art sign is a kind of "long process" ideographic type (whose intended interpretation is realized through a long process), which does not pursue communication efficiency but tries to highlight human subjectivity, as mentioned above. "There are a thousand Hamlets in a thousand people's eyes." tends to express that humanity's rich subjectivity results from the long process in an artistic expression. Even realistic paintings, which emphasize iconicity the most, also feature a great deal of human individuality. It is the same case with the visual art of images, such as painting and photography, which are called artistic representations. They become art not because of their similarity to the object, but because of the "similarity in a certain way" with the object. The reason is that the essence of art does not lie in its objective transparency but in the conventionality shown in a certain iconic way. Convention, as the basis for a random but not pure arbitrary re-motivatedness, is the exploration of the "probability of the way of iconicity".

Art, as a cultural symbol and as a whole, is bound to enrich human conventions, but we must keep innovating. This leads to a contradictory relationship in which the broad field of art is subordinate to conventions. However, in specific cases, this is not the situation, and the internal relationship has become the internal driving force for art to break with conventions. It thus makes every art sign necessarily the result of some arbitrariness. Countless individual examples of arbitrariness result in a new reading agreement; that is why it is often said that innovation is the essence of art. To break with conventions, the art sign must make certain that the gap between the signifier and the referent is never bridged, even while innovating for the future and inheriting the past. Once the gap is bridged, the artistic signification will be reduced to the communication of instrumental rationality. It is in this sense that we believe that the dissimilarity of modern art is inevitable, or that the essence of artistic signification is the breakthrough in the game between arbitrariness and motivation.

5.3.1.2 The Role of Iconicity in Art

As discussed above, the similarity or precise description in the general sense is not the essential goal pursued by art. However, this does not mean that iconicity as a semiotic mechanism has nothing to do with art; instead, it depends on how we understand iconicity. If we test iconicity and determine that it is regarded as a relationship of mirror-like copying and an objective physical relationship, and then it is in a wrong direction. In this sense, it is a mechanical interpretation of iconicity as well as a misinterpretation of the concept of representation to take iconicity as the only means of representation. The pure and objective realization of imitation is only the initial image of the source of art, while representation already allows abstraction and recognizes stylistic expressions. The relationships among imitation and representation and iconicity are immediate and accessible, while expressionism emphasizes the human mind. Matisse said that we have higher requirements for painting which must serve the expressionistic artist's inner fantasies (赫斯 [Hess] 1980). At that time, as the mental image was regarded as opposed to the real subjective world, representation became both the subject and the object of the expression.

Iconicity does not reflect the physical accuracy of art as it concerns the breakthrough of objective objects. The breakthrough in concrete things is the way leading to the abstract truth. Only by going beyond the physical bed made by the carpenter can it be similar to the artistic idea of "bed". A specific bed may be tall or short, with railings or without. It may be made of wood or stainless steel. It may have legs or may not. All these concepts do not have to be parts of specific beds, but they are multiple mental images of the bed in one's mind. Artistic expression cannot be separated from mental image, so iconicity, as an abstract concept, has become a form to which art inevitably resorts. Therefore, signs in art enrich the dimension of viewing things by going beyond the convention, but they do not generally represent concrete things. In this sense, all representations try to reach the true idea with the help of true specific utensils—what might be called a super truth. Human subjectivity, shown by human creativity, constitutes the essence of art. Iconicity is the coordinate that the art text is unable to abandon, being able only to be close to or deviate from it in specific works.

5.3.2 From Imitation to Representation

The relationship between iconicity and art texts can be traced back to Plato's Imitation Theory and Mirror Theory. When Plato discussed artists making things in *The Republic*, he pointed out that, through the rotation of mirrors in all directions, people can make shapes of the sun, stars, earth, animals, utensils, vegetation and themselves (柏拉图 [Plato] 1963). Pictures, like mirrors, are imitations of shapes. A painter, like the man who rotates the mirror, merely creates the shape of a thing. The object for painters or mirrors to imitate is not the truth itself, but the concrete things made in an attempt to represent the true idea. Therefore, the painter has to imitate the imitated work. The imitation theory was once interpreted as devaluing art. In imitation, the

"Idea" created by God is regarded as pre-existence, and the artistic image is seen as a kind of imitation that cannot be reached. Through imitation, we merely try our best to be close to the original, but we cannot copy it. In Plato's view, the original is always superior to its replicas and more accurate than its replicas, as the painter's technical practice confirms. Da Vinci realized that painters often end up in despair… especially when they see that their works lack three-dimensional effect and vividness enjoyed by the mirror image of things (Gombrich 1969). Therefore, imitation results in a limited "representatum", or, the ability to express the object in a semiotized way.

In da Vinci's time, artists recognized their own limitations and strove to appeal to the inherent needs of the work. The artists no longer blindly sought to re-portray the real objective world, but pursued limited presentation under the premise of recognizing that the truth cannot be replicated. From the objective and equivalent realization to the representation of visual effects, imitation theory was transformed into representation theory, and this is believed to represent important progress in the history of art theory. According to Bullock, by mirror-like imitation, the objective reality of the outside world is taken as the criterion against which art works are evaluated, while the representation theory of art focuses on the way in which the works themselves depict reality (Parsons and Blocker 1993). However, the purpose of representation is still to realize some signifying relationship to objective reality. In other words, both emphasize some kind of reflection of art on the world. Whether imitation or representation, it is the presentation of an iconic relationship in a certain way. Iconicity is a mechanism for an art text to relate to the world outside the text (source of creation, mode of interpretation, social culture). The two sides can be in either a subject-object relationship, a subject-subject relationship, or an intertextual relationship. Therefore, imitation is an asymmetric relationship, and iconicity can be symmetrical (Parsons and Blocker 1993).

Thus, the more primitive imitation emphasizes and pursues the impossible "replication effect", only to realize limited iconicity as a means leading to the truth. In the theory of art, the representation theory has become dominant because of its technical operability, and imitation is regarded as the original form of representation theory. Representation theory is what imitation theory developed into at an advanced stage, and it allows for non-objective expression. In representation or imitation, imaginal iconicity is still the dominant part of signs in art. Using the above example, when art takes the bed as the theme, the bed in the real world becomes the only path to the idea of the bed and thus is the most important thing. However, the idea of art itself has become a "by-product", which is a companion found in the pursuit of the imaginal iconicity of the bed.

In pre-modern art history, imaginal iconicity was so important that art was spontaneously displaying its diversity and styles in the pursuit of the probability of imaginal iconicity. Artists usually thought that through the study of technology and intense training, they could almost realize flawless copying and reproduction, but the reality often surprised them. Nevertheless, in the history of Western art, artists were always ready to represent objective things more accurately, and they realized a variety of methods and technical means leading to iconicity or even to absolute iconicity. Classical art has achieved significant accomplishments in beauty and proportion. For

example, in ancient Greek and even Egyptian art, the exploration of laws of perspective, proportion, color coordination, and others have also surpassed the re-imitation of physical objects that Plato called art. Visual art seems to follow some abstract principles that are closer to what he would refer to as ideas. In other words, painting is not the re-imitation of a specific bed. Painters or sculptors have often arranged visual elements in terms of the golden ratio perspective and painting composition methods. Painters and carpenters were often considered to be at the same level of artistry then. The difference is that the carpenter creates a concrete reality from an abstract concept in the form of a bed, while the painter concretizes the beauty of the abstract concept. The idea never presents itself; it is always hidden in all kinds of concrete things. Therefore, a certain degree of iconicity is an attribute that visual art cannot dispose of.

"Iconic relation" in some way has been pursued throughout art history. Pre-modern art is more or less a direct or disguised representation (such as the image of ghosts and gods) of some obvious similarity. In other words, in the process of the development of art, imaginal iconicity and artistic standards sometimes even become one. Renaissance artists who mastered perspective and various realistic techniques even thought that accurate and realistic art was not only more correct but also more beautiful. To sum up, the difference between representation and imitation lies in the fact that representation theory recognizes the basic nature of art as a sign. Thus, art is not the actual presence of the object for expression, but a kind of semiotic presence. However, what is important is that they have something in common, that is, both lay special emphasis on imaginal iconicity and subject-object reflection. The theory of representation has prepared us for the indexical iconicity. Representation will finally establish a signifying relationship of signs in art. However, in the pre-modern stage, imaginal iconicity still seemed to be a particularly important pursuit, the limitation of which was shown by the impact of technology after the Renaissance fully developed.

5.3.3 Representation and Expression

5.3.3.1 The Prominence of Perception

However, no matter how accurate their imitation is, artists cannot achieve representation without deviation from the original. They reluctantly became the footnotes of the works of art defined by Zola, who says a work of art is nothing more than a natural corner seen through a certain temperament (Gombrich 1969). On the premise of laying enough emphasis on "individual differences and probabilities", we agree with Bensen's view of art that art is an iconic probability of the indexical reality. That is, art inevitably has some kind of indexicality to the world, and iconicity is the way to indicate the world (whether in reality or spirit), while probability is a non-specific reflection of the world's possibility, and its exploration opens the way of iconicity. The freedom of art exists in probability, which does not mean inevitably following the existing conventions; rather, it means engaging in open exploration.

In the pursuit of similarity over a long time, probability has formed spontaneously. This does not seem to be an advantage and, in fact, has been regarded as human's limitation. For the generations after the invention of photography, it would even upset the painters. Once photography began to increase in popularity, Ingres led a number of painters to demand the government ban the technology because they thought it created unfair competition. At that time, painters not only suffered intense competition within their fields, but also felt a great impact on their methods of painting. After all, a person untrained in art can now accurately represent and retain the image of the object with the help of mechanical equipment. However, due to the impact of this irreversible trend of technological development, the visual language differences between painting and photography have been fully unearthed, and the artifice of painting has become its unique selling point as an art form. In modern art, the value of such difference has been strongly affirmed, and it has even surpassed that of expressing iconicity in objects. Realism, with the passage of time, has become synonymous with the lack of personality in art, in some cases. Moreover, it is believed that popular photographic and realistic works did not adequately advance solutions to major problems in art (岛子 2001). Therefore, realism's value has been questioned even as a training method of painting.

According to the expression theory in the arts that emerged in the nineteenth century in the West, art originated from the need for emotional expression and communication. Representative views include the following: Croce's theory of aesthetics, with the "logic of intuition" or "representation"; Collingwood's doctrine of reenactment; Louis Arnaud Reid's "theory of perception"; and so on. Because expression theory rose with the development of modern art practice and provided an explanation for modern art to a certain extent, it has made considerable progress, once surpassing even the theory of reproduction as the dominant art theory. Although they are opposed to one another, expression and representation, according to scholars, have respectively developed into expressionism aesthetics and realism represented by mirror theory or imitation theory (肖伟胜 2011). The theory of expression may be interpreted through the theory of representation, but the object of representation has changed from the imitation of the external world to the perceived imitation of man's inner world. The former reflects the mirror-like reality of the outer world, while the latter reflects the reality of the inner world (刘悦笛 2008).

In the 1980s, China witnessed a round of discussion on the relationship between representation and expression. Senior scholars, such as Liu Zaifu, Wang Chaowen, Wu Lifu, Wu Zhongjie, and Zhou Laixiang discussed this topic and developed similar academic views. At that time, expression and representation were basically set as subject and object, respectively, by researchers. Therefore, more discussions are needed to explain the artistic problems today, and it is believed that the discussion will continue for 30 years or more.

In the early discussions about expression and representation in China, the two issues were usually regarded as opposed to each other in category, and they were only related to each other in artistic practice. Some scholars regard impressionism as the watershed between expression and reproduction in the history of human art (边文刚 2009), and some scholars regard Western art as the development from representation

to expression. Compared with the West, the development path of China is just the opposite. For example, Zhou Laixiang (周来祥 1982) once put forward the idea that Chinese classical aesthetics is generally biased towards expression, which is opposed to representation, imitation and reason in Western aesthetics.

5.3.3.2 The Relativity of Representation and Expression

Representation and expression have attracted their own theories, academically. However, intuitively, representation and expression are two relative concepts. The category of art based on expression and representation is likely to regard the image as something represented and music as something expressed. Within the image, it is easy for people to regard photography as something represented and painting as something expressed; in the painting, it is often easy to regard concrete paintings as something represented and abstract paintings as something expressed. It shows that expression and representation are related to each other logically instead of externally. That is, there are factors of representation within the expression, and representation is not pure representation.

There have been too many problems in the discussion of expression and representation, resulting in confusion in our customary understanding. However, we may translate the concepts into clearer terms—arbitrariness and iconic motivation—as Gombrich (1969) did in his analysis of this category. He reviewed the relationship between the two concepts through the motivation of language signs and drew the conclusion that "the great wonder of artistic language… In the hands of a great artist, the object image is semi-transparent". The following question arises, that is, does the art sign text have some kind of iconic motivation? When the question is answered, we can find out whether one of the directions of modern art's development should be the self-expression of a "completely arbitrary" mind, one without iconic motivation.

a. Types of *xiangsi* (像似, iconicity) and its decomposition of *xiang* (像) and *si* (似)

Signs in image art enjoy both indexicality and conventionality, as far as their intuitive media characteristics are concerned, they are still iconic. Peirce once divided iconicity into image iconicity, diagrammatic iconicity, and metaphorical iconicity according to the degree of abstraction. His classification is clear but lacks maneuverability. In the field of artistic image, an effective formal logic may be developed to distinguish different types of iconicity, and this should help to understand the development of signs in art.

First, imaginal iconicity may be interpreted as objective proximity, measured on the yardstick of scientific logic (such as perspective, rule, photocopy)—results based on the scale of indirectly man-made tools, such as picture reproduction and camera shooting. Although sometimes the lifelikeness of artificial painting may be higher, things may have a certain subjective color as a result of the human mind.

Diagrammatic iconicity is structural and integral to psychological perception; however, it does not require the property of being accurately measured physically. Because we can always find a concrete correlative to the iconicity, it is a kind of iconicity with the property of being psychologically measurable, and essentially it is the embodiment of a sign's indexicality in an icon.

Abstract iconicity, or metaphorical iconicity, cannot be measured against an objective yardstick, but it can only be related in concept. Metaphor is an aspect of convention, and it has become a commonly used rhetorical device in the process of culturization with an untraceable source. Therefore, metaphorical iconicity is actually the embodiment of conventionality in iconicity.

It is important to distinguish *xiang* (像) from *si* (似), and to clarify the difference between them. 像 and 似 are synonyms in Chinese, and even interchangeable. However, in terms of word sources, they are different. 像 is a simulation between man and nature with subjective involvement. According to Kang Yin's (康殷 1979) *An Analysis of the Origin of Characters: An Instructional Text*, the character 似 is originally written as "  ", which is the objective result of comparing two things. It is written in the first part of *Xici* (《系辞》) that "Yi yu tiandi zhun, gu neng milun tiandi zhi dao…yu tiandi xiangsi, gu buwei (《易》与天地准，故能弥纶天地之道……与天地相似，故不违)". It is obvious that "*si*" in this sentence is synonymous with "*zhun*" in "yu tiandi zhun" and means "follow", "observe", or "being in line with". Therefore, it shows that 似 describes an objective comparison, making it imaginal iconicity. 像, on the other hand, represents an abstract and subjective concept, which is close to metaphorical iconicity. The diagrammatic iconicity seems to be iconicity between imaginal iconicity and metaphorical iconicity, so 像似 (iconicity) has a precise and rich connotation.

In the discussion of representation and expression in painting arts, many misunderstandings have arisen historically because these two concepts have not been clearly distinguished. The traditional *shenxing jianbei* (神形兼备, similar both in appearance and presence for humans, and similarity in externality and internality for things) is, in fact, a general statement, and *xing* (形) is often misunderstood to mean objective (似), with *shen* (神) identified as subjective 像. In fact, *shenxing jianbei* describes the perceptual 像 instead of the objective 似. The analysis of perspective and proportion in the previous section shows that *xing* also derives from revising the physical objective yardstick according to subjective perception. If there is a compromise, it must be the objective existence of the socio-cultural convention. In other words, imaginal iconicity is not only physical objectivity, but also a yardstick of cultural conventions. The yardstick formed unconsciously and collectively has gone beyond individual subjectivity and has gradually become an external standard. After all, this standard employs human beings as the ultimate yardstick, so a formal theory of art must also be based on human beings as a measure.

b. The internal sameness of representation and expression

The opposition between iconicity and artistic freedom is like that between the kite and the line. Without iconic motivation as the basis, the arbitrariness of image art

will fall into unreasonable "chaos", but if it is firmly restrained, art will lack corresponding development. Mental image as a particularly critical concept connects art expression and art representation, and it dispels the opposition between iconicity and convention. When a mental image is regarded as an understandable sign, painting becomes a sign text, which is another process of semiotic interpretation for a mental image. Accordingly, all artists' representations are transformed into works through the connection to the art's mental image. On the contrary, an expressive work cannot be separated from the representation of the artist's mental image and the abstract reflection of the artist's mental image of the world. Furthermore, the external world includes not only natural things, but also things in the relationship between a specific society and its history. Is the transformation of ordinary things into art texts not the result of combining artists and specific historical relationships? The pure expression theory may ignore the potential iconic relation between the works of art and social culture, and the pure imitation theory tends to be the mechanical representation theory. In a broad sense, any expression may be regarded as a variation of representation because a basis for 似 may be found. Any representation, in fact, must be more than pure copying. Even photographic realism and realistic photography are only art *fuxiang* because they have been semiotized by artists.

The relationship, then, between iconicity and signs in art becomes a form-means relationship, which is beauty realized in the operation of probability in iconicity. As an image text, art is in a separable relationship with the object because even the most abstract modern art already pre-exists in the referential framework of the object. Let us return to the dispute about expression and representation. Art is something expressed, and without expression, art is not art at all. Furthermore, art is something represented, and without representation, art cannot be a semiotic reference. All image arts are iconic, and iconicity is the inevitable self-contained attribute in the signifying process of signs of an image. The self-contained attribute holds the referential relationship between the artist and the object. Without the method of operation between similarity and dissimilarity, artists would not be able to realize effective artistic expression.

At a certain stage of art history, iconicity is particularly prominent, yet it is relatively weak at other stages. Art has always been in the pursuit of iconic probability. There are two purposes for contemporary art to stay away from iconicity. One is to make signs in art remain signs rather than being the same object; the other is to extend its individualized value with probability. A convention is a basis for becoming remotivated, which is arbitrary but not subjective, and it is an exploration of iconic probability. In this sense, we agree with Bensen's view of art that art is the iconic probability of the indexical reality (Nöth 1990). In other words, art must have some indexicality about the world, and iconicity is the way to indicate the world (reality or spirit). Probability is a non-specific possibility of reflecting the world, and the exploration of probability makes iconicity an open way. The freedom of art exists in probability, which does not mean to inevitably follow the existing conventions, but to engage in an open exploration.

Thus, it is not difficult to understand why the dissimilarity is particularly obvious in modern and contemporary art. It is indeed a qualitative change of diversity and a leap in the cognition of the essence of art. The way to interpret the effect of

dissimilarity in modern art, and its corresponding mechanisms are what we need to discuss further.

5.3.4 Artistic Consciousness

5.3.4.1 Rebellion Against the Image

The sudden change of iconicity in modern art can be interpreted as the transformation of the signifying method. The change from the objective 似, with clear signifying clues, to 像 with vague clues, is difficult to uncover, and sometimes even the trace of 像 cannot be determined. In this case, it is often difficult to realize 似 in traditional images, such as, light and shadow, color, proportion, the symbolism of the object and the mythological implication. Artworks often reject single and specific interpretations, and means of iconographic interpretation face the greatest crisis in history.

Innis (2022), a media historian, has studied the spatial and temporal bias of media and culture. The root of space–time bias is interpreted as the result of a certain dominant medium in social life. In his view, any bias leads to a certain socio-cultural consequence. From the perspective of the Internet, it is obviously space biased. The spatial bias of the medium allows the semiotic information it carries to go beyond space, but it lacks the required durability in practice. Thus, it leads to the change of the sign itself. That is, promoted by modern media technology, signs have been increasing in number. This has led to a strong diachronic bias in semiotic interpretation. The openness and uncertainty in sign interpretation is an important view in postmodernism. This shows that the view does not derive from the unfounded subjective imagination of artists or theorists, but is actually formed in the reality of contemporary media survival. Such medium bias reveals the realities of modern social life. The consequences in the field of art include the following: the classical interpretation of art texts will give way to multiple open and dynamic interpretations in diachronic processes, and will ultimately result in the interpretation of sign texts in art being increasingly close to Peirce's infinite semiosis. The openness of interpretation leads to the understanding that an individual sign does not need to undertake the specific representation of the too-clear image or perform a grand narrative at all times. The meaning of an art text is no longer monopolized by classical interpretation; instead, it points to the sets of meta-language with the goal of art texts.

In other words, modern art has never refused iconicity or explanation. However, it rejects the physical 似, that is, object-object similarity. This similarity does not enter the emotional perception of human beings, but enters the diagrammatic and metaphorical iconicity. The weirdest and most abstract postmodern art cannot refuse to represent its inner order. The clearer the concrete imaginal iconicity, the clearer the indexicality of interpretation caused by the 似; and the vaguer the signifying relationship, the more obvious the diversification of the reader's interpretation. As a result, art itself has gradually developed from a short process to a long one in realizing

intended interpretations so as to distinguish the sign communication of instrumental rationality. Therefore, pure art is often without any purpose. Dissimilarity often results in no interpretation, misunderstanding or difficulty in understanding.

If this problem remains unsolved, there will be no art text at all, and it can only be a riddle or other text of code. The genre attribute of the art text stipulates that art is a form of sign that can be interpreted. Essentially, art must be interpreted, and art that originated from signs is bound to be interpreted. Once we recognize that the expression of art is a kind of semiotic act, a sign in art must have a certain meaning because the sign itself is defined as "the meaning-carrying perception" (赵毅衡 2011b). Moreover, the specific meaning interpretation requires the genre, which is a presupposed accompanying meta-linguistic text—a tool for interpreting texts of art signs, to resort to the rules. Then the rule-carrying set of codes in a meta-language becomes the meta-language. Furthermore, art, in terms of definition, is to force cultural meta-language to interpret what it could not have explained (赵毅衡 2011b). Meta-linguistic pressure represents the primary reason why art texts must be interpretable. When people say a work of art is not interpretable, it has been given the identity of art text beforehand. The existence of meaning has also been acknowledged, as the process is a mandatory one. This meta-language forces the emergence of its meaning and people to admit artistic identity.

What, then, is the mechanism on which the meta-linguistic interpretation of art texts is based? It requires the analysis of the meta-linguistic structure. There are roughly three types of reasons directly causing art texts' lack of interpretation or difficulty in interpretation: (i) formal abstraction (the lack of information causing the lack of interpretation); (ii) paradoxical clues (conflicting clues that cause paradoxical interpretation); and (iii) Informational emptiness (meta-art with neither content nor form).

