AN ORIGINARY ANALYSIS OF
FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE
IN LIGHT OF
GENERATIVE ANTHROPOLOGY

by

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For Dad
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The work presented in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original except as acknowledged in the text. I hereby declare that I have not submitted this material, either in full or in part, for a degree at this or any other institution.

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Bibliography
Abstract

So much has been written about Friedrich Nietzsche’s life and work that entire books have now been written about how extensively Nietzsche’s life and oeuvre have been written about. There is not simply a wide range of interpretations of Nietzsche, but an industry of interpretations. What is apparent in this industry is an interpretative maximalism that is part and parcel of the postmodern, post–nineteenth century approach to Nietzsche and his radical break from modernist thinking. Yet, despite the evident value of these herculean hermeneutic and biographical efforts of the past, perhaps the best impulse might lie in a counter-intuition: to re-construct Nietzsche’s work in the most minimal terms possible.

Stemming from the French literary and cultural critic, René Girard, whose work on “mimetic desire” and the “scapegoat mechanism” were formative to his thinking, Eric Gans, Distinguished Professor of French and Francophone Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles, has pursued a line of non-metaphysical philosophical thought he calls “generative anthropology.” Contrary to much postmodern philosophical thinking—at least in the humanities—Gans has proposed a “minimal hypothesis” that attempts to answer fundamental questions about human consciousness and language by placing the ostensive sign at the very centre of human origins—of the origin of the human as human. Generative anthropology essentially attempts to figure Homo sapiens in the most elementary terms possible. Crucially, Gans claims that the work of Nietzsche represents a particular model of his originary analysis—although his analysis of how this is the case deserves to be elaborated on more. In this thesis, I situate Nietzsche’s work by articulating it in the most minimal terms possible—that is, to discern how Nietzsche’s work re-presents the scene of human origin; and equally, how this theoretical orientation offers a plausible, coherent, and novel way of approaching his work. And so, essentially, the goal of this
dissertation will be to expand and clarify how and why it is the case that one should utilise generative anthropology as a hermeneutic tool to study Nietzsche’s work.

Despite the overwhelmingly postmodern philosophical reception of Nietzsche’s works (by Heidegger, Derrida, Deleuze, Foucault) in the twentieth century, this thesis aims to situate Nietzsche, not only as a precursor to postmodern suspicion, but as a theorist of the human, of human origins, and of the ethical. Of course, Nietzsche is particularly preoccupied with the origin of language, resentment, religion, morality, tragedy, culture, and music—all minimal categories of the human, according to generative anthropology. Yet, how is it possible to fly against a century of typically Nietzschean postmodern philosophical thinking characterised by the denial of the objectivity of linguistic reference, where determinate meaning is impossible? The answer to this question may lie in generative anthropology, which theorises that the emergence of language was a singular event and that all human culture is a development stemming from this event. Generative anthropology allows for a hermeneutic of Nietzsche’s oeuvre that at once positions him as an anthropologist, a theorist of human origins and of the ethical, and allows one to bypass the postmodern de-/re-constructions of his work by claiming that he offers a particular scene of human origins, that he explicitly discusses the origin of the human and language, and that he provides a particular insight to one of the most important philosophical questions: What is the human?

This thesis positions Nietzsche as a theorist of the origins of the ethical. It does this by utilising generative anthropology, a field which deals specifically with the ethical in relation to the event of human language origins. By utilising generative anthropology as the hermeneutic lens to examine Nietzsche’s own insights about the human, we gain insights into both ways of thinking. Indeed, Nietzsche’s later thinking about the ethical is intimately connected to his earlier thinking about the emergence of language as an aesthetic phenomenon. Through an “originary analysis” of Nietzsche’s fundamental ideas about the human—the will to power, eternal recurrence, resentment, and language as “error”—Nietzsche’s particular vision of what the human is will be mapped out within a generative anthropological framework, which considers the advent of language itself to be coeval with the ethical and the “vertical”
separation of the human from the horizontal worldly appetite of the non-human animal. An originary analysis is essentially that which claims all human thought and activity stem from a single “scene” of human origin, where all aspects of the human can be traced back to this moment. In order to understand how and why one should read Nietzsche from a generative anthropological standpoint, it is essential to give a brief overview of generative anthropology and its understanding of the origin of the human, language, and the ethical. However, it is precisely because generative anthropology provides a fixed reference point that accounts for the fundamental elements of the human as human, we are able to assess Nietzsche’s own thinking about the human in a new way, without retreating into the postmodern suspicion of the truth value of language.
Introduction to Generative Anthropology:
The “Originary Hypothesis” and “Originary Analysis”

Inspired by René Girard’s work on mimetic theory, Eric Gans has pursued a line of non-metaphysical philosophical thought he calls “generative anthropology.” One might equate Gans’s notion of the origin of language to the cosmological theory of the big bang, or to how Gans himself describes his hypothesis, that is, the “little bang.”¹ For generative anthropology, all things human are accounted for with respect to the singular event of the emergence of human language. Gans argues that the origin of language is scenic—say, for instance, an early hominid group gathered around the fresh meat of a dead, non-human animal. For Gans, language is essentially scenic. In other words, language is characterised by a scene where a sacred centre and human periphery emerge. Accordingly, generative anthropology attempts to explain the emergence of meaning that is created from the scene of human representation. As a preliminary example—although it matters little to speculate on the exact details of how the first scene was generated, as long as it was a scene—several members of a hominid group are standing around an animal carcass, where all members of the group share the same triangulated mimetic desire for food. Since not all of the members of the group can acquire the same animal at the same time, an outbreak of violence threatens the group. At this instant, what Gans calls the “aborted gesture of appropriation” occurs. One member of the group has emitted a sign or signal that represents the central object of desire symbolically that at once points to the object and at the same time renounces mimetic desire for the object. The aborted gesture of appropriation functions to both defer violence and form a referent in and of itself. The first sign is an imitation of an object (as per the classical theory of mimesis-as-

representation) but paradoxically it becomes its own “object” in the instance of its emergence: it traces its own closure through mimesis of the object. This, Gans claims, is coeval with—and in some senses is—the event of the emergence of human consciousness. Once symbolic representation of the central object has been occurred, Gans claims, no “alpha animal” can defer to the dominance hierarchy of violent control, nor does it have the ability to dominate the group’s mimetic desire for the central object. The aborted gesture of appropriation effectively defers the alpha’s ability to dominate the group through violence because the sign preserves the knowledge of the originary event. For Gans, the sign is an imitation and symbolic representation of the central object of desire. From “horizontal” mimetic appetite comes the “verticality” of the sign. Gans writes:

The gesture of appropriation is an act that directly intends a worldly result; its temporality is that of the practical world. In contrast, the sign does not intend its referent directly, but through mimesis of its formal closure. The sign is an object, a product, a whole imitating another whole. The sign points to its referent, but in order to do so, it must be cut off from the possibility of attaining it, must mimic the objects closure in its own. What is new about the human sign as opposed to the most complex animal signals is that it is the product of a formal consciousness. The sign is a form in that it turns back on itself in order not to appear to be pursued as a gesture of appropriation.2

Indeed, through the abortive gesture of appropriation, violence becomes temporarily deferred through signification. The sole cause and paradoxical function of the original gesture/sign is to defer violence through ever-new, reciprocal emissions of itself. Gans explains: “The gesture is aborted as appropriated but pursued as representation.”3 What we have here is a sign that becomes a quasi object of its own, existing in itself while pointing to its referent at the centre. Our protohuman ancestors, through the emission of a sign, have managed to temporarily defer violence, and in

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3 Ibid., 98.
the act separated themselves from their biological progenitors. The following points, I argue, are the most basic elements that constitute the originary hypothesis: (1) there was an original scenic event of some sort, comprising more than one protohuman; (2) this original scene was catalysed, or triggered, by a mimetic crisis at a critical moment/instant; (3) the outbreak of violence was deferred through an aborted gesture of appropriation; and (4) the first sign (the gesture) and the signs that followed were rapidly disseminated among the first language users.

What Is the Methodology of Originary Analysis?

The originary scene of human representation is the moment of transition between the animal and the human proper, where everything human emerges in its nascent state. If one is to accept the originary hypothesis, one can deduce that all human representation throughout history “reproduces the minimal conditions of its origin.”

In other words, every human representation, utterance, sign, or gesture recreates the original deferral of violence through an aborted gesture of appropriation. Thus, the methodology of originary analysis is to examine the most basic developments of human communication from the standpoint of their origin.

In *Originary Thinking: Elements of Generative Anthropology*, Gans declares that originary analysis begins with examining the origin of the fundamental categories of the human; for instance, desire, art, religion, morality, and resentment. In order to gain a greater understanding of any of these fundamental categories of the human, Gans declares, “we must construct a plausible model of the ‘moment’ within the event in which the particular category is constituted.” Therefore, a link can be drawn between a specific understanding of a fundamental human category and a broader theory of the human in general. One aim for originary analysis, then, is to locate how

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5 Gans declares that an originary analysis is not an all-inclusive analysis. In other words, only categories of human culture may be subjected to originary analysis: the means by which we seek to understand the natural universe is not within the scope of generative anthropology. See: Eric Gans, *Originary Thinking: Elements of Generative Anthropology* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press 1993), 10.

6 Ibid.
and why a particular human category emerges from the originary event. Gans writes: “Originary analysis is essentially narrative; we understand a human phenomenon by attempting to tell the story of its emergence.” As an example, if one were to give an originary analysis of Nietzsche’s ideas on, say, resentment, one must first elaborate the emergence of resentment within the human scene of origin. By performing such an operation, we would be given a point of reference when examining Nietzsche’s position on central ideas: resentment, language, and the ethical. By utilising the “reference point” provided by generative anthropology and the originary hypothesis, I argue, I will account for—and redefine—many of Nietzsche’s central ideas, which are found on the original scene of human representation.

1. Twentieth-Century Interpretations of Nietzsche: Beyond Postmodern Thinking

The aim of chapter 1 is, first, to examine the major interpretations of Nietzsche’s thought found throughout the twentieth century, and, second, to position Nietzsche as a theorist of human origins in light of generative anthropology. The logic involved in surveying the most widely read and discussed interpretations of Nietzsche is twofold: (1) to understand the main trends of how Nietzsche has been interpreted thus far, and (2) to acknowledge how he has not been interpreted thus far—that is, as a theorist of human origins. Nietzsche is often categorised as one of the founding fathers of postmodern thinking, along with Freud and Marx, characterised by Paul Ricœur as the three masters of the “hermeneutics of suspicion.” Of course, the general tenets of postmodern thinking claim that “truth” and “knowledge” remain forever unreachable and unable to be verified because of the conditions that characterise language itself. If language is all that the human has as a tool to validate “truth,” it is impossible to prove the existence of an objective reality. Of course, the postmodern philosophers examined in chapter 1 all define, in one way or another, Nietzsche as a thinker who thinks beyond traditional Western notions of an objective reality. This skepticism

7 Ibid.
pertaining to the lack of objectivity found in language is precisely why there exists a problem with Nietzsche interpretations. For example, Gans claims that it was solely twentieth-century, “Nietzschean” thinking that was responsible for the postmodern skepticism of philosophy, or of the sciences, for that matter, locating any sort of objectivity. The underlying reality of all human thinking is, indeed, language. Gans writes: “With the death of the ‘right Nietzschean’ illusion of fascist regeneration through an esthetic politics is born an era dominated by ‘left Nietzschean’ skepticism about any form of authentic human interaction, esthetics and politics included.”⁹

Instead of the claims of the “right” fascists, or of “left” postmodern Nietzscheans, generative anthropology claims to be a non-metaphysical, philosophical line of thought that allows for a point of reference in order to examine Nietzsche’s work. Through the lens of generative anthropology, following Gans, I will clear a path where Nietzsche’s thought can be reconciled in objective terms, by tracing his thoughts on language, resentment, the ethical, the theory of the will to power, and the doctrine of eternal return back to the originary scene of human representation.

