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Chris Knight of the Radical Anthropology Group continues his examination of the Chomsky enigma

Born in 1928 in Philadelphia, Noam Chomsky describes himself as “a child of the depression”.¹ His family included militant trade unionists: “So you knew what a picket line was and what it meant for the forces of the employers to come in there swinging clubs and breaking it up.”²

“Some of my earliest memories,” Chomsky reminisces, “which are very vivid, are of people selling rags at our door, of violent police strikebreaking, and other depression scenes.”³ One incident stands out: “I remember I was with my mother on a trolley car. I must have been five years old. There was a textile strike. Women workers were picketing. We just passed by and saw a very violent police attack on women strikers, picketers outside ...”⁴

The response of these workers at first puzzled the young Chomsky: “It was mostly women, and they were getting pretty brutally beaten up by the cops. I could see that much. Some of them were tearing off their clothes. I didn’t understand that. The idea was to try to cut back the violence. It made quite an impression. I can’t claim that I understood what was happening, but I sort of got the general idea. What I didn’t understand was explained to me ...”⁵ The women were in fact “hoping the police would be embarrassed and back off. The police beat them up anyway”.⁶ The scene made an indelible impression.

Between the ages of two and 12, Chomsky attended the Oak Lane Country Day School in Philadelphia. This was an experimental progressive institution which sought to foster non-competitive creativity. Chomsky remembers that the teaching here produced “a lively atmosphere”, in which “the sense was that everybody was doing something important”. Each child “was regarded as somehow being a very successful student”:

“It wasn’t that they were a highly select group of students. In fact, it was the usual mixture in such a school, with some gifted students and some problem children who had dropped out of the public schools. But nevertheless, at least as a child, that was the sense that one had - that, if competing at all, you were competing with yourself. What can I do? But no sense of strain about it and certainly no sense of relative ranking.”⁷

On later entering a city high school, Chomsky was shocked to discover that none of this was considered normal. In other schools, apparently, competitive dynamics were encouraged and personal creativity

Fighting fund Chaotic week

After a chaotic week, we have finally arrived in our new office a few miles across north London. As I noted last week, this has meant we have incurred a good deal of extra expense, which is eating into our finances.

I was hoping my appeal for additional help would generate a lot of donations, but this has not yet happened to any great extent. True, this week’s post brought cheques from KP (£30), AN (£25), HF, BD, CT and SF (£20 each), as well as £5 from IN. That comes to £140 all told - slightly up on the average.

But again no web contributions this week, despite the 26,831 online readers (1,030 of them downloaded the entire *Weekly Worker* in pdf format). So we have £290 towards our normal monthly target of £500.

But this is not a normal month - as all those comrades who assisted with our move will confirm. We desperately need a significant boost to our coffers - and soon. Even better, we need a new batch of comrades prepared to take out a standing order - the more I get by way of regular gifts, the less I have to worry.

Next week I would like to report a surge in contributions, including a healthy number from among those thousands of web readers. Please don’t let this plea go unheeded.

suppressed. Chomsky comments: "That's what schooling generally is, I suppose. It's a period of regimentation and control, part of which involves direct indoctrination, providing a system of false beliefs. But more important, I think, is the manner and style of preventing and blocking independent and creative thinking and imposing hierarchies and competitiveness and the need to excel - not in the sense of doing as well as you can, but doing better than the next person."⁸ He is here describing the educational philosophy he would denounce throughout his life.

