



Charles K. Bliss

SEMANTOGRAPHY One Writing For One World



Charles K. Bliss, the inventor of 'Semantography' is a graduate of the University of Technology, Vienna, and studied at the Austrian Federal Training and Research Institute in the Graphic Arts, Vienna. Charles K. Bliss came to Australia in 1946, accompanied by his good wife, and co-worker on Semantography, (see picture). He tells his life story below. As to Australia, he and his wife felt that after the terrors of Europe and Asia, they had come to paradise on earth. He pays tribute to his adopted homeland in his first book, published in 1949 and in his most recent work published in 1970.

These are the stages that led me to semantography (Greek for "a meaningful writing"):

1. I was born in 1897 in the Babel of old Austria where 20 nationalities hated each other, because they spoke and thought in different languages.

2. As a boy, mad about chemistry, it was a revelation to learn that H_2O means water in all languages.

3. In 1922 I graduated in chemical engineering from the University of Technology in Vienna, entered an electronics firm, and was impressed by the pictorial symbols in radio diagrams.

4. Later as a victim in Dachau and Buchenwald I saw how words can turn men into killers. I tried "words" of an international language: music. My good wife smuggled my instruments into the camp, and with them I won the hearts of my jailers and my freedom.

6. We fled to China, and there I was fascinated by what Lin Yutang called "The Second Great Wall of China", its picto-ideographic script. I scaled the wall and looked into a wonderland where people of different languages could read the same letter, book, and newspaper.

7. Chinese scholars told me that the main unifying factor that welded many tribes and invaders into the largest nation on earth was this universal script. They said that a European Nation would have been a reality many centuries ago, if Englishmen, and Estonians, Frenchmen and Finns, Greeks and Germans, Romans and Russians, etc., had such a script which they could read in all their languages.

8. I studied Chinese history and was amazed by the racial and religious tolerance of the Chinese. Could that all-encompassing script be the cause?

9. This Chinese script moved the great mathematician Leibnitz (1646-1716) to predict the invention of a simple "Symbolis Universalis" in which pictorial symbols could be operated in a simple symbolic logic

10. I didn't know that Leibnitz' speculation was considered impossible to

realize. And so, "where ignorance is Bliss, it's folly to be wise" I started in 1942 and published in 1949. Then Professor Oliver L. Reiser of the University of Pittsburgh told the American Association for the Advancement of Science: "Bliss realized the ambition of the great mathematician Leibnitz" (see Bibliography).

Semantography is only an auxiliary medium, to be used only where the language barrier must be bridged. However, its symbolic logic can help everyone.

In this short article only a few symbols can be shown for (1) tourists, (2) motorists, (3) scientists, and (4) children for teaching them tolerance.

A modern symbol writing must be typable on a typewriter of normal size. It must be printable. Semantography is ideal for computerized typesetting by which letters or symbols appear on a TV screen and are photographed for offset printing.

How many symbols? I analysed languages and separated the "elements of meaning", not more than about 100, of which the following 30 are already international:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0 + - x ÷ = >

NUMBERS AND MATHEMATICAL SIGNS

! ? → ↑ ○ D * ⚡

MARKS DIRECTION SUN MOON STAR ELECTRIC lightning

✉ △ ♪ / } } ⚙ ⚙

MAIL letter SAFETY international sign MUSIC note obliterate cancel Aesculapius sign simplified Mercurius sign simplified

Typewriters can be adjusted by replacing the capital letters (obsolete anyway) by symbol lines, and retaining the small letters for names and ordinary correspondence. IBM has agreed to cast a ball containing 90 symbols, more than enough. Many symbols can be composed by "line letters" as shown below:

|| || || || || || || ||

LINE REPEAT LIMITS OPEN OPENING CLOSED ENCLOSURE

Here are important symbol elements.

MAN WOMAN GROUND HOUSE TIME dial

and here are some combinations

⊕ ⊖ ⊗ ⊙ ⊚ ⊛

ENTRANCE EXIT ROOM ROOM WAITER ROOM MAID

Here are a few symbol elements

○ 2 ○ / √

MOUTH speech EAR hearing EYE sight NOSE smell HAND touch

By putting an Action indicator on top of the symbols we form the verbs: to speak, hear, see, smell, touch. With this, children wrote whole sentences in their first lesson.

Now we can form an ageless symbol for TELEPHONE. The hand receiver sign (used today) is getting obsolete (ericophone, pushbutton phone, etc.). Our combination means "speaking and listening by electricity". When we add an eye and a box we get the symbol for TELEVISION. Without the eye it means RADIO.

○ 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2

MOUTH EAR LANGUAGE TELEPHONE TELEVISION

We add a new element, the wheel.

— ⊗ ⊗ ⊗ ⊗ ⊗

GROUND WHEEL TRAVEL TRAVELLER HOTEL

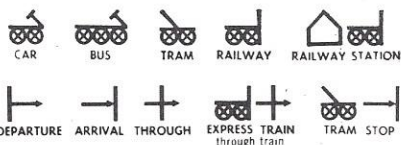
Though the word HOTEL is international, it's also INN in England, ALBERGO in Italy, GASTHOF in Germany, etc. This symbol is universal.