First, I will examine Martin Heidegger’s interpretation of Nietzsche as the “last metaphysician,” found in “Nietzsche as Metaphysician.” Heidegger ultimately declares Nietzsche to be the last metaphysician and the first to characterise “beings as such.” Second, I will examine Karl Löwith’s interpretation of Nietzsche found in Nietzsche’s Philosophy of the Eternal Recurrence of the Same as the systematic philosopher who was ultimately unable to reconcile the will to power with the eternal return. Third, Michel Foucault’s famous “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History” interprets Nietzsche’s On the Genealogy of Morals, which stands as a postmodern interpretation of Nietzsche’s thinking par excellence.¹⁰ Foucault considers the genealogical interpretation of history to be a reflection on the emergence of cultural artifacts as the interrelation between power structures. Fourth, considered to be the most idiosyncratic reading of Nietzsche’s oeuvre, Gilles Deleuze’s Nietzsche and Philosophy presents a “left” creative-active Nietzsche—a Nietzsche for “radically

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⁹ Eric Gans, Originary Thinking, 209.
personal, artistic, poetic, and philosophical efforts.” Beyond Deleuze, I will assess Jacques Derrida’s *Spurs: Nietzsche’s Styles/Eperons; Les Styles de Nietzsche*, where the father of “deconstruction” presents Nietzsche’s “styles” as the precursors to the decentring and deconstruction of the human as a consequence of Nietzsche’s proclamation of the death of God. The last work to be examined in relation to the major interpretations of Nietzsche’s philosophy will be Pierre Klossowski’s *The Vicious Circle*. Considered a masterpiece of Nietzschean scholarship, *The Vicious Circle* presents Nietzsche’s work as inextricably linked to his fluctuating health.

Having provided an account of the major philosophical interpretations of Nietzsche’s thought, I will reflect on the problems contained in, or restrictions placed on, these very disparate interpretations—linked only by the qualifier “postmodern”—through examining what generative anthropology itself has to say about Nietzsche. Yet one of the key links, particularly between Foucault, Derrida, and Deleuze, in their interpretation of Nietzsche, and in their own philosophical endeavours, is that they all agree on the notion that philosophical thinking must *not* engage with the search for human origins.

In the chapter entitled “Scenes of Philosophy” in *The Scenic Imagination*, Gans positions Nietzsche as offering a particular model of the human, where a scene of human representation emerges from the synergies between Dionysian music and the Apollonian symbol, as mapped out in Nietzsche’s *The Birth of Tragedy*. An originary analysis of Nietzsche’s main ideas set out in *The Birth of Tragedy* will mark the beginning of the trajectory of this dissertation. I will conclude chapter 1 by giving an account of the feasibility of an in-depth generative anthropological originary analysis of Nietzsche—something that no-one has yet attempted.

2. An Originary Analysis of Nietzsche’s Theory of Language

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Chapter 2 will begin by situating Nietzsche as a nineteenth-century theorist of origins by examining his very early works, “On the Origins of Language,” “On Music and Words,” *On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense*, and later, *The Gay Science*, in order to emphasise just how explicitly Nietzsche attempts to account for the origin of the human and the fundamental generative anthropological categories of the human, such as resentment, morality, religion, logic, knowledge, and language. Not only is Nietzsche deeply entrenched within nineteenth-century thinking about origins—he reflects extensively on Darwin’s theory of evolution by natural descent, however misguided—but, he also deeply engages with the origin of language and of the ethical. Through a dialogue with generative anthropology, I will examine the fundamental theoretical synergies and differences between Nietzsche’s understanding of the human, and that of generative anthropology, in order to establish how each mode of thinking’s views on language and the ethical orients a particular model of the human. One of the aims of chapter 2 is to give an originary analysis of Nietzsche’s thinking about language and how it orients his thinking about the ethical in light of generative anthropology. Indeed, generative anthropology considers language and the ethical to be inseparable. Chapter 2 will contend that Nietzsche’s early views on language directly influence his later thinking about the ethical as a merely aesthetic phenomenon. I will also discuss the consequences of viewing language as an aesthetic phenomenon in light of generative anthropology.

In *On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense* and *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche spends much of his time preoccupied with specific problems concerning language, such as its function, origin, and relationship to the ethical, and with other human “inventions.” Yet, his ideas about the function and origin of language are widely overlooked throughout academia. Nietzsche’s early fascination with philology led him to a keen interest in the problems of the origin of language. In these formative years he approached this problem by analysing the relation between verbal language and music. He considered music to be the “universal language” that “stands in symbolic relation to the primordial contradiction and primordial pain in the heart of the primordial Unity, and therefore symbolizes a sphere which is above all appearance
and beyond all phenomena.”\textsuperscript{12} For Nietzsche, music is the primary language, which precedes the linguistic. For him, linguistic symbolism is a secondary phenomenon, parasitic on music. In “Nietzsche’s Contribution to the Theory of Language,” Roger Hazelton writes that Nietzsche considers “the secondary symbolism that is language may thus be considered either as representational and imitative with respect to its objects, or as expressive and evocative with respect to its origin. This tension between metaphysical origin and phenomenal objects give rise in turn to the diversity of functioning within language itself.”\textsuperscript{13} In \textit{The Gay Science}, we also see Nietzsche acknowledging the idea that language is not situated with the individual, but rather “only a connection, a connecting network between man and man” ultimately formed “under the pressure of the necessity for communication.”\textsuperscript{14} In these texts, Nietzsche anticipates many elements in Gans’s originary hypothesis on multiple levels, including the necessity of language being a communal phenomenon, rather than some instantaneous, subjective evolution. This figuring of consciousness as arising in social terms antedates Gans’s originary hypothesis. Hazelton claims “the important idea that communication by verbal exchange of signs precedes and even conditions the growth of consciousness in the individual,”\textsuperscript{15} or what Nietzsche calls “social utility.” To highlight the fundamental parallels between Nietzsche’s view of language (aesthetic) and Gans’s (ethical) view of it will clear a path to situate Nietzsche’s work within a generative anthropological framework, where we can begin an in-depth analysis of the notion of the difference between language as aesthetic or as ethical.

3. Nietzsche, Girard, Gans: Master and Slave, Mimesis, and Originary Resentment

Chapter 3 will examine the notion of resentment as a fundamental, minimal element of Nietzsche’s theory of the human. Nietzsche, Girard, and Gans each contribute


\textsuperscript{13} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{15} Hazelton, “Nietzsche’s Contribution,” 51.
toward the understanding of the importance and position of resentment. According to all three thinkers, resentment is an indispensable element of what constitutes the human. Interestingly, Gans claims that Nietzsche is indeed the discoverer of the rightful place of resentment. In Nietzsche’s first essay in *On the Genealogy of Morals: A Polemic*, he investigates the ostensible origins of Judaeo-Christian morality and the consequent emergence of what he calls *ressentiment*. This section of research will focus on the homologies that exist between Nietzsche’s critique of “our origin of moral prejudices,” Girard’s mimetic theory specifically in relation to Nietzsche, and Gans’s originary hypothesis. Chapter 3 will ask: In what ways does Nietzsche give a scenic representation of resentment, as pointed out in *On the Genealogy of Morals*? Further: How do we reconcile Nietzsche’s methodological preference of “genealogy”—that is, a slow, intertwining, and gradual evolution of humanity—and Gans’s punctual “origin” of consciousness?

For Gans, resentment is not the overwhelming feeling of a slave morality towards a master; rather, he says that resentment is something experienced by *all* of humanity as a consequence of the inability to access the central object of desire, from the periphery, through the representation of the aborted gesture of appropriation. This is what Gans discerns as “originary resentment.” An originary reading of Nietzsche’s resentment may well be the formulation that the Jews—and, later, the Christians—produced an entire mode of living based on resentment because of the impossibility of accessing the now designated but unreachable centre. In other words, Gans tells us, Judaeo-Christian morality has made being on the periphery something of a virtue.

Girard’s work is also particularly important to chapter 3 for two reasons. First, his analysis in “Dionysus Versus the Crucified” gives insight into the religious elements of Nietzsche’s work, where one is able to get closer to sketching out an originary reading of resentment. “Dionysus Versus the Crucified” emphasises the notion that Nietzsche viewed the history of humanity as a violent struggle of impulses. Second, Girard’s work is a fundamental precursor to Gans’s work on the originary hypothesis. Without Girard’s work on mimetic theory and the scapegoat mechanism, Gans’s idea on the origin of the human would be inconceivable. Girard’s work will provide a balanced insight into what Nietzsche depicts as the “value” of morality and into
Gans’s hypothesis that language acts as the deferral of violence through continual representations of the sign. In chapter 3, I will reconfigure Nietzsche’s important discovery of resentment in light of generative anthropology. I will do so first by examining Gans’s notion of originary resentment. Then, I will provide a close reading of the central argument of Nietzsche’s On the Genealogy of Morals. Third, I will give a brief overview of Girard’s theory of mimesis, as it forms the foundation of his analysis of Nietzsche’s resentment. I will also consider some of the problems concerning Girard’s assessment of Nietzsche’s notion of resentment. From here, I will return to originary resentment in relation to Nietzsche’s idea that although the masters were the inheritors of language, the slaves were the ones who developed an internal scene of representation through resentment. Finally, I will consider Nietzsche’s assertion that the masters were the inventors of language, in relation to Gans’s proposition that there is indeed one who emits the first gesture on the scene of human origins, or what generative anthropology refers to as “firstness.”

4. An Originary Analysis of the Will to Power and of Eternal Recurrence

Through a close examination of Nietzsche’s unauthorised posthumously published notebooks (Nachlass), The Will to Power, chapter 4 will examine two of Nietzsche’s central philosophical ideas: the “will to power” and the “eternal recurrence of the same.” The Nachlass manuscript offers an extraordinary insight into what are considered to be the two pillars of Nietzsche’s thinking, the will to power, as the sum total of all reality, in an eternally recurring world of the same.

In the Scenic Imagination, Gans declares that it is Nietzsche “whose every sentence puts author and reader en scene more compellingly than any thinker since Pascal.”16 For Nietzsche, the scene, if you will, is the will to power in an eternally recurring world of sameness. He writes: “This world is a will to power, and nothing besides.”17 In order to succeed with an originary analysis of the will to power, one must locate

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16 Gans, Signs of Paradox, 139.
the minimal elements of these principles in order to reconstruct it on the original scene of human representation. This section will offer an originary analysis of what I consider to be the most relevant sections of Nietzsche’s *The Will to Power* (manuscript) in the attempt to situate Nietzsche’s formulations that constitute a theory of the “will to power” within an originary framework. This section will argue that Nietzsche’s will to power falters in light of generative anthropology because the subjectless will to power, as Nietzsche holds, is ultimately designated by a subject. Nietzsche’s theory of the will to power, however, may be tenable if we are to consider the cosmological doctrine of the eternal recurrence of the same.

The second aim of chapter 4 is to explore the eternal recurrence of the same in light of generative anthropology. There have been few responses from generative anthropology to Nietzsche’s eternal recurrence. A notable exception is Adam Katz’s *The Question of Originary Method: The Generative Thought Experiment*. Considering there is no forthcoming “proof” of the eternal recurrence, nor any possibility of one forthcoming, Katz claims the eternal recurrence rests on the originary scene of human representation as a self-reflexive thought experiment. Another productive way to examine eternal recurrence in light of generative anthropology is to examine a ubiquitous mythological symbol that converges on Nietzsche’s and Gans’s thinking, the Ouroboros. The Ouroboros is found on the cover of Gans’s first book on generative anthropology, presumably because the Ouroboros represents the perpetual deferral of violence through symbolic representation. The Ouroboros, for Gans, is also a symbol of the formal closure of the sign, thus producing consciousness. Therefore, there is a convergence between Nietzsche’s and Gans’s thinking about eternal return in some very distinct ways. For Gans, the eternal return is characterised as being the perpetual representation of the scene of human origin. For Nietzsche, it is both an ethic to live by and a cosmology, which, I contend, is untenable.

If Nietzsche is, indeed, a theorist of human origins—as this thesis has thus far posited—what are we to make of the eternal recurrence of the same, which is Nietzsche’s self-proclaimed “greatest teaching,” in relation to human origins and language? Once a general framework has been given for an understanding of the eternal recurrence as a *kosmos anthropos* (cosmic anthropology) that attempts to
overcome the human, I will consider where the eternal recurrence lies in relation to generative anthropology.

