

## Preconditions for the evolution of protolanguages, Merlin Donald

### Brief Introduction

Most theorists in the field of language evolution concede that the earliest forms of language must have emerged from adaptive elaborations on ape gesticulation and vocalization, and that these skills were gradually transformed by evolutionary pressures into the more flexible, and ultimately much more powerful, means of communication that we know as human language. There is such widespread agreement on this basic idea, from Darwin (1871) to Lieberman (1984), Bickerton (1990), Pinker and Bloom (1990), Corballis (1991), Greenfield (1991), Piner (1994), and many others, including myself (Donald 1991), that one must conclude that, within the bounds of a neo-Darwinian theoretical framework, no viable alternative to this position has yet been proposed.