

DR. EVERINGHAM'S LETTER TO THE MEDICAL JOURNAL OF AUSTRALIA

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This letter refers to Semantography as a tool for carrying out Chisholm's proposed treatment. See Semantography Series No. 85, 86.

A MESSAGE TO MORTALS

SIR: Your editorial (THE MEDICAL JOURNAL OF AUSTRALIA, November 8, 1952) seemed to me an unjust criticism of Brock Chisholm's positive approach to health. Chisholm, like his critic Desmond Curran, put his case for ordinary mortals in plain language. Also, Chisholm's case seems to me to need more urgent attention, at least from most psychiatrists, than the admittedly sound arguments you quote from Curran. Again, Chisholm's own plea for plain words appears in the outline of his argument for "positive" psychiatry quoted below (Chisholm, 1946):

"...this is a sick world, with...chronic, but ever more extensive and serious sickness...Though it seems...few want war...and many suffer in many ways during wars, man persists in this senseless behaviour...air transport and the atomic bomb are only the latest steps in... breaking down the geographical barriers...We are all now, perforce, citizens of one world, whether we are sufficiently mature adequately to carry that responsibility or not...we are the kind of people who fight wars every fifteen or twenty years...as far back as we know anything of the race.

When we see neurotic patients showing the same reactions in their private affairs we may...try to help the person in trouble to grow up over again more successfully than his parents were able to do...The responsibility for charting the necessary changes in human behaviour rests clearly on the sciences working in that field. Psychologists, psychiatrists, sociologists, economists and politicians must...earnestly consider what can be done to save the race...from its insatiable desire for its own blood...strong combinations of powerful nations... legislation...pretending that now everyone will love everyone else...prayer and fasting...control of enemy industries...all have been tried repeatedly and uniformly unsuccessful...

All psychiatrists know where these symptoms come from. The burden of inferiority, guilt and fear we have all carried lies at the root of this failure to mature successfully. Psychotherapy is predominantly...reduction of...this load...What basic psychological distortion can be found in any civilization of which we know anything?...the concept of right and wrong, the poison long ago described and warned against as "the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil" ...We have been very slow to rediscover this truth and...artificially imposed inferiority, guilt and fear, commonly known as sin, under which we have almost all laboured, and which produces so much of the social maladjustment and unhappiness in the world...we have bowed our necks to the yoke of the conviction of sin.

To produce a generation of mature citizens is the biggest and most necessary job any country could undertake and the reward in saving of misery and suffering would be colossal...What the world needs from psychiatry is honest, simple and clear thinking, talking and writing. It needs the same from psychology, sociology, economics and politics. Clear and honest thinking can almost always be expressed in simple words which are understandable by the people who matter in a democracy...the teachers, the young mothers and fathers, the parent-teacher associations, youth groups, service clubs, schools, colleges, churches and Sunday schools - everyone who can be reached and given help toward intellectual freedom and honesty for themselves and for the children whose future depends on them...psychology and sociology and simple psychopathology, the science of living should be made available to all the people...all children in primary and secondary school...Only so, I think, can we help our children to carry the responsibilities as world citizens as we have not been able to do...prevent their having to live in a world of fear and chaos and cruelty and death, far more horrible than we can know."

I appeal to would be "positive" workers in preventive mental hygiene, as a general public health project, to contact me, whatever their qualifications, or

to write to the Institute for Semantography, 5 Maroubra Bay Road, Pagewood, New South Wales, where the tool for carrying out Chisholm's plan has, I firmly believe, been evolved. It is so promising (Professor Meredith, a psychiatrist of Leeds, Bertrand Russell, Professor Reiser and other representative experts have commended it) that I feel we will soon no longer say, as Chisholm did: Can such a program of re-education or a new kind of education be charted? I would not presume to go so far." All I ask of those who disagree is that they put to me or the Institute any important verbal "bone of contention" which cannot be explained clearly and dispassionately to any sane person with a mental age of twelve, using less strokes of the pen than in any natural (phonetic) language script, and taking less time for teacher and pupil than any previous method. The basic symbols "crystal-clear" in any language, eliminate (or at least lay bare) ambiguities, paradoxes, disguised value-judgements, and all the other "inflammable", "explosive" or "poisonous" radicals in the chemistry of thought which do not appear in the empirical formulations of natural languages.

Unless groups of working enthusiasts can be formed among students of the humanities, UNESCO and most official bodies can be expected to go on dealing with Semantography politely with deaf ears, smoked glasses, red tape and pigeon-holes.

Yours etc.

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