



SEMANTOGRAPHY FOR THE MEDICAL MAN

A Letter
to

Dr. W. F. Cooper
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General Motors-Holden's
Fishermen's Bend
MELBOURNE, Vic.

Sydney 25th May 1951

Dear Dr. Cooper,

Please accept my thanks for your kind letter of appreciation, concerning my work on SEMANTOGRAPHY, following the article which appeared in the Magazine "General Motors-Holden's People". Even more am I pleased by your wish to purchase the 3 volumes on SEMANTOGRAPHY. Your interest gives me courage to carry on with a work, which might be a common place 100 years hence, but which rests today solely on my shoulders and even more on my earnings as a worker in the great organisation of General Motors.

In your desire to invest a few pounds in this new and world-embracing idea, you follow the appeal of the great mathematician and philosopher EARL RUSSELL, who wrote that spending money on a publication on SEMANTOGRAPHY means "performing an important Service to Mankind".

As you are the first medical man, outside of Sydney, who purchases my work I want to show my gratitude by writing this special letter to you, in order to show you that SEMANTOGRAPHY may be of service to you and to every medical man. There is a large chapter in the second volume p. 391 - p. 402 showing the application of the symbols of Semantography for Medicine. There is another large chapter on chemical meanings, directly applicable to Medicine on p. 368 - p. 390. There are a number of chapters on Psychology p. 161 - p. 182. In this respect I wish to mention the most favourable review which a Professor of Psychology, Prof. G. Patrick Meredith of the University of Leeds has written about my work. This review appeared in the British educational journal THE NEW ERA (London, November 1950).

You may perhaps desire to tell your friends about Semantography, and therefore I duplicate this letter and attach to it a reprint from the GTH People and other material of interest. However, in writing this letter directly on the wax stencil, I beg to excuse beforehand any misprint or awkward sentence constructions, which I shall commit and which are difficult to erase.

I am going to show some symbols which might be of interest to any doctor in Australia. Some doctors are dealing with the oldest Australians, the aborigines, and you and your co-workers have to deal with a great number of New Australians, the immigrants who can speak only Italian, or German, or Maltese, or Czech or any other European language. It is very important for them that they should be able to understand how to take or use a medicine, as prescribed on the bottle, etc.

All the symbols shown below are following up to expressions for complete case histories, etc. which can be read and understood in all languages.

Semantography for aborigines in Australia and New Guinea.



sun



earth



morning



day



moon



evening



night

It may seem farfetched to stress the importance of literacy for medical treatment of aborigines and natives. Yet, British scientists have found in Africa, that natives - enculped in superstitions - will not take to any improvements in hygiene, even in agriculture, without the stimulus of literacy.

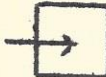
The natives of Papua, New Guinea (altogether about 1 million people) are split up in more than 100 different languages. Phonetic alphabets are out of the questions. Only such a modern pictography like Semantography could bring universal literacy in a new unheard-of sense, because natives of different languages will be able to read the same government notice or medical information in any of their mother tongues.

I have demonstrated Semantography before the staff of the Australian School for Pacific Administration, before the Department for External Territories in Canberra, and I have a letter from the Minister for External Territories Mr. Percy Spender (now Ambassador in Washington) in which he says that he has examined Semantography, that "it might be very useful in the territory of Papua, New Guinea" and that he has requested a report from Port Moresby. I hope that something will materialise from these efforts.

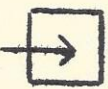
Semantography for New Australians

New immigrants are feeling unhappy, mostly because they feel strangers among people, whose language they don't understand. In trying to learn English they are baffled by the many apparently senseless idiomatic uses of words in English, without realising that their native language has similar non-sensical expressions. For instance, the words over and under have a very definite spacial meaning in all languages. But such expressions as "Do the work which was left over" or "He left this over night." are utterly baffling to the new immigrant when he begins to learn English.

Semantography makes it possible to build up a basic stock of English expressions, which have a very definite meaning, and for which there is an exact counter part in all languages. These meanings can only be demonstrated through the medium of a picto-ideography, for instance

					
over above	under below	enclosure	in inside	out outside	into entering

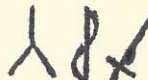
Medical Symbols for New Australians.

2							
Two	pills	morning	and	evening	Shake	bottle	!
5							
Five	drops	into	nose	yab	for	outside (external)	!

It should be understood that the corresponding words in English should always be printed or written underneath each symbol. Similar symbols containing technical advice at machines in the workshop can be used. This is of special importance for danger warning signs in the factory. Naturally, the new immigrants would have to be instructed about the meanings of these symbols. But, as shown above, this instruction can be part of the language learning. I am ready to work out a small folder showing in the first column the symbols and in adjacent columns the equivalent words in a number of European languages. I beg to take this proposal into consideration, with regard to the special requirements of General Motors-Holden's.

