Forum

Who taught Adam to speak?[1]

Speech is the best show man puts on. It is his own "act" on the stage of evolution, in which he comes before the cosmic backdrop and really "does his stuff". – B.L. Whorf

Arthur C. Custance

Abstract

It is taken for granted that the first man, being half-ape, 'spoke' by copying them. Research shows that such grunts and cries cannot 'evolve' into cultured speech because the speech organs and brain structure required for human language are entirely different from those needed for of animal communication.

The difference in animal and human thinking processes is not merely one of degree but rather of kind. This difference is seen in the use of signs vs. symbols, of emotional and situational language vs. conceptual, objective language. No animal communication system can account for the human one.

Perhaps, then, speech is instinctive? No, for people, however primitive, have been found without a language. Yet unless spoken to, one does not learn to speak – as demonstrated by feral (wild) children and deaf-mutes (like Helen Keller). So the question is – who spoke to the first human being – Adam – to teach him?

*About all that scientific investigation can do is to demonstrate what **cannot** be the origin of this extraordinary trait of human nature.*

The only light we have is from revelation. The first two chapters of Genesis not only tell us Who spoke first but also how the process of language was acquired. But the implications of the necessity of this unique faculty in terms of his humanity and the purpose of his very creation are profound.

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1 In 1957, Arthur C. Custance (1910-1985) first published this essay under the current title, as *Doorway Paper* #1, part of his successful *Doorway Papers* series and revised it in 1976. Ms Evelyn M. White, Manager of *Doorway Publications*, has especially edited it for *Koers*. The full text is available from the publisher at 38 Elora Drive #41, Hamilton ON, Canada L9C 7L6

1. Introduction

Many years ago Humboldt observed that if there was a transition from animal to man, that transition took place with the acquisition of speech (see Lyell, 1873: 518). But he added, with rare insight, that in order to speak, man must already have been human. The problem of accounting for the origin of speech appeared to him therefore to be insoluble. Apart from revelation, it still is.

Because of the influence of Darwin's theories, it seemed at one time unnecessary to question the derivation of human speech from animal cries. Essentially the two were the same; it was merely a question of the degree of complexity. Following in the steps of earlier social anthropologists who were arranging the various primitive cultures in a sequence from the simple to more complex, thereby illustrating man's supposed climb to Parnassus, those who philosophized about language assumed that the strange grunts, clicks and grimaces of the lowliest 'savages' were evidence that speech, like all else, had evolved by barely perceptible steps from simple to complex (see Goldenweiser, 1945:508).

2. The evolutionary account

But little by little it appeared that the problem was more difficult. To begin with, more careful studies of the most primitive societies, made by men in the field who spent enough time to learn to *use* the native languages they were studying, began to reveal that far from being simple, they were often exceedingly complex (see Kroeber, 1948:231). Indeed so rich in terms did they eventually prove to be in many cases that such an authority as Levy-Bruhl (1926:105-136) came to doubt (perhaps unjustifiably) whether they even thought as we do. The difference could no longer be measured in terms of 'higher' and 'lower' but as a different way of conceiving reality, indeed from one point of view, a more complex way of viewing it. G.G. Simpson (1966:477) rightly remarked:

> At the present time no languages are primitive in the sense of being significantly close to the origins of language. Even the people with least complex culture have highly sophisticated languages, with complex grammar, and large vocabularies capable of naming and discussing anything that occurs in the sphere occupied by their speakers.

Eric Lenneberg (1967:264) has said that primitive languages actually require *more* intelligence to learn than our so-called sophisticated languages do. In fact, the simpler the culture, the more complex in this sense was its language likely to prove.

Evidently therefore, the whole concept of arranging these cultures in an evolutionary scale was quite wrong (see Kluckhohn, 1969:148). Abandoning this prin-

ciple cleared the way for a more careful investigation of the origin of human speech, and attention was turned to the problem from several different directions. To begin with, an answer was sought to the questions: What is the *nature* of human speech, and do animals 'speak' to each other at all? If so, are the two forms of communication related or comparable? If they are not, we cannot easily derive the one from the other. Since, as we shall see, a negative conclusion was reached by a number of investigators, the origin of human speech remained a profound mystery.

