



SEMANTOGRAPHY SERIES

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INTRODUCTION TO THE
SEMANTICS OF SEMANTOGRAPHY

A Letter to

Prof. S.I. Hayakawa
Editor of ETC.:
A Review of General Semantics
International Society for General Semantics
539 West North, CHICAGO 10, Ill. U.S.A.

Dear Professor Hayakawa,

Please accept my sincere thanks for your kind interest and willingness to review my work on SEMANTOGRAPHY for ETC. I am grateful to Professor Oliver L. Reiser for his kind introduction, and I sincerely hope that you too will become a friend of Semantography. In writing this special letter to you, I wish to give visible expression of my keen desire to win your friendship and the friendship of all Friends of General Semantics in the United States and elsewhere.

Kindly excuse all shortcomings of this letter. I have found myself beset by the difficulties of every writer. I don't like what I have written an hour ago, tear it up, re-write it, and don't like when it's finished. To end these torments I have hit on the waxstencil idea. As the thoughts are coming into my mind, I type^{it} all down. Corrections on wax are very tedious. So I let it stay for better or worse. In this way I have written my 3 large volumes on Semantography, after tearing up 4 manuscripts.

Those 3 volumes have been reviewed by Professor G. Patrick Meredith of the University of Leeds (Great Britain). His review appeared in the November issue 1950 of the British Educational Journal THE NEW ERA, official organ of the International New Education Fellowship. He classes his 2000 word review as next to an "unconditional eulogy". He has only a few suggestions to make for alterations and here is one in his own words:

"The Semantic Theory should be presented in an independent volume, as a set of clearly stated principles, with such illustrations as have not already been well ventilated by Ogden, Richards, Bodmer, Hayakawa, Korzybski, Stuart Chase, etc. not to mention Charles Peirce, Bertrand Russell, Neurath, Morris and Carnap. For this volume would be destined for the minority, already thinking about these problems, for whom reiteration is no recommendation."

Now, I have titled my 3rd volume THE SEMANTICS OF SEMANTOGRAPHY and have cited you, Korzybski, Rapoport, and others. But I admit that Professor Meredith is right. I have written all 3 volumes from quite a different angle. Semantography has 2 aspects, the first is the Graphics of Semantography, a pictorial writing to bridge all languages, the second is the Semantics and Logic of Semantography. I have written my work from the first angle with the result that the Semantics of Semantography can only be found interspersed in the monster chapters on various human activities in Science, Industry, Commerce, Communication, etc. Looking into these books one may get a shock. All those symbols look strange at first. Professor Meredith calls it a "half million word bulldozer, on which nevertheless I have spent many more hours than I could rationally spare in recent weeks, through sheer fascination."

I had no choice. If I had written a small volume, showing a few symbols on this or that science, on this or that aspect of human activity, people would say that it is a mere scheme only. It hasn't been worked out yet. So, I had to work out a BULLDOZER to shove away any such doubts. I believe that Semantography is the first realisation of Leibnitz's speculation, a simple Picto-Ideography or (to use a low-brow word) a picture writing for interlinguistic communication even in science.

In this respect Semantography is another step forward in communication, which you have described in your admirable book LANGUAGE IN ACTION (which, I am glad to report, is available in all important libraries in Sydney):

"By means of scientific communication then, with its international systems of weights and measures, international systems of botanical and zoological nomenclature, international mathematical symbols, we are enabled to exchange information with each other, pool our observations, and acquire collective control over our environment." (p. 208).

I believe that I have shown that Semantography could be the first international and interlinguistic medium of scientific communication for the whole range of language.

In the above mentioned paragraph you go on to another form of communication, which you call "affective communication", and I believe that the Semantics and Logic of Semantography is another step in this line, a new medium to understand ourselves and each other, within the same language group. I shall try to give an account of it in these lines.

