

THE INSTITUTE FOR SEMANTOGRAPHY

A Non-Profit Institution for the Promotion of Semantics and Semantography

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SEMANTOGRAPHY SERIES

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What Scientists think
of

C. K. Bliss'
Semantography

100 Symbol Elements to overcome
Babel in Reading, Writing, and
Thought

Published 1949

by the Institute for Semantography.

together with
Historical Data and Quotations
about a

Curiosum in Science and Bibliography

For nearly 300 years

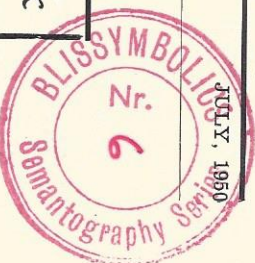
no original work was written and published as an attempt to realise an idea suggested by the great mathematician and philosopher G. W. LEIBNIZ (1646-1715), the inventor of the infinitesimal calculus.

Indirectly, his idea led to the adoption of international symbols in science, but what Leibniz imagined was a Symbolic of Thought, a Pictio-Ideography, a Symbol Writing, which (like the mathematical symbols $1 + 2 = 3$) could be read in all languages, yet be so simple that even peasants should understand it.

He prophesied: "I think these thoughts will some day be carried out"

Now after nearly 300 years—

(Please turn over)



SEMANTOGRAPHY represents the first practical realisation of Leibniz' idea, a new evolutionary step in the communication of thought from man to man.

SEMANTOGRAPHY has many immediate practical applications in Science, Industry, Commerce, Traffic, Education, especially in Language, Literacy, Semantics, Logic and Citizenship. It represents the antidote to fallacious "Wars of Words" within families and within nations.

Please study the following pages. Read what Scientists have to say about Semantography, Scientists like

Bertrand Russell

Lancelot Hogben

Carleton Washburne

Henry L. Brose

John Metcalfe

James Henning

B. Burgoyne Chapman

F. D. McCarthy and others.

Will you join them? We all have a responsibility to interest ourselves in new ideas which can benefit Mankind.

HISTORICAL DATA and QUOTATIONS

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Year

1661 George Dalgarno,

a school teacher, published his ARS SIGNORUM or UNIVERSAL CHARACTER.

1668 John Wilkins

Bishop of Chester, Co-founder of the Royal Society, published his ESSAY TOWARDS A REAL CHARACTER.

Unfortunately, Dalgarno's and Wilkins' symbols consisted of arbitrary lines, with no resemblance in outline to the things they should represent. "Dalgarno's system shows the complete lack of a practical basis, it is purely artificial . . . yet it had the merit of being the first concrete contribution to a problem which was so early recognised." (H. Jacobs).

1679 Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz,

Mathematician and philosopher, declined Dalgarno's and Wilkins' system. He thought of symbols, which should outline the real things, very simple, "very popular." He said in his NEW ESSAYS CONCERNING HUMAN UNDERSTANDING (translated by A. G. Langley, MacMillan New York 1896):

"A Universal Characteristic, very popular . . . might be introduced if small figures were employed in the place of words, which would represent visible things by their lines and the invisible, by the visible, which accompany them."

"This true method of a Universal Symbolism would . . . guide the mind as do the lines drawn in geometry, and the formulas in arithmetic . . ."

"This would be of service at first for easy communication with distant nations; but if introduced also among us, without however, renouncing ordinary writing . . . would be useful in giving thoughts less surd and verbal than we now have . . . This figured character . . . would be very agreeable to the people, just as in fact the peasants already have certain almanacs . . ."

"I think these thoughts will some day be carried out, so agreeable and natural appears to me this writing . . . for rendering our conceptions more real."

Leibniz realised the semantic effect of such an international picto-ideography. But he made no attempt to draw up such symbols, and later scientists completely disregarded his advice. They evolved arbitrary systems, based wholly on numerical classification, which would have made it necessary to memorise a vast catalogue of notions.

1873 Melvil Dewey,

Librarian, late President of the Association of American Librarians, evolved the only practical system of this kind in the limited field of numerical library classification, now in use in most libraries throughout the world.

However, with regard to Leibniz' idea, a Symbol Writing, covering the whole range of language, nothing was done.

1904 Professor Basil Hall Chamberlain,

Educator and Linguist, Author of books on East Asia, wrote:

"Ideographic writing apparently possesses some inherent strength that makes it tend to triumph over (without entirely supplanting) phonetic writing, whenever the two are brought into competition in the same area.

All the countries under Chinese influence exemplify this little known fact in a striking manner.