Further investigation soon revealed other complications. Speech was always assumed to be instinctive, but the discovery from time to time of 'wild' or feral children without speech, showed clearly that it results only where there has been social contact. Moreover, such contact must be with speaking individuals, for it was further discovered that someone else has to start the process off for each one of us. Company alone does not create communication by speech. Without the spark from one party already the possessor of the faculty, there is no conversation.

Having arrived at this point, it was felt that human beings should be able to encourage animals to speak, unless the organs of speech were different in the latter. In the course of time it was concluded from investigation of the anatomy of the higher apes that the organs of certain animals are not basically different, and that they therefore ought to be able to speak as we do (see Kroeber, 1948: 231, and Fox, 1952:28). Yet apes and monkeys cannot speak. Indeed as J.B. Lancaster (1965) rightly observed: "The more that is known about (communication systems in monkeys and apes) the less these systems seem to help in the understanding of human language." Perhaps language did not evolve at all!

On the other hand, history soon provided instances of human beings who lacked all the normal faculties or speech, i.e., sight, hearing and voice, and yet who learned to speak (with their fingers of course) and to communicate ideas at a very high level of abstraction. This once more seemed to indicate that the real secret lay in the structure of the brain, or in some other quality of human nature, and not in the organs of the voice.

It was therefore concluded that some genetic strain must suddenly have appeared to alter the structure of the human brain in some way at present unknown, thus paving the way for the appearance of this peculiarly human faculty (see Cassirer, 1948:31). Yet this does not answer the main problem, even if such a mutation could be shown to have occurred. We have on record the case of two feral children, brought up entirely in the wilds, without any human companionship except that they were themselves companions in isolation, who never between them spoke a single word of any form whatever. Thus we find that even the presence of another human being, possessing a truly human brain (for subsequently they

were taught to speak, though always with limitations), do not in themselves constitute the necessary framework within which speech must inevitably appear.

We are still left therefore, with the problem as to who started the process, for the process must be started by someone. While it is true that few authorities believe that the human race may be an amalgam of several distinct and independently originated stocks springing from lower forms of life, there are many others equally committed to an evolutionary origin for man, who hold that he must be derived from a single stock. In this single stock we must have a first man and a first woman. It matters little what we call them, whether Adam (which simply means *man*) and Eve (which really means *child bearer*, i.e. mother), we are still dealing with the same two individuals. What is to account for the fact that they began to talk to each other, and this has continued wherever their descendants are found and without exception, for no people on earth are known without a fully developed language. People are known in one part of the world or another without almost every faculty which we hold to be essentially human, even without mother-love, but not one people has ever been found without the faculty of speech.

It may be stated simply, then, that scientifically the question is beyond our reach. About all that scientific investigations can do is to demonstrate what *cannot* be the origin.

3. The biblical account

In Genesis, however, the story of the first conversation on earth is revealed. And since it is the only story that shows insight into the nature of man's first steps at conversation, it is of peculiar interest – whether we view it as fantasy or as fact. For all about us, every day, there are children learning to speak for the first time and showing us consistently a certain pattern of learning which by its very persistence leads us to suppose that it is the only pattern by which man ever learned to speak. Not merely the subject of conversation of the first pair, but the consequences of it, and the circumstances in which it came to pass, are of real significance for all those who today are concerned with the problem of human nature and conduct. For it is man's power of speech which has enabled him to do what he has done and to be what he is, whether for good or for ill.

This power of speech involves the power of abstraction and of self-consciousness, and of delayed reaction and decision. It has, in short, made man in part a free-willed agent. But it has also enabled him to learn in a unique way and to pass on the substance of his learning so that culture has become cumulative.

