

Chomsky's Cartesian Speciesism and the Failing of his Linguistics

“Descartes was by no means the fanatical rationalist he is often caricatured as. In fact he was quite wary of those "who take no account of experience and think that truth will spring from their brains like Minerva from the head of Jupiter"--- anonymous (CSM I, p. 21).¹

(Written in 2013-2015)

It might seem odd to include an essay on a modern philosopher in book on religion, when Chomsky is in no way religious in any traditionalist sense. But I think he belongs here as a part of this book which after all is not just a book critical of religion but of ideology in general. My concern through these books has been to chart an analysis of ideology, power and abuses that occur because of both. Linguistics is so far a failure as a science of the nature and evolution of language. Language does not do well when used to study itself, just as math is not very informative about math.² Linguistics, at least of the Chomskyeen variety, is inherently political and the knock down drag out fights

¹ http://metapsychology.mentalhelp.net/poc/view_doc.php?type=book&id=5110&cn=394

² Russell and Whitehead tried to write a principles of Math, and ended up with tautologies and this was rather a dead end. Chomsky uses grammar to study language and this dead ended too, in his idea of Merge. The moral of these stores might be that symbols systems are empty abstractions and really mean very little apart from how they are used. They are constructed tools and suggest very little as evidence of themselves. Since Chomsky is very likely mistaken, the answer might be that language is not .usefully studied except as a way of communicating, and thus akin to brains and living, animals and nature. This would seem obvious. But in linguistics today this is actually a radical suggestion.

between Chomsky and his critics is really a political fight. Chomsky's theory is an example of chauvinistic speciesism.

Linguistics, like religion, is political in its basis. This is partly because language itself is a political event by its very nature. Language is a system of abstract symbols used by people to communicate, create alliances, love, fight others or live in social networks. As such, fights as to what language is invariably divide up along political lines, class lines, gender or age. Children probably have a lot to do with what language does and is. Yet, linguistics is invariably a speciesism, at least up till now, as humans have come to abuse animals as a matter of economics and diet. Symbols are abstract things and they are prone to denigrate nature and others, Since by its very nature language is a mode of communication of human centered thought between people, it largely ignores nature and animals, which people wish to see as inferior to them, even though they are not. Chomskyeen linguistics is in the dark ages on this subject and is a good example of speciesism and human centered chauvinism.

The speciesism of linguistics and of language itself can be changed only when linguistics starts admitting its prejudicial and political nature. As of yet, neither Chomsky or those who hate him have been able to admit their political ideology or their speciesism. I realized that these people are incapable of objectivity about language and hide their politics behind a pose of objectivity. This makes contemporary linguistics theories delusional and probably more or less worthless as science. So those who believe that Chomsky, Postal, Behme, or Pinker are actually talking about what language and evolution is, are probably wrapped up in one or another ideological or religious fervor. So it is totally appropriate to write about this in this book, as this is a book about the political nature of the religions and ideologies of our time.

Since language and linguistics are used by these academics to sustain political ideologies, it is not really an effort to find out how human language works or evolved in animals, birds and primate species, as Darwin wished. It is useful to trace some of the implications of their delusions. Perhaps we can return to the program that Darwin already outlined, which has been neglected until now. Language is a system of human centered abstractions and this is amply reflected in the destruction of nature and other animals all over the earth. To study language is thus to study human beings, and this can only be done if one gives up the vanity of human centeredness.

Linguistics merely reflects this political chauvinism, in the case of both Chomsky and his critics. How are ideas and words used to exploit and control others? This is possible on the left as well as the right. This is why I discuss Chomsky and his enemies in this chapter, as he is not really a scientist, but a bit of a cult leader and romantic speculator who uses science to promote himself, while never quite coming up with evidence to support his theories. He claims to be a scientist, but I don't think he actually is. He is in fact a charismatic political figure and one that specializes in journalistic political commentary of an international nature, while promoting himself as a sort of language guru for his followers. He has little to do with language anymore. Most of his work is a critique of U.S. government actions and failures. He is good at that. I like many things he writes. I think his critique of corporate culture is brilliant and largely true. But I am convinced that Chomsky's linguistic ideology has features that are very much part of the short sighted nature of his politics and are present in his linguistics as well, which are not

part of science³ but rather closer to a political religion. He is not at all a traditionalist and indeed, he helped me see through the delusions of traditionalism, so I am not without some sympathetic gratefulness to the man himself. I repeat, he is not evidently religious⁴, but he uses ideas and behaves very much as a cult leader, as he is an ideologue. This book is partly about the intersection of religion and politics. Discussing Chomsky as charismatic myth maker is fitting in a book that questions the fecundity of mythmaking whether it occurs in linguistics or in religion. In the process of analyzing what Chomsky did and how he failed, I think I might discover some things about how ideology works and how one can abuse it to create a cult like influence on the society around him.

Chomsky is not a cult leader in the classic sense I outlined earlier, but his group has cult like characteristics, a cult of personality certainly, as well as some tendencies to charismatic bluster and dishonesty. But it is not a destructive cult, for the most part, but more of an academic one, which is rare. They do tend to bash or shun anyone who strays too far from the Master's pronouncements. Certainly people have been hurt by the Chomsky cult. While I might agree with things Chomsky has written

³ Christina Behme writes in her "A Potpourri of Chomskyan Science", Jan. 2015_ "Chomsky's views about language evolution reveal the full extent of the double standards evident throughout. He ridicules the work of an entire field, without ever citing the views he considers problematic. His own view is put forward authoritatively as the only rational option. This creates the impression that he is popularizing tidbits of a massive body of scientific work he has conducted. Yet, no supporting evidence is cited, and none of his speculations are based on work he has completed himself."

Elsewhere she writes the same thing but adds to it:

"Chomsky creates the impression that he is quoting tidbits of a massive body of scientific work he has conducted or is intimately familiar with. Yet his speculations reveal a lack of even basic understanding of biology, and an unwillingness to engage seriously with the relevant literature. At the same time, he ridicules the work of virtually all other theorists, without spelling out the views he disagrees with. A critical analysis of the 'Galilean method' demonstrates that Chomsky uses appeal to authority to insulate his own proposals against falsification by empirical counter-evidence. This form of discourse bears no serious relation to the way science proceeds."

⁴ Though he has connected himself rather closely to liberation theology in Latin America and to a Sufi in the middle east.

and he is strongest on analysis of corporations and media as they impact and recent U.S institutional policy and international studies, I have stayed pretty clear of being overly influenced by him and do not adulate him. But even in this area where he really is an expert, there are some pretty strange mistakes and errors of judgment.⁵ Chomsky has created, perhaps without meaning to, a political religion, or shall we say a religion of politics. His linguistics have largely failed. Why that happened is what I will mostly discuss here.

There are many critiques of Chomsky's linguistics that clearly have a political motivation.⁶ I find such critiques repulsive myself, with the exception of Christina Behme's perhaps, which I largely agree with, though it is obviously politically motivated, though I think she is largely unconscious of how this is so. She often gets her facts right. But there are real hatchet jobs of Chomsky's ideological linguistics on the far right, which do not really address what language might be.

I studied Chomsky in various contexts for decades. eventually I began to have real doubts about him. His linguistics theories turn out to be political at root. My critique of him not a right wing diatribe, but nor is it a left wing submission to his political cult of personality. Again, I have often, though not always, agreed with many of Chomsky's political ideas. But there is a religious aspect to Chomsky's politics---a certain cultishness in his bearing and followers that concerns me. A very different cup of tea is Howard Zinn. Certainly I admired Howard Zinn when I was getting my Master's in history and liked the inquiry of anyone who was willing to question unjust power and help the underclasses. But history is a different thing than language and it is much harder to hide

⁵ George Monbiot discusses some of these on his website.

⁶ that of Chomsky former student Paul Postman, for instance. Postman is a linguist and has some interesting things to say about Chomsky, but a lot of his ire is political. As I have shown elsewhere politics and religion are very similar things. But there are other critics of Chomsky who are so rabid as to be absurd. I am not one of those. I am a man of the left, however, so this critique of Chomsky does not have politics or religion as its starting point.

ones politics in history. I felt a great deal of warmth toward Zinn both in his persona and as a writer. Chomsky has tried to help the underdog in various contexts too, and I appreciate that. But I never felt a similar warmth with him. He always struck me as somehow machine like, and dogmatic, cold and calculating. So in this essay I will be questioning Chomsky more as a cult figure than as a geopolitical analyst and historian. Though I do think Chomsky has mangled the history of science in some ways, but that will come up later.

Steven Pinker, who has his own, more bourgeois politics, writes in one context that "Chomsky's theory need not be treated ... as a set of cabalistic incantations that only the initiated can mutter" I am not sure I agree with this. Actually, for most of the last 50 years, it has been a cabal headed out of MIT. Chomsky's very abstract and formalistic computations are idealized and have little to do with actual language use, with nature or with language as it may have evolved in a Darwinian way. His refusal to use the usual scientific parameters to check his work by peer review and replication has insured a very insular ideology. Only his close followers know what he is doing, and even they seems to get it wrong quite often. Chomsky himself often seems confused about what he has created. Pinker notes that "I would say that the problem with Chomsky is rather that with such a clever mind, such impressive erudition, and such formidable rhetorical skills, he has the power to push an *idée fixe* arbitrarily far"... Pinker also says that in Chomsky's linguistic and political ideology,

"we are seeing a fundamentally romantic view of human nature, in which people naturally cooperate and create without the need for external incentives, until these faculties are stifled by malign social institutions. We also see an all-encompassing moralistic theory of

political and historical causation – that world events can be understood as the intended outcomes of a morally odious agent, namely the United States and its allies. Tragedies, well-meaning blunders, painful tradeoffs, human limitations, least bad options, historic changes in contemporary standards of political conduct—none of these play a role in Chomsky’s causal model. Disciplinary expertise and training are beside the point – when you’re determined to advance an all-encompassing theory, intellectual and scholarly power can work to your ultimate disadvantage in terms of providing an accurate rendering of reality.

see: <http://www.cosmoetica.com/DSI4.htm>

Pinker is right about this. Chomsky is driven by a nearly ‘spiritual’ ambition to impose his romantic and rationalist ideology, even if the facts do not fit it. He tries to “advance an all-encompassing theory”, a quasi-religion. This is more dogma than science, and more like Aquinas—or Descartes--- than Darwin. Darwin was fact driven, an explorer and a man who loved experiment, studied barnacles, sailed around the world and studied pigeons, animals and birds. He did real science. Chomsky knows little about animals or nature and disliked experiments. He was a creature of academia and cities, better at interviews than observation of non-humans.

Chomsky has often been disdainful of Darwin, empiricism and facts, avoiding peer review and the normal avenues of scientific research. Besides not like doing experiments, none of his “discoveries” has any scientific basis. His system if made up of an elaborate and eccentric nomenclature made up out of arcane computations that have little to exhibit outside of abstract and imagined grammatical fancy. This is not science, but rather theory construction of a nearly medieval sort. Daniel Dennett shows this effort to side step or undermine evolution rather conclusively in his book [Darwin’s Dangerous Idea](#), which discusses the

rather bad effects of Stephen Jay Gould on Chomsky. John Maynard Smith notes that Gould's ideas "are hardly worth bothering with". Chomsky's rather dogmatic, rationalist and prophetic romanticism is true in both his linguistic and his political work. But while Chomsky's political work is a continuation of the French Revolution and the effort to question unjust power, his science work is really conservative and in some ways a throwback to Descartes and the rationalism of the 1600's as well as going off the deep end into Gould's fantasies of "exaptations" and other architectural fictions. Chomsky's Cartesian fantasies do not stand up well. Christina Behme has made a convincing case that his work is not really Cartesian at all. But, in some respects he is a reactionary throwback to the 17th century and its mentality of nature as a "possession" and an object of conquest. This is "Cartesian" in the worst sense. Chomsky's humanism has some very supremacist features that makes his political thought highly questionable, and perhaps hypocritical.

It is true that he opened up language to more serious study around the world and he deserves credit for that. No one denies that. But there is a consensus of doubt and disapproval of Chomsky's linguistics that has been growing into a chorus. His theories bore no real fruit and are now a hindrance to further inquiry. Some of those in this chorus are John Searle, Daniel Dennett, Stephen Pinker, Dennis Dutton. George Monbiot, Paul Postal, Christina Behme and many others. Collectively these critics suggest that Chomsky's language theories are largely a failure. My reasons for thinking this are somewhat different than theirs. But I am joining this chorus of skepticism and doubt in this essay. I think the discipline of linguistics is largely bankrupt and not just because of Chomsky, but because of the subject itself is inherently political and so far prevents any real scientific inquiry into the nature and evolution of language. Here are my reasons, which are partly in agreement with others and partly different than they..

Over a number of recent years, I have been thinking about Chomsky views on nature and the subject of animals in his work. Indeed, I am not a linguist but trained as an artist and historian, with a deep interest in science. But I can see an ideology and trace its effects. The ideas at the basis of Chomsky's inquiries were interesting and I tried to grasp what he is teaching and how he sees philosophy. I became interested in Chomsky mostly as a linguist in the mid-1980's, when he was really more of a philosopher and linguist than he subsequently became. I read him along with Wittgenstein⁷, Michael Dummett, Ernest Gellner, A. J. Ayers and Bertrand Russell, and Feyerabend. I was enamored of him at one point, though not to the degree that I enjoyed Zinn, who was a much nicer and more generous person. I met Chomsky at Cleveland State University a number of times and found him rather a hard person personally. I liked his political bravery. But even though his analysis of corporations and advertising is accurate, there are real problems with his politics. He alienates far more people than he inspires and his expertise is very narrow. One of his main promoters, David Basimian, calls him a "Sufi Sage", which is absurd and embarrassing. A lot of his efforts appear to be more about making himself a kind of cult leader, than changing the problems he sometimes describes accurately. At a certain point perhaps 10 or more years ago I wished to grasp how Chomsky was seeing science and animals and that was the beginning of

⁷ Bertrand Russell wrote an interesting forward to Gellner's book Words and Things in which he condemns Wittgenstein and the study of language divorced from the world. He excoriates language philosophy for being only about language and for "a dreary exegesis of the nuances of usage" as well as an escapist mysticism. Chomsky tends in this direction too and I cannot imagine Russell would have supported the way that Chomsky theory developed. Chomsky and Russell share a political bravery but are worlds apart on philosophy. It is quite true that Chomsky did not like Wittgenstein much. But what he disliked in him was his empirical quality, which means Chomsky was even more on the "mentalism" side of things, which is what Russell is criticizing. Russell did not like the 'mentalism' of Wittgenstein and would not have liked it in Chomsky either, I imagine..

<http://www.ualberta.ca/~francisp/NewPhil448/RussellIntroGellner1959.pdf>

my deeper questioning of his ideology.

Both these subjects, animals and science, have become increasingly dear to me as I age.. I was willing to extend Chomsky a great deal of leeway on what first appears to be a kind of speciesism in his thought. In a sporadic correspondence with him over several years,⁸ I discussed my doubts and concerns. It was a rocky and bad correspondence. One of the worst I have ever had, actually. He was prickly, difficult and dictatorial. Prone to be paranoid, he likes to excommunicate those who do not agree with him. It is not easy to talk to him, as anyone who has tried, who is not a devotee, must know. As Stephen Pinker said ,Chomsky can “ blow off critics as stupid or evil, explain away embarrassing data, and rationalize mistakes at will”. He did all these things to me. He struck me as a narrow minded old man who cannot be wrong or admit any mistakes, who never changes and if he is wrong about something, he acts proud of his ignorance and accuses others before admitting anything. But that aside I kept looking at his work. Slowly it dawned on me that a generous willingness to grant him the benefit of the doubt was misplaced. My original doubts about him were unfortunately confirmed. Indeed, communication with him was not just very difficult, but impossible. I persisted and this essay is the result

⁸ This correspondence actually started I 1996, when I first met Chomsky in Cleveland, I corresponded with he and Zinn at that time. That deteriorated quickly when I tried to arrange a debate between the two men on the subject of “objectivity in history”. They had very conflicted views on the matter which I would have liked to see explained. I began my inquiry on animals in 2008 and that went very sporadically for 5 years, with much disagreement and strife. Indeed, I found him more or less impossible to talk to in any reasonable way. But his answers were very troubling until at last I could not side with him at all as regards his linguistics, Descartes or animals and nature..

One thing worth noting was how he avoided being wrong about anything. He liked to prove me wrong about this or that, mostly trivial things, and I do not mind admitting when I am wrong, But he was wrong about much bigger things and was unable to admit any mistake on anything. His non-scientific vanity disturbed me. This is certainly not the attitude of a real scientist, who is able to see when he or she is mistaken. He would avoid or ignore all serious questions and nitpick on things that did not matter. Finally when I showed he was mistaken, he quickly attacked and implied there is something wrong with me and closed down the conversation, as if excommunicating someone were his only option to save face. This is not the behavior of an honest person but of a cult leader or autocrat.

of my 15 or 16 year inquiry into his work. I should add that he has been totally uncooperative with me on this, and that is not surprising, as I started to question his competence.

I have doubts that Chomsky's linguistics are even science, much less that they are valid science.⁹ My inquiry about Chomsky's view of animals did not go well. His views on nature are archaic. It is obvious, now that so many species are disappearing or under the threat of extinction that rights for animals must be part of an ongoing liberation of beings. Centuries ago "women, slaves, and chattels" were grouped as one category under rich men who alone had rights. Institutional slavery is largely gone in Europe and America and women have gained more rights relative to men, while animals and nature still lag far behind. Only animals and nature itself remain without effective rights, except in certain countries and in some cases. I was very glad to see Bolivia under Evo Morales has made efforts to apply the idea of Nature's Rights, calling it the "Law of Mother Earth".

I discussed the idea with Chomsky who mocked and laughed at the idea. "Rocks have no rights" he said, dogmatically. He said the trees in his backyard have no rights either.¹⁰ Trees do have rights and should

⁹ Somewhere around the year 2000 I became aware that he did not have a high opinion of animals from an essay the late Val Plumwood wrote about Chomsky. It is a good essay, which basically accuses Chomsky of having a hypocritical and blinkered vision that refuses liberation politics to animals and nature generally.. I corresponded with Plumwood about this and other things. She was a very interesting Australian philosopher and the polar opposite of Chomsky. She actually knows a lot about nature and animals, unlike most philosophers. But she dislikes rationalism, and this is problematic. I can't go far into that here, but suffice it to say that abandoning reason is just as problematic as Chomsky's excessive regard for it, to the point of neglecting the empirical. See Plumwood, Val, "Noam Chomsky and Liberation Politics" Here <http://www.bmartin.cc/pubs/96versions-of-freedom.pdf>

¹⁰ Chomsky is prone to these rather childish distinctions. He writes for instance

"To say that language is not innate is to say that there is no difference between my granddaughter, a rock and a rabbit. In other words, if you take a rock, a rabbit and my granddaughter and put them in a community where people are talking English, they'll all learn English. If people believe that, then they believe that language is not innate. If they believe that there is a difference

be allowed to grow, if they assert themselves, as they inevitably do. Suppressing tree's rights is a regular part of human behavior, but this does not make it just or right. Cutting down trees should always be carefully weighed and considered and only done if there is real reason and justification to do it. There must be a system of rights whereby the interests of trees and other beings can be considered and weighed against humans. If the trees the Ivory-Billed Woodpecker lived in had rights, the Ivory Bill would not be extinct now.

