

THE INSTITUTE FOR SEMANTOGRAPHY

A Non-Profit Educational Research Organisation.

Founder and Director: C. K. BLISS, B.Sc.

5-Maroubra Bay Road, Pagewood,
Sydney, N.S.W., Australia.

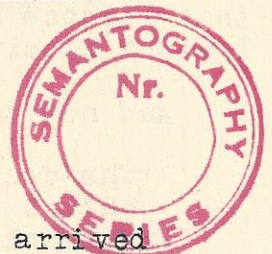


Nr. ~~14~~

Sydney 14th April 1951

Professor Dr. Oliver L. Reiser
Chairman, International Committee
on Scientific Humanism
Department of Philosophy
The University of Pittsburgh
PITTSBURGH 13, Pennsylvania, U.S.A.

Your letters of
February 27, and April 3,



Dear Professor Reiser,

Your first letter sent by regular mail and your airletter arrived almost simultaneously, and I have read all the printed material with ravenous interest until the small hours of the night. Saturday morning, and no factory work, I sit down and reply at once.

As I am going to give you some samples of my Semantography, and as I hope that you might show them to some of your friends, I am writing this letter directly onto waxstencils, and shall send you, apart from this first copy, which you will receive by airmail, some more copies by ordinary mail.

However, I must expose a weakness in the working of my mind. I am unable to write the same sentence twice. What I wrote yesterday or just an hour ago, I don't like when re-reading it. When I draft a letter and then type it down neatly, not a single sentence remains the same. This led to 4 manuscripts of my work, each completely different from the other. I have then been forced to type what comes into my mind directly onto waxstencils and let it go at that. In this way I have written the 3 volumes of my work, and consequently they are full of typing errors, awkward sentence constructions and other crimes against style. I can't help it. In the same way I have written this letter and beg forgiveness.

You wrote that you have been invited to contribute a paper on "Unified Symbolism and World Understanding" to the "American Academy for the Advancement of Science" and that you will make some reference to my work. Please accept my thanks for this. I think my work will justify your trust.

Let me now say that your writing is pure poetry, the poetry we human beings of this time need most. If the original meaning of Philosophy is "a love of wisdom" than I think that the meaning of Poetry is the expression of all our secret longings. And in our time this is "globalising democracy" and everything we connect with this meaning, to use your own words. I was not the least surprised to find in your pamphlet "A Philosophy for World Unification" some poems and understood that your thoughts simply could not be restrained to the prose of your books, which, as I said before, is poetry to me, and to other people.

These people are a small group in Sydney, the Australian Psychology Centre, and a chapter of Korzybski's Society for General Semantics. The Secretary of this Centre Mrs. Betty Staltenhoff who has helped me greatly drew my attention to your work THE WORLD SENSORIUM, and especially to your wishful thought about a picture writing for Scientific Humanism. I am indebted to her for making your acquaintance.

Now you closed your second letter with these words: "Do you see any way in which we could enter into some program of collaboration?" Of course I do. You are the heavenstorming lover of wisdom, and I am the down-to earth chemical engineer. You are speaking in fiery tongues. I have tried to create a medium to talk to children and illiterates of all languages. You are the idealist who sees far ahead. I am the practical factory man, who must tend to the immediate needs of people. You are thinking of globalising democracy. I, talking all the day with workers, and seeing how their simple minds are befuddled by the "progressive elements" of doctrinary dictatorship, have devoted a great part of my third volume

volume to the burning problem how to save the few still existing democracies, imperfect as they are. You are the great designer of Scientific Humanism, I am the factory man, who is bent on producing a practical gadget to implement your ideas, a gadget which any child, any illiterate and any fool can handle and understand.

This is the way how I see our co-operation and I believe it could be a happy and most productive symbiosis. Let me tell you that I have been your co-worker since I left the University. I have been for the last 30 years a honorary science lecturer at educational halls, colleges, etc. and after a heavy day at the factory I have told equally tired working people that science has a message for mankind. At that time I did not know that I was a disciple of Scientific Humanism. Now I know.

And now to your lines in THE WORLD SENSORIUM:

"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.

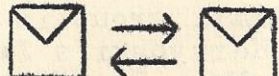
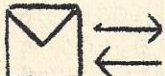
The job is to find a layout, a picture basis, so simple and so huge that it is usable by anyone who has mastered the movies or can punch a radio panel"

Considering that the writings about Scientific Humanism are by no means easy reading matter to people with primary school education only, your words are more than wishful thinking. And you realised this and wrote: "If someone with creative vision could come along, and dissolve old habits of thought..." and you defined "the problem of global semantics - that of social communication across the world-whole, speaking to all races and nations as one".