General medical symbols in Semantography (a few examples)

The symbol for Medicine is a simplified outline of the ageold medical symbol, the rod of Aesculapius, Roman God of Medicine.

					
Aesculapius Medicine Symbol	in Semantography	man	medical man	knife	surgeon
					
standing	weak (knees bent)	laying	sick (knees drawn up)	"opposite" symbol	healthy

The symbol for "standing" shows an upright person in profile, the horizontal short line indicates his feet. The semantic effect of the symbol for "healthy", the opposite of "sick", should be to impress upon healthy people, the real meaning of "healthy", namely the absence of pain. "Healthy" in Semantography means "Thankheaventhatisnot sick". The symbol itself is the simplest outline of a person laying in bed with the knees drawn up as writhing in pain.

These few symbols are augmented by many more symbols in the chapters of Volume 2, and the whole work gives ample proof that we are really in a position to indicate any meaning in any language with such simple symbols.

Case Histories, Medical Reports and Research Treatises in Semantography.

Incredible as it may seem, but this part of my work was indeed very easy, simply because the medical men of all nations have preserved the old international language of science, Latin. Consequently, all the names relating to parts of the body, to all the organs and to parts of these organs, all the diseases, etc. etc. are already fixed in Latin, and known to every medical man in the whole world.

Consequently, Semantography furnishes only the symbols for those everyday meanings which we need to connect the Latin words to complete sentences. I had therefore little difficulty to "translate" a treatise from the British Medical Journal. Parts of this translation are shown on the pages 392 - p. 396. But we can easily replace Latin terms by symbols. For instance

intussusception > of ileum + colon or simply ileum  colon

These few examples from my work should show that it would be worthwhile for the medical profession to take an interest in Semantography. It enables a doctor say in Portugal, to correspond with another doctor in Denmark, or France, or Siam or anywhere in the world, although both doctors speak different languages. The very same letter, typed on an adjusted typewriter, or written by hand, can be read and understood in all languages. In my University lecture before the University of Sydney I have shown that Semantography is adequate for any scientific communication and can be used for a very important, but lacking thing, a universal science abstract about new research findings, which could be read by all doctors and scientists of all languages.

I cannot show in this letter the application of Semantography for vague meanings, words which cause psychological disturbances, and worry. There is a War of Words going on in all families, between husband and wife, father and son, men and women and even children. We hurt each other with words, which have vague meanings, different for different people. And we know today that many organic disturbances are psychosomatic, that is mental in origin. Semantography may even here prove of help, and in my work I have shown that this can be done.

In closing this letter, I beg to appeal to you, to your friends and to all people in the whole world to help me. I am fighting a losing battle against time. I am now 54 years of age. I have to make a living, and I work gladly in a manual capacity at General Motors-Holdens, because my mind remains free of other thoughts, and I can devote my thinking to this work alone. Coming home, after a heavy days work, I go to sleep. From 7 pm I sit at the typewriter, working past midnight every day, and every weekend.

I have only one desire: to interest enough young minds in the whole world, so that they may take over. Sometimes physical fatigue and mental strain are unbearable. Often I am crushed by disappointments, coming from high quarters. Two great men, Professor Washburne of New York and Professor Lauwerys of London have made a personal approach to the Director General and the Deputy Director General of Unesco Dr. Bodet, and Dr. Taylor. But these men have turned Semantography down, although it provides a simple writing not only for scientific communication, but for three quarters of the world's population who cannot read and write, and who are split up in thousands of languages in the backward areas of the world.

Realising that a publisher will not risk money on such a novel idea, I have written the 3 volumes myself, typed all on wax stencils, printed them myself, and now I am trying to sell them. All the money which comes in, will go for other printings. I enclose the title page of a children's primer, which I have very much at heart, and for which I ask for contributions.

Your noble action to acquire my work means not only "performing an important service to mankind", it provides you too with a work of unique bibliographic value, a work written and printed by one man only, a work on a most novel and unique subject. The day will come, when such a writing (mine or another, improved one) will be used all over the world. Today we use pictographic symbols on the highways of the world, where motorists are racing along, and where mutual understanding is a matter of life and death.

Mutual understanding among the nations of the world is too a matter of life and death, and even among every nation we find misunderstanding caused by words which have a vague, ambiguous and even fallacious meaning.

I beg you Sir, to help me getting this idea across to the peoples of this planet. So far, I am the only man who knows about it, and I am a mortal with only a few years of life expectancy.

I remain with my sincere thanks for your active interest

Enclosures

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