



LANGUAGE,  
THOUGHT,  
*and* REALITY

SELECTED WRITINGS OF BENJAMIN LEE WHORF

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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.

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*Georgetown, Connecticut*  
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<sup>1</sup> 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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