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SEMANTOGRAPHY AND THE PURPOSE
OF MY INTENDED VISIT TO THE UNITED STATES

by

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Author of "Semantography"

The basis of my work is unusual, almost without precedent in modern science. I beg therefore to be allowed to give an account of it, in order to explain the reasons why I want to apply for a travel grant.

The Idea.

Nearly 300 years ago, the great mathematician and philosopher Gottfried W. Leibnitz followed John Locke with his NEW ESSAYS CONCERNING HUMAN UNDERSTANDING, in which he speculated about a logical Symbolis Universalis which would "guide the mind as do the lines drawn in geometry and the formulas in arithmetic." However, he did not want the introduction of abstract symbols, but stipulated that they must be pictorial "for rendering our conceptions more real"; and for being "very popular" and "very agreeable to the people". Such a pictorial symbolism which could be read and understood in all languages "would be of service at first for easy communication with distant nations." Leibnitz realized also the semantic effect of such a symbolism in which vague meanings could be spotted at once, because he wrote: "...if introduced also among us, without however renouncing ordinary writing, would be useful in giving thoughts less surd and verbal than we now have."

For nearly 300 years, Leibnitz's idea was considered a mere philosopher's speculation, impossible to realize. In 1921, Ogden and Richards wrote in THE MEANING OF MEANING that it "still remains where Leibnitz thus left it." However, Bodmer and Hogben wrote in THE LOOM OF LANGUAGE that one group of people had realized Leibnitz's idea in their field: the chemists. Indeed H_2O is more meaningful than w-a-t-e-r and boys and girls in all parts of the world have learned to operate the Graphios, the Logic and Semantics of "chemical Semantography". And - as Leibnitz predicted it - H_2O has the same meaning (water) in all languages.

How I came to work on this idea.

I am an industrial research chemist. In 1922, I graduated from the University of Technology (Technische Hochschule) in Vienna, Department of Chemistry and started work in a factory making electric lamps, radio tubes and accessories. In 1925 I was "loaned" for ^{2 1/2 years} to a research laboratory established in Vienna by the General Electric Co. of America. From 1930 - 1938 I was first secretary, then head of the patent department. I did much scientific library research. Although I was able to read publications in English, German and French, I was helpless with other languages, and I realised the truth in Prof. Lancelot Hogben's words, that the Babel of scientific publications is "a social problem of the first magnitude."

In my dealings with patent offices and courts in various countries I realized too the amount of vague and ambiguous words even in scientific and technical publications, words which were differently interpreted by different people. However, it became clear to me later, that school-children and even scholars are not keen of learning foreign languages, and this includes Esperanto and Basic English. What is needed is a kind of universal symbolism, such as we have in mathematics and chemistry, unambiguous symbols which people can read and understand in any of their many mother-tongues.

The Graphics of Semantography

comprises about 100 symbol elements only, mostly pictorial in outline, and typable on an adjusted typewriter. Underwood Corporation of New York has agreed to adapt an ordinary-sized typewriter for Semantography. The small letters remain, and instead of the capital letters line elements are introduced for the typing of the symbols. It took me 7 years to work it out and to write a 3 volumed work, showing the practical application for physics chemistry, medicine, agriculture, etc. also for industry, commerce, communication, education, semantics, logic, etc. etc. Not waiting for publishers to decline such a huge manuscript on such an unusual subject, I mimeographed my work and in this form it has been acquired by a number of scholars, universities and public libraries in the United States and elsewhere, following the recommendation of John Metcalfe, B.A., F.L.A., Principal Librarian of the Public Library of New South Wales, Sydney.

Bertrand Russell on Semantography

A number of scholars, Professor Oliver L. Reiser of Pittsburgh, Sir Richard Paget of London, etc. have agreed that Semantography represents indeed the first practical realisation of Leibnitz's idea. Bertrand Russell, foremost authority on logical symbolism studied my work, put me through a severe test and wrote afterwards that spending money for making my work known means "performing an important service to Mankind." I sincerely hope that his words, as well as the words of other scholars will be taken into consideration with regard to my application for a travel grant.