I am now going to prove that Semantography is just this medium. I could refer you to my 3 volumes, but the first impression of this huge work containing nearly half a million words and thousands of symbol drawings in huge chapters on practically most human activities, is one of bewilderment. Therefore this letter with a few samples for you and your friends.

I attach the title page of a Children's Primer, which I have in preparation, provided that accursed stuff is provided - money. It gives you an idea how the symbols of Semantography look. John Metcalfe, Principal Librarian of the Public Library of Sydney N.S.W. has been interviewed over the air and he was asked whether he thinks that my symbols could be simplified. To this he answered, that he cannot imagine that my symbols could ever be more simplified. I hope that you and your friends - after looking at the symbols on the Children's Primer Title Page - will agree with him. I have written a letter in Semantography to the children of Dr. P. Volkov, Editor of THE NEW ERA London, (in which the most favourable review of my work written by Prof. Patrick Meredith, University of Leeds, appeared). They used my letter and a few explanatory remarks to write a letter back to me with practically no mistakes. They are twins, aged 12, identical I.Q. 136

Now here are a few symbols concerning letter writing:

			or simply 
letter	to and fro	letter correspondence	correspondence

Now we must develop the symbols for material THING and physical ACTION

			
material THING	physical ACTION	a letter the THING	to letter the ACTION

These two very important symbols standing for MASS and ENERGY (practical division) are not arbitrary chosen. The symbol for the THING shows that

a THING has a geometrical outline, occupies a certain well defined space, has an inside and an outside, a volume and a surface. I have chosen the square to show that the structure of Matter reveals the divine simplicity and harmony which we find in the enrapturing beauty of a crystal, or on the submicroscopic level in the arrangement of the molecules. This explanation should appeal to children.

The symbol for physical ACTION indicates the first primeval action, which happened when the molten ball of our planet cooled down: the throwing up of volcano cones, and the thrusting up of mountains. To those who have not the imagination to visualise that primeval ACTION, the symbol may indicate the letter A in the words Actus or Action.

Now we are going to form sentences. By turning the ACTION indicator in the direction of the action we can indicate the transitive active and passive verb

man	letters	I	letter	you	I am lettered by you	I am addressed by	you
(writes a letter)		(I address you in writing)			(I am addressed by	you in writing)	
		(transitive active verb)			(transitive passive)		

Please keep these opposing action indicators in mind for a later symbol. Underwood Corporation of New York (Mr. J. A. B. Smith) has agreed to convert an ordinary typewriter model for the writing of Semantography. The small letters remain for writing ordinary letters, for writing names and international words. The capital letters (which are not essential) are discarded and in their place we have line elements for the composition of the symbols. In short, it will be the ordinary typewriter as we have it today.

I wish now to refer to one sentence in your letter which runs:

"One difficulty I have with a unified symbolism is that it does not contain a method for solving ethical problems, though it might indicate how to symbolise whatever solution is arrived at."

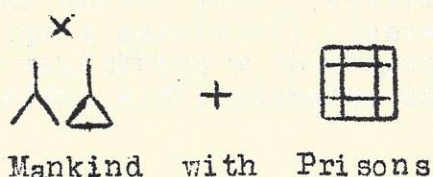
From your other writings, especially your table containing Classes, Propositions and Uninterpreted Symbols I see that you refer to the abstract symbols of modern logical symbolism. This discipline is a difficult one and gives a headache even to the student who studies it for his examination. As for Semantography, wholly abstract and arbitrary symbols are definitely out. They never can have a meaning to children and natives. I shall now show how ethical problems are indicated in the symbols of Semantography. In the same time, I shall allude to the graph on page 167 of your PLANETARY DEMOCRACY which shows the difference between Primary Symbols, the symbols which represent our present world, and Secondary Symbols, which are applicable to the Ideal World we dream of and want to build. The following symbol symbolises



prison punishment
(window with bars)

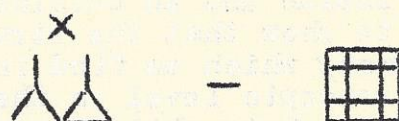
Now this is a symbol of our present world, in which we seem not to be able to dispense with prison punishment. But every criminologist and even the inborn sadists who chose prison warden as a career, agree that prison punishment is futile. It makes the first offender into a criminal for life and it hardens the second and third offender. With political prisoners the situation is even worse. The very fact of his imprisonment gives impetus to his cause and makes thousands of converts who consider him a martyr.