5.3.4.2 An Abstract Iconicity

The concrete information of pre-modern art is manifested in the clear presentation of various scenes and tangible objects. The objective elements in the picture are the projections of the fictional world of mythological texts in real life. For example, the theme of *The Last Supper* is the depiction of characters—Jesus and his disciples—seen in a way that we have not seen before. What pre-modern art presents, however, must be a concrete scene about supper. It is the projection of a biblical story in daily life. Logically speaking, the arbitrariness of signs allows us to designate any form of picture to refer to God. A post-modern abstract artwork may reject the human or the specific form of the supper with only colors and lines left, which makes it difficult for us to confirm from the picture why it is called the "last supper". What we are familiar with is precisely the representation of Plato's "carpenter's table", that is, a concrete object. And the lack of concrete information clue constitutes the most striking characteristic of abstract art.

In fact, abstraction does not negate iconicity, but we can negate an idea only through the representation of concrete objects. The cognition of abstract art negates

the diversity of the universe and objective things; indeed, the universe itself exists in an abstract way. As a result, there is iconicity between Kandinsky's or Mondrian's paintings and the order of the universe. They only systematized abstract painting into a category of painting, just as Duchamp regards daily necessities as a category of art. But this does not mean that living objects or abstract styles existed before. There is a high degree of iconicity between the relationships of abstract paintings and the laws of the universe. Nevertheless, iconicity transcends the imitation of platonic objects in a narrow sense, and it is the formal law recognized under the accumulation of human cultural conventions. These representations are not similar to something concrete, but they provide the possibility for readers to diversify their interpretation. In many arts, abstract forms result from the removal of concrete and clear intermediaries for communicating meanings. For example, in a song, the lyrics are the clearest intermediary for communicating meanings. However, in the tune without lyrics, the structural form for singing or melody is retained. An important feature of modern art is the prominence of the role of form. The "significant form" put forward by Clive Bell (Bell 1914) is almost universally regarded as the cornerstone of modern art theory. However, the specific reference to the form is quite different from the understanding of modern art theory. Bell described the "form" as "a combination of a particular line and color" (福柯 [Foucault]等 2003). Langer inherited the thinking of the semiotic philosopher Cassirer, who regarded the "form" as a metaphysical "symbolic consciousness". In *Problems of Art,* Langer refined her views that a work of art is a form that is expressive of human feelings (陈池瑜 2005). Her definition of form reflects the tendency toward perceiver-centered "acceptance turn".

Thus, the form, which is opposed to the content in the sense of dualism, is dispelled. On the acceptance-centered path, the form that lacks a fixed pattern is subject to perception or significance. As a result, the uncertainty about the meaning of the art text increases, and this reduces the interpretability of the art text. This is the case with music. In addition, in visual art, it is even more common to explore connotations freely through random picture elements. Random embellishment in visual art is often not strictly motivated in size, shape, or position, as these can be replaced at will. Drip painting and graffiti art are in a sense uninterpretable through the communication of certain natural forms. All schools of modern art have broken from the original form according to their own perspectives. Surrealism broke the relationship between form and quality; cubism reconstructed the relationship between two dimensions and three dimensions; futurism has even added the dimension of time to the two-dimensional plane. These breakthroughs represent artists' yearning for uncertainty and the elasticity of artistic innovation.

The prominence of form is an inherent element of acceptance in art aesthetics as well as the necessity of internal innovation. When the content is drawn out, it is as if the forms were drawn as a whole, and thus the work obtains poetic quality. In *The New Science*, the philosopher Vico (1999) refers to this form of creative thinking in early human aesthetics as "poetic wisdom", and he says it is not only a poetic ability and psychological function just like the ability to sense and imagine, but also a poetic creation. Poetic thinking is usually regarded as a kind of original thinking, which features the subject and object as one. In poetic thinking, people often transfer

subjective feelings to everything in the outside world, employing imagination to create a realm where subject and object are one and mind and object are also one. In Jakobson's view, poetic quality results from the fact that when the signification focuses on the information, the whole signification process is text biased. Therefore, the interpreter's attention is directed to the sign text and its own formal quality becomes dominant, so the interpretation of the textual content is secondary (霍克斯 [Hawkes] 1987). Under the pressure of meta-language, the readers' attention to self-talk songs is forced to turn to formalized elements such as singing, melody, rhythm, and so on. Similarly, without specific and meaningful communication through visual art, readers are forced to feel the beauty of form from the form of the picture. After drawing out the recognizable lyrics, the self-talk song has achieved a purer form of beauty. The iconicity seems to be sublimated from the concrete object to the abstract relationship between the form and the outside world.

5.3.4.3 Meta-Art

No art can be separated from form, and no form can be separated from specific significance. But we have to admit that the art typified by conceptual art, cannot be classified according to specific forms. The form of one's work does not resemble the abstract external world, nor does it even offer an "art form" that can be developed from tradition. This kind of artwork has significantly hindered the definition of the boundary of art. For example, the form of Duchamp's urinal is obviously not found within the abstraction of the lines and the material of the urinal, and Manzoni's *Artist's Shit* (*Merda d'artista*) cannot be distinguished by traditional expression or representation. Conceptual art impacts the extension and boundary of art by directly facing the essence of art. As with subsequent behavioral art, conceptual art specifically became an art with destructive influence, in opposition to each other. Their forms are often not artistic, so they directly impact the view of iconicity within a narrow perspective of formalism when they are included in the category of art. In other words, if a so-called artwork is neither obviously similar to a concrete thing nor has "artistic significance" in one of its abstract forms, its interpretation is much more difficult.

This kind of art often sets aside art's common content clues, and it even simplifies the form into a "non-form". In fact, conceptual art has not appeared suddenly, and some non-formal artworks on the shelf may be regarded as forerunners in rejecting such pure art. For example, the artwork of Kasimier Severinovich Malevich (representative of the Russian suprematism), *White on White* (1918) and *Black Square* (1915), are pencil drawings with the latter showing a square with a straight ruler on a piece of white paper and making it evenly black with a pencil. This artwork, which has no content and can be finished without professional art training in form, was displayed in 1915 causing a great stir. In Malevich's view, what is shown in the painting is not an empty square, and its emptiness is exactly its meaningfulness. It gives birth to a rich meaning.

Arthur Danto (1981) regards the "artistic transfiguration of commonplace" as the conceptual relationship determined through institutional history. In distinguishing art from pure things, Danto cites a series of seemingly similar examples, such as a canvas coated with the same red paint (It reminds us of Malevich's works.). However, it stands for the following different things: (i) Danish painter's painting, "the Mood of Kierkegaard"; (ii) "Red Square", which shows the scenery of Moscow; (iii) Minimalist painting, which is also entitled "Red Square"; (iv) The religious painting "Nirvana"; (v) The still life "Red Tablecloth" by Matisse's disciples; (vi) The canvas from Giorgione's Workshop; (vii) The canvas painted with red lead; (viii) The work "No Title", brought by an unknown, indignant young artist.

In Danto's opinion, changing the commonplace into art results from the fact that artwork is in the conceptual relationship of artistic context rather than any physical relationship or visible "attribute". The objects above share some common physical properties, some of which are not artwork, while some of them are. From Danto's point of view, all are artworks, except for the sixth and seventh items. The first to the fifth items include the psychological portrait, landscape painting, geometric abstract painting, religious painting, and still life painting, respectively.

Indeed, from the point of view of what iconic relationships involve, it is not difficult for us to regard them as the representation of concrete things (history, scenery, still life, etc.), or as abstract formal iconic objects (geometry, religion, psychological portraits, etc.). However, in the last item, Danto encountered the most critical problem. The unknown artist refused to offer a specific interpretation of the work, and he only asked for the same right as that of Duchamp or other great artists to "declare" his work as a work of art. In this virtual example, Danto agreed with the unknown artist, but we know that, in reality, it does not necessarily get the recognition of *Pompidou*, as is the case with well-known artists.

As a sign of communication, art must realize the context communication within specific societies and cultures through a certain medium. In this process, art can achieve self-reference—the meta-linguistic behavior of art. The high-price acquisitions by high-art centers such as the Pompidou Center for Culture and Art and the Museum of Modern Art in New York are not the qualifications to define artwork as art at all. Rather, such acquisitions are part of the process for work to be part of the world of art through the process of displaying and expressing signs in art. Even if Pompidou rejects Manzoni's piece, with Manzoni's behavior leading to discussions of art journals or the Internet, most people taking a negative attitude, we may barely judge Manzoni's behavior as a clumsy bad art in this cultural context. Art being in a certain cultural context is the meta-language of art genre.

At the same time, the author's own claim is invalid, because the validity of art depends on a complete process of sign-sending and interpretation of artistic behavior. Danto, who regards the claim within the context of a certain history or art, opposes the idea that artworks share something in common, so he believes that art can only be skillfully defined by means of an institutional element. Such a definition helps to understand the establishment of art, but it cannot help us find a certain law in the art text. According to Zhao Yiheng (赵毅衡 2011b), this kind of institutional history theory cannot engage with key qualities such as the innovation of art. Therefore,

besides recognizing the institutional elements of art, we must seek a definition to illustrate the essence of the form of art itself. The investigation above of the iconic relationship of art found that either artistic representation or expression has spiritual directivity. When the information clues of artistic content or form are clear, this directivity is realized by the iconic probability of mapping things. The spiritual directivity of art is realized by its own meta-language when these clues are missing, and it is accompanied by the text.

The meaning of the work depends on the boundary of the art at the meta-level, particularly in the absence of form and content. In other words, the art text, going beyond its content and formal information directly into the metaphysical reference of artistic self-identity, realizes its signification through the meta-linguistic dialogue between different levels. Although this is the destruction of the perfect self-consistent system, it is in line with the dynamic and systematic thought of the open boundary of late structuralism (Piaget 1968). We may also call this kind of uninterpretable art that refers to the metaphysical concept of art, as meta-art. It is often outside the formal extension of the original artistic concept (which often leads to arguments over whether it is art), and outside the meaning to which art as the meta-language refers.

In the category of meta-art, motivations (including iconicity) of objects to which arts specifically refer often weaken. They even refer directly to art beyond semiotic referents, as is illustrated by Zhao Yiheng, with the Chanzong Gong'an as an example: "A monk asked: 'What is Buddha?' Wenyan, a Chan master, answered: 'Ganshijue' (干屎橛, meaning shit)" (普济 1984). Is this "Ganshijue" the same as Manzoni's *Artist's Shit*? To a certain extent, techniques such as improvisation in art require the temporary abandonment of motivation, and this makes the art text temporarily lose its concrete similarity and return to reflexive inquiry. Jakobson has pointed out that "information" does not and cannot provide all of the "meanings" of communicative activities, and meaning actually exists in all communicative behaviors. As discussed above, when the communication process focuses on the information, it produces a poetic sense of formal beauty. Moreover, when communication is biased toward the sender, emotional expression plays a dominant role. When the emphasis is on the receiver, conativity plays a dominant role. And when the emphasis is on a medium for signification, the importance of information's semantic meaning weakens, and it only serves as a way to maintain contact (Hawkes 1977). The non-interpretability of art often means that the content transmitted by the art text does not provide clear information as clues for interpretation. The clues of artistic interpretation usually tend to be meta-language and context.

The interpretation relationship established by meta-language transcends the iconicity between a sign and the object, and this leads to the artistic idea. Now let us return to Plato, who believes artistic imitation actually has a defect. As in the metaphor of the bed, the artist should not just represent the carpenter's bed, but may represent the bed in his mind. Further, "bed" and "Ganshijue" then lead to the idea of art, instead of the idea of the concept of bed. The misunderstanding about imitation theory (arts) is that it is the object that is similar to bed that matters a great deal in the text. In fact, what modern art does is to constantly transcend the obstacles set by "bed" and then create art. This is the greatest progress in modern art. In any process

leading to art, we must rely on such media and specific forms that are different from bed, such as Ganshijue, and red cloth. Paradoxically, they are often no better than the idea of bed or closer to the idea of art. The presence of different media of signs and artistic means is significant because it can dispel the repetitive existing formal characteristics of signs of art texts, thus enriching the form to which signs point in art: iconic probability.

The self-reference of concepts is the formal characteristic of conceptual art, and this often transcends the object of an art sign. In other words, at least the object is less important. Meta-language not only serves as the stratabound interpretation of information from the content of the art text (self-contained meta-language), but also influences the links outside the content (such as contextual meta-language). For the recipient of the art text, the artistic full text (meta-language of competency) is the information to be mastered, resulting from projecting the elements on the art text. The reason why the so-called insiders in art institutions often have an important say in defining art is that, in terms of the acquired experience of art training, they can place the object in what Danto calls "the context of art history". For example, the popular online divine tune, "Tante" (《忐忑》), spread rapidly online, not because of people's aesthetic and profound feelings for the art form, but because of the entertainment spirit of netizens. The appreciators with certain professional training tend to know more about the dramatic elasticity of the song. To realize the beauty of extremely rapid and rhythmic change, those who have studied folk songs and traditional operas can also find the accompaniment of *sheng* (笙), flute, violin, *yangqin* (扬琴), and other musical instruments, the harmonious beauty with *Luogujing* (锣鼓经) as the libretto, and a combination of different sounds made by characters such as *laodan* (老旦), *laosheng* (老生), *heitou* (黑头), and *huadan* (花旦).

Chapter Summary: Art Images for Science and Humanistic Luminescence

This chapter discusses the semiotic characteristics of art images from three aspects: basic properties, technical characteristics, and formal evolution, aiming to show some of the essential characteristics of art through the formal analysis of art images. The research in this chapter shows that the final conclusion cannot be drawn from the isolated form of image text. Moreover, the power to interpret the image is not in the author's hands because it is the projection of a historical and social context in an act of signification and interpretation. It's worth noting that the reader plays the leading role in the interpretation.

Chapter 6
Simulacrum

Although the word "simulacrum (*nixiang*)" has no equivalent in Chinese, the word "拟象 (*nixiang*)" works similarly as a figure of speech. The phrase, "拟象" originated from "观物取象 (*guanwu quxiang*)" in the *I Ching* and means "simulation", and it was followed later by the figure of speech, "拟象", a feature of literary rhetoric. Simulacrum is mainly related to the image age, and the word "simulacrum" was popularized in particular through the translations of theories of Baudrillard et al. In fact, simulacrum connotes the media spectacle, so the word "像 (image)" is generally used. Baudrillard divided simulacrum into three stages: first, counterfeit, focusing on the imitation and representation of the original object; second, production, which is the self-cycle of capitalist commodity laws and reproduction without an original object as the object for imitation; third, simulation, which refers to the semiotized existence shown in modern social culture and its dispelling of the original objective reality. Before mechanical reproduction, true reproduction itself was almost impossible; at least, it accounted for an extremely small part of the culture. For example, in ancient China, calligraphy was learned by imitation, but only a small number of cultural aristocrats and emperors were lucky enough to see genuine artwork by famous artists, so even high-quality replicas were precious. The original *The Orchid Pavilion* (《兰亭序》, *Lanting Xu*), praised as the greatest work of running script in the world, was lost, so *Shenlong Lanting* (《神龙兰亭》), which is regarded as the closest replica of the original, is also cherished as a national treasure and displayed in the Palace Museum.

This is an era full of simulacrum. The complexity of image art in the digital age has developed far beyond what Benjamin called mechanical reproduction. Although the truth of the double remains an important problem in communication, the culture of reproduction effortlessly proves the logic of truth and falsehood: the irrefutable reality is that the double constitutes the primary mode of existence for information in this era. Lippman's concept of the pseudo-environment has long surpassed the media realities of his time and has become the universal experience of people's daily lives. Thus, the pseudo-environment is actually a true environment. Pseudo here does not

Y. Hu, *Semiotics of the Image*, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-96-4592-3_6

mean false because today there is no real environment to be opposed to the pseudo-environment. Among the many pursuits of this era, there are the following two kinds of "truth" that we constantly seek: one is the truth of the outside world, and the other is the inner self-truth. The former refers to the way we face the world, while the latter concerns how the world shapes our sense of self. In this chapter, the author discusses the simulacrum constructed by media reality, logically based on the fact that both truths must be constructed by signs in all kinds of media.

If the semiotics of culture cannot explain the contemporary media world represented by the digital spectacle, it is a false, or at least an outdated, theory. Whether it is the in-vogue brand image building nowadays, or the exploration of truth in news presented with a rational color, we may interpret it through the media simulacrum's sign generation mechanism. This way, we might find the path to understanding the truth from the numerous and complex media spectacles.

6.1 Image and the Self

6.1.1 The Development of Image Theory

6.1.1.1 The Utterance Context of the Image

In ancient Chinese, 形象 (*xingxiang*) is composed of two concepts: 形 (*xing*) and 象 (*xiang*). In *Shangshu zhushu* (《尚书注疏》), Kong Anguo of the Han Dynasty connected 形 and 象 to create the word 形象: "审所梦之人，刻其形象，以四方求于民间" (By recalling the look, or appearance, of the person in the dream, he had the image or the look painted and then sought such a person from the general public). Here, 形象 refers specifically to the appearance and physical look of a person. In modern Chinese, the word 形象 is used as both an adjective and a noun. When used as an adjective, it means lifelike and concrete. Peirce classifies icons according to the degree of abstraction, and imaginal iconicity is the most concrete classification, usually having the highest degree of resemblance. In terms of the way of thinking, "thinking in images", as opposed to "logical thinking", is a perceptual mode of cognition, replacing intuition. In the *Modern Chinese Dictionary* (2005 edition), 形象思维 (*xingxiang siwei*, thinking in images) is also called 艺术思维 (*yishu siwei*, thinking in arts). It is defined as the main mode of thinking in the process of literary and artistic creation, reflecting life with the help of images, shaping artistic images and expressing the author's thoughts and feelings by means of typification and imagination (中国社会科学院语言研究所词典编辑室 2005). This interpretation demonstrates how 形象 is closely related to literature and art. When 形象 is used as a noun, it has two meanings, that is, "specific shape or posture", and "the vivid and concrete picture of life created in literary works that stimulate people's thoughts and feelings, usually referring to the expression, appearance and characteristics of

the characters in literary works" (中国社会科学院语言研究所词典编辑室 2005). This indicates that 形象 can refer not only to the real thing, but also the virtual image.

The ancient religious society produced many studies and regulations of image. In the Buddhism of the Eastern world, "法相" (*faxiang*, *Dharma-laksana* in Sanskrit) is an important concept of cognition. There are different dharmas as various aspects of phenomena. The so-called *faxiang* includes both essence and meaning (陈义孝 1998). Further, there are 32 kinds of *faxiang*, which are said to be the nirmana-kaya of the Tathagata. According to the *Great Dictionary of Buddhism* (中国大百科全书出版社编辑部 1982), it is interpreted as "zhenru" (真如—Tathata and *shixiang*: reality). This interpretation shows that *faxiang* is an expression of *xingxiang*, but in Buddhism, *faxiang* refers not only to the external appearance, but it is also a comprehensive concept including both physical appearance and essential truth. The Western religions, typified in Christianity in the Western world, once held a negative attitude toward concrete approaches to the image because the human-created image is inanimate and spiritless. The nature of these images is material and hinders the spirituality of belief. Therefore, the Old Testament emphasizes the unknowability and emptiness of God. Furthermore, in the Ten Commandments, there is a line: "You shall not make for yourself a graven image." (Exodus 20: 4). Although still disapproving of idolatry, the New Testament features God incarnated, and the son of God was the image of the invisible God. As the manifestation of God, he finally became a model of all ages. In fact, we find that all religions in the East and the West pursue spirituality. However, in this process of pursuing spirituality, they cannot be separated from the image.

More importantly, in the context of media, the image has become such an important part of people's lives that individuals, organizations, cities, and countries have significant involvement in it. For example, in the Republic of Korea, the plastic surgery industry is popular with people from all over the world, and cosmetics and clothing have become the most basic part of consumption, in addition to diet. Enterprises spend a vast amount of money to build a brand identity, often hiring celebrities to advertise for them. Government agencies and politicians also attach great importance to public relations for the promotion of their images; and the image has become central component of the soft power of a country, a region, or a city. Switzerland's image of neutrality has transformed Switzerland from a relatively unknown small country to one of the wealthiest international countries with the highest average income in the world in over two hundred years of development. It may be said that what Bourdieu calls symbolic capital is mainly composed of image capital.

It is obvious that the image problem is an important theoretical issue, and its cultural and academic discussion is valuable for practically guiding real life in the context of contemporary media spectacles. Here come the following questions. What kind of sign is the image? What is the mechanism of signs in the media image?

6.1.1.2 Redefining "Image"

The commonly used English translation for 形象 is image and figure. Because 形象 is often equated with 图像 (*tuxiang*) in Chinese, 形象性 and 图像性 (iconicity) are often synonymous. The misunderstanding derives primarily from the translation process of the literature. The image, in its broad meaning, includes the photo, imagination, portrait, and idol. The common clue to these images is that 形象 enjoys an iconic mental representation. In *Rhetoric of the Image*, Barthes discussed specific visual images; the subtitle of Mitchell's masterpiece *Iconology*, is *Image, Text, Ideology*. However, in his *Picture Theory*, he abandoned the word image, which covers a wider range, and used instead a specific and popular word "picture". The previous chapter presents Mitchell's pedigree of image (as shown in Fig. 6.1) from his *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology*, and the author made a minor adjustment to the classification of language (Translated from 米歇尔 [Mitchell] 2012).

In the above pedigree, we may call the image at the top 图像. Therefore, 形象 in the broadest sense refers to 图像. As a result, 形象 in this book may be synonymous with 图像 in some contexts. However, there are also important differences between them, which can be boiled down to three. First, when both 形象 and 图像 are used in similar texts, 形象 is the conceptualization and abstraction of 图像, and 图像 is the concretization of 形象. What we call 图像 in a work usually refers to a specific frame or picture, while 形象 in the art or literary work is a 形象 (image) that is based on a certain perception caused by psychological cognition and then needs to be interpreted by readers' association. In fact, the image at this time is a kind of

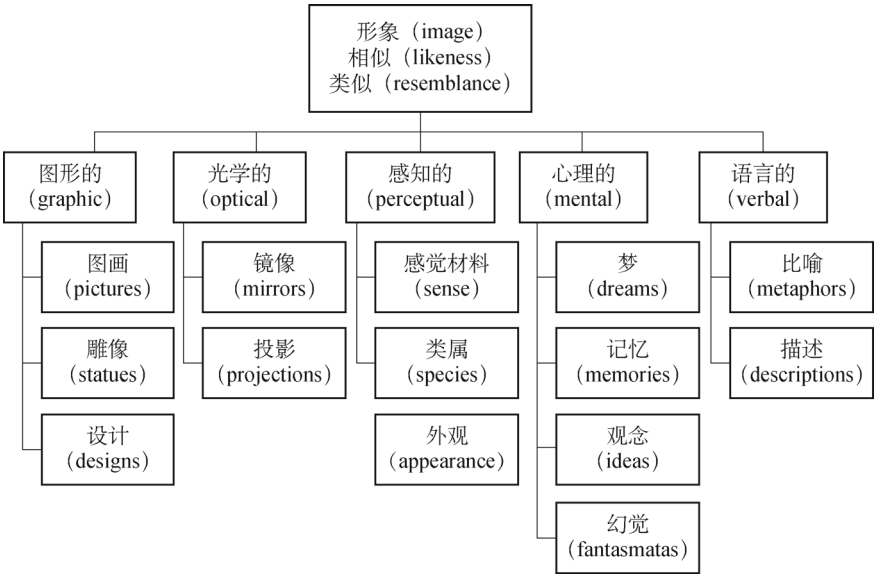

Fig. 6.1 Mitchell's pedigree of five types of images

mental image. Second, 图像 is different from 形象 in that it is biased to the text and 形象 is biased to the perception. When we say 心理图像, it is often necessary to add the word "mental" to limit 图像. Therefore, 图像 has a certain analogical nature here, and when we say 形象, there is no need to limit it. Third, 图像 is typically used as a more general subject name "图像学", which in English is iconology, and 形象 is typically used in 形象学 which in English is imagology that is developed from the image in literature.