Professor Oliver L. Reiser to the American Association for the Advancement of Science

Professor Reiser of the University of Pittsburgh, Pa. read a paper at the recent annual meeting, titled UNIFIED SYMBOLISM FOR WORLD UNDERSTANDING IN SCIENCE (to be published soon). He described Semantography and explained its advantages as a new mode for the establishment of "universal literacy" among three-quarters of the world's population who are illiterate and who speak thousands of different languages and dialects. Semantography on its simplest level, represents a picture writing. "Indeed," said Reiser, "since natives engulfed in superstitions are not able to adopt improvements in agriculture, hygiene and the like, without literacy, Bliss's system provides a powerful stimulus and aid to President Truman's Point Four Program (now the Technical Assistance Program of the United Nations)." Senior Lecturer H.D. Black of Sydney University supports this view.

Semantography for an international science abstract.

In my lectures at the University of Sydney I proved that any meaning which students proposed in the discussion can be symbolized with the simple symbols of Semantography. I advocate an international science abstract, printed or mimeographed on small filing cards by each university with the text in not more than 100 words in the language of the university and the symbols of Semantography, which thus can be read in any other language. It seems unbelievable that two scientists, or two doctors, or engineers who speak different languages, could correspond in Semantography each one reading and writing in his mother-tongue - but I have convinced everyone who cared to test it.

Prof. V. A. Bailey, Professor of Experimental Physics, University of Sydney

wrote to me "...your efforts deserve every encouragement by private or public means. It is very probable that a perfected system like yours would be of great value to scientists in communicating their ideas and information internationally at little expense or trouble."

Prof. Carleton Washburne, Professor of Education, Brooklyn College, New York

visited Australia in 1949 on a lecture tour, together with James Hemming, British Educationalist. Washburne outlined to me a series of experiments (see below). He said about Semantography that it is "ingenious" and that "it should be subjected to controlled experimentation..." and "if it proves practicable, it could be of great value." James Hemming wrote that "it should be developed as rapidly and as widely as possible."

The first tests in Great Britain.

Dr. P. Volkov, noted British Educationalist and Editor of THE NEW ERA IN SCHOOL AND HOME, London, asked Professor G. Patrick Meredith of the University of Leeds to review my work. In his review (November 1950) Professor Meredith wrote that my work deserves an "unconditional eulogy". Dr. Volkov tested Semantography on her children and wrote that they were "thrilled with it". Now, she informed me that Dr. Gattegno of the Institute of Education, University of London had taught Semantography at youth summer camps for adolescents from all Western European countries, and they are "absolutely fascinated by Semantography." Furthermore, Mr. A.A. Bloom, Headmaster of St. George-in-the-East, a modern secondary school in London informed Dr. Volkov, that he "is going to arrange for one class at his school to work on Semantography as an ordinary school lesson for a whole term."

The first invitation from an American University.

Professor R. L. Politzer, as Secretary of the Linguistic Society of the University of Washington, Seattle, wrote that "Semantography has been brought to the attention of the Linguistic Faculty of our University". He invited me then to give a lecture. Professor E. Reifler and Professor S.C. Dodd are planning similar invitations for their institutes.

The first purpose of my intended visit to the U.S.A.

Professor Washburne (see above) outlined to me a series of experiments with students, involving careful selection of groups with various I.Q. Now, although I have been a honoree science lecturer in colleges and evening classes in Vienna, I am unfamiliar with such educational experimental procedures, and I want to study this under the guidance of Prof. Washburne. Then, I want to carry out the experiments suggested by him with children in an American school, and with advanced students in an American college, the latter experiments to deal especially with scientific communication by Semantography. These experiments will be important because of the following fact.

Eminent educators have approached UNESCO.

Professor Carleton Washburne has approached Dr. John W. Taylor, an American, and Deputy Director General of UNESCO, drawing his attention to Semantography. Professor Joseph A. Lauwerys, Head of the Institute of Education, University of London did the same with regard to Dr. Jaime Torres Bodet, Director General of UNESCO. Dr. P. Volkov has been instrumental in the same way. However, Dr. Taylor, as well as Dr. Bodet informed me that the constitution of UNESCO allows them to carry out only those tasks which are approved by the General Conference of UNESCO. This means, that the experiments, outlined by Prof. Washburne, must be the very first step towards an approach to the General Conference.

The Semantics of Semantography.

This second aspect of my work, substantiated by the third aspect mentioned below, I consider of such a crucial nature, that it is difficult for me to restrain myself to the citing of facts only. The first fact, concerning humanity, is that there was no simple method available to teach simple people how to recognise vague, ambiguous and fallacious words, the most potent weapon of totalitarian doctrines. The second fact, concerning myself, is, that I myself have been a victim of semantic confusion and totalitarian propaganda. Together with tens of thousands of other unfortunates I went through the hells of Dachau and Buchenwald, and later, as a refugee in China, my wife and I were segregated by the Japanese as were many thousands of others.

