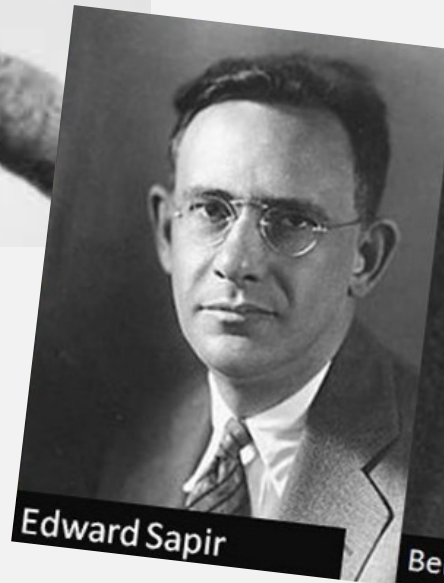


Franz Boas
**Father of Modern
Anthropology**

Why he was a
Champion of Equality



Edward Sapir



Benjamin Lee Whorf

American Structuralism

- An offshoot of anthropology

First half of the 20th century

In America, linguistics began as an offshoot of **anthropology**

Purpose: to record the cultures and languages of the fast-dying American Indian tribes

- 'Race, Language and Culture' (1940) – collection of essays
- Contributed mainly to cultural, biological and linguistic anthropology

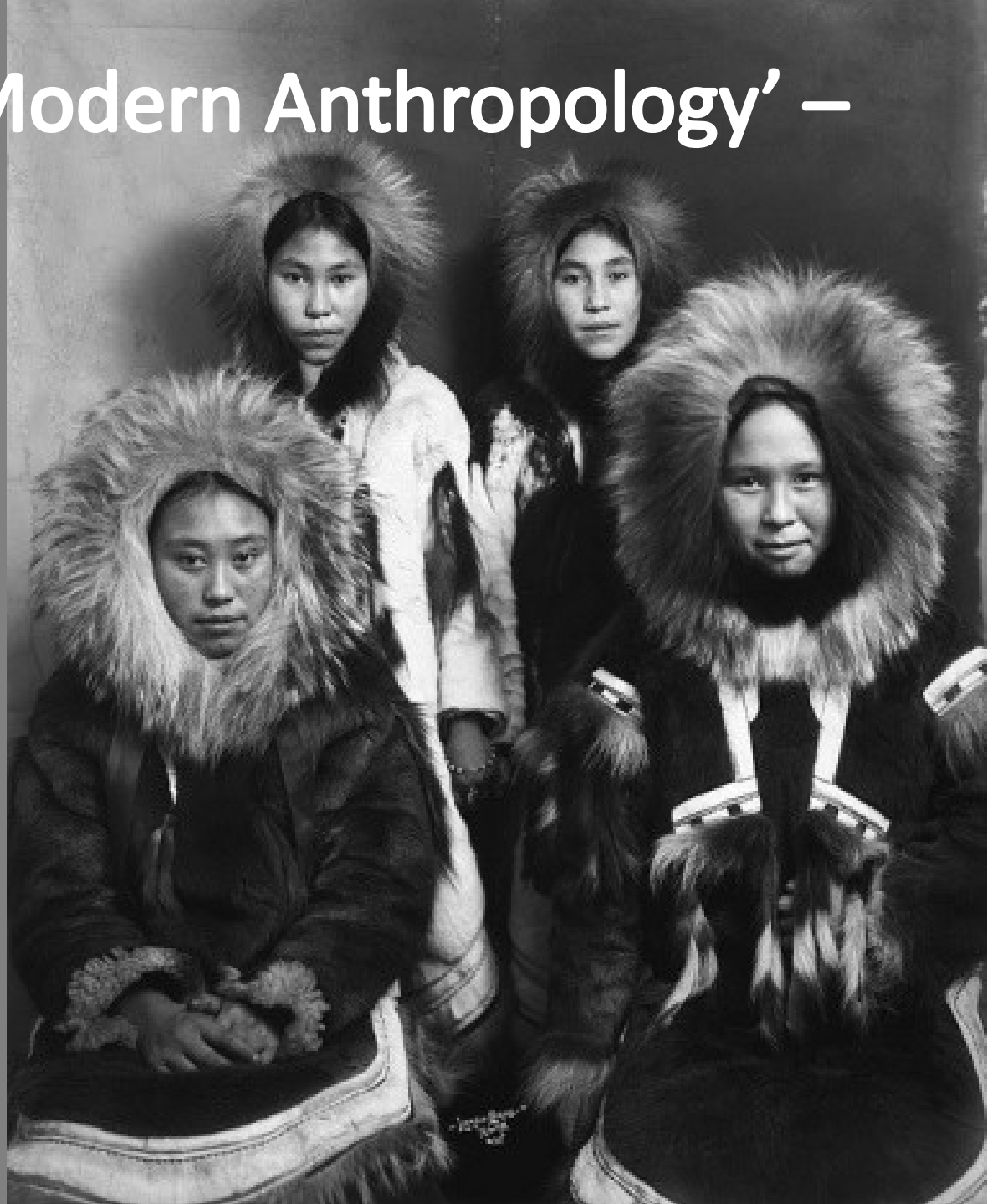
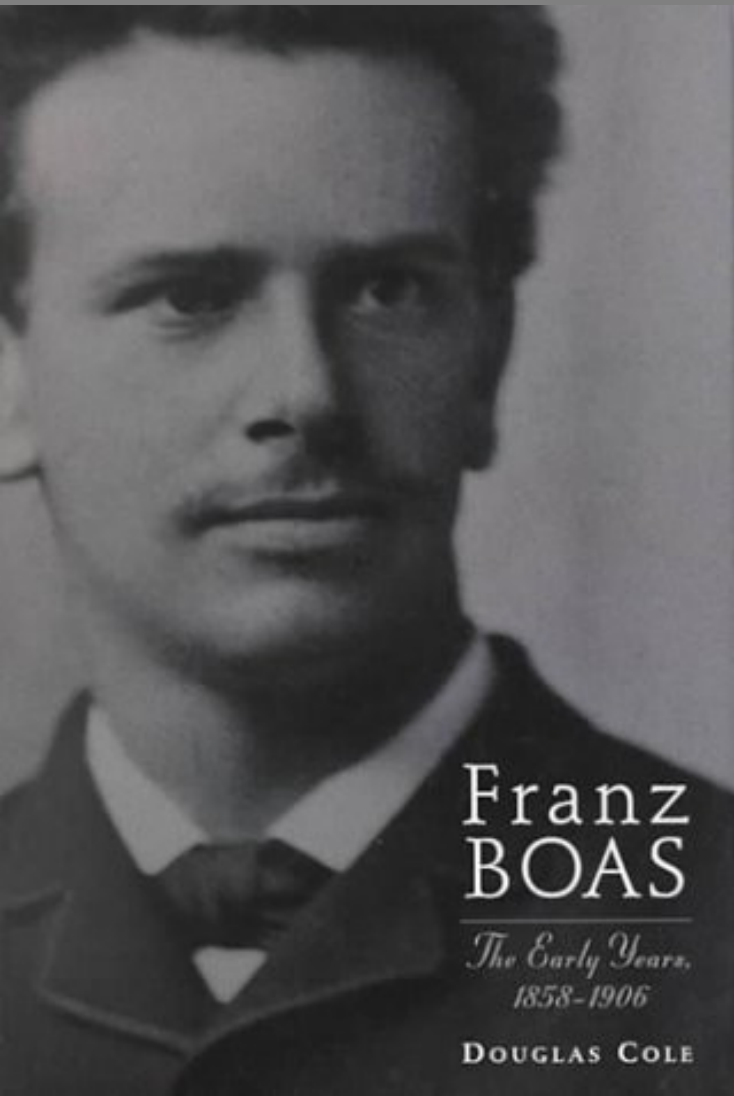
Franz Boas (1858-1842)