4. Sounds of speech: signs vs. symbols

But let us revert once more and consider the points raised in the foregoing in greater detail. It is strange how frequently what is obviously true turns out to be quite false. For centuries it was obvious to everyone that the sun moved around the earth: and until acceptance of this obvious fact was entirely undermined, no further progress in astronomy was possible.

That animals talked to one another was equally obvious. In times of danger a shrill warning was uttered, and the answering precautions of flight were undertaken by those who heard the signal, obviously indicating that they clearly understood what was being 'said.' Curiously enough some of the most profound observations regarding the real nature of so-called animal speech have finally come not from a man who was a naturalist, but from a man who was basically a philosopher interested in the nature of human nature. George Herbert Mead (1948: 354-360) showed, in a way which virtually compels assent, that animals are not self-conscious and therefore can only *utter* signals – which are not expressions of thought or of emotion. Such sounds are uttered involuntarily like the *Oh* and *Ah* of a man too deeply moved for speech. The excited whining of a dog in anticipation of food is not the dog's mind expressing anticipation but a reflex expressing itself. The dog does not express emotion consciously, but the emotion expresses itself. Raymond Pearl (1946:115) has pointed out that herd leaders are not leaders in the sense that human beings may be, for no thought or reasoning is involved. They serve rather as a special sense organ for the whole herd, and their position as leader is in a way an accident of biological processes.

Thus Mead distinguishes between a sound which is a sign, and a sound which is a symbol. The first is shared by all creatures able to express emotion, including fear and anger, hate and love, and of course in man, laughter. But a sign of such a nature is involuntary as a rule; always involuntary in the case of animals, but not always so in the case of man who is such a prodigious actor. The *Oh* of a man suddenly injured is not *thought* out. It expresses itself. Naturally we understand it all; the scream of fright, the roar of laughter; both are *read*, but neither are truly language. Mead points out that it is not until a child discovers what the meaning of his *own* sound to *others* is, and then deliberately makes the sound with this meaning attached to it, that the child speaks. In this sense speech might be held to start when a child discovers that it can cry (without compulsion) merely to direct attention to itself. Such an attitude arises out of self-consciousness and of the consciousness of others as being similar to oneself.

A child thus discovering the trick of gaining attention becomes an actor. Darwin was interested in the question of *acting* because he felt it threw light on the origin of language. He felt that the actor in *pulling a face* to indicate anger was only

doing what a dog might do when it bared its teeth to frighten its enemy. But this assumed that the dog is conscious of the face he is pulling and realizes that by doing it he can frighten his opponent. In actual fact it seems quite certain now that for the dog, *the face is pulling itself* and no self-consciousness is involved. To the other dog it is a sign to which he responds in a characteristic manner. But because the originator is moved by emotion and not by abstract or self-conscious thought, no speech is involved. It is a sign and not a symbol, for symbols have a nature arbitrarily (and therefore consciously) assigned by user and reader alike. The actor pulls a face consciously, knowing that it will be interpreted in a given way, and his thought thus expressed in a symbolic form and so read and understood by the audience, is communicated deliberately by what must be termed symbolic language. In common speech we may speak of a sign language, but it seems desirable to distinguish between what is in reality a symbol language and the unconscious sign of anger which an animal may express in the presence of an enemy.

5. Words of speech: emotional vs. propositional

That animal cries are emotional only, and not conceptual, is now the considered opinion of those who made a study of the matter. Cassirer (1948:28, 29) pointed out:

> Here we touch upon the crucial point in our whole problem. The difference between propositional language and emotional language is the real landmark between the human and the animal world. All the theories and observations concerning animal language are wide of the mark if they fail to recognize this fundamental difference. In all the literature of the subject, there does not seem to be a single conclusive proof of the fact that any animal ever made the decisive step from subjective to objective, from affective to propositional language.

