HOW TO DESIGN AN EMOTION

Summary of Part III: The Architecture of Meaning

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Abstract

This summary presents the argument of Part III of *How to Design an Emotion*, which moves from the identity of concepts to the architecture of meaning. The problem is that meaning is often treated as a property sitting inside a sign, as a free-for-all in which nothing can go wrong, or as something structure, biology, or statistics can do without an interpreter. The aim is to specify how a symbol becomes meaningful without collapsing meaning into an intrinsic property, private feeling, social convention, or statistical correlation. The method is architectural: the book states the Constructivist Semiotic Sign as five constituents that must never merge, tests those distinctions in the Unified Modeling Language and in executable C#, and measures inherited semiotic theories against the same criteria. The main claim is that meaning is not inside the sign and is not arbitrary. It arises when a rational agent, as Interpreter, coordinates an Identifier, a Concept, an instantiated Construct, and a Referent under constraints that determine whether interpretation succeeds or fails. Chapter 8 then tests the frameworks of Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles Sanders Peirce by that standard.

Keywords: Constructivist Semiotics; Constructivist Semiotic Sign; meaning; Interpreter; Identifier; Concept; Construct; Referent; Saussure; Peirce

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This is a summary of Part III of *How to Design an Emotion*; full text in the book: https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0HNR6KX5Q.

1. Introduction

Part III moves from the identity of concepts to the architecture of meaning. The book holds that a concept does not reach the world by itself: a mind does the reaching, and a mind answers for it.[1] “Signs carry no meaning of their own; yet meaning is no free-for-all, or nothing could go wrong.”[2]

The problem space is how a symbol becomes meaningful. The scope is architectural. Part III does not yet define emotion. It builds the bridge between experience and meaning, so later Parts can distinguish the experience that becomes interpreted from the interpretive construction produced from it.[3]

A subtler error, the book argues, hands the interpreting to structure, biology, or statistics. A language model can learn which words travel together, yet frequency cannot say which pairing matters now. Without an interpreter, symbols stay inert and correlations stay mute.[4]

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The aim is to specify how meaning can succeed or fail: not as a property sitting inside a sign, and not as an arbitrary play of uses, but as a governed act.

What is unique is the Constructivist Semiotic Sign, with five constituents that must never merge, tested in the Unified Modeling Language and in executable C#, and then used to measure inherited semiotic theories in Chapter 8.

This summary is written for philosophers of emotion and mind, affective neuroscientists and social and affective neuroscientists, emotion-AI and affective-computing researchers, and general readers who want to know how a mark, an idea, and a setting become something a mind can grasp and share.

2. Method

Part III applies the identity conditions of Part II to signification. The book formalizes the Constructivist Semiotic Sign in UML class, object, and activity diagrams and in five C# programs, holding a single invariant scenario constant (the symbol "7" taken as an integer in the context of days in a week) and varying only the governing conditions.[5] Computational Principle 1 requires ontological separability: a theory of meaning must preserve the distinct identity of each constituent under formal execution; no constituent may be merged with another.[6] Chapter 8 then measures the semiotic frameworks of Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles Sanders Peirce against those criteria.[7] Throughout, this summary keeps apart analytic propositions (valid by virtue of their definitions), logical truth, logical validity (a property of arguments), and analytic validity (what follows from fixed definitions alone).

3. Meaning as an Achievement

Meaning, on this account, is an achievement, and like every achievement it can fail.[8] The book rejects three reductions. Meaning is not a property hidden inside ink, sound, or circuitry. It is not a free-for-all in which nothing can go wrong. And it is not something that structure, biology, or statistical association can do in place of an interpreter.[9]

"The main proposition is direct: meaning is not inside the sign, and it is not arbitrary. It arises when a rational agent, as Interpreter, coordinates an Identifier, a Concept, an instantiated Construct, and a Referent under constraints that determine whether interpretation succeeds or fails."[10]

4. The Constructivist Semiotic Sign

"My answer is what I call the Constructivist Semiotic Sign, with five constituents that must never merge. The Identifier is the symbol. The Concept fixes identity conditions. The Construct is the particular case. The Referent places that case in a context. The Interpreter, a rational agent with a goal, coordinates the rest."[11] The Concept supplies identity conditions; the Construct supplies instantiated identity; the Interpreter generates meaning only when those roles operate within the Referent's Context and under the Goal it adopts.[12]