Franz Boas Onboard the Germania in 1883,
on his Expedition to Baffin Island



The 'Father of Modern Anthropology' – Franz Boas



Franz Boas
**Father of Modern
Anthropology**

Why he was a
Champion of Equality



The Mind of Primitive Man (1911), one of his best books, integrated his theories concerning the history & development of cultures:

- In any given population, biology, language, and culture are autonomous; no one of these dimensions is reducible to another
- Culture does not depend on any independent variables
- The biological, linguistic, and cultural traits of any group of people are the product of historical developments involving both cultural and non-cultural forces
- Cultural plurality is a fundamental feature of humankind, and
- The specific cultural environment structures much individual behaviour

In his Preface to it, he wrote:

“**The concept of racial type** as commonly used even in scientific literature is misleading and **requires a logical as well as a biological redefinition**. While it would seem that a great number of American students of biology, psychology and anthropology concur with these views, popular prejudice, based on earlier scientific and popular tradition, has certainly not diminished, for race prejudice is still an important factor in our life.”

“Still worse is the subjection of science to ignorant prejudice in countries controlled by dictators.

Such control has extended particularly to books dealing with the subject matter of race and culture.

Since nothing is permitted to be printed that runs counter to the ignorant whims and prejudices of the governing clique, there can be no trustworthy science.”

Boas: The Mind of Primitive Man (1911)

There is no fundamental difference in the ways of thinking of primitive and civilized man.

A close connection between race and personality has never been established.

THE MIND
of
PRIMITIVE MAN

FRANZ BOAS

REVISED EDITION

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

Race : Language : Culture

Proof of **diffusion of cultural elements** may be found everywhere. Neither differences of race nor of language are effectual barriers for their spread.

In North America, California offers a good example of this kind ; for here many languages are spoken, and there is a certain degree of differentiation of type, but at the same time a considerable uniformity of culture prevails (Kroeber 2, 3).

Another case in point is the coast of New Guinea, where, notwithstanding strong local differentiations, a fairly characteristic type of culture prevails, which goes hand in hand with a strong differentiation of languages.

Race : Language & Culture

The historical development of mankind would afford a simpler and clearer picture if we were justified in the belief that in primitive communities the three phenomena had been intimately associated. No proof, however, of such an assumption can be given. On the contrary, the present distribution of languages, as compared with the distribution of types, makes it plausible that even at the earliest times **within the biological units more than one language and more than one culture were represented.**

Summary_Race : Language & Culture

One race – many languages and cultures:

“within the biological units more than one language and more than one culture were represented.”

Examples:

- Europe
- Africa
- New Guinea

“A fair realization of the incredible degree of the diversity of linguistic system that ranges over the globe leaves one with an inescapable feeling that the human spirit is inconceivably old; that the few thousand years of history covered by our written records are no more than the thickness of a pencil mark on the scale that measures our past experience on this planet; that the events of these recent millenniums spell nothing in any evolutionary wise, that the race has taken no sudden spurt, achieved no commanding synthesis during recent millenniums, but has only played a little with a few of the linguistic formulations and views of nature bequeathed from an inexpressibly longer past.”

Ethnoscience

Franz Boas established *cultural relativism* as an approach to understanding indigenous scientific practices. Cultural relativism identifies people's differences and shows how they are a result of the social, historical, and geographical conditions .

The Greek historian, Polybius, asserted “we mortals have an irresistible tendency to yield to climatic influences; and to this cause, and no other, may be traced the great distinctions that prevail among us in character, physical formation, complexion, as well as in most of our habits...”
(quoted in Harris, 1968: 41).

Edward Sapir [sə'piər] 1884–1939

One of the most significant linguists in North America of the 20th century (the other being Leonard Bloomfield).

Involved in Boas' anthropology program, studying languages & cultures of North American Indians in their own right, and not as inferior to those of Europeans (which was then typical).

The scope of his work grew beyond structuralist analysis to include the **philosophy** of language & thought.

LINGUIST,
ANTHROPOLOGIST,
HUMANIST



Among his major contributions to linguistics is his classification of Indigenous languages of the Americas, upon which he elaborated for most of his professional life. He played an important role in developing the modern concept of the phoneme, greatly advancing the understanding of phonology.

