

Jerry Fodor was a foundational figure in the rise of cognitive science, with a profound effect on my own scientific formation. When I read his book on the Language of Thought, I thought, "But of course." Not because I had previous thought that there must be a language of thought, which I had not, but because once Jerry had made the argument for it, it seemed to me utterly obvious that there must indeed be one. Much of my subsequent experimental work and my theorizing has been directed toward trying to puzzle out what the pre-linguistic language of the brain must be.

Much later, when Rochel and I came to Rutgers, where Jerry had been instrumental in establishing a flourishing cognitive science program, we had the great pleasure of becoming good friends with Jerry and Janet. And, I did quite a bit of sailing with Jerry. (Janet and Rochel were less enthusiastic sailors than Jerry and I.) Among the many wonderful things about sailing are that it is quiet and not much happens for long stretches of time, so there is ample opportunity to talk and to argue. And argue we did. Jerry and I agreed on a great many things, but for two people as disputatious as we were, it is not hard to find things to argue about. One of the great pleasures of arguing with Jerry was his incredible quickness of mind. It was very hard to get out ahead of him. Another was his wonderful wit, which all who knew him will testify to. He could make you laugh hard even when you thought he was defending an absolutely indefensible position. It is a shame that Jerry had no Boswell, for like Samuel Johnson, he was an overflowing source of quotable aperçus, bon mots, ripostes and put-downs.

His death has left a hole in my heart.

-- Randy Gallistel