

The Argument from Language & the Existence of God

THE ORIGIN OF THE ARTICLE

- Joci Potter
- PHIL 470 Philosophical Psychology
- Her take-home exam
- My proposal
- Our religious differences
- Response for the *Journal of Religion*
- Our second submission

PINKER & BLOOM

All human societies have language. As far as we know they always did; language was not invented by some groups and spread to others like agriculture or the alphabet. . . . The grammars of industrial societies are no more complex than the grammars of hunter-gatherers. . . . Within societies, individual humans are proficient language users regardless of intelligence, social status, or level of education.

PINKER & BLOOM

Children are fluent speakers of complex grammatical sentences by the age of three, without benefit of formal instruction. They are capable of inventing languages that are more systematic than those they hear, showing resemblances to languages that they have never heard, and obey grammatical principles for which there is no evidence in their environments.

PINKER & BLOOM

- What explains all of this?
- [T]he ability to use a natural language belongs more to the study of human biology than human culture; it is a topic like echolocation in bats or stereopsis in monkeys, not like writing or the wheel.

THE REVOLUTION IN LINGUISTICS

- Linguistics in the early 1900s
- B. F. Skinner
- Chomsky
- The cognitive revolution
- Cognitive science
- Steven Pinker

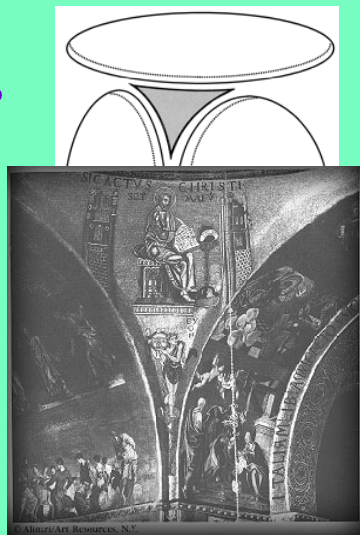


THE LANGUAGE ORGAN

- Chomsky's hypothesis
- Deep-structure
 - Debbie helped Steve.
 - Debbie heard Steve.
 - The shooting of the hunters disturbed me.
 - Homework, dog, chomp, sorry.
 - Colorless green ideas sleep furiously.
- All natural languages
- "The language of thought"

ADAPTIVENESS OF LANGUAGE

- Biological basis for language
- Darwinian explanation?
- Chomsky's position
- Steven Jay Gould
- Spandrels
 - San Marcos
 - Noses and eyeglasses
 - Language as a spandrel
- Pinker's hypothesis



PROBLEMS FOR THE EVOLUTIONARY HYPOTHESIS

- Time
- No knowledge of the details
- Mutant's linguistic partners?
- Intermediary forms?
- Embarrassment of riches
- Spandrels, again?
- Scientific puzzles
- Fatal problems?

ARGUMENT FROM LANGUAGE

- e₁. All human societies have language.
 - e₂. They always have.
 - e₃. Language was not invented, and did not spread.
 - e₄. Contemporary grammars are no more complex than those of hunter gatherers.
 - e₅. Humans are proficient language users regardless of intelligence, social status, or level of education.
 - e₆. Children are fluent speakers of complex grammatical sentences by the age of three, without benefit of formal instruction.
 - e₇. Children are capable of inventing languages that are more systematic than those they hear, showing resemblances to languages that they have never heard, and obey grammatical principles for which there is no evidence in their environments.
- =====
- t₀. God exists and endowed humans with an innate ability to acquire and use language.

RIVAL EXPLANATIONS

- t₁. Secular naturalistic explanations
 - t'₁. Pinker's evolutionary account
 - t''₁. Chomsky's spandrel account
- t₂. Religious pluralists' account

RANK ORDERING

Joyclynn

t₀
t₂
t''₁
t'₁

Jeff

t'₁
t''₁
t₂
t₀

DIVINE PERSONHOOD

- God as a person
- Dennett's Conditions of Personhood
 - Rational beings
 - Consciousness
 - Attitude toward it
 - Capable of reciprocating
 - Verbal communication
 - Self-consciousness
- Condition of verbal communication
- Don't all presuppose language?

PROBLEM ANTHROPOMORPHISM

- Referee's comment
- Problem of radical "otherness"
- Alston's argument
 - Acting
 - Loving
 - Knowing
 - Purposing
- We add
 - Communicating