The English neurologist Jackson introduced the term *propositional* language in order to account for some very interesting pathological phenomena. He found that many patients suffering from aphasia had by no means lost the use of speech, but they could not employ their words in an objective, propositional sense. Something had therefore reduced their speech to the level of animal noise which, like the cry of the parrot, was no longer human language at all.

Meanwhile the clicks and grunts which in popular imagination were taken to be a major part of some primitive languages actually take a very minor place in the structure of such languages. It can be said that the languages of the most primitive people, as for example the Australian aborigines, are exceedingly full of terms that are definitive and specific in the extreme. Indeed, they are so rich in terms and names for things that abstract thought becomes well-nigh impossible,

for there are no such simple things as 'classes,' everything is individual and specific (see Levy-Bruhl,1925:170).

For example, in the Arabic language there are no less than five or six thousand terms used in describing the camel – its shape, size, colour, age and the gait of the animal – but no one word for the species 'camel'. Similarly the Aymara Indians of Chuciutu in Peru have 209 distinct words for potatoes, and such northern people as the Eskimo of Canada and the Chukchee of Siberia have an almost unlimited number of names for snow and ice in every conceivable form, yet not a single word for 'snow.'

The languages of primitive people all over the world show this same amazing wealth. Here objectivity is a characteristic in excess. What is specifically lacking therefore in animal forms of communication is here exemplified to the nth degree ... and yet it was formerly thought that such societies would provide us with the very link between civilized man and the primates below him.

6. Speech: instinctive or learned

We have pointed out that no people are without a language. From this observation and because all subjects investigated up till a few years ago had possessed the power of speech no matter how primitive their culture, it was assumed that speech was instinctive (see Sapir, 1933). But in time it became apparent that this was not so. Although throughout the centuries of recorded history so-called 'wild' or feral children have been reported, it was not till comparatively recently that such children were found and studied by men whose judgement and scholarship were sufficient to guard them against sensational conclusions intended to stimulate public imagination. Such children have always been found to be without speech.

A very complete treatment of some 36 cases of feral children was published in 1966 by J.A.L. Singh and Robert M. Zingg under the title *Wolf-Children and Feral Man*. These children, usually abandoned for various reasons in the first years of life, were brought up by animals which include wolves, bears, pigs, a jackal, and even a leopard. Without exception, they did not learn to speak a word while in the wild and almost nothing even when later attempts were made to re-educate them.

Susanne Langer (1952:87) remarked in this connection:

> The only well attested cases are Peter the wild boy, found in the fields of Hanover in 1723; Victor, known as the 'Savage of Aveyron' captured in that district of Southern France in 1799: and two little girls, Amala and

> Kamala taken in the vicinity of Midnapur, India, in 1920. Even of these, only Victor has been scientifically studied and described.
>
> One thing however we know definitely about all of them: none of *these children could speak in any tongue, remembered or invented* (her emphasis). A child without human companions would of course find no response to his chattering; but if speech were a genuine instinct, this should make little difference. Civilized children talk to the cat without knowing that they are soliloquizing, and a dog that answers with a bark is a good audience: moreover Amala and Kamala had each other. Yet they did not talk. Where, then, is the language making instinct of very young children?

It is as though Providence had secured for us by historical 'accident' the materials we particularly need for testing all such hypotheses. Had we on record merely the instances of lone waifs and strays such as Peter and Victor, we might still have argued that they did not speak because they did not have company. Quite apart from the observation which Langer makes – that children talk to animals without sensing any incongruity (as adults do too!) – we have also the record in very recent times of the finding of two children who shared their strange childhood upbringing in the wild and still never spoke one word to each other.

Moreover, every subsequent effort to teach the boy Victor the use of language failed conspicuously, and when the question is asked why did *he* fail when others succeeded in part (though very inadequately), the answer seems to be (in Langer's own words), 'Because he was already about twelve years old'. In other words, when Victor was found, he had evidently passed the stage of development where he *could* learn a language, whereas the other children in varying degree, were still young enough to be taught at least a few words and expressions, though none of them developed into normal human beings.