All the efforts made in prison farms, reform schools, and prisons without bars and gates are made to save the individual and to save the huge expenditure necessary for the upkeep of useless prisons. In short, the ideal society for which we strive, must of necessity be a "mankind without prisons". In Semantography the plus sign indicates "with" and the minus sign indicates "without". We have then in opposition the following symbols:



Mankind with Prisons

Our present-day World



Mankind without Prisons

Our ideal World to come

Mankind is symbolised by the symbol for male and female human beings with the multiplication mark on top indicating a multitude (see children's primer title page).

Can you imagine more simple symbols than these? I cannot. And I cannot find better words to illustrate them, than those you wrote in your pamphlet "A Philosophy for World Unification" (p.10):

"The Semantics of Scientific Humanism is a creative semantics and not merely a descriptive semantics: it is concerned not only with adequate adjustment to a pre-existent world of facts, but with the creation of an as-yet non-existent (ideal) world. It is concerned not only with what words do mean, but with what they ought to mean in a fluid world."

How then can we solve ethical problems concerning prison punishment, whenever we encounter them. Very simple. If someone says: "This man must be treated with (+) prison punishment" the Humanist will always answer: "This man must be treated without (-) prison punishment". Boys and girls learn in school that if +a and -a are encountered in an algebraic equation, then both symbols vanish. $+2 - 2 = 0$. In other words, wherever we encounter a proposition which contains the symbol for prison punishment (in ordinary words or the symbols of Semantography) we have to replace the plus sign by a minus sign, according to the ethics (and findings of even prison wardens) of Scientific Humanism, and think of better treatments than prison bars.

Now one last example of Semantography, showing the building of ethical formulae. This example is contained in a large chapter of my 3rd volume on pp. 545 - 565 under the title THE UNITS OF ETHICS. And I want to cite your own words to show your longing and its fulfillment through the medium of Semantography (so I hope).

You wrote in "A Philosophy for World Unification" p. 11 and 14:

"We need to develop a universal ethics which shall transcend races, nations, religions, and local cultures"

"We need a planetary ethics to supply the emotional drive for the great tasks that lie ahead."

Needless to say, that we must teach such an ethic to children in the primary and secondary school. And equally needless to say, that the present teachings of ethics, administered by the various religious teachers is utterly boring to children, and even to adults, who resent "moralising".

But boys and girls like physics, and physical and chemical experiments. All those formulae make sense. They can be proved by the direct experiment. The task therefore is to try to develop the ethical laws of nature from the physical laws we learn in physics, chemistry, biology, etc.

That you are dreaming of just this treatment is proved by the following quotations from your paper A RESOLUTION OF THE "EAST-WEST PROBLEM" BY WAY OF A SCIENTIFIC HUMANISM, reprinted from Philosophy of Science Vol. 16, No. 4, October 1949 (p. 326 and 327)

"In so far as man studies physical, biological, and psychological laws he is able to make better adjustments than if he remained in ignorance of them."

"Physical laws and moral principles do not stand apart but on the human level are interwoven. The better we understand these moral principles related to natural laws, the more chance we have to follow through and prevent the conflicts which threaten to destroy us all."

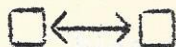
I am now going to show that the symbols of Semantography enable us to derive the laws of ethics from the laws of physics. Boys and girls could thus be convinced that these laws of ethics are something "natural", something which plays a tremendous role in our life just as gravitation and other physical forces.

Isaac Newton's Law of Action and Reaction reads in ordinary language:

"For every force in nature there must be two bodies, one to exert the force and one to receive it. For every action (or force) there is an equal and opposite reaction."

Now every physics teacher has a number of simple experiments to prove this law. The simplest is to hit the table with your fist. The table will hit back and it hurts. This law expressed in the symbols of Semantography looks like this

Newton's Law of Action and Reaction
in Semantography

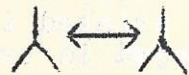


We see in this symbol compound the two material bodies and the two-headed arrow indicating action and reaction. The symbol for material THING is general. We can replace it in the above formulae by the pictographs of suns and planets or we can replace it by the symbols of human beings. They consist of matter and are thus subject to the same physical law.



Man acts on and
is acted upon by
another Man

or written in the
correct "grammatical"
form of Semantography



Man (a material body) acts
(active transitive verb)
on and is acted upon (passive
transitive) by Man

If you would kindly look back on page 3 where I have shown the symbolisation of the active and passive physical ACTION, and on page 2 where I have shown the symbol for material THING and physical ACTION you will realise that the indicators on top of the second symbol formula show directly Newton's Law of Action and Reaction.

