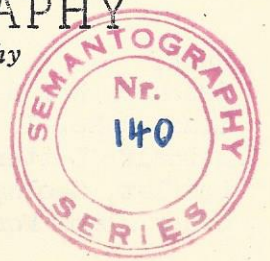


# THE INSTITUTE FOR SEMANTOGRAPHY

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

5 Maroubra Bay Road, Pagewood, Sydney, N.S.W., Australia



SEMANTOGRAPHY SERIES NO. 140

June, 1955

## A LINGUIST'S REACTION TO SEMANTOGRAPHY

3 Letters to Dr. Frederick Bodmer, Professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, Mass. U.S.A.

Note: Dr. Frederick Bodmer is co-author with Professor Lancelot Hogben (Birmingham) of the book "The Loom of Language", published by George Allen & Unwin Ltd., London. In this book the authors refer a number of times to Leibniz's speculation on a Symbolis Universalis (see pages 179, 444, 449 and 468 of the book). I expected, therefore, that these authors will be greatly interested in my work and I started first a correspondence with Professor Lancelot Hogben, with whom I exchanged a number of stimulating letters (see Semantography Series No. 12). Here below is the text of my 3 letters to Professor Bodmer.

### FIRST LETTER

Sydney 29th October 1951

Dr. Frederick Bodmer,  
Author of THE LOOM OF LANGUAGE  
c/o George Allen & Unwin Ltd.,  
40 Museum Street,  
L O N D O N. W.C.1.

Dear Dr. Bodmer,

For a number of years I wanted to write to you. Yet I hesitated. I have been encouraged by quick responses from Russell, Hogben, Washburne and others, but I have been utterly disappointed by the maddening rudeness of other scholars, whom I have sent published material, whom I have written detailed letters, and who found it in order not to accord to me even the courtesy of a penny postcard. In desperation, I often asked myself whether men who pioneer unusual ideas have still to wriggle out their lives first, until - too late - something is done for them.

So, as the years passed, I became less and less sure, whether you will fulfil the hopes, which your name invokes in me, or whether you will be just another disappointment. Somehow I felt, that I have in you a friend - and I was afraid of loosing this feeling.

Your book THE LOOM OF LANGUAGE has been a great source of inspiration, and with the permission of the publishers I have quoted from it freely. I feel sure that you will recognise my work as what it is ; the first practical realisation of Leibniz' speculation, considered impossible for 300 years. The few examples given in the attached material show not much of the Logic and Semantics of Semantography. They are written to attract the layman.

I feel sure that you are in contact with some Institution and University. I have written 3 large volumes showing the practical application of Semantography for Science, Industry, Communication, Commerce, Education, Logic, Semantics, etc. This is a one-man job, which I have hand-printed myself, and which enlightened librarians are now buying. I enclose a few Order Forms, and I shall be grateful to you, if you would see to it, that the work is bought. This will give you an opportunity to see it. I shall be happy to answer any question, criticism, etc.

Hoping that you will respond to my work, I remain

Yours sincerely,  
C.K. Bliss

Encl.  
 Brochure No. 6  
 Leaflet No. 1, No. 7, No. 8  
 Metcalfe Letter, Wolsky Letter  
 Leaflet, Geological Society, Correspondence Course Cover  
 Order Blank Forms.

SECOND LETTER

Sydney 15th October 1952

Professor Dr. Frederick Bodmer,  
 Massachusetts Institute of Technology,  
 CAMBRIDGE, Mass. U.S.A.

Dear Professor Bodmer,

One year ago, I wrote to you and sent some material with my letter. Later on, I learned from Prof. Burchard that you are at the M.I.T. and that you have consented that my 3 volumes on Semantography should be bought for the M.I.T. Library. Thank you for that. I hope that you had an opportunity of looking through my work, and I hope too that you have found (1) that I have devoted many chapters to the practical application of Semantography for Science, Industry, Commerce and Communication, (2) that my pictographs are - in Bertrand Russell's own words - "ingenious and easy to understand and the whole is capable of being very useful .....an important service to Mankind.", (3) that the pictographs can be typed on an adjusted ordinary typewriter model (and Underwood Corporation has agreed to adapt an ordinary model by replacing the capital letters only by line elements), (4) and that in principle my 100 pictorial symbol elements can do the job.

That you are Professor at the World's foremost Institute of Technology has special significance for me. I myself have been an industrial executive and research chemist in the electric lamp and electronic industry for nearly 20 years. In my travels I have found that the radio pictographs are understood by native radio mechanics, be they Europeans or Chinese or Philipinos, although they use different words for them. On the highways of the world warnings written in the native languages are replaced by pictographs. A curved arrow means a CURVE in all languages. And in various industries, apparatuses are manufactured which have at knobs and handles plates which do not carry words in 3 or more languages, but show in pictographs what that knob or handle is for. Once all men engaged in technological work realize that there is a system of simple pictographs available in which they can express any meaning in technological statements, they will readily take advantage of it. Machines and apparatuses, tins and boxes, and any kind of manufactured merchandise will carry the pictographs and a small folder intended for the export countries, in which the meaning of the pictographs is explained, showing in say 10 vertical columns the equivalent meaning in 10 languages of the relevant continent to which the goods are directed. Traders will soon realize that the pictographs can be explained in the various dialects to the consumers in the hinterland, be it Europe, Africa, Asia or elsewhere.

This application refers only to manufacturing. Other applications are readily to be found in the commercial field. A cable in Semantography need no coding, decoding and translating in any language. Sent by radio photo, it can be read in any language. Furthermore there are the invoices, the price lists, etc. which are already full with the international mathematical symbols. After all, even if we agree that Semantography has to be learned for wider application, there are in every industrial and commercial firm special employees, specially trained to code and decode cables, to calculate freights or to write in foreign languages.

