

## Re: genes and language (Homer, Richard Dawkins)

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Language is the means of getting help and understanding from those we depend upon (my definition from 1974/75), and a basic need of social beings is to belong: to be accepted and estimated as valid members of the various communities we are a part of, we are partaking in.

I told you of Nera, a dog from India; how she placed her head on the table, played her white eyebrows in her black face, begging for food from our meal – and ate a whole heap of peanut shells, for sharing a meal with us made her feel accepted as a true member of our tribe.

I also told you of a little girl I used to take with me to shopping; how I once made a joke by telling her that I was already gone, and on my way to the village, while standing right in front of her, and how the poor mite began crying. The fear of being abandoned is so strong that it can overflow the mind and blind the eyes (while big promises can blind people in a metaphorical sense).

The human brain easily recognizes angry voices, due to the amygdoid nucleus (a new discovery). We are always fearing to be excluded in one way or another, so when we hear an angry voice we wonder whether someone might be angry at us? and if so, why? and can we possibly do something about it? in order to be accepted again?

There are frightening examples of people who have been excluded from their tribe and died; a shaman or witch doctor spoke his banning formula, and the banned person died two days later, from no obvious reason other than the spoken words (I read about such a case from Africa, in a reliable book; alas, I can't remember its title).

Not being spoken to is hard punishment, while words console and heal. Even chatting is a pleasure; no need to say much, the mere sounds – or words on a screen – weave a band of mutual belonging. Which is why not only

the much abused forum sci.archaeology but also the well kept forum sci.lang are mainly chatrooms ...

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Regards Franz Gnaedinger [www.seshat.ch](http://www.seshat.ch)

> *The loving embrace and soothing voice of a mother tells*  
> *her baby, her child: you belong to me, to us, to our*  
> *family. When a child grows up, the embraces and touches*  
> *become less, while the words take over and weave a band*  
> *among the members of the family, of the tribe, of the*  
> *various communities, of the nation, of the world.*

>

> *The touches and voices of early childhood are never*  
> *forgotten and keep a hold on a human being. The mother*  
> *can heal a hurting knee of her child just by placing her*  
> *hand on it and saying a magic formula. We got a simple*  
> *one in Switzerland: Hila Hila saega = heal heal saying,*  
> *and it always worked when I was a boy, the pain of my*  
> *hurting knee immediately dissolved. The emphasis lies*  
> *on SAE–ga, SAY–ing, testifying to the power of language.*

>

> *Doctors know the healing power touches and words hold*  
> *on a human being. When you visit a doctor you have to*  
> *wait, and it may happen that you are sliding into some*  
> *kind of meditation. When you are finally called in you*  
> *see a doctor in white, which color makes him or her*  
> *appear larger, bigger. His or her language contains*  
> *mysterious words, and the books on the shelves are*  
> *certainly plain incomprehensible. You are feeling like*  
> *a child again, and the more so as you are reduced by*  
> *your pain and suffering that requires a doctor's help.*  
> *In such a situation you glide back into childhood, when*  
> *you were utterly depending on the grown–ups, when they*  
> *were so big and you so small, when they spoke about*  
> *things you barely understood, when all was mysterious,*  
> *and when a loving embrace and soothing voice dissolved*  
> *many a pain. By trusting your doctor you fall back*  
> *into early childhood and relive the wonder of the*  
> *healing voice and touch – better than many pills.*

>

> *Language is the means of getting the help of those*  
> *we depend upon in one way or another. The basic need*  
> *of social beings is belonging to their communities,*  
> *which need is satisfied by the weaving band of*  
> *language itself.*

> –

> Regards Franz Gnaedinger [www.seshat.ch](http://www.seshat.ch)

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>> *From the mill we moved on to the farmhouse on the hill,*  
>> *and then to the residence of a cotton magnate, owner of*

> > *a weaving mill, and a railway builder who was dreaming*  
> > *of an alpine railway from Switzerland to Istanbul ...*  
> > *Although we had little money we lived quite formidably*  
> > *in those times.*  
> >  
> > *When I went shopping in the village, half an hour to*  
> > *walk, I often took a small girl with me. On a very cold*  
> > *winter morning I was about leaving the house when the*  
> > *mite saw me and asked me whether she may come with me?*  
> > *Yes, I said, but hurry. I waited for some ten minutes.*  
> > *Finally she was released by her mother, clad in five*  
> > *warm layers, round and beaming. I made a joke and told*  
> > *her: Sorry, you are too late, I am already gone and on*  
> > *my way to the village ... She immediately began crying.*  
> > *I said: but look, I am still here, standing right in*  
> > *front of you. Don't you see me? I made a silly joke.*  
> > *Of course I waited for you, and here I am, here we are,*  
> > *ready to go ... She was still sobbing: But you told me*  
> > *you are gone! So I took her by a woollen glove, which*  
> > *contact finally convinced her that I was still there,*  
> > *and not gone as I had said.*  
> >  
> > *Language, my spoken word, was obviously far stronger*  
> > *than vision, what her eyes told her. How come? I shall*  
> > *explain that in my next message.*