



Blissymbolics Semantography Series 226

ONE LOGICAL SEMANTIC WRITING

FOR ONE WORLD

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Author and Inventor of "Semantography"

Introductory Note: Mr. Rudolf Modley formally of Vienna worked together with Dr. Neurath of Vienna, who invented the "Isotype" little pictures for statistical graphs, in which each little picture represented a certain amount as for instance a picture of one man represented 1 million men. Consequently $3\frac{1}{2}$ little pictures of the same outline (Isotypes) represented $3\frac{1}{2}$ million men.

He continued this work in statistical books and articles in America under the name of pictographs. Being a friend of my friend Fritz Treuer, and knowing all the time of my work, he got at last in touch with me in 1961, after having worked on a project on symbols for the Ford Foundation.

He informed me that he intends to publish a journal under the title "Symbols" and invited me to contribute an article. I immediately wrote for him the following article in January 1961. Today, when typing these stencils the date is August 1964 and my article is still not published.

"Ah, some sort of Esperanto (how hopeless)!"

"A new sign language (how backward)!"

"A picture writing (how childish)!"

These are the usual remarks of Western people who glance at an article on Semantography. Only the few who know the history of China know better. And those who know my story.

In 1938-39 the dreadful swastika symbol darkened my days in the concentration camps of Dachau and Buchenwald. Later, in Shanghai's segregation camp, the Japanese pinned another symbol on my coat, meaning "stateless." But my mind was oblivious to all the suffering then. I was captivated by a greater force than brute force: by the power and wonder of Chinese ideographic script. I learned that, throughout the centuries, Chinese governments tried to introduce a phonetic script - without success. The Japanese introduced Hiragana and Katagana centuries ago, but though they have adopted almost everything from the West, they could not abandon Chinese characters. Why?

The late Professor Sir Basil Hall Chamberlain of Tokio University gave the answer in 1905:

"Ideographic writing apparently possesses some inherent strength that makes it tend to triumph over phonetic writing whenever the two are brought into competition in the same area."

He proved it for Westerners by showing the universal acceptance of mathematical ideographs like $1 + 2 = 3$ which bridge all languages - without translation. And he prophesied:

"Ideographic writing will surely achieve the final victory over phonetic writing."

This prophecy is ridiculed by Western linguists. But they never tried to climb, what Lin Yutang called "The second great Wall of China", it's ideographic writing. True enough, it's archaic and complicated, yet it provides an amazing cultural and political unifying factor for people speaking different languages. Sinologists, students of Chinese history and culture, are unanimous in two amazing assertions. They say that

- (1) the main factor, which in China welded different linguistic groups of people into the largest nation on earth, is the Chinese ideographic script;
- (2) a European nation would have been a reality centuries ago if Europe had an ideographic writing, if Basques and Bulgarians, Frenchmen and Finns, Scotsmen and Spaniards, Greek and Germans had a common bond of communication in being able to read the same book and the same paper, and correspond with each other - though speaking many different languages.

Threehundred years ago, the great mathematician Leibnitz got excited about Chinese script, but dismayed about its complexity. In his "New Essays concerning Human Understanding" he speculated about a simple universal symbolism, pictorial and popular, containing also some sort of mathematical logic, just as everyone can read $1 + 2 = 4$ and realize that it contains a lie.

But pictorial logical symbols for all meanings in all languages? Linguists and logicians declared the idea impossible.

Now, 300 years later, Professor Oliver L. Reiser, eminent philosopher and logician of the University of Pittsburgh, read a paper to the American Association for the Advancement of Science, titled

"Unified Symbolism for World Understanding in Science"

and said

"Bliss realized the ambition of the great mathematician Leibnitz."

Being a chemist, I have tried to apply principals of chemical analysis to the analysis of words. I found that only about 100 symbol elements are sufficient to express in combination most meanings, even in science. Below are a few symbols (much enlarged) which can be typed on a specially adjusted typewriter of ordinary size from which only the redundant capital letters are removed and replaced by symbol elements for the composition of the symbol compounds. The small letters of the alphabet remain for typing names, international words and whole statements if necessary. With such a simple typewriter commercial firms can send out letters, prospects, pricelists, etc. which can be read in all languages. If this seems crazy to you, just think that today every larger commercial firm has an employee specially trained in the writing of the most crazily complicated ideographic scripts - the telegraphic codes. In contrast, a radiophotogram in Semantography needs no coding, decoding and translating. What is needed now is an enterprising typewriter manufacturer and a business college to start courses in commercial semantography.

All the foregoing assertions about China, about the advantages of ideographs, about my claim that only 100 symbol elements are necessary, may be difficult to believe. Even more unbelievable may be my claim that these symbols are to be operated like mathematical symbols in a simple semantics and symbolic logic. A schoolchild trained in semantography will immediately recognize the demagogic fallacies voiced at the breakfast table and the conference table, in the gossip papers and the political papers. Few men have taken the trouble to examine the logical semantics of Semantography, but these men are world authorities, like Professor Oliver Reiser ("Bliss' heroic work"), Lord Bertrand Russell ("an important service to mankind"), Sir Julian Huxley ("it provides something of real importance") and others. So let's see how these symbols look like and how they work.

The first 17 symbol elements are the numbers 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0, the mathematical signs + - x : =, and the dot (.) and the comma (,) Sample combinations of dot and comma are the semicolon(;), the exclamation mark (!), the colon(:), the apostroph ('), the quotation marks("), etc.