**Conclusion**

What is ultimately at stake in an originary analysis of Nietzsche’s thought are two things: (1) to consider Nietzsche a theorist of origins by aligning his thought with that of generative anthropology as a framework to guide us through Nietzsche’s central ideas; (2) Nietzsche’s views about the origin of the human and human language have greatly influenced his later thinking about the ethical—and even the human—as “error.” Generative anthropology not only sheds a great deal of light on Nietzsche’s thinking in relation to language, resentment, religion, and the ethical, but it also offers a solution to the post-Nietzschean thinking I will be exploring in chapter 1. For Nietzsche, the ethical is a mere artifact of the aesthetic emergence of the human—again, as a part of the will to power, which is the eternally recurring world. As we have seen, the originary hypothesis accounts for the emergence of both language and the ethical, and provides a new way of thinking in terms of examining Nietzsche.
Chapter 1:
Twentieth-Century Interpretations of Friedrich Nietzsche

_Mankind loves to put the question of origin and beginnings out of minds: must one not be almost inhuman to feel in himself the opposite inclination?_— Friedrich Nietzsche

The aim of this chapter is to give a critical account of the major interpretations of Nietzsche’s thought found in the twentieth century. What are deemed here the “major” interpretations of Nietzsche’s thought are, quite simply, those works that have been at the centre of philosophical discussion and debate; put more baldly, I’ll concern myself with those thinkers and lines of thought most cited. This strategy clears the path of what would usually be a task that extends far beyond the reaches of a dissertation preoccupied with the fecundity of twentieth-century interpretations of Nietzsche’s philosophy. The logic involved in surveying the most widely read and discussed interpretations of Nietzsche is twofold: (1) to understand the main trends of how Nietzsche has been interpreted thus far, and (2) to acknowledge how he has not been interpreted thus far—that is, as a theorist of origins. A crucial question we must ask in this chapter is: Why does academia resist the interpretation of Nietzsche as a theorist of origins? So far, the major philosophical accounts of Nietzsche’s work give no consideration to his early thinking, where he is indeed preoccupied with the origins of language and the human—precisely the theme that most concerns generative anthropology. In the last two sections of this chapter, through the lens of generative anthropology, following Eric Gans, I will clear a path where Nietzsche is situated as a theorist of human origins.

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The twentieth century is witness to a great eruption of interpretations of Nietzsche’s work. He has evoked more varied interpretations, in just a century, than almost any other thinker of his age. For example, renowned Nietzsche translator, Walter Kaufmann, asserts that Nietzsche’s books are “easier to read but harder to understand than those of almost any other thinker.”\(^2\) One of the reasons it is so difficult to “interpret” Nietzsche is because Nietzsche himself questions the essence of interpretation itself. His legacy is so deeply ingrained within twentieth-century intellectual history that much of Nietzsche scholarship has gone so far as to claim him to be the father of modern philosophical thinking, founder of postmodernism,\(^3\) and creator of radical individualism.\(^4\) All of the above claims are correct. However, the sheer variety of –isms that find their ostensible source in Nietzsche’s thinking is hard to summarise. One can scarcely account the number of intellectuals who are primarily indebted to his thinking. What is this thinking, however? Why is it so difficult to agree which tenets of Nietzsche’s thought are central to it? One strategy is to account for those who have attempted to interpret Nietzsche’s thought thus far.

This chapter will focus on the philosophical interpretations of Nietzsche that are the most cited: those of Martin Heidegger, Karl Löwith, Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze, and Pierre Klossowski (in that order). Ultimately, there exist major strains of thought that are to be examined in order to uncover how and why Nietzsche has not been interpreted as a theorist of origins. The first major interpretation of Nietzsche is found in the work of Martin Heidegger. I will examine Heidegger’s notion of *Dasein* in relation to his interpretation of Nietzsche as found in “Nietzsche as Metaphysician.” As with every interpretation of Nietzsche discussed in this chapter, it is essential to briefly examine the central ideas espoused in Heidegger’s philosophy if we are to make sense of the conclusions he has drawn from Nietzsche’s own work. I will discuss also what Heidegger means when he

declares Nietzsche to be the “last metaphysician.” Second, I will examine the interpretation presented in Karl Löwith’s—a student of Heidegger’s—Nietzsche’s *Philosophy of the Eternal Recurrence of the Same*, where he claims that Nietzsche’s work is a system of aphorisms that are ultimately linked by Nietzsche’s “central notion of the eternal recurrence of the same.” From here, I will examine Michel Foucault’s essay, “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,” which is indicative of his other works that deal with Nietzsche’s philosophy. Foucault’s views of Nietzschean “power” and “genealogy” are based on Nietzsche’s use of these terms as found in *The Genealogy of Morals* and the posthumous notes compiled in *The Will to Power*. Foucault is a thinker who, rather than presenting a commentary on Nietzsche, prefers to “utilise” Nietzsche’s ideas in order to invent new ways of thinking. I will examine precisely what these “new” ways of thinking are, which I suggest are fundamentally flawed. From here, I will examine Gilles Deleuze’s *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, where Deleuze presents a “left” creative-active Nietzsche—a Nietzsche for “radically personal, artistic, poetic, and philosophical efforts.”

Beyond Deleuze, I will assess Jacques Derrida’s *Spurs: Nietzsche’s Styles/Eperons; Les Styles de Nietzsche*, where the “father of deconstruction” presents Nietzsche’s “styles” as the precursors to the ubiquity of challenges faced by the West in the twentieth century, such as those related to sexuality, death, and politics, at least as far as these can be read through the analysis of “the question of style.” The last work to be examined in relation to the major interpretations of Nietzsche’s philosophy will be Pierre Klossowski’s *The Vicious Circle*. Considered a masterpiece of Nietzschean scholarship, *The Vicious Circle* presents Nietzsche’s work as inextricably linked to his life. In other words, Klossowski opts for a curious approach in claiming that Nietzsche’s ideas on truth and power resonate with his various physiological ailments. After giving an account of the major twentieth-century interpretations of Nietzsche, I will take into consideration how and why these thinkers have not taken seriously Nietzsche’s ideas about human origins. I will conclude the chapter by

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providing an alternative view of Nietzsche; that is, I will argue that Nietzsche is a theorist of human origins. Through an examination of Eric Gans’s *The Scenic Imagination: Originary Thinking from Hobbes to the Present Day*, I will justify and spell out the significance of generative anthropology in relation to Nietzsche’s thinking about the human.

**Heidegger’s Interpretation of Nietzsche as the Completion of Metaphysics**

This section will focus on one work in relation to the twentieth-century German philosopher, Martin Heidegger, who ultimately declares Nietzsche to be the last metaphysician and the first to characterise “beings as such.” Through an examination of Heidegger’s essay “Nietzsche as Metaphysician,” I will show that Heidegger’s interpretation of Nietzsche is as a philosopher who declared that all beings are manifestations of the “will to power.” Heidegger criticises Nietzsche for never examining Being itself, which according to Heidegger is the greatest task of philosophy. Heidegger ultimately suggests Nietzsche ends the long chain of Western metaphysical thinking—beginning with Plato—by being the first thinker to characterise beings, yet he does not extend his philosophical inquiry in Being. Nietzsche’s work, for Heidegger, marks the end of metaphysics. Yet Heidegger, like many others, utilises Nietzsche’s philosophy in the service of his own philosophical project. Heidegger’s project in the essay “Nietzsche as Metaphysician” is to advance his notion of *Dasein* (Being) through a dialogue between Nietzsche and himself, rather than to attempt to directly explicate Nietzsche’s work.

From the outset of “Nietzsche as Metaphysician,” Heidegger’s intentions are clearly to interpret Nietzsche as the philosopher of the will to power—that is to advance his uncovering of “being.” Heidegger’s aim here is to examine Nietzsche’s philosophy in light of a reflection on the being of beings; that is, Heidegger considers the ontological primacy of that which comes before all else, Being. Most of the discussion in the essay relates to Nietzsche’s position within the history of
metaphysics. Being, according to Heidegger, is in the concrete domain of reality and is not a metaphysical term. Nietzsche’s entire philosophy, according to Heidegger, is a series of ontological statements. If we could summarise Heidegger’s view of Nietzsche in one simple sentence, it would be: Nietzsche is the end of philosophy. I will show that this is evident in “Nietzsche as Metaphysician.” In other words, what Heidegger had in mind is surely that Nietzsche had exhausted the possibilities of metaphysics that had begun with Plato. Nevertheless, Heidegger’s critique of Nietzsche was his refusal to talk about “Being” as he furnished his entire philosophy around “becoming.” What is distinctive about Heidegger’s analysis of Nietzsche is that he never attempts to consider Nietzsche outside the light of a metaphysical debate. For Heidegger, the question of Being is always in the background. Nevertheless, Heidegger refuses to discuss what Nietzsche himself discusses about being. Nietzsche ultimately declares being to be an arbitrary metaphor for lazy thought, much like his understanding of the word “God.”

In “Nietzsche as Metaphysician,” Heidegger, as previously mentioned, sets out to frame a central concept of Nietzsche’s—the “will to power”—as an answer to “the question what beings are.” Heidegger claims that the will to power “names that which constitutes the fundamental character of all beings.” Indeed, for Heidegger, Nietzsche’s concept of “will to power” is that which claims to answer the fundamental question of what beings are—precisely what Heidegger declares has been the task of all philosophy since Plato. Nevertheless, Heidegger’s view on the real task of philosophy is to uncover the essence of Being, not what beings are. He writes: “[t]he fundamental question, i.e., the question that became the foundation stone for philosophy, is the question about the essence of Being; it has never been developed in the history of philosophy as such, Nietzsche, too, remains within the preliminary domain of that question.” For Heidegger, Nietzsche is part of an ancient Western philosophical tradition preoccupied with the very same question of what beings are.

7 Ibid., 105.
8 Ibid., 106.
Therefore, Heidegger sets out to position Nietzsche as preoccupied with a single question throughout all his work. Heidegger positions Nietzsche as the culmination, the end, of metaphysics. He claims that Nietzsche had uncovered what beings are, that is, the will to power. Nevertheless, Heidegger asserts that Nietzsche had still not uncovered what the Being of beings is, or what Heidegger declares to be the non-metaphysical question of beings (us) par excellence. According to Heidegger, we cannot find the meaning or value in Nietzsche’s thought if we look into the life of Nietzsche or the works themselves, strictly presented by their own content. He writes: “For even the work as work remains closed to us as long as we furtively search in some way for the ‘life’ of the man who created the work instead of asking about Being and the world upon which alone the work is based.”9 Rather, Heidegger insists we are to look at Nietzsche’s “work” as a single thought “about beings as a whole” and a philosophy about the “end of Western culture.”10

Indeed, if we are to take Nietzsche seriously, according to Heidegger, we must place a heavy emphasis on the single thought (which every great thinker only has) about “beings as a whole.”11 Heidegger contends Nietzsche is one of those essential thinkers. He writes: “the essential thinkers are those whose sole thought tends in the direction of a single and highest decision, either preparing for this decision or accomplishing it definitively.”12 Characteristic of Heidegger, he sets out to define the real meaning of a “decision.” Heidegger claims that the real decision to be made (leaving aside the superficiality and coarseness of day-to-day, mundane “decisions”) is between “the primacy of beings and the dominance of Being.”13 According to Heidegger, Nietzsche is a thinker who stands at the apex of all great Western thinkers that came before him. It is here where Heidegger’s criticism of Nietzsche begins. Heidegger claims that Nietzsche appears to “affirm the primacy of beings over Being without knowing what is at stake in such an affirmation.”14 The “primacy of beings,” for Heidegger, is that which is the culmination of the Western tradition’s metaphysics.

9 Ibid., 109.
10 Ibid., 106.
11 Ibid., 109.
12 Ibid., 110.
13 Ibid.
14 Ibid.
Yet Nietzsche’s affirmation of the primacy of beings, according to Heidegger, is what positions him as the thinker of the culmination of the modern age with his single thought of the will to power.¹⁵ Nietzsche, for Heidegger, is the “transition” from the modern age to the “beginning of its completion.”¹⁶ We catch a glimpse of why Heidegger considers Nietzsche a metaphysician, for he writes: “Metaphysically thought, Being is that which is thought in terms of beings as their most universal determination and in the direction of beings as their ground and cause.”¹⁷ In other words, if beings are the actualisation of Being, in any particular mode of thinking, including Nietzsche’s, the form of thinking is then metaphysical. Heidegger writes: “From the Greeks to Nietzsche all Western thinking has been metaphysical thinking.”¹⁸ And so, for Nietzsche to assert the true meaning of beings as will to power, Heidegger claims Nietzsche ends the modern age of metaphysical thinking by characterising beings—as a whole—as a will to power. Heidegger’s justification for this is that Nietzsche “thought ahead” by thinking of the will to power as thinking of “beings as a whole in such a way that the metaphysical ground of history of the present and future age becomes visible and at the same time decisive.”¹⁹ Ultimately, Heidegger’s legacy of Nietzsche interpretations is that Nietzsche is the thinker of the will to power, who is also the thinker of beings. For Heidegger, since Nietzsche has unraveled what beings actually are, he has also paved the way for an examination of Being itself—Heidegger’s idiosyncratic preoccupation as a thinker, not ours.