I should have done it years ago. I should have approached you, and Korzybski and Rapoport and other American Semanticists years ago. I hesitated - because I have found in the few approaches I have made, that the result may be disastrous - a downhearted feeling of disappointment and frustration. The reason is obvious. Every student starts his creative thinking where the other has left off. It has taken Pythagoras and Korzybski and others a life time to build up their system. It takes then only a few months of intensive study to take in these systems, and every creative student will then go on creating where Pythagoras or Korzybski has left off. Naturally, he will try to improve on those systems and the result will be a system which looks quite differently - and may then not be accepted as an improvement - in this particular case, of Korzybski's General Semantics. I am looking forward therefore, with hope but also with apprehension, to the reaction of the Friends of General Semantics with regard to Semantography. Will they consider it as a work carried forward where Korzybski left off, or will they reject it? Will they consider it in the true spirit of Korzybski's theory of Time-binding? Will they therefore allow me to start with a criticism of what needs improvement in General Semantics?

I see 3 possibilities. The first a wholehearted support, the second a polite acknowledgement and the third a rejection. I shall go for the first, and hoping for the magnanimity and generosity of you and the other scholars and friends of General Semantics, I shall dare to voice my criticism, for no other purpose than to show that Semantography is indeed a further extension of General Semantics. Believe me, I put my greatest hope in you and your followers. I am not against Korzybski. On the contrary. I have studied his SCIENCE AND SANITY, your LANGUAGE IN ACTION, Lee's LANGUAGE HABITS IN HUMAN AFFAIRS, and the other books as a man studies a subject on which his life depends, and my life and lifework depends now on Semantics and all it stands for. I appeal to all of you, to receive my criticism kindly, and to realise its purpose - improvement of Semantics, so that it shall serve all the people of the world.

Meredith said (see foregoing page) that I should write my book "for the minority already thinking about those problems..." and this word MINORITY gives the problem in a nutshell. Korzybski's work makes heavy reading even for one versed in mathematics, etc. And all the other books including ETC are written for a minority and can be understood by a minority. We must therefore aim at a presentation which can be understood by everyone. A Picture Writing is a good basis for this. Firstly, the pictorial symbols look indeed similar to those drawn by children of the things around them. Furthermore, it is quite clear that vague and ambiguous abstractions cannot be pictured. They simply have no outline. They do not conform to anything real in our world. They exist only in our mind. Therefore first application of the Semantics of Semantography when hearing a word is: "Can I draw a picture of it? Can I photograph it?" Can this be applied to the word "cow" or to the word "man". Yes. Can it be applied to the word "ambiguity" or "progress"? No. Consequently these last meanings may differ in different minds.

The great value of Korzybski's work is that he has brought us "down the abstraction ladder". And this expression is quite good to show that Korzybski's work can be improved. If I am right, Stuart Chase used the expression mentioned above. And you have pictured Korzybski's Structural Differential upside down on page 126 of your book LANGUAGE IN ACTION. Yes, this is a better presentation. Putting the symbolic outline of the submicroscopic level down "to earth", making it a basis from which to start talking, is much better than the first presentation with the abstraction levels hanging downwards.

Once we arrive at the real THING, a man, we can easily grasp that not two men are alike. We can see this biological phenomenon of differentiation everywhere. Children can grasp it easily.

You have before you my brochure "Introduction and First Lesson of the Correspondence Course on Semantography, the new simple Logic and Semantics for Everyone." There I have started with Korzybski's teaching and have drawn it in the symbols of Semantography: that not two human beings are alike. I shall now draw it in the presentation of yours on page 254 in your book LANGUAGE IN ACTION :


 etc.

man₁ unequals man₂ unequals man₃ unequals man₄ unequals man₅
 I am different from you he 4th person 5th person

Now this is a very important rule, and it will help people not to lump many human beings together under one label and draw then conclusions. But, once we have absorbed this rule, we must recognise its limitations. Someone told me that Communists have sneered at General Semantics. This is understandable, because they have to fear a semantic interpretation of their slogans and verbalisations. But with the quick wit of the antagonist, they quickly found out the weak spot in the enemy's front, and retorted by drawing up a similar formula:

Nazi₁ is not Nazi₂ is not Nazi₃ is not Nazi₄ is not Nazi₅

This looks quite convincing. What's the use of differentiating between different Nazis? They are all professed Nazis, aren't they? Indeed they are. A rabid antisemit who will not listen to reason will admit that not two Jews are alike, yet he will say: Jew₁ is not Jew₂ is not Jew₃ etc. But they are all Jews. And a great number of frightened people, although convinced that not two men are alike, discriminate innocent people, saying: Commy₁ is not Commy₂ is not Commy₃ etc, but Communists they are, even if they have no membership cards. The results are disastrous for some who have nothing to do with Communism.

