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Signs: An Introduction To Semiotics (Toronto Studies In Semiotics And Communication)



Synopsis

The interpretive science of semiotics offers powerful analytical tools for the application of many disciplines to the study of perception. Semiotics is the study of signs, and as such, is of relevance to a wide spectrum of scholars and professionals, including social scientists, psychologists, artists, graphic designers, and students of literature. Semiosis - the production and interpretation of linguistic and visual signs - is innate to human beings of all societies. From the simplest of hand gestures to the most complex diagrams and charts, the sign is key to the communication of ideas. Thomas A. Sebeok examines, in an engaging, readable style, how the sign mediates between bodily experience and abstract thought. This updated second edition of *Signs* combines some of Sebeok's most important essays with a new general introduction, introductory passages at the outset of each chapter, a glossary, and brief biographies of the major semioticians. From an overview of the discipline to a more detailed exploration of sign categories, the author powerfully demonstrates the co-dependency of verbal and non-verbal communication. Aimed primarily at undergraduate and graduate students, this engaging book also has plenty to offer any general reader who is interested in exploring and analyzing the complex sign systems we so often take for granted.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Thomas A. Sebeok is Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Linguistics and Semiotics at Indiana University. He has written numerous articles and books, and is world-renowned as an authority on semiotics.

"Semiotics is not about the 'real' world at all, but about complementary or alternative actual models of it... semiotics never reveals what the world is, but circumscribes what we can know about it." Through SIGNS, Sebeok brings together the ideas of experience and abstract thought using the perspective of semeology: the doctrine of the sign. He traverses the sectors of language, psychology, biology (including entomology- yes, rather bizarre) and others to reveal the complex nature of the sign in a coherent prose that I would say caters to a broad spectrum of readers. Sebeok is successful towards constructing an introduction to signs and provides a tremendous genealogy of its supposed origin (through the Greek physician Hippocratis to the (structuralist?) Ferdinand Saussure), but you wonder: why have I given him only 3 stars? I would have easily given him another star (to make 4), but, alas, I do roll with a bias. I give Sebeok 3 stars because I came into this book from the French post-structuralist perspective after reading Roland Barthes' S/Z (A 200+ page deconstruction of a 30 page Honore de Balzac short story). Barthes' beautifully lucid prose (though quite thick, haughty, and as usual, referenceless) hides the theoretical (and rather controversial) body of the text, but his fearless (and conceited) approach steals the attention of my adolescent aspirations to become a sophisticated individual. At times I found Sebeok quite dull and his sporadic sense of humor mild, but as I bracket my emotions from the text I discover that from reading this book my conception of "signs" has become quite solid. If you go for this book- go for the 2nd edition (came out in 2001 i believe) it includes a Basic Notions chapter and glossary for those new in the field. I also recommend the "Fetish Signs" chapter- very interesting.

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