We may draw a further conclusion from all this, therefore, that the capacity is latent in every child for the learning of a language, even in those who are reared in the wild, but this capacity does not guarantee that language will automatically arise on its own accord. On the contrary, in each of these four children no language whatsoever did appear of its own accord. It was only after they had been spoken to, that they spoke in turn, and even then only provided that the capacity for acquiring the faculty of thinking in words had not been outgrown (see Tomb, 1925:553-555).

7. Words: dependent on vocal chords and brain

Having arrived at this point, the question immediately arose as to whether it might be possible to teach animals to speak as men speak, provided instruction was begun early enough. Efforts have been made for years, and continue to be made, to open up lines of communication with animals. The prodigious and patient labours

of the Kelloggs (1933), Hayeses (1951), Gardners (1969:644-672) and Premack (1971:808-822) have revealed some surprising facts. It is certain that animals do communicate amongst themselves successfully, and that man, by speech, can establish contact with them, as indeed he may with his horse or his dog. But apparently those animals which seem therefore capable of understanding speech, do not themselves have the capacity to speak. Such creatures as Premack's chimpanzees did 'talk' by signs, but vocalization has proved quite beyond their physiological capacity thus far.

Absence of speech among animals cannot be attributed to the absence of the secondary glossolabial anatomical structures, for they have many phonetic elements which are also common to human languages. Granted that some of the sounds we make might be beyond the capacity of some animals, at least they ought to be able to reproduce a kind of dialect of their own. But they never do. It is felt that this must therefore be due to some lack in the brain. By contrast, birds which can vocalize meaningfully to the hearer seem nevertheless without the mind necessary to make their own vocalization meaningful to themselves. Birds have vocal organs adequate to the task but no mental equipment to make the capability useful to them. Other animals may have the mental equipment but no vocal organs adequate to communicate their thoughts usefully to men (see Custance, 1972:60-73).

Formerly it was customary to assume that the essential difference in animal and human thinking processes was one merely of degree. But when the brain of man is compared with that of the animals, the difference, as Henri Bergson (1944: 200-201) notes

> ... at first appears to be only a difference in size and complexity. But judging by function, there must be something else besides ... Between man and the animals the difference is no longer one of degree, but of kind.

The kind of brain that man has results in a mentality that is conceptual in character (see Briffault, 1931:762). And it is this conceptual character in man which permits speech.

At the present time it does not seem that any animal communication system could possibly account for the human one.

8. How sounds become speech

That animals do not speak, nor have they thus far been taught to speak, is not because they lack the mechanical means (the muscles in the tongue and throat, etc.), but evidently because they do not have the brain structure necessary to permit conceptual thought. On the other hand, and this is of profound impor-

tance, a human being can be lacking in all the normal requirements for speech and yet, because of the structure of the brain, the mechanical and secondary handicaps can be overcome and conversation be carried on at a very high level of abstraction.

It would almost seem as though Providence were again at work in history, for we have two examples of individuals who were blind, deaf, and dumb, and yet who developed a high degree of understanding and education, one becoming an internationally famous spokesman for her fellow sufferers. Two facts – (1) that such handicapped people could learn to communicate ideas and (2) the circumstances surrounding the first steps by which they learned to speak at all – are of very great significance for our purposes. Moreover, when it is found that both individuals passed from speechlessness to speech by the very same kind of process, it is a matter of considerable interest here.