Remove any one constituent and the program cannot produce the meaning. The symbol alone does not explain itself. The Concept alone does not determine relevance. The Construct alone does not fix interpretation. Only the coordinated act produces a result that can succeed or fail.[13]

The book treats Jordan Zlatev's cognitive semiotics as its nearest neighbor, and it differs in method: it states the sign as five separable constituents and requires that they survive formal execution.[14]

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5. Saussure, Peirce, and the War of Signs

Chapter 8, The War of Signs, grants what Saussure got right: meaning lives in no symbol, and a community's system constrains it. But Saussure set the speaker aside on purpose, and the cost appears the moment anyone speaks. Formalize his sign, and five constituents collapse into two. In the book's phrase, "Saussure drew a flawless street map with no traveler and no destination."[15]

Peirce restored a mediating interpretant and a triadic relation, and the book keeps that insistence on mediation.[16] It still asks whether Peirce's triad, formalized, preserves the distinct jobs of concept, construct, context, goal, and a rational interpreter who can succeed or fail. The comparison is not a search for ancestors. It is a test of architectural completeness against the criteria of Chapter 7.

6. Objection and Reply

One objection is that meaning is only association or statistical regularity, so an interpreter is a decorative extra. Language models and learned pairings seem to show that frequency can do the work. The book replies that frequency cannot say which pairing matters now, and that association cannot say whether a new case deserves the same reading.[17] A related objection hands the interpreting to structure or biology. The reply is the same standard: if the constituents collapse under formalization, the theory has not explained meaning; it has assumed it.[18]

7. Conclusion

Part III builds the bridge later Parts require. Experience can occur without yet functioning as a detachable symbolic object. Once it becomes available to interpretation, an agent can discriminate, organize, compare, signify, and eventually name it.[19]

The Metamorphosis of an Ontology records that step. "I now provisionally declare that the phenomenological experience is a conscious idea whose affective character, under conceptually governed identity conditions, enters semiotic availability."[20] "I now provisionally declare that the evaluative orientation is a goal-governed, context-sensitive cognitive disposition by which an agent subjects that phenomenological experience to semiotic interpretation."[21]

Because interpreted meaning still needs a place in a theory of affect, feeling, and emotion, Part III ends by opening Part IV: how is emotion constructed, and how does it differ from the feeling it interprets?

The full argument, with its cases, notes, and the next stage of the Metamorphosis of an Ontology, is in *How to Design an Emotion*, available for pre-order on Amazon: https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0HNR6KX5Q

Notes

1. Cézjah, *How to Design an Emotion*, chap. 7, page TBD.
2. Cézjah, *How to Design an Emotion*, chap. 7, page TBD.
3. Cézjah, *How to Design an Emotion*, "Methodology of an Ontology," page TBD.
4. Cézjah, *How to Design an Emotion*, chap. 7, page TBD.
5. Cézjah, *How to Design an Emotion*, chap. 7, page TBD.
6. Cézjah, *How to Design an Emotion*, chap. 7, page TBD.
7. Cézjah, *How to Design an Emotion*, chap. 8, page TBD.
8. Cézjah, *How to Design an Emotion*, chap. 7, page TBD.
9. Cézjah, *How to Design an Emotion*, chap. 7, page TBD.
10. Cézjah, *How to Design an Emotion*, chap. 7, page TBD.
11. Cézjah, *How to Design an Emotion*, chap. 7, page TBD.
12. Cézjah, *How to Design an Emotion*, chap. 7, page TBD.
13. Cézjah, *How to Design an Emotion*, chap. 7, page TBD.
14. Zlatev, "Cognitive Semiotics." See also Cézjah, *How to Design an Emotion*, chap. 7, page TBD.
15. Cézjah, *How to Design an Emotion*, chap. 8, page TBD. Compare Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*.
16. Peirce, "On a New List of Categories." See also Cézjah, *How to Design an Emotion*, chap. 8, page TBD.

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17. Cézjah, *How to Design an Emotion*, chap. 7, page TBD. Compare Harnad, "The Symbol Grounding Problem," 335.
18. Cézjah, *How to Design an Emotion*, chap. 7, page TBD.
19. Cézjah, *How to Design an Emotion*, "Methodology of an Ontology," page TBD.
20. Cézjah, *How to Design an Emotion*, chap. 8, "The Metamorphosis of an Ontology," page TBD.
21. Cézjah, *How to Design an Emotion*, chap. 8, "The Metamorphosis of an Ontology," page TBD.

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