Chomsky's real education, however, came less from school than from a lively intellectual culture dominated by the radical Jewish intelligentsia of New York. It was, he recalls, a "working class culture with working class values, solidarity, socialist values, etc. Within that it varied from Communist Party to radical semi-anarchist critique of Bolshevism ... But that was only a part of it. People were having intensive debates about Stekel's version of Freudian theory, a lot of discussions about literature and music, what did you think of the latest Budapest String Quartet concert or Schnabel's version of a Beethoven sonata vs somebody else's version?"⁹

At an early age, Chomsky was affected by the outcome of the Spanish civil war: "The first article I wrote was an editorial in the school newspaper on the fall of Barcelona, a few weeks after my 10th birthday."¹⁰ He describes the defeat as "a big issue in my life at the time".¹¹

Referring to Germany and Italy after World War I and 1936 Spain, Chomsky comments: "The anarcho-syndicalists, at least, took very seriously Bakunin's remark that the workers' organisations must create 'not only the ideas, but also the acts of the future itself' in the pre-revolutionary period. The accomplishments of the popular revolution in Spain, in particular, were based on the patient work of many years of organisation and education, one component of a long tradition of commitment and militancy. And workers' organisations existed with the structure, the experience and the understanding to undertake the task of social reconstruction when, with Franco's coup, the turmoil of early 1936 exploded into social revolution."¹²

By his 12th birthday, Chomsky had already rejected the politics of the Communist Party. Inspired by Barcelona's anarchists, he adopted their defeated cause and in subsequent years has never abandoned it. Chomsky rejected not only Stalinism, but also Leninism, which he associated with elitist attempts at mass indoctrination. The Spanish anarchists, he felt, did not try to educate the masses by imposing a rigid ideology from above. They believed in self-organisation and everyone's capacity - once personally and politically liberated - to contribute to the revolutionary cause.

"I do not doubt," Chomsky writes, "that it is a fundamental human need to take an active part in the democratic control of social institutions."¹³ The "fundamental human capacity", in his view, "is the capacity and the need for creative self-expression, for free control of all aspects of one's life and thought". Contemporary capitalist society ensures rewards for the more selfish tendencies in human nature. "A different society," however, "might be organised in such a way that human feelings and emotions of other sorts - say solidarity, support, sympathy - become dominant."¹⁴

Chomsky observes: "It is no wonder that 'fraternity' has traditionally been inscribed on the revolutionary banner alongside 'liberty' and 'equality'. Without bonds of solidarity, sympathy and concern for others, a socialist society is unthinkable. We may only hope that human nature is so constituted that these elements of our essential nature may flourish and enrich our lives, once the social conditions that suppress them are overcome. Socialists are committed to the belief that we are not condemned to live in a society based on greed, envy and hate. I know of no way to prove that they are right, but there are also no grounds for the common belief that they must be wrong."¹⁵

Disaffected academic

In 1945, Chomsky went to the University of Pennsylvania: "I entered with a good deal of enthusiasm and expectations that all sorts of fascinating prospects would open up, but these did not survive long, except in a few cases At the end of two years, I was planning to drop out to pursue my own interests, which were then largely political."¹⁶

While actively opposing the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine, Chomsky met

Robbie Rix

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Zellig Harris, who was prominent in campaigning for Jews and Arabs to join together in liberating Palestine from feudal and colonial oppression. It so happened that Harris was also a charismatic professor of modern linguistics.

Chomsky describes himself at that time as “a kind of college dropout, having no interest in college at all because my interest in a particular subject was generally killed as soon as I took a course in it”. Just “to have something to do” he decided to study linguistics under Harris, who by now had become a personal friend. Gradually, “I got interested in the field and sort of put it at the centre of my concerns”.¹⁷

Although he “got interested”, however, Chomsky felt relatively unqualified. His father had been a noted Hebrew scholar, imparting to Noam a childhood interest in historical linguistics and mediaeval Hebrew grammar. But on attending college he encountered structural linguistics - for which he felt no enthusiasm at all. Neither was he attracted by linguistic anthropology or any of the social or psychological sciences. Under Harris’s influence, he instead took courses in philosophy and mathematics - “fields in which I had no background at all, but which I found interesting, in part, no doubt, thanks to unusually stimulating teachers”.¹⁸

As an anarchist, Chomsky naturally distrusted the state, large institutions in general and the university and all its functionaries. Disaffected intellectuals of this kind, according to one social historian, “are less vulnerable to the corruption of title and salary because their resistance is moral, almost instinctual”.¹⁹ Chomsky respected science, especially mathematics and physics. By the same token, he was deeply suspicious of the so-called ‘social sciences’, regarding them as patently ideological. He dreamed of ridding linguistics of such contamination. He would do this by detaching the discipline from its current institutional affiliations and rendering it purely formal - if possible, purely mathematical. Was it no more than a happy coincidence that this was exactly what the nascent computer industry - and its military sponsors - required?