I see no reason humans should be allowed to burn down rain forests for meat cattle as they do in the Amazon, killing off half the forests there. In the Himalayas they destroy nature for minerals. In the mountains of west Virginia or the coal tar sands of Canada they dig and blow up huge tracks of land, whole mountains, just in order to satisfy human greed, while putting profits before destroying the earth with global warming. The denial of rights to nature has to do with human greed. The real conflict is between nature's rights and human greed. I've seen with my own eyes how 97% of all Redwoods are now cut down and no old growth to speak of exists anymore on private land. One cannot trust the market to have an "invisible hand" to stop this predation. The notion that we "possess" nature is one of the main obstacles to preserving biomes and saving endangered species. Yet Chomsky upholds this archaic ideology.

Living and non-living things, obviously related, need to start being accorded rights. The earth itself must have rights prior to ours and certainly prior to anyone property rights.. Beings on earth, obviously interrelated and inter-dependent, are increasingly under attack from

between my granddaughter, a rabbit, and a rock, then they believe that language is innate." (Chomsky 2000: 50)

We are fundamentally related to rabbits in a direct way through evolution and we come from a planet that is made of elements(rocks). Darwin was quite able to deal with these differences without losing sight of their similarity and coherence. Chomsky does not have a clue about to do this this. In a nut shell, this is why Darwin is leagues ahead of Chomsky in nearly every way.

greed and the artificial concept of ownership, which is a human fiction.

Chomsky has claimed that he has been pushing the idea of nature's rights all along, which I do not think is true.¹¹ Language has always been about those in power defying what is correct language and what is low class, whose speech is more important than others, and who is an authority and who is not. But Chomsky's idea of Nature's Rights is really truncated and applies only to nature being preserved in the interests of humans. "Trees have no rights", he writes me. Tension for the human world. Brave tree sitters, who have tried to stop the slaughter of ancient trees would disagree. Me too. In a recent essay he asks: "Who will uphold the rights of nature? Who will adopt the role of steward of the commons, our collective possession?"¹² So, it turns out Chomsky is an anthropocentric thinker, and believes everything is owned by humans. "Our collective possession"-this is Marxist anthropocentrism in a nutshell, not really different than capitalist possession, just generalized in

¹¹ Paul Postal has shown rather convincingly that Chomsky is less than scientific about how he goes about his scholarship. Postal is a politically motivated critic of Chomsky, but the facts in this essay appear to bear further fact checking, unlike some of the other of Chomsky's critics like Dershowitz or Horowitz who seem to froth with seething hatred of Chomsky and have few cogent arguments against him. Postal's criticism of Chomsky appears to have some justification in terms of fact, but it is mixed up with all sorts of political invective, overtly or covertly. This is less true of Christina Behme criticism of Chomsky. But in her case, she cites Postal as one of her main advisors. She writes: "Finally, I am greatly indebted to Paul M. Postal for replying in an incredibly helpful

manner to my unfocused questions, is how she puts it in her PHD Thesis. Elsewhere she says that Chomsky's "science is just as problematic as his 'Politics'" I don't think his politics are entirely mistaken, and It would be helpful to jettison all this squabbling implicit in linguistics study and start linguistics over from scratch, on a Darwinian basis and abandon Chomsky, Postal and others. Chomsky is hardly the only one that writes corrupted language theory. See Postal's essay "A Corrupted Linguistics" here:

ling.auf.net/lingbuzz/001634/current.pdf

¹² Quoted from Chomsky: "How Do We Defend Ourselves from the Corporate and Imperial Forces That Threaten Our Existence?" Znet, July 6 2013

a socialist human centeredness. This is a repulsive attitude. Evidently he thinks we own whale sharks, pangolins,¹³ Aye-Ayes and Redwood trees, as if they did not evolve on their own, in their own way. Evolution is about survival and any species that survives has achieved that through asserting its rights or its power to continue. This is what nature's rights really is: Nature's right is the right of each species to pursue its evolutionary course. No species is possessed by any other. The more time one spends with many species the more one learns to respect the hard work and amazing evolutionary achievement of each species. Chomsky has never acquired this respect for nature or evolution and the implicit concept of rights that was part of Darwin's discovery.

So possession is not Nature's Rights at all, nature is nowhere a "collective possession". Anyone who thinks this could never understand how language evolved, since he does not understand evolution itself, which has no favorites. Val Plumwood points out in her excellent Feminism and the Mastery of Nature that the notion of nature as a possession is misogynistic. Chomsky is prone to a speciesist anthropocentric view of nature. It is hard to imagine such a progressive man could have such a backward view of nature. But there you have it, His attitudes constitute a rank speciesism. He is part of the problem and in no way the solution. His theory of language is hopelessly human centered and thus not Darwinian and thus false on the face of it. Plumwood rightly notes that Chomsky has fallen for what she rightly calls the "pitfalls or Guruism" and that he does not "articulate the plurality of struggles and experience of oppression, suffered by women, nature and animals, as well as others outside the middle class of

¹³ Pangolins are illegally imported into China because they like to eat their meat and wrongly believe pangolin scales promote lactation. This not an unusual case of animals being harmed do to irrational superstitions and religious belief.

Chomsky's rather narrow view of social democracy."¹⁴ This could not be more exactly right.

As Thoreau said "in wildness is the preservation of the world". To protect wild beings and honor their right to exist is what we need, unless all the world, except humans, is to be a caged zoo where all animals and trees are our "possession". Cage all of nature and you cage humanity too. But then Chomsky knows little about nature and does little to help nature. What he does do is flatter human conceit and need of power, though he claims to be against that in other writings..

The origin of the idea of Nature's Rights is to be found in many sources, from Thoreau, to Abbey, Plumwood and many others who thought of the reality if not the actual phrase. Marc Bekoff recently called it "Wild Justice" Bolivia passed a their Law of the Mother Earth and Ecuador had their Permanent Rights of Nature Tribunal in Quito, Ecuador in 2014. Tom Linsey has been fighting for it for in courts for years with his CELDF. I started using the phrase Nature's Rights on my own back in 1999 or so, but the concept is not mine but belongs to whoever grasps what it means. My own view of it, like Plumwood's, was born of close observations of species lives in the natural world over a long period of time. ¹⁵ Chomsky has yet to grasp it. He has an amazing will to not understand what is in front of him, sometimes,. I suspect he is prone to this sort of rhetoric to hide his ambitions and the fact that his pose of scientist has not as much basis in fact as he would wish us to believe.. ..

It is not hard to demonstrate how wrong he can be. Recently, Chomsky claimed the Bolivian Law of the Earth was really about human

¹⁴ Plumwood in Versions of Freedom. Sydney, 1996. Pg 27-30.

¹⁵ Her essay on being attacked by a Crocodile in Kakadu park in Australia and her essay on her pet Wombat are well worth reading on this subject. She was a great observer of the natural world. Another writer worth reading an animals and birds is Barry Kent McKay who lives in Toronto Canada, and who has written brilliantly on nature. See also his amazing series of birds around the world, as he is perhaps the first artist to really extend Darwin's vision of birds to the whole of the world's birds.

centered needs of the “commons”. He writes to me that “by referring to “rights of nature,” indigenous movements and others concerned with the fate of the species are underscoring our responsibility for the environmental commons” Ecuador has attempted to pass similar legislation.

This is not correct at all. He misread the Bolivian Law of Mother Earth. What it actually says is that beings and plants are not merely for human use. Their rights are intrinsic and not merely human centered as Chomsky imagines . Nature, or Mother Earth has laws Bolivia says and these are

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“ the right to life and to exist;

the right to continue vital cycles and processes free from human alteration;

the right to pure water and clean air;

the right to balance;

the right not to be polluted;

the right to not be affected by mega-infrastructure and development projects that affect the balance of ecosystems and the local inhabitant communities;

the right to not have cellular structure modified or genetically altered(this one is more complicated than the others)”

Nature’s Rights is about respecting all species, not giving one species ultimate “possession” as Chomsky claims. The Bolivian Law of Nature could be better, but it is a good introduction to the concept of Nature’s Rights.. Chomsky has not understood this idea.

He says in an essay, “Defending our Existence” that we must have a “worldwide struggle to preserve the global commons” and that this global

commons is “our common possession, to defend or to destroy.”¹⁶This notion of possession of all of nature as ours is part of the fantasy of world dominion and common ownership of all of nature that goes back to the 16 and 1700’s when the ideology of private property was developed. This is indeed a Cartesian ideology and one that is repulsive and needs to be jettisoned. This goes very far back and we can already see this perverse ideology in Descartes, Chomsky’s sometimes hero and even to Aristotle, who says that

“we may conclude of those things that are, that plants are created for the sake of animals, and animals for the sake of men; the tame for our use and provision; the wild, at least the greater part, for our provision also”

No one owns nature and the conceit that we do is an utter fiction. The Communist tried to universalize the Lockean concept of private property and make all nature owned by the state or to be exact, that all property would be owned by the “dictatorship of the proletariat”. This also was horrendous and resulted in terrible environmental destruction, such as the emptying of Lake Aral, one of the biggest Lakes in the world. Communists and capitalists since the 1960’s have done of the harm to earth in the last 10 years. The oceans have also been treated as a “common possession” with disastrous results, many species going extinct and widespread pollution in all the seas. Global warming, extinctions pollution of the atmosphere, the list of destruction is nearly endless. Language and its inherent speciesism plays a big role in this. Chomsky’s notion of nature as a “common possession” is thus merely a restatement of the ideology of conquest, a variant of which was the idea of ‘manifest destiny’, and this ideology is already a total failure..

¹⁶ <http://www.zcommunications.org/how-do-we-defend-ourselves-from-the-corporate-and-imperial-forces-that-threaten-our-existence-by-noam-chomsky.html>

The premise that nature can be owned by anyone is a spiritual or metaphysical conceit, a fictional delusion. It shows the patriarchal domination of Chomsky's vision of nature. It is a potent fiction but a fiction nevertheless. No one owns the sun, diatoms, wild birds, insects or the Milky Way anymore than anyone had the right to own slaves, the sea, women or land. The abolishment of slavery shows just how this fantasy of ownership is ephemeral and arbitrary. One could say that one owns one's own body and perhaps some of the things that are close to oneself, but little is actually ours, almost everything we encounter in the world has other claims on it. Birds claim the trees in our back yards and have a right to them and fish claim a right to our lakes the streams, insects to our gardens and owls and moths to the night sky. The reversal of the ideology of ownership applied to nature requires the global approval of a notion of nature's rights. Such a Universal Declaration of Nature's Rights would be the basis of human rights and which would affirm and identify . the rights of species and biomes to exist independently of humans, as well as supply for the protection of species against human abuse and decimation. The Supreme Court has ruled that even corporations are entitled to certain legal rights, but animals "have no more rights than a pair of tennis shoes". Stephen Wise has rightly said. This is ridiculous and worthy of satire by a Jonathon Swift, since corporations are legal things and not beings, and are hardly the equal of living beings like animals, which are far more important.

Chomsky resists rights for nature and animals and he wrongly claims such rights are "incommensurate" with human rights.¹⁷ He makes these conservative and backward claims based on the archaic views of Cartesian philosophy. He says elsewhere that human concerns are alone worth pursuing, and he thinks animals and nature are more or

¹⁷ Letter to the author

less irrelevant. But the fact is that to claim human rights and not extend rights to other species is hypocritical, since we are ourselves part of nature, born of evolution and fundamentally related to all other species, by evolution, and by existence on earth itself. Indeed, the only viable basis for a theory of rights is to ground all rights in nature's rights, which are prior to human rights, or rather, of which human rights are merely subset.

As I questioned Chomsky and analyzed his responses it became clear he had no rational defense of his position. He is clutched in an ideology that goes back to the earlier parts of the 20th century, when his human centered views were more average. His views on animals are inextricably connected with his career as a linguist and derive from Descartes and others. His views may also derive from his cultural origins, the fact he is meat eater and supports scientific testing on animals or other reasons that I know nothing about. His human centered and reactionary point of view contradicts his otherwise enlightened political attitudes and should be resisted and questioned. I began to see that his ideas about language are entwined with ideas about Descartes and animals, and these ideas should be questioned as well. I will outline these questions here....

When I read Chomsky's 2002 essay on "Biolinguistics", I first thought Chomsky had softened his earlier, rather speciesist views of animals as lesser beings. He had long held to a rationalistic "Cartesian" philosophy which he held onto as a sort of personal identity or 'brand' for his linguistic philosophy. He is something of a historian of the scientific philosophers of the 17th and 18th centuries, though I have doubts about the conclusions he draws from this history. He clearly misunderstood the notion of gravitation or magnetic fields and "action at a distance"

A lot of Chomsky's conclusions about science in the 17th century are questionable. He says for instance that gravity is a huge "mystery"¹⁸ and that "scientists abandoned the animating idea of the early scientific revolution: that the world will be intelligible to us". No, no one abandoned that, they merely conceded that not everything was clear as yet, which should not have surprised anyone.

But the answer to the question of action at a distance did come. Actually, gravity is increasingly well known and is a part of the physical world and thus of causation, as is proven by the fact that human bone and muscle loss accelerate quickly in outer space, doing physical harm to astronauts that stay more than six months. To say that gravity is "action at a distance" and this fact defeats mechanism and proves that "all is mind" is hugely overstated and erroneous. There is no magical or spiritual action going on here, nor is it "mental" as Chomsky sometimes claims. Gravitational and magnetic fields are not mental but physical

¹⁸ Chomsky uses the word "mystery" to hide all that he does not know about a given subject. So for instance in a recent essay, (2014) called "The Mystery of Language Evolution". Actually communications skills in many species tell us a great deal. But Chomsky has the bad habit of wanting to undermine any advance in understanding of other species. Chomsky makes the same mistake as the people that taught Nim Chimpsky 125 signs of sign language. Even more was accomplished with Koko, Washoe and other primates. Rather than acknowledge this Chomsky demeans it as he foolishly wants all primates to be human. It is an amazing feat that that the primates learned as much as they did, as it shows many of the same mental capacities are there in chimps. Chomsky, ever the speciesist, disparages this and says ,

"Nim Chimpsky, the chimpanzee that produced the only public corpus of data in all animal language studies, produced signs considerably below the expected degree of combinatorial diversity seen in two-year old children (Yang, 2013), and with no understanding of syntactic structure or semantic interpretation.

Actually a great deal can be inferred from this experiment. They wanted him to be human and not chimp. That was the same mistake Chomsky makes in all his comparisons between animals and humans. Language is human centered and political in essence and until a linguist stops being human centered there will be no understanding of language evolution. One of Nim's caretakers concluded "What he needed... was to be with other chimps," Bob Ingersoll says. "Chimps don't need to be with humans. They need to have a chimp life.... Chimpanzees in captivity is just not where they ought to be. ... I would hope that one of the lessons that we learned from Nim's life is that keeping chimpanzees in cages is torture and really plays havoc on their mental health." Once we jettison the Chomsky model of language as useless, and start studying animals in the wild, much more will be learned about just how effective animal communication is. It is not human communication and should not be expected to be.

things, effects of matter.

He claims only the “ghost” is left in the analogy of the ‘ghost in the machine’. This conclusion is utterly unwarranted. The analogy of the ghost in the machine is not an accurate analogy to begin with. Chomsky seems to be indulging in a mystagogy of sorts. He suggests an analogy between gravity and “power of moving our body by our thoughts”, in Newton’s words. But that is merely electricity than enables that and electricity has to do with fields as Maxwell and Faraday showed, quite conclusively. Again, I doubt Chomsky can be trusted as an interpreter of the history of science.

Both gravity and thought are areas of science not well understood, but so what? That does not imply any analogy. The science at the basis of these is progressing. Thought appears to work by electricity and not by gravity. Chomsky appears to be confused. There are many things not yet understood by science. In “Turing on the “Imitation Game” Chomsky states that “thinking is a property of organized matter, alongside of other mysterious properties like attraction and repulsion.” What they have in common, Chomsky imagines, is that they “transcend the limits of mechanism”. This is pure imagination as magnetism is well understood as physical fields; it does not at all “transcend the limits of mechanism”. His understanding of the limits of mechanism are too narrow. This is an unwarranted surmise on Chomsky’s part that has no evidence at all in its favor.

Neither electromagnetism or gravity escape basic laws of physics, nor do movements of human bodies or our thoughts. Chomsky is almost in the realm of science fiction here, or religion in these speculations.. It is very unlikely that either gravity or the brain transcend causality or “mechanism”. The only ‘mystery’, still not understood is why gravity is

only an attractive force and electromagnetic fields in contrast repel and attract. But this is purely a physical question too, though Einstein's notion that gravity is an effect of the curvature of space time is difficult to understand in practical terms. But he does suggest that gravity travels at the speed of light, and is a wave, like light.

To summarize what I am saying here about Chomsky: there are physical forces in the world that suggest 'action at a distance' without actually being that, such as magnetism and gravity. These did not really bring Newtonian mechanics into question, though Chomsky mistakenly thinks they did. Pure Cartesian mechanics is rather too simple to explain much, but concepts like Michael Faraday's and Clerk Maxwell's idea of fields go far to explaining how the appearance of 'action at a distance' can happen, while yet the underlying facts are all physical and mechanical in the sense of being causal and having physical explanations.

Chomsky appears to have an interest in misunderstanding or suppressing the history of science here, but I have no idea why he would do that, though it appears to be a tendency he has. Or rather, I suspect he wants to negate empirical fact in favor of his detached rationalism. By avoiding peer review and dictating his results he can act as the Pope of Language, and many people fall for that. Not burdened by the requirements of the scientific method he can dictate his results without having to repeat any experiments. Science gets deformed by his politics again. He does this when he thinks he can, and this favoritism toward the solipsistic, the inchoate, the mysterious and the mental is also present in his language theory.

He imagines language is a mentalist, quasi-Platonic abstract phenomena, a mysterious part of people's brains by genetic accident. He imagines that "We can understand theories about the world, but the

nature of the world itself is really unintelligible to us.”¹⁹ which is not really accurate at all. Indeed, we know more and more about nature and the world every year, far more and more deeply than has ever been the case. But for someone who denies empiricism when it suits him, it is quite understandable he would deny that the world has become far more intelligible since Descartes died. He makes a common mistake, which is to extrapolate from the rather arcane and dubious theories of experimental physics to the facts of ordinary life. Many have done that, evoking Heisenberg or the puzzles of Quantum mechanics, but to extrapolate these things as general conclusions about actual existence and ordinary life is to make a big mistake. It is clear that Chomsky’s theories about the 17th century mechanics are mistaken.

Chomsky argues Descartes is the model we should have followed, though he also denies this too, when it suits him.²⁰ Darwin should have been the model he followed. He tried, at least in his early career, to be true to the Cartesian tradition. Descartes is one of the first philosophers to begin to escape middle age dogmas and scholastic denial of experience and empirical observation. He had some good ideas. Foremost among them was his effort to create science as reductionist materialism. His ideas in this direction still have some useful and attractive features. But his rationalist approach could be used to avoid or side step actual empirical study and it appears Chomsky did this to some degree.

