

THE INSTITUTE FOR SEMANTOGRAPHY

A Non-Profit Educational Research Organisation.

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SEMANTOGRAPHY AND PROFESSOR ANATOL RAPOPORT

The following first letter has been written by Professor Erwin Reifler of the University of Seattle to Professor Anatol Rapoport of the University of Chicago. Rapoport is associated with Professor Hayakawa who has written "Language in Action" and who edits the journal on General Semantics: "Etc".

I met Reifler in China where he taught Chinese at the French Aurora University at Shanghai. Actually, he was the first scholar whom I approached and I hoped to receive great help from him, not only because he himself is a teacher of Chinese writing but mainly because he, just as I, was a refugee from Europe. However, he extended no help to me with regard to the recognition of my work, but later in Seattle, he interested Professor Dodd (see Semantography Series No. 70) and wrote also a letter to Professor Rapoport. When I received the copy of his letter to Rapoport, I immediately sent a letter to Rapoport which is re-printed below. However, Rapoport ignored Reifler's suggestion and my letter. He did not answer.
Letter of Professor Reifler to Professor Rapoport:

February 28, 1952

Professor Anatol Rapoport
Committee on Mathematical Biology,
University of Chicago,
Chicago 37.

Dear Professor Rapoport,

I wish to draw your attention to the work of Mr. C.K. Bliss of Sydney, Australia who in many years of research has developed a kind of "meaning-writing" which he calls Semantography.

Mr. Bliss conceived the idea of Semantography during the last war while a refugee in China where he became acquainted with the Chinese writing system. Realizing the unique advantages of this system (relative independence from any spoken language, employed by Chinese speaking mutually unintelligible dialects, by the Japanese, Koreans and Annamites speaking languages not related to Chinese and mutually unintelligible, as a common medium of thought communication for the educated among all these peoples), but also realizing its disadvantages (lack of a thoroughly systematic structure on account of natural growth, absence of scholarly planning, resultant complexity, inconsistent use, for instance misuse of symbols on account of phonic identity or similarity, resultant incongruity of many of their meanings, etc. etc.), he set out to develop a graphically extremely simple and structurally systematic kind of writing representing only "ideas" but no speech sounds, a writing which could be adopted by the speakers of any speech community for inter-community thought communication. There is especially one aspect of this writing system which may be particularly attractive to General Semanticists. "Translated into pictorial (i.e. semantographic) language", says Mr. Bliss, "the slogans of dictators and rabble-rousers would create only hearty laughter, because everyone would see at once they were meaningless". That is, only speech that means something can be translated into this system of symbols.

I am sending you, attached, a number of leaflets which will give you some more information.

I believe that The International Society for General Semantics may be interested in hearing Mr. Bliss present his work at its Annual Conference. An invitation to read a paper, while not committing the Society in any academic or financial way, may, on the other hand, contribute to Mr. Bliss' obtaining a travel grant from one of the American Foundations for a lecture tour to this country. Our Linguistic Society has already sent him such an invitation. Mr. Bliss wants to come here in

order to present his idea and the system he has developed and thus have the benefit of ample criticism and suggestions. I know Mr. Bliss personally from China where he first explained his plan to me. He has already published a bulky, three-volume, work on his Semantography, and I may add that Professor Stuart C. Dodd is also very much interested in him.

I shall be grateful for the return of the leaflets when you do not need them any more.

Please remember me to Mrs. Rapoport. With the kindest regards to you and Dr. Hayakawa,

Yours sincerely,

Erwin Reifler.

Letter of Bliss to Rapoport;

Sydney 7th January 1952

Prof. Anatol Rapoport,
Committee on Mathematical Biology,
University of Chicago,
CHICAGO 37, Ill. U.S.A.

Dear Professor Rapoport,

For a number of years I wanted to write to you, but found not the time, or was apprehensive about a discouraging answer. Now, through an advertisement in an American magazine, the Institute of General Semantics became aware of my work. Furthermore Professor Oliver L. Reiser of the University of Pittsburgh - my generous friend - spoke about my work a few days ago in a lecture read to the American Association for the Advancement of Science. It was Professor Reiser who suggested to Prof. Hayakawa that he should review my work in ETC. With the same mail Prof. Hayakawa will receive material which he will surely show to you, and I take this opportunity to approach you too, and to send you personally some material for your own bookshelf.

I enclose the leaflet which was drawn up (especially the 4th page) by my Friends of the Institute in order to help me out of my personal material and mental "depression". The 4th page tells of my plight and Professor Reiser was generous to give it to the 40 odd participants of the Annual Meeting of the AAAS.

Nearly a year ago I have sent promotion material to the Library of the University of Chicago, unfortunately with no result. However, the Chicago Teacher College 6800 Stewart Avenue acquired my books. This is the only copy available in Chicago. On page 441 and 574 I have quoted from your writing in ETC after receiving permission from Prof. Hayakawa. You should know that my 3 large volumes are mimeographed (see page 4 of the leaflet mentioned above).

I enclose furthermore a 6 page sheet titled INTRODUCTION TO THE SEMANTICS OF SEMANTOGRAPHY, a special address to Professor Hayakawa. I am writing to you, asking for a kindly attitude to a new work, which in some respects differs from some of the tenets of General Semantics, but only in so far, that it is in my opinion an improvement. I feel sure that Professor Hayakawa will let you see all the material.

Lastly a request. The United States Educational Foundation in Australia makes available travel grants to Australian students and scholars, provided they attach themselves to a University or other higher Institute of Learning in the States. This means that the Institute has to agree first. Do you think that you could secure such an attitude by the University or other Institute in Chicago. Professors and Students of the University of Sydney have written in eulogistic terms about my ability as a powerful speaker.

Encl.

INTRODUCTION TO THE SEMANTICS OF SEMANTOGRAPHY
(Sem. Series 74)

Brochure Sem. Series No. 6

Russell Facsimile Sem. Series No. 8

Leaflet to Prof. Reiser Lecture Sem. Series No. 52

Yours sincerely

C.K. Bliss

Leaflet to Lecture Physical Society Sem. Series 13

Leaflet to Lecture Geological Society Sem.

Series No. 43