In Europe such competition has scarcely taken place, except in the case of the symbols for the numbers and a few other ideas; but there too the general law has asserted itself.

Which is the simpler, the more graphic, the more commonly used: 'three hundred and sixty five' or '365'?

Ideographic writing will surely achieve the final victory over phonetic writing."

Three Centuries passed by

the most momentous in the advancement of knowledge by the human race, but Leibniz' idea remained forgotten, and in the year

1922 Professors C. K. Ogden and I. A. Richards,

University of Cambridge, wrote in *THE MEANING OF MEANING* (Kegan, Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., London):

"This speculative construction, which first occupied his attention at the age of 18, and was constantly in his thoughts, especially about the year 1679, and when it became clear that he would not have the strength to proceed with it, still remains where Leibniz thus left it."

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After World War I.

A "War of Words" started. Nationalist, Socialist, National-Socialist, Fascist, Communist, (now even) National-Communist, and other ideologies, were presented in vague, ambiguous, relative words to people, who have learned to read, but not yet learned to recognise fallacious meanings, which could mean different things to different people. Ministries of Propaganda were set up and the slogans prepared for new wars.

Learned men realised the danger and at some Universities, the study of meaning—Semantics—was taken up.

1930 Sir Richard Paget,

Fellow of the Physical Society, and of the Institute of Physics, London, warned in *BABEL* (Kegan, Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., London):

"WE ARE IN THE ALARMING POSITION of having enormous control over the forces of nature, and very little reasoning power to guide our actions—in fact, very much like a lot of children playing with loaded guns. Man, it appears, is still handicapped by his . . . muddled way of thinking. May it not be that much of this unreasonable muddle is due to the simple fact that our symbols for thought—language—are not yet set in order; that in the matter of thought symbolism we are still much in the same state of confusion as the Romans were in their arithmetic? We should be horrified at the difficulty of multiplying MDCCIX by LVIII; to the educated Roman it seemed natural and inevitable, but his arithmetical powers suffered in consequence."

"Human thought requires an efficient method of symbolism such as no language yet supplies. If the keepers of our language maintain a die-hard attitude and succeed in preventing reasoned improvement the result will, I suggest, be that language will be less and less used for intellectual and rational purposes and relegated to an altogether inferior status as the symbols of sentiment and small talk. All accurate thinking will have to be carried out by means of some other symbolism like that of mathematics."

"This idea is also not new . . . Leibniz realised the need of a reformed symbolism and method of thought. He imagined a universal symbolism of thought which would be understood by all nations, and by which thought itself would become accurate and quantitative."

1941 Dr. Frederick Bodmer and Professor Lancelot Hogben

(See quotation page 10) wrote in *THE LOOM OF LANGUAGE* (publ. 1944 by George Allen and Unwin, London):

"The efforts of Dalgarno, Wilkins or Leibniz were not fruitless . . . revision of chemical terminology realised Wilkin's dream of a real character. Modern chemistry has a vocabulary of ideographic and pictographic symbols . . ."

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1942 Charles K. Bliss,

B.Sc., an industrial research chemist and science lecturer, with a lifelong training in the handling of chemical symbols, found himself marooned in China, and then in the hands of the Japanese.

He was impressed by the unique quality of Chinese picto-ideography (although complicated and cumbersome) which made it possible that a newspaper printed in Shanghai could be read in the different languages of China and East Asia, and even in English, French, etc.

He remembered his linguistic troubles in scientific literary research, and, realising the havoc wreaked by war-making slogans, he set to work to analyse language and to separate the "elements of meaning," then to draw up simple pictographs, typable on an adjusted typewriter of ordinary size, (which carries the small letters of the alphabet too).

After the war, he worked for another 4 years on this idea, put it on a sound scientific basis, simplified his symbols until they became almost self-explanatory, and wrote his book.

After World War II.

Many scientists realised that it is their responsibility to create a world of peace. "Since war begins in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed" reads the preamble to UNESCO's Constitution. And an old-new idea began to take new shape, Scientific Humanism.

1946 Professor Oliver L. Reiser,

University of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Chairman of the International Committee on Scientific Humanism, Author of PHILOSOPHY AND THE CONCEPTS OF MODERN SCIENCE, THE PROMISE OF SCIENTIFIC HUMANISM, A NEW EARTH AND A NEW HUMANITY, wrote in THE WORLD SENSORIUM. (Avalon Press, New York):

"The central difficulty with Humanism has been that it has tried to put an immensely simple message into WORDS, whereas such a message can only be written into a form of a universal picture language.