Karl Löwith’s Interpretation of Nietzsche as the Philosopher of the Eternal Recurrence of the Same

Unlike Heidegger’s accounts of Nietzsche, Karl Löwith’s Nietzsche’s Philosophy of the Eternal Recurrence of the Same, is of central importance to the enquiry to this thesis. This work is an important milestone because it turns our attention to

¹⁵ Heidegger claims the modern age spans roughly from 1600 to 1900. Ibid.
¹⁶ Ibid.
¹⁷ Ibid., 111. Emphasis in original.
¹⁸ Ibid.
¹⁹ Ibid., 112.
Nietzsche’s self-proclaimed greatest teaching, “eternal recurrence.” Löwith’s interpretation of Nietzsche is in stark contrast to the other major interpretations of his time: he is the only thinker to examine Nietzsche’s oeuvre without importing his own philosophical categories. Löwith is also a rare thinker in that he takes into consideration Nietzsche’s perpetual battle with the Christian belief in eschatology, and he uses Heraclitus’s idea of a cyclical model of the cosmos as his weapon. Is it an interpretation of Nietzsche, however? Löwith goes so far as to declare his reading of Nietzsche to be not an interpretation as such; rather, he declares, “this book does not impose an interpretation from without but rather extracts it from the Nietzschean texts.”

As a student of Heidegger, it is surprising that his “extraction” of Nietzsche is so utterly divergent from Heidegger’s interpretation from “without.” Of course, Heidegger claims that the thinker of the will to power is indeed the thinker of the end of Western metaphysics. On the other hand, Löwith declares Nietzsche’s work to be a system of aphorisms that only become coherent in light of the central idea of the eternal recurrence of the same. More strikingly, he explicitly rejects Heidegger’s emphasis on the will to power as a characterisation of beings; and ultimately claims the core of Nietzsche’s philosophy—eternal recurrence—is incompatible with the will to power. Instead, Löwith declares that the only way to read Nietzsche is in a systematic, methodical way, always bearing in mind eternal recurrence of the same as the attempt to overcome nihilism. The aims now are as follows: (1) to give a necessarily brief overview of Löwith’s reading of Nietzsche’s oeuvre as a system in aphorisms, (2) to outline the unifying fundamental idea found in his philosophy of eternal recurrence, and (3) to examine Löwith’s critique of the idea of the eternal recurrence of the same.

The Experiment: A System in Aphorisms

One of Löwith’s intentions is to provide a “methodical summary” and not a vast “total presentation of Nietzsche.” He considers Nietzsche’s work to be a system of

21 Ibid.
interlocking aphorisms whose paradoxical relationship is only reconciled under the concept of the eternal recurrence. Löwith equates Nietzsche’s philosophy to a “system in aphorisms” bound together by the “single meaning” of the “eternal recurrence of the same.” Nietzsche himself declares the eternal recurrence to be his greatest teaching. Although Löwith admits that many aphorisms read side by side can at times be wholly contradictory, he nevertheless urges the reader to read Nietzsche’s corpus in its entirety. He writes: “For it is unmistakable that his writings consist of more- or less-developed aphorisms, and that he sketched out plans concerning the whole by means of which all fragments cohere. And they cohere exactly in what both the systematic interpretation and the renunciation thereof leave out of consideration, namely, the teaching of the eternal recurrence. Only in that teaching (as his last experiment) does the sequence of Nietzsche’s attempts dovetail, with systematic consistency, into a ‘teaching.’”

Löwith also urges readers to consider Nietzsche’s work—as a whole—to be experimental in nature. Nietzsche’s critique of “closed systems of philosophical thought” is replaced by “experimenting” with the “aphoristic seed corns” of “hard little truths.” In this way, Löwith considers Nietzsche to revive not only the eternal recurrence but also, in his use of the aphorism, to renew “the old wisdom of the philosophic proverb.”

Löwith claims that Nietzsche’s philosophy is experimental because he explores “the anti-Christian repetition of antiquity on the peak of modernity.” For Löwith, a certain amount of courage is required to experiment with life. Löwith writes: “A lack of courage for the problem leads the systematic philosopher to close the open horizon of ‘at-tempting’ examination and questioning.” In a reflection on modernity, Nietzsche would experiment with ancient cosmological beliefs. Nietzsche declares: “He who would be wise about old origins … will finally search for sources of the future and for new origins.” Again, Löwith’s argument rests on the basis that Nietzsche’s philosophy of the eternal recurrence of the same is inherently built on a

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22 Ibid., 11.
23 Ibid., 13.
24 Ibid., 17.
25 Ibid., 108.
26 Ibid., 10. Thus in the original.
27 Ibid., 108.
“system of aphorisms.” In other words, in order to understand eternal return, one needs to recognise Nietzsche’s conscious effort to experiment with the first premise in mind that existence is “one essentially and comprehensive contradiction, which arises from a fundamental conflict in the relationship of man and world—where there is no God and no common order of creation.” Nietzsche’s philosophical “experiments” are what Löwith claims to be at-tempts towards new values. Of course, these experiments of Nietzsche’s are “nevertheless systematically guided” according to Löwith.

The Unifying Fundamental Idea in Nietzsche’s Philosophy

The chapter entitled “The Unifying Fundamental Idea in Nietzsche’s Philosophy” in Löwith’s book contains the most critical elements of his reading of Nietzsche, both in themselves and for this thesis. Through a detailed analysis of Thus Spoke Zarathustra, Löwith sets out to emphasise the eternal recurrence of the same to be the core theme of Nietzsche’s philosophy in its entirety, without which all the seemingly unrelated aphorisms would fall apart in meaninglessness. In his chapter, Löwith claims there to be two fundamental interpretations of the eternal recurrence of the same that cannot be reconciled; that is, the anthropological and the cosmological readings of eternal recurrence. Löwith ultimately declares that Nietzsche’s philosophy is shattered into pieces because of this irreconcilable difference between interpretations.

The anthropological component of eternal recurrence is based on an ethical imperative: if modern man has murdered God and has no direction or goal, then the teaching of the eternal recurrence establishes a new goal. Löwith writes: “the eternal return is to give humanity a goal that goes beyond the present state of man, yet not into an otherworldly ‘backworld,’ but instead into humanity’s own continuation.”

The explicit goal, ethical imperative, or philosophy of life given by Nietzsche is to

28 Ibid., 3.
29 Ibid., 11, emphasis in original.
30 Ibid., 84.
live “every moment so that you could will that moment back again over and over.”

To embrace eternal recurrence, for Nietzsche, means to be the “lord of the earth,” which is “the refrain” of Nietzsche’s “practical philosophy.” Anthropologically read, the eternal recurrence, for Nietzsche, has the highest “ethical gravity” because the willing is now a “responsibility for the future” and “a positively turned irresponsibility towards the innocence of existence.” The teaching of eternal recurrence is delivered by none other than Zarathustra, who according to Nietzsche is the highest type of man in total lordship over himself. The eternal recurrence, according to Löwith, is a historically conceived idea (Heraclitus), acting as a counterweight to the decay and decadence of Christianity. Löwith writes: “As a counterweight to the ‘modernity’ of decayed Christianity, the idea of the return is thus a historically conceived idea, and in accordance with its purpose it is directed to the future of European man … The teaching of the return sets free the hidden nihilism that results from the death of God.” After the death of God, the ethical imperative of eternal recurrence gives humanity a new goal for the future.

For Löwith, eternal recurrence is the absolute overcoming of nihilism through the experimental character that begs us to explore new horizons for eternity. Löwith writes: “the teaching aims at the externalization of this existence as opposed to its vaporization in the technical bustle of existence. The teaching reflects Nietzsche’s desire to raise this finite existence to an eternal significance.” Ultimately, the eternal recurrence, for Löwith, is Nietzsche’s attempt to replace a dead God with an externalisation of this world, an affirmation of this world, not its denial, not a desire to live in another world, a “backworld.” Nietzsche would declare that if we “could bear our immortality—that would be the highest thing.” The eternal recurrence, then, is a “willed” replacement for the worldly (otherworldly) religions—particularly Christianity. If one wills the eternal recurrence, the nihilistic skepticism of the belief that “nothing is true; everything is permitted” is obliterated. However, Löwith does not read the eternal recurrence of the same in its literal sense. Instead, he argues

31 Ibid., 85, emphasis in original.
32 Ibid.
33 Ibid.
34 Ibid, emphasis in original.
35 Ibid., 86.
36 Ibid.
“eternity, then, does not have the meaning of an eternal recurrence of the same, but it is the willed goal of a will to eternal-ization.”37 Read in this light, the eternal recurrence is a self-willed goal without the need of a God. The self-willing goal of eternalisation, according to Löwith’s reading of Nietzsche, is the superhuman ethical teaching that obviates the Christian belief in the afterlife and God.

Löwith argues that the cosmological component of eternal recurrence, if taken seriously, forces one to witness Nature as entirely indifferent to our ethical projects if we are to believe in the eternal recurrence as a cosmological principle and scientific proof. It is Nietzsche’s belief that the eternal recurrence is the “most scientific of all possible hypotheses, and a “new conception of the world.”38 Here, Nietzsche is referring to the scientific principle of the conservation of energy, which demands an eternal recurrence. Löwith observes that Nietzsche is convinced that the universe is infinite in time, but finite in matter. Therefore, all possible combinations of atoms would repeat ad infinitum. Yet, Nietzsche claims that because there is no origin of the universe (nor a goal), it begins and ends at the same time, in every moment as a “constant alteration of the same.”39 Nietzsche writes:

In infinite time, every possible combination would at some time or another be realized; more: it would be realized an infinite number of times. And since between every combination and its next recurrence all other possible combinations would have to take place, and each of these combinations conditions the entire sequence of combinations in the same series, a circular movement of absolutely identical series would thus be demonstrated: the world as a cycle that has already repeated itself infinitely often and plays its game in infinitum.40

Indeed, how can one ascertain a goal, or self-will the eternal recurrence if nature is indifferent to this? Perhaps this is Nietzsche’s point, as Löwith points out.

37 Ibid, emphasis in original.
38 Ibid.
39 Ibid., 89.
40 Ibid., 90.
Nevertheless, the fundamental distinction to be made when contrasting the anthropological and cosmological readings of eternal recurrence has to do with will. How is it possible to will at all in an eternally recurring universe when at the same time the same willing for the eternal recurrence has already happened an infinite number of times? Would one not live one’s life an infinite number of times in the same way only to rediscover the eternal recurrence in an identical way? These questions are explored in greater detail in Löwith’s chapter entitled “The Critical Yardstick of Nietzsche’s Experiment.”

The Critical Yardstick for Nietzsche’s Experiment

As we have seen, Löwith points out that the two predominant interpretations of the eternal recurrence are irreconcilable: the anthropological and the cosmological. Let us now briefly reflect on Nietzsche’s idea of eternal recurrence by recourse to his own words. First appearing in The Gay Science, the eternal return of the same is described by Nietzsche as follows:

What, if some day or night a demon were to steal after you into your loneliest loneliness and say to you: “This life as you now live it and have lived it, you will have to live once more and innumerable times more” ... Would you not throw yourself down and gnash your teeth and curse the demon who spoke thus? Or have you once experienced a tremendous moment when you would have answered him: “You are a god and never have I heard anything more divine.”

In the end, Löwith claims Nietzsche’s descent into insanity was caused by the attempt to embody the contradiction inherent within the eternal recurrence: the anthropological doctrine and the cosmological principle of eternal recurrence. Löwith writes: “Nietzsche’s philosophy, being a twofold ‘prophesy’ of nihilism and of the eternal recurrence of the same, is as ambiguous as Nietzsche himself. This

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teaching was consciously his ‘destiny,’ because his will to the nothing (being a ‘double will’) wanted to get back to the Being of eternity.” Löwith considers Nietzsche’s eternal recurrence to be, on the one hand, an ethical imperative and, as such, a philosophy of life: live your life as if every moment were to return innumerable times. On the other hand, Löwith claims that Nietzsche set out to prove the eternal recurrence as a physical reality: if time is infinite and matter finite then all possible combinations will recur infinitely. Indeed, this is why Löwith claims Nietzsche’s philosophy to be a particular cosmos anthropos (cosmic anthropology); it is at once a claim to a cosmological principle and an anthropological doctrine of sorts. Nevertheless, Löwith claims that Nietzsche’s attempt to avert—conquer, even—nihilism is ultimately shattered by the inherent contradiction between cosmic determinism and an ethical imperative. If the cosmos does indeed repeat endlessly, where is there room for human freedom? Löwith argues there is none.