The early meaning of image refers primarily to thinking in images in literature. *Shi erxiang*, written by Liu Shahe, systematically expounds the theory of poetic image. According to Liu Shahe, the image in literature is divided into "twelve images", which are divided into twelve parts, which are called "twelve *xiang*": *yixiang* (易象), *xiangzheng* (象征), *xingxiang* (兴象), *yuxiang* (喻象), *nixiang* (拟象), *yinxiang* (隐象), *dianxiang* (点象), *fuxiang* (赋象), *yixiang* (意象), *yixiangpai yili* (意象派一例, an example of imagism), *keguan duiying wuxiang* (客观对应物象), and *xiangwai zhi xiang* (象外之象). The image also mainly refers to the literary "verbal icon" as it is generated by rhetoric. Modern imagology focuses on the literary discussion of image and the pragmatic problem of social problems in our everyday society viewed in a social context. Meng Hua points out that the research history of imagology in comparative literature may be traced back to the birth of the subject in comparative literature. Comparative literature had been focusing on "tourists" from the beginning with "tourists" being regarded as an important research object of "media studies". The travel records handed down by "tourists" generally record the "images" of foreign countries, which makes the study of images included in the most traditional "international literary exchange". (孟华 2000) Since the 1940s and 1950s, imagology has been studied systematically, especially by French and German scholars. It mainly deals with "the image or description of a foreign country" (巴柔 [Pageaux] 2001). After nearly 50 years of development, 形象 (image) has become a common topic and a common phenomenon in contemporary media life, and its meaning is far beyond "foreign culture". However, as a subject originating in comparative literature, imagology is classified as literary research in Chinese academic circles. Meng Hua, one of the important scholars who introduced imagology into China (金安利 2007), believes that in image research, by borrowing many new theories and methods under the new situation, major reforms have been made to the tradition and in terms of theory and methodology, a set of mature systems has been constructed, which can finally be regarded as "imagology". But the ultimate goal of its research has not changed: the study of foreign images in a country, which ultimately leads to attention to the literary and cultural relations between "I" and "other", so it is still within the broad scope of the study of international literary relations and mainly uses the research method of influence—acceptance (孟华 2000).

Obviously, art images can no longer encompass the entire concept of image in contemporary media culture. In the book's classification, image is defined as a comprehensive impression perception based on objects and includes individuals, groups (nationality, race, community, and gender), institutions (governments, enterprises and organizations), cities and countries. Image is of great significance to media research, and it is central to brand identity in a broad sense from the point of view

of positive communication effect. As discussed above, image studies have naturally gone beyond the existing category of "literary imagology" when image in contemporary media society becomes the intangible asset of enterprises—the guarantee of product sales, a component of the soft power of a city and even a country—and this shift can be witnessed in contemporary times (Kauhanen 1997). After the generalization and cultural turn of literature, literary imagology, the construction of which is based on mass media, must become a cognitive study of self and others in literary texts, in a broad sense. Social image has become the way for individuals to realize self-cognition by establishing means in relation to society. Moreover, image studies also must generate general cultural semiotic research to seek laws for all kinds of images. As far as the specific form is concerned, it must also look for more vivid material from the "literary text in a broad sense", that is, the media text. All media, including material from fields such as advertising, news, law, history, and appliances, have become the means to construct contemporary culture and generate images. Further, these are means to enable contemporary cultural imagology to achieve robust growth. Based on the association of ideas from micro to macro and from concrete to abstract, the author considers that the study of image may be involved in the following three levels of relationship.

Level One: The Textualized and Media Presentation of the Image. In this stage, the image is concretized into a visual picture, or it may be included as a description of the "writing text". When the image is visualized, it becomes a specific picture, photo, film, video or other media component. As a cultural study of image, visual image may be regarded as a kind of contemporary media culture. Therefore, many specific visual images in media are needed as text objects. At least one element of the image includes a picture, graphics, appearance, or portrait. Image realizes mental image through a specific presentation. In the operation of a modern brand, the image is formed through repeated advertising effects, which create an important link that must involve the visual culture of images within the context of media. However, it is important to stress here that the concretized vision, appearance, or graphic does not form the whole of the image; rather, any one of the three is a specific aspect of the image. A national image may be presented as its literature, sports, or a specific symbolic image, but we cannot believe that this is an image of the country as a whole. Moreover, the logical relationship, like that between "white horse" and "horse", is the relationship between the specific part and the abstract whole. In turn, any image needs to be disseminated through the media after a specific symbolic expression. In 2014, there was a program called "Chinese symbols" in the Spring Festival Gala of the year of the Horse that showcased the natural landscape and cultural representations of China through human body modeling. In this program, the Chinese images were presented through specific symbols.

Level Two: The Mental Image Formed in Image Projection and Perception. This level concerns the "impression accumulation" of the image in the eyes of the recipient. Each impression results in the projection of some abstract image, but the perceived mental image is not the entire image. On the other hand, this mental image is dynamic and unreliable. Recipients may only achieve a quite shallow perception because of their incomplete understanding, or they may experience the tragedy of *The Peony*

Pavilion (《牡丹亭》) because of dreams and illusions. Nevertheless, this unreliability is not tantamount to error because an abstract image itself is constructed by all kinds of images. Therefore, all acceptance of the image is a symbolic, one-sided stereotype. As far as collective psychology is concerned, these different stereotypes often reflect the overall image. Therefore, when we say "image", the image is examined at a comprehensive level of abstraction.

Level Three: The Subject of the Image. The subject of an image is usually an entity, usually the owner and sender of the image. However, the subject of an image is not the "truth" behind the image. The truth of the image text only exists in the image text and image acceptance. Coca-Cola's brand image, for example, is made up of a series of impressions consisting of logos, colors, advertisements and celebrities, and the subject is the Coca-Cola Company. Coca-Cola's factories or production bases are not the "truth" behind Coca-Cola's image, but just the "original objects" on which the image is based. As is discussed in detail in the section about semiocity in Chapter 2, the original object is only the place where the icon is temporarily located and is not the full nature of the original. In the practice of brand image communication, the operator of image often consciously selects "the appearance with its characteristics" for symbolic communication. Politicians need to advertise themselves as people who love their families and their country, and film stars try their best to present good images. People are often curious about the "truth" of stars' lives, and then they often feel disappointed. This is likely because a celebrity in daily life is often not the "self" of imageology, but the other, who is only related to the image people expect to see.

At these levels, we can roughly distinguish the following two dimensions of the image: self-image and social image. Self-image has evolved from the mirror image, and social image is the result of a set of social meta-languages for evaluation. At these two levels, we can abstract the semiotic definition of image. Image is the aggregation of social subjects' icon-centered communication effects, and it is also the subject's important semiotized way of existence in society. Because specific cognition contains corresponding meta-linguistic rules, the image is also a set of evaluative meta-language of the subject.

For example, under multiple articulation, the image referents, a wife and an able woman, result from different evaluation mechanisms of meta-languages. The conflict and evaluation form a sort of whirlpool of meta-language at the same level: loyalty and filial piety seldom go together, with loyalty and filial piety being placed in the evaluation mechanism of an excellent personality. The formation of an image is usually accompanied by inevitable stereotype and meaning accumulation. When the subject actively portrays his own image, he often selectively provides information. Therefore, the image, as a collection of innumerable simulacra, cannot be an objective and comprehensive result. At the same time, the image is not completely controlled by the image subject, so self-intention cannot be fully implemented in the image text. There are, then, two basic aspects of imagology. One is the mechanism to understand image formation, and the other is the operation based on the image structure to realize the subject intention. Therefore, the current imagology can be described as the study of the formation mechanism and laws of the image so as to achieve the goal of subject image construction through corresponding textual strategies. In the context

of contemporary media, the construction of image is usually realized by means of media.

This definition goes beyond the limitations of the study of imagology in comparative literature. First, it has broken through the category of image in literature as a genre to encompass all the images that may be constructed in mass media, such as brand image, national image, urban image, personal image, media image, diplomatic image, corporate image, and so on. Second, the breakthrough of the research goal is not limited to image evaluation. The research also aims at discussing the construction of image. For example, Li Yongyin's "Image Narratology" discussed the narrative generation mechanism of image, and Luan Yimei's *Introduction to Media Imagology* discusses the construction of media organizations' images. This book does not delve into these operational issues, as it aims to provide their inherent symbolic mechanism, especially a sign generation mechanism based on semiotics of image. There are two dimensions among the many problems of the image: the external objective image and the internal self-image. As a kind of symbolic aggregation, external evaluation does not have the special significance of symbolic mechanisms such as "reflexivity", and, as it is far from iconicity—the central subject of this book, it is not discussed in depth. Instead, it focuses on a highly iconic sign within the relationship between self-image and mirror image.

6.1.2 Reflexive Image

How does the socialized media image evaluation transform into human beings' self-cognition? As a cognitive way of schema, self-image is a symbolic self-construction process based on mirror image as a prototype, and it is a concept of reflexivity. Reflexivity requires a distance in signification; in other words, "self-consciousness" is actually a reflection of the self from the outside world. The concept of mirror image is the most relevant aspect of this self-reflection. In fact, the mirror image is also the most abundant type of sign among human cultural symbols. One can only see oneself with the help of a mirror, a kind of medium—if one considers this idea closely, it is very strange. Very few things are endowed with so many social factors and at the same time cause so much confusion. Chinese and Western myths coincidently imbue the mirror image with magical power. Similarly, writers are infatuated with it, and sign theorists argue about it endlessly. The mirror image and sign in people's customary understanding seem so different. Moreover, they are so "natural" that mirror image may not be regarded as a sign, and many scholars even want to expel it from the category of semiotic theory. In fact, many propositions of mirror image still need to be discussed in depth. The focus of this section is on how mirror image, as a generation mechanism of self-image, occurs and how human cognition of the entity of mirror is transformed into a symbolic cognitive way of "me in the mirror".

6.1.2.1 Mirror Image and Human Self-Cognition

Human beings have been trying to discern the fundamental difference between themselves and other animals, but any single piece of evidence from such efforts is inadequate to constitute an insurmountable divide between the two groups. Many animals demonstrate significant capabilities, for example, an eagle has a sharp vision, a dog has a keen sense of smell, and bats can echolocate with ultrasound. Even in relation to simple intellectual issues, we may not be able to find a definite line between animals and humans. Chimpanzees have a better short-term memory than humans; curly-tailed monkeys in the Amazon jungle can use tools; orangutans can even make simple tools; and the division of labor in ants and bees is extremely effective. Human reason can only help distinguish animals from humans in a metaphysical sense, and even morality and the spirit of self-sacrifice cannot completely distinguish the two. Nevertheless, understanding the self is so important that people must construct this difference through comprehensive perspectives, and the specific content of this difference has been accumulating all the time. In the Introduction to *An Essay on Man*, Cassirer (Cassirer 1944) points out that understanding the self is the highest goal of philosophical studies. His argument that man is a symbolic animal once again provides new evidence for human self-cognition, but it still does not prevent each crossing the other's boundaries. Sebeok's zoosemiotics offers negative evidence of the view that symbols are exclusive to human beings.

Unfortunately, no single argument can definitely solve the complex problem of separating human beings from other animals. Max Scheler once argued impatiently that we have a scientific anthropology, a philosophical anthropology, and a theological anthropology, but there is no communication between any two of them. So, we no longer have any clear and coherent ideas about human beings. The growing complexity of the various special sciences engaged in the study of human beings is not so much to clarify our concept of human beings as to make it even more chaotic (Cassirer 1944). Scheler saw the complexity, but in fact his anxiety reflects his refusal to admit that complexity, hoping instead to make a simplified claim and induction. Edgar Moran (2015) points out that complex things cannot be generalized into a key word, cannot be summed up as a law, and cannot be reduced to a simple concept. Complexity can't be defined in a simple way and replace simple things. Complexity is a word that raises questions, but not a word that offers ready-made answers, and it shows the challenges the world poses to us. The idea of complexity does not enable us to avoid and eliminate this challenge, but it can help us meet it or even control it.

The best way to demonstrate this challenge is to realize the total value of the "human being" concept in the continuous self-construction of humankind, and to realize the self-construction of human beings with new evidence, rather than providing a rigid, ultimate answer. Although Cassirer defines (1944) the human as a "symbolic animal", he retains the definition's openness to animals. He points out that it is too early to make any comment about the future development of this problem (the semiotization process of anthropoids). This field must always be open to future research. The same is true of the "recognition memory of mirror" discussed in this book as a kind of human symbolic ability. Scientific experiments have shown that,

with the exception of humans, only domesticated chimpanzees and some birds, such as magpies, have the ability to view accurately their reflections in the mirror (Prior et al. 2008), and monkeys' ability in this regard has not been demonstrated by experiments (Tattersall 2002). It does not mean that recognizing oneself in the mirror is equivalent to having an abstract self-concept, but there is no doubt that mirror cognition is an important basis on which self-concept depends. Self-recognition ability is one of the perceptual signs of self-interpretation, and it is a very basic one. Although self-recognition mirror ability does not decisively distinguish humans from animals, its inherent self-identification ability (the concept of so-called "I") has played an important role in human evolution. In a sense, the cognition of mirror image is the symbol of the awakening of human self-consciousness, because only when "I" exists is it possible to further show self-consciousness in the process of the development of human socialization. Almost all the humanistic problems in human history boil down to certain aspects of "I". It is the unique ability of human beings to further explain the mirror image; humanity, as the symbolic animal, wins again in solving the problem of mirror image.

6.1.2.2 Mirror: The Reflexive Symbolic Construction of Image

Symbolic ability, also known as "competence metalanguage", is the capability of an interpreter to interpret the sign text with appropriate codes (赵毅衡 2011b). There are three reasons why symbolic ability is analyzed in this book. First, symbolic ability is not only the ability of interpretation, but also the ability to make signs. Second, symbolic ability itself is a meta-level ability, which can be called the carrier of meaning only through the convention of people with symbolic ability. Third, symbolic ability includes not only linguistic interpretation, but also non-verbal symbolic interpretation and creation ability. This book discusses the problem of image, which naturally requires us to go beyond the language problem.

As mentioned above, mirror cognition is an important link in the awakening of human self-consciousness. However, even for the most intelligent modern human beings, mirror recognition also requires a cognitive process. Experimental science has demonstrated that it takes a great deal of time for people who were blind in childhood but recovered in adulthood to understand the basic characteristics of mirrors, and similar results can also be confirmed by the experience of some indigenous cultures that do not use mirrors. Second, people are not born with the ability to understand mirror images; such comprehension is obtained by individuals through the accumulation of experience in the process of their growth—what Lacan calls a "mirror stage". The central reference of Lacan's mirror stage theory is the Mirror Test by Henri Wallon, a French child psychologist. Wallon's experiment shows that humans demonstrate advantages over other animals in understanding their own mirror image even if they are weaker than other animals in terms of limb coordination. This seems to show that mirror image is a more special ability in intelligence, and it may not be entirely equivalent to other forms of intelligence, such as memory. Lacan and Freud both believe that the self is not a natural existence, but the product of "the

passion of narcissism" between the child subject and his/her own mirror image (严泽胜 2006). This means that an individual does not rely on his or her own entity to achieve self-cognition, but such recognition is the reflected image of the image of "I". Lacan thus calls himself "ideal-I"—a fictional sign. Therefore, this cognition may be understood in similar terms: human beings rely on signs to achieve self-construction, and the mirror image is an important threshold for the self-construction of humans as symbolic animals. It seems that when we step over this threshold, human beings enter the symbolic world, and the relationship is irreversible. As a result, Cassirer (1944) says that humans can no longer face reality directly because it seems impossible for them to face intuitive reality. Figuratively, this is similar to the idea that "the mountain we see is not a mountain at all". This means that when people recognize socially conventionalized things in symbolic codes, cognitive ability becomes a transcendental thing, a pattern and a mode of understanding. For example, through children's eyes, the world is flat, but as we grow older, we become accustomed to looking at things in perspective, and we no longer retain the same vision of things as we had when we were children. Many artists devote their entire lives to trying to retrieve the intuition of children to reach the goal in which "the mountain they see is a mountain". However, this begs the question: is what they perceive about the mountain still the result of children's intuitions about the mountain? Obviously, this is yet another kind of perception about the mountain.

In the process of demonstrating human beings' essence as symbolic animals, Cassirer focused on the difference between a symbolic system and an organism, and he interpreted the difference as reaction (corresponding to signal) vs. response (corresponding to symbol). This book does not intend to dwell on Cassirer's criticism of Pavlov's experiment, focusing instead on explaining the kind of ability that symbolic ability is, and regarding symbolic ability as the secret to opening the door of a special human world—a human cultural world! Cassirer (1944) attributed this secret to the universality, effectiveness, and full applicability of the symbolic system.

Symbolic ability is a kind of universal designation different from signal, and it is different from the signal's dependence on material reality. Cassirer (1944) distinguished between "signal" and "symbol". Symbol, as far as the original meaning of the word is concerned, cannot be reduced to a simple signal. Signal and symbol belong to two different domains—signal is a part of the physical world. Even when the signal is understood and used in this way, it still has some physical or material existence, while the symbol has only functional value. This is similar to Saussure's view that regards symbolic behavior as a psychosocial phenomenon.

Cassirer (1944) even believes that the relationship between the symbolic world and the physical world to which signal belongs can be described as the following: when a certain amount of progress has been made in human symbolic activity, the same amount of physical reality seems to retreat accordingly. Further, what Cassirer says is more appropriate when understood as a metaphor than as an actual state in which people master symbolic tools. This is because the symbolic world begins intellectually and is not gradually invading the territory of the physical world. Once the key to symbols is obtained, even if a limited designation is obtained, the whole world is in a position of symbol formation. Even in ancient times, human beings

with limited cognitive ability were not impeded from semiotizing the whole universe in a specific way. With human evolution, increasingly rich cognition has actually provided the text of the universe with more opportunities for articulation. At the time when humans acquired symbolic ability, they put forward the original semiotization of the whole world. The physical world is the world in itself, and the symbolic world is the human world. Once in the human world, we live among symbols completely and not partially. Cassirer (1944) has understood this as an ability that does not retreat, and in a sense, man is constantly dealing with himself rather than dealing with things. He makes himself so much surrounded by the form of language, artistic imagination, mythological symbols, and religious rituals that he cannot see or know anything unless these man-made media are used.

When we discuss the mirror image, we are unable to talk about a semiotized or desemiotized "mirror", and we can only talk about the mirror in some semiotized way. It looks incredible, because common sense tells us that we can talk about the purely objective physical properties of mirrors, but, in fact, purely objective physical properties do not exist in human perception. When we talk about its "volume, weight, color, and optical performance" from a certain perspective, we have selected the elements that belong to human-acquired experience, and selection is a process of semiotization. Unless we can abandon human beings' perception and return to our non-human state, we can only talk about sign carriers with certain optical properties. We cannot discuss this entity in terms of certain physical-optical properties or its characteristics. When Zhao Yiheng (赵毅衡 2011b) explained competence meta-language, he pointed out that it results from a kind of social growth experience. When we say that the twenty-first century is a century of symbols, it does not really mean that this is a world dominated by symbols. Rather, it means that the speed of symbolic expansion in this era is too rapid, and therefore symbols fill our lives. With the rise of mass culture and in the process of media and information being extensively used, the symbol has undergone a change in density. McLuhan calls this "implosion".

Humans' entry into the symbolic world confirms that human beings are different from animals. Only in this way can human beings be called symbolic animals with logical self-consistency. In the symbolic world, there are some key nodes, and the sign of a mirror is such a competence. Moreover, it is one with landmark significance because the mirror image is more challenging than a general sign. There is an obscure boundary between the general sign and the signal, and many signals are mixed with signs. Zhao Yiheng (赵毅衡 2011b) refers to the signal as the bottom line of symbolic activity. Sebeok includes the signaling behavior observed in the animal kingdom within the category of semiotics. The great misunderstanding that may occur here is over the question of whether the uniqueness of human beings as symbolic animals disappears when zoosemiotics is established. In fact, essentially zoosemiotics is still "human semiotics" but about animals. As Uexküll argues, in the world of flies, there are only "things of flies" and in the world of sea urchins, there are only "things of sea urchins". We cannot understand the "symbolic intention" of animals in zoosemiotics studies without having the means to understand the symbolic intention in the human symbolic world. In other words, the animal's way of symbolic behavior, which we

construct in the process of human understanding, is essentially a projection of human social psychology. Even if the name of this projection is "zoosemiotics", it is still the symbolic activity model of human society.

In respect of the problem of image, a mirror image provides a certain way of self-corroboration and subject construction on human self-recognition regarding human nature. In fact, the idea of mirror image here should be extended from the scientific definition of mirror image discussed above, including the "reflexive reference capacity" in conceptual cognition. In this sense, a magpie that can look in the mirror does not have the symbolic designation of *itself* in a strict sense. The symbolic designation of oneself is the presentation of an abstract concept of "self" with the help of various icons, so the image of "I" is a semiotized abstract mirror image of the self. Self-image is the application of reflexive reference capacity in icons. Generally speaking, the image itself does not have an evaluation mechanism concerning truth and falsehood; instead, it has a simulacrum constructed on the iconic mechanism in a social metalanguage. It is in this aspect that the image differs from the simulation to be discussed in the next section. Simulacrum includes simulation in symbolic veridiction as well as the simulacrum constructed under the social evaluation mechanism.

