

ual life and as a means for establishing with man that equilibrium of mind necessary to face the influx of hell. If we attend to our dreams, we may well be able to understand the nature of our inheritance and so better see those evils we seek to fight. Let us then remember the value of dreams, as we seek guidance from God's Word to order our steps on His heavenly path.

COMMUNICATIONS

Editor,

Secretly I read *THE NEW PHILOSOPHY* and other New Church publications looking for illumination that will open new horizons. Erik E. Sandström's "From Enoch's Codex to the Ancient Word" (April-June, 1976, pp. 385-398) was one of those rare pieces that did just that. Not only did he tell me much that I didn't know, but from this perspective a lot of other things become clearer. A gem. My compliments to him.

Ukiah, Ca.

WILSON VAN DUSEN

To the Editor of *THE NEW PHILOSOPHY*:

In the article entitled "Language, Thought and Culture" that appeared in your last number, Miss Sandström has made a worthy contribution to linguistic study looking to a *new philosophy* of language. She has also lucidly demonstrated the futility of nailing great thinkers into *-ism* boxes.

One definition of "relativism" is: "The theory that all truth is relative to the individual and to the time and place in which he acts" (AHD). As applied to language, the relativistic view would seek to emphasize the individual character of all language communities with minimal regard for underlying consistencies amongst them.

Since the human species is born into total ignorance it is dependent on society for the tools of expression and communication. Competence in language use (Whorf: "the how of understanding")—even in the Chomskian sense—is an acquisition of the rational mind, thus very much a product of environment and culture. But the *ability* to acquire it (Whorf: "the why of understanding") is truly a human characteristic, identical with the ability to speak spiritual language that is inmosty inherent in all without instruction.

Language is one of the elements of the cultural framework that forms the natural mind; but when and if the spiritual mind is opened, this framework is relegated a subservient role. Then cultural differences no longer separate, but only distinguish varieties of life and thought. It is therefore no coincidence that the "lip" in Gen. XI: 1 (i.e. "language") signifies *doctrine*. In a most vital sense, only those in spiritual charity "speak the same language"—even if their mother tongues differ; while those not in that charity speak different languages, even if their mother tongues are the same.

What marks human language as distinct is its function of signifying realities by means of vocal (or gestural) symbols. Insofar as these symbols are *natural* ones, there is universality; insofar as they deviate from genuine correspondences, diversity arises. If mankind had remained in the order of creation, perhaps language on this planet would have developed as the universal medium it essentially is.

Future research will no doubt unearth in this world's language labyrinth many hitherto unsuspected relics of a primordial "natural" speech from which all languages evolved.

Miss Sandström's last quote from Whorf mentioning "unsuspected realms of fact" is very apt indeed.

Huntingdon Valley, Pa.

J. DURBAN ODNER