We see therefore that something is wrong with the above mentioned formula, or rather that the formula needs some clarification, some additional symbol. In order to find this out, let us formulate a number of such formulas and see whether there is grave danger of misinterpretation, or a semantic fallacy, likely to cause misunderstanding.

Man₁ is not Man₂ We have here different biological entities. On this formula people of different convictions will agree.

Cow₁ is not Cow₂ On this formula too we shall find each other in agreement.

Stone₁ is not Stone₂... This too will be obvious. No disagreement.

House₁ is not House₂... Obvious again.

All these words are classified in Semantography as material THINGS. All such THINGS we can draw, we can photograph, we can touch, we can weigh, we can count. We can easily find agreement about material THINGS. I have chosen a symbol to stand for a material THING. It is a little square □. This should indicate that every material THING has a geometrical outline, an inside and an outside. Moreover, the harmonious configuration of the square should indicate that the structure of matter is not chaotic. On the contrary. A great harmony and simplicity reveals itself to us in the lines and planes of a crystal, or the molecular structure of matter.

Consequently all those words above have a real outline, are real: man (□), cow (□), stone (□), house (□), etc.

Now let us form other formulas dealing with man only, but in various activities:

Plumber ₁	is not	Plumber ₂		It's obvious. No serious disagreement will
Farmer ₁	is not	Farmer ₂		" " " " arise.
Driver ₁	is not	Driver ₂		" " " "
Cow, grazing ₁	is not	Cow, grazing ₂		" " " "
Cow, walking ₁	is not	Cow, walking ₂		" " " "

Now we can quickly ascertain whether something is a man or a cow. These are defined biological entities. Furthermore we can quickly ascertain what ACTIONS these THINGS are performing, whether a man performs ACTIONS with pipes and taps, or with ploughs and grain, or with motorcars or other vehicles. No serious disagreement will arise.

This brings us to the second class of words in Semantography, in which all words fall which indicate a physical ACTION. These ACTIONS are performed by material THINGS.

A physical ACTION can be observed, either with the naked eye, or with a telescope or a microscope, or an electroscope, or any other instrument. Moreover, we can film such ACTIONS with a movie camera. This means that THINGS and their ACTIONS are real, they exist outside of our brain. For every such word there is a real counterpart in nature. I have chosen the following symbol Δ to stand for Action. It resembles the letter A in the Latin word Actus. It indicates one of the primeval Actions on our planet, the throwing-up of volcano cones, the thrusting-up of mountains.

These words fall then into this group: plumbing (Δ), farming (Δ), driving (Δ), grazing (Δ), walking (Δ). The words plumber, farmer, driver fall into both groups. In all 3 cases the first symbol will show a human male, the second symbol will indicate his activity: plumber ($\square \Delta$), farmer ($\square \Delta$), driver ($\square \Delta$).

It appears then that this classification conforms with the two aspects of nature, the manifestation of MATTER and ENERGY. In view of the fact that the scientific method has been developed to a remarkable degree, we can quickly come to an agreement in checking and measuring scientifically the THINGS and their ACTIONS.

Two other aspects of nature enter the picture SPACE and TIME. But they can be reduced to MATTER and ENERGY. In speaking of spatial meanings we refer everything to our earth ($\square$). In using temporal meanings, we refer to the Action of the sun ($\square$) or the movement (Δ) of the finger ($\square$) of a clock ($\square$).