6.2 Simulation

In Baudrillard's simulacrum theory, simulation is present at the advanced stage. At the primary stage of mimicry, imitation exists relative to the "original object" and is always opposed to the original object. At the second stage, the importance of the original object gradually weakens as a large amount of self-reproduction constitutes the major part of a simulacrum at the production stage. At the stage of simulation, symbolic production dispels the difference between social reality and the simulacrum through simulation, and it replaces the original reality of the objective world. This study does not produce Baudrillard-style social criticism, but it analyzes the semiotized ways of simulation and how these constitute a major part of the media spectacle from the perspective of semiotics.

Eco (1979) once defined the category of semiotics as everything that can be used to study lying, obviously because if something cannot be used to lie, it cannot, in turn, be used to clarify the truth. He even believes that lie theory should be regarded as a comprehensive outline for general semiotics as it shows that veridiction plays a very important role in semiotic theories. At the same time, the lie and truth as a pair of categories can never be separated from each other. Thus, semiotics must also be the study of "veridiction"—either the lie or veridiction serves as a judgment of the relationship between specific meaning and the object, and semiotics, as the study of meaning, must encompass both. From the point of view of the process of sign formation, the representatum, through which the sign text conveys meaning, is only partially (and can ever be only partially) extracted from the object. Therefore, it can only be a secondary imitation, as Plato calls it, and it is a disaster induced by the deficiency of iconicity. As the second chapter of this book details, "iconicity" can

only reach "absolute iconicity" or "complete iconicity" but cannot further develop into "sameness". Therefore, "falsehood" can never disappear. Truth and falsehood are meanings with different conventions and thus are not obstacles that can be overcome by physical technology. As a result, the reproduced *Mona Lisa* can never replace the original work. These factors create a great many unclear relationships between similarity and being.

It seems that once a semiosis starts, Pandora's box opens, with new interpretations on the sign chain being constantly involved. The truth exists not only at two levels, but is trapped in a Platonic black hole that is out of reach. The basic process in which signs represent the objective world already contains the possible link of distortion. If we consider the existence of subjective intention of deception from the sign sender and the existence of misinterpretation by the sign recipient along with the media distortion in the process of sign communication, the semiosis can be considered complicated and confusing. To capture this complicated and confusing sense, Peters uses the thought-provoking phrase "speaking into the air" in the title of his book, *Speaking into the Air: A History of the Idea of Communication*, which in Chinese translates into "交流的无奈" (similar to "helpless communication"). In his view, perfect communication is nothing more than a futile effort doomed to failure. This futile effort is not moral failure, but the proper death of a defective plan (Peters 1999). Indeed, it shows how difficult it is to realize perfect communication! In other words, the authenticity cannot be touched but can only be a platonic abstract idea, and, once it is semiotized, it is no longer the idea itself, but a specific image showing the idea. Every signification of the idea is only a specific semiotic journey. This chapter discusses the veridiction of a specific phenomenon based on symbolic form theory on the premise that "authenticity" cannot be touched, and, therefore, it does not study how to perfectly realize the truth in the philosophical sense. The discussion is supported by understanding this era full of images and iconic media illusions.

6.2.1 "Pseudo-Environment" and Semiotic "Authenticity"

First, this book does not discuss lies out of subjective intentions: false news, legal perjury, and historical fraud can all be falsified in the true scope stipulated by these genres. Lippmann (2004) discovered nearly a hundred years ago that the world we live in is a "pseudo-environment" dominated by media, and indeed, modern media has caused the complete loss of modern social life in the name of reality. Lippmann's use of pseudo means "false". That is, he reminded people that the environment in which we live is different from the one with which we have actually come into contact. The reason why it is "pseudo" and not entirely false is that it cannot, in binarism, be believed to exist within the real environment that Lippmann references. More importantly, the actions taken according to the information in the "pseudo-environment" will act on the real social environment. In order to warn people of the reality which is often accepted as the real environment, Lippmann insisted on defining the concept of pseudo-environment as the opposite of the real environment. Later, Japanese scholar

Fujitake Akira further studied "how to make a pseudo-environment become a real environment". He believes that after the pseudo-environment is accepted as the real environment, the feedback is no longer the pseudo but has become a real behavior constituting a part of the real environment. Therefore, the whole process is a cycle from the pseudo-environment to subjective cognition and then to real environment.

The view, with a profound impact, has become one of the basic theories of contemporary communication. However, with the development of media reality, people have gradually found that there is no "real environment" outside the pseudo-environment because there is no room for the real environment if any information communicated or semiotized through media is an integral part of the pseudo-environment. In other words, the real environment that is believed to exist and which is opposed to the pseudo-environment is itself actually just another pseudo-environment. Furthermore, in the opposite category of pseudo-environment, it is informative to regard the sense of epistemology. Falsehood does not exist, and the real world's reality is indeed realized through the contact between signs and human perception, so signs and media must be employed. In such cases, it seems that the word "pseudo" should be replaced with "simulacrum" and "simulation". However, the pseudo-environment is the simulacrum, and the simulation is caused by the untouchable authenticity. This must go through semiotization and media, and the most important mechanism is the iconicity of signs. The simulacrum generated by modern media is a world of veridiction dominated by a high degree of iconicity. The perceptual effect of simulation is achieved through a very high degree of iconicity. Baudrillard defines "hyper-reality" as all that which the media generates. This then leads to the problem of how we perceive truth, which has two articulated parts: the way of existence and the way of appearance. On the one hand, "truth" is realized through the simulation of the real sign. No simulation is entirely the truth, so instead of being the self-presentation of authenticity, it is a "super-truth". On the other hand, the true appearance can only be obtained through the symbolic simulacra composed of various signs. The relationship between various *fuxiang* is the object-object relationship, and countless object-object relationships are open to semiosis, leading to the authenticity that exists as a working hypothesis.

Therefore, the truth we touch on is only limited to "symbolic veridiction". Since signification involves many links, the truth and falsehood we talk about in daily life usually emphasize intention, result, and whether or not they conform to the sender's intention. If we judge truth and falsehood from a simple binary category, the problem is simple and there is no need for theoretical discussions. If we start from the symbolic veridiction of the truth and provide other possibilities between truth and falsehood, things will become different. The Semiotic Square of Veridiction developed by Greimas is such a representative possibility. The Semiotic Square of Veridiction abandoned the binarism but turned simple binary opposition into the negative interaction of ten factors through an unfold process, resulting in a dialectical negative logic matrix. His logic denies his placement of the symbolic truth in a comparative relationship with seeming. The terms he used are "being" (是) and "seeming" (似), shown in Fig. 6.2 (Greimas and Courtés 1982).

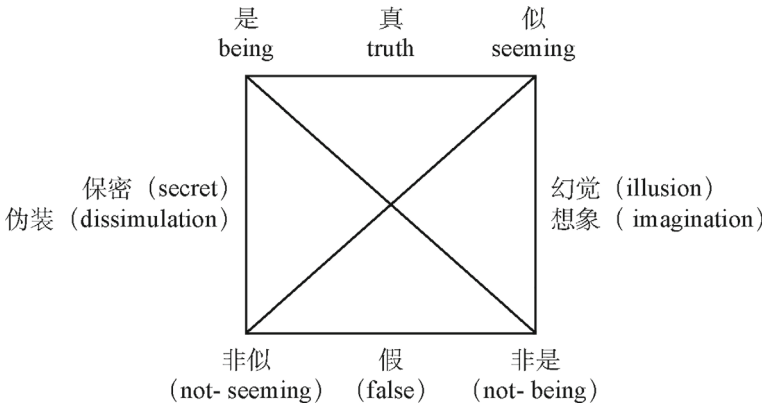

Fig. 6.2 The semiotic square of veridiction (Greimas and Courtés 1982, p. 312)

The concepts of truth and falsehood in this group of relationships are very different from the dichotomy used in daily life. The whole matrix is composed of two basic elements[1]: "being" and "seeming", or a combination, as well as their opposites. Among them, "being" can be understood as a traditional relationship between the text content and the object presented, and "seeming" is the impression caused by the degree of iconicity between the text and the object's sign. The relationship of "seeming" is more complex than "being" because, in simplifying "being" and "not being" into a simple logic of positive vs. negative, no intermediate possibility is lost. However, "seeming" not only involves the degree, but also involves the text itself, and the perceptual result of "seeming" involves such accompanying elements as the appropriateness of the discourse context. Taking into consideration the requirements of news, advertising, and artistic verity in communication, we may look at the important cognitive value in understanding the true signs of the truth of news.

Truth: Being + Seeming. With the sender's intention, the symbolic information provided is "similar" to the "object" it interprets, and the recipient achieves an understanding close to the sender's intention, in line with the context agreed upon by the two sides of the communication. Let us take the news as an example. According to traditional news theories, the truth of news is often based on a binary truth. That is, the news report must be in line with the objective report in verity, or with the whole picture of certain truth. The truth of this kind of subject-object dualism ignores the pluralistic forms of the presentation of truth, and it cannot be tested due to a theoretical presupposition of the objective truth: the presentation of a certain state of affairs within the genre of news reports. Apart from subjective factors, it is also impossible to achieve "complete agreement" in objective reality.

First, the entirety of objective truth cannot be fully presented by news reports. For example, the objects of news events may not only have the verity of news significance, but also the authenticity in history, culture, medicine, and other fields. That is, we must limit the context of this kind of complete agreement in disciplines. Even in the context of the discipline, the truth of news is not fully covered by a form of

reporting. The truth and accuracy of the news focus on the accuracy of the basic elements such as the time and place of the news, while in-depth reporting focuses more on the details and the causes and consequences of the news. But does this mean that "in-depth coverage" is a genre that is better for presenting the truth than news reports or news flashes?

Obviously, it does not. We may say that from the presentation of the whole picture of the news object, the in-depth report provides more detailed materials. This makes it more conducive to comprehending the causality and overall situation of the news, but it does not mean that the verity of the in-depth report is greater than that of the more typical news report. In fact, cross-genre comparison is untenable. A news flash is as true as it should be and as it is required to be, and this is also the case with other genres. In other words, for the verity of the news, the most important aspect is to integrate the materials collected rather than present all of the materials. All news reports are about specific events, and news is presented to the audience by semiotized texts of words, images, videos, data and so on, all of which reflect the event. Regarding "seeming", the information provided by the in-depth report is richer and more vivid, as it is more similar to the whole picture of the news object.

False: Not-Being + Not-seeming. In this category, the sender has no intention of deceiving others and conveys a negative message through a false appearance that is easily known. All fictional sign texts may be included as "not-being", but a certain mark of "not-seeming" needs to be provided to limit the sign text's genre. For example, it is a very common technique to present at the beginning of some movies or TV dramas a message that the story presented is purely fictional, and any resemblance to actual individuals or events is coincidental. In other words, the text itself provides clues to the interpretation of "being" and "not-being", and therefore "not-seeming" is not about whether the scenes and characters described in film and television dramas or novels are similar to what we describe in our daily lives. In fact, some media forms themselves include their own agreement of not-being. For example, when we enter a cinema, without any explanation, the reader can reach a tacit agreement of not-being with the text. This interpretation clue, as a meta-language at a higher level than the content information, dominates the communication of the information by the text. That is, all fictional genres are false, but they provide a description of the genre so that the reader is clearly aware of its "not-being". The falsehood here is not what is commonly referred to as deception, but is the expression of "truth" in a negative way. It does not explicitly convey the intention to deceive the audience, but it provides the audience with a symbolic direction of not-seeming, so that the audience knows that it is not-being. This group of logical relationships can reach the truth with the negation of negation.

Illusion and Imagination: Not-Being + Seeming. Without the sender's intention, and because of the iconic relationship, the directivity of the sign leads to the misreading and misunderstanding of the recipient. Among these, "illusion" represents a text-dominated cognitive deviation, and imagination is the mental image produced by the audience. In this case, the logic of single negation leads to cognitive deviation.

In the era of electronic media, the media itself does not necessarily have the media characteristics of "not-being". For example, regarding what is communicated on radio, television, and the Internet, the "not-seeming mark" of the "not-being" is not obvious. If the text does not provide enough not-seeming information, it may lead to a series of misjudgments. The most famous example in the history of communications is a 1938 radio drama about an alien invasion. The CBS network broadcast a dramatic series about a Martian invasion of the Earth. Before it began, the commentator announced on the radio that CBS and its affiliated stations would broadcast the *War of the Worlds*, which is adapted from Herbert George Wells's science fiction novel the *War of the Worlds* and hosted by Orson Wells. Then Wells began to narrate the drama in a live news mode, that is, we now know that in the early twentieth century, the earth was closely monitored by intelligent creatures, and they were more advanced than human beings.

The radio drama was broadcast in the form of imitating a breaking news broadcast. Although statements were made at the beginning, at the 40th minute, and at the end that it was fictional, many listening audience members did not take note of these brief statements in their panic overhearing this apparent news. They believed in the apparently authoritative live broadcast and the claims on the radio, and they became convinced that Martians had waged a war to invade the Earth. Since most of the listeners listened to the broadcast when they came across the program by tuning into the channel, they did not hear the statement introduced at the beginning of the broadcast. Moreover, on a night just a year before the outbreak of World War II in Europe, people were highly nervous and sensitive. In this case, the distinction between truth and falsehood led to extensive misunderstanding, because it was a "live broadcast" and seemed quite real. In the broadcast, many details were presented by simulating the scene of the disaster. For example, there was a scene where astronomy expert Professor Pearson was interviewed. During the interview, journalist Carl Philip said to the audience: Professor Pearson's phone calls and other communication tools may be interrupted anytime; he is in contact with astronomical observatories around the world… So, Professor, may I ask you a question now?

In this case, although the broadcaster did not have a clear "intention to deceive others", the sign text—the information broadcast—was unintentionally segmented. The previous "not-seeming" information did not play its due role, and this resulted in "seeming" but "not-being". Therefore, the sign provided had a "seeming" relationship with the event object, and the sign referred to another thing. Then, the pattern of symbolic veridiction changed, and it became a common "illusion" in the era of mass media. In this case, the media did not deliberately create illusions, but the fragmentation and infinite reproduction of the information created by the media itself led to the public's incomplete cognition of reality and thus to their misconception of having already mastered the truth. This incident is only an accidental case, but the reality in the network age is that the media does not fully reflect reality. This results in a certain amount of illusion being at large, and this illusion is accepted by the public as the truth. In addition, its reaction to the real world will produce a butterfly effect, with the original butterfly no longer having the ability to react and control the repercussions. In fact, what Baudrillard calls a simulacrum represents the status quo

of media and the real world, bridging the gap between reality and virtuality in the implosion of information.

Dissimulation and Secret: Being + Not-seeming. Dissimulation involves a clear intention to deceive others and/or to conceal the truth. Dissimulation makes the sign point to the wrong object through disguise and "not-seeming", which leads to the recipient "misreading" and "misunderstanding". Secret, similarly, involves blocking the dissemination of information so that the object cannot reach the necessary information as presented. Thus, the cognition of the truth cannot be achieved, and this is deliberate deception and falsification. Dissimulation of this kind is the most recognizable as it is not theoretically easy to mix it with others in symbolic logic. The behavior is clear: false news, rumors and behaviors cover up the truth. Of course, this does not mean that dissimulation in real life is easily detected technologically. On the contrary, because of the subjective intention, its text of "not-seeming" must be prepared much more carefully.

These four cases above are significant because the binarism of true and false is placed into an analysis with more comprehensive elements, and the presupposition of accepting the results is also implied. The presupposition is what Greimas has not explicitly mentioned, and it implies two requirements for veridiction. (i) The sender and the recipient must share the common discourse rules between "being" and "seeming". (ii) Only by sharing a meta-language and accompanying texts that do not need to be described clearly in the common discourse rules can we effectively realize the judgment of "being" and "seeming".

The problems with truth that we discuss in our daily lives actually focus on two concepts. The media spectacle acquires important inspiration from Greimas' Veridictory Square because it shows the difference between truth and reality. Truth is not necessarily real, and virtuality is not necessarily false. The "being" in the Greimas' square corresponds to the "real-having", while the "seeming" corresponds to the mental image perception of having. Therefore, the simulacrum created by the media is a concept related to the reality of the phantasma created by the media. They may not be real, but they really constitute our lives. Baudrillard calls the so-called pseudo-symbolic information environment "hyper-reality". Sometimes, simulation is various derivatives of the original thing and is a concept relative to truth; it is very real but not necessarily true. For example, though they are based on material reality, the goods on the shelves are not necessarily needed for the long-term development of society or the human mind, and their legitimacy may be questioned. The truth here is legitimate in cultural and value judgment, while reality represents what is "really" happening in our social life. Although literature and media texts of simulacrum are true but not real, they constitute our spiritual home and the ideal of society. In this sense, both "God" and "art" are "true but not real". The huge machine within consumption society is "real but not true". Furthermore, because it is not true, it looks more deceptive than the former, but in fact, it is very fragile. All reality-based contradictions, such as war, disaster, and plague, will destroy the social machine, but the idea and phantasm of "non-truth" is difficult to eliminate after thousands of years of development.

Based on the reading of the physical text, truth simply represents a relationship of agreement shared between readers and sign senders. It resorts to the genre of the text, and accompanying text, among others. Reality is a relationship of existence, resorting to the form of medium. Both spiritual and material things may really exist, but fictions are neither true nor real.

6.2.2 The Truth About Advertising, Journalism and Literature

6.2.2.1 The Advertising Veridiction as "Possible Fact"

Journalism and advertising, belonging to communication studies, are related to traditional literary writing. More importantly, the two forms of information that appear most frequently in media are required to be of verity, and if they fail to be of verity both will be investigated legally and morally. However, what they present is very different. Real advertising can be creative, while real news must minimize subjective descriptions, without free imagination. Now, let us discuss why advertising and journalism, two parallel subjects within communication studies, are so different from each other from the perspective of symbolic veridiction.

Advertising veridiction features real products, with descriptions that are only possible in the future in the dimension of infinite possible futures. For example, "人头马一开, 好事自然来" (Good luck will naturally fall on those who share Remy Martin). According to the symbolic veridiction logic discussed above, the body of the sign text of advertising is a "not-seeming" veridiction of illusion, which is a structure of a possible world-"人头马一开, 好事自然来". News is inherently about the past, and even the live broadcast always results from technical encoding after the news has occurred. Although the speed of the encoding has been increased to the speed of light today, which can be ignored in terms of physical quantity, logical practice constitutes the framework of the news text, so news can only be presented in a style of veridiction of "being" plus "seeming". As far as the ultimate ownership of the text is concerned, the news text points to information—the decrease of entropy. Once the news has been released, it loses its core value. Therefore, news is an information-based, disposable consumer product, while the advertising text points to conative persuasion and action. Moreover, the repeated broadcasting of advertising information also occupies the information transmission channel to form a preference for "communicativeness". Among Jakobson's six elements, advertising is conative. However, because an advertisement is not necessarily or mandatorily executed, repeated broadcast is required for advertisement to achieve a kind of information force: a violence of information replica. That is, when the news is exposed, its information value disappears. The news then will choose to retreat automatically and give over the information channel to the fresh news. However, the advertisement requires a large number of replicas of information to engage people's viewing and

listening so that people are familiar with a certain brand, service, slogan and proposition. This produces a sense of familiarity to build unconscious trust within the target audience to influence their purchasing behavior. Consequently, the repetition of this information leads people to misjudge the facts. For example, on the basis of the strengths being broadcast, campaign advertisements may make people judge a candidate to be good and completely qualified. The premise discussed here is that all advertisements are legally and morally true. Advertisement strives to realize the truth by complying with the essential provisions of advertising texts.

As with other factual sign texts, facts are the basis for the production of sign texts in advertising, but the proportion and position of advertising factuality in the whole advertising texts are not the most important. Indeed, they are a basic necessary condition rather than a defining property for advertising texts. The fact is only the starting point of the advertising text, but what runs through the whole advertisement is the "possibility of the future". The fact itself does not provide the richness and imagination to the advertising text. Therefore, as a kind of "quasi-factual" text, advertising controls the main dimension—the possibility of the future. The difference between advertising and news veridiction is that news achieves perceptual "truth" with "being" and "seeming", while advertising is a phantasm text, trying to achieve "not-being" with "being". Accordingly, we can effectively distinguish the truth of advertising from the truth of news. As the future dream-creating mechanism, the most real advertising does not aim to dig out the established fact of a product but aims to seek the lifelike quality of the dream created. Thus, advertising represents the romantic expectation of the ideal life but does not reflect the real life of our times. It ultimately shows the desire for possible life in this era. As a result, advertising "simulation" is the simulation of the possible world.

According to McLuhan, advertising is the most effective text to study contemporary society in the future. This idea may be understood in the sense that advertising does not only reflect the material basis of contemporary social life, but it also fully expresses people's desires and imagination of the future. In a sense, advertising is a broad literary style, which is particularly important in this era. However, the news is different from advertising communications. From the perspective of truth-telling, it may have a subtler relationship with literature. Once the framework of truth-telling involves the actual historical origin of news and literature, things become much more complicated. To clearly define the commonality and difference between news truth and symbolic veridiction, literature will be used as a reference. The choice of this reference is not only due to the historical disciplinary connection between literature and news, but also because, in reality, the specific techniques in news presentations are borrowed from literature. Furthermore, this news form draws a great deal from literary techniques of expression, and it has even created an emblematic news style in New Journalism. As it comprises properties of both literature and journalism, New Journalism is frequently dismissed as "non-true" and "false". The following section will justify the validity of this genre in the sense of symbolic "truth".

6.2.2.2 The Intersection Between the Truth of Journalism and the Truth of Literature

a. New Journalism

In our daily lives, true and false are used too extensively, and this makes it difficult for us to use them to simply distinguish the internal differences between literature and journalism. People often praise the verisimilitude of literary description with modifiers such as "lifelike", "reflecting personal experience" and "including real-life experience". Today, when we bring up New Journalism again, we must determine the difference of "truth" between literature and news. Only through the difference in the way of telling the truth, in terms of genre, can we give it a clear identity in the way of "style". The acquisition of this identity and the construction of a reading contract with readers are the only references against which we can measure a work.