¹⁹ <http://zcomm.org/znetarticle/philosophy-language-making-sense/>

²⁰ One of the best attempts to show how far Chomsky goes to abuse Descartes and project on him his own interests is Christina Behme’s *Cartesian Linguistics: From Historical Antecedents to Computational Modeling*

“Chomsky has little interest in the facts of history, but intends to use the suitably re-interpreted Cartesians as figurants or ventriloquist puppets on the Chomskyeen-Linguistics stage. For this reason I suggest that it is misleading to call Chomsky’s work *Cartesian Linguistics*.” (page 313) She is right to a degree that his linguistic theories are not Cartesian as he uses Descartes as a foil on which to project himself. But I think she misses the ways in which he is indeed, Cartesian, and why. Chomsky accepts the Cartesian notion of human centered domination. I think Behme has not gotten beyond this herself and so does not see it in Chomsky.

Descartes himself stressed empirical study on occasion, but his one foot in the scholastic is a real problem and created in Chomsky a reliance on rationalism and innatism that sometimes goes against fact and reality. In my own view this aspect of language, its abstract character, divorced in some many ways from reality, is precisely that aspect which is dangerous and which has helped create religions and systems of unjust power. It is here that Chomsky seems to be really on the wrong footing. As Christina Behme notes

“In the 1950s Chomsky’s promise to bring rigor and exactness to linguistics and to situate linguistic theorizing firmly within the natural sciences (Chomsky, 1957, 1965, 1966) clearly revived linguistics. However, 60 years later many of the initial promises remain unfulfilled. Chomskyeen science remains vague about the mental machinery that underwrites creative language use and has not provided testable hypotheses regarding the mechanisms that allow for language acquisition.”

The failure of his linguistics is partly due to his misunderstanding of Descartes and the shortcomings of rationalism. Language capacity might be innate, but not language itself, which is learned, laboriously, implying that language is cultural. Many things Descartes thought or said, particularly about animals, are archaic and medieval, inherited from archaic and backward Christian and Greek speciesism. There appears to be a psychological element of cruelty in Descartes too, which was evidently passed to his followers. Chomsky has endorsed efforts by his own followers to dismiss the facts about Descartes’ cruelty. But before I explain that I need to back up a little.

A few years ago, I had come across a quote from Chomsky made in an interview in which he said that the followers of Descartes had horrible

relations with animals. He writes:

“In Cartesian philosophy, for example, where it was assumed ... the Cartesians thought they had proven that humans had minds and everything else in the world was a machine. So there’s no difference between a cat and a watch, let’s say. It’s just the cat’s a little more complicated. You go back to the court in the seventeenth century, and big smart guys who studied all that stuff and thought they understood it would as a sport take Lady So-and-So’s favorite dog and kick it and beat it to death and so on and laugh, saying, this silly lady doesn’t understand the latest philosophy, which was that it was just like dropping a rock on the floor. That’s gratuitous torture of animals. It was regarded as if we would ask a question about the torturing of a rock. You can’t do it. There’s no way to torture a rock. The moral sphere has certainly changed in that respect. Gratuitous torture of animals is no longer considered quite legitimate.”

Naively, I took this to be a rare willingness on Chomsky’s part to question Descartes himself, who does indeed deserve to be questioned on this subject. I loved this comment by Chomsky and thought, wrongly, that it indicated a change in Chomsky from his more hard headed early days where Descartes seemingly could do no wrong. Had Chomsky opened his mind to ideas outside his rather narrow and archaic Cartesian rationalism? I was warming to the belief that he is a man who can change his views and wrote him to thank him and celebrate this.

To my great disappointment, I was mistaken to think Chomsky had changed and now cared about animals and nature. In my letter I praised Chomsky for this comment, glad he rejects cruelty that was inherent in the Cartesian view. He wrote me back and insisted he has not changed.

He was proud of never changing, it seemed. He went further and stated, falsely as it turns out, that Descartes had been slandered and only Descartes's followers and not Descartes himself had been cruel to animals. Linguistics for Chomsky is a sort of narcissistic religion, based on the false innatism of Descartes, and promoting language as a sort of solipsistic politics of the creative self. This is what his "I" language, freedom of infinite expressions and his theory of Merge is really about. It is a self-portrait of sorts, both political and religious and it inspires a very real cult following.²¹

He tried to maintain, wrongly, that Descartes had nothing to do with cruelty at all. To prove this he sent me an essay by a follower of his, Justin Leiber, purporting to prove Descartes innocent of the "myth" of cruelty to animals. But I saw right away that Leiber's essay is full of easily disproved errors. Leiber mistakenly claims that "'There is simply not a line in Descartes to suggest that he thought we are free to smash animals at will or free to do so because their behavior can be explained mechanically.'" Leiber is totally wrong. Leiber's essay is badly researched. Since Leiber is wrong Chomsky is too. Daniel Dennett is wrong too, as he also wrote an attack on animals, defending or rather excusing Descartes' really ignorant attacks on animals, using the same bogus essay that Chomsky uses. Dennett, like Chomsky Leiber and Descartes wrongly claim that animals don't feel or think or have consciousness. ²²

²¹ Chomsky's concept "Merge" has a lot in common with artificial constructions, such as the Christian concept of the Word, or the Hindu Om, In the latter, all the universe was supposed to be born from a single letter just as Chomsky images infinite word combinations come from a single mutation 60,000 years ago. This forced analogy really explains nothing, while seeming to be profound. Chomsky created Merge as the ultimate origin of his concept of language. His rationalism devolves into this reductionist solipsism. Merge is merely adding words or concepts together. This need of reducing language to a simple contraction is modeled on physics and does not explain much at all. Language is not physics. If Chomsky had tried to understand language based on Darwinism rather than physics he would have done far better.

²² See Dennett's "Animal consciousness: what matters and why"

Descartes said quite a bit about cruelty to animals and indulged in it himself. The incontestable truth is Descartes was a cruel man who thought that animals deprived of language cannot think and, therefore, are nothing but well-constructed, complex, unfeeling machines. Descartes proposed a dualistic division between the outside objective world and the inner subjective world. These are partly what Chomsky thinks, too.

Descartes himself wrote

“if you cut off the end of the heart of a living dog, and through the incision, put your finger into one of the concavities, you will clearly feel, every time, the heart shortens, if you press your finger and it stops pressing, every time, it lengthens”²³

Also in a letter to Mersenne of November 18, 1630 Descartes says that if ‘you whip a dog six or eight times, to the sound of a violin, the dog will whimper and tremble if it hears to sound again’.

Chomsky wrote back with no apology for using Leiber’s paper as the truth when it was clearly false. He was using the paper to promote himself. He did not thank me for the corrections of his and Leiber’s obvious errors about Descartes either., as he should have²⁴ So far I have

http://instruct.westvalley.edu/lafave/dennett_anim_csness.html

This is a very flip essay that has little insight in it, other than to show the usual speciesist hatred of animals that treats them as ignorantly and nonchalantly, as if no one intelligent would ever take them seriously.

²³ see Richard Watson *Cogito Ergo Sum: the Life of Rene Descartes* pg. 167-168, see letters of Descartes too

²⁴ Steven Pinker is a critic of Chomsky’s later linguistics. He said of Chomsky that he is a ‘daunting opponent and not much inclined to give quarter to his critics. This has led to some fierce fallings-out. Pinker says in the *Boston Globe Magazine* (Nov. 19, 1995, p. 25) that

found no example of Chomsky every admitting to be wrong about anything and he never says he is sorry. This worried me. I am often wrong about things, and do not mind admitting it. I was wrong about details in my letters to Chomsky several times and admitted it. It has been said that arguing with Chomsky is like arguing with a buzz saw. I felt that and have to say it is unpleasant to talk to him. Pinker says he is a bully and I concur with that. I do not see him as a scientist but as an ideologue and an opportunist.

Chomsky said that practices in animal experimentation were different in Descartes time. (1620 or so) So Descartes is somehow excused. I rejoined that in no age is whipping a dog while playing it violin anything but monstrous. Playing violin to the victims at Auschwitz was also a horrible act. Indeed, Descartes desensitization towards the pain of others is an early example of alienated and horrible killings throughout the modern period. Da Vinci lived a hundred years before Descartes and let birds go from cages because he saw it as cruel. Like Darwin, Da Vinci was concerned with animal's rights. He was also a vegetarian and he was a far better experimentalist and scientist than Descartes ever was. Claiming Descartes was cruel because he was merely a child of his times is specious argument that seeks to excuse him. Chomsky is wrong to excuse Descartes for being an innocent child of his times. It is right to admire Descartes for formalizing aspects of the scientific method and a few minor discoveries, but trying to hide Descartes cruelty to protect

Chomsky “ implies that people who disagree with him are stupid and ignorant. He is a brilliant debater and an out-and-out bully. It’s great fun if you’re on his side, but not if you’re suddenly the target. People storm off and hate his guts for the rest of their lives”. " This is quite true and I have talked with a number of people who truly hate the man, who was very vicious to them. Steven Pinker in a 1995 profile in the Boston Globe newspaper. In another interview with Cosmopetica, Pinker states that Chomsky can “can wow sycophants, blow off critics as stupid or evil, explain away embarrassing data, and rationalize mistakes at will.” Yes, Chomsky does do this. I have seen it myself. But far worse than his need to personally attack people is his denial of direct evidence. That is a different order of infraction entirely as it sometimes puts Chomsky outside science into the realm of cult and dogma.
<http://www.cosmoetica.com/DSI4.htm>

your own linguistic theories is something else entirely.

It was becoming clear to me that Chomsky would stoop quite far to try to excuse the hero of his linguistic theories. It was personal for him. He would deny direct evidence that contradicted his false claims about Descartes. Suddenly, and distressingly, my belief that Chomsky is a scientist and cares about rights was brought into question. I learned what I did not want to learn: he doesn't care about evidence and that he is a man with little conscience, who will doctor evidence to serve his own interests.²⁵ He cares about being right, his career, and a dogmatism that is born of 'rationality', now became an irrationality. At least when it comes to his Linguistics career, Chomsky seems to be one of those "who take no account of experience and think that truth will spring from their brains like Minerva from the head of Jupiter". I say this reluctantly as one who has admired Chomsky's politics for many years, and what I thought was his science too. He may be indeed the narrow minded speciesist that I feared he was years ago.

Chomsky wrote me again and tried to say that Leiber's essay still stands because Descartes clearly assumed that animals could feel pain. Actually this is wrong too. I sent him this quote where Descartes clearly denies that animals feel pain.

²⁵ George Monbiot came to a similar conclusions about Chomsky in a series of letters between the two. Monbiot writes that Chomsky, "whose research is usually so thorough, is deliberately ignoring a vast weight of evidence which conflicts with his political beliefs." He writes this account of the whole matter and basically accuses the ZNet crowd of cult like holocaust denial of atrocities in Rwanda and the Balkans. He writes about Chomsky, Edward Herman and Albert among others that " If people who claim to care about justice and humanity cannot resist what looks to me like blatant genocide denial, we find ourselves in a very dark place" Z Net is not what we hoped it might be. It has become increasingly money grasping and is a Chomsky admiration society these days. I think Monbiot puts too much trust in the Chomsky circle, who have largely lost whatever groove they once had. There is an occasional good article there, but the leadership is cultish, old and narrow and can't handle justified criticism.

see more here:

<http://www.monbiot.com/2012/05/21/see-no-evil/>

In a letter to Mersenne, on 11 June 1640, Descartes wrote

"I do not explain the feeling of pain without reference to the soul. For in my view pain exists only in the understanding. What I do explain is all the external movements which accompany this feeling in us; in animals it is these movements alone which occur, and not pain in the strict sense ...".

Obviously, Descartes believed only humans and not animals have understanding, and only humans not animals have a soul, and therefore animals do not feel pain. He thought there was no connection between their sensations and their understanding and thus they could be tortured with impunity. Though animals can feel the "sensation" of joy, pains and other emotions they might mechanically respond by dancing about, appearing happy, or the like, even though the "animal machines", as Descartes calls them, would not *consciously* feel anything.

Chomsky responded to this obvious claim of Descartes that animals do not feel pain in a strange of Orwellian way. He told me that when Descartes says they don't feel pain "in the strict sense" he is saying that of course they feel pain. Yeah right, and war is peace and innocence is guilt and Animal Farm was written by Genghis Khan.

Chomsky was trying to bully me. The truth was staring him in the face and he denies it. This is not a good man who cares about the truth. The evidence is very clear and I did not give in. Descartes clearly says that animals cannot feel pain because "pain only exists in the understanding" not in mere sensation and animals are incapable of understanding. He says that animals "have no [reason] at all." ²⁶ So animals who sense pain do not actually feel it. For Descartes, animals

²⁶ Chapter 5 Discourse on Method

might squeal in of pain, but this is only a mechanical reactions to external stimuli. In other words, hitting a dog with a stick, for example, is a kind of input and the squeal that follows would be merely output, but the dog did not feel anything at all and could not feel pain unless it was endowed with a mind and reason, which Descartes claims animals do not have. So Descartes followers, following their master, whacked away at little dogs and were oblivious to the screams.

Descartes lived for a time on a street of butchers and watched animal killings often. He brags in a letter in 1639, "I have spent much time on dissection during the last eleven years, and I doubt whether there is a doctor who has made more detailed observations than I." Since we know he liked to do live dissections many of these dissections were no doubt live tortures. Da Vinci, writing a hundred years earlier, writes with great compassion about those whom he dissected.

In summation, Chomsky and Leiber were trying to cover up for Descartes atrocious abuse of animals. The reason for doing that of course, was to hide Chomsky's own speciesism. Leiber tries to prove that Descartes was maligned by history and animal rights activists such as Peter Singer. Leiber's claim is false. Descartes thought animals can be tortured with impunity because they feel no pain. Chomsky was therefore mistaken to use Leiber in an effort to excuse Descartes for the moral culpability of "gratuitous torture" of animals. Leiber was trying to whitewash Descartes in order to make Chomsky's "Cartesian linguistics" look more palatable. He was trying to hide or erase the implicit speciesism in both Chomsky and Descartes. Most of Leiber's essay was an attack on Peter Singer, the animals rights activist. As it turns out

Leiber was mistaken to attack Singer in this way.²⁷ Singer's opinion that Descartes had an influence on subsequent indifference to animal abuse is largely correct. In short Leiber and Chomsky were presented with direct evidence invalidating their ideas and both denied the overwhelming evidence.. By sending me the essay Chomsky was trying to rope me into the deceit. These are dishonest men.

Further proof is not needed--- *but there is further proof*. Descartes was himself aware that he was trying to vindicate animal torturers and creating an excuse for butchers, meat eaters, and animal abusers to enjoy themselves with impunity. Descartes writes in a 1649 Letter to Henry More:

“For Brevities sake I omit here my other reasons for denying thought to animals. *Please note that I am speaking of thought, and not of life or sensation*. I do not deny life to animals, since I regard it as consisting simply in the heat of the heart; and I do not even deny sensation, in so far as it depends upon a bodily organ. Thus my opinion is not so much cruel to animals as indulgent to human beings—at least to those who are not given to the superstitions of Pythagoras—since it absolves them from the suspicion of crime when they eat or kill animals” 3:366—AT 5:278-9

So here is Descartes admitting both his twisted and irrational logic

²⁷ Peter Singer writes, correctly, that Descartes believed that animals feel no pain “when cut with a knife” or “hot iron” and that Descartes theory “allowed the experimenter to dismiss any qualm they might feel” about torturing animals. See Singer [Animal Liberation](#) -. 118-120, Singer is quite correct about this, but the proof of this is not so much in Singer's sources for this information but in Descartes writings. Leiber attacks Singer's sources but neglected to look it up in Descartes own work, where there is plenty of evidence of his speciesist and cruel attitudes toward animals.

that it is OK to kill animals since they feel no pain and that he rather despises vegetarians. He is admitting he is well aware of vegetarians and thus of animals rights, and is saying he really cares to justify killers of animals. His theory is deliberately means to excuse cruelty. So much for Descartes age being ignorant of the issue, as Chomsky implied.

The Pythagoreans he mentions, who were certainly superstitious, were also vegetarians and Descartes is here taking a swipe at them for their vegetarian interests. Chomsky imitates Descartes quite closely, and thinks "thought" is what language is about and since animals have no language, they have no thought. Darwin, who is both deeper in feeling empathy and finer in sensibility than Chomsky, denies this directly of course, and insists, rightly, that animals are capable of advanced thought in many cases. For Descartes sensations did not mean awareness or understanding. He also denies animals have consciousness, or reason and thus they did not feel the pain they felt as sensations. He claimed they feel no pain when they are hurt, they merely react as machines who act as if they had pain. He is saying that his theory of animals as machines who feel no pain liberates animal killers of all kinds and vindicates those who hate vegetarians. This is once again a kind of speciesism.

Also in my discussion with Chomsky I quoted Michael Albert's autobiography in which he says "I see no comparison in importance between seeking to eliminate the roots and branches of sexism, and seeking to eliminate the roots and branches of violence against animals." For Albert, it is good to be nice to women but violence against animals is OK. Liberation of women is one thing but do not liberate nature and animals, these are only for human use and abuse. He needs his huge beefsteak slapped on a plate, and apparently thinks it OK to eat shark fin soup or murder bears. Michael Albert's rather obtuse preaching suggests a man who has little insight into the world.

Why should the abstract character of system of signs and symbols in language make Chomsky think the human animal superior to any other animal?. He disparages animals and says

“Animal communication systems have thus far failed to demonstrate anything remotely like our systems of phonology, semantics, and syntax, and the capacity to process even artificially created stimuli is highly limited”

Why would anyone demand that animals be human, any more than that a zebra should be a Roseate Spoonbill. In fact there is no reason to pursue these comparisons ad nauseum, as Chomsky does in in his 2014 essay on the “Mystery of Language Evolution”, from which the above quote comes. Thinking in symbols is a very destructive way to think, as I have shown throughout these books. Ants and bees appear to think through chemical markers, or pheromones. The notion that merely using symbols makes human superior to other species is ridiculous, it merely makes them more brutal and willing to destroy our planet. There is no reason to compare animals with humans unless the comparison goes both ways. Can Humans echolocate like bats, or use infrasound like elephants, communicate by smell like moths or see ultraviolet like wasps and bees? No, not even close. In many ways animals and insects re superior to humans. Darwin had respect even for the intelligence of worms, and never thought they should be other than as they are. After Darwin and J.G. Romanes there was an unfortunate tendency to denigrate species that arose as a result of Behaviorism. This Evolution has no favorites and to think it does in merely rank religion or politics of an egregious kind. ²⁸

²⁸ See the letters of G.J. Romanes to and from Darwin and Romanes’ books on Animal Intelligence and Mental Evolution in Animals., both of which Darwin was aware of and whose point of view had his sympathy to some degree. Romanes had an interesting attitude to animals of all kinds and rates they

In many ways human language makes people far worse than other animals and precisely because of their false belief that they are so much better. Language is very close to religion and politics and as such has strongly involved in brutality, extinctions, harming the earth and creating war.²⁹ The ability to speak has not made people better. You can tell a lot about people by how they think of animals. Chomsky says he basically agrees with this human centered prejudice and monstrous endorsement of cruelty. That is what Descartes would think too. Racism, sexism and how animals and nature are treated are “incommensurate”, Chomsky claims, invoking Cartesian speciesism. Nonsense. Sexism and racism and the linguistic prejudice that hold humans to be superior are very close. The speciesism of Albert and Chomsky creates substantial outclass of living beings, not just animals, but nature in general. This is repulsive and goes far to discredit Chomsky’s thought. This surprises and repulses me even more than his attempt to whitewash Descartes.

