

THE INSTITUTE FOR SEMANTOGRAPHY

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

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SEMANTOGRAPHY AND STUART CHASE

AUTHOR OF THE "TYRANNY OF WORDS"

Note: The first time I learnt of the word "semantics" and its meaning was through the book the "Tyranny of Words" by the American author, Stuart Chase. I read it when in China and it has influenced me greatly. Consequently one of my greatest hopes with regard to the recognition of my work in America was Stuart Chase. Nevertheless when I immigrated in 1946 to Australia I did not contact him until 3 years later when the 3 books on Semantography were completed. Then I wrote the letters below. I regret to say that the reaction of Stuart Chase was most disheartening and disappointing. As this is one of the many disappointments I suffered on the hands of prominent men in these fields, I place here below my letters on record in order to show that there was nothing in them in any way offending the addressee. They are similar to many other letters which I have written to important people. The letters below are interesting insofar as they reveal something of my background and my development with regard to Semantography.

FIRST LETTER

2nd August 1949

Mr. Stuart Chase,
c/- Methuen & Co.
LONDON.

Dear Mr. Chase,

Your book THE TYRANNY OF WORDS has been the first book which brought me in contact with Semantics, and it did this at a crucial moment, when I was investigating language from a new angle. I have now completed my manuscript and I have quoted so much from your book that your publisher asked for a fee, although I told them, that I want first to duplicate only 75 copies of my manuscript. As I have quoted from many other books for which I got permission free of charge, it will give you an idea, what your words and saying mean to me. I hope therefore you will be interested in what I have to say, which can only be understood by knowing my background.

I am an industrial research chemist from Vienna, and my primary hobby was being a science lecturer at educational halls, people's universities etc. in Vienna. Consequently in 1938 the Nazis carried me off to the hell of Dachau and then to Buchenwald. There I got two labels, stitched to my prison garb: a red triangle which symbol stood for "political" and a yellow triangle which stood for "Jew". My "Aryan" fellow-prisoners had only the red triangle, or a crimson (Bible students) or a pink (race-disgracer) or a black (shy of work), etc. Brown was not used, being the symbol for Nazism. According to these labels, virtually displayed on our breasts, we were treated "wholesale". This was my first painful recognition of the power of a word label.

My second experience in semantics was this: although the blackguard and I spoke the same language, German, understanding was completely blocked. So I pondered frantically how I could appeal to their understanding. Then I hit on an international language: music. I had been a good musician in my haydays, and I advised in veiled language my wife how to smuggle two of my instruments into the camp. (Believe me, all this is true and I can prove it). Then I "captured" the blackguards of the Gestapo with my music, made them understand that I am a feeling and suffering human being and effected in due course my release.

I could go to England, but could not take my wife, with me. When making arrangements for her get-away, the war broke out. The front was now between us.

However, there was one way open: we could meet in Shanghai. I went via Canada and the Pacific and she via Siberia.

In 1943 the Japanese plastered a new label on both of us: stateless refugee. Consequently we were herded in a ghetto. But now my mind was immersed in an exciting venture, which made me forget the miseries of the day.

Not satisfied with only earning our bread, I plunged headlong into the fascinating Chinese culture, which I began to study.

I begun to study Chinese writing and was struck by 3 outstanding facts. Firstly, people of different parts of China cannot speak with each other, but can read the same newspaper and the same book. Secondly, a classic or a poem written 2500 years ago, can still be read in the various languages of to-day, although the old language is completely forgotten. In contrast, English writing of 1,000 A.C. is almost incomprehensible.

But the most fascinating item is of a very different nature, and to understand it, let me quote from your book: "Good language alone will not save mankind. But seeing the things behind the names will help us to understand the structure of the world we live in".

The meanings of "human being" is pronounced differently in different languages. MAN in English, HOMME in French, HOMBRA in Spanish, NULJ in Shanghai speech, etc. etc. but in Chinese writing the character is thus:  showing the outline of a human being on two legs.