The works of New Journalism appeared early in the 1950s. Lillian Ross published a report entitled "The Film", written in the form of novels, in 1952 in *The New Yorker*, and it is considered one of the founding works of New Journalism (程道才 2004). In the early 1960s, New Journalism was simply a popular style of writing. In 1973, Wolfe and Johnson co-published a monograph on *New Journalism*, which provides a preliminary theoretical explanation for this new literary news genre (徐孜望 2008). In it, they put forward four characteristics of journalism. First, in a structure combining scenes and pictures, the event is described; second, each scene is displayed through what the person who experiences the event sees and thinks; third, the dialogue between the characters is recorded without any abridgement; fourth, a lot of trivial details are employed to depict the characters. (徐孜望 2008) Wang Xiong summed up the new journalism as follows. The so-called "New Journalism", in a nutshell, means that journalists borrow many techniques of novelists to carry out news reports and writing in a richer and more imaginative way. (王雄 2000) The climax for New Journalism occurred in 1979 when the Pulitzer Prize for Journalism (Feature Writing) was set up. Then for a period, New Journalism did not experience any development because of the opposition to it. In the 1990s, New Journalism flourished again, based on market demand. As a result, on the one hand, we feel deeply that there is a need among the public for works of New Journalism in the market. On the other hand, the flavor of literature and subjective components of New Journalism are still regarded as the natural enemies of news "verity". In order to clarify the identity of New Journalism, we need to gather the requisite courage to revisit related problems in broad stylistics, where journalism and literature are in a binarism.

b. The formation and differentiation of style

The cognition of a thing depends on concepts, but concepts are not constructed according to objects in the world because the object is continuous and non-articulate. To cognize objects, these continuous things must be articulated. In many cases, articulation represents the pressure of specific needs in our lives. For southerners in China who rarely see snow, there is only one kind of white in the world, but for the

Inuit, there are dozens of alternatives to snow color. By the same token, various styles derive from the division of this continuous world in human language concepts. We use the semiotic concept "signifier" to denote "style" and "signified" to represent the universe of "texts" in the world. A close look at it will help us see style as a self-updating concept system with the continuous progress of creative practice. The earliest style is oral literature, which is generally combined with music to form lyric poems that we can sing. The earliest written literary work in China is believed to be the *Book of Songs*. From the point of view of the specific object referred to, the literary object is constantly enriched and developed with the change in literary practice.

Since the birth of news, these two concepts have been brought into the absolute binarism of "truth and falsehood" and "objective and subjective". In order to break through this binarism, we must eliminate the basis for their opposition. Simultaneously, we must establish their relative independent properties that can be clearly distinguished on the common basis of their existence. When news was born as an influential "writing text", literature was already a conventional concept. However, the trend of thought led by structuralism and its systematic theory tended to build its own complete system in synchronic space, which was stable and supported by a strong literary tradition. Therefore, in terms of the divide between journalism and literature, journalism is clearly marked by the practical and real, while literature is marked by the artistic and illusory. When cross-boundary confusion arises in the binary stable structure with the rapid development of journalism and literature, and even when many other binary structures fall apart in the new social context in human social life, their opposition remains solid. The specific requirements for news as information compel the audience to refuse to accept a kind of news that is claimed to be a literary text. However, some subtle changes have taken place in the meaning of the news truth itself. Traditional news theories feature ideas such as factor truth, macro truth, and essential truth, which are gradually abandoned because of special political factors. A close look will help us find that all these kinds of truth reveal the truth of symbolic expression: it is a kind of symbolic imitation of the scene by the reporter who is not involved in the news events. The inevitable subjective color is not intended by the reporter, but results from the one-sided process caused by each semiosis that is inevitable in logic.

The semiotized truth is usually difficult for traditional journalism to accept. The idea of the unity of subject and object is deeply rooted in the theory of journalism; however, changes have taken place since the linguistic turn. When the overall information constructed by the mass media appeared as "super-real", an ever-reported event may never have happened. As a result, the relationship between truth and reality has become a problem about which we must rethink.

c. The broad literary text after the cultural turn

Traditional literature has definite objects in genre, such as a novel, drama, poetry and prose. Today's literature has had to be manifested as multilingual cultural texts, and the so-called boundary between daily life and art has disappeared. The essence of these changes is the disappearance of the monopolization of the literary text by traditional literature (art) language (蒋荣昌 2004). It is generally believed in

academic circles that the cultural turn in literature took place at the end of the twentieth century (the specific time varies slightly according to countries and regions, but the turn generally occurred in the context of electronic media). The cultural turn of literature is manifested as being greatly limited by the increasingly powerful mass media, and its related objects are no longer limited to literary text in the traditional sense. The openness of literary texts has incorporated the creation, dissemination, and acceptance of literature as a complete process. After the turn, this has mainly led to the more extensive connection between literary texts and all fields of society. Literature itself is no longer an artist's personal emotional expression in terms of its production process. Under the background of a highly market-oriented consumer society and driven by the invisible market, both the generation and dissemination of literary texts come from the flow process in the mechanism.

At present, the most influential work is not the traditional work with the most artistic value, but the most appealing work in the market. The popular Korean TV series, *You Who Came from the Stars,* earned more than a billion hits online. With the elite morality theory set aside, looking at this kind of literary carnival for different people reveals that the logic behind it is not based on the depravity of literature but on its existence in a new living space in the era of media. Its mass production depends on the continuous progress of data analysis technology, which analyzes audience preference at large. The American hit TV series *House of Cards* is such an example. Industrialization and media are not meant to deprive literature of its living space. On the contrary, literature has become a mass consumer product in the media age since the "cultural turn" and one of the accompanying consequences is that literature has retreated from the elitist discourse system and returned to the daily and popular aesthetic tastes of ordinary people, requiring us to alter our processes of interpreting literary texts from focusing on literary text itself to focusing on the whole social text. Thus, the connotation of literary texts has been different from the traditional literary genre with novel and poetry as the main styles. It must include a series of cultural sign texts, such as news, advertising, and so on, and expand itself into the broad literary text as an overall name for social and cultural sign texts in consumer society and the information age.

In the broad literary text after the cultural turn, the basis for the divide between journalism and literature in the traditional sense—the divide between practicality and art—has been dispelled. The boundary between truth and falsehood may also be re-examined from another perspective. As a multilingual, multi-media, and multi-genre discourse system, the broad literary text accommodates and covers diverse perspectives of expression. When we choose to present the facts in the position of news, the disclosure of the object in the presupposed news position must represent the temporary concealment of all the other positions of non-news. Jiang Rongchang points out that the verity of news is not the verity of the news event. For a news event, which is an actual event in life, its truth or real state in ethics, law or the meaning structure of the event itself results from what the person related to the practical meaning of the event in life must deal with. (蒋荣昌 2005) That is, as the identity of imitators of life events (not the news events) changes, the signified of the truth has also undergone a radical change. Therefore, the news text can imitate the truth

in only one of the ways. Since this kind of truth cannot negate life events, its verity must be an utterance in a specific context in which there is a definite interpreter and an object, but it is not rooted in the isolated life event. The truth represented in this utterance is not the news fact itself, but the news fact's rhetorical image uttered in the conventionalized figure of speech in the name of news. For news readers, the best effect resulting from the rhetorical image is to evoke the mental image of the truth on the spot.

d. Physical news truth and metaphysical cultural truth

With Greimas's Veridictory Square as the reference basis, the truth of news must be a mode of "being" + "seeming". There must be three dimensions of truth for news texts to determine the truth of an event, as is described below.

First, the honesty intention of the sender (institution, individual, and every gatekeeper in the production link, et al.) must be determined. In such a case, the news is not intentionally covered up, and facts are not misinterpreted. Within senders' capabilities, they will objectively report what they see in the news. From this point of view, New Journalism is a form of expression with honest intention. The multifaceted nature of the facts on the news scene combines with the nature of the fact itself as a kind of historical event that cannot be fully reproduced, so senders should try their best to reproduce the news event according to their understanding. Performing in the documentary and simulation diagrams of a scene in the news are the means used by senders to better present the news facts.

Second, faithful text must be presented. The text effectively reflects the sender's cognition of the news event and is changed into news text. Whether it is the exaggeration of the title, or the reproduction of the imagination regarding the picture, there may be a definite deviation from the actual situation. A process similar to the psychological description in New Journalism may be the good intention of the sender, but it may damage the text's faithfulness to the news truth. Moreover, within the conventional framework of news, it may cause misunderstanding among readers.

Third, the wonderful acceptance effect occurs. In other words, both the intention of honesty and the faithful text need to be tested finally by the acceptance effect. Only when readers finally and cognitively know the fact that is not distorted in the news can the truth of the news be delivered effectively. In fact, the reader's own judgment will never go unchanged. With the evolution of media practice, the reader's adaptability will also improve. One of the reasons for the 1938 panic over the *War of the Worlds* radio drama may be that, at the time, people did not fully understand and adapt to the diverse genres of broadcast as a new medium. Today, such incidents may only be discussed at our leisure. That is, when a reading agreement of a specific genre has already been reached between the reader and the text, some techniques for expression are feasible. For example, reportage in New Journalism is valid if it is published in the category of reportage and makes certain that the readers know it.

From a metaphysical point of view, we cannot merely look at the problem from the perspective of the technical operation of the news event in order to achieve the readers' general understanding. However, premised on recognizing news as a kind of symbolic truth, the truth of news is regarded as a kind of truth of interpretation:

reaching a reading agreement to the effect that the reader will not misunderstand it. Of course, when we say that news belongs to a kind of broad literary text, it must be made clear that it refers to the comprehensive cultural symbol system of signification in mass media after the cultural turn, rather than to the artistic and fictional literary text. Indeed, the literariness of "news text" is still rooted in "verity and objectivity" (蒋荣昌 2005). Only in this way can the verity of the news text be integrated with the sense of truth that readers can perceive. To achieve this unity, news also adopts narrative methods and rhetorical devices that can be recognized by the reading agreement within the scope of its genre. This is the way that news can serve as a living cultural history. With a little review of the history of news documentaries, it is not difficult to find that documentaries called "true movies" or "direct films" are no closer to the truth than other documentaries that strictly abide by their own grammatical rules. News, as a form of text imitating contemporary social life, is also a style of literary text in a broad sense. From the perspective of its extension, those genres called reportage, true novel, and in-depth report can all be included in this category, but they must define the paradigm of their respective texts in the stylistic sense. In order to deal with these definitions, we may even establish stylistics for New Journalism on this basis. But these are only what we should do after the identity of New Journalism is clear.

To sum up, there is no lack of specific modes adopting the name of truth in the various texts of modern life to which broad literary text refers. On the one hand, advertising presents product data such as quality and raw materials, as mentioned above. On the other hand, diversified advertisements best show consumers' willingness to consume the product as audiences. Consumers do not call it "false" advertising because it presents something superior to the real product in quality or offers a better psychological feeling about the product. Here, there is a tacit agreement of rules between the reader and the sender of the text. Based on this agreement, which belongs to the rhetoric of advertising verity, we do not appeal to the law because good luck did not naturally fall on us after we shared Remy Martin with others. Similarly, the truth of news texts is only "the truth of texts". In the era of broad literary texts, the public has well mastered the basic rules of constructing tacit agreements according to a kind of text.

Chapter Summary: Existence in Simulacra and Symbolic Evolution of the Image

The two topics of this chapter—the self-image and the truth in news—are ultimately incorporated into a kind of symbolic construction of the sense of reality. This raises important questions: Will this lead to new cultural problems? Is the personal involvement of the subject declining? To some extent, the difference between "pseudo-environment" and "reality" in Lippmann's "pseudo-environment theory" may be interpreted as the difference between "perception in media" and the perception of "personal involvement". More virtual signs have been created in the image world during the digital age, but have these virtual signs thoroughly replaced such personal

involvement and the sense of reality? Or does this sense of reality mean something genuine to people? If the answer is yes, reexamination is needed of the pseudo-environment theory and the subsequent problem of how to transform the pseudo-environment into a real environment. If the digital image spectacle is the same as those spectacles we have visited physically in terms of perceptual utility, is the dichotomy between pseudo-environment and real environment still meaningful? The question functions like this: Is the real environment in which we live ultimately only the pseudo-environment constructed by signs? We do everything in the sign, so the real environment has been cancelled. In other words, the original sense of the real environment is merely one of symbolic mimicry that is presented in a certain symbolic environment.

Therefore, rather than the absolute opposition between the pseudo and the personal, the era of digital media represents only the evolution of the form of media signs. If this evolution is reduced to perceiving the progress in iconicity, contemporary visual culture might be interpreted as the correlative of the evolution of a certain cultural form: iconicity oriented to sinsign, legisign, and qualisign.

Imaginal Iconicity in the Era Oriented to Sinsign. This type of iconicity is represented in ancient forms of body language and signs with personal involvement. Iconicity then is the ancient and primitive form of symbolic representation, and its symbolic form usually incorporates personal involvement. For example, handmade products are left with human traces, which in art is regarded as an unrepeatable inspiration. The aspect of personal involvement here is in line with Lippmann's theory; however, it is not absolutely personal involvement in the philosophical sense. On the contrary, this kind of personal involvement demonstrates the employment of media in creation, because the body serves as another kind of material medium. What's more, as animals that create and use tools, human beings have never been purely "bodies" or purely objects. Zhuangzi, a pivotal figure in classical philosophical Daoism, says *you jishi zhe bi you jixin* (有机事者必有机心: those who work with machines must be opportunistic). This seems to advocate personal experience without media, but Zhuangzi could not abandon the idea of the body as the last medium, and finally, he awakened from his dream about a butterfly.

Imaginal Iconicity in the Era Oriented to Legisign. This category is represented by photography and mechanical reproduction. As an evolved form of image, it is a kind of physical result of mechanical production, and it must be influenced by the idea of shadow. As a development of the mechanical age, it not only includes static photos, but also includes the specific forms within the dynamic media genres of film and television. Let us examine a text from the advertisement for the wine Guojiao 1573: You can hear a history of 130 years, you can see a history of 186 years, and you can taste a history of 434 years. It is widely recognized that the visible history is 186 years old, marked by the dawn of photo-taking taking over roles of precise description of images that had been held by painting. In other words, this kind of viewing is based on the machinery's resembling and simulating natural objects. It has nothing to do with the accuracy of representation, but is only related to the form of symbolic representation. Photos taken shortly after the invention of photography provided little information, but essentially the eyes of humanity were extended in

time and space because of this provision of mechanical photography. The primary feature of photography is the ability to make a replica that is almost the same as the original, even though the difference between the mechanically reproduced thing and the original is still recognizable. And typed representation dominates symbolic representation in photo-taking with a photo representing a class of things.

Qualisign-oriented Iconicity. This is represented by the digitalized and super-real simulacrum. In the age of simulacra, the existence of a direct simulation of an object is no longer necessary. Instead, there must be a kind of comprehensive construction of the whole. The pursuit of drawing near "real effect" in the picture age transformed into a "beyond-the-scene" simulacrum in the photography age. In the age of simulacra, the object to be imitated is no longer the real world in the original sense, but people's mental image. Digital technology and media have transcended reality to create a direct dialogue between human perception and the surreal. Numbers have become the quality of all simulacra; thus, the meaning of qualisign has changed. The qualisign now completes the self-directing of the signifier in another form.

Signs do not have to have correlatives in the real world with their carriers pointing to their own qualities in a highly digitized and simulated era. Moreover, there is zero difference between a reproduced qualisign and its original. In an era dominated by sinsign and legisign, qualisign cannot form a sign because there must be a referent. In the age of simulacra, on the other hand, image is able to signify many things with the extreme case in which a qualisign refers to itself. The unity of the qualisign itself does not get rid of the sign because it evokes a mental image. At the same time, because of its super-real characteristics, qualisign finalizes the image by refusing the free imagination in the generation of mental images.

Notes

1. Zhao Yiheng (赵毅衡 2011b) extended Greimas's semiotic square of veridiction by including the reader's "acceptance" and "rejection" to form a more complex pattern. Here, as the focus is on symbolic veridiction, only two sets of elements are used to analyze the text and intention 4.

Chapter 7
The Cultural Spectacle

7.1 The Articulate World

In the opening thesis of *The Society of the Spectacle*, Guy Debord (2021) says that the whole life of those societies in which modern conditions of production prevail presents itself as an immense accumulation of spectacles. All that once was directly lived has become a mere representation. He adds that the accumulation of this kind of landscape even dominates the real society and the real world. According to Debord, spectacle is not something added to the real world—a decorative element. On the contrary, it is the very heart of society's real unreality in all its specific manifestations. In advertising, entertainment, and social landscape, a spectacle has become the dominant mode of life. Debord's spectacle theory is believed to have opened up a new perspective of the critical theory of modern media culture and, to a certain extent, promoted the post-modernistic turn of French academic thought. The media reality since Debord's time has produced a hundred times more spectacles than he witnessed, and this has to some extent underscored his description of the path of spectacle society.

One question worth further discussion is whether, with the rapid development of the media spectacle, people have slipped into what was criticized by Debord in which the spectacle represents the escape from human activities and the reconsideration and correction of human practice. However, actually for half a century, people have not fallen into this situation passively, instead they have been more engaged in the production of the spectacle while embracing it. People are no longer in the situation in which feedback for information was denied in the era of mass media, but take the initiative to create and generate the symbolic spectacle of society. Instead, people take the initiative to create and generate symbolic social spectacles. As a result, we may need to reconsider whether these criticisms of the spectacle have created an elitist perspective by undervaluing the public's role, and we may question whether the spectacle Debord presupposed has always been in opposition to social practice. In other words, if spectacles constitute the practice in which the public is involved

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and which they create, should the public have the ability to reflect on and criticize the spectacle? If this kind of reflection is possible, "spectacle-styled survival" could be regarded as a legal mode of survival, and spectacles will no longer be limited to the accumulation of simulated objects in the era of reproduction. Instead, it could be a way, deeply rooted in human society, to comprehend the world. The spectacle provides a means for the human mind to cognize the world, using clues. It is based on the vision that helps gather most information, yet it extends beyond vision to grasp the world in one's spirit. Dating back to Plato's "imitation theory" and visual centralism, it has been revived in modern times through the reality of media. With Kant's view of human being the measure of all things and the conclusion drawn in modern quantum mechanics that the characteristics of things are related to the observer, we have reason to understand the spectacle in a neutral schema. The media world is in the view of the spectacle.

This study returns to the analysis of symbolic forms to understand the cultural media spectacle, so it does not focus on criticizing the critical theory. As Barthes (1972, p. 160) said, "Here I am, before the sea; it is true that it bears no message. But on the beach, what material for semiology! Flags, slogans, signals, signboards, clothes, suntan even, which are so many messages to me." Barthes's (1972) message clearly presupposes that symbolic materials are "traces" left by human society. If we want to exhaust all symbolic materials, we cannot help but ask, how can the name of the sea come to humankind's hearts since the sea does not contain any information?

7.1.1 Platonic Representation

7.1.1.1 Iconicity—Imitation of the "Idea" in the "Cave"

Seen from the perspective of representing the world in signs, Plato's thought represents the cognition of Western classical philosophy and has far-reaching historical significance. One of his important concepts in grasping the world is "eidos", which is Greek for "idea". There are more than 20 kinds of Chinese names for *eidos*, such as *linian* 理念, *lixing* 理型, *guannian* 观念, *gainian* 概念, *zhonglei* 种类, *xiang* 相, *gongxiang* 共相, *xingxiang* 型相, *xing* 形, *shi* 式, *xing* 型, *yuanxing* 原型, *fanxing* 范型, *moshi* 模式, *xingshi* 形式, *fangshi* 方式, *yishi* 意式, and *tongshi* 通式. Chen Kang, an expert in ancient Greek philosophy, suggested that it be translated as *xiang* 相. Ling Jiyao, an aesthetician, summarizes the four main parts of Plato's theory of idea. First, the idea of an object is the meaning of an object; second, the idea of object is the organic whole formed by each part of the object; third, the idea of object is the generality of all the individual objects belonging to it; fourth, the idea is non-material, which reveals the nature of all objects (凌继尧 1999). Viewed from the perspective of immateriality and non-symbolic characteristics, the concept of idea is similar to the cognition of *Tao* in ancient China, and it is not contingent on the independent existence of the material world. Such concepts include "sounds of nature" in *Zhuangzi*《庄子》, the "Tao" in the *I Ching*, and "a very big image" in the work of

Laozi (ancient Chinese philosopher and writer). In the tenth volume of *the Republic,* Plato refers to the idea as the source of the visible objective world. The objective world constitutes the blueprint of art signs and the object for imitation, accordingly. Therefore, we can only represent art or the beauty of ideas as the ultimate form of the world by imitating the shadow of ideas cast in the category of the objective world. Iconicity in the metaphysical dimension is the general relationship of this book; that is, the world in which we live has an iconic relation with the ideational world, but this relation is not a visible projection. It is a projection abstracted from the real world.

Plato's view mentioned above was reflected again in his famed *Allegory of the Cave* (Plato 2000). In it, people's perception is likened to the shadow cast in the cave, and the world outside the cave, in which there is light that illuminates every ultimate truth, is likened to the known, or "real" world. In fact, the real world is the ideational world. In this metaphor, Plato also designed a plot that one of the prisoners is liberated and sees the outside world. He sees that the source of the shadow on the wall of the cave is caused by fire and light. This plot is often used by later generations to explain that the world outside the cave is knowable and useful for proving the knowable world. Realistically, there are no liberated prisoners. Thus, the prisoners are essentially just like us, and all the objects they can perceive are merely projections of the ideational world on the wall of the cave. However, the projections are in fact reality, and they are not fabrications. This order of reality is different from the intuition of the real world outside the cave, for it is the semiotized representation of that real world. These shadows then are the intermediaries through which we understand the world.

Human beings have never stopped trying to liberate themselves from imprisonment in the cave, and every revolution in science and philosophy represents a process for a brave prisoner to break free from the rope and exit the cave. As Plato presupposed, the prisoner as a result needs great wisdom to understand what he newly sees, but also it is difficult for other prisoners to believe him. For these prisoners, the spectacle outside is far less real than the shadow on the wall. Indeed, Copernicus, Galileo, Bruno, and Darwin dared to defy the original cognition of other prisoners, and they were declared heretics, and some were sentenced to life in prison while some even were executed. We have considered the evil of those who executed them, yet we did not realize that the executioners were themselves no more than cowardly prisoners until we viewed their actions from the perspective of Plato. These great men who led humankind to see part of the spectacle outside the cave are just the prisoners who broke free from bondage and attempted to escape from the cave. Every time we positively prove their actions, it draws all humankind collectively to emerge from one cave. However, there has never been one great man who reveals all the truths, and each who has tried has only revealed a very small part of any truth. We do not even know whether there is another cave outside the cave, or whether we are only walking towards the entrance of hope, but we will never get out of the cave to be exposed to the sunshine. All we know is that we cannot realize all the truths of the world at one time. As Plato expressed in *Allegory of the Cave*, we may not see anything when we are suddenly exposed to the sun from within the darkness. Human beings can only obtain specific cognitive progress through certain intermediaries.

Intermediary plays a very important role in the discovery of truth. The liberated prisoner is the heroic Prometheus, who steals fire in ancient Greek mythology. Both Prometheus and the snake that entices Eve to eat the forbidden fruit from the Tree of Knowledge, show that there are always guides in Western classical myths to help people reach the ultimate divine light. In fact, in the *Allegory of the Cave*, the prisoner who breaks away from the chain is able to tell the other prisoners not the truth itself, but the truth through his eyes, which is another shadow the truth cast on him. In this sense, like the shadow on the wall, he is just an intermediary. From the perspective of semiotics, we might as well regard Plato's three worlds as a continuous process of transformation. The ideational world is the ultimate truth, and the "fire and light outside the cave" is what we cannot see directly. The truth can only be gained by the presentation of the intermediary (whether it is a liberated prisoner, Prometheus, or the shadow on the wall) and explained with the prisoner's own wisdom. Therefore, by borrowing Plato's *Allegory of the Cave*, the symbolic representation gradually forms the following three levels of the world that can be distinguished by semiotized transformations.