Despite Löwith’s criticisms of Nietzsche’s central teaching of eternal recurrence, his reading of Nietzsche signals the first attempt to situate the philosopher as an original, systematic thinker offering a cosmological anthropology. Löwith’s final conclusions about Nietzsche’s conception of eternal return are inherently contradictory; that is, the cosmological principle of eternal return cannot be reconciled with the anthropological. Löwith writes: Nietzsche’s thought is “one essentially and comprehensive contradiction, which arises from a fundamental conflict in the relationship of man and world—where there is no God and no common order of creation.” Like Heidegger, however, Löwith situates Nietzsche’s thought as a set of variations on a single thought, the thought of the eternal recurrence of the same, from which all other aphorisms get their ultimate sense.

Löwith continually interprets Nietzsche’s philosophy as a single, unwavering thought. In the preface to Nietzsche’s Philosophy of the Eternal Recurrence of the Same, Löwith writes: “He who has learned to read Nietzsche systematically will thus be astonished not at the motley riches of his alternating perspectives but at the

42 Löwith, Nietzsche’s Philosophy, 4, emphasis in original.
43 Ibid., 10.
continuity and even the monotony of his philosophic problem.” Löwith’s rigorous analysis of Nietzsche’s oeuvre considers the “eternal return of the same” as a coherent, intelligible system of thought. Giving structure to Nietzsche’s fragmentary and aphoristic thought has always been a challenging endeavour. And so, Löwith is the first to present Nietzsche’s philosophy as forming a coherent structure out of one paradoxical aphorism. Ultimately, Löwith’s place in the history of Nietzsche interpretation is important to the extent that he was the first reader of Nietzsche to consider his work as a coherent system of the eternal recurrence in aphorisms – and this will be explored further in chapter 4.

Nevertheless, Löwith declares that Nietzsche’s project was doomed from the beginning. For according to Löwith, in order to self-legislate an ethical imperative under the banner of eternal recurrence is to mistake oneself for God. Löwith has the final say when he sees Nietzsche’s “attempt to find his way out of the finite nothing of the self-willing ego back into the eternal whole of Being finally ends in his mistaking himself for God, around whom everything becomes world.” Löwith figures Nietzsche as an important philosopher of the nineteenth century, but ultimately declares him to have descended into a fatal madness, from which there was no return.

**Jacques Derrida: The Playfulness of Nietzsche’s “Styles”**

Literary theorist and philosopher, Jacques Derrida, is one of the most widely celebrated thinkers of the twentieth century. His impact on philosophy, anthropology, and social theory remains difficult to gauge. He is a difficult thinker to engage with as he implements no “methodology” as such. Rather, each “text” under Derrida’s analysis is examined in order to uncover precisely what is not in the text itself. Derrida examines texts themselves without incorporating external references or other methods of literary analysis. Chris Fleming, in his entry in *Theory in Social and Cultural Anthropology: An Encyclopedia*, aptly summarises Derrida’s form of

44 Ibid., 22.
textual analysis. He writes: “analyses are invariably predicated on meticulous readings of the texts under consideration rather than examining them by reference to external criteria; he proceeds via a strict, albeit provisional, adherence to the concepts and logic of a host text to evacuate what the text excludes (historically and conceptually) in order to constitute itself. That, in a nutshell, is what is called ‘deconstruction.’” In order to understand Derrida’s interpretation of Nietzsche’s philosophy, we must first identify the fundamental ways in which Derrida interprets all texts.

Simply put, Derrida contends that there is no single way of interpreting a text. Indeed, he suggests that it is an impossible task to etch out a single reading of any text due to the very nature of the ambiguity of texts themselves. This is also the case with Derrida’s reading of Nietzsche. Derrida takes this very same approach when he examines Nietzsche’s philosophy in *Eperons: Les Styles de Nietzsche* (Spurs: Nietzsche’s Styles). Originally planned to have the title (in translation) “On the Question of Style,” *Spurs: Nietzsche’s Styles* sets out to “deconstruct” Nietzsche’s work by assessing whether the “style” of the text can be separated from its content. It is important to note that Derrida does not attempt to offer a precise account of Nietzsche’s philosophy; nor does he engage with the idiosyncratic readings of him regarding the will to power or the eternal return—Derrida claims that this is an impossible task. Instead, Derrida’s preoccupation with Nietzsche is to provide an alternative, transformative interpretation of Nietzsche in light if Nietzsche’s own notion of affirming the creation of new values. In *Spurs*, Derrida is more concerned with the question of “style” more generally, where he claims that it is indeed questionable that the style of a text can be separated from its content.

In order to assess Derrida’s interpretation of Nietzsche, we have to understand the three main elements found in Derrida’s textual analysis of Nietzsche (and others) that invariably form the “structure” of his interpretation of Nietzsche’s text(s). They are as follows: (1) Derrida’s connection between his “metaphysics of presence” and Nietzsche’s discussion of “antithetical values.” In order to understand Derrida’s

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interpretation of Nietzsche’s texts, we need to examine what Derrida means by a metaphysics of presence. I will also examine how and why this is the case. (2) Derrida’s implementation of Nietzsche’s “styles” in order to discuss the subject of “Woman” in relation to “Truth.” I will explain how and why Derrida claims that woman is the “untruth of Truth” in relation to his interpretation of Nietzsche. (3) Derrida’s analysis of the famous line in Nietzsche’s unpublished notes, “I forgot my umbrella.” Derrida makes this analysis in order to highlight the impossibility of rendering a singular interpretation of this quote—that the interpretation of the text is always to be renegotiated.

**The Metaphysics of Presence and Antithetical Values**

The first concept to consider is what Derrida calls the “metaphysics of presence.” Beginning with Aristotle, metaphysics can be characterised as being concerned with the search for the essential qualities in a thing, which exist in a world of perpetual change. Metaphysics deals with the first principles of things, which form the structure for experience and thought to take place. For example, if we look at a chair, there exists an ideal, perfect metaphysical chair that characterises our understanding of “chair.” Derrida claims that all Western thinking is structured by this inheritance of metaphysical thinking, and he claims that all metaphysical thinking also presupposes the notion of “presence.” For Derrida, presence serves to underline the prioritisation and presupposition Western thinking has for the “here” and “now.” He claims, however, that we cannot make such a presupposition. In other words, for Derrida, the belief in presence allows one to fall into the illusion that we can determine the essence of something if it is in the spatial-temporal dimension of here and now; he declares that we cannot determine that there “is” an essence of something at all. Thus, Derrida claims there is an inherent paradox involved in the use of the language of a “metaphysics of presence,” while at the same time exposing its impossibility by questioning the presumption that something is here and now. Nietzsche, too, claims the West must escape what he considers to be the metaphysical “faith in antithetical values.” On the one hand, Derrida contends in *Difference* (1982) that there is no single point (Reason, God) or presence that can
determine the immediate truth of something. On the other hand, Nietzsche claims that there is no world outside of the human where we could grasp absolute truth or meaning. For example, in *The Will to Power*, he claims that to seek for the “highest” value of something from the standpoint of the human is a false faith in antithetical values. Of metaphysicians, Nietzsche writes:

This mode of judgement constitutes the typical prejudice by which metaphysicians of all ages can be recognised; this mode of evaluation stands in the background of all logical procedures; it is on account of their ‘faith’ that they concern themselves with their ‘knowledge,’ with something that is at last solemnly baptized ‘the truth.’ The fundamental faith of metaphysicians is the faith in antithetical values.47

Here is where the notion of style comes into play. Derrida claims that where Nietzsche is criticising “antithetical values,” he does so with a style that summons a play of oppositional forces. Derrida calls this play of forces the will to power. If we take into consideration that Nietzsche himself understood the will to power as a perpetual play of forces, it sheds light on Derrida’s belief that Nietzsche’s texts themselves are never at rest, and so can never reveal a singular interpretation. It is the play of the forces of oppositions as Nietzsche “style” that inhibits any one reading of Nietzsche’s texts, according to Derrida. In other words, for Derrida, there is no unity that emerges from Nietzsche’s thinking, but only a style that reveals the play of forces of the will to power, which in turn cannot by its very nature be interpreted. Yet there is an inherent paradox involved in this “reading” of Nietzsche.

**Woman as the Untruth of Truth**

In *Spurs: Nietzsche’s Styles*, Derrida considers the notion of “Woman.” Simply put, Derrida equates the subject and object of Woman to the opposition between truth and untruth in Nietzsche’s texts. Derrida claims that Nietzsche’s texts contain the idea of

Woman as the elimination of truth and non-truth. Derrida claims that Woman “suspends the decidable opposition of the true and non-true.”

Presumably, Derrida gets hold of the idea of Woman from the preface to Nietzsche’s *Beyond Good and Evil*. In the opening lines to the book, Nietzsche famously writes: “Supposing Truth to be a Woman—What?” Nietzsche continues with “playfulness” in his opening remarks and claims that if all dogmatists and metaphysicians approach Woman in the same way they approach the “Truth,” they stand little chance in winning her over. Interestingly, before Derrida, no interpretation of Nietzsche had taken the subject of woman into account as a way of observing Nietzsche’s metaphor for truth and untruth as Woman. Indeed, there are three ways Derrida positions the subject/object of Woman as a way of examining Nietzsche’s texts: (1) Derrida claims that Nietzsche considers Woman to be similar to man, who believes undoubtedly in Truth. For Nietzsche and Derrida, if “Woman” believes in objective truth, then she also believes that she can present herself as “Woman,” as a thing-in-itself. Nietzsche and Derrida criticise this evaluation as there can be no validity to the claim of either truth or woman. (2) The second shape woman takes on is simulation. For Derrida’s Nietzsche, a woman pretends the truth in order to get what she wants. Woman may not believe in the truth, but nevertheless acts out the truth in order to acquire something. The Derridian Nietzsche’s response to this is that the woman simulates the truth to such an extent that she eliminates the possibility of acquiring the multiplicity of figures a Woman can take on. (3) The final assumption made about Woman is the elimination of the possibility of Truth, where Woman becomes the untruth of truth. In *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche famously writes: “Women are considered deep—why? Because one can never discover the depths of them. They are not even shallow.”

In *Spurs*, Derrida echoes Nietzsche’s notion of woman in the following statement. He writes:

> There is no such thing as the essence of woman because woman averts, she is averted to herself. Out of these depth, endless and unfathomable,

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50 Ibid., 103.
she engulfs and distorts all vestige of essentiality, of identity, of property. And the philosophical discourse, blinded, founders on the shoals and is hurled down these depths to its ruin. There is no such thing as the truth of woman, but it is because of that abyssal divergence of the truth, because that untruth is “truth.” Woman is but one name for the untruth of truth.\(^{51}\)

Here, the notion of Woman as the untruth of truth is a fundamental way in which Derrida interprets Nietzsche’s texts as either uninterpretable, or interpreted in an infinite number of ways. It is only through the examination of the “style” and “playfulness” of the text that we might uncover a new way(s) of reading Nietzsche’s texts.

“I Forgot My Umbrella”

For Derrida, there is no separation between Nietzsche’s (or any author’s) work from his or her life, no way of differentiating between the text and the outside of the text. Conspicuously wedged between two lengthy aphorisms in his unpublished notebooks, Nietzsche writes the words “I forgot my umbrella” with the quotation marks surrounding it. Derrida sets out to assess whether or not we can ever find a way to understand what Nietzsche means by this statement. Derrida claims that the decision to leave the quotation marks around the statement makes it impossible for a reader to determine any meaning in it. For Derrida, “I forgot my umbrella” is a phrase that cannot be interpreted. However, what remains important for Derrida is not that the phrase cannot be deciphered and given validity, but rather that Derrida always returns to playfulness in the undecidability about the meaning of any text. By analysing “I forgot my umbrella,” Derrida exposes the myth that there is a particular, a right, way to read and interpret a text. In short, Derrida is the first of Nietzsche’s major interpreters to claim that it is impossible to fathom a right way to examine an author, precisely because, following Nietzsche, Derrida claims that there is no metaphysical ground on which one has the ability to assess a text that can be

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\(^{51}\) Derrida, *Spurs*, 51.
separated from the life of the author, the inside and outside worlds, or the “style” of a text.