Now it is easy to write in Chinese characters the meanings of American, Russian, Jew, Bully, Rabblrouser, Monster, but - the very first character of all these meanings would invariably be this  with the qualifying adjectives following afterwards. So, you can never lose "sight" (literally) of the fact, that you are dealing with a human being just like you and me.

This outstanding characteristic of pictographs and ideographs explains why scholars claim Chinese poems and writing to be most vivid. We see directly the real things in their schematized outline. No translation in our mind (from sound letters to the mental picture) is necessary.

But Chinese characters modified through thousands of years are complicated and cumbersome. But how about a modern, simplified system, built according to scientific, analytical lines? The thought struck me forcibly. This was in 1942. And the following points gave impetus. In Shanghai, the most international city I could see that people stick to their mothertongue, and will learn the rudiments of another tongue, only under the threat of starvation. Think of the language Babel in America, the great communities of Italians, Czechs, Ukrainians, etc. etc. The other point is this: Scholars who studied Chinese history and culture claim, that the great unifying factor which bound people of different races and different languages together into the largest nation on Earth, which absorbed every invading race and unified it into the whole - this unifying factor was only the ideographic Chinese writing, a writing which bridged all linguistic differences.

So I sat to work, and here below are a few lines about the outcome.

(follow excerpts of testimonies by scholars about my work)

Before you form any opinion about all this, let me again quote from your book: "Nonscientists jeer at Fulton's steamboat, laugh heartily at a horseless carriage operated by gasoline, presently they are going to tell you that semantics is nonsense".

Now semantics is already taught at a few universities. It took more than 60 years since Michel Bréal invented the term Semantique. It's no nonsense any more. But now, people might say that semantography is nonsense.

You have proved very entertainingly that philosophers do not attack milkmen or diesel engineers but only philosophers and each one proved in turn that the philosophy of the other guy is nonsense. So, I have acquainted myself with the thought that ordinary people will only laugh about my semantography, but the real attack will come from the semanticists.

Now, you Mr. Chase are not an ordinary man, but you are also not a professional semanticist. Your book is "rather the result of a series of raids into this laboratory and that ... "And I recommend your book as first and best reading to anyone who wants to become acquainted with semantics.

I hope that you will not laugh and will not attack. In any case you will make up your mind at the end of this letter in either way. Either to dismiss it or to say: "Let's hear more about it!"

Unfortunately I am here in Australia and not in your study. I can't prove to you the workability of my system by answering directly your questions: "How do you write "fascism, democracy, freedom of speech"". My system is similar to mathematics. First, you learn only how to add and to subtract, and only at a very later stage, you learn about the infinitesimal calculus.

I have proved in various lectures in Sydney that my system can be taught even in the kindergarten. In fact, my symbols resemble in their simplified outline the drawings of children. Usually I give two lectures. In the first I show that I can express any meaning with only about 100 symbol elements in combination. The second lecture is devoted to practical semantics. I ask the audience to take out their newspapers and to hand me any statement from any politician. Then I write it down in my symbols and apply the "grammar rules" of semantography. And quite often I get an applause midstage.

And here is a very important point. It is not necessary for people to know how to write any word in any symbols. Only the few "grammar rules" are necessary to discover any trick in debate, and any false syllogism. You have shown many times, what the syllogism can do in people's mind. And you have also dealt with the formal logicians. Well, I claim that my Semantography furnishes a simple logic for the people, which can be operated by any person with only primary school education. And after a training, you become immune against all the fallacies which are practised to-day.

My manuscript is very bulky, simply because I have devoted large chapters for the application of semantography to traffic, travel, commercial correspondence, international passport and custom forms, banking, rail, ship and plane transport, postal service, technology, industry, merchandise, etc. The world is fast getting smaller. National and linguistic boundaries become an anachronism. Warning signs on the highways written in the nation languages are taken down and replaced by international ideograms. This new mode of writing is bound to come.