The job is to find a layout, a picture basis, so simple and so huge that it is usable by anyone who has mastered the movies or can punch a radio panel."

1949 SEMANTOGRAPHY, 100 Symbol Elements to overcome Babel in Reading, Writing and Thought,

was completed by C. K. Bliss after seven years of work and published by the Institute for Semantography.

WHAT IS SEMANTOGRAPHY?

SEMANTOGRAPHY constitutes the first practical realisation of the Dream of Leibniz, the Demand of Paget, the Description of Reiser. It comprises:

AN UNUSUAL, NEW TOOL FOR LANGUAGE LEARNING

Our minds resist—even under compulsion by parents and teachers—the learning of foreign languages (and this includes Esperanto). We learn French for seven years and many of us can't ask correctly for a glass of water. The people of this planet stick to their many and varied mother tongues, even in the United States of America.

Some of the reasons are the different word order, grammar, sentence construction, idiomatic expressions and nonsensical use of the particles (which make "up" nearly 30 per cent of all the words we use) in the many languages. The idiomatic expression "to make up one's mind" seems utterly nonsensical in most foreign languages, unless it refers to "plastic brain surgery." But for the word "to decide" there is a simple counterpart in most languages.

Semantography applies a few simple and universal laws of Physics, Chemistry, Biology and Psychology and we arrive therefore at a common basis for all languages, which are anyway used to describe the same physical world around us.

Consequently, Semantography represents a new tool for language learning and language planning. It enables us to acquire in the shortest way a basic stock of any foreign language. It makes us realise the unpicturable nonsense in the expressions, rules and exceptions of our own and any other mother-tongue. By applying the "natural sciences" to our utterances, we learn to talk sense.

Still there are the differently pronounced words for the same thing in the many languages. We don't like to memorise strange vocables, but we take easily to international symbols like $1 + 2 = 3$, &, £, %, because we can read and pronounce them in our own familiar mother-tongue.

And this leads to a fascinating and fantastic advantage of Semantography, namely:

ONE WRITING FOR ONE WORLD

A letter, a notice, a warning, a paper written, typed or printed in the simple, almost self-explanatory picturegraphs of Semantography can be read in any language. This has immediate practical applications in countries with a multilingual population and/or international traffic. Furthermore it represents a new auxiliary interlinguistic medium for correspondence and reference literature in Science, Industry, Commerce, Communication, Education, etc.

LITERACY FOR THE BILLION

Scientists have found in Africa that natives, engulfed in superstitions, will not take to any improvement in agriculture, hygiene, etc., without the stimulus of literacy.

Here is a simple universal "Picture Writing" for more than 1,500,000,000 illiterates in Asia, Africa and elsewhere, speaking in thousands of languages and dialects.

Here is ONE PRIMER, ONE PAPER, ONE PRINT FOR ONE WORLD. "With the Art of Writing," said Thomas CARLYLE, "the true reign of miracles for Mankind commenced . . . Democracy is inevitable."

A SIMPLE SEMANTICS FOR THE CITIZEN, A LOGIC FOR THE PEOPLE

The most desperately needed items of Education are not taught in the primary schools and secondary schools of the world: "how to think logically" and "how to recognise vague, ambiguous and fallacious words," which threaten and often wreck the family, the nation, the whole world.

A simple symbolic logic and semantics can be taught by way of the symbols. Vague, ambiguous and disputable meanings become directly visible as such. A generation steeped in Semantography may stop nagging and bickering or being misled by hate propaganda.

THE PLANETARY MEDIUM FOR SCIENTIFIC HUMANISM

The symbols work like chemical symbols. They reveal something of the inherent structure (and danger) of a meaning. The simple mind symbols work like variables in propositional functions. Even laws of Ethics, written in the symbols, can be arrived at by a similar treatment to that for scientific formulas—yes, even peasants would understand it, as Leibniz wanted it, peasants of any country and any language.

WHAT SCIENTISTS THINK OF SEMANTOGRAPHY

So far, the following scientists have had an opportunity of acquainting themselves with this new scientific discipline.

BERTRAND RUSSELL, O.M.

