



Of Cigarettes, High Heels, and Other Interesting Things: An Introduction to Semiotics (Semaphores and Signs)

Marcel Danesi

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Why is it that certain members of the human species routinely put their survival at risk by smoking cigarettes? Why is it that some females make walking a struggle for themselves by donning high heel footwear? This book attempts to answer such questions. Such risky behaviors are obviously shaped by forces other than the instincts. Indeed, for no manifest genetic reason, humanity is constantly searching for a purpose to its existence; this search has led it to invent myths, art, rituals, languages, mathematics, science, and other truly remarkable things that set it apart from all other species. In this volume author Marcello Danesi shows us that the discipline that endeavors to understand the human meaning quest is known as semiotics. Danesi demonstrates how semiotics unravels the meanings of signs that make up the system of everyday life that we call a culture or a society. This book will engender in the reader the same kind of questioning and inquisitive frame of mind with which a semiotician approaches the subject matter of meaning. Basic semiotic ideas and analytical techniques are introduced via a seemingly fictional yet very telling scene, one which reveals a lot about the human need for meaning. The scene is a fashionable modern-day restaurant, and the fictional actions that occur allow Danesi to provide the semiotic version of the human drama in concrete terms. As Danesi argues, perhaps the greatest skill possessed by Homo Sapiens, literally the knowing animal, is the ability to know itself. This book reveals how semiotics helps to sharpen that ability considerably.

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