In conclusion, Derrida’s reading both relies heavily on Nietzsche’s ideas and is an adaptation and transformation of his ideas; precisely because Derrida claims the text is always undecided. Although Derrida examines different “styles” as a way of examining the “untruth of truth,” his notion of a metaphysics of presence separates him from Nietzsche’s thought. Nevertheless, what Derrida takes most from the spirit of Nietzsche’s writing is the idea of the creation of new values. Derrida takes Nietzsche’s work and does indeed transform and reinterpret it. This now brings us to another esteemed French interpreter of Nietzsche’s work, Michel Foucault.

**Foucault: Nietzsche as Genealogist**

Michel Foucault is greatly indebted to Nietzsche’s genealogical interpretation of the history of morals. Indeed, Foucault’s analysis of truth, power, and subjectivity is greatly influenced by Nietzsche’s thinking, particularly the book *The Genealogy of Morals*. In direct opposition to most interpretations of Nietzsche, Foucault’s interest in Nietzsche is directed at neither the will to power nor the eternal recurrence. Rather, Foucault concentrates his efforts on Nietzsche’s genealogical account of the history of morals. What interests Foucault about a genealogical analysis of history is the rejection of “origins” in favour of a genealogical account of history, which appears to deny singular origins. In other words, Foucault etches out from Nietzsche’s *The Genealogy of Morals* a way of interpreting the history of “things” so as to account for the multiplicity and duplicity of the emergence of phenomena rather than their metaphysical origin. In this section I will briefly examine Foucault’s essay “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,” where he interprets Nietzsche as the thinker of the genealogical method; that is, Nietzsche, as a genealogist, provides an alternative way of examining history by assessing the relationship between truth, power, and subjectivity, instead of seeking what Foucault thinks to be false origins.
Genealogy

What is genealogy? Why does Foucault, contrary to all obvious evidence, insist Nietzsche is not only a genealogist, but one opposed to origins? In the opening lines of “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,” Foucault claims that genealogy is “gray, meticulous, and patiently documentary. It operates on a field of entangled and confused parchments, on documents that have been scratched over and recopied many times.”\(^5^2\) Foucault claims that interpreting history from a Nietzschean, genealogical perspective has an advantage over what he calls a “historian’s history,” which is too reliant on a “suprahistorical perspective.” In other words, Foucault charges the historian’s history with attempting to interpret history within a linear historical narrative. Instead of seeking metaphysical origins, Foucault suggests we implement Nietzsche’s understanding of history—that there exist no singular origins, but many tributaries, to account for the developments throughout history. Foucault writes: “genealogy retrieves an indispensable restraint: it must record the singularity of events outside of any monotonous finality; it must seek them in the most unpromising places, in what we tend to feel is without history.”\(^5^3\) For Foucault, Nietzsche is a philosopher who denies the singular origin of things, but who is in favour of examining the multiplicity of forces that account for the “emergence” of things in history.

In the opening lines to “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,” Foucault claims the history of morality, which Nietzsche is preoccupied with in *The Genealogy of Morals*, cannot be traced in terms of a linear development, from origin to finality. He declares that by searching for a linear development of the history of morality merely masquerades in the service of utility. Foucault points out the German scholar, Paul Rée, a friend of Nietzsche’s, who Nietzsche attacks in the preface to *The Genealogy of Morals*, had made this fatal error. Foucault writes: “He [Rée] assumed that words


\(^5^3\) Ibid., 76.
had kept their meaning, that desires still pointed in a single direction, and that ideas retained their logic; and he ignored the fact that the world of speech and desires has known invasions, struggles, plundering, disguises, and ploys." In contradistinction to Rée’s understanding that morality has an origin, Foucault prefers Nietzsche’s genealogical interpretation of history. He writes:

[G]enealogy retrieves an indispensable restraint: it must record the singularity of events outside of any monotonous finality; it must seek them in the most unpromising places, in what we tend to feel is without history—in sentiments, love, conscience, instincts; it must be sensitive to their recurrence, not in order to trace the gradual curve of their evolution, but to isolate the different scenes where they engaged in different roles. Finally, genealogy must define even those instances when they are absent, the moment when they remained unrealized.

What is Foucault’s justification for implementing what he considers to be an analysis of history without origins, however? Foucault claims that Nietzsche’s genealogy is not in opposition to history as such. Rather, Nietzsche’s genealogy is in direct opposition to the “mole-like perspective of the scholar.” In other words, Nietzsche’s genealogy “rejects the metahistorical deployment of ideal significations and indefinite teleologies. It opposes the search for ‘origins.’” Foucault insists that a Nietzschean genealogy of history searches for the microcosmic elements that contribute to the “descent” and “emergence” of things in relation to each other. What is the difference between Nietzsche’s use of the words “descent,” “emergence,” and “origin,” however?

Foucault claims that Nietzsche’s resistance to the origins of “things” rests on the separation between the words Herkunft (descent) and Ursprung. According to Foucault, the genealogist must refuse to “extend his faith in metaphysics” of the

54 Ibid.
55 Ibid.
56 Ibid., 77.
57 Ibid.
“timeless and essential secret,” “the essence” of human origins.\textsuperscript{58} Rather, Foucault insists that things have “no essence,” that “their essence was fabricated in a piecemeal fashion from alien forms.”\textsuperscript{59} Essentially, Foucault deploys Nietzsche’s genealogical interpretation of history as a reaction to teleological readings of history. Finally, Foucault suggests that “what is found at the historical beginning of things is not the inviolable identity of their origins; it is the dissension of other things. It is disparity.”\textsuperscript{60} Indeed, Foucault’s interpretation of Nietzsche as opposing “the search for origins” directly relates to the way in which he considers Nietzsche’s different uses of the word \textit{Ursprung} (origin). We will examine this in detail at present. Foucault writes:

In Nietzsche, we find two uses of the word \textit{Ursprung}. The first is unstressed, and it is found alternately with other terms such as \textit{Entstehung, Herkunft, Abkunft, Geburt}. In \textit{The Genealogy of Morals}, for example, \textit{Entstehung} or \textit{Ursprung} serves equally well to denote the origin of duty or guilty conscience; and in the discussion of logic and knowledge in \textit{The Gay Science}, their origin is indiscriminately referred to as \textit{Ursprung}, \textit{Entstehung}, or \textit{Herkunft}.

Foucault insists that Nietzsche uses the word \textit{Ursprung} mostly in an ironic fashion, connoting his suspicion of the search for the “miraculous” metaphysical origin of morality, religion, or the human. Nevertheless, Foucault points out that Nietzsche uses the word \textit{Ursprung} from \textit{Human, All too Human} onwards until he abruptly shifts his emphasis of the impossibility of origins by instead interchanging \textit{Ursprung} with \textit{Herkunft} (descent) or \textit{Entstehung} (emergence) in order to “challenge the pursuit of the origin.”\textsuperscript{61} Why is this the case? Foucault insists that Nietzsche considers the attempt to grasp “origins” is destined to failure. He writes:

\textsuperscript{58} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{59} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{60} Ibid., 79.
\textsuperscript{61} Ibid.
First, because it is an attempt to capture the exact essence of things, their purest possibilities, and their carefully protected identities; because this search assumes the existence of immobile forms that precede the external world of accident and succession. This search is directed to “that which was already there,” the image of a primordial truth fully adequate to its nature, and it necessitates the removal of every mask to ultimately disclose an original identity. However, if the genealogist refuses to extend his faith in metaphysics, if he listens to history, he finds that there is “something altogether different” behind things: not a timeless and essential secret, but the secret that they have no essence or that their essence was fabricated in a piecemeal fashion from alien forms.\(^{62}\)

According to Foucault, instead of seeking the “inviolable identity” of an origin, we must accept that where we seek origins, there is only “disparity.” Instead of seeking fabricated original identities, Foucault asks us to accept that the non-origins of history are a “profusion of entangled events.” The false belief in origins, according to Foucault, is a result of “a metaphysical extension, which arises from the belief that things are most precious and essential at the moment of birth.”\(^{63}\) Foucault’s justification in favouring a genealogical analysis of history, as opposed to seeking origins, lies precisely in the thinking that a genealogical analysis of “values, morality, asceticism, and knowledge” will never confuse itself with the false premise that they have an inviolable origin.

In the third section of Foucault’s essay, he devotes his attention to Nietzsche’s use of the words *Entstehung* and *Herkunft*, which he claims are more exact terms than *Ursprung* for the objective of genealogy. The German word *Herkunft* equates to the English “descent,” which is to do with being affiliated to a group bound by blood, culture, ritual, and class. For Foucault, an analysis of descent requires us to seek the subtlest, “subindividual marks” that “form a network that is difficult to unravel.”\(^{64}\) In this form of analysis, as opposed to seeking origins, Foucault claims history opens up

\(^{62}\) Ibid., 78.
\(^{63}\) Ibid., 79.
\(^{64}\) Ibid., 81.
to “numberless beginnings.” In analysing descent, one can dispense with the concrete “self” and recognise a “profusion of lost events.” Most importantly, descent is inextricably linked to the body. By looking at the body through descent, it allows for the analysis of errors of the body—pertaining to digestion, temperament, and respiratory failures—or of accomplishments of ancestral groups. These “errors” continue on into the future, in which further errors are manifested.

The German word Entstehung equates to the English word “emergence”; this is not to be confused with emergence as in a singular origin. Rather, an analysis of emergence pertains to the reestablishment of “the hazardous play of dominations.” Foucault claims that Entstehung deals with interactions and struggles of forces that are constantly attempting domination over each other. Ultimately, emergence is “the entry of forces” that designates “a place of confrontation.” For Foucault, no single origin is responsible for the emergence of historical phenomena. Rather, it is the interplay of an infinite number of forces and power relations.

Foucault’s main preoccupation with an interpretation of Nietzsche clearly deals with ways of interpretation. He declares that there is no origin or “suprahistorical” perspective to view historical phenomena. On the contrary, Nietzsche’s genealogical analysis, for Foucault, opens up the horizons of the perpetual interplay of dominant and reactive forces. Furthermore, if there is no metaphysical, singular origin to be found in history, there can be no singular, historical “meaning” to be found. Rather, Foucault suggests that the “origin” of things is the perpetual play of forces where there is no distinct unity to be found.

Finally, Foucault claims that Nietzsche’s “historical sense” is in direct opposition to the “Platonic,” metaphysical search for origins in three distinct ways: (1) in Nietzsche’s use of parody, which opposes history as being something to be recognised or real; (2) in Nietzsche’s attempt to dissociate himself, where he is opposed to identity, continuity, or representation; and (3) in Nietzsche’s emphasis on

65 Ibid.
66 Ibid., 83.
67 Ibid., 84.
sacrifice, where he is opposed to any recognition of “truth” or knowledge to be found in history. Foucault writes: “the veneration of monuments becomes parody; the respect for ancient continuities becomes systematic dissociation; the critique of the injustices of the past by a truth held by men in the present becomes the destruction of the man who maintains knowledge by the injustice proper to the will to knowledge.”

As we have seen, Foucault’s interpretation of Nietzsche in “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History” is one that clearly focuses on exposing the false premise of metaphysical origins, in favour of a “gray, meticulous, and patiently documentary” analysis of history. This is what he calls a genealogical interpretation of history. Foucault’s interpretation of Nietzsche as genealogist allows Foucault the insight to expand the concept of “genealogy” as a way of tracing power relations (forces) that have existed in history. Instead of searching for the linear history of human characteristics, Foucault claims we must follow Nietzsche’s and look for that which is precisely not there.