Stimulus and response

Up until this time, speech had been allocated to ‘culture’, in turn thought of as ‘learned behaviour’. During the 1940s and 1950s, the standard paradigm in scientific psychology had been behaviourism - championed in the Soviet Union by Pavlov and in the United States most prominently by BF Skinner.

Skinner’s new book, *Verbal behaviour*, claimed to explain language as a set of habits built up over time. Rats, Skinner showed, can be trained to perform highly complex tasks, provided two basic principles are followed. First, the tasks must be broken down into graduated steps. Second, the animal must be appropriately rewarded or punished at each step. This type of learning was termed by Skinner ‘operant conditioning’.

Building on his work with rats, Skinner argued: “The basic processes and relations which give verbal behaviour its special characteristics are now fairly well understood. Much of the experimental work responsible for this advance has been carried out on other species, but the results have proved to be surprisingly free of species restrictions. Recent work has shown that the methods can be extended to human behaviour without serious modification.”²⁰

Skinner accordingly treated human language in stimulus-response terms, identifying ‘meaning’ with the habituated response of the listener to the speech stimulus repeatedly heard. Language was conceptualised as structured like a chain, learned by associating one link - via appropriate approval or ‘reinforcement’ - to the next.

This stress on ‘learning’ was, of course, part of a much wider intellectual movement. It was closely linked to the notion of ‘culture’ that had been central to anthropology since the beginning of the 20th century. Franz Boas and his students had founded cultural anthropology in the United States by forcing a breach with Darwinism and other currents within biological science. They justified this by arguing that ‘human nature’ is a myth: humans can learn virtually any conceivable ‘habit’ or ‘custom’, given appropriate contact, and need external input because they lack the precise instincts of other animals.

In Britain, Bronislaw Malinowski and AR Radcliffe-Brown echoed these themes, arguing that man’s evolutionary origins were unknowable and in any case irrelevant. Breaking with evolutionary theory, they instead recommended ‘functionalism’ - a body of knowledge designed specifically to appeal to educators, employers and administrators.

Radcliffe-Brown in particular helped redefine social anthropology as an instrument of political coercion: “To exercise control over any group of phenomena,” he explained, “we must know the laws relating to them. It is only when we understand a culture as a functioning system that we can foresee what will be the results of any influence. intentional

or unintentional, that we may exert upon it.”²¹ What the colonial and other authorities needed was an applied science, a rule book for dealing with indigenous peoples, enabling them to be manipulated in much the same way that natural forces can be controlled and manipulated by knowing the laws of chemistry and physics.

Planners and social engineers - among them Stalin in the Soviet Union - welcomed behaviourism in psychology for similar reasons. Like the new anthropology, the new psychology seemed to offer enhanced techniques for mass education, pacification and control. Stimulus-response psychology, as one historian observes, encouraged industrial managers in the belief that securing cooperative behaviour meant finding in the workforce which buttons to push - and pushing them. Or, as Chomsky puts it, “Those who rule by violence tend to be ‘behaviourist’ in their outlook. What people may think is not terribly important: what counts is what they do. They must obey, and this obedience is secured by force.”²²

Language and social control

Two years after publishing *Syntactic structures*, Chomsky wrote his celebrated review of Skinner’s book, *Verbal behaviour*. He had been wise enough not to take issue with, say, the Marxist-inspired school of child psychology pioneered in the Soviet Union by Lev Vygotsky²³ or the subtle and fruitful insights developed by the Swiss developmental psychologist, Jean Piaget.²⁴ Despite major differences with psychoanalysis, these and many other 20th century psychologists had echoed Freud in accepting that humans, like other animals, must have deep-rooted instincts of some relevance to a study of the mind. Chomsky, however, refrained from acknowledging the existence of such scholars. By singling out behaviourism for attack and ignoring everything else, he succeeded in arranging the battleground to suit his own needs.

