



Seven Brief Lessons on Language

Jonathan Dunne

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Seven Brief Lessons on Language is an insightful language arts book with an unusual take on the spiritual underpinnings of English.

Jonathan Dunne's musing text *Seven Brief Lessons on Language* addresses the spiritual side of linguistics.

Beginning with the assertion that the first word the human physiology is capable of producing is Sanskrit for "invoke the gods," this book forwards intriguing arguments about the links between language and the spirit. It suggests that there are three elements of speech: breath, water, and flesh—the same three elements that, in the biblical creation story, are called into service to make human beings. Thus, common words are said to carry a code to understanding the nature of God; the meaning and purpose of life; and how life on Earth came to be. The book muses that this overlooked spiritual dimension can only be perceived with open eyes—and also that seeing it can lead to a life of awareness about God's presence everywhere, in everything.

Less a theory that can be proven via a "rational, coherent argument than by the words themselves," this controversy-courting book argues that English language translations of the Bible contain misinterpretations due to lack of awareness that words are carriers of encoded, nuanced messages. It takes an unconventional approach to unraveling these misinterpretations, employing a logic that arises from a life and viewpoint based in the sacraments of the Orthodox Church, participation in spiritual life, and a firm belief in God. As a result, the logic of its explanations may seem arbitrary to those not oriented in a similar manner.

The book introduces new word equivalents; interprets them in reverse, or with their letters rearranged; and gives them meaning according to the rules of phonetics, the order of letters in the alphabet, what they look like, or their similarity of sound, according to its system of fixed rules. White spaces in a text are counted as representing eternity. Sanskrit and Greek, together with creative linguistic devices, are used to widen these perceptions, explain anomalies, and help clarify some of the parables of Jesus and teachings on the Holy Trinity, giving rise to conclusions that support Dunne's beliefs. Further, the text shifts between complex explanations, examples of the ways its word meanings and correlations are devised, and more accessible theological discussions.

An error arises in a discussion of the water of baptism as the combination of Jesus as the oxygen "(O)," and the Holy Spirit as the hydrogen "(H)." The correct chemical formula for water is H₂O. Some sentences lack spaces between words, and the text contains punctuation errors that undermine its delivery. Still, the book makes a cogent argument that humans are not the authors (creators), but merely the translators (users and manipulators) of what exists in the world. Here, the role of translator is somewhat magical, and the book honors human beings' role and purpose as givers and receivers of meaning, love, and kindness.

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KRISTINE MORRIS (April 21, 2022)

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