BUT THE MOST IMPORTANT APPLICATION OF SEMANTOGRAPHY FOR INTER-LINGUISTIC COMMUNICATION IS IN THE FIELD OF SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL RESEARCH. I have found in many years of scientific library research that - to use Prof. Hogben's words, the Babel of scientific Publication "is a social problem of the first magnitude." In my lectures at the University of Sydney I have challenged the students to give me any scientific meaning in any science for symbolization in Semantography. In all cases, I have satisfied them all that the pictographic symbolization is simple and even more to the point than a Latin or Greek term, which is indeed "Greek" to those, who don't know Greek.

The students went even further. They did what Bertrand Russell did. They and he gave me some of the most controversial meanings of our time and I satisfied them and Russell and any other scholar who challenged me.

A UNIVERSAL SCIENCE ABSTRACT is my favourite idea, which I have expounded in a number of lectures. Each university and institute may issue the research results on small filing cards in say 100 words, mimeographed in the language of the University - and the pictographs too. Anyone who can read English or French (from French University filing cards) need not bother about the pictographs. Anyone else who cannot read English or French, but only Danish or Hindustani will gladly learn Semantography. IF ONE GREAT UNIVERSITY OR INSTITUTE STARTS ISSUING SUCH CARDS AND OFFERS THEM FREE IN EXCHANGE TO ANY OTHER UNIVERSITY, WHICH DOES THE SAME THING, then the idea will be on its way. I attach a leaflet in which I have outlined all this with more words. Such pioneering work would well befit the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and I don't know of any linguist better fitted than you to direct this research. And this idea is the reason for my letter to you.

Pictographs have proved successful, whereas the hundreds of universal languages have found no practical application. To-day, after more than half a century of Esperanto, more than a quarter century of Basic English - and no practical application whatsoever, we must realize at last that the peoples of this planet will stick to their mother tongue even in the most literate countries of the world. In the U.S.A. or Canada, millions of people speak almost exclusively French, or Italian or German or a host of other languages. But the symbols of mathematics, of chemistry, of radio, of highway warnings are the same for all of them.

Here then is my proposal. I have been a successful industrial executive, but I am sick of making money in factories. This idea is well ordered in my mind, and all I want is to be put to work all my time on this idea. I am ready to accept the lowest salary which provides the essentials for me and my wife - if only I can work on Semantography, adapting it to the needs of various industries and sciences. So much money is spent on scientific and technological research in your and in other Institutes. Could you possibly think of adding this kind of research to your or any other department? If you would study the grammar, the logic and semantics of Semantography you would realize that your teaching in THE LOOM OF LANGUAGE has been my guidance. Now, I think that it would be great to work under your direction.

Professor O. L. Reiser of Pittsburgh University has expounded my work at the Annual Meeting of the AAAS in Philadelphia. THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS has given a standing order to a prominent Sydney bookshop to acquire anything I have written or am going to write and be it even in typewritten form. On the recommendation of Earl Russell, George Allen & Unwin is now considering a book on Semantography. I have been an honorary science lecturer all my adult life. I shall do justice to your favourable consideration of my proposal. Awaiting your answer I am

Yours sincerely,

C.K. Bliss

Encl.

### THIRD LETTER

Sydney, 16th July 1953

Professor Dr. Frederick Bodmer,  
Massachusetts Institute of Technology,  
CAMBRIDGE, Mass, U.S.A.

Dear Professor Bodmer,

I have written to you on the 29th October 1951 and have submitted to you a number of leaflets, brochures, etc. concerning Semantography. Unfortunately I received no answer. I have then written to you again one year later on the 15th October 1952, stressing in detail the application of Semantography for scientific and industrial purposes, and have included a number of recent publications. I also included letters and publications for Mr. J. W. Perry and Dr. Y. Bar-Hillel of the M.I.T. and asked you to forward all to them. Again I have received no reply or sign that you and the other persons have received my letters.

I feel sure that you will understand the feeling of bewilderment and humiliation which such treatment has caused to me. I realize of course that scholars are busy men, but I have been honoured by many scholars with their correspondence, and in cases, their secretaries have acknowledged my letters, and have acted on them. I do not think that I deserve your treatment. I do not think that anyone deserves such a treatment, least of all a man, whose work has been presented to the AAAS and has been lauded in the highest terms. A line from your secretary, or the silent return of my papers is, I should think, the least which could be expected.

You might be annoyed by this letter. Then please think of my mounting annoyance growing through two years. I do think that you as the author of *The Loom of Language* have a responsibility if not a duty not to treat a pioneer of language planning in this way. Moreover, Mr. Perry, who was present at the AAAS meeting, is genuinely interested in my work, and I do not know whether you have forwarded my material to him or not. Dr. Y. Bar-Hillel has been recommended to me by a scholar in New York, and again I do not know whether he has received my material.

Throughout the centuries, men who pioneered new ideas, which at the time seemed strange and even absurd, had to go through similar experiences, only to be extolled after they have lived out their life of embitterment and frustration. However, I am still alive and the least I can do is to protest in the name of all pioneers who went through similar excruciating experiences.

I ask you therefore to direct your secretary to inform me what has happened to my letters to Mr. Perry and Dr. Bar-Hillel, and to the material sent to you and to them. I do this in the firm belief that you understand the bitterness you have caused.

Yours truly,

C.K. Bliss

Note: I do think Professor Bodmer has behaved incorrectly in ignoring my letters. Moreover as a co-author of *"The Loom of Language"* it is his duty to take an interest in any new idea in the field of linguistics. I protest herewith against his treatment of my work and myself, and shall endeavour to make my protest being heard.