LANGUAGE, THOUGHT, and REALITY

SELECTED WRITINGS OF BENJAMIN LEE WHORF

Edited and with an introduction by JOHN B. CARROLL

Foreword by STUART CHASE

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There is no one metaphysical pool of universal human thought. Speakers of different languages see the Cosmos differently, evaluate it differently, sometimes not by much, sometimes widely. Thinking is relative to the language learned. There are no primitive languages. Research is needed to discover the world view of many unexplored languages, some now in danger of extinction. Somewhere along the line it may be possible to develop a real international language. Some day all peoples will use language at capacity, and so think much straighter than we now do.

Theoretically this might mean the end of linguistic relativity, but it would not mean the mountain had been climbed. The next great task would be to devise new forms of speech to bring us ever closer to reality, to move capacity on and up. "So far as we can envision the future, we must envision it in terms of mental growth."

It is tragic for us all that the mental growth of Benjamin Lee Whorf was so prematurely interrupted.

Georgetown, Connecticut
November 23, 1955

STUART CHASE

CONTENTS

v Foreword, by Stuart Chase
1 Introduction, by John B. Carroll
35 On the connection of ideas (1927)
40 On psychology (date unknown)
43 A central Mexican inscription combining Mexican and Maya day signs (1931)
51 The punctual and segmentative aspects of verbs in Hopi (1936)
57 An American Indian model of the universe (circa 1936)
65 A linguistic consideration of thinking in primitive communities (circa 1936)
87 Grammatical categories (1937)
102 Discussion of Hopi linguistics (1937)
112 Some verbal categories of Hopi (1938)
125 Language: plan and conception of arrangement (1938)
134 The relation of habitual thought and behavior to language (1939)
160 Gestalt technique of stem composition in Shawnee (1939)
173 Decipherment of the linguistic portion of the Maya hieroglyphs (1940)
199 Linguistic factors in the terminology of Hopi architecture (1940)
207 Science and linguistics (1940)
220 Linguistics as an exact science (1940)
233 Languages and logic (1941)
246 Language, mind, and reality (1941)

Bibliography

A. Published writings of Benjamin Lee Whorf
B. Unpublished manuscripts (selected)
C. Books and articles relating to Whorf's writings (selected)

1 Dates in parentheses are dates of composition.
only necessities for substantives in certain sentence positions, necessities for forces, attractions, etc. which are only necessities for verbs in certain other positions, and so on. Science, if it survives the impending darkness, will next take up the consideration of linguistic principles and divest itself of these illusory linguistic necessities, too long held to be the substance of Reason itself.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of Composition</th>
<th>Title</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1925</td>
<td>“Purpose vs. evolution.” Letter to the editors of the New Republic, issue of December 19, 1925.</td>
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<tr>
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