Ideational World. The ideational world does not depend on the independent existence of the objective world and the sense world. It is the ultimate, best, and real world as well as the eternal law and principle. It is the origin of the world and the abstract whole that cannot be directly semiotized.

Objective World. The objective world is the projection and copy of the ideational world. Meanwhile, it is the source of the world of art signs as well as the necessary path to the historical world. The objective world is only a source of the symbolic world rather than being our symbolic world. In particular, the objective world is defined here as between idea and sign. It cannot be spoken because it is set at a pre-symbolic status at a certain level. Once it is uttered, the objective world becomes a semiotized world, in "the name of objectivity". It is a perceptible and describable world and also the encounter between existence and *Dasein*.

Imitative World. The imitative world is the semiotized world. Human consciousness generates sign texts according to the individualization of the objective world. Semiotized world is the part touched on by human consciousness, perception, and understanding in the objective world.

7.1.1.2 Position of Biological Perception

Classical philosophy in both the East and the West believes the origin of truth features overall grand characteristics that cannot be described, but their paths to the source of the world are different. The Western world focuses on the steps leading to the truth, and this is different from the idea of harmony between heaven and humanity in China. Plato's objective world is undoubtedly a semiotized nature ("the second" nature), not the original world. It should be noted that the second nature here includes both the natural world and the objective items made by humankind according to ideas. Plato used the "bed" for illustration, that is, the idea of bed is the foundation of the bed, and the bed made by the craftsman according to the idea is an objective bed, and

the art sign is already the third nature. There is actually a logical contradiction to Plato's second nature: Does the craftsman make the bed according to the idea? Does it mean craftsmen are closer to the source of truth than artists? Plato (2000) said the beds made by carpenters were not permanent because of the limitations of time and space, materials, craftsmanship, and use, so they could only share certain fragments and aspects of the idea yet not fully show the idea. The explanation is incomplete because, according to common sense, craftsmen and artists are at the same level. Using art design as an example, the idea/concept of a bed is formed before a bed is made. Craftsmen simply act as designers and producers at the same time when making beds. The practical bed and the artistic bed in a picture can be different symbolic presentations of the bed.

Is there still a difference between the "objective world" and the "symbolic world"? The answer is yes. The "bed" made by artists on paper or drawn by designers may become the "objective world" for carpenters. The difference lies in the difference in semiotized order between carpenters and artists. Nevertheless, Plato's metaphor is not inappropriate. What he does not say is that the position of the artist and the carpenter in the process of semiotization is determined by the objective object according to which they construct representations, rather than by their identities. When the carpenter makes the bed according to the design, then the design is the objective object, and the practical bed made by the carpenter is the symbolic representation. Conversely, when the artist takes the bed that a carpenter has made as the creation basis, it is assumed that the carpenter's work is the objective bed. Therefore, three worlds come into existence under the idea. In other words, the structure (ideational world—objective world—symbolic world of art) is not changed.

Plato's process starts only with human perception because in his time there was no information theory, no biosemiotics, and no quantum mechanics. Therefore, the perception and imitation in the three worlds Plato describes presuppose the existence of human perception. If we reconsider the division of symbolic transformation processes on the basis of modern science, we may also need to include "the relationship between observer and observation results" in quantum mechanics and extend Kant's view of human being the measure of all things to observer being the measure of the object observed. This is similar to the saying in Buddhism of "a world in a wild flower, and a bodhi in a leaf". If we take into account how those who perceive things make legislation for the world, a new link emerges in the process of transforming Plato's ideational world into the symbolic world: the biological world. In the face of an objective table, should we admit the perceived results of animals that also have the ability to sense at the biological level? Is what a fly sees in its compound eyes comparable to what a human perceives? Regarding the mechanical world, one might ask whether what a camera shoots is a kind of perception. These questions seem to show that the three worlds summarized according to Plato's concept of idea cannot fully cover the details in people's attempts to comprehend the truth of the world. Through the process of signification in modern semiotics, we may attempt to elaborate on it.

7.1.2 The Four Natures

The "four natures" of signification presented here together represent the logical development of the source, medium, perception, and interpretation of the sign at the necessary stage in the process of signification itself. However, it is an overall description of the "universe" of signs and the objective world rather than a model of individual semiotics in general semiotics, and it is a metaphysical cognitive study of all the elements of signification. The four natures are not put forward without any purpose. On the contrary, by emphasizing the relationship between signs and the natural world, people hope to grasp more clearly the relationship between the sign and the object as well as the transformation mechanism between them. The motivations in the transformation may be used to prove the "motivation of generation" and "basis of iconicity" that are the basis for semiotics. This is also a necessary supplement to the study of natural representation by signs. To put it simply, the four natures are as follows: the first nature—the world in itself, with focus on the source of signs and the abstract truth; the second nature—the umwelt world, with focus on the symbolic intermediary and the objective world; the third nature—the perceptual world, with focus on the symbolic perception and the biological signal; the fourth nature—the cultural world, with focus on the symbolic interpretation and the cultural symbols.

7.1.2.1 The First Nature: The World in Itself

The first nature is the ideational world without symbolic abstraction. There is no concrete form in the first nature, and it comprises neither the subjective world nor the material world but includes all the beings of the concrete world that we can cognize. It is the Tao in Eastern philosophy and the ideational world in Plato, or "the being of beings". According to Hegel's definition, being, as the primary beginning, cannot be included with intermediary or indirect things; it is, then, a "pure being" (张世英 1991). Being refuses to be cognized in the form of "type" or "articulation", and its "universality" is the "universality" beyond everything. In Western philosophy, being cannot be defined, but is inferred from the highest universality (Pascal 2007). Hegel supposes that being is poor yet potentially contains everything, so it is of the most abundance, as in the view from Chinese philosophy that it was from the Nameless that Heaven and Earth sprang (*Canon of the Way and Its Power*,《道德经》). Here, "the Nameless" means the "ideational world" that is indescribable but can be inferred at the highest level of meaning.

Since the first nature seems so empty conceptually, why is it introduced into semiotics? On the one hand, semiotics, as a study of meaning, must have its own philosophy and the dimension of ultimate meaning, and it is not just the physical interpretation of language and image. In his *Essay on Human Understanding*, John Locke discusses a study of signs and predicts that semiotics will provide us with another kind of logic and theory, which will be different from what we are now familiar with (Locke 2003). This methodology includes a metaphysical color. At the

same time, the first nature here is not exactly the same as Plato's idea or Hegel's absolute spirit, but it developed from them based on some kind of symbolic interpretation. Hegel's absolute spirit, emphasizing its eternity and transcendence, is the absolute being external to "time and space, nature and society". Both Hegel's absolute spirit and Plato's "idea" emphasize their "immaterial", or non-general property. Based on signification, the first nature, here, inevitably conceals the specificity of the sign. In Heidegger's approach, the concrete extension of a sign actually conceals other meanings. Therefore, in semiotics we must attach importance to a kind of being that transcends general individual signs. It involves self-knowledge of the limitation of symbols and the limitation of human cognition; otherwise, it is easy to fall into an arbitrary judgment.

Today, the boundaries of semiotics are expanding rapidly. There has been a huge cognitive transformation from the period of the emergence of zoosemiotics to biosemiotics. The discussion of symbolic activities is no longer limited to zoosemiotics or biosemiotics, and material semiotics, more broadly, is increasingly a topic for discussion. Peirce's claim that the universe is full of signs is itself supported by another theory. However, the first nature put forward here does not represent a simple affirmation for extending the denotation of semiotics. Semiotics based on material objectivity is ultimately not established because "material" is only the representation of "materiality" presented by the first nature, and the material does not have the "meta-existence" that transcends the spirit. The philosophical stand of semiotics raised here firmly supports the "ultimate being", which is a working hypothesis and extremely necessary because it can effectively avoid randomly taking spirit, material, or a certain facet of being as the ultimate place for everything. Even when we use the word "objective" to describe it, we need to be particularly careful because the first nature, as an abstract whole, objectively including material things, is supposed to include the spiritual world as well. Therefore, it is not possible to understand the first nature from the perspective of reality. A more intuitive way of understanding is to regard it as the deculturalized expression of Tao in Chinese classical thought, or as the whole world composed of Plato's ideas.

The first nature, of course, is not part of Peirce's tripartite semiosis, and it is an indescribable whole. When we refer to the "world in itself" (being) in writing, image, or any other form of sign, we have met the Dasein in it. The object we point out is not the thing in itself, but the projection of the second nature in our perception. The first nature is of the degree zero, pure nature unconsciously processed. The world in itself can only be described in the macro concept and cannot be described by specific signs because any description will change its pure, in-itself and for-itself state, and the world in itself is a formless meta-being. Because it cannot be semiotized, the first nature is not in the inner process of signification. Therefore, in the first nature, there is no specific semiotic iconicity.

7.1.2.2 The Second Nature: The Umwelt World

The first nature cannot be semiotized directly, nor is it of sign. What, then, is its relationship with the sign? How do people grasp the ultimate world? The world is finally transformed into signs and obtains perceptual meanings through intermediaries. The first nature's intermediary is the objective being as the object of perception. When we use being to represent the first nature's state in itself, the intermediary may be expressed as Dasein. In Heidegger's view, being always means the existence of the Dasein—to force the being from the Dasein. However, the transformation from a being into a sign is not a seamless process. There is a state of transformation from the abstract whole to describable objects between them. Eero Tarasti (2001) inquired about the "a priori state of signs" repeatedly in *Existential Semiotics*. He even regards this state as the most important in semiotics, referring to it in Finnish as the *esi- merkkejä*. Ricoeur (1990) put forward the theory of "three-fold mimesis" from the organization of daily life experience by narrative, and pointed out that the first mimesis refers to the pre-understanding of the "narrative nature of experience" in daily life. The second mimesis refers to the self-structure of narrative, which is based on narrative coding inside the discourse. The third mimesis refers to the reconstruction of reality by narrative, which is equivalent to metaphor. In Ricoeur's view, the lifeworld and the text world need to be reconstructed in the complex narrative. Kristeva used to describe the state before sign formation, demonstrating that the chora is neither a symbol nor a signifier. It is neither a model nor a copy in a pre-symbolic period and uncertain, it cannot be named and described (Kristeva 1986). Her other concept of the semiotic refers to the external domain in the process of meaning generation, and is an uncertain space not presented as a provisional segmentation. This external domain does not enter the space of meaning, but it is on the brink of meaning.

This perspective highlights a problem, that is, the abstract idea cannot directly lead to perception or the sign because there is an important process of transformation between them. In this book, the whole process of transformation is regarded as the projection of the first nature: the second nature. The second nature, also the real basis of symbolic existence, occurs between abstract existence and symbolic existence. Moreover, it is the "encounter" between Dasein and the world in itself. It is a "world" resulting from the world in itself touched by human consciousness. The world is formed by the whole of human activity, as Dasein. This world demonstrates that people and human activities "exist in the world". The specific occurrence of the projective relationship between the first nature and the second nature may be summarized as "concretization and objectification".

Primarily, the second nature is the first nature "objectified", with what Kristeva calls "uncertain provisional segmentation", which makes the world cognizable. Chaos in the universe did not end with the Big Bang, and the clear sky, the turbid earth and the differentiation of Yin and Yang are the result of segmentation. The first nature, as the "universal", is differentiated into perceptible concrete images in real existence. In China, the "big image" in the general sense is invisible and imperceptible, and specific quasi-images derived from it provide people with understanding.

This is what the *I Ching* refers to as, "Taiji sheng Liangyi, Liangyi sheng Sixiang" (太极生两仪，两仪生四象—Taiji, the "Supreme Ultimate" state of undifferentiated, absolute, and infinite potential, the oneness before duality, produced Yin and Yang, from which Jin, Mu, Shui, and Huo originated). Here, *sheng* can be understood as the "way of existence"—being or transformation from being to Dasein. With Liangyi (两仪—Yin and Yang), there will be relative opposition of categories, or segmentation; with the Sixiang, there will be specific objects that can be described. In Plato's theory, all these are aspects of the objective world. However, the word "objective" in this case is inappropriate, so it needs to be used carefully. "Objective" is problematic here because the world in itself, as the first nature, has the objectivity of universality at the highest level, and it cannot be explored. Thus, the meanings become too broad when "objective" is used to explain the opposite of "subjective". Through segmentation, the world is no longer chaotic, and the external difference between "a thing and another one" is obtained. Due to the segmentation of the result, "the unity of heaven and man" is changed and the two—"heaven" and "man"—are no longer the same. The second nature constitutes the objective world of signs; it is where meanings are generated.

In addition, the second nature includes not only physical nature but also man-made articles, such as the bed made by Plato's craftsman. When we do not ask about the existing meaning of a man-made thing, but regard it as an object in a working hypothesis, it is subject to the second nature. For example, Saussure regards this as a kind of "sound image", which is obviously limited to inference, especially of spoken language. Similarly, Peirce's concept of representatum is considerably broader, but it does not specify the relationship between representatum and the natural world. The second nature serves as the carrier of potential meanings (potential here means that the meaning has not yet been realized). This definition applies to any signs, and the representatum or signifier belongs to the second nature. Special attention should be paid to the contrast between the concepts of "the first nature" and "the second nature" used here and the different concepts with the same names used by Marx. Marx used these two concepts primarily to refer to the human world and the instrumentalized world caused by "artificial transformation". However, what we are talking about here is a symbolic, and cognitive problem. The second nature constitutes parts or fragments of the first nature that is cognizable. Compared with the first nature, the relationship between the second nature and signs is more direct. Positively, the second nature is defined as a general collection of matter, energy, and information. However, these specific things that can be cognized do not actually occur in the category of human beings or biological organisms. In fact, they occur only in inorganic operations, such as celestial body movement, mechanical transmission, the chemical reaction, and biological evolution. Furthermore, these operations constitute knowable and perceptible phenomena: the concrete projection of the first nature. Once the first nature—that is indescribable—is projected into the objective world, it becomes a world of signifiers, fragments or facts of the world, but there is no human perception.

In the whole category of the human world, the second nature is the vast "foundation" of specific signs. From the macro point of view, with a world of meanings,

it has entered the process of signification, but its specific signification process has not occurred. The second nature, just a "signal source", is no longer a pure world in itself, but one of its specific signals is still "source code", undecoded. For example, electrical signals, holding a great deal of information, only exist at the level of the machine. The second nature is the world in itself where media play a very important role. If the semiotization process ends at this step, it stays at the "signal transmission" stage. The second nature is obviously different from Saussure's concept of "signified", which includes both the referent and the indicated meaning interpretation. The second nature is closer to but not exactly the same as the object described by Peirce. One of the detailed differences is that Peirce's object is an internal element of semiosis relative to the representatum, while the second nature emphasizes the world where signs are formed. It does not specifically refer to the object that enters the semiosis, but covers the objective world that does not enter the semiosis. From the perspective of semiosis, Peirce's object has been and is necessarily of the third nature and the fourth nature. Furthermore, the work done here is a process of deep differentiation.

The projection and segmentation from the first nature to the second nature is not a semiosis, and might only exist in some kind of "perceptual result" as symbolic mimicry.

7.1.2.3 The Third Nature: The World of Perception

The third nature is the world of perception based on biological neuro functions. Compared with the symbolic world of humans, the perceptual world represents functional perception and genetic memory where no meanings are provided. This concept is an important supplement to distinguish it from the previous worlds. First of all, it is different from any of the three worlds Plato detailed. There, the process from the objective world to the representation of art signs is based on the hypothesis of human society and lacks organisms in between. In Peirce's tripartite system, representatum, interpretant, and object are presented in semiosis, and they are identical in nature. The third nature here aims at presenting the links through which signification proceeds in the heterogeneous world. The first nature is an absolute world in itself, the second nature is the objective world in itself, and the third nature has entered "perception", but it has not entered meaning interpretation. The third nature, which is suspended in the result of pure biological organisms, is a biological perception that abandons cultural forms. When we want to push semiotics itself into "organism", we must temporarily abandon the interpretation model of human society and culture and return to the more basic level of organism to look at the problem, and this is where the significance of putting forward this link lies. Otherwise, the biosemiotics we talk about is nothing more than models of various forms of human cultural symbols being inflexibly applied in biological texts.

The second nature, the world in itself, is segmented and produces signifiers, and it is the world external to an individual. This external world is different from the first nature only in its individualization. In order to enter the human symbolic world,

the organic role of the meaning of life must be employed. In semiotics, "umwelt", which means the "subjectively perceived world" in relation to an organism, is the term put forward by biologist Jacob von Uexküll to support a broader concept. The umwelt is full of signs, referring to the "universe of signs" as a whole rather than the "specific and individual" signs in the process of signification. Therefore, it may at most be regarded as a material storehouse or structural forms that constitute signs. Among others, "relative absence" is also a perceived form of the world, as does not contradict Peirce's belief that signs of image may not depend on the reality of the object (Peirce 1931–1958). If we compare the third nature with Kristeva's concept of chora, we will find that although the concept of chora also originated from Plato, Kristeva obviously only adopts its non-semiotic meaning of something that "cannot be named". Kristeva has provided too many cultural and discourse characteristics of the subject to chora, regarding it as the source of cultural criticism and revolutionary language. Here, if we deculturalize the semiotized chaotic state and dispose of the critical context, we approach the third nature: the world of perception. We know that this state does not really exist, but as a working hypothesis, it can effectively decompose objects.

The transformation from the second nature to the third nature is a great leap from inorganic "signal flow" to organic individual perception. The biological neural network is the result of natural evolution, and although its intelligent results may be imitated by machinery, the process cannot be reproduced mechanically. Biological organisms have emotions that may come from biological genes and instincts that cannot be simulated by mechanical processes. Although the question of whether this stage belongs to semiotics or not is still controversial in academic circles, its boundary is clear. If we, as observers, create legislation for signs, it is at the stage of "biosemiotics". If perception is regarded as an integral part of symbolic capability, animals and even plants have their own special abilities. They may outperform humans in some way, such as in the sense of touch or vision, for example, and they even have the ability to perceive natural phenomena such as earthquakes that are beyond both our interpretation and even the existing science. Moreover, they have a great deal in common with humans. Excluding the communicative acts of such animals from signs, there tends to be a human-centered working hypothesis, or one that supports a "symbolic discrimination" against animals. The working hypotheses have been re-examined with the advance of human civilization. According to John Dilly, in terms of the boundary of semiotics, it is believed that symbolic behavior or symbolic activity may at least be extended to the place where consciousness or cognition occurs, including the whole field of "animals' symbolic activity".

The third nature, as a physiological perception that has not been semiotized by man's unique pattern, is not the representatum described by Peirce. The third nature is based on the existence of perceptual consciousness (including human beings and organisms with complex nerve function). That is to say, neither materiality nor objectivity can be regarded as the essential distinction. It is not to negate the material reality in which symbols often appear, but to emphasize that semiotics itself is a discipline of cultural psychological perception. For example, the physical basis of digital image signs is the potential difference between 0 and 1 and the visual presentation at various

display terminals. However, for perception, the image is not the potential difference between 0 and 1, but the psychological traits it evokes. Distinguishing the perceptual world from the world of cultural interpretation shows the trend toward openness in research methods of the discipline, and it satisfies the need for semiotics to expand to the biological level. It aims to show the multifaceted existence of signs as a kind of complex system that opposes simplifying things in a certain way as a single perspective.

Iconicity, as a symbolic representation mechanism, begins to play its role in the third nature. Chameleons, dead leaf butterflies (moths), and a large number of organisms that stimulate the environment have evolved. We cannot deny that they produce mysterious simulations of the environment or some objects in the environment in some form; moreover, they are perceived by humans and indeed show iconicity. Humans ultimately are judges of iconicity, but other creatures do so through their instincts and genetic choices. Unfortunately, it is too common for us to stubbornly and inappropriately exclude all the biological symbolic capabilities. We may look at iconicity at the biological level in important ways. Organisms' imitation of the environment is generally aimed at reproduction or survival and the realization of which involves the object being "deceived" by the iconicity mechanism; for example, a natural enemy, an object to be entrapped and a pollinator will be "deceived" by iconicity in vision, hearing, and smell. In this sense, the bottom line of icons is imitation behavior at the biological level. Of course, the establishment of this symbolic behavior is based on the styles understood by human beings, who are the ultimate referees of the sign. Compared with the iconic mechanism of human society, the mechanism of animal simulation lacks the ability of interpretation, and the recipient of biological iconicity will not think about or interpret it after being fooled.

7.1.2.4 The Fourth Nature: A Cultural World Full of Meanings

In terms of the individual, the constituent element of the fourth nature is symbolic interpretation. Symbolic interpretation is not static, but open and dynamic. The entire culture that the dynamic interpretation infinitely approaches after infinite semiosis constitutes the whole world of meanings. Therefore, culture's definition as "the collection of meanings created by human beings" is the natural result of the logic of sign generation. Peirce's ternary structure is superior to Saussure's binary structure in that interpretation is a separate item in the process of signification. Interpretation is the final decisive link to establishing the existence of signs and is the "fourth nature" of the whole process. They are arranged here in a logical order, not in a chronological sequence. The concept to which Cassirer refers "man is a symbolic animal" is effective in the fourth nature. Until now, the major research task of semiotics has also been focusing on the symbolic interpretation of human cultural phenomena. Cassirer (1944) refers to an animal's response to stimulation as a signal and compares in detail the differences in the form of response between human beings and other animals. After enumerating a large number of phenomena in animals' quasi symbolic experiments, he argues that this problem cannot be solved

on the basis of facts alone, and a correct logical starting point must be found. He then determines that an animal's response is a sign and only human beings as animals have symbol ability. He concludes that animals have only practical imagination, and only human beings have developed semiotized imagination, wisdom, and the principle of symbolic systems, which, because of its universality, effectiveness, and comprehensive applicability, has become a key to exploring the special human world—the world of human culture.

The fourth nature here is simply the entirety of this human cultural world. The sign, due to its universal applicability, encompasses the world of meanings. The world does not negate the expansion of the boundary of semiotics, nor does it equate a certain semiotics with the whole of semiotics. In his *An Essay on Man*, Cassirer (1944) points out that it is too early to determine any language about the future development of this problem and that this field must be open to future research.