Aeroplane signs today show backswept wings, soon to be superseded by delta wings. Here is an ageless symbol.

∨ ⊕ ∨ ∨ ∨ ∨

WINGS bird AIRLETTER WHEEL AIRPLANE AIRPORT

The wheel and a few lines give us



A water wave gives us many meanings



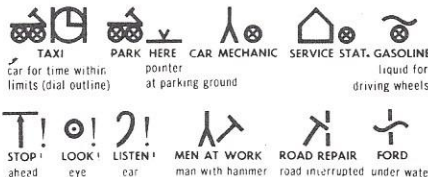
The Aesculapius sign means medical



The safety sign can be used with the sign for electricity (lightning) and for fire (a wavy flame). The ear hears the alarm.



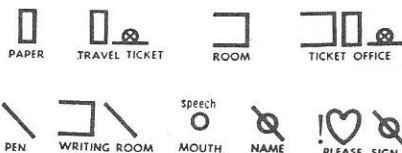
Pictorial signs are used on roads. Here are new symbol combinations



A flag on a territory symbolizes



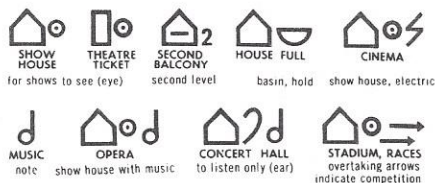
Two more elements: the pen (in inclined writing position), and the shape of a sheet of paper (small or large)



Food in the widest sense means what our mouth takes in from Mother Earth



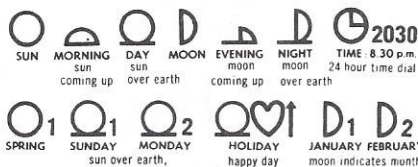
The traveller looks for a show now



He needs money from the bank



When do banks, museums, etc., open?



The most important use of semantography will be for science summaries. About two million papers appear yearly in 35,000 journals in many languages. Research is often uselessly repeated.

In lectures at Sydney University I advocated the use of small index cards carrying a summary of, say, 100 words in:

1. The language of the country (if it is not English).
2. In English.
3. In the symbols of semantography.

Scientists, doctors, engineers, etc., would subscribe to cards in their special field only, and order the full article of special interest to them.

Here are a few science symbols. For chemistry we have the age-old retort.



A physicist however, does not divide (analyse) matter. He measures the movements of matter and energy.



For more science symbols look up the large chapters in the book on semantography (see bibliography).

Can we "picture" abstract meanings? Yes! And here below are a few lines from the large chapters on the application of the semantographic logic on emotional, intellectual, philosophical, political, religious meanings and others.

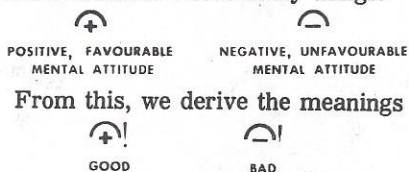
For Emotion we use the age-old heart symbol. For REASON we picture the outline of the upper skull, seat of the brain. And there is a superimposed higher reason, our CONSCIENCE.



The higher mind that dominates our own mind could be the mind of God, our

parents, teachers and masters.

We usually form positive or negative mental attitudes about many things.



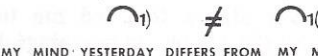
From this, we derive the meanings

How much misery has the word "bad" created! Character assassination with this word is still going on.

Now here are two simple rules which even children can grasp and apply.



No two minds are alike, think alike and act alike. Hence what one mind thinks to be "good" another mind may reject as "bad". But there is another mind mechanism. To picture it we introduce the symbols (no space to explain them here) for PAST) and FUTURE (.



Indeed, we may "change our mind" overnight. What we thought to be "bad" yesterday may seem today "good" after all. In short, all meanings that carry the mind symbol in semantography are vague and variable. "You are jealous, insincere, you are really bad! NOT TRUE TOMORROW."

What happens when we put the plus and minus sign into one mind? Then we arrive at a precious human virtue.



This symbol teaches us not to be cocksure that we are right, and the other guy wrong. We may "change our mind".

Incidentally, the plus minus sign already indicates "tolerance" in engineering. Engineers, knowing of human failures and frailties, specify the limits of tolerances thus: ± 0.1 mm.

This short article can give a hint only of what is contained in the 382 pages of the book on semantography. It opens up a new world of thought and understanding across all barriers.

Bibliography: Prof. O.L. Reiser, "Unified Symbolism for World Understanding in Science." C.K. Bliss, "Semantography," 2nd Edition. C.K. Bliss, et al., "The Semantography Series" (over 300 issues). All published by Semantography-Blissymbolics Publications, 2 Vicar St., Coogee, 2034, Sydney.