

Fernando Pessoa

[Carta a Eden Fisher & Co. — 27 Nov. 1925]

Lisbon, 20th. October, 1925.

Messrs. Eden Fisher & Co., Ltd.,
6-8, Clements Lane, London, E.C.4.

Dear Sirs:

I have devised a system to

(1) condense into five-letter code halfword each unit (word or phrase) of the A.B.C. 5th. Edition Code; and also, and at the same time, to

(2) code simultaneously with the A.B.C. 5th. and the A.B.C. 6th. Edition Codes, no possible confusion arising; and, besides this, and at the same time, to

(3) code with the greatest conciseness the most complex numerical designations — millions, thousands and units, decimals of any type and fractions of every sort.

The originality and efficiency of the system I have devised consists essentially, not in that it does any of these three things, but that it does *all three together* by the same system and in the same way.

No great ingenuity would be required to «condense» the A.B.C. 5th. Edition; and the 6th. Edition does not require condensation. But it is a different thing to enable anyone to code simultaneously with the two codes and at the same time to handle without difficulty numbers and fractions of the greatest imaginable complexity.

The system is not only ingenious, but also simple and concise. It is simple because it is understood at once and because its application is extremely rapid, since it involves nothing to strain the intellect or even the attention. It is concise because an eight-page pamphlet can contain it all.

It stands to reason that this system, if it have (as in fact it has) the advantages I claim for it, would be of use to you and to the proprietors of the A.B.C. Codes in so far as:

(1) It would enable users of only the 5th. Edition to cut down their telegraphic expenses fifty per cent.

(2) It would enable users of both the 5th. and te 6th. Editions to avail themselves, at the same time and without any possible confusion, of the separate and distinct advantages of each of those two codes.

(3) It would enable users of either or both those Codes to cable in connection with them numbers, decimals and fractions of the greatest complexity.

(4) Considering its small size, the cost of this supplementary booklet would necessarily be also small.

(5) Besides these advantages to the users, which are by implication advantages to the sellers, of the two Codes, the publication of this system would enable you not only generally to compete with other codes, but more particularly to do so with the so-called «Improved» 5th. Edition wherever that is sold, for there is no one but would prefer a system (consisting in a cheap pamphlet) which, while doing the same thing that the «Improved» 5th. does, has, over and above that, two other applications. The mere presence of the «numerical» part of the system — to code complicated numbers, decimals and fractions — is sufficient to clinch the matter, the more so that the A.B.C. 5th. Edition has a small range in this respect.

I need not add that what I have called «an eighth-page pamphlet» may be published not only as such but as a small preface, appendix or addendum to either the 5th. or te 6th. Editions in future impressions of them.

If the contents of this preliminary letter create in you or in the proprietors of the A.B.C. Codes any interest in respect to my system, I shall be pleased to send a copy of it to you or to them, with a view to negotiation.

Yours faithfully,

20-10-1925

Pessoa Inédito. Fernando Pessoa. (Orientação, coordenação e prefácio de Teresa Rita Lopes). Lisboa: Livros Horizonte, 1993: 34.