

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

UNITED STATES: P.O.B. 167, Yellow Springs, Ohio.

GREAT BRITAIN: C/o Messenger Ltd., 100 St. Martin's Lane, London, W.C.2.



THE CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR
FIRST GREAT AMERICAN PAPER TO WRITE
ABOUT SEMANTOGRAPHY

The full text of the article which appeared on the editorial page of the Saturday issue, May 17, 1952, written by the Chief of Bureau of THE CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR for Australia and New Zealand.

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BLISS AND SEMANTOGRAPHY

Australian Smoke Signal

By Albert Norman

Sydney

"Nothing puzzles Americans more than the current Asian-tendency to look on them as imperialists." So wrote this newspaper in an editorial last summer.

"Look at our record in the Philippines," they say, "Look at our long sympathy with the Indian independence movement. Look at our unselfish philanthropies in Asia..."

"Again and again students of the East have pointed out that good will is not enough; there must also be the understanding that knows how to translate that good will into terms which the recipient will likewise be able to recognize as good. It is even in part a matter of semantics."

Charles Bliss, Australian inventor of semantography, has been preaching an almost identical gospel for the past decade. In fact, he believes that the worldwide development of practical semantics is a major key to worldwide understanding.

The Bliss system of semantography is based on 100 simple symbols. It follows an idea originally proposed nearly 300 years ago by Leibnitz, the great 17th century philosopher and mathematician, inventor of the infinitesimal calculus.

Leibnitz visualized a symbolism of thought, a picto-ideography which could be read in all languages in the same way that mathematical symbols are readily interpreted around the world.

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But it was in China that Charles Bliss first realized that language symbols could be mutually read by people who spoke what were to each other completely incomprehensible tongues.

Glimpsing in this way the scope of ancient Chinese character writing, he also be-thought himself of the worldwide symbolism of modern chemistry which he had used in his profession as an industrial chemist. And then too of the internationally accepted symbols of various other global codes.

But was there not some broader yet simplified form of symbol writing which all men everywhere could use for everyday communication? The search for modern semantography had begun.

The author told us how he tested his system, when still in its formative stages, on the children of family friends. "I sent them", he chuckled, a simple little letter of love written in semantography and with it a translation and also a simple text on how to read and write the symbols.

"Well," he said, "the mother crossed out the translation and gave the children the letter just in symbols and the how-to-read-and-write text. They not only translated my letter correctly but also sent me one in reply. Here it is," he laughed, handing the letter across. It was written in semantography and obviously had been drawn with careful tongue-in-cheek application.

"But," he said, "this ingenious symbol for love," pointing to it, "was their own invention. I didn't have one then and so I have adopted theirs."

Nowadays, Mr. Bliss does not permit people to invent symbols for him, "I have publicly notified that any person or organisation may freely use or adopt my system providing they do not invent more symbols or otherwise abuse the rules laid down," he said.

As an effective method for determining the meaning of meaning, the Bliss system has been praised by such notable intellectuals as Lord Bertrand Russell, British philosopher and mathematician.

Prof. Oliver L. Reiser of the University of Pittsburgh also has commended this Australian attempt to fix meaning and prevent misunderstanding. Late last year, Professor Reiser praised the Bliss system before the American Association for the Advancement of Science at Philadelphia.

Semantography has been extended by its author to cover the most complex subjects but always with the aim of eliminating ambiguity. Thus the system can be applied to industrial technology and economics, to the social arts, to family life, business and international politics.

In Mr. Bliss' opinion, today's international propaganda war gets its big chance because people who have learned to read have not yet learned to recognize fallacious meanings which could mean different things to different people.

Charles Bliss frankly declares his aim is to give back to language its basic principles of truth, as both mathematics and music embody it in internationally readable form.

To do this has involved long hours of careful research into the origins of speech and writing itself. In these researches, Mr. Bliss has made what he modestly calls "re-discoveries" which show gift for penetrating analysis.

He points out facts which he believes to be of even greater significance than semantography itself. For example, he shows that the cave paintings of paleolithic man (50,000 to 30,000 B.C.) record victories of men over animals only. Whereas those from 5000 B.C. to modern times, record victories of men over other men.

"Thus the records of paleolithic man," triumphantly declared Mr. Bliss, "show that human warfare was absent 30,000 years ago and became a predominant characteristic of society only 7000 years ago.

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In other words, that warfare fundamentally is foreign to man's nature and therefore can be abolished. And further, that the disastrous social disbalance which developed somewhere after 30,000 B.C. definitely can be corrected.

But as this Australian points out, warfare today is waged for men's minds and is far more subtle. Thus the free nations are forced to pour out great treasure to defend their people in this ceaseless propaganda struggle. Charles Bliss aims to make every man his own defender. In this, his system gradually is spreading into the world's libraries and a correspondence course is now available in America and Australia.