The next symbol element is the line which in combination with the dot forms

| | | |
|---------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| | · | .· |
| line | before in front | behind after |
| · | — | |
| above over | below under | between |

The next symbol is the well-known arrow which in combination with the line forms

| | | |
|----------|-----------|----------|
| ┌→ | → | → |
| start | departure | progress |
| → | →┘ | ┆→ |
| approach | stop | through |

To the motorist these symbols strike a familiar note. Indeed, where the bridging of the barrier of Babel is a matter of Life or Death - on the motor-roads of the world - warning signs in the native languages are taken down and replaced by pictographs which can be quickly grasped in all languages, in rain or fog, in darkness or drunkenness. Semantography offers simple symbols for all meanings on the road, even for all meanings on the menu-card in the roadhouse restaurant (all composed with a few symbol elements. See the 3 volumes on Semantography, mentioned in the Bibliography at the end of article).

For the science-minded reader the line symbol represents the "line of reference", the space-time co-ordinate from which all movements are measured. The arrow symbol alone means that something is moving, but what? The line symbol too demands an answer as to space and time: Where to? Where from? and When? A child trained in these pictographs will know that it has to ask: "What is moving?" A man, a bus, a train, a plane? Where and When? From London to Glasgow. From 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Thus the symbol is resolved.

But the arrow standing alone and meaning "Progress" has no definition and no defining lines. Hence "Progress" may mean anything and nothing. Hence this word is dearly beloved by all politicians. Khrushchev cries that "Russia is progressing" and Mao-Tse-Tung shouts of "the great leap forward", and millions of Americans fall victim to these words, including John Kennedy who said that "America is standing still. We must make it move again."

A child, when seeing the symbols 2 + will ask "Two plus what?" But learned men and laymen alike, when hearing that Russia is progressing and America not, do not ask: What is progressing? Where and When? Right now, when I write these lines Olga Ivinskaya 55, the Lara of Pasternak's "Doctor Zhivago" may be progressing in a cattle train towards a Siberian concentration camp. Mao-Tse-Tung is moving Chinese men and women into separate communal dormitories, thus destroying China's only common bond of family life. And Kennedy's first progressive move was the speeding up of armaments. All this is progress, but is this the progress we all mean when we hear the word?

These paragraphs may show you that Semantography means nothing less than a revolution in mankind's thinking. And this is exactly what Leibnitz had in mind and hoped for, when he wrote 300 years ago:

"A Universal Symbolism, very popular, might be introduced if small figures were employed in the place of words, which would represent visible things by their lines and the invisible, by the visible, which accompany them."

"This true method of a Universal Symbolism would guide the mind as do the lines drawn in geometry and the formulas in arithmetic."

"This would be of service for easy communication with distant nations, but if introduced also among us, without however renouncing ordinary writing, would be useful in giving thoughts less absurd and verbal than we now have."

"Now" meant for Leibnitz the seventeenth century. But "now" we have the press and the loudspeakers, radio and TV. The absurd and verbal thoughts of today have increased trillions of time. Surely, we are heading for "semantic suicide" said Professor Oliver L. Reiser. And here are some symbol samples from the book

THE INTEGRATION OF HUMAN KNOWLEDGE

by Prof. Oliver L. Reiser
University of Pittsburgh
(published by Porter Sargent, Boston)

Herebelow followed the page 78 of the aforementioned book which is actually a reprint of the 3rd page of Semantography Series No. 52, the pamphlet which I prepared and printed for Prof. Reiser's lecture in 1951, before the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Oliver L. Reiser, UNIFIED SYMBOLISM FOR WORLD UNDERSTANDING IN SCIENCE (including Bliss Symbols (Semantography), Logic, Cybernetics and Semantics) published by the Semantography Publishing Co. 2 Vicar Street, Coogee, Sydney Australia, \$2 post paid)
- Oliver L. Reiser THE INTEGRATION OF HUMAN KNOWLEDGE (published by Porter Sargent, Boston, \$8)
- C.K. Bliss SEMANTOGRAPHY 3 volumes (published by the Semantography Publishing Co. 2 Vicar Street, Coogee, Sydney, Australia \$12 post paid)
- C.K. Bliss and Co-workers THE SEMANTOGRAPHY SERIES, 200 issues containing special applications of Semantography, Courses, Correspondences, Controversies, Articles which appeared in papers and magazines, (published by the Semantography Publishing Co. 2 Vicar Street, Coogee, Sydney, Australia, a 20 page catalog will be posted for 50 ¢, which amount will be deducted, when issues of the Series are ordered).

Post Mortem in 1971 nine years later

Today 9 years later I report that Modley never published this article. But then he never published his proposed journal "Symbols" either. What he did publish was a few "newsletters" about an organisation called "Glyphs" originated by himself and Margaret Mead. I shall have to say a lot about all this at a later date. Enough to say here that Modley tried hard to get money for symbol research. He got some before from the Ford Foundation, but then nothing more, and the co-operation of Margaret Mead did not help it at all.

We exchanged sometimes irascible letters, simply because I thought that Modley should promote my work. Modley however, did not believe and does not believe that my system can indeed be used for all meanings in commerce, industry and science, and he said so. I refuted all his arguments, and proved that he did not take the time to look into my book.

Neither would Modley agree that I have conceived even a symbolic logic. And therefore he may have been stymied by my references to present-day politics. Never mind. My system is the only complete system and all other symbol-seekers try to evolve symbols and can't. What they can, is talk about symbols.

The End