But what really shocked me about this discussion with Chomsky was his willingness to deny direct evidence against his claims, and to try to brow beat me into submitting to his outrageous denials of the evidence. I had written Chomsky in an effort to investigate his science because I was writing about his science positively in a poem. My discovery was unwelcome and more or less destroyed the poem I was trying to write. But the truth matters more than a poem.. I could still write a poem and

intelligence very highly. His work is simple by comparison with what could be done today, which has barely scratched the surface of animal intelligence. I was watching a crow look for worms or bugs in the grass today and it is abundantly clear in every movement that this is a bird of great mind who can seek and plan its movements with deliberation and brains. Animal intelligence and cognition in the wild is under studied partly because of the unfortunate influence of behaviorism and corporate science as well as the latent speciesism that has long been part of animal experimentation.

²⁹ It would be interesting to do a book entirely on bad experiments designed by people studying animals. There are so many, torturing animals in mazes, putting dogs on electric floors,, cutting jelly fish to see if they can swim, all the way back to Descartes killing live dogs and experimenting on them as they died. Scientists will do all sorts of elaborate experiments to avoid studying them in the wild, which the most important kind of study one can make. What these bad experiments show is how stupid humans can be rather than how intelligent animals are.

tell the truth about what I learned, even though that poem is now a mess. I had made similar investigations to write about Darwin³⁰, Newton or Hawking. To my deep dismay I came away from Chomsky doubting he is a scientist at all. I saw how he misused science. Yes, I do believe that Chomsky did valuable work in claiming that the capacity for language is genetic. But he appears to have failed to have proven his main thesis that grammar is innate. His willingness to deny direct evidence makes me question Chomsky's embrace of rationalism. His rationalism was showing clearly dogmatic and irrational features. Chomsky used rationalism to flout direct evidence and erect any arbitrary rule he wished to, regardless of the reality of the matter. If you question him too closely he accuses you of having an inflated self-image or of being insane or somehow mentally deficient. This where his claim to be a prophet takes on a terrible and self-interested subjectivism.

What I learned was that his willingness to deny evidence suggests a dogmatic refusal of the scientific attitude. This disturbed me so much I started doing research on Chomsky's science. He has many enemies and most of them can be dismissed as right wingers who are politically motivated. They misrepresent and distort what he has been trying to do out of hate or prejudice. I do not hate Chomsky or need to misrepresent him. As it turns out, there are serious claims by people such as Daniel Dennett, Steven Pinker and John Searle, all of them well known philosophers more or less of Chomsky's generation or a little younger. These men doubt that what Chomsky is doing is valid science. I think

³⁰ Reading about Darwin really enlightened me. The more I found out about him, and I read many books about him as well as his own work, and as I did I liked him more and more. He was very interested in animal rights and both he and his wife worked on animals' behalf, He also was against slavery. Adrian Desmond admirably shows in his [Darwin's Sacred Cause, How a Hatred of Slavery Shaped Darwin's Views on Human Evolution](#), Darwin was not just against slavery but saw his science work as a major contribution to ending both slavery and race and religious prejudice.

they may be right, Chomsky ‘second cognitive revolution’ may be a failure”, as John Searle says. Christina Behme concurs and writes

“Given my findings about Chomskyan linguistics, the question may arise if there is anything salvageable. Considering his voluminous output, the potential gain of finding the pieces worth keeping may seem not to justify the tremendous effort required for completing this work”.

Descartes theories about animals are ridiculous. He claims they do not feel pain, even if they have “sensations”. Descartes argument about animals not having minds also is an argument that denigrates animals in order to claim that only humans have language and that we are fundamentally separated from animals in our ability to use words. Here again we see language used as a political tool to outlaw nature. This side of the argument is fundamental to Chomsky’s theory of language. It is here that Descartes speciesist attitudes toward animals implicate Chomsky’s theory of language. Language may not be an instinct at all, as Darwin said. Linguistics, like religion, is a human centered construction used to disparage and put down animals and nature, who do not conform to the artificial norms dictated by and implicit in linguistics.

Descartes imagines humans are the only “thinking things”, he was able to devalue everything that was taken to be outside thought. Anything that does not think or speak is of lesser value to Descartes. Chomsky’s erection of thought via symbolist thinking in language is the source of his speciesist ideology and it depends on holding that abstract reality is superior to actuality. This is basically a religious or metaphysical claim and not an objective one. Peter Singer is right to implicate Descartes in justifying animals abuse for some centuries after

him. Descartes speciesism depends upon and ‘integralist’ notion of language where language is equated with thought. Chomsky also equates language with thought. Chomsky linguistic theory is really a form of political thought control. For Descartes and Chomsky language could not be about communication primarily because that puts it into the realm of the ‘lesser’ reality of animals and nature. What he calls FLB—Faculty of Language Broad) Chomsky is even “hostile”, Pinker says, to the idea that language is about communication”.³¹

Language is about communication, in fact, but Chomsky and Ian Tattersall and other speciesist bigots refuse to admit this. They refuse because to admit that it is to admit continuity between humans and animals, not separation and absolute difference. They claim a kind of absolute uniqueness for humans. Every species is unique in its own way and to assume a hierarchy in nature is self-serving chauvinism. Hummingbirds, no more than a few inches long, can fly from the Amazon to North of Lake Superior, and have been able to things like this for millions of year. An Albatross can fly without beating its wings over the surface of the ocean for thousands of miles. Intellectuals like Chomsky and Tattersall do much to justify the continuation and preservation of rank speciesism, and so can eat and abuse animals, submit them to medical abuse, animal testing on products, hunting, genetic altering for profit and mass production of factory farming. Their chauvinistic “humanism” becomes just another form of racist like disregard if nature..

³¹ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=piGbuSTckr8&NR=1>

Pinker compares Chomsky to the romantics Rousseau and Marx, rightly I think, and should have added that Cartesian notions of privacy also lead in Chomsky’s thought. like Samuel Beckett, Chomsky thinks language is mostly solipsistic monologue. Pinker notes the formalistic beauty of Chomsky’s writing on language, as in his Sound Pattern of English, (1967). But this formal beauty is an effect of his anti-empirical rationalism, and one finds a similar beauty in Beckett, where language takes off on its own into the Cartesian void of doubt and subjectivism. Is this science? No. In Beckett it is art of a despairing kind, in Chomsky it is reason and speech trying to recreate itself as universal relevance, and failing, due to a lack of ground in empirical and Darwinian facts. “Fail better”, Beckett stubbornly concluded. Noam will never admit he failed.

Chomsky follows Descartes to the letter and claims “the form of language ...is largely determined by internal factors.” (CL. 64). Of course, language is a portrait of human centered obsessions and nature domination, but as it has always been a way to discriminate against those who are lower class. Both Darwin, Pinker and many others dispute the idea that language is merely internal. . The very structure of language, all language being formed around subjects and objects, shows it originates as a way of seeing the natural world, which is everywhere both inside and outside us. It amazes me that Chomsky accepted the internalist side of Descartes argument, when the most simple empirical observations of animals and humans shows language is mostly about communication. Humans, birds and whales all have ability to communicate when born but this must be nurtured by parents and environment. Certainly, the origin of this capacity is in the brain in both humans and animals. But there is no evidence that I can find that there is a locus of universal grammar originated in the brain as Chomsky originally postulated. Grammar is a social construction as is obvious, since it can be turned into political ideology as Chomsky has done with his absurd FLN and FLB. Faculty of Language Narrow or FLN is a Chomskean fiction that creates a human centered, prejudicial notion of human superiority. Chomsky must define language as thought because only then can it be made to differ from animals, as if animals do not think too.

So I looked deeper in Chomsky system of linguistic thought. John Searle referred to Chomsky notions of innate grammar as a “stunning mistake”. This seems to be an accurate assessment. ³² This is obvious

³² In *The Rediscovery of the Mind* Searle writes: “Chomsky claims that innate, unconscious rules cause verbal behavior. In other words, there is a cause/effect relationship between ‘rule’ and language. But studies of neuro-physiology indicate that language is caused not by ‘deep unconscious rules’ but by neuro-physiological structures that have no resemblance to the patterns of language at all. The brain’s hardware produces patterns, but these patterns are not causally

just on prima facie evidence. Language changes very quickly, such that Shakespeare would hardly understand the language of Beowulf and we can barely understand of Shakespeare. Language appears to be an accidental fact of our brains and is very lightly and ephemerally attached to us. It is a constructed social product not an innate fact like bird migration which last eons.

Dennett complains that Chomsky's linguistics appears to be based on a denial of Darwinian evolution. This is not exactly accurate but it is true Chomsky hedges on this subject quite a bit in his own defense. He slurs its importance and downplays all animal achievements in communication. He gives lip service to Darwin, when it suits him. Following Descartes, Chomsky claims that language is unique to humans and animal have no language. "language appears to be a unique phenomenon, without significant analogue in the animal world", he writes.³³ This assessment has no real study behind it. Indeed, little research has been done, but what has been done shows strong analogies between human and animal communication. They should not be expected to be the same, as indeed they are not. He quotes Descartes that animals are very stupid compared to humans

"[I]t is a very remarkable fact that there are none so depraved and stupid, without even excepting idiots, that they cannot arrange different words together, forming of them a statement by which they make known their thoughts; while, on the other hand, there is

related to language produced by humans: they merely delineate the possible forms that human languages can take." In other words actual evidence brings Chomsky's ideas into question but he ignores this.

Quoted in this essay

http://www.developingteachers.com/articles_tchtraining/grainnatepf_mark.htm

³³ Language and mind 1968

no animal, however perfect and fortunately circumstanced it may be, which can do the same" (*Cartesian Linguistics* 116 17).

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The problem here of course is the notion of "words" and the demeaning expectation that animals should make human words or sounds rather than birds songs, whale calls, raccoon vocalizations or dolphin whistles and squeaks. Descartes said elsewhere that "But the greatest of all the prejudices we have retained from infancy is that of believing that brutes think." Actually it is the opposite that is true, animals do think and it is a prejudice to imagine they don't. They don't think exactly as humans do on all occasions, often to their credit. Anyone who has spent much time with dogs, crows³⁴, ravens, dolphins, parrots, otters, green herons or thousands of other species knows that animals have intelligence and can reason and use strategy, plans, elementary logic or avoidance, give commands, warnings, mating sounds and many other communications. Animals think, communicate and act on their thoughts both on their own and in concert with one another. As Katy Payne has shown Elephants have elaborate communication skills.³⁵

³⁴ Crows use tools, recognize faces and are very smart. "If Men had wings and bore black feathers, few of them would be clever enough to be crows." Henry Ward Beecher said. They also care about their dead, and I have seen them hold a sort of vigil for them. Like Ravens and other Corvids they mostly avoid humans if they can, and seem to know humans are needlessly destructive.

³⁵ <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/nature/episodes/my-life-as-a-turkey/full-episode/7378/>

Joe Hutto's study of Turkeys is exceedingly interesting. There are moral questions that can be asked about why he did this and it does result in the birds being harmed later in their lives. But the experiment was extremely interesting as to the complexity of Turkey vocalizations and "language". The birds were able to refer not just to snakes as a category but to individual species of snakes. As Darwin notes, the ability of share with others via vocalizations the presence of a danger is already the beginning of language. Darwin writes " (*Descent of Man*. chapter 3

"may not some unusually wise apelike animal have imitated the growl of a beast of prey, and thus told his fellow-monkeys the nature of the expected danger? This would have been a first step in the formation of a language."

Parrots and dolphins demonstrate behavior that is as sophisticated as verbal phenomena in many humans. Chomsky tries to say that only humans have “language” or grammar and linguistic abilities that engender thinking. He overrates grammar. He cramps and parses definitions of grammar and usage to justify a speciesism that is already part of his mental make-up. A similar argument has been made that only humans have “self-conscious” music, but this also turns out to be false.³⁶ Following Descartes, Chomsky denigrates animal abilities to do complex language skills. He subjectivizes language³⁷ and overly exalts grammar and humans. Like Tattersall, he does not understand how destructive symbol use can be.

Descartes speciesism wrongly assumes animals are stupid and therefore it is OK to torture them with impunity. From this erroneous premise he derives his notion that language is somehow unique to humans. This is also false, if language is understood as communication, as it should be, humans merely have a more sophisticated form or communication than other species—in our terms---, just as ducks have a

³⁶ From *Frontiers in Evolutionary Neuroscience*
“Birdsong: is it music to their ears?”

Sarah E. Earp and Donna L. Maney

“We found that the same neural reward system is activated in female birds in the breeding state that are listening to male birdsong, and in people listening to music that they like,” said Earp, who recently published the study’s findings in *Frontiers of Evolutionary Neuroscience*.

³⁷ He writes in “Biolinguistics and Human Capacity” 2004 that “the most elementary concepts of human language do not relate to mind-independent objects by means of some reference-like relation between symbols and identifiable physical features of the external world, as seems to be universal in animal communication systems” I am sure that he is mistaken here. Language is a social institution, not a natural fact like photosynthesis, as Searle has pointed out. Thus language is primarily about communication. Chomsky spent his life doing formal grammar studies, which was a mistake. If he wanted to learn about language he should have studied the brain, animal communication and human language as a biological, social fact. A truly Darwinian study of communication in animals and humans has yet to be done. This would require scrapping the Chomskian system and starting anew.

more sophisticated mode of flying or otters of swimming. Language is part of evolution, like music, which evolved in birds and in us. Chomsky denies any relationship between human language and birds or bird music and human music, presumably. But this is obviously mistaken.

The notion that humans are somehow superior to birds or aardvarks has no validity as an evolutionary postulate. Darwin knew that evolution is not about hierarchy and to make it that is to lie about it. Evolution does not play favorites, as each species seeks its own survival and slowly created its own form over aeons. Language did not evolve for thought, as Chomsky likes to sometimes say. If language evolved at all, and it by no means proven, it was an accident that overlaid the brain, or took advantage of parts of it. Biology links us to all other species and does not separate us from them. Darwin writes that language is always changing and evolving just as species change and evolve, in direct opposition to Chomsky's myth of a Platonistic universal grammar. Darwin writes:

“The same language never has two birth-places. Distinct languages may be crossed or blended together.*⁽²⁾ We see variability in every tongue, and new words are continually cropping up; but as there is a limit to the powers of the memory, single words, like whole languages, gradually become extinct. As Max Muller*⁽³⁾ has well remarked:- "A struggle for life is constantly going on amongst the words and grammatical forms in each language. The better, the shorter, the easier forms are constantly gaining the upper hand, and they owe their success to their own inherent virtue."

Darwin says that language and its relation to Natural Selection is “a marvelous problem.”, as indeed it is. He says in a letter to Asa Gray that “I wish someone would keep a lot of the most noisy monkeys, half

free, & study their means of communication!” . Unlike Chomsky, Darwin sees human and animal communications as part of the same continuum, as it necessarily has to be. Notice too, that Darwin’s instinct was correct that one must study animals that are free, or half free, and not lab animals, whose behavior severely distorted by captivity. Chomsky’s myth of a Platonistic universal grammar has slowly unraveled.³⁸ It is a medieval fantasy of a universal language. It simply does not exist. The 6-8000 languages in the world are much more varied and diverse in syntax, grammar and organization, not to mention use, than appears that Chomsky thought. Chomsky’s theory is about him, not really about language. It is a quasi-religious construction. Universal Grammar appears to belong more to the history of religion and myth than to science, or at the very least it belongs to the domain of failed hypotheses.³⁹

³⁸ Indeed, grammar is probably the less important to language than the fact of communicating. Grammar is a practical matter of nouns and verbs and how they are arranged in a sentence to help us talk to each other. Grammar is about conditioning, social constraints, interactions and practical matters of how to express what one means to say. Different cultures and classes do this very differently. The fiction of Universal Grammar just does not say what language is and his theory failed. Rather than admit it, Chomsky varied his theory endlessly, trying to make it work, when it simply did not cover the facts.

³⁹ See for instance http://www.princeton.edu/~adele/LIN_106:_UCB_files/Evans-Levinson09_preprint.pdf



Darwin would take a dim view of Chomsky's unwarranted speculations. In Descent of Man Darwin ridiculed those like Descartes and Chomsky who

“have insisted that man is divided by an insuperable barrier from all the lower animals in in his mental faculties. I formerly made a collection of above a score of such aphorisms, but they are almost worthless, as their wide difference and number prove the difficulty, if not the impossibility, of the attempt.” (Descent of Man, Chapter 3)

The beauty of Darwin was his thorough understanding of both animals and people. This is what is now required of us, but not all scientists yet understand his example in this. Chomsky, foolishly, imitates Descartes and ignores Darwin. Descartes views on animals are a really repulsive speciesism, and lack any real evidence, but are assumed by Chomsky as fact. In order to assert human centered speciesism Chomsky must both deny Darwin and make language not primarily about communication but rather about inner life. What Chomsky does is help create an ideology of supremacy to human beings by trying to discredit all “lower beings”, who do not have the kind of communications system that humans have. Chomsky’s claim that human beings are utterly “unique” is really a religious or ideological construct and not a fact. Nina Varsava explains the need of the artificial notion of the “human”, very well

“The human, then, is produced, although never finalized, through anthropomorphism and its denial: the continuous circulation of anthropomorphic representations preserves the human/animal categorical divide and its attendant ethical code—which, as we have seen, serves the interests of humans at the expense of all other animals.”

In other words, the human/animal divide is a cultural construction and not based in fact, and it results in huge injustices. It is more like a religion or akin to racist or sexist fictions and prejudices. Varsava goes very far to show that the apotheosis of humanity that we see in Tattersall, Chomsky and other writers is a religious ideology, a fiction. It is not a fiction we should accept. They act as cheerleaders of human supremacy and uniqueness in ways that are deeply flawed and speciesist. She wants to show that the concept of “the human is a

corrupt concept—that there are no factors which justify the moral weight it is given.” Chomskyeen linguistics and Tattersalls notion of the humans as the “Masters of the Planet”, is a corrupt concept.⁴⁰ Chomsky criticizes capitalists for wanting to be “masters of the universe”, but then hypocritically supports the idea that humans are “Masters of the Planet” in his linguistic theory. In Tattersall’s book, not ironically called, “Masters of the Planet”, Ian Tattersall writes a chapter called “In the Beginning was the Word”. This title itself is indicative of a delusion. There was no “Word” of course, but what Tattersall is doing is trying to claim a nearly mystical exception of human language, as if we are made quasi-divine by it. He tries to advance the theories of Chomsky and Stephen Jay Gould about language with much hyperbole.

Yuval Noah Harari⁴¹ claims that humans are different than chimps

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“I am starting to conclude that the American Museum of Natural History has some history of dubious practices. In the 1970’s a Dr. Aronson was accused of cruelty to cats, who he was using to do experiments of feline sexuality. While the museum defended him, they later stopped such experiments and started a program, according to a 1976 document written by AMNH, in their words, “ would place greater emphasis on natural populations of animals and on field research, as opposed to physiologically- oriented laboratory research with domesticated or laboratory-bred animals.”. (see http://digitallibrary.amnh.org/museum/annual_reports/source/R1976.pdf)

This is something of an admission, if not an admission of guilt. Many years earlier, a director of the AMNH from 1908-33 was Henry Fairfield Osborn. He was a scientific racist and pushed the idea of purity of blood, reflecting the views of some of the rich patrons of the museum. Tattersall is not exactly a racist or a man who abuses animals, but he is a speciesist, which does reflect on today’s upper classes, many of whom share speciesist attitudes about humans as the “Masters of the Planet” Unfortunately museums are often creatures of their times and reflect some of the ideology that may be the least flattering at a given time. Tattersal writes like an apologist for the corporate ideology of global culture so much a part of New York culture, where he lives.

