

《西方博物学大系》总序

总目

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卷二 方“博物”与西方观念之异同

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在中国传统观念中，“博物”一词，与“自然史”相近，但并不完全相同。甚至还有相当大的区别。自然史“搜罗自然界的知识”，这种最原始的含义上，两者确实也有相通之处。故以“博物学”翻译 Natural History 一词，大体尚属可取，而且已被广泛接受。然而，已故科学史学家刘振钢教授指出，古代中国人处理知识，如开中药铺，有数千人目不暇给，均在其间，则夹杂人其中，聊以安身。刘教授言此，并非有意贬低——认为中国人不致力于探索世界“所以然之理”，故不如西方之分析传统优越。诚然古代中国人这种炫耀知识的风格，正与西方之博物学相适。

与此相对，西方的分析传统致力于探究各种现象和物质之间的相互关系，试图以此解释宇宙运行的原因。自古希腊开始，西方哲人亦孜孜不倦地构建各种几何模型，试图以证明宇宙如何运行。其中最典型的作品，即托勒密所著《天文学》(Almagest) 和宇宙体系。

比较而言，中国历史上，古代中国人并不关心外太阳系“如何”运行，而只着眼于太阳系内之天体系统；西方传统则有强烈的宇宙传统，只是未能光大而已，更遑论世界“为何”如此运行。在经

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