Respect and awe for the natural world do not lead to the derogation of human dignity and unique status. Human beings as symbolic animals do not necessarily reject the use of the term sign by other creatures. Therefore, this classic proposition must be constantly revised to improve its accuracy. Human beings prove that they are different from other animals not because of a specific argument or concept, but because human beings are simply constructed by the whole of the meaning practice and social practice of human beings. Furthermore, this kind of practice is a constantly enriching semiosis and not necessarily a static law. Thus, it is natural that iconicity exists in the world of cultural symbols. Indeed, this kind of "icon" based on human consciousness is the category of "human cultural semiotics" set up in this book. There is no natural iconicity of the objective world in either the first nature or the second nature that is external to man. The protective color and simulation of the third nature is the bottom line of iconicity, but it lacks the interpretation in the form of human culture. Therefore, it needs to avoid the "Objective Iconicity Theory" criticized by Eco. As originally put forward by Plato, idea is a study of mind, which is related to semiotics itself. Heretofore, we have ignored that much of the objective evidence sought by linguistics relies entirely on the cultural conventions in human subjective consciousness. Consequently, it is not so convincing to use this kind of cultural spiritual evidence to prove iconicity based on objective existence.

The first nature is an abstract being. Hegel's concept of "being" does not refer to the natural world that really exists in physical or chemical forms; rather, it is an abstraction that covers universality, which he describes with the term "universal". Or, every being, including signs, has its basis. Only by introducing the category of the first nature can we avoid regarding the non-existent things in the natural world as some external and other being. Nothing is external to the reasonable existence of the world. Perhaps the world does not leave a trace in the "real world" in the physical sense, but it is projected in the symbolic world. As mentioned above, the second nature does not resort to biological organisms. Instead, it is an inorganic operation, including the actions in the natural world, such as celestial bodies' movements and semiotized projections of logical causality. The second nature, as the object of signs, is a collection of these, and they can communicate meaning with one another. The

first nature is put forward to serve as a supplement to the symbolic world and the objective world.

7.1.3 The Discipline to Which the Image World Belongs

7.1.3.1 The Four Natures and Object Decomposition

The four natures serve to cognize the universe of objects by signs rather than to distinguish the species and genus of objects at the same level (that is what the signifier does in segmentation). For example, we will discuss 天象 (celestial phenomenon, *tianxiang*) in the conceptual category of the four natures. Before the first nature enters the scope of discussion, it is nameless, as a being beyond specific objects, and it cannot be presented by specific symbolic forms such as language, image, and writing. When we describe it in the name of celestial phenomenon, its being becomes an "extracted fragment" which is concretized and fixed into the projection of a certain signal. Then, the celestial phenomenon is an intermediary structure that is formed, self-presented with specific forms, such as material, traits, and characteristics. Presentation is a kind of signal about celestial phenomena, but these signals are "suspended" in an objective world because they are not perceived. Through the perception of biological organisms with their senses such as vision, hearing and sense of touch, the perceptual relationship between the celestial phenomenon and the biological organism is established. Most plants interact with celestial phenomena through photosynthesis, and sunflowers also respond to celestial signals through special auxins. Animals have more complex nervous systems, and they have more abundant and diverse ways to sense celestial phenomena. Some creatures can see ultraviolet light, while some can receive ultrasonic waves, and ants can sense humidity. Various creatures with various powers "see" the world in completely different ways, and their respective perception is not limited by the way human beings accept.

Eco and other semioticians have repeatedly stressed that there is no objective symbolic world and that all signs are the result of social psychology. Although it is true, this does not negate the fact that human beings, as biological individual beings, have a way of perception that is bound to be limited by biological function. For human beings as organisms, celestial phenomenon is a kind of "image" with variable colors and contents and composed of visible light. The perceptual world is distinguished from the world interpreted through culture, so as to show the multifaceted being of signs as a complex system. A complex system opposes simplifying things in a certain way from a single perspective.

In the fourth nature, "celestial phenomenon" falls into cultural semiotics, with its meaning depending on the comprehensive agreement among various kinds of knowledge regarding the celestial phenomenon by the social and cultural system as well as its concrete projection when it is used. For example, through the saying "zhaoxia bu chumen, wanxia xing qianli (朝霞不出门, 晚霞行千里)", we know that when you see rosy clouds in the morning, it is better to stay at home because it is

quite likely to rain; and when you see rosy clouds in the afternoon, you can plan to go out the next day, as it means the weather will be fine. In addition, there is also an old saying that goes like this: Kong Ming guan tianxiang zhi Cao Cao ming bu gaijue (孔明观天象知曹操命不该绝—Zhu Geliang judged by celestial phenomena that Cao Cao would not die). Here, *tianxiang* (天象, celestial phenomena) is a cultural image sign that has been interpreted, and its semiosis is determined by the intention.

7.1.3.2 General Deduction of "Graph" and "Image"

The study of images mainly covers the "graph" as the object and the "image" which is perceived. Graph refers to the elements of image based on visual reality, while the "image", as the perceptual result formed in the process of semiotization, requires the involvement of perceptual subjects. Further, the combination of the two aligns with the definition: "A sign is perception with meaning." Therefore, the logical starting point of this book is to process images as signs, that is, as "semiotics of images". The above definition of image naturally divides the book into the following two parts: one is about the "graph" in image signs and the other is about the mechanism of "image". The binary system seems to be the same as in Saussure's classification of signs, but Saussure mainly used linguistic cases to demonstrate his views, while images are used in this book.

As a component of signs, the graph is not necessarily the being of a material entity but of every object or thing that evokes visual perception, based on perceptible reality. Therefore, the concept of the "graph" in this book does not exactly correspond to the signifier in Saussure's semiotic theory, in which the signifier is the representation of sound. The graph in the image sign has the natural properties of the objective world as well as the "sensuous property" of the sound described by Saussure (1966). Through Marx's description of the object of nature, we may regard the "graph" as the combination of the first nature and the second nature.

What, then, are the characteristics of image signs in the four worlds involved in signification?

First of all, the first nature is the mother, in which graphs and images exist. It is the source of the second nature, and it provides the foundation to which the third nature belongs. As the result of creation, the third nature particularly opens up infinite possibilities for the first nature. The "graph" belongs to the first nature and the second nature, while the image perceived belongs to the third nature and the fourth nature. The representatum is the second nature, the "object" is the third nature, and the interpretant is the fourth nature, that is, "the first nature (universal)—the second nature (medium)—the third nature (perception)—the fourth nature (interpretation)".

The relationship between the first nature and the second nature is like the shining sun. If human beings are always in the dark night, they can only be cognized by the sun's shadow on the moon. The moon, then, becomes the sun's medium, like Plato's cave. It is impossible for human beings to know the first nature directly, but they can do it through a medium, which is the projection of the first nature. The third world is our perceptual world, and it is also the object referred to by the sign carrier

(medium) of the moon—the light of the sun. Plants realize their perception through photosynthesis or phototropism, and animals use light as the basis for judging time and other information.

Finally, we may give the moon a variety of cultural utterances according to human knowledge. The image perceived is neither exactly equivalent to Saussure's signified nor is it exactly the sum of Peirce's object and interpretant. As a cognitive effect, image includes both the referent of the graph—the object—and the psychological trace. Thus, image corresponds to Saussure's signified, that is, the abstract concept of the cognitive projection result of the graph in psychology.

7.1.3.3 Image Sign's Structure and the Four Levels of Its Denotation

The First Level: Element. The basic unit of the image that can be induced is a graphic morpheme that must be perceived or induced in the form of a graph. It is divided into morphological grapheme and structural grapheme. The morphological grapheme includes points, lines, surfaces, and color, and the structural grapheme represents the relative relationship between the object of the morphological grapheme and the surrounding environment. The simplest structural relationship is position and direction, because they may be composed of a single morphological grapheme and the surrounding environment. A more complex structural relationship is that among graphemes, such as density, skeleton, and rhythm. Neither morphological grapheme nor structural grapheme can constitute image signs because they are not perceived as meaning. The study of grapheme, as the micro basis of the semiotics of images, is the embodiment of the maneuverability of semiotics of images in art design, image recognition, and so on.

The Second Level: Icon. It is usually understood as a unit where meaning is first perceived by an individual. At this level, a qualitative leap has taken place, and the "graph" has become a sign. However, an icon, which is not necessarily a grapheme or a structure, may be an immense object expressed as an individual with a clear meaning. For example, the earth and stars are expressions in the context of the cosmological level.

The Third Level: Icon Text. This level represents a group of "signification units, which become one in a certain structural order", also called an "icon group". The icon text is actually an organic structure as well as the arrangement of icons. It is not distinguished by the size of a single icon. Although a single icon already has a complete function for signification, its signification is often uncertain because of the lack of contextual information. Therefore, the biggest difference between an icon text and an icon is that the icon text has a structure, with more definite contextual information, so the function of signification is stronger than that of a single icon. It makes an icon text closer to the social culture than an icon and becomes the bridge to link signs and social culture. The study of the icon text is of great value to the universal verification of semiotics.

The Fourth Level: Spectacle. If the icon text is "super-sign", spectacle is "hyper icon text". Spectacle, as a grand scene of social culture composed of the icon text, is

the presentation of social culture in the field of vision and the macro dimension of semiotics of image.

Summary: Binary, Ternary, and Multidimensional World

Saussure's binary structure and Peirce's tripartite system have their own advantages, but they have not yet clearly defined the relationship between signs for representation and the natural world. Thus, it is necessary to reflect on the self-consistency of semiotics as a social psychology from Saussure. Saussure's semiotics is based on social psychology, so its binary structure emphasizes psychological influence. The linguistic tradition thus developed focuses on the internal relationship of the world of language signs. Because of the marked abstractness of language signs, these conclusions need not be revised. His research subjects made him believe that semiotics is based on arbitrariness, which is supported by later semioticians such as Eco. However, when it comes to the discussion of image signs, signs are based on the motivation of iconicity; but mirror images are excluded from the field of sign. This exclusion is no longer a problem discussed within signs, as it has come to be perceived as a disaster spread into the whole field of semiotics. The ternary structure highlights the importance of interpretation, and it grasps another core link. Within it, the sign generation was discussed through the definition of the relationship between the object and representatum, but the constituent sign and the natural objective world as its source were not discussed fully. In their systems, the relationship between signs and non-sign nature cannot be understood deeply, as is particularly true for "image signs" based on iconicity. As a result, it is necessary to define the categories involved in the signification process more clearly and to investigate the relationships among them. From the point of view of the development of semiotics itself, it is also necessary to look at diverse modes of thinking in semiotic theories in a more dimensional world.

7.2 Thinking in Sign in Chinese Culture

7.2.1 Xiang *(象): The Imitation of the Universe in Ancient China*

The original philosophical wisdom of Chinese civilization demonstrates how people of the time were filled with awe for the natural universe and imitated it through signs. Generally speaking, the ancient Chinese ancestors created He Tu (Chart from the Yellow River) and *Luo Shu* (Book from the Luo River) to express their understanding of the world of the universe, which is one of the important sources of Chinese philosophy. According to the legend, in ancient times, Longma (龙马, a legendary animal) rose above the water in the Yellow River in Mengjin County, northeast of

Luoyang, with He Tu, and dedicated it to Fuxi (a cultural hero in China). He Tu is what Bagua (the Eight Triagrams) drawn by Fuxi is based on, and it is also the origin of the *I Ching*. Legend also has it that *Luo Shu* is a book from heaven, dedicated to Da Yu (the Tamer of Flood) by the tortoise floating in Luo He River of West Luo Ning County (in Luo Yang today). *Luo Shu* was thus named after the Luo He River. Da Yu successfully tamed the river according to the wisdom in *Luo Shu* and later divided China into nine provinces. These governance policies spread and became the classic philosophies of governing the country in ancient China. Later, they became one part (known as "Hong Fan" 洪范) of the *Book of Documents*.

This story shows how *Luo Shu* offers a kind of abstract wisdom even though it may not provide specific technologies or precise methods for water conservancy. "He chu tu, luo chu shu, shengren ze zhi (河出图, 洛出书, 圣人则之)", written in the first part of *Xici*, meaning that He Tu Luo Shu reflects the laws of the universe. It adds that the saints who abide by the laws not only manage the relationship between man and nature, but they also understand the method of governing society. For thousands of years, He Tu Luo Shu and Bagua have been overly mystified and distorted. Since He Tu Luo Shu we see today are not very different from the original ones thousands of years ago, it may be concluded that He Tu Luo Shu, which are weak coding signs with great meanings, only provide information about basic permutations and positive and negative combinations. As a result, there is room for different interpretations of them. Binary coding is thought to have also developed from the *I Ching*, in spite of a lack of proof. It may be said that He Tu Luo Shu contains the basic principles of modern computer technology, but it does not mean that the authors of the texts possessed the knowledge and ability of modern scientists. Even if the invention of the binary system was inspired by the *I Ching*, the great ancestor only provided what initiated thought regarding the invention of the binary system, just as the apple triggered Newton's thinking about laws of universal gravitation. Of course, the important difference between them and the apple is that people do not assume that the apple has the same subjective divine enlightenment (Clearly today's Apple is accepted), but He Tu Luo Shu are the totem symbols of the Chinese national belief in the wisdom of ancestors. Therefore, the Chinese nation spent 3000 years interpreting and complicating He Tu Luo Shu, together with the subsequent Bagua and the *I Ching*, trying to discern the way of thinking about the universe in Chinese classical wisdom.

The author does not intend to be involved in the dispute over the ownership of these inventions or the blind self-worship of Chinese civilization. Rather, this book attempts to make it clear that the overall abstract description of the universe with a *xiang* (象) is realized by abstracting the universe into different permutations and arrangements of nothingness and reality, Yin and Yang in He Tu Luo Shu, which are regarded as the source of the philosophy of our ancestors in ancient China.

7.2.2 Yixiang (意象): The Image Evolution of the Chinese Cultural System

7.2.2.1 The *I Ching*: A Relatively Complete Icon System About the Cosmos in Early Ancient China

The *I Ching*, a much more complex and complete system than He Tu Luo Shu, is regarded as "the most important one of the six classics in China" and is usually considered as the beginning of the systematization of Chinese classical philosophy. With totems and symbols in He Tu Luo Shu, the *I Ching*, is quite inclusive and tends to be interpreted differently by different people. Therefore, from the Han Dynasty to the Ming and Qing dynasties, an increasing number of books were written by ancient scholars to interpret the *I Ching*. This shows that the complexity of the *I Ching* studies does not lie in the complicated text of the *I Ching*, but the sign *Yi* is infinitely closer to that part of Chinese culture, with several thousand years' history in the context of its "infinite semiosis" with China. The *I Ching* has become the most important book of the six classics, to some extent, because of its "non-concreteness". It simply provides a *gongxiang* (共象, common reflection) of all things in the world, and even in the universe.

The origin of the world and the truth of the universe are implied and indescribable, as agreed by ancient philosophical thinkers. Laozi's statement of "a very loud voice cannot be heard, and the great form is beyond shape" is more clearly interpreted by Zhuangzi in his book *Zhibeiyou* (《知北游》): Tao is not audible, and the audible is not Tao; Tao is not visible, and the visible is not Tao. Moreover, in the book, *Qiwulun* (《齐物论》), Zhuangzi notes that the important Tao is indescribable and the most convincing argument is not shown with words. Tao may not be described, but it is the origin of the world, the ultimate destination of all things, and the ultimate truth. In fact, in Chinese philosophy or the logos of Western philosophy, it will finally resort to physical ways to approach and seek Tao. Additionally, the first step is semiotization. Laozi says "wu ming, tiandi zhi shi; you ming, wanwu zhi mu (无名, 天地之始; 有名, 万物之母)". Here *ming* 名cannot be interpreted narrowly as "name" or "speak out", but as any sign's object that can be perceived by man. As the most important one of the six classics, the *I Ching* resorts to 象 to explain everything. The *I Ching* says that therefore, the *I Ching* records 象, which should be imitated; and Tuan (彖) refers to structure; and Yao (爻) is to imitate the changes of the world. The *I Ching* describes the universe through 象, and the 象 in the *I Ching* shows the "changes of the world" through the way of 像 (imitation). "Tuan" in the *I Ching* is the material for description, and "Yao" simulates the form of the movement of all things in the universe. Tuan and Yao, then, are specific Guaxiang (卦象, hexagrams), and in fact both of them show that the *I Ching* reproduces and simulates the laws of the universe and all things through Guaxiang, the signifier.

7.2.2.2 The Infinite Semiosis of the *Yi Xiang* 《易》象: The Way to Transmit Chinese Civilization

Tao cannot be described, so an image is used to represent it in the *I Ching*. The semiotized 象 is what is under Tao first. *Xici* says that according to the *I Ching*, Taiji, the "Supreme Ultimate" state of undifferentiated absolute and infinite potential, the oneness before duality, produced Yin and Yang, from which Jin, Mu, Shui and Huo originated. Then from these four elements Bagua originated. Then with Bagua, the significance and auspicious qualities of spatial relationships can be determined so that great cause can be achieved. All the laws of things can come from the Great Tao. According to *Xici*, the metaphysical is called Tao, and the physical is an object. And the metaphysical does not simply include the physical, but is the result of deduction from the physical. Therefore, the book *Laozi* explains that Tao gave birth to the One, and the One gave birth successively to two things, three things, and up to ten thousand (everything). Although they are the laws of things underlying concrete forms, they are all derived from Tao. Modern science is not physically or concretely included in the Western logos or Tao, but it is the deduction of these "primitive" ideas, as the use of things and the principles of things are originally integrated. The West and the East follow different evolutionary paths. Under logos, Western culture constantly seeks stratification between the metaphysical and the physical through differentiation, while Eastern culture in China has always repeated interpretations of "Tao" at the same level. In the Tang and Song dynasties, Chinese thinkers established the theory of "three Yi" (the theory of Principle, Image, and Number) in response to the interpretation of Tao. In a sense, they are still synonymous with Tao and result from the interpretation of Tao at the same level. Moreover, the deduction at the same level is not conducive to the establishment of modern science.

One of the answers to the famous Needham problem[1] is that the Chinese are too practical, and many findings are still based on experience. Moreover, this view is shared by some Chinese intellectuals. In the late Ming Dynasty, Xu Guangqi, comparing *Elements of Geometry* with *The Nine Chapters on the Mathematical Art: Companion and Commentary* (《九章算术》 *Jiuzhang suanshu*), said "qi fa lüe tong, er qi yi quan que (其法略同, 而其义全阙)" about *The Nine Chapters on the Mathematical Art: Companion and Commentary*. In his book, *Inheritance and Rebellion: Why Modern Science Appears in the West?* (《继承与叛逆: 现代科学为何出现于西方》—*Jicheng yu panni: Xiandai kexue weihe chuxian yu xifang*), Chen Fangzheng (陈方正 2009), former director of the Institute of Chinese Culture of the Chinese University of Hong Kong, explains what Xu means: Chinese mathematics is different from Western mathematics, which "only focuses on procedure" (*fa*) rather than clear, meticulous and direct demonstration (that is, *yi*). Chen Yinke (陈寅恪 2001) says that Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) practitioners can offer us effective medicinal herbs, but there is no principle underlying.

In fact, Chinese thinking not only emphasizes practicality, but also in China the metaphysical realm. Tao replaces scientific principles at the meso-level. For example, the principles of arithmetic can be deduced from the *I Ching*; likewise, there is also Zang Xianglun concerning traditional Chinese medicine. That is, these concrete

disciplines are connected to the ultimate Tao while the exploration of rules at the meso-level is relatively weak. For example, Saints used He Tu Luo Shu not only to deal with the problems of the natural world (such as water control), but also to deal with social problems (such as making the world safe). Therefore, it is not necessary to have principles at the meso-level (the principles and laws of science), or at least they are not as important. In ancient Greece, in contrast, Plato accepted the Pythagorean school's suggestion that paramount importance should be attached to mathematics. Thus, modern science, based on mathematics, developed within one tradition, and modern science is the result of attaching importance to mathematics. In Chen Fangzheng's view, the occurrence of modern science in the West does not result from a sudden transcendence in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but is the inevitable result of the different development paths of these civilizations for thousands of years.

In a letter to J. S. Switzer in 1953, Einstein wrote that the development of Western science was based on two great achievements—the invention of formal logic by Greek philosophers (in Euclidean geometry) and the discovery (during the Renaissance) of the possibility of finding causality through systematic experiments. In his opinion, people need not be surprised that the Chinese sages had not made such progress because it was surprising that these findings had been made at all. It is implied that it is natural that ancient Chinese scholars did not understand the formal logic system and experimental verification. Some scientists argue more directly that the *I Ching* influenced the way of thinking in Chinese culture, and this influence was one of the important reasons why modern science did not sprout in China.

The next problem is that the emphasis on and respect for Tao has led to the loss of scientific spirit to a certain extent. Does this mean that we should more comprehensively reflect and criticize Chinese civilization? Before answering with great courage, the difference between "science" and "science and technology" must be clearly defined. Science comes from the Latin word *scientia*, which only refers to knowledge and learning. However, since modern times, more emphasis has been placed on the natural sciences. Science and technology concern the practical ability of human beings to master, understand, and apply objective natural laws. In addition, it is important to define the meaning of science itself as well as the perspective from which it is seen. Joseph Needham, Yu Yingshi, and Chen Fangzheng agree that modern science is based on mathematics. There is no doubt that the emergence of modern science resulted from breakthroughs in mathematical and physical sciences—achievements done by Kepler, Galileo, Newton and so on, and the development of the next 300 years shows that the rest of modern science is also based on mathematics and physics (陈方正 2009).

Reflection is undoubtedly necessary, but it does not mean the negation of Chinese civilization and its classical texts themselves. Further, the focus of the negation regards the way in which these classical texts exist and are interpreted. As mentioned above, these texts are no longer the interpretations of the texts themselves, but they have been repeatedly interpreted at a flat level for thousands of years. This flattening process leads to the extraction of "scientific principles". From the point of view of the learning process, individuals cannot effectively accumulate the work

of their predecessors. Instead, they must return to the classic text itself, resulting in significant intellectual waste, manifested as individual intellectuals preoccupied with studying, perusing, and reciting the classics. In contrast, in Western civilization, a large number of effective intellectual achievements that were obtained based on the work of previous intellectuals through axioms, laws, and "logical inferences" at the meso-level would be likely to produce finer scientific findings, and, at the same time, to promote the division of intelligence and the division of disciplines. Therefore, the intellectual achievements of Western civilization have been organically integrated. As a result, those with outstanding intelligence and fame in China are usually omnipotent, which is not conducive to the division of labor and specific scientific breakthroughs.

China never lacks curious inquiry, nor does it lack the pursuit of principles. However, the classical Chinese way of grasping the universe, focusing on the understanding of an individual and spiritual perception of things and principles, is not conducive to the accumulation of knowledge. Unfortunately, such means of iconicity is related to the development of science and technology in China.