⁴¹ Harari, for the moment anyway, is a Buddhist, and takes an impersonal point of view as an historian. I find a Buddhist view of history to be a false view, as I have explained elsewhere in these books, even though in Harari’s case it has some interesting results. But detachment is a fictional state itself and one that tends to imagine the world as a human creation of the mind. This is not the case and so Buddhism tends to denigrate reality, even as it claims to value it. Harari’s analysis of gods and corporations is quite right, but

because of the “mythical glue” that “has made us the masters of creation” (Sapiens, page 38). This is little different than Tattersall ‘Masters of the Planet’ idea. The “master of creation” is a much larger claim. Myths are false of course as is the whole idea of “creation”, so Harari is merely playing with metaphors here. There is no evidence the universe was “created”. Such mythic pronouncements are really about humans attempt to control everything on earth. Unlike Chomsky and Tattersal, Harari is not a speciesist, since he possesses factory farming of animals. But his need to exalt and cheerlead a human centeredness in conceited language is oddly cut off fomr his interest in animal rights.. It suggests he has not really escaped the mythical. Indeed in the final chapter of this otherwise interesting book, Harari claims that humans are “an animal that has become god” Marx already claimed this in his essay on “the Jewish Question”. It is an absurd supposition that merely means that the human tendency to transcendental magnification is still unrecognized and so not gone beyond. If any of these men actually spent some time with animals in wild circumstances they would see that animals lives are rich and interesting. Animals are not at all moved by the human conceit that inspires these absurd oracular sentences conferring ultimate status on humans. The truth is the entire earth and all species are threatened by humans and such delusions fo grandeur must be stopped. Human centered philosophies such as one finds in Tattersall and Harari are part of the problem.⁴² Harari should be trying

then he veers off in misunderstanding science, having no distinction between valid observations and corporate abuse of science. To his credit he is a vegan, but one who mistakenly thinks that The notion of animal or human rights is a fiction. This would be great news for CEO’s if it were true. Thousands upon thousands of workers have suffered terrible abuses as have animals and to say that their suffering and subsequent fight for rights is fiction is to discredit and abuse them further. David Neibert and Peter Singer and others have written well on animal and human rights and should be studied. Harari says little that is helpful on this subject.

⁴² Harari assessment of science and capitalism is almost scary. He is in some ways a corporate promoter of futuristic fantasy. He reminds me of the fake future that was preached to me when I was a kid, flying cars, food coming out of replicators and other such nonsense. None of it was true. The future is just a way to sell gimmicks like I phones or computers. It has changed very little except for those who got rich off the hype.

to stop these transcendental delusions, not augmenting them. But Harari has at least ask the question that Tattersall and Chomsky both avoid due to unawareness of animal and natural suffering. Harari asks

“Is there anything more dangerous than dissatisfied and irresponsible gods who don’t know what they want?”

No there is nothing more dangerous than human pride and ignorance in combination. We need to start downsizing the rich, abolishing CEO culture, undoing the excesses of capitalist animal and land abuse and stop the insanity of systems of transcendental magnification.

Chomsky and Tattersall created a fiction that language originates by some miraculous process outside evolution, in a sudden mutation, which gives humans an absolutely “unique” status on earth. As I have explained, every species is unique worth. Actually there are no hierarchies in Darwinian evolution, Darwin was rightly opposed to the ideology of teleological purpose. Man is not the pinnacle of nature, except perhaps in dirty and wasteful cities like New York and Shanghai, which are hugely wasteful of earth’s resources and unfortunate places.⁴³

What Chomsky and Tattersall created is more religious fiction than science or evolution. It is close to Creationism, in a way, not real inquiry.

Harari equates science with imperialism, and is partly true but largely not true. He makes no distinction between corporate science and science as a study fo things as they are. (Leonardo would be very surprised, even horrified, at that!) There are abuses of science that are imperial, (land and ocean destruction, polluting, DDT etc.) but not the impulse which gave us pottery, blacksmithing, Franklin’s key and kite, vaccines and so much else

⁴³ Tattersalls latest book, The Strange Case of the Rickety Cossack: and Other Cautionary Tales from Human Evolution is an attempt to rescue his dismal theory of chauvanistic speciesism, and self-congratulatory paleoanthropology from his earlier book. He rather apologizes for the excess of Masters fo the Planet. it. In his final chapter he finally admits that man might not be the “pinnacle” after all. This should have been his initial premise before he wrote Masters of the Planet. He should have understood the notion fo Darwin that nature is not hierarchal, but he didn’t and this led him into Chomsky and Gould, who are certainly mistaken on this.

As I said this sort of human centered cheerleading has little to do with language and a lot to do with a humanist suprematism of a speciesist sort. Chomsky was something of a cult leader and his theory of language is more symbolist suprematism than science or fact.

In both cases Chomsky and Tattersall they have a fantasy of language starting in some mysterious “non- adaptive” Gouldian “exaptation”—a mutation that has no basis in reality at all. This is supposed to have led to the ability of humans to use symbolic expressions and abstract thought.

The most delusional tendencies in human culture come precisely from the symbolic and abstract. So it is very hard to see this as an advance over the communication skills of bird’s song, whale sounds or gorilla and Chimpanzee communication. Of course, many humans think this is an advance, but that is just speciesist prejudice. Bird song is a very sophisticated thing with its own form of natural syntax, order and expression, none of which are like human, perhaps to their credit. To suppose the fictional and alienated realm of human language to be superior is merely a prejudice, not a fact. Symbolist thinking involves a denigration of the actual, or in this case a denigration of all other beings seen as beneath humanity.

Chomsky’s tendency to romantic anti-intellectualism arises from a rejection of empirical evidence and the need to have truth arise “within” or because of a wild mutation, “Merge”, or some interior monologue, infinitely in love with its own voice. This essentially romantic need for truth to be an inner reality rather than something found by science or experiment is what explains his and Gould’s disparaging attitude to science and evolution of other species, including earlier humanoids. His refusal of experiment and peer review is a slap in the face at objectivity. He does not want to be accountable. Fictions and lies are a major part of human abstract communication, facts which he never discusses in his linguistic theory. Primitive notions of symbolism and magical thinking

are part of Chomsky's theory. A barely suppressed Platonism of symbols or archetypes are emphasized because these can be felt within as imaginary constructs. They do not need to be demonstrated in the world or subjected to any verification. Thus in romantic and symbolist thinking, any nonsense can be entertained as fact, however phony or superstitious. Tattersall and Chomsky create a human centered fiction of linguistics and try to float it as science.

Varsava, rightly I think, wants a "a deconstruction without salvation of the Western concept of the human."⁴⁴ This is logical and needed. The notion that humans are the "Masters of the Planet", as Tattersall calls mankind, is merely a new version of manifest destiny, the peculiar belief that humans are exceptional and miraculous. Actually humans are the ones who are destroying all that is lovely and loveable in our world. They are precisely the worst danger our planet has ever seen.

Tattersall has little understanding of nature. Nina Varsava complains that

"In *Becoming Human*, for example, Tattersall holds that language is "universal among modern humans," and "is the most evident of all our uniquenesses: the one in the absence of which it is least possible for us to conceive of humanness as we experience it" He goes on to deny language to nonhuman apes, suggesting that ape calls are inherently emotional, which makes them categorically nonlinguistic: "Not only do chimpanzees not have language," he declares; "they don't even have an incipient form of it, Tattersall's allegation echoes the dominant attitude of the sciences in the nineteenth century—"

Tattersall views are not very different than 19th century Manifest Destiny ideology. That is a shameful thing in our world, where nature teeters on the edge of mass extinctions and global warming. Chomsky's theory is more a part of this problem than anything like a solution. Trying to stress that humans are utterly "amazing" and "unique" in a time when global warming is caused by us alone, and threatens our planet is perverse. Abstract symbolic thought can be utterly delusional and this is a case where it is just so.⁴⁵ One can understand why there is an audience for such vaunted hyperbolic nonsense, since we live in an age of reality denial. But the truth is otherwise. Harari is wrong that humans are gods, but right that people who think they are gods or who create and believe in them are dangerous.

The claim that language proves our uniqueness holds little truth in it. Language may go back much farther than Neanderthals. It will turn out that language has its origins in earlier evolution, perhaps in Homo Erectus, (the original maker of fire and tools) or before, and indeed stretches back into animals and birds. It appears that language developed through a gradual Darwinian process of both biological and cultural evolution -- rather than, as Chomsky, Tattersall and others state, through one or just a few random, untraceable genetic mutations or "exaptations".⁴⁶

Hauser and Tattersall wrote a piece denying that Neanderthals⁴⁷ had language, as this would make humans much closer to animal evolution. Actually there is gathering evidence that Neanderthals did have

⁴⁵ Both Tattersall and Chomsky get their basic idea from Stephen Jay Gould who was mistaken on many things, including the fiction of Non-adaptive exaptations, a concept which is close to a religious fiction or a Martian fantasy.

⁴⁶ Chomsky and Tattersall got the notion of the sudden emergence of language, which is the hinge pin of their idea of language as an exclusively human uniqueness, from Stephen Jay Gould. Whose idea of punctuated equilibrium or sudden mutations seems to have been largely discredited.

⁴⁷ <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3781312/>

Much more interesting than the denials of Neanderthal language is the work of Dr. Svante Pääbo and Ed Green. For a video summation of some of their findings see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rohwn11xeI>

language, had burial, used shells as jewelry, flint axes as symbolic objects and made sophisticated tools out of birch pitch. They also made flint scrapers more sophisticated than human ones of that age, which Tattersall tried to denigrate some years ago. Tattersall claims that Neanderthals did not have the use of symbols. That is probably not true but one can see why he claims this. As I have shown throughout these books symbolist thought is not always a good thing and is the source of many human problems. Exactly what the Neanderthals contributed to the human genome is not known, but to suppose them stupid and incapable of abstract thinking is prejudicial and borders on speciesism or racism. These are academic racist prejudices against these people and no doubt born of irrational cheerleading for human supremacy as their ultimate goal. The problem with the biased and self-congratulatory nature of human anthropology and history has yet to be dealt with.⁴⁸

. Ancient humans did not share these race prejudices, as they are now known to have bred with Neanderthals often, and had offspring, and up to 4% of our DNA is Neanderthal. As Svante Pääbo, and others have shown, --- Neanderthals are in us, it turns out, as we absorbed them by breeding with them. They did not go extinct, exactly, nor were they killed off by human superior technology as the speciesist myth claims. These are merely miscegenistic myths born of racist prejudice. They are part of the human species and they could breed with us. Denying early humans

⁴⁸ Speciesism is really just this self-congratulatory human-centered cheerleading. I found it to be rife in history departments in college and it is present in anthropology, economics and many other disciplines. It is partly narcissism of course, but it goes deeper than this, into religion and ideology going way back in time. It amazes me it still exists, as humans are currently destroying much of the world, degrading ecologies everywhere and destroying species at an unprecedented pace. To claim to be “Masters of the Planet” they are destroying is more than an odd paradox, it is a lie, and one that is horrendously perverse and destructive. To think highly of humanity might have made sense 2400 years ago, when Aristotle wrote. But by Da Vinci’s time, being dubious about humans was already a fact he could not ignore. One can only be glibly pro-humanity if one lies to oneself now. One can only believe in the greatness of humanity if one is a con man marketer, , or believe that making a billion dollars is a good thing, or to be a self-appointed prophet like Chomsky or Schuon, and think oneself the summit of mankind, In fact, being an historian propagandist is writing another kind of fiction, and I for one just won’t do it. A goodly part of these books is to question just this sort of cultural self-aggrandizement. There is not much time to stop more species going extinct and I wish to help the earth survive, even if it means downsizing CEOs, demoting Plato and calling into question all the religions.

like Neanderthals language is part of the old racist prejudice against them and part of Chomskian speciesism. Homo Erectus, used fire and stone tools for a million years before Homo Sapiens, and that already suggests language, or precise communication skill of some kind. Homo Erectus is part of the human family too. The *FOXP2* gene is involved in speech and language was found in Neanderthals suggesting they probably had speech too. Erectus may even have bred with the Denisovans, and Neanderthal with the Denisovans and Neanderthals with modern humans, Paabo claims to have shown through DNA analysis.

So the human family tree is now very broad and blurred, which is good, and continuity between supposed different species suggests that humans are from a much larger family than previously thought.⁴⁹ There are now facts which suggest that the species lines between Neanderthal, Erectus, Denisovan and Sapiens were not formal or fixed. Anthropology was wrong for decades about this. There are differences, but it is claimed that Neanderthals were 99.7 % the same as Homo Sapiens, which basically means that having two names for these “species” might be a mistake, or at least the two species were not exactly two species.⁵⁰ They

⁴⁹ There is some evidence that that female Neanderthals and male Sapiens did not produce fertile offspring. There is no mitochondrial DNA inherited from Neanderthals, Paabo claims.. (others question this) “We might have inherited most of our Neanderthal genes through hybrid females”, Paabo said. Neanderthals and male Sapiens did not produce fertile offspring. Another author, David Reich of Harvard Medical School, told reporters that we and Neanderthals “were at the edge of biological compatibility.” This means they were hybridizing, and some male children of these unions were not fertile. This is ambiguous however. Reich also writes "Neanderthal alleles caused decreased fertility in males when moved to a modern human genetic background." Decreased fertility is not the same as sterility. So it remains ambiguous if Neanderthals and humans are separate species. Some sources say they are and others that they are not.

⁵⁰ Tattersall admits that humans and Neanderthals are 99.7 percent alike in his book, [The Strange Case of the Rickety Cossack](#), on page 197. Tattersall is a morphologist, and thus studies aesthetic differences

are substantially one species, even if there are slight differences, exaggerated by anthropologists who think that humans are “masters of the planet”. Darwin was right, continuity matters more than uniqueness in the development of humans and other species. Speciesism is a minority opinion and happens to be mistaken. We are not “masters of the planet” as Tattersall claims. There are millions of other species and they have rights too. ⁵¹

Previously Tattersall had denied that Neanderthals could interbreed with humans, but he was wrong about that. It turns out Neanderthals and humans are probably variants of the same species and share a good deal of DNA, (1-4%). David Reich showed that. "it was modern humans with modern human behavior that interbred with Neanderthals,"⁵², which means that very likely they did have language too, since the individuals whose DNA was sequenced were from about 45,000 years ago, which is somewhat after language is imagined to have begun. It looks like language might go further back than that and was probably spread across many early hominid species or races. Humans are increasingly seen as interbreeding with Neanderthal and Cro-Magnon, possibly even before leaving Africa. Neanderthals made clothes and

between species, and likes to throw out terms like gracile, for homo Sapiens or Robust for Neanderthal. Paabo usually avoids this sort of type casting, and says for instance, that the DNA evidence suggests that Neanderthal rather than Homo Sapiens were probably the dominant one in the mating events that put the Neanderthal code in human DNA.. Paabo writes that “all, or almost all of the gene flow was from Neanderthals into modern humans” But this does not mean that Neanderthals did not raise human children. They probably did and we raised Neanderthal/human babies too, again suggesting that language was probably on both sides.

⁵¹ See this essay on the shortcomings of the Chomskian theory

On the antiquity of language: the reinterpretation of Neanderthal linguistic capacities and its consequences

Dan Dediu^f and Stephen C. Levinson

Levinson states in his conclusion that

“In this paper, we have tried to review the evidence supporting the claim that Neanderthals, Denisovans and contemporary modern humans shared a similar capacity for modern language, speech and culture.

Furthermore, we argued that regarding these lineages as different species is unhelpful, and that their admixture probably shaped present-day genetic and linguistic diversities.

<http://pubman.mpdl.mpg.de/pubman/item/escidoc:1760092:6/component/escidoc:1795944/fpsyg-04-00397.pdf>

⁵² <http://www.newscientist.com/article/dn26435-thoroughly-modern-humans-interbred-with-neanderthals.html#.VM7nJE0U8dU>

spears and probably art too, so it is very unlikely they did have language too. So Tattersall and Hauser are probably wrong about denying language to Neanderthals. Chomsky's notion of a "language revolution" by sudden mutation is a myth.

The speciesist hatred of others species which Chomsky, Tattersall and Hauser show might be a majority opinion, as humans have a long history of speciesist hatred of primates. We have all but killed off Gorillas, Chimps, Bonobos and Orangutans. But these 19th century notions of human 'manifest destiny' applied to species are tired and unnecessary anymore, and these men stand in the way of a scientific understanding of human origins that would help us see our common ancestry with all beings on earth, including primates and Neanderthals, as well as others species. Darwin was right that all species are unique and three really is no hierarchy in nature.

While it is true that the inner life of animals can be hard to access, just as it is for humans to understand people with disabilities or Alzheimer's, it is also true that much more effort is being expended now on trying to see the world from the point of view of animals and birds, or Alzheimer's patients. But there is a great deal that we can know from relations that do not involve human language. Chomsky is safe among those who know little about animals in asserting this rather counter-intuitive thesis that animals have no inner life. But anyone who has spent a good deal of time with animals outside of laboratories, with traditions of serving profit, will tell you otherwise.

Chomsky chose the discredited animal researcher Mark Hauser as his associate in recent work. A bad choice both in the fact that Hauser is in trouble for poorly done research and because Hauser appears to have studied animals mostly in labs, which tells one little about actual

animal behavior.⁵³ This combined with Chomsky's choice of Stephan Jay Gould as a model of evolutionary theory, when Gould's theory of spandrels and punctuated equilibrium, has been seriously questioned⁵⁴, further brings into question Chomsky's linguistic theories. ⁵⁵

⁵³ This lamentable dearth of understanding of animals in the wild is evident in his book Animal Minds. I read this book before I had any idea of his close relation to Chomsky and thought it very poorly done. Hauser's was later made to leave Harvard and accused of research misconduct. Cognitive psychologist Julie Neiworth of Carleton College in Northfield, Minnesota tested some of Hauser's work on Tamarin monkeys and found that Hauser's attempt to prove a relation to human language was not accurate. She said "I don't think this behavior is a marker for human language at all. It likely is something abstract and deeper tied to hearing and recognizing sounds," she says. How does she know that? Because she also tested them with patterns of tamarin call noises, barks, hoots and the like, split into their simplest forms and put into patterns. "That's their language, those noises." Neiworth says. "We don't know what they all mean, but we do know a lot of them and those are the ones we used." This also suggests a rudimentary language of their own among Tamarin, a fact that Chomsky and Hauser tend to deny.

<http://www.usatoday.com/story/tech/2012/09/29/marc-hauser-research-reviewed-harvard-scandal/1600229/>

⁵⁴ Dennett discusses Gould at some length in his Darwin's Dangerous Idea. But his ideas are discussed elsewhere too and dismissed by most evolutionary thinkers. For instance, John Tooby and Leda Cosmides write that "the best way to grasp the nature of Gould's writings is to recognize them as one of the most formidable bodies of fiction to be produced in recent American letters" Gould, like Chomsky wants to make the past a great mystery, and thereby promotes his own theories that have no evidence, as if they did not require precedent.

