SBK QM

Semiotic **B**its of **K**nowledge
Mined from
The **Q**uest for **M**eaning
by Marcel Danesi

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This text collects bits of semiotic knowledge mined from "The Quest for Meaning" by Marcel Danesi. Each section of this document represents roughly one-half of a chapter in the book.

For each section of this document, an set of 15 sequences of from 1 to 3 contiguous sentences has been lifted from the corresponding half-chapter of text and copied to this document, perhaps with just a bit of modification in order to enhance the appeal of each sequence as a stand alone construct. The order in which these sequences appear in this document corresponds to their order of appearance in the text. Moreover, each section begins with a one-paragraph abstraction of the contents of the half chapter from which the sequences are mined.

The goal for each half-chapter mining activity was to select a set of sequences of sentences which represents the most significant semiotic knowledge contained in the chapter, in as balanced and complete a manner as possible, given the constraints of the assignment (15 sequences of 1-3 contiguous sentences), and the common sense dictate of creating a pleasing (cognitively and aesthetically) presentation.

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1 Chapter 1 - What is Semiotics? (Sections 1 and 2)

Summary

Semiotics, the study of signs and systems of signs, is characterized in terms of goals and methodology. A first example of a sign is discussed in some detail. A history of semiotics from ancient times through the twentieth century is presented. The founders of modern semiotics, the Swiss linguist Ferdinande de Saussure and the American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce, are introduced. Brief mention is made of a number of people who, building on the foundational ideas of Saussure or/and Peirce, played leading roles in developing semiotics into the sophisticated discipline that it is today: Ludwig Wittgenstein, Charles Morris, Roman Jakobson, Roland Barthes, Agiridas Greimas, Thomas Sebeok, and Umberto Eco. Finally, even briefer mention is made of other significant contributors to the field, namely Derrida, Levi-Strauss, Merleau-Ponty, Deleuze, Ricoeur, Deely, Merrell, Lotman, Hjelmslev, Kristeva, Lacan, Foucault, Lady Welby, Benveniste, and Langer.

Salient Sentence Sequences

1. The ultimate goal of semiotics is, in fact, to unravel the meanings that are built into all kinds of human products, from words, symbols, narratives, symphonies, paintings, and comic books to scientific theories and mathematical theorems. (Quote - bottom of page 3)
2. Methodologically, semiotics focuses on the use, structure, and function of signs (symbols, words, images, figures, etc.) involved in meaningful activities. (Quasiquote - top of page 4)
3. The central aim of semiotics is to investigate, decipher, document, and explain the *what*, *how*, and *why* of signs, no matter how simple or complex they are. Since the middle part of the twentieth century, semiotics has grown into a broad field of inquiry. It has been applied to the study of body language, art forms, discourses of all kinds, visual communication, media advertising, narratives, language, objects, gestures, facial expressions, eye contact, clothing, space, cuisine, rituals - in sum, to everything that human beings produce and use to communicate and represent things in some psychologically and socially meaningful way. (Quasiquote - bottom of page 5)

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