The names of these two blind deaf-mutes are Helen Keller and Laura Bridgeman. Their story, in so far as it immediately concerns us, is best told in the words of their teachers and their own. It is desirable to comment that both individuals had learned to tap out with their hands certain signs communicating needs as they arose, and that both experienced a day when the real meaning of these signs was discovered by each in turn. Miss Sullivan (1905:315), the teacher of Helen Keller, has recorded the exact date on which the child began to understand the meaning of human language:

> I must write you a line this morning, because something very important has happened. Helen has taken the second great step in her education. She has learned that everything has a name and that the manual alphabet is the key to everything she wants to know. This morning, while she was washing, she wanted to know the name for 'water'. When she wants to know the name of anything, she points to it, and pats my hand. I spelled w-a-t-e-r and thought no more about it until after breakfast ...
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> (Later on) we went out to the pump house, and I made Helen hold her mug under the spout while I pumped. As the cold water gushed forth, filling the mug, I spelled w-a-t-e-r in Helen's free hand. The word coming so close upon the sensation of cold water rushing over her hand seemed to startle her. She dropped the mug and stood as one transfixed. A new light came into her face. She spelled 'water' several times. Then she dropped on the ground and asked for its name, and pointed to the pump and trellis and suddenly turning around she asked for my name. I spelled 'teacher'. All the way back to the house she was highly excited and learned the name of every object she touched, so that in a few hours she had added thirty new words to her vocabulary. The next morning she got up like a radiant fairy. She has flitted from object to object asking the name of everything and kissing me for very gladness. Everything must have a name now. Wherever we go she asks eagerly for the names of things she has not learned at

> home. She is anxious for her friends to spell, and eager to teach the letters to everyone she meets. She drops the signs and pantomine she used before, as soon as she has words to supply their place, and the acquirement of a new word affords her the liveliest pleasure. And we notice that her face grows more expressive each day.

What a simple account this is, and yet how dramatic. It is almost like being present at the birth of a soul! And how significant do the names of things become. To possess the name is to possess the very object. But we also have Helen's own account of this experience (Keller, 1905:23-24):

> We walked down the path to the well-house, attracted by all the fragrance of the honeysuckle with which it was covered. Someone was drawing water, and my teacher placed my hand under the spout. As the cool stream gushed over my hand she spelled into the other the word 'water', first slowly, then rapidly. I stood still, my whole attention fixed upon the motion of her fingers. Suddenly I felt a misty consciousness as of something forgotten, a thrill of returning thought; and somehow the mystery of language was revealed to me. I knew then that w-a-t-e-r meant the wonderful cool something that was flowing over my hand. That living word awakened my soul, gave it light, hope, joy, set it free. There were barriers still, it is true, but barriers that in time could be swept away.
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> I left the well-house eager to learn. Everything had a name and each name gave birth to a new thought. As we returned to the house every object which I touched seemed to quiver with life. That was because I saw everything with the strange new sight that had come to me.

It seems presumptuous to attempt to interpret Helen's experience, as it would be foolish for a blind man to describe the colour of a sunset. But it appears that Helen realized for the first time that w-a-t-e-r was not a sequence of taps indicating her need but a substance which stood apart from her need, though it could also supply it. It stood apart from her need, objectively – it was the substance in its own objective existence. W-a-t-e-r was not her supply but water, whether from the pump or in a cup, or in the rain, or in a stream.

Naturalists often remark that one of the chief delights of a walk in the country is that they can identify the plants and animals of which they know the name. When we know the name, in some peculiar way we understand the nature of a thing. It is this kind of conviction which prompted Moses to ask God His name. To most primitive people a name is very secret, for when one has obtained the name of a person one has obtained a peculiar power over him. Indeed if a child in its first few months, turns out to be constantly unwell, the Chukchee of Siberia believe it has been given the wrong name, and they will change it. The Eskimo do not believe the child has a soul until it has a name, and thus no murder is involved in infanticide so long as the child is still unnamed.