⁵⁵ Nina Varsava gives a good example of a speciesist who is proud of ignorance of nature and animals. "A more sensible definition of language might appeal to what makes language so very important, or what its primary function is, which seem to amount to the same thing— i.e., *communication*. But Tattersall's conception of the human as abysmally apart from, and superior to, all other animals requires a particularly narrow definition of language. His reasoning promotes a view of animals as non-linguistic and unthinking creatures, supports the categorical distinction between humans and all other animals on these grounds, and accordingly defends the supremacy of the human, which is based on that distinction. The "yawning cognitive gulf" that Tattersall posits "between modern Homo sapiens and the rest of nature" permits him to make diametrical claims against the possibility of human empathy towards animals: "Adept as you may be at reading the minds of members of your own species," he writes, "you simply cannot imagine the dog's actual state of consciousness" The "yawning cognitive gulf", ironically, is in Tattersall himself and those who think as he does."

I asked Barry Kent MacKay, the great Canadian bird artist, and animal researcher and advocate, what he thinks of Chomsky's and Hauser's disparaging ideas about animals. Barry has who has spent his whole life studying birds closely, said

Chomsky wants animals to be human. Even within our own species how things are said, and what is said can vary immensely, so why should we expect animals to "talk" as we do, the real question being how and what they can communicate, and whether it is more or less than we do, and there is absolutely no reason to assume that it can't be more, but more about things we don't know, or care about, or are important to us. I can't imagine what an elephant or a Blue Whale needs to know, or needs to communicate.

I have a similar concern about "intelligence" We are, beyond doubt and by far, the most intelligent species, based on how WE measure intelligence. But I can think of other ways to measure it that make us pretty dumb, indeed. If the function of intelligence is to destroy the life-support capability of the planet, than we are, hands-down, the best there is...no other species comes close, but that does not fit even our own definition of "intelligence".

There seems to be universal "alarm calls" that humans can imitate that call smaller birds "to arms" over the presence of a predator. I've seen a very large number of kinglets, augmented by a few chickadees and a Downy Woodpecker, thus mob a Northern Saw-whet Owl, and of course it is common to see jays do it around an owl, or crows, but also chickadees, nuthatches and so on. I once saw Mountain Chickadees and a Golden-crowned Kinglet "mobbing" a Northern Pygmy-Owl

This is exactly right. Bird communications can be very sophisticated and even cross species lines. Chomsky wants animals to be human and can't handle comparisons that take other species points of view. Linguistics is speciesist by definition, language being to us what the "Beak" of a Platypus is to them. If Platypuses had Platypusingists, they would certainly be Platypus-centered too. An attempt to study all forms of communication in all species would require a much less human centered science, and this is growing. The faults of human communication could be studied too, which are currently outside the domain of linguistics study. Chomsky developed a prejudicial and human centered system, rather like the bogus Physiognomy and Phrenology theory of the early 19th and early 20th centuries. Ian Tattersall's notion of language, which echoes Chomsky and supports it with paleo-anthropology, is likewise akin to the bogus "scientific racism" and anthropology of Buffon, Ernst Haeckel, St. Hillaire, Broca, Coon and others. Tattersall is not a racist so far as I know, rather, he has shifted the same sort of anthropological thinking to prejudice against non-human species based on language and the self-centered ideology of symbolist thought. 18th and 19th century ideas of language already had a racist component, but when this was discredited after the Nazis, speciesism took over as the primary form of discrimination in social sciences like linguistics and anthropology. Tattersall and Chomsky are two of the main proponents of this atrocious, pseudo-scientific system of belief, but they are hardly the only ones. Speciesism is common in today's universities. Indeed, ever since Descartes speciesism has been endemic in most social science.

Just as bogus physiognomy studies were used to analyze the human face and deduce racist characteristics, so Tattersall,

Hauser and Chomsky use language to deduce speciesist prejudices about animals. They have enshrined speciesism irrationally in their linguistic speculative systems. Their linguistics is a pseudo-science, and is inherently speciesist and not based on evidence or science. Chomsky, Hauser and others try to push his ideology because they know so little about nature themselves. He knows virtually nothing about animal communication and has not studied it in natural populations. Hauser's understanding is distorted by animals abused in cages. They know little about wild animals and how they communicate so there is no surprise they see it as a great "mystery" and wish to suppress others from inquiry into it. Even in their proposal for studying wild animals they suggest extreme means. Hauser suggests that "we can imagine that in the not so distant future, it will be possible to non-invasively obtain neural recordings from free-ranging animals, and thus, to provide a more fine grained and quantitative measure of spontaneous processing of different stimuli".⁵⁶ Animals live in nature just as we do and removing their natural context will not tell them much about how animals communicate, perceive and live. They can watch animals themselves in the world, now, but few of them do and when they do they do not know how to read what they see. Chomsky plays the Pope of language when actually he is probably wrong in many ways about it. It is abundantly clear that animals communicate far more than humans realize.

Darwin, in contrast was quite a good nature observer and he denied language was innate in Chomsky's sense. Darwin is much more sensible and not ashamed of empathy and reason, writes that

⁵⁶ Chomsky, Hauser et al. "Mystery of Language Evolution" 2014
<http://journal.frontiersin.org/Journal/10.3389/fpsyg.2014.00401/full>

“language certainly is not a true instinct, for every language has to be learnt. It differs, however, widely from all ordinary arts, for man has an instinctive tendency to speak, as we see in the babble of our young children; whilst no child has an instinctive tendency to brew, bake, or write. Moreover, no philologist now supposes that any language has been deliberately invented; it has been slowly and unconsciously developed by many steps.”

Chomsky wrongly claims that language learning is effortless for children. Actually it is quite hard for children to learn it and it takes years,⁵⁷ just as it takes a long time for birds to learn to sing. Chomsky claims that in human language we “we find no striking similarity to animal communication systems”⁵⁸ This is nonsense. I have watched birds and animals raise their young and doing it myself has had a huge overlap with what I have seen raccoons, Canada Geese or Orioles do with their young. Most people are so alienated from nature that they have no idea how similar animals and birds are to us.

Actually A New Study, called “Stepwise acquisition of vocal combinatorial capacity in songbirds and human infants” by Dina Lipkind, Gary F. Marcus⁵⁹ and others shows that language acquisition between

⁵⁷ Since we homeschool our children I know exactly what it takes to teach children language. It is a labor of love certainly, but not that easy and requires a lot of patience and care, seven days a week, over a period of years.

⁵⁸ <http://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/philosophy/works/us/chomsky.htm>

⁵⁹ There is a New York Times article about this too,
http://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/02/science/from-the-mouths-of-babes-and-birds.html?hpw&_r=0

And the study itself is here:

<http://www.nature.com/nature/journal/v498/n7452/full/nature12173.html>

Pinker’s and Jackendoff’s refutation of Chomsky Hauser and Fitch is here:

humans and birds shares striking similarities. Chomsky tries but fails to discredit these studies, as was expected, as he tries to discredit any threat to his power. But despite him, science now supports Darwin's view of language, not Chomsky, whose theory is incorrect.. This study negates Chomsky's notion that human language is unique. Obviously human language shares important characteristics with bird communication as it does with many other species. Chomsky wrote in his Hauser and Fitch(2002, 2014) and more recent essays that animal and human communication were radically different. He is clearly mistaken on this. In Descent of Man Darwin had already speculated on the similarity of bird and human communication systems. He was right and has been proven to be right experimentally. Chomsky theories are wrong in so many ways. But here is one way that disproves a major thrust in the Chomsky theory.

Darwin was far ahead of Chomsky in the 1860's. Jackendoff and Pinker are correct when they state in their essay contesting Chomsky claims. Pinker and Jackendoff state in their "The faculty of language: what's special about it?"⁶⁰ that Chomsky theory of language is "sufficiently problematic that it cannot be used to support claims about evolution"⁶¹. Indeed, the basics of the Chomsky theory are all failing, as

http://pinker.wjh.harvard.edu/articles/papers/pinker_jackendoff.pdf

This seems to me to be a very important refutation of many of Chomsky's claims. Indeed, it is a step toward erecting linguistics on a non Chomskian basis. While Pinker's own views may have problems, at least he allows for an empirical approach. While some of Chomsky's idea can be saved perhaps, much of it would be well to jettison and begin again on a Darwinian basis, with much more research to be done on animal societies in the wild. I also am pleased to see that Pinker and Jackendoff largely if not entirely defeat Chomsky's human centered speciesism.

⁶⁰ http://public.wsu.edu/~fournier/Teaching/psych592/Readings/Pinker_Jackendoff_2005.pdf

⁶¹ Chomsky's hostility to biology and evolution in particular is bizarre. According to Pinker Chomsky thinks that current biology must be revamped to

Pinker and Jackendoff, Dennett, Searle and others show.. One can expect that this discovery of the similarities between bird and human communication is just the first of many to be found between animals and humans in the upcoming decades. I have seen enough of the capacities of animals and birds to guess that they are much more sophisticated than most humans realize. Chomsky's theory of language will be merely an historical curiosity one day. Some of what he said was helpful but much of it was not.

Chomsky is overlooking the obvious. We are animals. We evolved from animals. Crows do elaborate communications to warn each other about hawks and also mourn the death of loved ones, as do elephants. A wolf pack has an amazingly diverse and varied array of expressions of emotional states, calls indicating whereabouts and many others feeling states indicated by different sounds. They think and strategize too. They employ complex strategies to bring down prey which indicates some measure of "reason" and even "creativity", which is Chomsky's primary claim for human language uniqueness. Bower birds make something

accommodate the findings of [Chomsky's] Minimalist linguistics: The evidence for this is Chomsky own statement below...

Any progress toward this goal [showing that language is a "perfect system"] will deepen a problem for the biological sciences that is far from trivial: how can a system such as language arise in the mind/brain, or for that matter, in the organic world, in which one seems not to find anything like the basic properties of human language? That problem has sometimes been posed as a crisis for the cognitive sciences. The concerns are appropriate, but their locus is misplaced; they are primarily a problem for biology and the brain sciences, which, as currently understood, do not provide any basis for what appear to be fairly well established conclusions about language (Chomsky, 1995, pp. 1–2).

Pinker points out that this is presumptuous of Chomsky. He tends to think his ideas are god given and everyone should move over. The truth is otherwise, sometimes he is just mistaken and this is one of those times. He has made no "well established conclusions" about language other than to those who follow his rather cultish dogmas which have little empirical evidence behind them.

very much like human art out of colored object and female bower birds judge the results of these nests.⁶² This is very like human communications in love. Darwin observes, rightly, I think, that language is laboriously learned, like an art and humans have a tendency to want speak at birth but must learn it from parents and foster parents. Darwin explicitly denies claims that language is genetic: it is nurture not nature. He compares this learning process to that of birds....

“The sounds uttered by birds offer in several respects the nearest analogy to language, for all the members of the same species utter the same instinctive cries expressive of their emotions; and all the kinds which sing, exert their power instinctively; but the actual song, and even the call-notes, are learnt from their parents or foster-parents. These sounds, as Dines Barrington*(2) has proved, are no more innate than language is in man." The first attempts to sing "may be compared to the imperfect endeavour in a child to babble."⁶³

Like the recent essay that proves just this, mentioned above, this is an explicit denial of the innateness theory of language as held by Chomsky or anyone else. Darwin does not deny that the capacity for communication is genetic in the brain, or that the apparatus of the larynx or mouth might favor speech, he denies that grammar or talking or language use is genetic. Of course he did not know about genes, yet. But he is saying that language is a proclivity not an innate structure. This appears to be correct. Language is largely

⁶² For a very interesting essay on the subject of art and its biological origins see [The Art Instinct](#) by Dennis Dutton. Dutton also rejects Stephen Jay Gould's non-adaptationism. He is closer to Steven Pinker, who also dissents from Chomsky's views for Darwinian reasons.

⁶³ http://www.infidels.org/library/historical/charles_darwin/descent_of_man/chapter_03.html

cultural. Darwin continues:

The slight natural differences of song in the same species inhabiting different districts may be appositely compared, as Barrington remarks, "to provincial dialects"; and the songs of allied, though distinct species may be compared with the languages of distinct races of man. I have given the foregoing details to show that an instinctive tendency to acquire an art is not peculiar to man. (*Descent of Man* Chapter 3)

Birds acquire song and people acquire language by similar mechanisms. The capacity is present genetically insofar as parts of the body and brain have been adapted to language but that actual use of song or language proceeds by way of instruction and culture.

Darwin's *Descent of Man*, chapter 3, puts Chomsky's work as a linguist in question and I think defeats many of its main postulates. I would go further and say that Chomsky's understanding of language is still behind what Darwin understood 140 years ago. Darwin says that language is learned by many small steps and this is accurate, just as birds learn to sing. He supplies endless examples of his points from experience and reality. This is very refreshing compared to Chomsky who has little understanding of other species or even domestic species. Many animals and birds create complex structures for habitation, and very likely humans derived their buildings types partly from animals structures such as beaver lodges and dams or termite nests. Humans warn each other just as animals do, announce the proximity of food, exclaim in pain or pleasure, deceive others with feigned imitations⁶⁴ and

⁶⁴ Blue Jays do a perfect imitation of red tailed hawks which they use to scare other birds and humans too.

many other similarities. Chomsky is mistaken that animals have no creative use in communication. Consider the many complex birds songs, the amazingly varied utterances of the Starling or Robin, to cite two common birds or Mannikin mating dances, or Lyrebird imitations of other birds or Elephant and Giraffe infra-sound and whale singing. Bees appear to have complex communications. Chomsky denies animals have “language” after he sets up rather narrow and exclusive, elitist and speciesist notions of what human language is supposed to be. Darwin is much more open to actual experience and has a detailed and amazing knowledge of actual animals. Chomsky’s cramped computational view of language is all dusty blackboard and university office, formalistic and abstract city and streets. It is hard to imagine Chomsky studying birds or walking by a pond, much less sailing on the Beagle for years to study flora and fauna. Chomsky writes:

the fact that human language, being free from control of identifiable external stimuli or internal *physiological* [emphasis added] states, can serve as a general instrument of thought and self-expression rather than merely as a communicative device of report, request, or command (CL, 11-12).

[human language] is not restricted to any practical communicative function, in contrast, for example, to the pseudo-language of animals (CL, 29).

[Cartesians want to account for intelligent behavior] in the face of their inability to provide an explanation in mechanical terms (CL. 12).

While it is true that no other species has language in quite the way the way humans do, it is obvious that Darwinian evolution developed human speech out of antecedents in our animals ancestors. No other

species has communication skills in the ways dolphins or elephants do either. The notion that one is superior to the other is just speciesist prejudice. The quality of unique capacity occurs everywhere in nature. There is both difference and continuity between insect, bird and mammal communication, but all are developed via evolution. Human communication privileges humans in their own eyes, but it also makes them think other species are worthless and deserve extinction, which hardly suggests humans are as great as they imagine they are. There is nothing “pseudo” about elephant or whale communication as Katy Payne has shown. She has shown that “elephants use their low-frequency calls to coordinate their social behavior over long distances”⁶⁵. So this basic premise of the Chomskian system is Descartes’ speciesist and prejudicial thesis restated. Elephants and other species show empathy for each other and communicate closely. Darwin is a wonderful antidote to grudging supremacist bigotry.

Darwin is at pains to show that though the capacity or need to speak may be “instinctual” or genetic, as we would say now. But the doing of it must be taught, as must bird song, and so grammar itself is probably not instinctual or genetic, but practical and changeable in different societies. He stresses that writing must be learned as well, and it is even harder to learn that speaking. Darwin notes that the singing of songs in birds “is no more innate than language is in man” (Descent pg. 298) He notes that the instinctive tendency to acquire an art” is common to both birds and humans.

Chomsky’s linguistic theory is suspect and lacking empirical evidence. At end the of his paper “A Minimalist Program for Linguistic

⁶⁵ See the Elephant Listening Project on Elephant Language here:
<http://www.birds.cornell.edu/brp/elephant/cyclotis/language/language.html>

See also Katy Payne’s book Silent Thunder

Theory" (1995) Chomsky even notes himself the failure of his linguistic theory to achieve status as "science". The notion of "deep structure" failed. He is theorizing and guessing in a rationalist way, with little or no dependence on empirical testing, and this leads him merely to make a theory that looks more like his own ego than like nature. This is a mistake and a mistake that Chomsky has been loathe for too long to admit or give up. It appears that Chomsky's main impetus in rejecting aspects of Darwinian theory come from Stephen Jay Gould, whose idea of "spandrels" appears to be the source of Chomsky's odd ideas about language being somehow independent of Darwinian adaptation. Chomsky's insistence on language having primarily to do with thought rather than communication is part of this rejection. It appears likely that he is mistaken in this. Darwin, once again, was right that language is primarily about communication and derives ultimately from primate ancestors.

Darwin's argument, stated in the Descent of Man, is that language might have some of its origins deriving ultimately from singing in primates. He uses the example of Gibbons calls. He implies also that language may have been encouraged by sexual selection. This is a very amazing and pregnant passage, still largely overlooked in Darwin's work which ought to be much more deeply studied:

"I cannot doubt that language owes its origin to the imitation and modification of various natural sounds, the voices of other animals, and man's own instinctive cries, aided by signs and gestures. When we treat of sexual selection we shall see that primeval man, or rather some early progenitor of man, probably first used his voice in producing true musical cadences, that is in singing, as do some of the gibbon-apes at the present day; and we may conclude from a widely-spread analogy, that this power would have been especially exerted during the courtship of the sexes,-

would have expressed various emotions, such as love, jealousy, triumph,- and would have served as a challenge to rivals. It is, therefore, probable that the imitation of musical cries by articulate sounds may have given rise to words expressive of various complex emotions. The strong tendency in our nearest allies, the monkeys, in microcephalous idiots,*⁽²⁾ and in the barbarous races of mankind, to imitate whatever they hear deserves notice, as bearing on the subject of imitation. Since monkeys certainly understand much that is said to them by man, and when wild, utter signal-cries of danger to their fellows;*⁽³⁾ and since fowls give distinct warnings for danger on the ground, or in the sky from hawks (both, as well as a third cry, intelligible to dogs),*⁽⁴⁾ may not some unusually wise apelike animal have imitated the growl of a beast of prey, and thus told his fellow-monkeys the nature of the expected danger? This would have been a first step in the formation of a language.