Eminent Philosopher, Mathematician, Logician, etc. Bearer of many academic distinctions. Author of numerous books among which are THE PRINCIPLES OF MATHEMATICS, PRINCIPIA MATHEMATICA (co-author with A. Whitehead), AN INTRODUCTION TO MATHEMATICAL PHILOSOPHY, THE PHILOSOPHY OF LEIBNIZ, THE A.B.C. OF ATOMS, THE A.B.C. OF RELATIVITY, THE ANALYSIS OF MATTER, AN OUTLINE OF PHILOSOPHY, EDUCATION AND THE SOCIAL ORDER, HISTORY OF WESTERN PHILOSOPHY, etc. etc. wrote:

Dear Mr. Bliss,

I have been looking through your system of Semantography and I think very highly of it. The logical analysis is good. The symbols are ingenious and easy to understand, and the whole is capable of being very useful. Any man or men who will spend the money necessary to get your work printed will, in my opinion, be performing an important service to mankind.

Your Sincerely

Bertrand Russell

P.S. You are at liberty to make any use you choose of this letter.

PROFESSOR LANCELOT HOGBEN,

F.R.S., M.A., D.Sc., Prof. of Medical Statistics, University of Birmingham, etc.

Author of MATHEMATICS FOR THE MILLION, SCIENCE FOR THE CITIZEN, NATURE AND NURTURE, INTERGLOSSA, etc. Editor of THE LOOM OF LANGUAGE (by Dr. Frederick Bodmer), Author (with Marie Neurath) of FROM CAVE PAINTING TO COMIC STRIP and other books.

Prof. Hogben, in a letter, calls the book on SEMANTOGRAPHY "**fascinating**," and writes:

"... I think the views of Mr. Bliss are stimulating, ingenious, and worthy of a wide public among interlinguists . . ."

And in another letter:

"I have found the project of Mr. Bliss interesting and stimulating, well worthy of encouragement as a possible aid to education of preliterate communities and likely to promote further study of a much neglected problem of world unity."

PROFESSOR CARLETON WASHBURN,

B.A., Dr. Engineering, Professor of Education, Brooklyn College, New York; UNESCO Education Reconstruction Specialist, formerly Director of Education in Italy, U.S. Army, 1945, World President New Education Fellowship, etc.

Author of A LIVING PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION, NEW SCHOOLS IN THE OLD WORLD, ADJUSTING THE SCHOOL TO THE CHILD, THE RIGHT BOOK FOR THE RIGHT CHILD, REMAKERS

OF MANKIND, LOUISIANA LOOKS AT ITS SCHOOLS, THE STORY OF THE EARTH (co-author with his wife Heluiz Chandler Washburne) and many other publications, writes:

"A brief examination of the "100 Symbol Elements" idea of Mr. C. K. Bliss, shows it to be ingenious.

I believe it should be subjected to controlled experimentation to demonstrate whether or not it is practicable. If it proves practicable it could be of great value."

PROFESSOR HENRY L. BROSE,

D.Phil., M.A., (Oxford), D.Sc. (Adelaide), F.Inst.P. (London) formerly Professor of Physics, University of Nottingham, Author of THE THEORY OF RELATIVITY, etc, Translator of works by Albert Einstein, Max Planck, and others, writes:

"It has given me great pleasure to read the three volumes on Semantography by Mr. C. K. Bliss, B.Sc. In my opinion Mr. Bliss has evolved a new system of pictorial ideography, which should be useful in many different spheres. For example, it can be applied in our ordinary daily lives in scientific communication, commerce and as an international script. It is easy to see that the possibilities of the scheme are not exhausted by the many ingenious suggestions sketched in Mr. Bliss' volumes.

By this method the root meaning of words come into evidence in a manner, reminiscent of a type of mental algebra and of a system of symbols akin to those used in chemistry.

I feel that these ideas should be of wide application in the future when nations will need to be drawn more closely together by just such ways as are here outlined by Mr. Bliss."

JOHN METCALFE,

B.A., F.L.A., Principal Librarian and Secretary of the Public Library of New South Wales, Australia, Honorary General Secretary of the Library Association of Australia, Author of numerous Publications on Library Problems and Practice, writes:

"I have known of the work by Mr. Bliss on what he now calls Semantography for the past four years. The field in which he has been working was not one unfamiliar to me, because I had been interested in and had written and published articles on Basic English.

Mr. Bliss has now published an extensive work, setting out his system and I believe that it should be studied by those interested in any way in semantics and in the problems of international language. Even if nothing comes of his particular system and in his life-time, **I believe his book should be available in the larger public and university reference libraries throughout the world.** I have therefore no hesitation in recommending its purchase by these libraries. Having regard to the size of the book and the present cost of production, I do not consider the price of approximately £A5 to be excessive."