It was not difficult for Chomsky to associate the linguistics of his time with political reaction and totalitarianism. Leonard Bloomfield had been the major figure in American linguistics between the wars. In 1929, he told the Linguistics Society of America: “I believe that in the near future - in the next few generations, let us say - linguistics will be one of the main sectors of scientific advance, and that in this sector science will win through to the understanding and control of human conduct.”²⁵

Following World War II, reviewing the apparently undesirable conduct of large numbers of disaffected military personnel and insurgents worldwide, many of Bloomfield’s colleagues in the United States saw themselves living “at a time when our national existence - and possibly the existence of the human race - may depend on the development of linguistics and its application to human problems”.²⁶ The wave of McCarthyite witch-hunting which swept North America during the 1950s was in part premised on the belief that critics of ‘the American way of life’ must clearly have been brainwashed by communists. In this bitter cold-war context, linguistics was seen as a crucial weapon in the worldwide struggle for mastery and control.

Against this backdrop, Chomsky found it easy to present his antithesis as politically attractive and even liberating. Skinner had openly advocated transferring his manipulative techniques from laboratory rats to humans. The “control of the population as a whole”, as he would later explain, “must be delegated to specialists - to police, priests, owners, teachers, therapists, and so on, with their specialised reinforcers and their codified contingencies”.²⁷ In their attempts to avoid punishment, the populace are expected to shrink from rebellion - surviving by internalising the externally imposed rules. Skinner’s aim, correspondingly, is to “design a world in which behaviour likely to be punished seldom or never occurs”, a world described as one of “automatic goodness”.²⁸

Chomsky comments: “Extending these thoughts, consider a well-run concentration camp, with inmates spying on one another and the gas ovens smoking in the distance, and perhaps an occasional verbal hint as a reminder of the meaning of this reinforcer. It would appear to be an almost perfect world ...”²⁹

Chomsky’s review of Skinner’s *Verbal behaviour* succeeded, it would seem, beyond its author’s wildest dreams. Published in the journal *Language* and subsequently splashed across the front cover of *The New York review of books*, the “case against BF Skinner” set in motion a tidal wave of revolt against a school of thought increasingly perceived as Orwellian in its project to shape and manipulate human life.

The language instinct

For Chomsky, there could be no middle way. According to him, Marxist-inspired social

science - intrinsically behaviourist - viewed language as originating from a source external to the malleable, passive individual. If that theory were correct, no child could acquire its natal tongue without repetitive training involving punishments and rewards. Chomsky observed that in real life no child acquires language in this way. If the source of language is not 'external', he reasoned, then obviously it must be 'internal'. The child's pre-installed, genetically specified creativity is its fundamental resource which should simply be allowed to grow.

Chomsky is withering in his response to the notion - still prevalent in left-liberal circles to this day - that a child must be taught its natal tongue through training and example: "Attention to the facts quickly demonstrates that these ideas are not simply in error, but entirely beyond any hope of repair. They must be abandoned as essentially worthless. One has to turn to the domain of ideology to find comparable instances of a collection of ideas, accepted so widely and with so little question, and so utterly divorced from the real world. And, in fact, that is the direction in which we should turn if we are interested in finding out how and why these myths achieved the respectability accorded to them, how they came to dominate such a large part of intellectual life and discourse. That is an interesting topic, one well worth pursuing ..."³⁰

How can language be an ordinary acquired skill? What kind of 'skill' is it when humans everywhere in the world 'learn' it in basically the same way and in equal measure? Languages - Chomsky and his supporters point out - are not like other cultural patterns. They are not more or less complex, more or less sophisticated, according to the level of technological or other development. While differing from one another grammatically and in other ways, every human language is an equally intricate, complex intellectual system; none can be described as more or less sophisticated or 'advanced'.