In this age of vague abstractions and semantic labels, millions of people have been put to a quick death because they were labelled "inferior". Millions of other human beings are dying now a slow death in the slave labour camps of Soviet Russia because they are labelled "bourgeois" and therefore "unreliable". And hundreds of millions of people in the Soviet countries are indoctrinated with the fallacy that every American carries the label "Imperialist". They have never heard the word, they don't know ^{what} it may mean (if anything), but they are made to think that it is something very "bad". And so strong is the tyranny of such words that millions of people even in the free countries of the world are falling victim to such propaganda, with grave results to the safety and freedom of the few existing democracies.

It seems therefore that the most desperately needed item, perhaps more important than any defensive measure, is a simple method for teaching the children and adolescents of the free democracies, the citizens of to-morrow, as well as the citizens of today, how to recognise the vague, ambiguous and fallacious meanings of totalitarian propaganda. I believe to have proved that Semantography can be this very method, the antidote to the War of Words - the realisation of Leibnitz's dream - a simple Logic and Semantics.

The second purpose of my intended visit to the United States.

I want to do what I did here at the University of Sydney, lecture to students, answer their queries and challenges, demask the words which make "fellow travellers". I want to challenge students and scholars, as I challenged Bertrand Russell, who answered my challenge by asking me to analyze with Semantography some of the most controversial meanings of our time. After that, he wrote about helping Mankind by helping Semantography.

In the official journal of the Australian Broadcasting Commission (June 23, 1951) it was said that I lecture with "the zeal of the crusader" and rightly so, because I have learned behind barbed wire what freedom really means, and what words can do to men. Professors and students have written in enthusiastic terms about my lectures, and I have inspired students who wrote articles on Semantography in university magazines (see for instance the article by W. Heaney in the magazine of New England University College, Armidale, also the address by Professor A.G. Mitchell, and the student papers).

I am teaching already American students Semantography by correspondence course, but this is not enough, and I am 55 years of age. By lectures in the United States would Semantography become known to American students and scholars, and some of them will carry on where I left off and perfect this new tool to bring mutual understanding to mankind.

Mr. A. H. Handley of Boston, Mass.

His work is lecture management, and he is so much impressed by the importance of what I have to say, that he will now - "without personal profit" - approach the universities and colleges of the Eastern states. He feels that in doing so, he will, in the words of Bertrand Russell, "be performing an important service to mankind" and to the American nation in particular.

Prof. M.F.Ashley Montagu of Rutgers University, N.J. and the third aspect of my work.

I feel it necessary to state right at the beginning that this eminent Professor of Anthropology is in agreement with the third aspect of my work, which is so unusual that I beg the reader to master all his indulgence and forbearance.

In 1945, two lectures were given in Washington and New York under highest government auspices. Lecturer was Major General G.B. Chisholm, Deputy Minister of Health of Canada, now Director General of the World Health Organisation of the United Nations Organisation. The titles of the lectures were: "The Re-establishment of Peacetime Society" and "Responsibility of Psychiatrists".

Chisholm said that "waging war" is a mind perversion, an epidemic - and we know now how to stop epidemics, once we have found the cause. He traced that cause back into the dim past when primitive man began to attach the abstract meanings of "good" and "bad" to anything and anyone. The people around him which he liked were "good", all the others across any real or fictitious borderline were "bad". War became imminent.

Chisholm's idea gave a tremendous impetus to thoughts which I have harbored for years. If articulate language underwent a slow evolution, then there must have been a time when man had not ^{yet} learned to formulate abstract meanings. Bertrand Russell said once that it must have taken man countless generations until he realized that two boars and two girls have something in common, the abstract meaning of "two". Similarly, I pondered, it must have taken primeval man many more generations until he formulated the abstract meanings of "good" and "bad" and attached them to anything and anyone. A boar alive was dangerous and therefore "bad", but a boar killed and roasted was "good". In short: when did man apply this reasoning to his "bad" enemies across the border? When did human cannibalism start?

I searched all the books I could get hold of here in Sydney, and found that the archeologists could give me a quite precise answer. Archeologists have examined the kitchen refuse heaps of neolithic man and found animal and human bones mingled and broken which people do to extract the marrow. Nothing of this kind is found on sites belonging to paleolithic man. Archeologists conclude (Graham Clark for instance) that neolithic man was a cannibal, whereas paleolithic man was not. Paleolithic man lived until about 30,000 years ago. Neolithic man until about 5000 B.C.