7.2.3 Chinese Aesthetic Pursuit Derived from Yixiang

7.2.3.1 The Subtle Differences in the Representation of Chinese and Western Art Signs Between 像 (*Xiang*) and 似 (*Si*)

This negative influence on the development of natural science encompasses the differences between the East and the West regarding 像似 (iconicity) in all things in the universe. 像似, is a phrase with two synonymous Chinese characters; 像 should be distinguished from 似 because 像 emphasizes imitation and comparison, and it is the reflection and representation of the object. As discussed above, "the *I Ching* records principles, which should be imitated", and 像 is a way of simulating nature, as is promoted in Chinese cultural classics. This means of simulating nature is vague and imprecise, and it does not prioritize the functional perception of the body, but rather prioritizes the mind. The derogation of functional perception maintains the unique fuzziness of human thought and emotion, and emphasizes the ultimate pursuit of Tao. From the way the *I Ching* represents the universe, we can see that the 象 in China is a vague means of 相像 (resemblance). Because the *I Ching* is one of the important sources of ancient Chinese culture, this vague means of resemblance is also reflected in the category of the art sign. At the root, all *fuxiang* must reach Tao, and Tao is the ultimate experience of existence. It cannot be described and cannot be shown by objective signs. Rather, this requires that the sign carrier that represents Tao should have some room for differentiated interpretation, as exemplified by a famous Chinese quotation "kong gu na wanjing (空故纳万境: Nothing may beget anything imaginable)". In the context of Chinese culture, overly clear signification often lacks the "artistic conception" of Tao.

In most cases today, 似 (*si*) means "similarity and being close to", and it can be exchanged with 像 (*xiang*), as in 相似 and 相像. Neither can even explain the other. However, considering the source of the characters, they are different. 像 is the imitation of the object humankind, and it describes the relationship between humankind and nature. However, the relationship between humankind and 似 is not close because the radical 人 was originally used mistakenly, but later was accepted as a standard usage.

According to Kang Yin's (康殷 1979) *An Analysis of the Origin of Characters: An Instructional Text*, 像 was originally written as  , whose meaning is closer to the idea of comparing two things, but includes more obvious characteristics of an objective image. For the earlier usage, we can see it in the first part of *Xici*: "yi yu tiandi zhun, gu neng milun tiandi zhi dao…yu tiandi xiangsi, gu buwei." It is obvious that *si* in this sentence cannot be replaced with 像 and that the phrase should be understood in the context of the preceding sentence. "*Yu tiandi zhun*" in the first sentence means "follow the laws of heaven and earth", but in the second sentence *si* also means "follow", "observe", or "being in line with". Here it is incorrect for us to interpret "*yu tiandi xiangsi*" as "be similar to heaven and earth" because 像 is simulation and reflection of the internal abstract things, and 似 is used to objectively compare two things externally.

In the West, the representation of culture and art in China is quite vague. Whether it is the Tao (道) of the *I Ching*, the Tao (道) of *Laozi*, the Wu Xing (五星) of the *Records of the Grand Historian of China*, or the Qi (气) of *Guanzi*《管子》, all are considered inaccurate; not representative of objective physical reality; and to describe the great Tao of the universe in an abstract way.

Compared with the ambiguity of Chinese culture, Western culture emphasizes 似 and functionality and measures perceptual results by taking the objective physical world as the point of reference. Therefore, Western civilization is bound to move towards differentiation. In fact, Western civilization since Aristotle has been more empirical or function-centric than vision-centric—the functional role is emphasized in the West. In addition, the status and ranking of each function are discussed in more detail. Aristotle regarded vision as a means for "high-level perception" and believed that it was the most important channel leading to the mind and to wisdom. Western visual centralism considered "whether the vision is the projection of light from an object in the eye or it results from the light emitted by the eye touching the object?" It is a unique way of thinking that differentiates Western culture.

7.2.3.2 Cavalier Perspective: A Misleading Description

As mentioned earlier, differentiation and external transcendence have promoted the development of natural science and reason, as is the case with the history of art. Consider, for example, the development process of perspective. Historically, no scientific perspective in a strict sense has been found in primitive arts. For example, in order to create a more three-dimensional effect, the Egyptians presented faces and upper bodies only in profile. The concept of perspective has not been identified in primitive

art in any region. However, once perspective was established in Western painting, it became clear that it was based on Euclid's *Elements of Geometry*. With this advancement and the development of science, Renaissance art fully utilized perspective in painting. This eventually resulted in the perspective technique of Leonardo da Vinci.

Chinese painting has always featured a technique known as "cavalier perspective" in which the focus is essentially an uncertain cruising. The term perspective is used in a metaphorical sense and embraces cultural self-esteem. First, the concept of "perspective" itself comes from the West, and there is no such word in theories of Chinese classical art and painting. "Perspective" originally meant to see through (*perspicere* in Latin). The accurate perspective was not achieved historically through geometric calculation, but in the following process: fix the scene through a transparent glass or a plane and draw the scene on it with a pen. Later, with the support of the geometric principle, the perspective could be carried out according to geometric calculation. Furthermore, the meaning of perspective is no longer just "see through". It involves the technique of displaying the three-dimensional spatial position, outline, and projection of an object in a plane according to a certain principle, and the study of this technique is called perspective science. According to this disciplinary definition, there is no scientific perspective in the Western sense in Chinese painting. There are two reasons for it. First, all the theories on the perspective relationship in Chinese painting are the summary of artists' acquired experience, rather than describing an accurate measurement relationship in natural science; second, the art of Chinese painting and accurate mechanical imitation are essentially incompatible.

In the Northern and Southern dynasties, Chinese painting artists noticed some basic phenomena of perspective. The *Hua Shan Shui Xu*《画山水序》written by Zong Bing in the Southern and Northern Dynasties records that the farther we are away from the object, the smaller it looks. Now, if we prepare the white silk for painting well to draw the distant object, even the shape of Kunlan (Kunlun Mountain) can be represented on the silk measuring about several *cun*s (寸) in width and several *chi*s (尺) in length (one *cun* is equivalent to about 3.3 cm and one *chi* is equivalent to about 33 cm); three *cun*s are drawn vertically to represent the mountain as high as several thousand *chi*s; then draw several *chi*s horizontally to show the mountain range extending for several hundred miles (宗炳 2016). That is to say, the idea that "objects near seem bigger than those far from us" was proposed nearly a thousand years before the Renaissance. In this regard, if we had emphasized this technical precision in a scientific way, it is possible that we would have developed a more precise perspective relationship. The problem arises because perspective does not describe an accurate scientific computing relationship. This idea can only be inherited as an artist's acquired experience, and it has not developed rapidly. Two hundred years later, in the *Shan Shui Lun*《山水论》, written by Wang Wei in the Tang Dynasty, tips were put forward to deal with the perspective relationship in landscape painting more precisely: When the mountain drawn measures one *zhang* (丈), the tree drawn should be about one *chi*; the horse one *cun*, the man one *fen* (one *fen* is about 0.33 cm); there are no eyes drawn on distant people and no branches on distant trees; no stones drawn on distant mountains which should be black; no waves drawn in distant water which

is close to clouds (王维 1962). It is obvious that this law of the nominal "perspective" is still vague and only general experience has been acquired.

Chinese artists' and art theorists' understanding of and attitudes towards Western perspective also proved that Chinese artists did not think the subject worth pursuing. In the Qing Dynasty, after learning about Western painting, Zou Yigui concluded that Western painters are good at drawing the line, so they emphasize precision in representing light, distance, and space, with shadows of figures, houses and trees painted. The color and painting techniques they use are quite different from those used in Chinese painting. The shading arrangement tapers off from the broadness measured by trigonometry (邹一桂 1985). This passage shows that although Chinese painters were surprised at the precision in perspective of Western painting at that time, they did not appreciate the characteristics of Western painting at the artistic level. Of course, in Western art circles, they did not only pursue "accurate representation by imitation", and they did not even take accurate representation as the ultimate goal. Hippolyte Adolphe Taine (1865), in *The Philosophy of Art*, makes it clear that imitation is not the purpose of art, and some arts are deliberately inconsistent with the object. However, Western artists first mastered the ability of accurate representation, and their artistic pursuit was diversified.

To sum up, Chinese art resorts to 像 in aesthetic appreciation, while Western art focuses more on 似. Of course, there is no clear distinction between them. Western art also emphasizes spirit, but it also has its own paintings. However, Western artists often express the spirit through form. Unlike this, in Chinese art, artists pay more attention to direct mental perception and transcending form directly to reach the source, so that Chinese art signs often need to give way in the process of signification. Zhuangzi believes that sounds made by humans are not as good as sounds made by wind, and sounds made by wind are not as good as sounds of nature because sounds of nature cannot be reproduced with sign texts. In the post-modern era, Western art began to transcend forms through ideas and behaviors, but it only fell into certain forms, which is far from the spiritual perception of Chinese art.

7.2.3.3 Signs in Chinese Art: A Temporary Bridge to Tao

There are three relatively independent subjects in the interpretation of the process of signification in modern semiotics: the intention of the sender; the intention of the text; and the intention of the receiver. In the process of single-linear signification, the sender intends to lose complete control over the text by sending out the text before the text becomes a set of codes independent of the sender. Intention can only be realized by means of text encoding by the sender, and the dominant role of the sender's intention is transferred to the text intention. Next, when the receiver interprets the text, there may be a new deviation due to the receiver's knowledge background or capability, meta-language, and the text as an established representatum. Thus, the text gives way to the interpretation of the receiver in terms of the dominant role. In other words, in this process, the latter in turn negates the former. But in fact, this process is not completed once, but it is a cyclical process. Even in a process

completed once, the latter's negation of the former and the transfer of the dominant role from the former to the latter will not lead to the disappearance of the former as a kind of intention itself, and each specific link has its own important and independent significance.

Little importance is attached in China to the independent meaning of this process of signification with art signs. Wang Bi gave full play to Zhuangzi's thought in the realization of Tao and wrote in *Mingxiang of Zhouyi Lüeli*《周易略例·明象》: Therefore words are used to illustrate 象, and to get 象, one should not be confined to words; 象 is used for signification, and for signification, one should not be confined to 象. It is the same in the following case: a net is used to catch a rabbit and to get the rabbit one should not be confined to the net; Quan (筌, fishing tool) is used for fishing and to get fish one should not be confined to Quan. Thus, words are like the net of 象 which is like the Quan for signification. In Chinese traditional culture, the abstract and vague goal above is always emphasized. After achieving the goal with tools at different levels, words, or 象, tools may be neglected with their functions and values realized. It is considered low to stay at the level of tools. In contrast, in the West, instrumental rationality is emphasized. Because of the need for accurate and clear cognition of the objective world, people must rely on tools as the extension of natural ability. In other words, Western civilization has always recognized that humans and the objective world are related to each other through some kind of intermediary, as is what we often call the "external transcendence" tendency in the West. Western civilization has an extraordinary sense of awe towards the intermediary, and this sense of awe is not limited to objective physics, science, and technology because even religion is the external tool for people in Western countries to achieve spiritual perfection.

This instrumental rationality in a broad sense can even reflect from one side important differences in the social and historical structure between China and the West. The transcendence of the personal understanding of the ultimate Tao in China leads to a universal psychology of overstepping one's authority. The saying that if one gets Tao in the morning, he or she may die content in the evening may easily be transformed into the delusion of "getting the Tao without dying". Similarly, it is reflected in religion wherein China is more likely to accept polytheistic teachings. In native Taoism or foreign Buddhism, the causality and transcendence of polytheism are more in line with the expectations of individual persistence. The universal psychology of overstepping one's authority is reflected in the historical development model of constantly changing dynasties without influencing the structure of social noumenon at the social level. The cross-examination of "Do those gentries certainly have blue blood?" reflects the overall mentality in Chinese culture. What is behind it is that all peasant revolutions are in fact not for the purpose of anti-feudalism, but only against the man on the throne at that time.

Generally, it shows that Western art is always closer to the "representation of scientific objectivity" than the art of China. Such representation of objectivity is a scientific knowledge system at the "meso-level". The development of science and technology has brought about rich material wealth and deepened the exploration of

the physical universe, but it cannot thoroughly understand man's thought. In introspection, the inherent transcendence of Chinese philosophy makes it unique in terms of cultivating people's minds, to which Western art is not comparable.

Summary: Reflection on Internal Mechanism and Contemporary Value of Chinese Iconicity

It is easy to draw a conclusion with only a single standard, but the result must be partial. The possible result of a cultural model does not mean that it is a total negation of this mode of thinking. Specifically, the Chinese cultural mindset may not be the best soil for the development of natural science. However, it does not mean that this culture itself is problematic; at best, it means that this mode of thinking does not best match the dimensions of natural science. Furthermore, the judgment of the legitimacy of scientific development itself is another matter. Western scholars have cried out that high technology and high-speed development have become disastrous for human beings, and environmental and energy problems have become unbearable barriers to high-speed development. Material abundance does not necessarily bring about happiness, and high-speed technological development cannot stop for a moment because of its inertia. Therefore, all countries have been forced to accelerate their growth because they have to integrate themselves into a globalized economy. Although people have realized it, paradoxically, the human beings trapped in it have become prisoners in trouble, afraid that their development at a slower pace may lead to alienation and being left behind in the context of high-speed development. The infinite expansion of individuals' desires, the constant stimulus of the national economy, energy plundering, arms race, and currency war are all inevitable products of this inertia. The common sense that backwardness leads to being beaten applies to all modern countries. Further, the country's leaders have actually been completely trapped, so the slogan for the election has to be "lower unemployment and higher economic growth". Only high technology and increased material wealth can enable even the most democratic governments to maintain high approval ratings. In this way, all seemingly vulnerable people are not the ruled, but are rather the dictators. Thus, they are supported by technology supremacy and selfish desire—the complicity of billions of tyrants would be much more powerful than the centralized power of a government. The ultimate goal becomes so distant that even God cannot fully save it—Christian doctrine lacks the doctrine that inaction and Tao should follow the laws of nature. Therefore, Western philosophers have begun to try to find spiritual wisdom from the East.

If people directly pursue the source of laws and happiness and slightly reduce the impracticality of high-speed development of science and technology, they might not rely on material abundance, and then live a happier life with more harmonious social development. From this point of view, Neo-Confucianism is actually a product of a compromise that scholars found as a result of being beaten because of its backwardness of the natural sciences. It hopes to achieve the external practical utilitarian effect

as well as to maintain the ultimate value theory of laws, but it also gains the realization of the so-called "inner sageliness—outer kingliness".[2] In fact, it separates the inevitable relationship between "sageliness within" and "kingliness without". Not only that, there is a serious inherent logical paradox in the good wish itself. If Neo-Confucianism is regarded as a relatively universal creed, with every country and group pursuing the external kingliness without, there must be competition, struggle, and even war between different kinds of kingliness without. This will eventually lead to the reverse, so that the goal of "sageliness within" gives way to the realistic need for means to realize the "kingliness without".

To summarize, technological science is not the only aspect of human civilization's well-being, nor is it an unquestionable, self-evident truth. Science itself has a more comprehensive meaning, including the humanistic dimension, rather than being only confined to technology. Science, as a kind of truth, is intended to include knowing, which includes the ethics of its own existence. This knowing is a concrete confirmation of the intelligence of this intelligent species, that human beings are not limited to the invention of the compass or the discovery of a neutrino. In a sense, the legitimacy of the technology at our disposal has boundaries, as ethics confirms. For example, human cloning, organ transplants, and many experiments with human bodies in medicine may lead to some faster results in science and technology. However, many of these experiments are not permitted, which shows that science and technology need some kind of ethics to stop them from developing in wrong directions. In fact, to solve the current crisis resulting from rapid development and an expanding urge for material wealth, it is also necessary for cultural values to be brought to the fore. Such values could be favored instead of the disguised narrow nationalist goal of "kingliness without", pursued by Neo-Confucianism. This could serve to guide and even stop for a time, to a certain degree, humanity's constant rolling forward, pushed by high technology and high-speed development. In other words, unfortunately, the human mind really needs to be readjusted. In this regard, when separated from the "meso-level theory" to go straight to the universe, classical Chinese thought enjoys its special advantages.

Chapter Summary: Discussions on the Mode of Thinking in Chinese and Western Cultures

Although commonly used methods for comparing conflicting cases in semiotics are important, there are cases that cannot be covered by these methods. In this chapter, with a media spectacle mechanism as a starting point, the logical structure of the whole world is discussed. It may seem too grand, but in fact this chapter does not aim to construct an ultimate grand structure as the final goal. Rather, it aims to single out a world so as to mark the place where the universe of signs is. The fourth nature is not put forward to produce a new world outlook, but to summarize the elements of signification in the category of semiotics. Such summary itself has the flavor of "schematic grasp", so it is hoped to avoid using the scattered individual cases and the unidirectional linear thinking for demonstration.

The second section discusses the mode of thinking in Chinese and Western cultures. The Chinese approach to iconicity reflects China's understanding of the world and the universe from the characteristics of the representation mechanisms of signification and sign. In order to discuss the cultural model, it is necessary to avoid discussing the advantages and disadvantages of simplification. Clearly, different civilizations differ in degrees of development, and different cultures may also be compared based on certain criteria for reference. However, the characteristics of cultural thinking cannot be used to compare different modes of thinking in different cultures without being placed in specific contexts. In terms of force, the whole human civilization does not outdo the dinosaur era. The oriental civilization is dispraised as people presuppose an evaluation system dominated by technological science, but the legitimacy of technological science as a yardstick has not been discussed. Therefore, what is reflected about Joseph Needham's problem in this chapter is this: as far as the organizational systems of mathematical and physical sciences and disciplines at the meso-level are concerned, the oriental Chinese way of iconicity is not the best soil for growth. From the perspective of great science, which is comprehensive and includes human civilization, this kind of cultural thinking mode may have special advantages.

These discussions are important for today's media spectacle because they can show its origin and mechanism more clearly. Moreover, such discussion can enlighten us on how to deal with the traditional cultural heritage, especially heritage in cultural thinking.

Notes

1. Joseph Needham, a British biochemist who became an authority for his outstanding contribution to the study of the history of Chinese science and technology, formally put forward the famous Needham problem in his 15 volume *History of Science and Technology in China* stated in the following. If my Chinese friends are as intelligent as I am, why are great figures such as Galileo, Torricelli, Steven, and Newton all Europeans instead of Chinese or Indian? Why did modern science and scientific revolution only occur in Europe? Why was China, until the Middle Ages, more advanced than Europe, but later Europeans took the leading role? How could such a change have taken place?
2. "内圣外王" (nei sheng wai wang) is a concept from Chinese philosophy, particularly associated with Confucianism. Its translation is "inner sage, outer king". This phrase encapsulates the ideal of personal and political excellence. "内圣" (inner sage) refers to the cultivation of personal virtue and wisdom. It emphasizes self-improvement, moral integrity, and the development of one's character. "外王" (outer king) refers to the application of these internal virtues in governing and leading others.

Postscript

Image is one of the important academic keywords in recent years. Heidegger regards the visualized world as an important manifestation of modernity from a philosophical point of view. In his perspective, image is the basic way to understand and grasp the modern world. Mitchell believes that the "pictorial turn" is one of the most impressive landmark declarations of the times after the "linguistic turn". For the general public, a great amount of image production and consumption constitutes the main part of the information in this era. Billions of pictures and videos are uploaded through Facebook, TikTok, WeChat and other We-media platforms every day. People all over the world produce and share a feast of image dissemination. The book centers on the consumption of images as symbols, with examples, and focuses on the comprehensive research regarding image relationships in literature, language communication, arts and traditional culture

After nearly one hundred years' development, the research objectives in semiotics have changed considerably. Semiotics is no longer the working category of Saussure's linguistics and the binary structure of signifier and signified, nor is it even entirely a typed sign with a clear boundary as described by Peirce. Today, when we look at Cassirer's theory of "human as an animal symbolicum", we must look at the world of biological signs beyond human beings more carefully from the perspective of today's biological science. Similarly, when we try to discuss Barthes's and Eco's fallacies about image rhetoric and iconicity, today's object for image rhetoric is no longer the graphic advertising repeatedly once cited by Barthes. We're facing a multimodal world—a world full of images, videos and all kinds of virtual reality images—A new metaverse world is taking shape.

The impact of the practical experience of media spectacle on semiotics is manifested in its being universally cross-boundary and in its intersection with other disciplines. For example, the image research in fine arts field has been extended to images in daily life, such as advertising and design; the image research in language and literary texts has been extended to new research on contemporary signs including multimedia, multi-modal and multi-agent forms in a broad sense. These studies cover a wide range of issues, which are specific enough to the discussion of key terms such

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as “like”, and grand enough to the strategy of image communication of cities and countries.

One may raise a question: is this not a kind of semiotic imperialism? We believe that, as a theory of meaning, all problems that deal with the form of meaning have to be discussed in semiotics. In other words, if a research method in a discipline does not have the general capability of interpretation within the claimed category, its inherent logical self-consistency is disputable. From this point of view, the doubts above are precisely another affirmation of semiotics as a part of the humanities. The research method in semiotics does not repel other methods. In fact, it represents a methodology rather than a specific field without flexibility. Therefore, semiotics is not a monopolized “empire”, but a “kingdom” with theories and realistic operational power. Semiotics also provides us a perspective to understand the entire world and even the universe as well as providing the operationality to interpret reality.

The foundation of this book lies in my previous publication in Chinese, “Image Semiotics”. Throughout the process of revising and reworking it into an English manuscript, I encountered numerous linguistic challenges. Particularly, the clear expression of subtle nuances between the terms “*xiang*” (象/像) and “iconicity” often troubled me. I was fortunate to receive assistance from Professor Tang Aiyan of the School of Foreign Languages at Guilin University of Electronic Technology. Not only did she provide linguistic guidance, but she also directly participated in the rendering and grammatical revision. It should be said that this book is the result of our joint efforts. I would also like to express my special gratitude to my good friend, Professor Michael Ranta from Linnaeus University in Sweden. He was the first non-Chinese scholar to review my manuscript and provided valuable advice and assistance. Additionally, I would like to express my thanks to doctoral candidate Yin Jingwen and master candidate Li Wanting from the School of Literature and Journalism at Sichuan University for their considerable efforts in literature retrieval and reference verification. This book is one of the “Global Communication of Chinese Culture” series, and its publication is supported by Sichuan University.

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内 容 简 介

从 20 世纪初索绪尔和皮尔斯符号学开始，符号学经过一个多世纪的发展，已成为一门具有完备体系的学科，也因富有逻辑性而被称为人文学科中的数学。本书是建立在“图像转向”和“媒介景观”两个时代背景下的“后语言学符号学”，以“图像性(iconicity)”为立论基础及核心线索，系统性地讨论语言、文学、艺术中的像似性问题，以及它们在当今新媒介语境中的呈现;旨在为当今传媒文化景观提供系统化阐述,进而形成一门“图像符号学”。作为对图像符号学理论的研究,本书有两个明显特点:一是指向“媒介景观”的意义阐释;二是,也是更重要的特点,本书引入中国古典文化中的符号思想遗产,这部分内容或许可以为中国之外的学者提供一个理解中国文化思维的途径。

本书可为符号学、传播学研究者提供参考,也可供对中华传统文化符号思想感兴趣的读者阅读。

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