In all cultures, moreover, people speak fluently regardless of social status, training or education. There is an innate biological schedule for language acquisition, specifying at what age a new language can easily be mastered and at what age the task becomes virtually impossible. While young children take quickly and easily to learning a new language, adults encounter immense difficulties, often making recurrent basic errors and revealing a permanent tell-tale accent even despite years of trying. Such children not only learn easily: in linguistically impoverished environments they may creatively invent improvements, developing a language more systematic than any they have heard. It is as if they knew by instinct how a proper language should be structured, anticipating regularities and establishing them inventively where necessary.³¹

The human vocal tract is a complex arrangement - a combination of disparate structures whose original evolutionary functions certainly had no connection with speech. But with its independently controllable parts, the tract as it now exists appears well designed to transmit strings of digitally encoded information accurately and at very high speeds. This, too - as Chomsky's colleague, Lenneberg,³² was among the first to stress - illustrates that there is such a thing as human nature. No child needs to be taught to babble, any more than it needs instruction in suckling at the breast. The rhythmic lip and mouth movements are instinctive and enjoyable for their own sake. Given even a minimally loving and stimulating environment, the next transition - from babbling to mature speaking - occurs equally naturally. Like the transition from crawling to walking, it is just part of growing up.

The syntactical skills of children mastering a language, Chomsky points out, are acquired with extraordinary rapidity and in unmistakably creative ways. The child is not just assimilating knowledge or learning by rote: on the contrary, what comes out seems to exceed what goes in. Children hear relatively few examples of most sentence types, are rarely corrected, and encounter a bewildering array of half-formed sentences, lapses and errors in the language input to which they are exposed. Yet, despite all this, they are soon fluent, creatively producing sentences never heard before, knowing intuitively which sequences are grammatical and which are not.

In Chomsky's words: "The fact that all normal children acquire essentially comparable grammars of great complexity with remarkable rapidity suggests that human beings are somehow specially designed to do this, with data-handling or 'hypothesis-formulating' ability of unknown character and complexity."³³ It is as if humans had an instinct for language.

A human revolution?

In accepting military funding for his early language research, Chomsky risked being accused of political corruption. How could an anarchist do such a thing? As if fending off such attacks, Chomsky went out of his way to clarify his political stance. Showing unusual courage for a prominent academic, he inspired and helped organise draft burning and other forms of direct action aimed at disrupting the United States war effort in Vietnam.

Getting himself arrested and spending time in a police cell, he achieved a place high on Richard Nixon's 'enemy list' of extremely dangerous artists and intellectuals.³⁴

As the political system is currently constituted, Chomsky argues, policies are determined by representatives of private economic power. In their institutional roles, these individuals "will not be swayed by moral appeals", but can only be affected by the "costs consequent upon the decisions they make".³⁵ Chomsky's stance seemed vindicated when, after the Tet offensive of 1968, the joint chiefs of staff pointed out that the deployment of additional troops to Vietnam was being hampered by the need to ensure that "sufficient forces would still be available for civil disorder control" at home.³⁶

During these and subsequent years, no American public figure did more to put the record straight on "the US invasion of Vietnam" (as he termed it) than Noam Chomsky. Other leftwing intellectuals may not have felt quite the same need to deny personal culpability for their country's actions around the world. Chomsky experienced this need as intimate and morally inescapable.

However, simply to explain his political stance was not enough. Chomsky's overall programme had to appear consistent. He could hardly afford to let his leftwing critics get away with the suggestion that, although his political views were largely progressive, his transformational grammar was - to quote George Lakoff - "as much part of the intellectual establishment as General Motors is a part of the military-industrial establishment".³⁷ Chomsky's anarcho-syndicalism and anti-militarism had to be constructed as consistent with his linguistics. Somehow, the corporate-backed and financed 'cognitive revolution' in psychology and related sciences had to be presented as intrinsically liberating and consistent with Chomsky's political beliefs.