And then - in the writings of the archeologists - I found the very proof to Chisholm's theory. In my quest for pictorial symbolisation in early writings, I studied the writings of the early Chinese, the Egyptians, the Babylonians, etc. until I arrived at the very first records of man, the paleolithic cave paintings found in Spain and France (Altamira, Lascaux, etc.)

Comparing these records with the records of modern man of the last 7000 years, I was forcibly struck by one tremendous difference. The cave paintings of paleolithic man show hundreds and hundreds of pictures of animals, grazing or fleeing, pursued by hunters, wounded and killed by arrows, spears and axes. We see men in pursuit of animals. But we don't see men in pursuit of men. Modern man of the last 7000 years painted and carved hunting scenes too. But - in striking contrast to paleolithic man - he glorified men hunts, wars and victories.

Then I found that archeologists have been struck by the same difference and have interpreted them similarly (MacCurdy, Scott, Patterson, etc.). But apparently, nobody believed them, because there was the common belief that "war is innate to human nature", and there was no Chisholm yet to tell us that war must be a recent mind perversion only. I wish therefore to stress it most emphatically that what I say here is not original. Competent archeologists have found the proof to Chisholm's theory before me. I stumbled

upon it when I found that many words in any language carry explicitly or implicitly the meaning element of "good" or "bad". Then came Chisholm.

Now, Patterson went even further and said: "War...may even be thought to be a sinister peculiarity of the human species that hordes should pursue hordes of the same kind with a persistent purpose of rapine and destruction." Indeed, when we look at the living world, we find that living organisms can live only on organic matter produced by other organisms, but they don't take it from the same species. Lions don't kill lions, tigers don't kill tigers, and wolves will starve together and will not attack each other. But man kills man. I conveyed these thoughts to my esteemed old teacher Professor Emil Abel now of London and he drew my attention to the work of Professor M.F. Ashley Montagu of Rutgers University, N.J. who had proved with many experiments and instances that within the same animal species "the highest ethics is supreme law". When I wrote to Ashley Montagu, I found him in complete agreement. He had advocated the same idea and he too considers the semantic confusion as one of the causes of human warfare.

The third purpose of my intended visit to the United States.

The idea that war is not innate to human nature, that creatures of the same species live in peace with each other, that only 30,000 years ago man did the same, that human warfare is only a recent mind perversion, an epidemic which can be stopped - all this gives mankind more practical and breathtaking hope than all the promises of evangelists. Here is Chisholm and here is the proof for everyone to see, the records of paleolithic man free of human warfare, in utter contrast to the records of modern man. We did not see the difference, because we made the grave mistake of identifying the hunt for food (from other species) in the animal world with the hunt for destruction (of the same species) in the human world.

All this (and more details as contained in my work) I want to tell to American students. Here is what Sydney university students wrote about my lectures on the Graphics and Semantics of Semantography only: "If you have not yet heard Mr. Bliss, then you cannot afford to miss this opportunity"... "those who know of Mr. Bliss and his work will all be there."... "you couldn't forget having heard Mr. C.K. Bliss lecture on "Semantography" ... "hear this vital personality", etc. (from the official student papers "Honi Soit" and "Union Recorder"). But so far, I have not spoken in public about this third aspect of my work as abstracted in the foregoing paragraphs. However, a few weeks ago I was visited by a correspondent of American papers. He knew about my work and need not be convinced about it. So I told him about the third aspect, and he said that this is more important than the other aspects. As it will soon be in American papers, as TIME and LIFE are considering and preparing articles on my work, I had to say it here, although throughout the years I did not dare to speak about it. But now, it has to be said, because the medical psychological treatment which Chisholm advocates is the very essence of Semantography, indeed its moral and its ethics; that we can with Semantography become aware of those words which contain the meaning element of "bad" and which cause war in almost every family, in every nation and within the family of nations.

I appeal for a travel grant and for the necessary invitation by an American institution

to lecture there for a number of months. I have taught and lectured in a honorary capacity throughout my adult life. For the last 9½ years I have devoted my time and my efforts, my savings and earnings on this world-embracing idea. I am 55 years of age, and I want hand over my work to young minds. Bertrand Russell has appealed in the name of mankind for financial support and mankind is now becoming aware of this work and will give credit to the men who will help it along.