But there is a third aspect of nature, which we can observe in animated THINGS, the Life Force which causes MATTER to multiply, to repair its own tissue and to think. These activities are centralised in the higher organisms in the brain, and we humans are highest in evolution. We have evolved articulate language, and we have found words which indicate material THINGS, physical ACTIONS and words which refer to mind activities. AND THESE ARE THE WORDS WHICH CAUSE MOST ARGUMENTS. Here then are the 3 aspects of nature, the mind indicated by the outline of the upper skull, which encases the brain.

$\square$	Δ	$\cap$
MATTER	ENERGY	MIND (outline of skull)

In the MIND group fall all words which indicate a MIND activity, a MIND ACTION or REACTION. For instance: thought ($\cap$), thinking ($\cap$), contemplating ($\cap$), consideration ($\cap$), decision ($\cap$), revulsion, ($\cap$), emotion ($\cap$), reason ($\cap$), conscience ($\cap$), etc. etc. It should be noted that these words refer to a brain ($\square$), which Acts somehow - we don't know yet how, but we have found words for those activities, which go on INSIDE OUR BRAIN with no counterpart in the outside world. At present we have no apparatuses to ascertain whether a man is considering something or not. When he says he is considering it, he may tell a lie. Similarly a man may believe that his activity is motivated by his reason or his conscience, and it may not be so.

We are now coming to one activity (Δ) of our brain ($\square$), which is most disastrous. In looking on the THINGS and their ACTIONS man is not satisfied to give words to them ($\square \Delta$). He must pass judgement ($\cap$), he must evaluate ($\cap$) them. All those words I have termed human EVALUATION, a word which I took from General Semantics. For this group I have chosen this symbol V which looks like the letter V in the Latin Valere, Value, evaluation. It may indicate too the labile position in mechanics, a cone standing on its top, liable to topple over. Indeed the words falling into the group of human EVALUATION (V) can be challenged easily and topple over easily.

Let us now take the simplest terms falling into this group, the words long and short. Do these words stand for a specific material THING (like man or cow)? No ! Do they indicate a specific ACTION ? No ! Consequently they fall into the 3rd group, indicating a mind activity, a human EVALUATION. These 2 questions are indeed sufficient to ascertain into which group a word falls. In the simplest example, we may have 2 men arguing whether the distance to the railway station is long or short. The one may consider ($\cap$) it rather long (V), the other would think it short (V). If they stick to their opinion ($\cap$), no one will be able to convince the other one. The quarrel is resolved by applying the scientific method and measuring the distance. If both men find that the distance is 1000 meter, agreement would be reached, and in this process the evaluating words long and short have disappeared. By using the term meter they have referred to the earth ($\square$) as yardstick.

The most frequent human evaluation words are good, bad, right, wrong, beautiful, ugly, in short most adjectives and adjectival nouns, but not all. These words are genuine adjectives, but there are derived adjectives. For instance from the word water ($\square$) we derive the adjective aquatic. We speak then of "aquatic supply". But we mean actually "water supply". We may derive the adjective stony (V) from stone ($\square$), and may then speak of the "stony

"stony surface" of some plastic (□) or wood (□), we may find ourselves in disagreement with someone who would challenge our comparison (□). But we could again quickly find agreement by measuring the hardness of the surface with a hardness meter. This would remove the word stony. But if someone accuses someone else that he has a "stony heart" or a "watery mind" blows are likely to fall. No agreement can be reached, because we have no apparatus to measure the "hardness" of the emotional part of our brain, nor its "liquidity". In short, evaluations like watery and stony, derived from material THINGS (□) are comparatively harmless if attached to other material THINGS or ACTIONS. But they are dangerous if attached to words which refer to the MIND or a MIND activity.

Now let us go back to our first formula: Man₁ is not Man₂ is not Man₃ etc. This formula - good as it is - is harmless, because it contains only reference to material biological entities, or in the symbols of Semantography: □₁ ≠ □₂ ≠ □₃. There are no EVALUATIONS here. We can quickly ascertain that not two human beings are alike (including identical twins).