I have not yet approached publishers, but only a few outstanding men and you are one of the very first. I am now duplicating the third and last volume. I can send you some of my writing, if you want it. I hope that some scientific foundation will help me along. I am sure of your interest if I could only tell you directly about it, and not through letters.

Awaiting your reply, I remain

Sincerely yours

C.K. Bliss

In view of the fact that I have not asked Stuart Chase permission for copying his letter I shall give here an abstract only. He informed me that he has read my letter "with the greatest interest and attention". Then he told me that he had recently been in Washington and had talked to Dr. Frank S. Hopkins, Assistant Director of the Foreign Service Institute of the State Department. This Institute, he informed me, "teaches foreign languages to career men going abroad. It is also doing fundamental research into language as a major aspect of culture and is interested in analyzing international languages". Chase then said that the persons from the Foreign Service Institute have been studying Chase's book "The Proper Study of Mankind" which has chapters on communication and semantics and he had "some very rewarding discussions" with them.

Chase went on that he "suspects" that "Dr. Hopkins would be the ideal man to review your most interesting proposal". He then suggested that I should write to Hopkins, that I should mention him and it may well be that "the Institute will want to look over your manuscript". As far as Stuart Chase is concerned he declined to look into it because he is "deluged with commitments", and he ended

his letter saying "it is clear that we have much in common".

As Stuart Chase was one of the first men whom I approached after completing my work, his letter threw me into an ecstasy and I put tremendous hopes on his recommendation to the Foreign Service Institute in Washington. It did not occur to me that Stuart Chase reverted to the old subterfuge "go to someone else - let me alone" and so I sent off my 2nd and 3rd letters to Stuart Chase.

SECOND LETTER

30th November, 1949

Mr. Stuart Chase,
Georgetown,
CONNECTICUT.

Dear Mr. Chase,

This letter is only to acknowledge and to thank you for your kind letter of September 21. I have started to prepare something for Mr. Frank S. Hopkins, Assistant Director of the Foreign Service Institute and for you, but it is delayed again and again. In order not to make the impression that I have forgotten to answer your letter, I send this letter off, and take the opportunity to wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Sincerely yours,

C.K. Bliss

THIRD LETTER

Sydney 16th February, 1950

Mr. Stuart Chase,
Georgetown,
CONNECTICUT.

Your letter, Sept. 21 1950
My letter November 30, 1949

Dear Mr. Chase,

This new and unusual leaflet--letterhead will give you the aspects of my work "in a nutshell", and I hope that your interest will increase.

The most significant fact is this: You and other men who "preach the gospel" of Semantics, as an antidote against fallacious word-propaganda must feel that, at present, there is no simple method to teach Semantics in the primary schools of the world. Semantography is the simple method to teach the man in the street, the people who have no more than primary school education, Semantics and Logics. And a new Logic it is, in which you will find nothing of the verbiage of formal logic.

Consequently I hope and I ask you to help me in bringing this new idea to the knowledge of young men and women, to whom it could mean a good carrier and a fascinating work. The paragraphs printed above, will tell you where my difficulties lie. Until the proper authorities will take notice, I might be dead. Until they decide to do something about it, I might be dust. And here I am, far away from the centres of learning, far away from the United States, far away from the great foundations, the great men, who could give me the help I need.

Whatever you want to tell the world, you need money to do it. At present, having worked for 7 years, having spent most of my savings, I have to make a living as an engineer at General Motors, and the best part of my time cannot be devoted to this work.

I need your help. You can interest some foundations, some important men. I have now approached Mr. Frank S. Hopkins, and I shall inform you about the outcome.

Yours sincerely,

C.K. Bliss

I received no answer from Stuart Chase and I am sorry to say that Dr. Hopkins of the Foreign Service Institute ignored my approach completely. Worse even, whatever later letter I addressed to the Foreign Service Institute was completely ignored. I shall, in a later issue, reprint my letters to the Foreign Service Institute.