JAMES HEMMING,

Research Officer of the Association for Education in Citizenship, England; Member of the National Institute of Industrial Psychology, the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations, Author of DEMOCRACY IN SCHOOL LIFE, TEACH THEM TO LIVE, THE CHILD IS RIGHT (co-author), etc. writes:

"The world is now one, technologically and economically speaking. There is, thus, an urgent need

to develop a language-free means of conveying ideas **universally** as, in limited fields, has already been achieved by musical notations and by the international symbols used in mathematics, electronics, etc.

Your system is designed precisely to achieve this and warrants an extensive trial with children, with adults, with persons of different nationalities and with individuals of varying intelligence. If the system stands up to this test—and I see no reason why it should not—then obviously, this particular method of jumping the language barrier between peoples **should be developed as rapidly and as widely as possible.**"

B. BURGOYNE CHAPMAN,

M.A. (Sydney, Cambridge, Columbia), formerly Fraser Graduate Scholar in History (Sydney), Fellow Teachers' College Columbia University, Fellow Royal Geographical Society, formerly Principal Central China Teachers' College, and General Secretary Central China Christian Education Association, etc., writes:

"Thank you for letting me see your proposed international sign language, from which, for the first few minutes, I confess, I was inclined to flee. But investigation showed me the excellence of the idea and I was increasingly surprised at what could be expressed by so few symbols and how easily they could be learnt.

I have often written Chinese characters (a similar sign language, but unduly complicated and numerous) to "talk" with Cantonese and Japanese who read them in utterly different words, and yet we have got on happily and quickly.

Your disinterestedness personally, and sole desire to serve humane and cultural causes makes me feel that almost **your sole difficulty will be to induce busy and conservative people (like myself yesterday) to take the first ten minutes, seriously to begin to study the proposal. After that, its interest and advantages should be clear to intelligent people.**

As a fellow Cambridgeman with Ogden, I know that his Basic English (which attacks quite a different and more limited problem) was at first laughed to scorn."

F. D. MCCARTHY

Dip. Anthr. (Sydney), Curator of Anthropology, Australian Museum, Sydney, Author of AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINAL DECORATIVE ART, STONE IMPLEMENTS OF AUSTRALIA, and numerous papers, said:

"Such a simple "language" of symbols will help tremendously to overcome the very difficult problem of disseminating information to peoples of diverse languages, either in one country, such as New Guinea, or in different countries in many parts of the world."

THE SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIAN INVENTORS

(Patron Prof. M. L. OLIPHANT, F.R.S., (President Prof. H. L. BROSE) authorised the Honorary Secretary Mr. A. R. Bamber to write:

"On the 22nd September, 1949, Mr. C. K. Bliss gave a lecture on Semantography to members of the Society of Australian Inventors. Great interest was shown in the demonstration and it was felt that the symbols used in the conveyance of thought are very ingenious, and are worthy of serious consideration by the various responsible authorities. If its practicability

can be proved, especially with children, then its value indeed would be great."

THE AUSTRALIAN SCHOOL OF PACIFIC ADMINISTRATION,

Sydney. After a demonstration before a group of teachers, the registrar, Mr. Wilfred S. ARTHUR, wrote:

"We feel that a system of ideogrammic writing would have uses for such things as public notices, and that it could be used among peoples speaking a variety of vernaculars."

THE NATIONAL ROADS AND MOTORISTS' ASSOCIATION

of New South Wales, Australia. The executive body after a study of the Semantography symbols for international traffic, authorised the General Secretary, Mr. H. E. RICHARDS, to write:

"... I would advise that this Association is of the opinion that the adoption of your system of symbol writing throughout the world would contribute towards much safer traffic conditions in international motoring ..."

For further testimonials see the next leaflets.

Will History repeat itself?

When Louis **BRaille** in 1825 invented a new auxiliary Writing, which filled a desperate need of the blind people, the Academy and the proper institutions rejected it, and even his colleagues obstructed it—the usual fate of unusual ideas.

SEMANTOGRAPHY too is a new auxiliary Writing, which fills a desperate need of mankind. It offers advantages, never before comprised in any existing writing system, and it has already been highly praised by learned men.

BUT it is going to suffer the same treatment as Braille's Writing—unless enlightened persons anywhere in the World, realise the urgency and are instrumental in its examination and adoption in their country.

This concerns **YOU** and all men of learning, and the World will judge **YOU** according to **YOUR** attitude towards new ideas, whether it is one of (1) prejudiced rejection, (2) polite inaction, or (3) enlightened action. **WE ALL** have a responsibility to interest ourselves in new ideas which can benefit Mankind.