He did not have to look far for a solution. Chomsky projected the 'language device' of his electronics laboratory into the brain of the human child. In real life, the human brain is not composed of wires or switch-boxes of the kind a 1950s computer engineer might devise. But if Chomsky's electronic 'device' could henceforth be conceptualised as a feature of the maturing human brain, it would nonetheless solve a number of pressing problems.

Central to anarchism is the celebration of spontaneity and self-organisation. It must have occurred to Chomsky that a machine defined as autonomous - as freely controlling its own 'creative' output - would fit into the anarchist scheme of things. Chomsky could now claim that his commitment to what looked like a box of electronic tricks had a deeper political significance.

The commitment in reality was to a resistant and creative human nature. Children do not need to be taught language by external pressure or example because - thanks to the special 'device' in their brains - they know the basics already. We "can know so much", as Chomsky explains, "because in a sense we already knew it, though the data of sense were necessary to evoke and elicit this knowledge. Or, to put it less paradoxically, our systems of belief are those that the mind, as a biological structure, is designed to construct."³⁸

If human mental nature is intricately structured and resistant, it must set limits to authoritarian control: "If, indeed, human nature is governed by Bakunin's 'instinct for revolt' or the 'species character' on which Marx based his critique of alienated labour, then there must be continual struggle against authoritarian social forms that impose restrictions beyond those set by 'the laws of our own nature', as has long been advocated by authentic revolutionary thinkers and activists."³⁹

Chomsky shows no patience with academics who oppose him on this point: "Yes, I speak of human nature, but not for complicated reasons. I do so because I am not an imbecile, and do not believe that others should fall into culturally imposed imbecility. Thus, I do not want to cater to imbecility. Is my granddaughter different from a rock? From a bird? From a gorilla? If so, then there is such a thing as human nature. That's the end of the discussion: we then turn to asking what human nature is."⁴⁰

Moving onto the offensive against his left-liberal critics, Chomsky discerns dubious motives behind the 'blank slate' theory of human nature: "For intellectuals - that is, social, cultural, economic and political managers - it is very convenient to believe that people have 'no nature', that they are completely malleable. That eliminates any moral barrier to manipulation and control, an attractive idea for those who expect to conduct such manipulation, and to gain power, prestige and wealth thereby. The doctrine is so utterly foolish that one has to seek an explanation. This is the one that intellectual and social history seem to me to suggest."⁴¹

Fortunately, continues Chomsky, the 'blank slate' theorists are wrong. Humans do possess an innate and resistant nature. It is thanks to this fact that revolution remains possible at all. As we learn a language, according to Chomsky, we are not cultural conformists. The child becomes fluent not by adjusting to external constraints, but by allowing free

expression to its own inner creativity:

“If some individual were to restrict himself largely to a definite set of linguistic patterns, to a set of habitual responses to stimulus configurations ... we would regard him as mentally defective, as being less human than animal. He would immediately be set apart from normal humans by his inability to understand normal discourse, or to take part in it in the normal way - the normal way being innovative, free from control by external stimuli and appropriate to a new and ever-changing situation.”⁴²

Celebrating a rebellious human nature, Chomsky repudiates the pessimistic view that humanity’s “passions and instincts” will forever prevent enjoyment of the “scientific civilisation” that reason might create. He concludes instead that “human needs and capacities will find their fullest expression in a society of free and creative producers, working in a system of free association ...

“Success in this endeavour,” as he puts it, “might reveal that these passions and instincts may yet succeed in bringing to a close what Marx called the ‘prehistory of human society’”. No longer repressed and distorted by competitive and authoritarian social structures, these passions and instincts may set the stage for a new scientific civilisation in which ‘animal nature’ is transcended and human nature can truly flourish”⁴³.