The reader may imagine my mounting disappointment and my growing unhappiness. A year passed by in which I received many other hits like the one in the case of Stuart Chase. It was then my hope that I could at least keep going with my work if I could only sell enough of my books to Libraries or interested private individuals. The hope that any institution would employ me with this work had already faded away. One year later I wrote with a heavy heart the following 4th letter.

FOURTH LETTER

Sydney 18th January 1951

Stuart Chase, Esqr.,
Georgetown,
CONNECTICUT.

Please take this long letter as a sign of my devotion to your work. Please give your full attention to what I have to say. Thank you!

Dear Mr. Chase,

Since my long letter of August 2, 1949, and your kind letter of September 2, 1949 nearly one and a half years have passed, and I sincerely hope that this letter will find you and the members of your family in good health and good spirit.

I am now writing to you again for two reasons. I hope that you have received my intermediate letters of November 30, 1949 and February 16, 1950.

The first reason to write to you again is that you are my first love in Semantics so to speak. There is therefore a weak point in my heart for you, and I have to write to you when I have good news. But I have been disappointed also in this my first love, and as I want to keep in my heart the picture of you as I formed it, I am writing again in order to rectify the position.

In my first letter I asked you: "I can send you some of my writings if you want it". But you didn't. This, of course, was a bitter disappointment, because you could have easily spared say half an hour to browse through a new work on Semantics, especially one of a completely different nature. Now, you have taught people about syllogisms. So let us form the first:

1st Premise: A man interested in Semantics would like to have a look into a new Manuscript on Semantics.

2nd Premise: Stuart Chase doesn't want to have a look in my manuscript.

Logical Conclusion: Stuart Chase is not interested in Semantics.

Something is wrong with this syllogism, but according to formal logic it might stand. In any case, the so-called "man in the street" does not know where the fallacy lies.

In my last letter of February 1950, I asked you for your help. I did not receive an answer. So let's form the second syllogism:

1st Premise: A man who does not want to help progressive ideas along is a reactionary.

2nd Premise: Stuart Chase does not want to help a progressive idea along.

Logical Conclusion: Stuart Chase is a reactionary.

Well, something wrong again. But where is it? This is the kind of syllogism operated by the rabblers, and indeed it works.

I maintain that a boy or girl, a man or woman, who has had a few months training in Semantography will immediately know where the fallacy lies. But according to formal logic the syllogism is quite in order, although the formal logician will have to do some "acrobatics" if he knows Mr. Stuart Chase and want to prove that Stuart Chase is interested in Semantics and is not a reactionary.

I hope you will understand that my correspondence with you left some bitterness in me. I realised of course your kindness and appreciated your help which was of the usual prototype: Go to someone else. You advised me to approach Dr. Frank S. Hopkins of the Foreign Service Institute in Washington. I did. It was a short letter, befitting for the occasion. I attached the favourable comment of Professor Lancelot Hogben (Author of "Mathematics for the Million", "Science for the Citizen", etc.) who said about my work "interesting stimulating, fascinating, ingenious". I attached furthermore the favourable comment of a great American, Professor Carleton Washburne, Professor for Education, Brooklyn College, who said about my work "ingenious, could be of great value". I attached at last the comment of James Hemming, British Educationalist, who said about Semantography "it should be developed as rapidly and as widely as possible."

These 3 favourable comments of important men, should have induced Dr. Hopkins to adopt an interested attitude, and ask for more. Did he? No he didn't. He did not answer at all.

This of course was another blow. Bewildered I went into the Information Library of the United States, and looked up as much as I could find about the Foreign Service Institute. What I found, I took for an explanation. The examination questions for those who want to go through the examinations of foreign languages, were of the worst oldfashioned type, as if the new ideas on language teaching have not yet reached the Institute.

Some of these questions were very new. You might be interested to know that for instance one examination paper was the translation of one of the worst Nazi propaganda pieces: The logical grounds why Danzig had to be raped. It was in the original German of the Fuehrer. After that I knew enough about the Institute, and I believed to understand why even the meanest courtesy of acknowledging my letter was not extended to me.

