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Abstract: This paper addresses the concept of semiotic scaffolding by considering it in light of questions arising from the contemporary challenge to the humanities. This challenge comes from a mixture of scientific demands, opportunism on the part of Western governments in thrall to neo-liberalism, along with crass economic utilitarianism. In this paper we attempt to outline what a theory of semiotic scaffolding may offer to an understanding of the humanities' contemporary role, as well as what the humanities might offer to the elucidation of semiotic scaffolding. We argue that traditional humanist positions adopted in defence of the humanities fail to articulate the enhancement of humanity that semiotic scaffolding represents. At the same time, we note that the concept of scaffolding is sometimes in danger of taking on a functionalist perspective which understanding the humanities modus operandi is likely to dispel. Putting forward these arguments, we draw on the work of Peirce, Cassirer and Sebeok in elucidating the structural and 'future-orientated' benefits of the scaffolding process as it suffuses the humanities.
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