Cassirer (1948:35) gives us the record of Laura Bridgeman's experience:

> Long before Laura Bridgeman had learned to speak, she had developed a very curious mode of expression, a language of her own. This language did not consist of articulated sounds but only of various noises which are described as 'emotional noises'. She was in the habit of uttering those sounds in the presence of certain persons. Thus they became entirely individualized. Every person in her environment was greeted by a special noise. 'Whenever she met an acquaintance unexpectedly,' writes Dr. Lieber, 'I found that she repeatedly uttered the word for that person before she began to speak. It was the utterance of pleasurable recognition.' But when by means of the finger alphabet the child had grasped the meaning of human language the case was altered. Now the sound really became a name; and this name was not bound to an individual person but could be changed if the circumstances led to require it. One day, for instance, Laura Bridgeman had a letter from her former teacher, Miss Drew, who in the meantime by her marriage had become Mrs. Morton. In this letter she was invited to visit her teacher. This gave her great pleasure, but she found fault with Miss Drew because she had signed the letter with her old name instead of using the name of her husband. She even said that now she must find another noise for her teacher as the one for Miss Drew must not be the same as that for Mrs. Morton. It is clear that the former 'noises' have here undergone an important and very interesting change in meaning. They are no longer special utterances, inseparable from a particular concrete situation. They have become abstract names. For the new name invented by the child did not designate a new individual, but the same individual in a new relationship.

Laura Bridgeman subsequently studied arithmetic and geography, and actually became a successful teacher of others who were both blind and deaf, and like Helen Keller she manifestly lived an amazingly full, interesting, and genuinely enjoyable life.

From both these instances there is much to learn. In the first place there seems to be some form of inborn capacity to make emotional noises, and this is shared by animals. That this is not dependent upon mimic is evident from the fact that animals brought up in entire isolation make all the ordinary cries and calls of their species, although trained animals and domesticated animals develop certain additional sounds or variant cries. It is generally held for example, that dogs only bark when domesticated, howling only when entirely wild.

The second thing that we may note is that both girls developed an entirely different, and it may be said specifically *human*, personality once they had acquired genuine speech. Moreover, in the initial stages of this acquisition, it was a hunger for the names of things which most rapidly built up the power of speech, and not the desire to understand the things they could name.

9. So who did speak first?

The question still remains, as we consider this extraordinary and long overlooked or minimized trait of human nature: Where and how did it all begin? We have the case of two Indian children, Amala and Kamala, neither of whom had spoken one word between them, although they shared each other's company. Reverting back to the very first pair, whom we may most reasonably refer to as Adam and Eve for purposes of identification, who or what first induced them to talk to one another?

Names stand for processes, and knowing the name seems to deceive us into thinking we understand the process. Those committed to the evolutionary origin of man must fall back upon the use of a magic word for the appearance of the special kind of brain man has which make speech possible for him. They tell us it was a 'mutation' of some sort! And there we have the whole 'explanation'.

But even if a name were an explanation, they still have not told us who spoke first to start the process off, nor are we told what kind of a conversation would be most probable – though we might have guessed by now that the one who began the process must be one who was other than Adam and Eve, and prior to them and must already have been a speaking person. And we might have guessed, too, that the first words would have to be a list of the names of things.

In the first chapter of the book of Genesis we are constantly told that *God said* ... and not merely what God did. Moreover, in the creation of man a peculiar change takes place in the narrative, for having noted the recurrent phrase "Let the sea bring forth" or "Let the earth bring forth" as though directions were given to that which is inanimate to obey the word thus spoken, when the creation of man is in view, we are immediately presented with a conversation in heaven. That God was not speaking to the heavenly host of angels when He said, "Let us make man ..." is clear from the fact that *man* was to be made in *His* image, and after His likeness. This conversation therefore originated and was carried on within the Godhead. He who first spoke to Adam was God, who had already been *conversing* about him.