Of course, he may be quite innocent about this part of the curriculum, and I shall approach him again. But I hope you will understand that my bitterness mounted.

There is of course an explanation for your and Hopkins attitude. My approach is so novel, so outlandish (imagine a picture writing should help Semantics!), that you and Hopkins might have been very sceptical whether it is really worth while to have a look into my work.

Well, such thoughts assailed me during the 7 years of my work. I felt, that I might well be going into the grave a crank - without recognition, and the treatment which I have received from you and Hopkins (inspite of Hogben, Washburne and Hemming) added only to my bitterness.

But now - the golden opportunity came my way, a chance in a million. The greatest living authority on symbolic and mathematical logic (not formal logic, which he despises) came to Australia: Bertrand Russell.

I sent him some information about my work, and was delighted when I received an answer, that he wants to see more of it, when in Sydney. In Sydney, he gave it a thorough test. I said to him: "I want to show you that I feel confident, to be able to symbolise in Semantography any and even the most controversial meaning, and to show you how my Semantics and Logic work! Please think of any meaning you want to have symbolised."

My demonstration must have been a success. He kept the 3 volumes of my work, studied them for some days and wrote then the following letter to me:

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.

Yours sincerely,

Bertrand Russell.

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

A few days ago, I received another letter from him, in which he spoke of "my high opinion about your work". And he has realised where my difficulty lies: the money necessary to get my work to be known. As such, it is not yet a paying proposition for publishers.

I realised this when I started to write my final manuscript. And I knew that my work would have to be large, because I had to show that my symbols and my system is applicable to any human activity. It was necessary to convince people that my work is not a mere idea, a mere plan, a mere scheme, but something which has already been worked out in detail.

I had my 3 volumes bound and went to the Principal Librarian of Sydney John Metcalfe. He was greatly impressed, bought the work right away, approved of the price of £A 5, equal to \$ 11.20 and dictated the letter, which I attach.

I am now approaching Men of Science, Men who are interested in Semantics and Public and University Libraries. Russell wanted that people should give me money for the printing. I do not want money alone. I want to sell my work, in order to get money to print another and smaller work "SEMANTOGRAPHY for the children of the World."

And now Mr. Chase, here is another syllogism, but this time you can easily prove it wrong or right:

1st Premise: A Man who has written Books on Semantics would like to purchase a new work on Semantics, one which has been hailed by Bertrand Russell, one which discloses a new and progressive idea, one which should interest anyone interested in Semantics.

2nd Premise: Mr. Chase will buy the work on Semantography.

Logical Conclusion: (you can form this yourself)

I enclose an order form. This is an extensive work, containing nearly half a million words and thousands of drawings. I feel sure that you would buy an etching from an unknown artist, who has been hailed by a great man, like Bertrand Russell. An etching is a reproduction made entirely by the artist himself. The price of \$ 11.20 is not much for an etching. But I have done much more, and you will be able to convince yourself, that the money (which will go for another book) is spent in a worthwhile manner. I attach my Brochure No. 6 as a prospectus.

Now Mr. Chase, you have an opportunity to show that you are ready to help a semanticist along. Write out your cheque and send it to my American Address: SEMANTOGRAPHY PUBLISHING CO. P.O.B. 167 Yellow Springs, Ohio. I remain with thanks.

Encl.
Brochure No. 6
Letter John Metcalfe
Appeal Bertrand Russell and Order Form.

Yours sincerely,
C.K. Bliss

Chase ignored it. He did not answer. However, it is interesting to note that in 1955 when Stuart Chase had published his new book "The Power of Words" I received a prospectus addressed personally to me. Apparently Stuart Chase or his Secretary has kept me on the list as a potential buyer of Stuart Chase books. Nevertheless I hope to live a few years more and to see Stuart Chase reversing his opinion about my work because up-to-now judging from his silence he cannot see its value.