To children the transformed formula can be easily proved by experiment. If you hit a table, the table will hit back. If you hit another boy he will hit back. Whatever the working of his braincells are, they are subjected to the law of Action and Reaction, and they will crave to hit back. Should the first hitter be too brawny, and the victim brainy enough to realise his disadvantage, then the braincells of the victim will be tormented by constant thinking how to get even, and the opportunity will come.

Yes, it's Newton's Law alright, and in my book I have shown how we can substitute and transform the above formula in much the same way as we do with mathematical and physical formulae. Thus it is easy to arrive at

"An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a kill for a kill"

The latter formula is still observed in all countries using capital punishment, and in all countries it is recognised that it does not deter potential future killers. It's useless.

This universal law of action and reaction has been recognised by great scientists and sociologists of ages past. In my chapter I have shown the following transformations:

Newton's Law: For every action there is an equal and opposite reaction.

Moses' Law: Thou shalt not kill! (because it will precipitate another kill)

Jesus' Law: Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.

The symbol formula expressing that universal law can now^{be} interpreted for various instances. Jesus considering this universal law, gave the advice "Help thy enemy!" And this advice is so far the only practical method ever found, how to turn an enemy into a friend. Give a fellow a good turn, even if he did hurt you, and his braincells will - sooner or later - yield to Newton's Law, and retaliate a good turn with an equally good turn. It's simple and everyday physics, and I don't see why physics teachers should not teach it in their class with everyday practical experiments. And this leads to another aspect.

If you open various textbooks on physics written in different languages, you will find for instance Robert Boyle's Law of the relationship between gas pressure and gas volume.

$$\frac{V_1}{V_2} = \frac{P_2}{P_1}$$

Now, this formula will be interpreted with different words in different languages and even with different words in textbooks written in the same language. And physics teachers will give lengthy sermons about it, again in different words, and in different countries in different languages.

What Jesus the teacher said, was said by Mahomed, by Gautama Buddha, by Spinoza, and indeed by every great prophet of every religion. However they said it in different words and in different languages. But now we have a picture writing which shows the real things, and we can now write the law down in a formula which will equally illustrate Jesus sayings, and Moses sayings and Mahomed sayings, and the sayings of Confucius, Mencius, Spinoza, etc. etc. We can visualise a time when Semantography will have spread to the far corners of the earth, and then the interpreters of the various religions will not object to a plan: that such symbol formulae shall be printed into every prayer book of every religion, that they should be displayed in every church, synagogue, temple and shrine of worship.

Here, Professor Reiser here is your "planetary and universal ethics which shall transcend races, nations, religions and local cultures". Here are your "moral principles related to natural laws" and here is your "universal picture language" to write the "immensely simple message of Humanism" so that it could be understood by children and adults of all nations.

Now you are the visionary who wants to "globalise democracy", and I am the practical engineer trying to evolve a plan to save the few existing democracies. But you too see the necessity of this short term plan, and therefore you drew up a chart of the features of the different societies (capitalist, socialist, etc.). I have done exactly the same in my work, but with one big difference. You did it in words, and I did it in a picture language, in which real picturable things are shown, and in which vague words which have different meanings to different people are avoided. Anyone who studies my structural formulae can never use the words Capitalism and Socialism as two opposing -isms. I have done, what you hoped it could be done, namely, I have drawn up the structural formulae for "fair living wage" and "adequate housing", expressed in calories, floorspace per person, water taps, electricity points, etc. and no vague meanings in all. I thank you for your information that the Library of the University of Pittsburgh has ordered my work, and I hope that your friends will do the same.

Now one last item, a personal plea. I have been a successful chemist, a successful factory executive, a successful businessman of my own. I believe that I have made a success of Semantography. But the job has just started. I have spent the greater part of my savings working on Semantography, and when my savings reached a dangerously low level, I have taken on employment. However, my mind refuses to work on anything but Semantography. So I work as a skilled manual tradesman at General Motors at Sydney. However physical fatigue, and mental strain are sometimes unbearable. I am 54 years of age, my blood pressure is high, and I can pass out any time. If I could work one year on Semantography only, sell my work, print the Children's Primer, I could make Semantography a paying proposition. What I need are \$1500. Can you find a wealthy private citizen, who could get me out of the sweat shop? Bertrand Russell, foremost authority on Logical Symbolism has written that anyone assisting materially Semantography "will be performing an important service to Mankind" PLEASE HELP. This is a cry to you and to all your friends. Don't let me down!

Yours Sincerely

C.K. 13/1/55