As the voice was used more and more, the vocal organs would have been strengthened and perfected through the principle of the inherited effects of use; and this would have reacted on the power of speech. But the relation between the continued use of language and the development of the brain, has no doubt been far more important. The mental powers in some early progenitor of man must have been more highly developed than in any existing ape, before even the most imperfect form of speech could have come into use; but we may confidently believe that the continued use and advancement of this power would have reacted on the mind itself, by enabling and encouraging it to carry on long trains of thought. A complex train of thought can no more be carried on without the aid of words, whether spoken or silent, than a long calculation without the use of figures or algebra. It appears, also, that even an ordinary train of thought almost requires, or is greatly

facilitated by some form of language, for the dumb, deaf, and blind girl, Laura Bridgman, was observed to use her fingers whilst dreaming.* Nevertheless, a long succession of vivid and connected ideas may pass through the mind without the aid of any form of language, as we may infer from the movements of dogs during their dreams. We have, also, seen that animals are able to reason to a certain extent, manifestly without the aid of language. The intimate connection between the brain, as it is now developed in us, and the faculty of speech, is well shown by those curious cases of brain-disease in which speech is especially affected, as when the power to remember substantives is lost, whilst other words can be correctly used, or where substantives of a certain class, or all except the initial letters of substantives and proper names are forgotten.*(2)”

These gems of insight are far in advance of anything written by Chomsky about language, communication, animals and humans. These gems of insight, which suffuse all of Chapter 3 of Descent of Man and other works of Darwin, should have been developed by Chomsky but were not. Chomsky ignores Darwin and imagines, falsely, I think, that Descartes is wiser and truer on language. Descartes’ theory of language is self-involved and anti-natural. It is paltry and appears to be born of prejudice and should be abandoned as should most or perhaps all of Chomsky’s theory. Looking at language from a Darwinian point of view means to study communication across species lines and all the way back in time. It does not mean merely studying grammar, which is merely codified rules of speech and is a later development. Crows talking, Wolves howling, Neanderthals talking to Modern Humans, Whales communicating are far more important. Indeed, there is reason to abandon Chomsky theory of language and start anew. It would be nice to see Chomsky himself abandon this, though that is unlikely. His ego is

attached to the theory and it is a theory that accords well with human centered ideologies, but capitalist and socialist. He does not seem to want to follow the normal route of science that a theory must be tested and submitted to review. He is a very uncompromising fellow who listens to no one. There is reason to doubt he is doing science at all, and if it is not science it is demagoguery.

John Searle notes regarding Chomsky's early work up till the 70's or 80's that "the original paradigm had failed".⁶⁶ His later 'paradigms' do not look very promising either. Indeed, while Chomsky politics is interesting, most of Chomsky's claims for linguistics appear to be on very shaky ground, if not outright fiction. Not only does universal grammar appear to be a fiction but notion that FLN and FLB are different things really is just an excuse for speciesism.⁶⁷ Animal communications are rigorously exclude from his 'narrow' definition of language. His notions of "I language" obscure more than they explain,⁶⁸.. While he is certainly right that language has a genetic component, little is known about it. In brain injuries the locus of apparent language activity can even be rerouted to other parts of the brain, that in itself suggests that a language "organ" is not the right way to speak of how the language works in the brain. It is spread over different areas of the brain. Moreover,

⁶⁶ <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2002/jul/18/chomskys-revolution-an-exchange/>

⁶⁷ These acronyms stand for Faculty of Language Narrow and Faculty of Language Broad, and we in use as of 2004, essay with Hauser and Fitch.

⁶⁸ According to Pinker "Merge" and "recursion" in language is hugely overrated by Chomsky. This is extensively discussed in Pinker and Jackendoff, "The faculty of language: what's special about it?". I wonder if recursion might be the dead end of the Chomskian theory, a sort of self-referential self portrait of the grammarian himself, just as Descartes ends in the dark of *Je Pense Donc Je Suis*", as Beckett shows him, talking to himself in a black room. Chomsky ends in recursion, tautological analogy, and similitude. But I don't think this tells us much about what language actually is, it merely states a sort of Chomskian religion of the mind looking at itself. Rather like the mythical Unified Field Theory, Merge appears to be a myth born of straining after the origins of language in the vacuum of Chomsky's rationalism without much empirical study.

language appears to be a cultural phenomenon as much as a genetic one. It appears to be brought about more by social conditioning or learning than by genetics, as Darwin claimed. The ideology of innate grammar may be invalid, because there is no evidence that can either verify it. In his *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, Karl Popper proposed a generally accepted variant of this doctrine: a hypothesis is valid if and only if it can in principle be falsified by empirical evidence. Chomsky has little evidence to support most of his ideas. It is much more likely that grammar is a product of language use, --a product of the process of using nouns and verbs, and not that grammar is innate and prior to language use. This was both Darwin's and Skinner's point of view and it appears to be right, given the empirical evidence, though exactly how this works has not yet been fully understood. I think Chomsky has gotten away with his pandering of very insecure and questionable ideas in linguistics by force of personality rather than by force of actual discovery. Chomsky rejects Skinner's⁶⁹ and Russell's stimulus response theories and balks at accepting Darwinians idea when he can get away with it. He is an abrasive and difficult person and forces his followers to conform by being overbearing manner. One must either be his accomplice or his victim. I have tried to be neither: I do not accept his claims and demanded of him better explanations which he will not and cannot provide.

Chomsky's claim that language is mostly about solipsistic thinking appears to be overstated as does his claim that it is not

⁶⁹ The is a rather devastating historical review of Chomsky's bad attack on Skinner by David Palmer. Palmer claims that:

My own exploration and evaluation of Chomsky's theories led me to predict that his work will ultimately be seen as a kind of scientific flash flood, generating great excitement, wreaking havoc, but leaving behind only an arid gulch.

primarily about communication. ⁷⁰ Clearly animals do have a kind of language and do communicate in a great variety of ways. Darwinism suggests that human language is one of these ways, more complex than the others, but there is no need to demean or denigrate what animals can do.. Bats can echolocate and human have only learned to do this recently and only with elaborate and expensive technology, radar, sonar and so on. If one must compare bats and humans on a scale of values that has flying while vocalizing as it main term, bats are far superior to any humans. No human can swim as well as a dolphin or fly as well as a Tern or a Nighthawk. If language is a ‘unique property of evolution” for humans, this might not be an entirely good thing, given the despicable facts of what we have done with it. Animals have capacities that are also unique, which really means that uniqueness is a normative fact of evolution, and thus meaningless: every being and every adaption is unique. Hierarchy is an illusion as evolution is a bottom up process of incremental development, species by species. The notion that one species is superior to others is false; each is unique and has its own capacities and traits and survives by virtue of these. Each deserves protection form human self-centered chauvinism. Many species have faculties or capacities that humans cannot touch. Octopuses can change skin color and shape at will. Terns can fly 15,000 miles on their own energy. Camels can go long periods without water. Elephants can communicate using infra-sound, as Katy Payne and others have shown. Humans have language, that is our special ability, but that hardly invalidates the

⁷⁰ Pinker notes that “ In fact, over the years he[Chomsky] has become rather hostile to the idea that language is a system designed for communication. He believes that language evolved for beauty, not for use. Chomsky's skepticism about evolution extends far enough to say that there is nothing about language that is particularly well adapted for communication... He believes that people have a spontaneous tendency to cooperate and create for the sheer sake of it without regard for reward or consequences. That is the deepest root of Chomsky's belief system. This leads his radical politics. It also leads to a conception of language that emphasizes creativity, but devalues the utility of language as a system of communication. It cannot be explained in terms of its beneficial consequences, which is the essence of natural selection.”

superiority of other species to humans in endless other ways, form penguins, to Butterfly wing patterns, to the marvel of birds wings.

In order to explain Chomsky's rather strangely Platonic 'archetypal' notions of "deep structure" and "universal grammar"⁷¹ he cannot rely on Darwinian evidence because there isn't any, so he resorts to cosmic and rather occult theories, Chomsky claims that the:

" language faculty appears to be biologically isolated in a curious and unexpected sense....To tell a fairy story about it, it is almost as if there was some higher primate wandering around a long time ago and some random mutation took place - maybe after some strange cosmic ray shower - and it reorganized the brain, implanting a language organ in an otherwise primate brain."⁷²

Language did not occur miraculously or outside of evolution. It is hard to imagine this sort of fantasy coming from someone who claims to

⁷¹ Chomsky wrote that Universal Grammar implied the possibility that all human languages are already in the human brain before birth. This is a Platonic idea and seems untenable and unworkable--- as are Platonic concepts in general. Evidently Chomsky later dropped this idea , which was central to this theory. He also justifies some of his ideas by reference to Alexander Koyre, a rather reactionary Platonist, who was an influence on the traditionalists and their anti - science program.. He quotes Koyre's anti materialistic notions lifted from Newton that ``a purely materialistic or mechanistic physics . . . is impossible". This is really a misunderstanding of physics, I think. Koyre is a favorite of science bashers. Chomsky also uses Goethe as an example, another Platonist. Another Platonist that influenced Chomsky was Julius Moravcsik, a philosopher. Chomsky does not call himself a Platonist as far as I am aware. He would probably deny he is one. But the concept of "Universal Grammar" UG, a virtually Platonist concept, is an idealization along the lines of Platonic "Archetypes"--- "Eidos". The actual mechanism of language in the brain appears to be quite different than Chomsky idealized notion of grammar. Chomsky is guilty of what A.N. Whitehead called the 'fallacy of misplaced concreteness', making UG into a factual entity, when really it is just an idealistic postulate. Plato's archetypes are also guilty of this. In the end the postulate failed, as the Archetypes failed. Chomsky also quotes Koyre in other essays, for instance he quote Koyre's idea that in science "We are left with the ``admission into the body of science of incomprehensible and inexplicable `facts' imposed upon us by empiricism",-- this is nearly a romantic and religious statement again attacking empiricism. This is a mistake on Chomsky's part I think. Here:

<http://www.chomsky.info/articles/2000----.pdf>

⁷² Chomsky *The architecture of language* Oxford 2000, p4

be a scientist, but that is just the problem I am getting at here. He would rather invent romantic or mythical fictions like this that do the hard work of finding Darwinian evidence for his theories, in brain science or in nature and other animals. It is likely, as Darwin and lots of evidence suggests, that language is primarily about communication, and evolved because of ordinary natural selection and sexual selection as well as social and cultural factors. Chomsky's mistake is to never have gone on the Beagle or a similar voyage of discovery, looking for the roots of language in animals, birds and our own biology.

Chomsky is evoking the rationalist Plato and the archetypes which he transmogrifies via Descartes and Humboldt into "innate grammars", which have never been proven to exist. This is mythology and religion, not science. Chomsky's Platonistic claim that people are born with innate knowledge of grammar is postulated but unproven after 50 years of Chomsky's research. Language has naturalistic or realist explanations that are cultural, Darwinian and empirical, and Chomsky largely ignores these. His influence by Descartes and Humboldt does not make much sense unless he is trying to create a self-sustaining faith or dogma that is rational and non-empirical, but in that case we are not dealing with science so much as sort of Cartesian dogma, a Cartesian Church as it were, with Chomsky as its priest. An example of his Platonist theory⁷³ of

⁷³ Chomsky's rather Neo-Platonist views are evident here: the puzzle as to how a child can master a grammar is, for Chomsky, an instance of 'Plato's problem' - "the problem of explaining how we can know so much, given that we have such limited evidence"...". Plato's answer," says Chomsky, "was that the knowledge is 'remembered' from an earlier existence. The answer calls for a mechanism: perhaps the immortal soul. That may strike us as not very satisfactory, but it is worth bearing in mind that it is a more reasonable answer than those assumed as doctrine during the dark ages of Anglo-American empiricism and behavioral science - to put the matter tentatively, but accurately."... Chomsky forgets to add that Plato's theory of the Eidos is thoroughly discredited. "So we should not associate the doctrine of the soul with the dark ages: on the contrary, it is the opponents of Plato's theory who are in the dark ages. But there is a

Language is his explanation of language unfolding in children in a quasi-automatic way. I have small children and it is not automatic, but halting and difficult with constant corrections and amendments from parents and peers, exactly as Darwin says. Learning English or any other language is no small matter but takes years to accomplish. Chomsky underrated the vast influence of natural selection and parents and teachers. Darwin claimed that language is learned with difficulty and much time and practice and I can confirm this having taught my own children most of the language they know. That my children are genetically predisposed to learn it is unquestionable. But they mangle grammar with such regularity it is clearly not inborn, but learned.

Darwin says that “language certainly is not a true instinct”. He implies it is a cultural creation. The spread of language over the earth and the fact that languages change so easily and quickly would indeed, suggest a cultural development, not a genetic one. Chomsky and Pinker both imply it is an instinct, without giving really good reasons why this should be so. I think it is safe to conclude that the subject of linguistics is hopelessly deadlocked and confused, inherently political and as yet

problem: talk of man's 'immortal soul' sounds like antiquated *language*. For the doctrine to appear more acceptable, it needs to be rephrased: . . . "Pursuing this course, and rephrasing Plato's answer in terms more congenial to us today, we will say that the basic properties of cognitive systems are innate to the mind, part of human biological endowment" . . . So UG is really a template of the Platonic soul modernized. . . . language is a sort of meta-Platonic template in the brain deposited there at birth and this does not appear to be the case. (see N Chomsky, 'Linguistics and adjacent fields: a personal view' in A Kasher (ed.) *The Chomskyan Turn* Oxford 1991, p15. and also see N Chomsky, 'Linguistics and cognitive science: problems and mysteries' in A Kasher (ed.) *The Chomskyan Turn* Oxford 1991, pp26-53; p50.).

incapable of real science and objectivity.⁷⁴ I suspect Darwin is right and not Chomsky. Chomsky appears to leave out Darwin and the obvious idea that language is logical phenomena, born perhaps very indirectly out genetic inheritance and commonality with other animals.. Chomsky expresses the unlikely hope physics will explain language. This privileging of physics over other sciences is absurd as it is no more important than other sciences. When Chomsky was young physics was given artificial status because of Einstein and the Manhattan Project. If anything physics is the least of the sciences and what really matters is understanding living things. This is probably pure fantasy that Chomsky tries to tie language back to physics. Language is a biological and cultural fact of biological evolution not a factor growing from $F=MA$, even though, obviously the brain is effected by physical forces. He claims Newton's frustrated mystical idea about gravity implies mechanism is fiction and all is the ghostly mind. He does not understand that Newton probably misunderstood gravity. Rather than pursue the hard evolutionary science that needs to be done, Chomsky allies himself with

⁷⁴ Geoffery Sampson argues against both Chomsky and Pinker in his [The Language Instinct Debate](#). Sampson appears to be another far right critic of Chomsky, but his arguments appear to have some reason in them, independent of his politics. I don't think I agree entirely, as language does appear to have some evolutionary foundations. But I show this to show how conflicted this domain is and how neither Chomsky nor Pinker have really made it clearer or better. here:

<http://www.grsampson.net/Atin.html>

Sampson says "I conclude that there is no language instinct. On the available evidence, languages seem to be products of cultural evolution only. The biological foundations on which they depend are an open-ended ability to formulate and test hypotheses, which we use to learn about anything and everything that life throws at us, and perception and phonation mechanisms which evolved to serve other functions and have no special relationship with language.

The question how cultural evolution developed the complex languages used during recorded history out of simple precursors is an interesting, worthwhile question. But it is surely a very different question, to which different kinds of evidence are relevant and different sorts of answer available, from the question how an alleged "language instinct" might have evolved biologically.

the romantics rather than with biology.⁷⁵ Chomsky writes, talking about his own formative influences, that

“This Platonistic element in Humboldt’s thought is a pervasive one; for Humboldt, it was as natural to propose an essentially Platonistic theory of “learning” as it was for Rousseau to found his critique of repressive social institutions on a conception of human freedom that derives from strictly Cartesian assumptions regarding the limitations of mechanical explanation. And in general it seems appropriate to construe both the psychology and the linguistics of the romantic period as in large part a natural outgrowth of rationalist conceptions.⁷⁶

Such romantic concepts lead up to Chomsky himself of course and go far to explain his sometimes mystagogical and irrational tendencies. He distorts the history of science to lead up to his own theories. He is good at appearing very rational but the basis of his thought is anything but rational. He is a mythical thinker. It would be far simpler at this point to

⁷⁵ Chomsky proneness to mystagogy and mysticism is evident in the following quote----.He attacks Darwin obliquely on the basis that “ one element of a famous disagreement between the two founders of the theory of evolution, with Wallace holding, contrary to Darwin, that evolution of these faculties cannot be accounted for in terms of variation and natural selection alone, but requires “some other influence, law, or agency,” some principle of nature alongside gravitation, cohesion, and other forces without which the material universe could not exist.” Wallace’s pursuit of spiritual “agency”, which is what is referred to here, forced him to become embarrassingly religious in later years, a fact Chomsky fails to note. Darwin was right in this argument against Wallace’s irrational religiosity, as many have noted, (see David Quammen [The Reluctant Mr. Darwin: An Intimate Portrait of Charles Darwin and the Making of His Theory of Evolution on Wallace and Darwin](#)) Chomsky effort to spiritualize the language faculty with a mystagogy surrounding gravity and thought, is unique, but very eccentric and probably wrong. The abstract and internal character of a language is one of its worst properties, as it tends to divorce humans from nature and creates a sort of doubling whereby religion and other abstract alienation becomes possible. Chomsky, like Wallace tries to make a virtue of this failing in human language, when really it is one of the most unfortunate of illusions. This might be the source of Chomsky’s dislike of Darwinism and of animals, who are way down on the totem pole of Chomskian theory.

⁷⁶ From one of Chomsky’s lectures in [Language and Mind](#) reproduced here <http://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/philosophy/works/us/chomsky.htm>

admit the romantic fiction of innate grammars has failed and that that these suppositions were really moonshine, a dead end. But Chomsky keeps going on and on, trying to spin ever tighter webs of myth and theory around the carcass of innate grammar.

Language grows out of our brains, but does so because of the evolutionary development of communication skills and cultural conditions and this is something that evolved over time, through genetics perhaps, and the development of the brain and or culture. Chomsky's innate Platonism is a lifelong illusion of his, which derives from Descartes. He is fixed on this idea irrationally, as John Searle suggests in his excellent "The End of the Revolution" which is about the failure of Chomsky's linguistic theories to bear real fruit.⁷⁷

I hasten to add that Chomsky insistence on the genetic origin of language might be partly correct in that there is a genetic component that provides the capacity for language, as is shown in brain studies on Broca's and Wierneke's areas and other areas of the brain as well, most of which involve communication or understanding of communication, both meaning and expression.⁷⁸ But the fact that the areas of the brain that are concerned with language are about communication and

⁷⁷ The following essay used to be online, now you have to pay for it. That is a shame.....it is a good article that really scours Chomsky's plate and does so with tact and reason. He shows that many of Chomsky major efforts are mostly fantasy, there is no LAD, no universal grammar, and very likely one could go on,... no I language no Merge etc.... Indeed, Merge appears to be little more than a reduction of language to tautology, which gives us little or nothing.
<http://www.scribd.com/doc/47780900/John-Searle-End-of-the-Revolution>. New York Review of Books

⁷⁸ Much has been learned about language from the complex reactions to various kinds of aphasia. Darwin already understood this. In some aphasias patients can hear but not understand words, in other aphasias patients cannot speak but can understand language. In other cases, patients with damage to these areas of the brain can relearn language in other areas of the brain not usually used for language, suggesting again that language is not just in one area but is occurs in various areas of the brain. There is no "language organ" per se, but only a generalized adapting of the brain itself to use. There is no universal grammar. Language is easily lost in Alzheimer's and other diseases. How this works is still largely unknown, though much more is known that was the case.

meaning, already suggests that Chomsky's grammatical, "Cartesian" and functional linguistics might be beside the point. Darwin said on the other hand that language is not an instinct. This means it is not innate and not genetic. Grammar appears to be a minor development of meaning and expression through communication needs--- in other words grammar is a development of custom and use in social contexts , not the archetypal or "universal" genetic center of all languages as Chomsky contends.. Grammar is a by-product of intentions and the practice of communication, not a cause, in other words. We have good brains and brains that allowed us to invent language as part of our culture

There are areas of the brain that appear to have to do with meanings, such as an area for animals or famous people, face recognition and even cerebellum or motor areas appear to be involved in language in complex ways. But though the exact process remains obscure, much more is known about it now that was the case even 20 years ago. What is known about it appears to contradict Chomsky's claims. The brain/language connection is Darwinian and adaptationist, not Platonic or Chomskian. There is no language "organ" per se, but rather an adaptation of the various parts of the brain and body (vocal cords, mouth) to language that probably grew up by the usual Darwinian processes.⁷⁹ It is of course very sad that Chomsky turned out to be wrong in so many ways. But as John Searle notes that

“ It is often tempting in the human sciences to aspire to being a natural science; and there is indeed a natural science, about which we know very little, of the foundations of language in the

⁷⁹ Dennett appear to be correct that Chomsky was led astray by Stephen Jay Gould who tried to minimize the importance of direct adaptation. See Dennett book Darwin's Dangerous Idea, that has a whole chapter on both Chomsky and Gould. Dennett is highly critical of Chomsky's effort to eliminate Darwinism from linguistics. Rightly so.

neurobiology of the human brain. But the idea that linguistics itself might be a natural science rests on doubtful assumptions. “⁸⁰

I suspect Seale is right. Searle’s claims that

‘there is no universal grammar common to all languages; there is no Language Acquisition Device in the brain; grammar is not innate but mastered through experience of language and life; there are no deep structures in the brain; language has many functions other than describing things’. It is time to more seriously doubt Chomsky’s linguistics, both in its sources and its final goals.