Before Sapir it was generally considered impossible to apply the methods of historical linguistics to languages of indigenous peoples because they were believed to be more primitive than the Indo-European languages. Sapir was the first to prove that the methods of comparative linguistics were equally valid when applied to indigenous languages.

[1921]

This is without doubt the most important book ever written on the subject of Language and Linguistics. It is a basic book, covering all the then known branches of the large field. It is therefore must reading for anybody interested in a deep study of languages.

This is a book which is basic in its subject and popular enough to be of interest to the general reader. The psychological and formal characteristics of speech are carefully established and after studying the historical factors that have molded it the author has devoted his last chapters to the wider bearings of linguistic science and to furnishing a clear understanding as the ever changing instruments of our emotions and mental activity.

https://books.google.com.pg/books/about/Language_by_Edward_Sapir.html?id=pULTnQEACAAJ&redir_esc=y&hl=en

LANGUAGE

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF SPEECH

EDWARD SAPIR

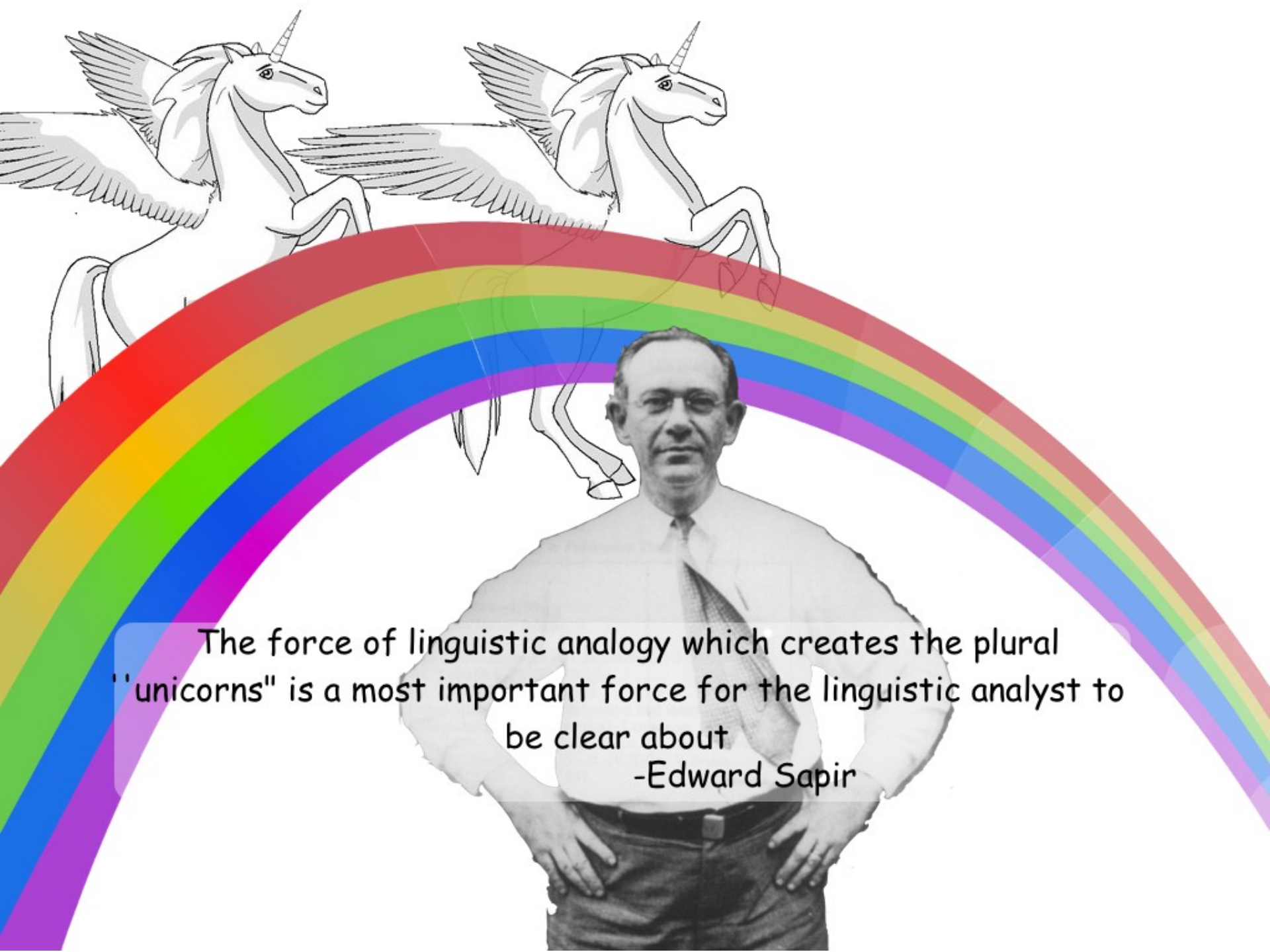
con-cep-tu-a
con-ception or
con-cep-tu-a
doctrines

Sapir's Quotes

“Language is a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions, and desires by means of a system of voluntarily produced symbols.”

— Edward Sapir: Language





The force of linguistic analogy which creates the plural "unicorns" is a most important force for the linguistic analyst to be clear about
-Edward Sapir



It would be naïve to imagine that any analysis of experience is dependent on pattern expressed in language. Any concept, whether or not it forms part of the system of grammatical categories, can be conveyed in any language. If a notion is lacking in a given series, it implies a different configuration and not a lack of expressive power.

— *Edward Sapir* —

AZ QUOTES



Nonverbal communication is an elaborate secret code that is written nowhere, known by none, and understood by all.

— *Edward Sapir* —

AZ QUOTES

“The worlds in which different societies live are distinct worlds, not merely the same world with different labels attached ... We see and hear and otherwise experience very largely as we do because the language habits of our community predispose certain choices of interpretation.”

— Edward Sapir

Sapir Quotes

We see and hear and otherwise experience very largely as we do because the language habits of our community predispose certain choices of interpretation.