**Deleuze’s Interpretation of Nietzsche: The Triumph of Reactive Forces over the Active, and the Overcoming of Nihilism**

This section’s aim is elucidate the work of Gilles Deleuze’s *Nietzsche and Philosophy*. Deleuze’s book is a work many commentators have considered to be the most idiosyncratic interpretation of Nietzsche’s philosophy: Deleuze takes into account what he considers to be Nietzsche’s main themes of the “will to power” and the “eternal recurrence,” and he positions them as part of a coherent philosophical system. In the opening pages of *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, Deleuze tells us how we should *not* interpret Nietzsche. He writes:

> As long as the reader persists in: (1) seeing the Nietzschean “slave” as someone who finds himself dominated by a master, and deserves to be;

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68 Ibid., 97.
(2) understanding the will to power as a will which wants and seeks power; (3) conceiving the eternal return as the tedious return of the same; (4) imagining the Overman as a given master race—no positive relationship between Nietzsche and his reader will be possible. Nietzsche will appear a nihilist, or worse, a fascist and at best as an obscure and terrifying prophet.\textsuperscript{69}

The above passage illustrates Deleuze’s interpretation of Nietzsche in a number of ways, precisely because he explicates how we should decidedly not read Nietzsche. Deleuze points out that it is a mistake to reduce Nietzsche’s thought to the level of a single reading. How does Deleuze interpret Nietzsche, then? In the opening lines to \textit{Nietzsche and Philosophy}, Deleuze tells us precisely the goal of his book. He writes: “This book sets out, primarily, to analyse what Nietzsche calls becoming.”\textsuperscript{70}

Much akin to Heidegger and Löwith, Deleuze figures Nietzsche as a seminal, indispensable thinker in Western thought, alongside Plato, Kant, and Aristotle. In many respects, Deleuze follows Löwith in emphasising Nietzsche’s key concepts of will to power and eternal return. For Deleuze, these key ideas are indispensable in his reading of Nietzsche. For Deleuze, too, Nietzsche was the first to define nihilism as the triumph of the reactive forces of resentment and bad conscience as a negative will to power, over the active forces inherent in becoming. Through the Overman as a positive force, argues Deleuze, \textit{ressentiment} and bad conscience—nihilism—is overcome through total affirmation of the transience of life. In this section I will examine several key themes in \textit{Nietzsche and Philosophy} that comprise the main thrust of Deleuze’s interpretation of Nietzsche. They are as follows: (1) the notion that Deleuze considers Nietzsche’s philosophy as a \textit{critical} metaphysics in opposition to Kant’s \textit{critique} of metaphysics, (2) Deleuze’s notion of the genetic conditions of reality, (3) the idea of active and reactive forces in relation to the will to power, and (4) Deleuze’s notion of the eternal return of difference.

\textsuperscript{70} Ibid.
Nietzsche as the Inversion of Kant and of the Genetic Conditions of Reality

Here, I will examine what Deleuze means when he considers Nietzsche’s philosophy to be a critical metaphysics as opposed to a critique of metaphysics. To begin, Deleuze places Nietzsche’s philosophy within the tradition beginning with Kant. Instead of Deleuze replacing Kant with Nietzsche, he considers Nietzsche’s philosophy to be the completion of the Kantian tradition. Deleuze writes: “Nietzsche thinks that the idea of critique is identical to that of philosophy but that this is precisely the idea that Kant had missed, that he has compromised and spoilt, not only in application but in principle.” How does Nietzsche complete Kant’s project, however?

Deleuze tells us Nietzsche completes the Kantian project—whose goal is to uncover the nature and role of reasons—in a number of ways. The first is that Nietzsche questions values themselves. Deleuze writes: “One of the principal motifs of Nietzsche’s work is that Kant had not carried out a true critique because he was not able to pose the problem of a critique in terms of values.” In other words, Deleuze claims that Kant makes the mistake of thinking that all subjects are identical in their social and historical spheres. Kant might ask: How can we know that we know something? Nietzsche, on the other hand, would ask not only what the value of truth is, but also, why would anyone want the truth at all. Deleuze claims Nietzsche’s critical metaphysics of the question of the value of truth is not the Kantian debate about truth and falsity. Rather, Deleuze claims Nietzsche’s questioning of the value of truth reveals the “genetic” conditions of all reality. These genetic conditions of reality are simply the multitude of forces that constitute the will to power. On the one hand, Deleuze considers Nietzsche’s will to power to be a critical metaphysics of positivity and creativity. On the other, Deleuze considers Kant’s critique of metaphysics to be negative. Deleuze thinks this for two reasons.

71 Ibid., 88.
72 Ibid., 1.
The first is that Deleuze believes Kant’s critique of metaphysics relies on the thought that knowledge itself is valuable and is the true aim of thinking. Deleuze, on the other hand, claims that—following Foucault—Nietzsche’s genealogical analysis reveals that knowledge is only valuable according to social and historical contexts. The second reason, according to Deleuze, relates to Kant’s considering individual experiences and conditions to be universal, which Deleuze claims Nietzsche rejects. Ultimately, Deleuze asserts that Nietzsche’s philosophy is the inversion of Kant’s critique of metaphysical thought and the implementation of the will to power as a way of revealing the historically and culturally specific “genetic” conditions that allow for the construction of human reality.

**Active, Reactive, and the Will to Power**

What is the will to power for Deleuze? According to Deleuze, the will to power is both a transcendental and an ontological concept; it is that which constitutes the actual conditions of reality. In other words, the will to power is not something that resides in the human mind; rather, it is something that can be used to understand the origin of historical and cultural phenomena. The chapter entitled “Active and Reactive” in *Nietzsche and Philosophy* engages with what Deleuze considers to be Nietzsche’s understanding of the will to power as an explanation of all reality (or of nature). Deleuze describes what Nietzsche writes in *The Will to Power*, in the following way: “all reality is already quantity of force. What exists is nothing but quantities of force in mutual relations of tension.”\(^{73}\) Yet, the perpetual engagement of forces, Deleuze asserts, is an engagement of unequal forces. He writes: “to dream of two equal forces, even if they are said to be of opposite senses is a coarse and approximate dream, a statistical dream.”\(^{74}\) Consequently, these unequal forces, which constitute the will to power, are either active or reactive forces. For Deleuze, the active forces are the dominant forces, while the reactive forces are those that are dominated. Idiosyncratically, Deleuze declares that Nietzsche considers the reactive forces of life to have dominated the active forces. He claims this by asserting that

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\(^{73}\) Ibid., 40.  
\(^{74}\) Ibid., 43.
active forces have no immunity to the disease of reactive forces, which is a state of affairs that is the precursor to ressentiment, the revenge against life. For example, Deleuze writes: “inferior forces can prevail without ceasing to be inferior in quantity and reactive in quality, without ceasing to be slaves in this sense. One of the finest remarks in The Will to Power is: ‘The strong must be protected from the weak.’”

To complicate matters, Deleuze considers the fundamental characteristic of all forces to be essentially active. This brings us to Deleuze’s account of the notion of the will to power. Deleuze writes: “the will to power is a good principle … because it is an essentially plastic principle that is no wider than what it conditions, that changes itself with the conditioned and determines itself in each case along with what it determines.” In other words, the will to power, for Deleuze, is active or reactive, affirmative or negative, but, in the final analysis, the will to power is affirmative. Why is this the case? Deleuze would suggest that the only way that the will to power can manifest itself negatively is through a misrepresentation of it. This is what Nietzsche refers to as nihilism. Deleuze writes: “Nihil in ‘nihilism’ means negation as a quality of the will to power. Thus, in its primary and basic sense, nihilism signifies the value of nil taken on by life, the fiction of higher values which gives this value and the will to nothingness which is expressed in these higher values.” The nihilistic interpretation of the will to power, Deleuze claims, stems from reactive, slave morals that wish to transform the will to power into a nothingness. Instead of wishing for a nothing, Deleuze claims, one must accept the will to power as a game of chance. In other words, the multiplicity of active and reactive forces that constitute the will to power are to encounter each other purely by chance. In order to understand what Deleuze means by chance as the affirmation of the will to power, I will now discuss his reading of the eternal return of the same (difference).

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75 Deleuze describes the priest as an example of a reactive force, who, although the priest dominates the flock, the priest represents a reactive force to life.
76 Ibid., 58.
77 Ibid., 50.
78 Ibid., 147.
Eternal Return of Difference

I will now discuss the last major theme found in Deleuze’s interpretation of Nietzsche; that is, an interpretation of Nietzsche’s eternal return as an eternal return of difference. What does Deleuze mean by this? At first, Deleuze equates the eternal recurrence of the same with the affirmation of chance. If the active and reactive, dominant and dominated forces encounter each other only by chance, then the eternal return is the affirmation of these chance encounters, according to Deleuze. Beyond his claim about chance, Deleuze considers the eternal return to be an affirmation of difference and change. According to Deleuze, each active and reactive force that meet by chance manifest change. Yet the changes only ever occur through chance. This is why Deleuze considers the eternal return to be one of difference. To put things more simply, Deleuze considers the nature of all reality to be the chance encounters of forces that create change, and these changes are themselves pure chance. In other words, for Deleuze, nothing in nature can stay the same. Everything is subject to change through chance encounters, which in turn create more change. For Deleuze’s Nietzsche, everything is in a perpetual state of becoming another thing, something else, something different. Deleuze’s equation of the eternal return of difference relies on the basis that there is no underlying, fundamental reality beyond the chance of forces encountering each other.

In *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, it is frequently difficult to ascertain whether Deleuze is attempting to present Nietzsche’s own views, a thoroughly Deleuzian Nietzsche, or some combination of both. In the preface to the English translation of *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, Deleuze claims that his interpretation of Nietzsche deals with the Nietzschean use of the concepts (forces), “active” and “reactive.” Deleuze writes: “Nietzsche was responsible for creating a whole typology to distinguish active, acted and reactive forces and to analyse their varying combinations … this book attempts to define and analyse their varying combinations.”79 The book does exactly what Deleuze describes in the above quote. Ultimately, Deleuze contends that the reactive force, *ressentiment*, has “triumphed” over humanity; this is also representative of

79 Ibid., x.
present-day “slave-morality.” Conversely, the active forces of the will to power come to light only when we view reality as a becoming through the affirmation of “eternal return.” To affirm becoming is to affirm the active, creative forces in opposition to the well-established reactive forces that have gradually held over humanity. Finally, the most important aspect to take from Deleuze’s Nietzsche is “to think, to cast the dice …: this was already the sense of the eternal return.”

Klossowski’s Nietzsche: Valetudinary States and the Vicious Circle

Pierre Klossowski’s *Nietzsche and the Vicious Circle*, in terms of its reception, is comparable to Heidegger’s two-volume *Nietzsche*, or Deleuze’s *Nietzsche and Philosophy*; it is one of the most widely cited interpretations of Nietzsche. Indeed, many have claimed Klossowski’s text to be the most extraordinary interpretation ever of Nietzsche. In the book, Klossowski offers a highly curious approach in finding an intimate connection between Nietzsche’s work, his fluctuating health, and the centrality of his experience of the eternal recurrence of the same. Indeed, the innovation of this study of Nietzsche lies in an examination of Nietzsche’s experience at Sils-Maria, where Klossowski provides a new interpretation of the event. Klossowski’s strategy for interpreting Nietzsche and others, he would later write, is “devoted not to ideologies but to the physiognomies of problematic thinkers who differ greatly from one another.” How does Klossowski interpret Nietzsche as the thinker who lived the thought of the eternal recurrence? What does a live experience of eternal return entail, however? Klossowski introduces *Nietzsche and the Vicious Circle* by questioning the possibility of understanding Nietzsche’s thought without taking into consideration the many interpretations that had come after Nietzsche’s death. Klossowski writes: “How can we speak solely of

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80 Ibid.
81 Ibid.
82 In an early review of the work, Foucault writes that *Nietzsche and the Vicious Circle* is the “greatest philosophy book I have ever read, next to Nietzsche.”
83 Now considered a pseudoscience, physiognomy is the examination of a person’s outer appearance—particularly the face—in order to judge the person’s character traits and personality.
‘Nietzsche’s thought’ without taking into account everything that has subsequently been said about it?\textsuperscript{85} Klossowski’s remark is true of Nietzsche and the Vicious Circle. There is no doubt that his interpretation of Nietzsche is the most unidiosyncratic reading of Nietzsche, precisely because Klossowski deals with not only the central concepts to be found in Nietzsche’s work, but the character of Nietzsche, the personality of Nietzsche—in short, Nietzsche’s physiognomy.

In order to situate Klossowski in the history of Nietzsche interpretation, I will examine key themes of the seminal work Nietzsche and the Vicious Circle. They are as follows: (1) Klossowski’s idea that Nietzsche’s philosophy is intrinsically related to bodily impulses; (2) the eternal return as a vicious circle; (3) Nietzsche’s combat against culture. These three key themes will provide a general overview of Klossowski’s interpretation of Nietzsche.