But if we write down the formula: Nazi₁ is not Nazi₂ is not Nazi₃ in Semantography it looks:

$$\square_1 V \quad \square_2 V \neq \square_3 V \neq \square_4 V$$

We see that to each material entity there is an EVALUATION attached. For a hard-boiled Hitlerite all Nazis are good. He will accept that not two Nazis are alike, but they are all good. Whereas an anti-Nazi will evaluate them all bad. Or in ordinary language:

Man₁bad is not Man₂bad is not Man₃bad

or in other words: Rascal₁ is not Rascal₂ is not Rascal₃

The word Rascal in Semantography carries the symbols □ V, material THING with an EVALUATION attached, similarly to man (□) bad (V) or bad man. And as said before, we have found yardsticks to measure the evaluation long and short, but we have no yardsticks to measure good and bad. It is true that the criminal code has such yardsticks to some extent, measuring bad deeds in amounts of dollar fines or years of imprisonment, but even here a rascal may come off lightly when evaluated lightly by a judge.

But outside the criminal court, we use the words bad and rascal very freely. It may turn out that Rascal₁ is the thief who broke into our house, and Rascal₂ may be the neighbour who played the radio after 10 p.m. And as shown above in certain circumstances men called rascals by one group may be evaluated heros, martyrs, good men by another group. And yet in both cases the 3 rascals (□ V) or the 3 heros (□ V) are the same 3 men (□), Tom (□), Dick (□), and Harry (□).

THE "IS".

These long explanations will now culminate in one assertion (□) which may be evaluated good or bad by people. For me it's good, because I believe that I have arrived at it in the true spirit of time-binding, carrying on where Korzybski left off. And you will soon see why I have hesitated for years to approach Korzybski (alas, he is not among us) nor any other semanticist or friend of General Semantics. Now, that Semantography has reached the American Semanticists I cannot avoid it any more. It has to be said. It will be the crucial test for Semantography. If Semantography "survives" in the eyes of the American General Semanticists, then they will take to it kindly. Otherwise.... well, I hope that there will be no "otherwise".

After thinking for years about the IS I have found out (on account of the deliberations mentioned above) that we must revise the semantic importance of the IS. It seems to me quite harmless, the old copula, the binding link between two words. I understand of course Korzybski when he said: "Whatever you say it is - well, it isn't!". I understand that a horse is not a horse but a submicroscopic process. But I have found out in a Seminar where we read Science and Sanity, that utter confusion is the result. After all, we use language to make ourselves understood. We quite agree that a word is not the THING, but if we say that something IS a horse, something which conforms to the picture in our zoology book, well we must adhere to certain semantic understandings. Otherwise understanding would be impossible. I shall endeavour to give an example.

Let us suppose that someone had never heard the word Korzybski, and he asks: "What IS Korzybski?" I would tell him that Korzybski IS a man, that he IS the author of a book, that he IS a native of Poland, that he IS a naturalised American, etc. etc. (assuming that Korzybski were still alive). To this an adherent of General Semantics would say: "Whatever you say it IS, - it ISN'T. This would mean that Korzybski IS NOT a man, that he IS NOT the author of a book, that he IS NOT, etc. etc. It simply would not work. I can assure you that

quite a number of people here in Sydney have left the idea of General Semantics in disgust. The application of the IS NOT seemed utter nonsense to them, inspite of all explanations. Or that: "the word is not the THING". "What do you mean by that", one asked me, "my mother is dead for 10 years. Now, if I say the word "m-o-t-h-e-r" this is not my real mother!"

I was able to clear up the semantic confusion. The use of the word IS is harmless, if connected with material THINGS and physical ACTIONS. Korzybsky is or was a man ($\square$), he was the author-writer ($\square \wedge$) of a book ($\square$), etc. etc. Similarly "the man ($\square$) is working ($\wedge$)", he ($\square$) is driving ($\wedge$), he ($\square$) is writing ($\wedge$). Or: he ($\square$) is a father ($\square$), a manager ($\square \wedge$) a motorist ($\square \wedge$), etc. etc. IN ALL THESE CASES THE IS IS PERFECTLY HARMLESS.