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light gray grid background. The signature reads "E. Sapir." in a cursive, slanted script.

Sapir's Quotes

Language is an anonymous, collective and unconscious art; the result of the creativity of thousands of generations.

In a sense, every form of expression is imposed upon one by social factors, one's own language above all.

Sapir's Quotes

Nonverbal communication is an elaborate secret code that is written nowhere, known by none, and understood by all.

No two languages are ever sufficiently similar to be considered as representing the same social reality.



The fact of the matter is that the
'real world' is to a large extent
unconsciously built up on the
language habits of the group.

— *Edward Sapir* —

By the end of his life he was professor of anthropology at Yale, where he never really fit in.

Among his many students were the linguists *Mary Haas* and *Morris Swadesh*, and anthropologists such as *Fred Eggan* and *Hortense Powdermaker*.

With his linguistic background, Sapir became the one student of Boas to develop most completely the relationship between linguistics and anthropology.

Like Boas, Sapir wrote about the relationship between language, race & culture, and was interested in the relation between linguistic differences, and differences in cultural world views.

Sapir emphasized the importance of psychology to anthropology, maintaining that studying the nature of relationships between different individual personalities is important for understanding culture and society.

The Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis

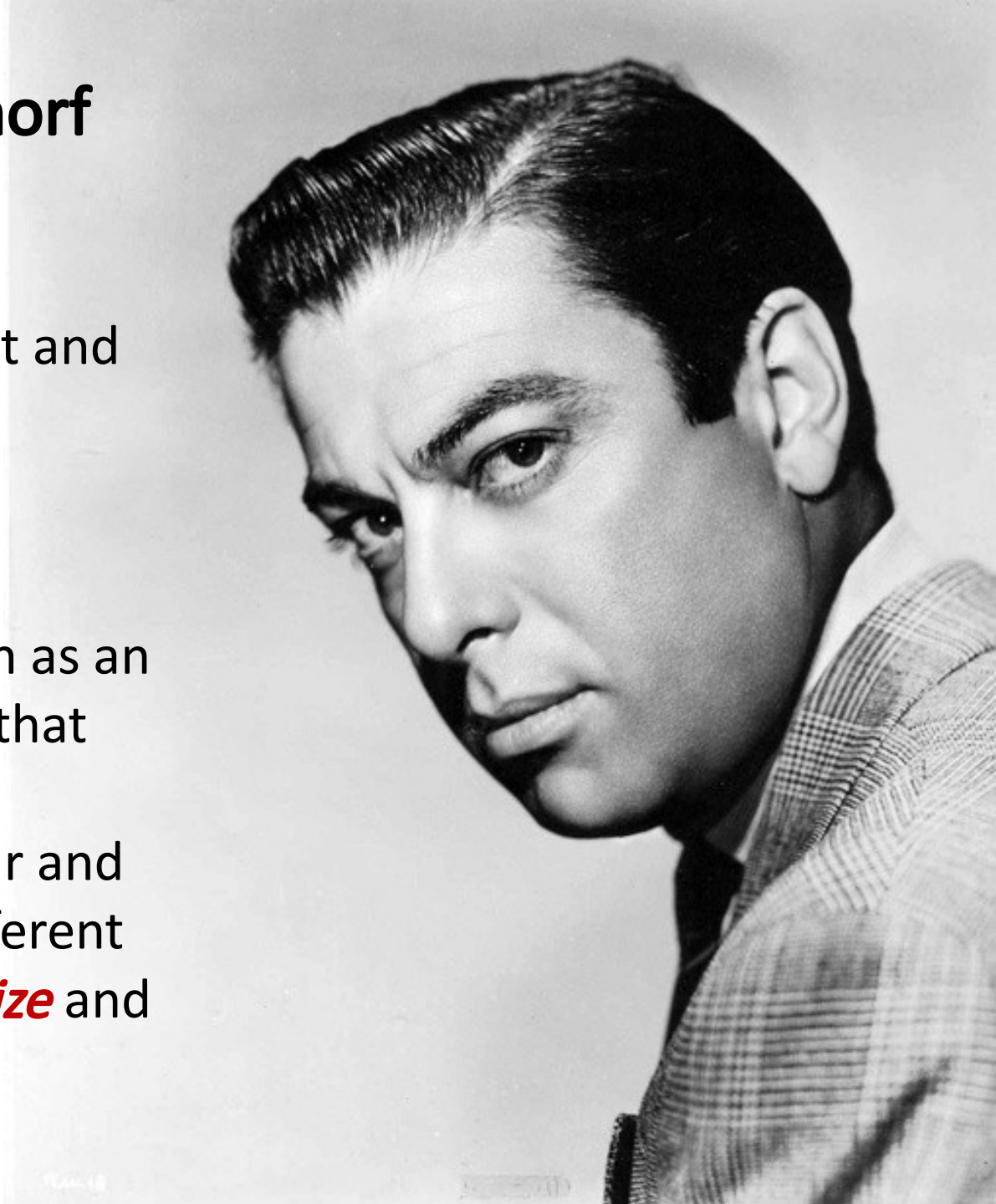
Sapir's ideas were developed by his student *Benjamin Lee Whorf* into the principle of linguistic relativity or the so-called "Sapir-Whorf" hypothesis.



Benjamin Lee Whorf (1897–1941)

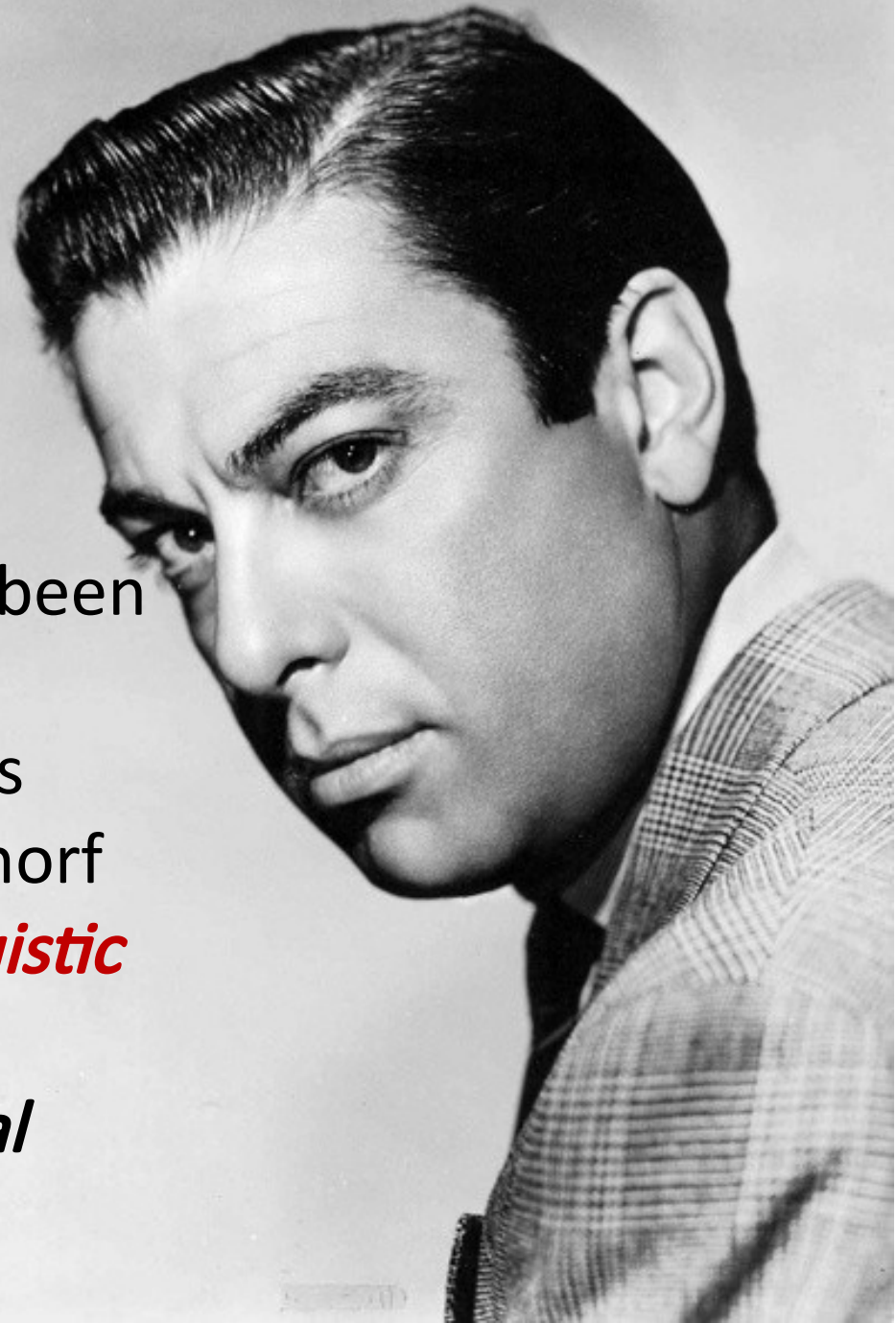
- An American linguist and chemical engineer
- **Sapir's protegee**

Whorf is widely known as an advocate for the idea that because of linguistic differences in grammar and usage, speakers of different languages **conceptualize** and **experience** the world differently.



The "Sapir–Whorf hypothesis"

This principle has frequently been called the "Sapir–Whorf hypothesis", after him and his mentor Edward Sapir, but Whorf called it the principle of *linguistic relativity*, by analogy with Einstein's principle of *physical relativity*.





Language is not simply a reporting device for experience but a defining framework for it.

— *Benjamin Lee Whorf* —

AZ QUOTES

Whorf Quotes

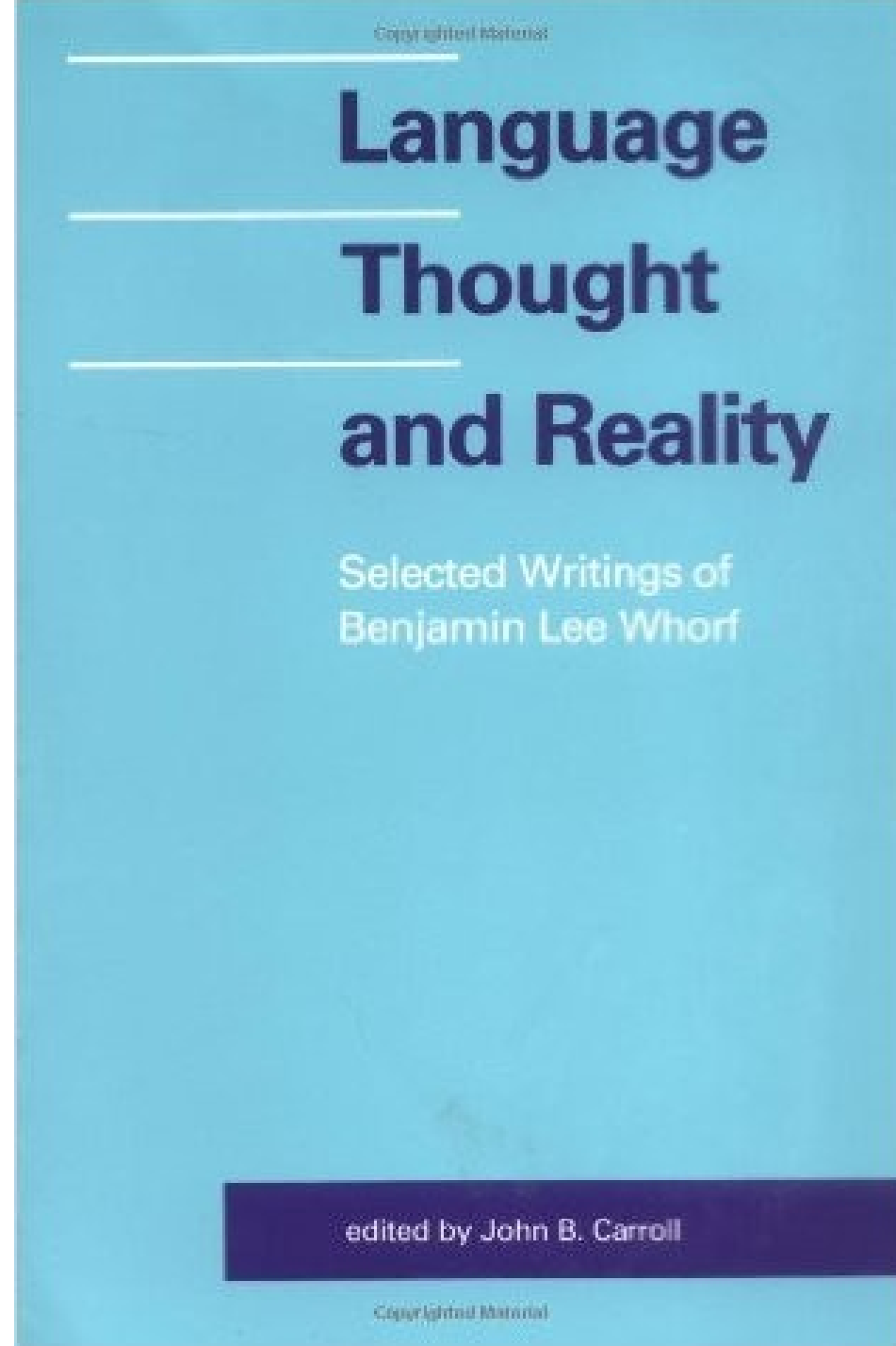
“Language shapes the way we think, and determines what we can think about.”

“We cut nature up, organize it into concepts, and ascribe significances as we do, largely because we are parties to an agreement to organize it in this way—an agreement that holds throughout our speech community and is codified in the patterns of our language.”

BLW Quotes

Most metaphysical words in Hopi are verbs, not nouns as in European languages.

We dissect nature along lines laid down by our native language.



BLW Quotes

Language is not simply a reporting device for experience but a defining framework for it.

Language, Thought, and Reality

Selected Writings of
Benjamin Lee Whorf

second edition

edited by John B. Carroll,
Stephen C. Levinson, and Penny Lee

BLW

After his death from cancer in 1941 his manuscripts were curated by his linguist friends who also worked to spread the influence of Whorf's ideas on the relation between language, culture and cognition. Many of his works were published posthumously in the first decades after his death.

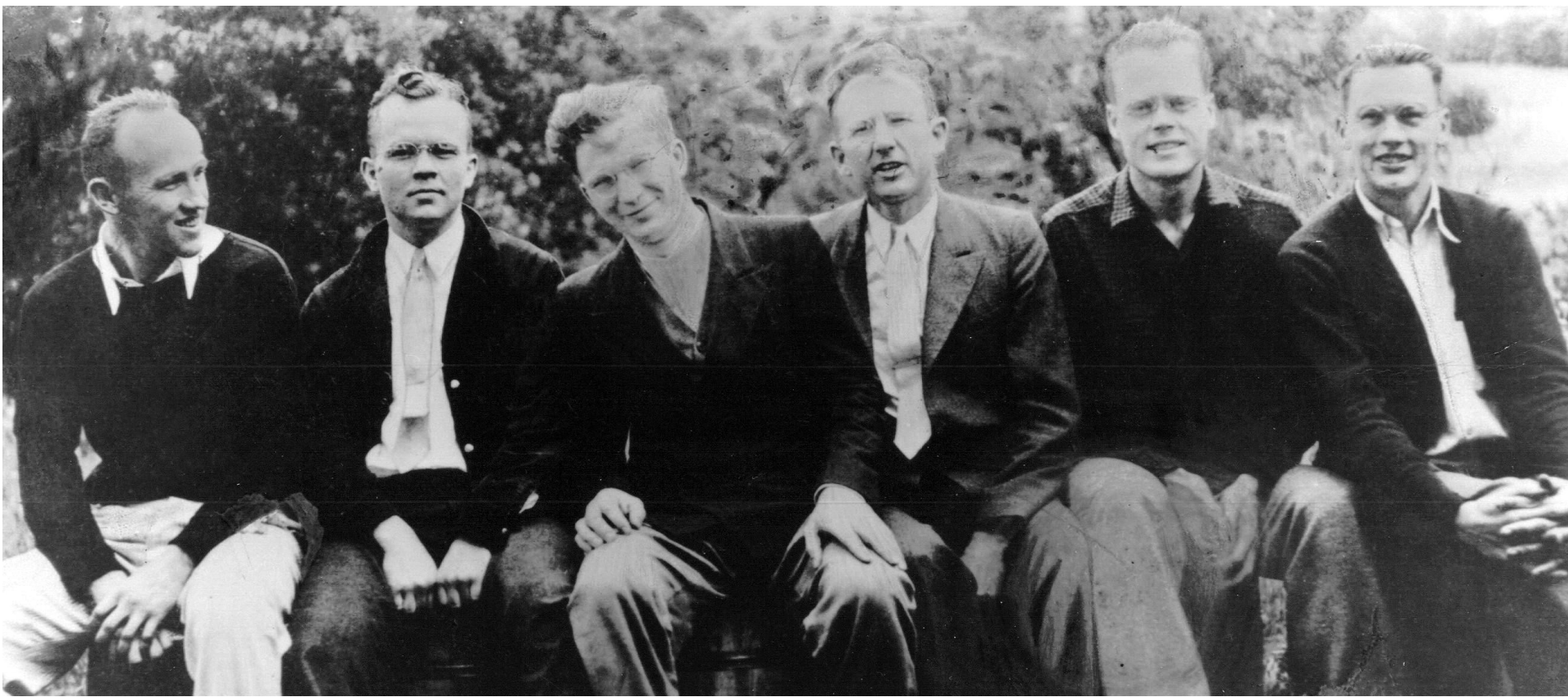
In the 1960s Whorf's views fell out of favor and he became the subject of harsh criticisms by scholars who considered language structure to primarily reflect cognitive universals rather than cultural differences. Critics argued that Whorf's ideas were untestable and poorly formulated and that they were based on badly analyzed or misunderstood data.

BLW

In the late 20th century, interest in Whorf's ideas experienced a resurgence, and a new generation of scholars began reading Whorf's works, arguing that previous critiques had only engaged superficially with Whorf's actual ideas, or had attributed to him ideas he had never expressed.

The field of linguistic relativity studies remains an active focus of research in psycholinguistics and linguistic anthropology, and continues to generate debate and controversy between proponents of relativism and proponents of universalism.

By comparison, Whorf's other work in linguistics, the development of such concepts as the allophone and the cryptotype, and the formulation of "Whorf's law" in Uto-Aztecan historical linguistics, have met with broad acceptance.



Kenneth L. Pike @ the 2nd SIL* session 5/7/1935

Another name to remember:

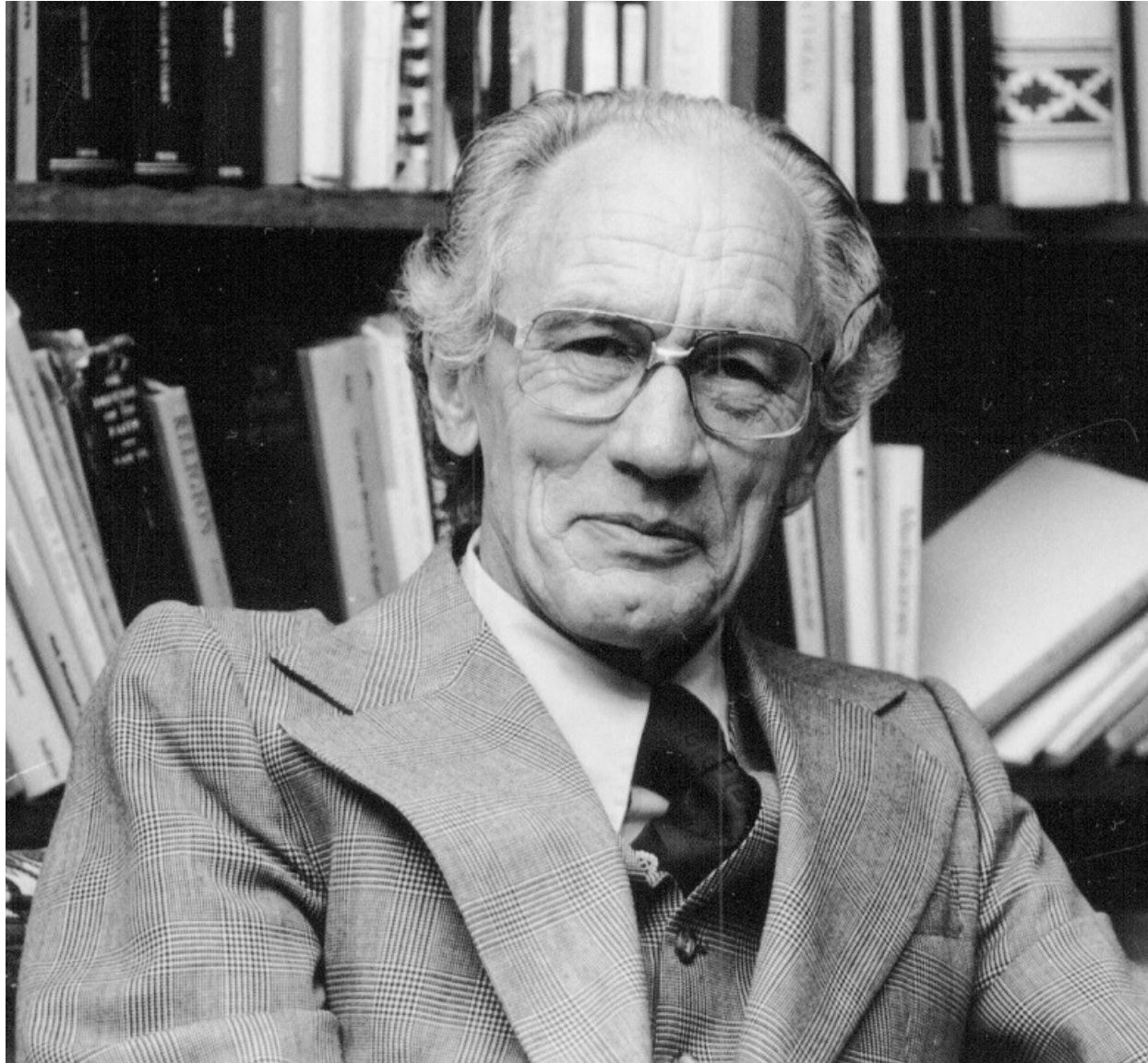
Kenneth Lee Pike (1912-2000) extended cultural relativism to linguistic analysis. With particular interest in **phonology** and **tonal systems**, Pike contributed a lot to the study of language in the context of human behavior.

* SIL International is a faith-based non-profit organization committed to serving language communities worldwide.

Ken Pike's terms: "Etic" vs. "Emic"

The ***emic*** approach focuses on how local people think: how they perceive/ categorize the world, their rules for behavior, what has meaning for them, and how they understand things.

The ***etic*** approach shifts the focus from the insiders' perceptions to those of the outsiders, emphasizes what they consider important.



Emic and *Etic* ways of understanding behavior /culture /personality of a people fall under the study of *cultural anthropology*.

Cultural anthropology states that people are shaped by their cultures and their subcultures, and we must account for this in the study of personality. One way is looking at things through a culture-specific *emic lens* with a focus on a single culture which must be understood “on its own terms.”

N.B. "*emic*" < "*phonemic*" < *phoneme*, which is a language-specific way of abstracting speech sounds

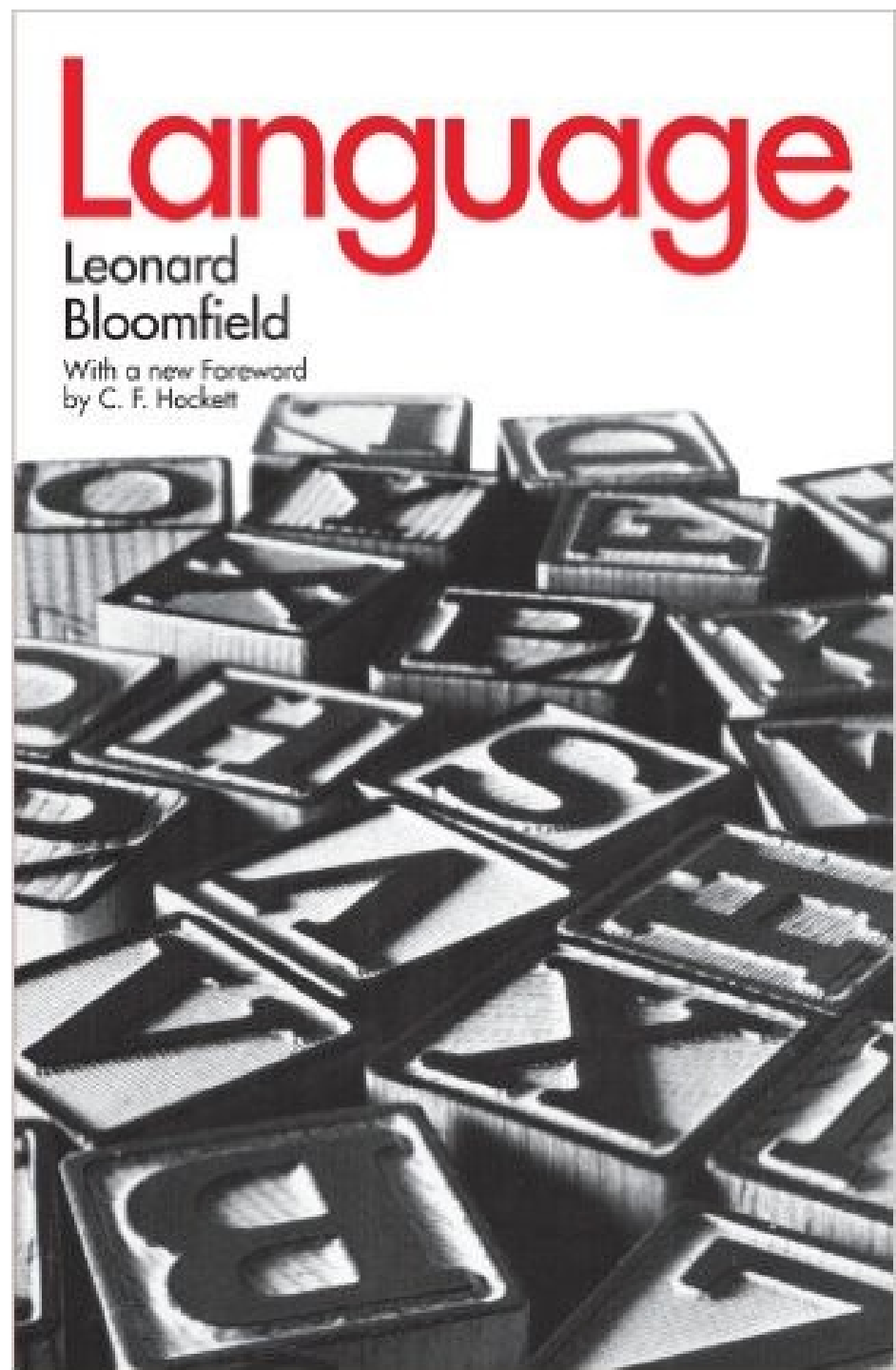
Leonard Bloomfield (1887 – 1949)

- Led the development of *structural* linguistics
- Made significant contributions to
 - Indo-European historical linguistics
 - The description of Austronesian languages, and
 - The description of languages of the Algonquian family.



Leonard Bloomfield (1887 – 1949)

- **Language** (1933) – over 5000 pages long
- Language study must always be centred on the **spoken** language
- Definitions used in grammar should be based on the **forms** of the language, not on the meanings of the forms; and
- A language at a given time is a complete system of sounds and forms that exist independently of the past – so that the history of a form does not explain its actual meaning.
- **Phoneme** – the most basic element



'Bloomfieldian era' – 1930s – 1950s

Focus – writing descriptive grammars of unwritten languages:

- Collecting sets of utterances from native speakers of these languages, and second,
- Analysing the corpus of collected data by studying the phonological and syntactic patterns of the language concerned, as far as possible without reference to meaning.
- Items were (in theory) identified and classified solely on the basis of their distribution within the corpus.

Bloomfield and his followers were interested in the **forms** of linguistic items, and in the way the items were arranged, not in meaning (semantics).

According to Bloomfield, meaning was not observable using rigid methods of analysis, and it was therefore 'the weak point in language study.'

Bloomfield claimed that linguistic phenomena should be studied in isolation from their non-linguistic environment.

Adhering to **behaviourist principles**, he avoided all but *empirical* description.

Behaviorism  Innateness

Discovery Procedures

For American structuralists, the ultimate goal of linguistics was the perfection of the discovery procedures – a set of principles which would enable them to ‘discover’ the linguistic units of an unwritten language.

Because of their overriding interest in the internal patterns, or ‘structures’ of language, they are sometimes labelled ‘structuralists.’

The **STRENGTH** of American structuralism:

The development of “Discovery Procedures” – the sound **methods** for the documentation and analysis of unfamiliar languages.

Its **WEAKNESS**:

Total focus on technical descriptions of the physical structures of language, in isolation from, & ignoring, **MEANING** – its essence.

Bloomfield

Emphasized the use of the **scientific** method & formal procedures for the analysis of linguistic data.

The influence of Bloomfieldian structural linguistics declined in the late 1950s and 1960s as the theory of Generative Grammar developed by Noam Chomsky came to predominate.