**Valetudinary States and Semiotics**

The second chapter in Nietzsche and the Vicious Circle, entitled “The Valetudinary States at the Origin of a Semiotic of Impulses,” provides the most concise overview of Klossowski’s main themes in his interpretation of Nietzsche. In order to understand Klossowski’s interpretation of Nietzsche, however, it is important to break down the title itself. This, in turn, will enable us to understand why Klossowski considers Nietzsche entire philosophy to be thoughts arising out of the impulses of the body. A “valetudinary state,” according to Klossowski, is simply the states of sickness or health in the human body. What Klossowski means by a “semiotic of impulses” is the way in which he considers Nietzsche’s thoughts to have their origin in the body, but are ultimately distortions once they reach consciousness. Of course, the way we can understand these impulses requires a “semiotic” in order to correctly interpret the signs, allowing us to trace the thoughts back to bodily impulses. Klossowski argues that Nietzsche implemented this semiotic of the body as a kind of experiment. Indeed, Klossowski argues that Nietzsche was the first to

\textsuperscript{85} Ibid., xiii.
introduce the importance of the body into philosophy—as opposed to Plato or Descartes, who according to Klossowski and Nietzsche, attempted to subjugate the body. Nietzsche asks: “Can one go more dangerously wrong than by despising the body?”

It is well documented by Nietzsche and his commentators that he was a very ill man. Klossowski is the first interpreter of Nietzsche who considers Nietzsche’s sickness to be the hermeneutic key towards understanding his philosophy. Klossowski argues that Nietzsche’s illness provided him with access to what Klossowski calls a lucid delirium. A lucid delirium, according to Klossowski, is an acute awareness of the impulses of the body, manufactured when the mind is overwhelmed. Indeed, Klossowski claims Nietzsche integrated his lucid delirium into his philosophy, using it to explore the dimensions of the body.

Nietzsche’s use of the terms “drives,” “affect,” and “instincts” is ubiquitous in his oeuvre. Klossowski examines these terms and provides his own term, “impulses,” as an umbrella term for each of Nietzsche’s. In doing so, Klossowski claims that one of Nietzsche’s main themes, the will to power, is made up of the ebb and flow of the impulses of the body in constant relation to each other. Beyond Klossowski’s claiming Nietzsche integrated his lucid delirium into a philosophy by monitoring the impulses of his body, Klossowski further asserts that Nietzsche attempts to revalue the body by raising the status of the body above consciousness. Klossowski claims Nietzsche does this by considering consciousness as a natural element or instinct found within the body. Furthermore, Nietzsche claims consciousness is the latest and, therefore, most underdeveloped, part of the human animal that is subject to error.

Here is where Klossowski’s main idea arises. Not only does conscious thought originate in isolated bodily impulses at war with each other, but conscious thought also makes false these undifferentiated impulses through a misinterpretation. Yet why are the conscious interpretations of the body false? Klossowski claims that each

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86 Ibid., 244.
87 For example, Nietzsche in Beyond Good and Evil compares the impulses of the body with the forces that compose all reality.
individual impulse, in isolation, is entirely meaningless. Meaning can be found only in the relation of two or more impulses, perpetually exerting domination or acquiescing to dominance without end. Ultimately, Klossowski positions Nietzsche as the philosopher who tried to develop a philosophy that was good for the body. Although there is no adequate interpretation of the impulses of the body, there is a way of finding authenticity of these impulses in a collective by adhering to their becoming, as opposed to their being. This now brings us to Klossowski’s notion of the eternal return as a vicious circle.

**Eternal Return as a Vicious Circle**

According to Klossowski, who considers the eternal recurrence of the same to be the fundamental element in Nietzsche’s work, the eternal recurrence of the same cannot be “understood”; rather, the eternal return is only ever to be experienced by Nietzsche alone. It is the bodily experience of eternal return, according to Klossowski, that allows Nietzsche to consider the body a unity. Why does Klossowski consider the eternal return to be a vicious circle, however? He claims the eternal return is a vicious circle precisely because it is a profound paradox and radically destructive. Klossowski claims this is so for three reasons: (1) eternal return interprets reality in a way that disrupts the continuity of reality itself, (2) eternal return is a doctrine that questions its own status as something intelligible, and (3) eternal return is an experience to be experienced only by Nietzsche and that at the same time questions the reality of an experiencer and experience itself.

According to Klossowski, eternal return can be defined as a willing of every instant and an affirming of each instant as necessary to existence. In this way, Klossowski claims Nietzsche’s eternal return is a response to *ressentiment*. Simply put, *ressentiment* is what Nietzsche considers to be the negation of life itself by willing for the otherworldly and not for this world. The willing of every instant of life, to affirm it, is what Nietzsche refers to as the goalless goal of humanity. With the removal of linear time and meaning—the precursors to a goal for humanity—there is no longer a goal besides the eternal return of life itself. Yet, the paradox of eternal
return is that there exists an experience without an experiencer. So, how can eternal return be experienced? Klossowski never appears to resolve this paradox.

**The Combat against Culture: Conspiracy**

The last way in which Klossowski interprets Nietzsche is by looking at the political implications of Nietzsche’s thought. At the outset, Klossowski writes: “there can be no question, in Nietzsche’s thinking … of instituting a political regime in any traditional sense.” Rather, Klossowski turns to Nietzsche’s critique of culture and the notion of “conspiracy” (Ger.: *complot*). In Klossowski’s chapter “The Combat against Culture,” He claims Nietzsche considers two types of culture: a lived culture and a gregarious culture. Indeed, Klossowski asserts that Nietzsche considers Western morality to be based on a particular “gregariousness” that is to be critiqued through the lens of the ideas of the ancient, pre-Socratic world. The term “gregariousness” can be equated to Nietzsche’s notion of slave morality. Klossowski writes: “A lived culture, according to Nietzsche, can never have a gregarious foundation.” According to Nietzsche, this “gregarious” characteristic of morality is “the principle ‘metaphysical virus’ of thought and science.” In opposition to the gregariousness of culture, Klossowski argues that Nietzsche favours a particular political model based on a lived culture, which is characterised by a master morality, inequality, and one of exceptional individuals in order to experiment with the human body ultimately in the service of producing the *Übermenschen* (Overman). Not only does Nietzsche criticise contemporary culture for its gregariousness, he also criticises both the capitalist system and science as being in service to the slave morality of a gregarious culture, infected with Judaeo-Christian values. Indeed, Klossowski claims Nietzsche’s understanding of science and industrial capitalism to be a kind of “super gregariousness” that will ultimately level out humanity to averageness, eliminating exceptional individuals. Klossowski writes:

89 Klossowski, *Nietzsche and the Vicious Circle*, 34.
90 Ibid., 6.
91 Ibid.
92 Ibid., 130.
mankind will be able to find its best meaning as a machine in the service of this economy—as a tremendous clockwork, composed of ever smaller, ever more subtly “adapter” gears; as an ever growing superfluity of all dominating and commanding elements; as a whole of tremendous force, whose individual factors represent minimal forces, minimal values.  

Clearly, then, Nietzsche vehemently attacks contemporary economic and political structures that impose this levelling out of the human animal. What is Nietzsche’s solution to science and capitalism? How does he combat the gregariousness of contemporary culture? Where does the notion of conspiracy come into play in Nietzsche’s philosophy, however? Klossowski claims that the levelling effect of a Christian-based science and capitalist system is a kind of “external conspiracy.” In order to combat a conspiracy, Klossowski asserts, Nietzsche implements his own counter-conspiracy of the vicious circle. Klossowski claims that Nietzsche proposes the eternal return is in direct opposition to gregariousness. Indeed, to implement the principle of eternal return would bring about Übermenschen, as opposed to the levelling out of humanity. According to Klossowski, the affirmation of eternal return leads to a kind of experimentation with the human. The political dimension of eternal return, according to Klossowski, is the separation between those who understand the implications of eternal return and those who aim for the averaging out of societies. In other words, the eternal return is for the strong; the “supergregariousness” of science and capitalism is for the weak. Nevertheless, Klossowski thinks Nietzsche considers the eternal return to be a transitional stage in the development of societies, one that will be fully understood only when the Übermenschen emerge. Needless to say, this thinking had hitherto unimaginable consequences in the twentieth century.

Klossowski’s Nietzsche: “Destined” for Madness

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93 Ibid., 123.
94 Of course, this thinking had hitherto unimaginable consequences in the twentieth century, when some tried to realise the Übermenschen as a reality through a pan-Germanic, “Aryan” eugenics program.
What is one to make of Klossowski’s Nietzsche, then? In Klossowski’s final chapter, “The Euphoria of Turin,” he sums up his position on Nietzsche by inferring that Nietzsche’s descent into madness was the ultimate conclusion to and consequence of his “extreme lucidity.” Klossowski claims that the only way Nietzsche could complete the circle of eternal return was to destroy “the organ which had disclosed it: namely—Nietzsche’s brain.” According to Klossowski, if the eternal return is incommunicable and unthinkable by its very nature, then the only way to think the eternal return is to un-think it. The only way to un-think the eternal return, according to Klossowski, was for Nietzsche to willingly, consciously go mad. This very unthinking of the eternal return, argues Klossowski, was Nietzsche’s “destiny” to land into mad muteness. Klossowski’s reading of Nietzsche ultimately emphasises the “experience of eternal return” as a process of self-dissolution, disregarding entirely Löwith’s argument of the cosmological element of eternal return. For Klossowski, every part of Nietzsche’s thinking revolves around the experience of eternal return at Sils-Maria. Whereas Löwith declares that Nietzsche could no longer bear the weight of the supposed contradiction between the cosmological and anthropological interpretations of the eternal return, Klossowski claims that the mad “muteness” brought on at Turin was the necessary, final conclusion to Nietzsche’s life and thought as the only way of un-thinking the eternal return.

Against Origins: Foucault, Derrida, Deleuze

Even a brief survey of the major interpretations of Nietzsche’s thought highlights the considerable variation that exists between them. Such a paradoxical and divergent historical reception of Nietzsche is indicative of his wide-ranging thoughts. As we will see, the philosopher, René Girard, whose I will consider in a subsequent chapter, claims Nietzsche’s legacy remains tied to his twentieth-century interpreters: Heidegger, Foucault, Derrida, and Deleuze. Of course, the twentieth century has witnessed Nietzsche as: the Heideggerian Nietzsche, who characterises beings as the will to power; the Deleuzian Nietzsche, the creator of new values through the

95 Ibid., 169, emphasis in the original.
affirmation of eternal return; the Foucauldian Nietzsche, who is the father of genealogical analyses, interpretation, and power relations; the Derridian Nietzsche, who claims that truth, language, as well as Nietzsche’s texts, are as elusive as “woman,” from which it is an ultimately pointless exercise to attempt to extract a final meaning; the Löwithian Nietzsche, who is the coherent systematic philosopher of the single idea of eternal return; and the Klossowskian Nietzsche, whose thought is irrevocably linked to his fluctuating valetudinary states. Yet what does this tell us about the main preoccupations of the interpretations of Nietzsche? Perhaps Nietzsche himself is to blame for such widely diverging readings. Of course, Nietzsche famously demands in Ecce Homo, “Have you understood me?”97

In Human, All Too Human, Nietzsche writes “Mankind loves to put the question of origin and beginnings out of minds: must one not be almost inhuman to feel in himself the opposite inclination?”98 Surely, then, Nietzsche is not aiming at disregarding human origins altogether, like his postmodern inheritors. Indeed, it is difficult not to observe that one of the shared characteristics concerning the theorists examined, what is consistent among all of the above Nietzsche interpretations, is the absolute dismissal of the question of human origins. It also remains difficult to examine what these thinkers have to say about human origins themselves. For some of these post-Nietzschean thinkers, such as Deleuze, Derrida, and Foucault, even their own work eschews the impossibility of origins, quite explicitly. Indeed, their thinking is a product of postmodern thinking, whose founder they claim to be Nietzsche himself. Lyotard characterises postmodern thinking as incredulous towards metanarratives. In other words, the wide consensus among twentieth-century philosophical thought is that language itself cannot convey meaning or objective truth outside of itself; therefore, its origin cannot be reached. Yet, even when twentieth-century thinkers postulate a theory of non-origins by rejecting metaphysical narratives, their very ideas of non-origins must, and do, require an origin. Nietzsche, I argue, understands this better than most of his interpreters, who claim that he is among them as the first postmodern thinker or the postmodern

thinker par excellence. All of the thinkers examined in this chapter concede, in one way or another, that they owe a tremendous intellectual debt to Nietzsche. All of their projects, however, are either decidedly unsure, or explicitly work towards a denial of origins, whether they be those of language or of the ethical.

As has been previously discussed, