



Semantography Series No. 259

THE DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY OF
THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF
AUSTRALIA AND SEMANTOGRAPHY

This issue is a follow-up of the issues No. 232, 233, concerning my approach to the United Nations Association of Australia. It contains the following letters:
Dr. S.A. Wurm and Dr. D.C. Laycock, Sydney 12th April, 1965
Australian National University,
Canberra. A.C.T.

Dear Dr. Wurm, and dear Dr. Laycock,

Mr. H.F. Dawson, Honorary Secretary of the United Nations Association of Australia has informed me that you have answered a request of the Department of External Affairs for an appraisal of my work Semantography. On the basis of your favourable opinion, the Department has recommended that the U.N. Association of Australia should sponsor my work, because it could "represent a significant contribution to International Co-operation Year of the United Nations."

I am now an old man, who has hoped against hope to see some recognition of my work during my life-time. The news of your kind and favourable appraisal has gladdened my heart. If I could have the full text of your review, it would make me even happier. I would incorporate it in my Semantography Series, which is subscribed by a number of great universities. The Australian National Library in Canberra has one set, as well as 2 sets of my 3 volumes on Semantography, which volumes are, as you have seen mimeographed only. This sorry fact is often considered as a proof of unworthiness, having not attracted a publisher. It has however, not distracted you, as it has not done so also in the case of Bertrand Russell, Julian Huxley and other scholars who have testified to the value of my work.

As I can thank you only with words, I am reminded of Goethe who said that words are only "Schall und Rauch" - "Sound and Smoke". I hope to have one day an opportunity to return your kindness with more than words. Perhaps you can send me some of your work, which has any bearing on semantics. I would incorporate it as issues of my series, and it might then find the attention of an interested researcher in the universities which will receive them. I would also be glad to read anything of your linguistic research and reform. I am also prepared to send you as many copies as you want of your writing which I intend to incorporate in the series, and do it without any cost to you. Just tell me whether you want 500 copies or more. I know how hampered university scholars are by the limitations imposed upon them as to the facilities of distribution of their writing.

May I in this connection send you the latest TIME review of a new book by Lancelot Hogben, who has in the past written a number of books on Language. In this new book "The Mother Tongue" Hogben tries to revive the old original work of the Brothers Grimm on "Lautverschiebung." Incidentally, Hogben has committed almost a sacrilege. He has abandoned his alliteration titles so beloved by him: Loom of Language, Mathematics for the Million, Nature and Nurture, Men must measure Science for the - alas not - Scitizen. I am sure he must have worried a lot about "The Mother Mumblings" or something similar.

Hoping to receive the full text of your review of my work, I am with renewed thanks,

Yours sincerely,
C.K. Bliss, B.Sc.

The Australian National University
Department of Anthropology.

30 April, 1965

P.S. Please do not quote Dr. Wurm's name in connection with this matter, as the statement on your work was made by me alone. I should also not like to be quoted in any context that suggests I have said more than is contained in this letter.

Dear Mr. Bliss,

Your joint letter to Dr. Wurm and myself falls to me for answering, as I was the one who wrote the report on your work for the Department of External Affairs. I am pleased to see that the Department has recommended the UN Association of Australia to sponsor your work, as a result of my letter.

Unfortunately, I cannot communicate to you the text of my letter to the

External Affairs Department, as this was written in the form of a letter setting out private opinions and is not suitable for printing or excerpting. Basically, what I said was that I gave your work "guarded approval". I pointed out the vast number of interlinguistic systems of one kind or another that have been created since the time of Wilkin's Real Character, and was not optimistic for the success of a new system, whatever its merits. I pointed out that European culture-bias of your system (the use of the heart symbol for emotions, for example: in many languages the seat of the emotions is the stomach): but I also said that this was not necessarily a bad thing, as the people who would most benefit from your system would be those who most thoroughly partake of European culture (with the possible acceptance of China and South-east Asia, with which you have some familiarity anyway).

My conclusion was "I do feel that (Mr. Bliss's) system is good enough to be tabled for consideration at the 1965 United Nations conference on glyphology: the rest is then up to the experts. I would be wary of any blanket endorsement of his work, or even making any statement about it which could, out of context, be taken as signifying more than guarded approval: but guarded approval and the opportunity for expert evaluation and development appear to me to be quite justified."

This may sound a little over-cautious, but I am not an expert in international language systems, though I have followed something of their progress with interest. However, I am always anxious to have any new ideas thoroughly examined on their merits, without bias: and it seems that your work is at last to get this evaluation. I wish you every success in this.

Thank you also for the review of Hogben's book. I had already seen the review, but have not yet read the book. Incidentally, it was the reading of Bodmer's The Loom of Language that first started me, as a schoolboy, on a linguistic career - though I now recognise it to be a fairly bad book. I liked your title "The Mother Mumbings".

Best wishes for the success of Semantography.

Yours faithfully,

Dr. D.C. Laycock.

4 May, 1965

Dear Dr. Laycock,

Many thanks for your prompt and detailed answer to my letter, and for your good words you have found for my work. To put your mind at rest, I shall use your favourable "guarded approval" not for the promotion of my work, but for the promotion of my own health. Guarded approvals like yours are the best medicine for an old man, who knows that he shall not see the fruits of his labours.

I am glad to know that you are an anthropologist. You are not alone in your approval. The nearest anthropologist to you is Professor Nadel then head of the School of Pacific Studies, who years ago was even in favour of a publication grant to be given to me by the National University. Another anthropologist is Mr. F.D. McCarthy of the Australian Museum in Sydney. I enclose the little brochure containing some data and some testimonies of my work. You will find Mr. McCarthy's statement on page 14. He thought of the use of my pictorial symbols in New Guinea. (Semantography Series No. 6)

The anthropologist who did most for my work, and who tried to gain recognition for me in the United States (even a publication grant) was the late Harvard Professor Clyde Kluckhohn. We had a common friend Prof. Reiser of the University in Pittsburgh who even read a paper about my work to the American Association for the Advancement of Science. I met Prof. Kluckhohn in Sydney and he was fascinated by a line of thought in my work which somehow paralleled his own thoughts, expressed in his book MIRROR FOR MAN. Another anthropologist who too favoured some of my ideas, which were influenced by his ideas, is Prof. Ashley Mantagu then of Rutgers University New Jersey.

Unfortunately, these ideas are contrary to the prevailing theories on man as an animal who wages war against his own kind. The fact that language could have an influence on this disastrous human habit did occur to a few only. And as you know, old theories die hard. However, you may be interested in all this, and I take the liberty to send you the article which Prof. Kluckhohn commissioned me to write. It is titled a POSSIBLE PROOF AND TOOL FOR CHISHOLM'S THEORY ON THE CAUSE AND PREVENTION OF HUMAN WARFARE. Years before, I wrote about the same theme, and my thoughts were then influenced by my academic upbringing, namely my degree in chemistry. I tried to find a chemical cause. Please don't feel obliged to answer and comment on the paper mentioned before, and the other titled THE GAP IN PREHISTORIC HISTORY. I know very well that scholars are simply snowed under by papers which they possibly cannot read, nor comment upon, simply because of lack of time. You need not answer this letter too, which I write in gratitude. (The above papers are S.S. 85 and S.S. 25)

And out of gratitude, I wish to repeat my willingness to help you with the printing (alas, mimeographed only) of some of your papers. Just send me the manuscript and tell me how many copies you want, and I shall deliver the goods and be most grateful for all you have done for me. Yours sincerely, C.K.Bliss

There was no answer, and this closes this correspondence.

The End.