So Chomsky’s “Universal Grammar” goes the way of Descartes Pineal Gland. It goes poof, it never existed. What would be really grand, even stupendous, would be if Chomsky himself admitted that some of his critics might be right, not just recently but over many years. I do not mean his political critics. I am not talking about his politics here. To admit that his critics are right and the basic trajectory of his linguistic theory is mistaken would be a good thing. This would be the right scientific stance for him to take, rather than his usual dogmatic stand, denying direct evidence. He would then reveal himself to be actually willing to question himself and that would be grand. He would regain my respect if he did that. It would liberate the next generation of scientists to do better and newer work on language along Darwinian lines. This is already occurring. People are dropping the Chomskyeen ‘paradigm’, or ideology. Chomsky’s repressive hold on the study of linguistics has held linguistics back for long enough. But there is no relenting with Chomsky.

Searle notes in his essay that Chomsky’s “work in linguistics is at the highest intellectual level.” I agree with that, but that does not mean he is true or right or immune to going off the deep end in his

⁸⁰ <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2002/jul/18/chomskys-revolution-an-exchange/?page=2>

understanding of language. Everyone makes mistakes, sometimes mistakes that last a lifetime. He is hampered by his inability to admit he is wrong. It was a glorious illusion or fantasy. Chomsky says he wished to prove that “human languages are basically cast to the same mold, that they are instantiations of the same fixed biological endowment, and that they “grow in the mind” much like other biological systems, triggered and shaped by experience, but only in restricted ways.” This has not happened, and his ambition has been partly thwarted by his own dislike of empiricism and his dogged pursuit of rationalist inquiry on the grammatical blackboard instead of in nature and actual practice. The theory he created spun out a Chomskian mythos which does not fit reality.

Certainly in respect of Descartes, Chomsky has taken his ideas uncritically and refuses direct evidence that questions his embrace of the prototype of his theories. This is not healthy or conducive to the long term viability of his work. Descartes was important in creating the impetus behind early science, but his science itself has little value. Chomsky made a huge mistake trying to adapt the Cartesian program into linguistics. He should have abandoned that decades ago. A romantic strain of irrational rationalism that has anti-Darwinian features led him astray. His involuted, subjectivist and baroque theory of language is solipsistic, and may reflect more Chomsky’s own mental convolutions more than it does on the facts of language and how it actually operates.

Language appears to be, like religion/politics and culture, a by-product of evolutionary developments in the brain and body. Darwin was probably right and Chomsky and Pinker wrong that language is a genetically formed instinct. But this is a hugely conflicted area of study, and I do not claim to know the answer. But that there is a close relation of language, religion and politics going far back into culture and evolution seems to be a fact. They are all systems of custom and power,

organizing people into manageable groups and mental faculties. How this came about in terms of the evolution of the brain is as yet very unclear.

That is my main conclusion, but a few other tangential details need to be discussed . I cannot find the quote at the moment but somewhere Chomsky says that over population of the America is not a problem there is lots of open space. This is nonsense and shows again a lamentable lack of understanding about nature, and the huge pressure animals and plants suffer due to overpopulation. Chomsky is a city person and knows little about nature. He also states somewhere that we should not bother about animals and nature because humans are such a threat to their own survival that we should concern ourselves only with human things. This also is merely a mask for speciesism. Obviously, concern with other species is part of concern for our own species and care of one does not exclude care of the other. Indeed, care of nature and animals is the beginning of care of ourselves, the human comes after the horse, whales, mice and platypuses. Not before. We cannot care for ourselves without also caring for our world, which is so much part of us.

.....

The political journalistic work of Chomsky is usually pretty good. I think his real contribution is in journalistic politics and not in language. He is good at writing virtual running commentary on what appears in the News, particularly the New York Times, for years now. But in recent years Chomsky has been comparing himself to Socrates and the Biblical Prophets.⁸¹ This is another indication of his

⁸¹ Chomsky says “Prophet just means intellectual. They were people giving geopolitical analysis, moral lessons, that sort of thing. We call them intellectuals today. There were the people we honor as prophets, there were the people we condemn as false prophets. But if you look at the biblical record, at the time, it was the other way around. The flatterers of the Court of King Ahab were the ones who were honored. The ones we call prophets were driven into the desert and imprisoned. (Interview by Harry Kreisler, March 22, 2002) Chomsky talks about this a lot, and

romantic and idealized –nearly mystical, Platonism. I could understand if he compared himself to Tom Paine or Voltaire, or better yet, Bertrand Russell, whose political incisiveness Chomsky echoes in various ways. But he prefers to compare himself to biblical prophets and Socrates. But Socrates was opposed to democracy and was defending the reactionary proto-Nazi state outlined by Plato in the Republic. The Biblical Prophets were certainly fictional characters who are part of a very toxic system of reactionary religion and dogma, handing down edicts and demands from a fictional god. Chomsky's claim that they were doing "geopolitical analysis" is absurd and his projection on them of what he is himself doing, does not hold up to the facts. This need to style oneself as a prophet has a long history which I have outlined at length in this book. It is invariably fraudulent and is a claim at being a power broker, a claim of inaugurating a paradigm revolution. Chomsky does claim to have initiated a revolution in linguistics. In fact he failed to do so. But the need to appear as if he did do it is tremendous for him. One finds this in Nietzsche too, when he declares that God is dead and then turns around and resurrects Zarathustra, who is Nietzsche's own alter ego, as a sort of prophet-god. I have shown how Schuon, Muhammad and Christ all had similar magnified terms applied to them or declared themselves prophets or sons of god or whatever. The prophets were fundamentally conservative and defending a status quo as part of a fictional projection and make believe that is the biblical religion. It appears that Chomsky's latent Platonism and tacit religiosity drives him to make these objectionable comparisons. Comparing himself to prophets is a typical thing for cult leaders to do and Chomsky resembles cult leaders various ways, if not in every way.

brings it up on many occasions, for instance he mentions the biblical chapter in Kings 1, in which King Ahab condemns Elijah. Chomsky identifies himself as the misunderstood or outcast prophet. And he says he began to do so when he was still a child. There is a pathology in this and it is this tendency that generates some of cultic characteristics of him and his followers (see <http://www.tabletmag.com/scroll/50346/the-lefty-lion/>)

He is unable to admit when he is wrong and has a terrible need to promote himself at all costs. This overweening self-regard has some bad consequences. For instance quite apart from the free speech question, Chomsky's support of the far right holocaust denier French scholar Robert Faurisson raises other questions. Chomsky defended Faurisson's right to free speech in an essay entitled "Some Elementary Comments on the Rights of Freedom of Expression". One wonders what he was actually thinking when he did that. The willingness to side with a neo Nazi indicates Chomsky's rather diffused and wandering allegiances to whatever outlying libertarian idea that serves him at the moment. Indeed, he often allies himself with Islamic or Liberation Theology causes. In these cases Chomsky appears as libertarian willing to support a far right ideologues and apostates stigmatized by western politics. He excuses himself on the grounds that Voltaire defended the right of fools to speak. That might be taking Voltaire a little too literally. I don't think Voltaire meant to side with fanatics in the opposite camp, regardless of their willingness to abuse power. Of course, siding with liberation theology in south America is opportune as we all wanted an end to client states in South America. It is the fact that Chomsky has refused to criticize the religious basis of this, while yet supporting their politics because it suits him, which rubs the wrong way.

But then George Monbiot shows that Chomsky is quite willing to engage in holocaust or genocide denial when it suits him. Chomsky denied the importance of atrocities in Rwanda and elsewhere. That is an awful thing to do. Rwanda is the largest atrocity in recent decades. This suggests his willingness to use atrocities as a tool of politics, which is hypocritical since this is exactly what he accuses the American government of doing: "worthy atrocities" verses unworthy ones.. Monbiot concludes that Chomsky "is deliberately ignoring a vast weight of evidence which conflicts with his political beliefs". He does this in linguistics too, suggesting against that language and politics have a very

close relationship. Chomsky is himself an example of the close tie of religion, politics and language.

As I have shown throughout this essay, Chomsky is weak on following evidence and too strong on dogma and ideology. This is what creates his cult like status and his linguistic myths. Had he been more honest about the failure of his linguistics or his political ideas it might have been better for him. I would admire him more, not less if he could admit when he is wrong. I would like to say it could be the man's age or forgetfulness are is at issue here. But this may not be the case, as these are tendencies in Chomsky that have been appearing for years now. His attack on B.F. Skinner in 1959 has come under attack too, and appears to have been motivated more by careerism than a search for truth..⁸² Many have said that his attack as unfair, and mistaken. Julie Andersen says this in her essay "Skinner and Chomsky 30 Years Later Or: The Return of the Repressed" (1991) O'Donohue and Ferguson's *The Psychology of B. F. Skinner* (2001) come to a similar conclusion . They claim Noam Chomsky's review of Skinner's *Verbal Behavior* was influential, but was badly done in its exegesis. Kenneth MacCorquodale's, review of Chomsky's book rejects it as cogent and says that Chomsky completely misunderstood Skinner. E.O Wilson says this too, but nuances it and says, "both Skinner and Chomsky appear to have been partly right, but Skinner more so" ⁸³There appears to be a good deal of truth in this. The hatred of Skinner in Chomsky's essay is hard to explain, but appears to be motivated by bad will, and the effect was harmful to linguistics for decades. Skinner himself wrote before he died that

"I have never been able to understand

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⁸³ Wilson, E. O. *The Social Conquest of Earth* Liveright Publishing, 2012. Page 235.

why Chomsky becomes almost pathologically angry when writing about me but I do not see why I should submit myself to such verbal treatment. If I thought I could learn something which might lead to useful revisions of my position I would of course be willing to take the punishment, but Chomsky simply does not understand what I am talking about and I see no reason to listen to him." Quoted in Julie Andresen "Skinner and Chomsky 30 Years Later

Skinner also wrote that "Linguists have usually studied listening rather than speaking (a typical question is why a sentence makes sense), but *Verbal Behavior* is an interpretation of the behavior of the *speaker*, given the contingencies of reinforcement maintained by the community. " This is a far bigger question and one that is well beyond Chomsky's formalist approach. But as this attack raises many questions , I cannot help but wonder what other mistakes Chomsky has made in his science and linguistic studies. As a scientist he is too willing to deny evidence that contradicts his case. He does not submit his work to falsifiability, and indeed is not open to criticism at all. As David Palmer points out that Chomsky work has left little but a desert of squabbling intellectuals, whereas Skinner inspired work on autism and teaching children to read that has had great benefits.⁸⁴ E.O. Wilson's most interesting comment is that language is a later development and that "as suggested in Darwin, the fit between language and its underlying mechanism evolved because language evolved to fit the brain, rather than the reverse" (Pg 235)

Chomsky also recently came out objecting to the marvelous work done by Dawkins, Harris, Dennett and Hitchens questioning religion. This is another mistake. The devotion of Chomsky's followers is summarized by radio

⁸⁴See <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2223153/> for an excellent essay on how and why Chomsky misused Skinner. Skinner's ideas has had positive benefits on learning for children and autistic, whereas Chomsky failure is more and more obvious and has born little good fruit.

producer David Barsamian, who describes the master's resplendence when he wrote in openly religious terms about Chomsky that: "he is for many of us our rabbi, our preacher, our Rinpoche, our sensei." Yes, that is exactly the problem with Chomsky, he has not created a healthy atmosphere of inquiry and science around him, but rather has cult followers who call him rabbi and "Rinpoche", which is a reincarnated Tibetan Lama—a virtual god in Tibetan culture.

While Chomsky was a pretty good journalist, which is to say I often agreed with his politics, he was never my guru or my cult leader. I find the adulation of his followers off putting, and like their cult leader they tend to be mean and authoritarian. Chomsky has a lot of groupies and followers, like Michael Albert and other writers at ZNet, They imagine they are the sine quo non of the Left, and they are not, indeed their cultish lock step makes them a terrible thing for the left, as they fragment it and create an elitist cell of believers who do little more than talk to each other. I have watched ZNet for years now and it is mostly a divisive influence on the left that cycles around the Chomskyeen ego with groupies vying for approval from the master.. For instance, Chomsky has a follower named Paul Street, whose writing sometimes like and who wrote insightfully about Obama. But Street appears to be unable to have any critical insight into his guru. Street is a rather self-conscious Marxist, trying to pretend he is a Marxist such as the 1930's produced, with little awareness that those days are over. Marxism was hugely destructive to all leftist causes and enshrined a religious credo and nature hatred little different than state capitalism. The killing of people in Marxist countries of Russia and China under Stalin and Mao was so horrendous that the ideology is permanently suspect. Mao Tse Tong is said to have killed between 20 and 45 million people during the Great Leap Forward campaign in the late 1950's and early 1960's. The total toll for Mao is probably much higher than that, though reliable numbers are hard to know. Stalin killed millions too, Kulaks, people in the Gulag system, people who disagreed with him, though again the

exact number is unknown. Capitalism too has done its destructive things, just as bad in many ways. There is little reason to identify oneself with either ideology. Both ideologies have their religious true believers and Paul Street is one of these, as on the other side is Milton Friedman or Rand Paul.

A Marxist who becomes a Chomskyan is changing religions in a certain way. A Marxist now must read dogma as truth even if the evidence is not there for the dogma, as is often the case in Marxism. Marxism is in many ways just state capitalism, with all the money going to the state instead of to the capitalists and they call the shots. It is a top down system with CEOs of a kind. In China Marxism has become a kind of state capitalism supplying cheap workers for western corporations, who exploit the workers and those at home too. To be a Marxist after a century and a half of failure takes a certain hard headed refusal of evidence. Chomsky relies heavily on dogma too, with similar irrational results. He plays the Prophet and the scientist when he is neither, except in his followers imaginations. Street and other writers at ZNET, whatever their good points, use Chomsky in their writing as an unquestioned authority and that is again in common with the Marxist faith, since Marx also set himself up as a guru who did not need to prove his claims.

Indeed, Marx and Chomsky are prone to a nearly religious following. This rather repulses me. Michael Albert is forever sending out messages trying to grub money to support him and others who work on the ZNet staff. ZNet is a political cult, and I am hardly the only one to say so. Their collective vision of the future is one of rule by committees and has many Soviet style features, despite their denials of this. I would not want to live in the society they have actually created at ZNet, where dissent is repressed, valid questions are not allowed, and they want to impose their views on everyone in the future. It is good to have alternatives, but their particular alternative is unpalatable, for the most part, even if they are right about some things. The incestuous and

narcissistic preaching to the choir that goes on at NET draws many good minds out of the left into a vortex of praise for the ever needy Chomsky who needs this sort of worship

Chomsky is not a cult leader in the classical sense, but he has tendencies in that direction. His cult suppresses any inconvenient information about their master, and protects his often irrational and dogmatic mistakes without owning up to anything. He likes to excommunicate those he disagrees with⁸⁵. And his ability to negate anyone who questions him too closely is amazing and manipulative. He calls anything he disagrees with a “rant”, reduces his critics to nasty and absurd labels, when they be very clear headed, or right, and he marginalizes those he speaks with all sorts of demeaning expressions or claims not to understand them. I have never seen him admit to wrong doing, though I have seen him do wrong and cruel things.

I find his need to compare himself to fictional prophets and tendency to mysticism and cultish leadership objectionable. I would like to see Chomsky formally renounce his canonization which he has himself encouraged. But he loves adulation too much. He cannot be educated himself even though he has theories of education. He claims, like another cult leader I knew once, to have always thought what he thinks now, as if he were born full headed out of the brow of Zeus. He needs to come back to the fold of science and falsifiability. Evidence must be sought in service of reason,. Reason should not fly forth on its own, “like Minerva form the head of Jupiter” detached from empirical evidence, into irrational grandiosity and self-inflation. In the end Chomsky appears to me to be a cult leader who became that way though politics, whereas in the rest of this book I was looking at cult leaders who become political

⁸⁵ There is a video of Chomsky being badly treated by the far right pundit, William Buckley, which the cult around Chomsky likes to use as an example of his victims status, but actually Chomsky does this same thing to people he does not agree with. I never liked Buckley much, though he was good for never heard before words, but Chomsky meanness is quite equal.

tyrants through religion. This illustrates some of the modalities of power and how closely religion and politics really are. In both cases, ideology becomes an excuse for mistreating others and setting up a regime of knowledge as a way to manipulate others for power.

And lastly, I end this essay with a measure of real hope. Chomsky's heavy, obscurely formalistic, grammatical and computational hand has been an intolerable burden on linguistics for many years and has done little good for anyone. Many writers claim that he is a hindrance to further research, not only in linguistics itself but in the evolution of language, a topic Chomsky has avoided and repressed or tagged as an insoluble "mystery" when actually more and more is coming to light about it. What he has written about recently, too little too late, it is not very helpful. I think his reign should be at an end by now and if we won't abdicate, as he should, he needs to be ignored. Once his work is behind us, the way is open for a renewed effort to pursue the Darwinian study of language into nature itself, as Darwin himself wished. We now know that language was probably found in Neanderthals too, our close relatives, and very likely goes back to Homo Erectus. It is a creation of slow evolution, and thus part of the natural world, not a quasi-divine result of a fictional mutation, UG, or 'spandrel' or 'punctuated equilibrium'. This means there is no human exceptionalism, and as Darwin said, we are all part of evolution and there are no favorites. This is a great leap forward for science, and opens up the study of the communications of animals and the relation of humans to animals in concrete and systematic way. This is also a very exciting prospect. It opens up all communications in nature to renewed examination. How do birds actually live and think? How do Ungulates or Turkey Vultures communicate? How do dolphins see the world around them, or Hummingbirds negotiate and speak to each other in their tiny world and migrate huge distances. Crows recognize one human face from another and communicate effectively.

Raccoons can make 51 different kinds of vocalizations and are extremely smart. We don't yet know why or what they are saying. Once these and many other research projects start to see animals in their own terms, our world will be non-Chomskian. It will be better and clearer and will set humans once again into natural fabric of the universe, not separated from it, as was the case in the Cartesian and Chomskian system of rationalistic dogma. Our systems of communications may be different and some more sophisticated than others, but we all talk, call or sing on the same earth, and we are all related.
