



The Seeds of Speech: Language Origin and Evolution (Canto)

By Jean Aitchison

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Human language is a weird communication system: it has more in common with birdsong than with the calls of other primates. Jean Aitchison explores the origins of human language and how it has evolved. She likens the search to a vast prehistoric jigsaw puzzle, in which numerous fragments of evidence must be assembled. Such evidence is pieced together from a mixture of linguistic and nonlinguistic sources such as evolution theory, archaeology, psychology, and anthropology. This is an accessible and wide-ranging introduction to the origins and evolution of human language.

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Editorial Review

Review

'We must be grateful to Jean Aitchison for so very readably assembling a good deal of recent work that might seem to hint at how language began ... liberally peppered with fetching quotations from all manner of sources, ranging from the cartoon character Charlie Brown through Lewis Carroll to Jonathan Swift's satirical novel Gulliver's Travels ... the author goes out of her way to offer a restful read to all comers.' The Times

'... communicate[s] often quite complex ideas about language in a straightforward, intelligible, and often witty way ... can be recommended to anyone with a curiosity about their language, where it came from, and how it reached its present state.' Child Language Teaching and Therapy

'She [Aitchison] carries her learning lightly and writes in a most comprehensible and often amusing way ... I wished I had been able to ask the many questions that the book raised in my mind but that is an indication of Professor Aitchison's ability to make the reader think.' The Expository Times

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