HOWEVER, THE IS WHEN CONNECTED WITH HUMAN EVALUATION WORDS BECOMES DANGEROUS, BUT THE DANGER IS IN THE EVALUATION WORD. He ($\square$) is bad (V). He ($\square$) is a rascal ($\square V$), etc. etc. I can prove my assertion. I have found that if we accuse the IS of misrepresentation, than we must level the same accusation against the HAS. The IS is connected with the adjective: He is bad. But the HAS can be connected with the adjectival noun: He has badness. He has evil ($\wedge$). He has perniciousness (V). We could even say: He has a rascal in him. It is true that the adjectival noun is seldom used in this simple form. But I hope that I have shown that not the IS and not the HAS is the culprit, but the human EVALUATION word. And consequently what one mind may term bad, another mind may term good. I have shown in my chapters on Logic that a syllogism which contains an evaluation word may be found true for one mind and false for another mind. And this brings me to the end of this letter.

I shall use the remaining lines to say something about the multi-valued orientation. Actually, the words themselves: multi-valued (V) orientation ($\cap$) tell what I want to say. Not two human beings are alike, not two minds are alike, and my mind may think and evaluate to-morrow quite differently from today. We can clear it up for those who can't comprehend General Semantics, or don't want to. SOMETHING is either a man or a woman, either a horse or a zebra, and nothing between (biological freaks are rare). All these words refer to $\square$. Or a driver drives or he drives not, a writer writes or he writes not. This is two-valued logic and quite acceptable. These words refer to $\square$ and $\wedge$. Only when we come to the 3rd group V do we have multi-valued evaluations. And here we can explain to the antagonist of General Semantics: "The word bad is not the THING. It is no THING at all. It is a meaning which has no counterpart outside of our brain." True enough, the word IS, which indicate real existence lends weight to the assertion that some ^{one} IS bad. But the trouble is that we have not kept those words of human EVALUATION strictly apart from the words indicating real THINGS and ACTIONS. This has led to the false belief in many people that bad is as real as a stone. True enough some people murder and do great harm to people. For such crimes we can use the criminal code. But these are rare cases, whereas the word bad is used every day in every home, every office, every workshop, every assembly, etc. If it refers to some THINGS like a piece of work we may be able to refer to measurements and avoid the V word. But if we refer the V word to a $\cap$, then we have no measurements and blows are likely to fall, friendships are likely to break and tragedy may result.

One last example to show that the multi-valued orientation of Semantography goes very far. Let us take the statement: "Is/German rearmament good or bad?" The answer should be obvious. It is bad. Yet some intelligent and honest people would say it is good. How then can we come to an agreement? This question is resolved in Semantography as follows: We will consider one human being. He has a mind ($\cap$). And as such he is a unique observer, and his mind the entrepost from which he makes his measurements. He can erect different systems of reference within his mind, different co-ordinates and measure (evaluate) from them. First frame of reference: A re-armed Germany may plunge the world into another world war. Evaluation: this would be bad. Second frame of reference: A re-armed Germany would prevent Soviet expansion and would thus stop Russia from over-running Europe. Evaluation: this would be good. Third frame of reference: A re-armed Germany with its sovereignty restored may become a co-operative partner in the United Nations. Evaluation: This would be good. And so we can go on, erecting different frames of reference and finding our evaluations vary from good to bad, from very good to very bad, and all the time we would deal only with one and the same question. Once we learn that the words bad and good are vague, ambiguous and relative, we must relate them to certain frames of reference. It is then possible that different people - once they have agreed on the particular frame of reference - may both agree that it would be bad. At the same time - using another frame of reference they may agree that it would be good. However, there is one word in all those statements, the word "would". It refers not to $\square$ not to $\wedge$, but to $\cap$. How to handle this, I cannot say here at length. Enough to say, that the symbol in Semantography carries the question mark (?) Whatever we assert: "it would be so..." once we realise that the word itself carries the question mark in Semantography we might not be so absolutely sure of what we say. We might not indulge in heated and useless debates which tends to separate us, where we should stand together and solve our problems intelligently. General Semantics is a great step forward in this direction, and I believe Semantography is another one.

Yours Sincerely
C. K. Bliss
C.K. Bliss