What follows in the story is of real importance. Any thoughtful reader must surely be struck by the frequency with which the idea of 'naming' things occurs in this early record. In some books one finds the glossary of terms at the end, although they are needed at the beginning. In this instance, however, and for reasons which are obvious in the light of what we know of the faculty of human speech, the meaning of the first words and the names of the ordinary phenomena about which God wished to inform Adam were given to him in some detail. Thus a name is given to the heavens, and to the earth, making more specific the general

reference to them in Genesis 1:1. It is as though God had said 'Now I wish to tell you about these phenomena; and henceforth therefore we will refer to the sky as heaven, and to the soil on which you stand as earth, to the light as day and the darkness as night, to the waters as sea, the atmosphere as the firmament, and we will name the rivers, and the sun and the moon, and even the stars'. Then two trees are singled out and given compound names, the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Then Adam received his own name. But there is a break in the narrative at this point. Having established a frame of reference, Adam was now invited to speak for himself. Most of us like to name our own pets. Part of the commission given to Adam was that he should govern the animals, and it was natural therefore that he should be invited to name them for himself. None of them had any name up till then, and thus with artless simplicity the record says that whatever Adam called any creature, that was thenceforth its name.

Now we are not told how he named them. We do not know whether he was guided by their colour, size, shape, or the cries they made. But what followed this naming ceremony seems to imply that there was a more significant reason for giving him the task. There are some who believe that Adam was merely one of many such representatives of manlike creatures, perhaps a special *Homo Sapiens* singled out by the Creator who had then given him the benefit of a unique spirit. But the record seems in a remarkable manner to go out of its way to make it clear that Adam was the only man alive at that time. In Genesis 2:5 we are told that "there was not a man to till the ground". In Genesis 2:18 we are told that God had remarked, "It was not good that man should be alone". In Genesis 2:20 we are told that "there was not found a companion for him". And finally in Genesis 3:90 it is stated that Eve became the mother of all living. It seems clear from the wording of Genesis 2:18-23 that God wanted Adam to discover for himself that he could never find among the lower forms of life a suitable companion in his loneliness. It seems obvious that if Adam had been a slouching half-ape creature, God might well have brought to him other creatures of the primate stock that differed little from himself which might have sufficed for his half-intelligent mind as an appropriate mate. However, with proper insight, Adam gave to each animal brought to him a name by which he signified in some way his reaction and his evaluation of its relative position with respect to himself.

That this is so, is clear when one reads what followed the naming process. Removed into a state of unconsciousness (perhaps tired by the exercise of judgement in such a critical matter), God performed an operation isolating part of Adam and constituting that part into a new whole. Awakening from sleep, and quite probably still supposing that the process of naming must continue, he is pre-

sented with this creature in whom he instantly recognizes a true helpmeet, and a very part of himself.

The whole story is so simply written and so profound in its insight into the nature of speech and the forms which it first takes in childhood, and the true significance of the use of names for things, that it is almost as though God had deliberately cast the record in such a form that it might shed its own light on one of the profoundest of all mysteries. At any rate it is the only light we have. There is no other from any other source.

10. Conclusion

Roger Brown (1968:192) sums the situation up very effectively when he wrote:

> Neither feral nor isolated man creates his own language these days, but must not such a man have done so once in some prehistoric time and so got language started? Actually the circumstances in which language must have begun represent a combination for which we can provide no instances.
>
> We have animals among animals, animals in linguistic communities, and humans among animals; but in none of these cases does language develop. We have humans raised in linguistic communities and in these circumstances language does develop. What about a human born into a human society that has no language? We don't know of any such societies, and so we don't know of any such individuals. But these must have been the circumstances of language origination.

Susanne Langer (1952:87-88) made a significant admission therefore when she concluded, "The problem is so baffling that it is no longer considered respectable".

Revelation is all that remains to us, and that revelation has been set forth in clear simple terms. God spoke to Adam first. And in due time Adam learned to speak with God. This unique gift of speech makes possible the unique relationship which man has with God, a capacity for conscious fellowship and communication, with all that this implies.

For this fellowship man was created, and without it he is like a feral child, an orphan, and terribly alone. To communicate with others is necessary for the generation of a soul in the personal sense of the term. To communicate with God is necessary for that soul to be truly alive. And this kind of communication involves a fellowship based upon a *true* reconciliation between God and man.

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