Notes

1. Interview in J Peck (ed) *The Chomsky reader* London 1988, p13.
2. N Chomsky, ‘Reflections on the Gulf War’, quoted in M Rai *Chomsky’s politics* London 1995, p7.
3. Interview in J Peck (ed) *The Chomsky reader* London 1988, p13.
4. N Chomsky *Class warfare* (interviews with David Barsamian), London 1996, p93.
5. N Chomsky, ‘Reflections on the Gulf War’, quoted in M Rai *Chomsky’s politics* London 1995, p9.
6. *Boston Globe* May 31 1989. Quoted in M Achbar *Manufacturing consent: Noam Chomsky and the media* Montreal 1994, p46.
7. Interview in J Peck (ed) *The Chomsky reader* London 1988, p5.
8. *Ibid* p6.
9. 1990 interview with David Barsamian, quoted in M Rai *Chomsky’s politics* London 1995, p8.
10. Interview in J Peck (ed) *The Chomsky reader* London 1988, p13.
11. RF Barsky *Noam Chomsky: a life of dissent* Cambridge, Mass 1997, p16.
12. Quoted in CP Otero (ed) *Radical priorities* Montreal 1981, p31.
13. Quoted in M Rai *Chomsky’s politics* London 1995, p103.
14. Quoted in *ibid* p102.
15. *Ibid*.
16. J Peck (ed) *The Chomsky reader* London 1988, p192.
17. Interview in J Peck (ed) *The Chomsky reader* London 1988, pp6-7.
18. CP Otero (ed) *Language and politics* Montreal 1988, p119.
19. Interview in J Peck (ed) *The Chomsky reader* London 1988, p8.
20. BF Skinner *Verbal behaviour* New York 1957, p3.
21. AR Radcliffe-Brown *Method in social anthropology* Bombay 1960.
22. Quoted in J Peck (ed) *The Chomsky reader* London 1988, p131.
23. See, for example, N Minnick (trans) *The collected works of LS Vygotsky* Vol 1, New York 1987.

24. See, for example, J Piaget *The child's conception of the world* London 1929.
25. CF Hockett (ed) *A Leonard Bloomfield anthology* Indiana 1970, p227.
26. RI McDavid *Studies in linguistics* 12,27-32, 1954.
27. BF Skinner *Beyond freedom and dignity* New York 1971, p155.
28. *Ibid* p66.
29. N Chomsky, review of BF Skinner's *Beyond freedom and dignity: New York Review of Books* December 30 1971, pp18-24.
30. N Chomsky *Language and problems of knowledge* Cambridge, Mass 1988, pp137-138.
31. See LR Gleitman and EL Newport, 'The invention of language by children: environmental and biological influences on the acquisition of language', in DN Osherson (ed) *An invitation to cognitive science* Vol 1, Cambridge 1995, pp1-24. For a more wide-ranging treatment of this and related issues see S Pinker *The language instinct* London 1994.
32. EH Lenneberg *Biological foundations of language* New York 1967.
33. N Chomsky, review of BF Skinner's *Verbal behaviour: Language* 35(1), 1959, pp26-58, 57.
34. See RF Barsky *Noam Chomsky: a life of dissent* Cambridge, Mass 1997, p124.
35. N Chomsky *Turning the tide: US intervention in central America and the struggle for peace* Boston 1985, p252.
36. M Rai *Chomsky's politics* London 1995, p115.
37. G Lakoff, foreword to A Borkin, etc *Where the rules fail: a student's guide* Indiana 1971, ppi-v, ii.
38. N Chomsky *Reflections on language* London 1976, p7.
39. *Ibid* p133.
40. N Chomsky, letter to RF Barsky, December 15 1992. Quoted in RF Barsky *Noam Chomsky: a life of dissent* Cambridge 1997, p208.
41. *Ibid*.
42. N Chomsky *Problems of knowledge and freedom* London 1972, p100.
43. N Chomsky *Reflections on language* London 1976, p134.

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