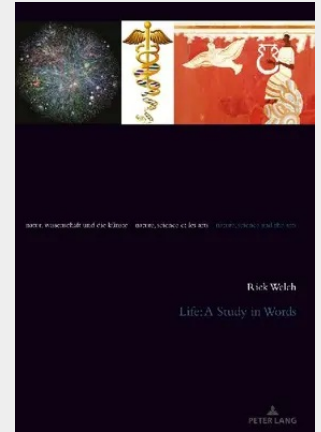


Life: A Study in Words

is a query that never dies... Most modern-day approaches to this enduring question attempt to define what life *is*, from the standpoint of science, philosophy, religion, medicine, etc. In this book, the conception of life in Western culture is explored through a host of words that has come down to us from antiquity. The author presents a flowing linguistic view of life from the distant past. The etymologic heritage is traced to ancient Greek – to the philosophical foundation of Western thinking. The author pursues a path into prehistory, looking at the development of words from roots in the Indo-European language family, which includes the classical languages of Greek and Latin, as well as English and many other Eurasian languages – ultimately, in the common ancestral Proto-Indo-European (PIE) tongue. In so doing, one finds a shared lexical genealogy underlying the linguistic source of the Western notions of life. The diversity of word-forms that are associative of life in today's vernacular grew out of a seemingly labyrinthine – though, in reality, a highly integrative – state of comprehension of the affiliation between the mortal human being and the natural environment in the prehistoric PIE civilization. In the *logos* of ancient Greek thought, emanating from the ancestral *mythos* of the PIE and early Mediterranean peoples, the ideas of "life" and "nature" were fused into a unified vision of existence – as can be seen in the prehistoric origin of the verb *be* itself. This book concentrates on more than sheer words; it is also on how we – the living, sentient beings that we are – speak of our very being in space and time in the world around us. The birthright of a conjoined sentence of life and nature has branched-out through the ages of Western thinking. The legacy today is a fossilized linguistic Tree of Life, engendering a plurality of words for "life"; wherein, each of us must create our own meaning of "life."

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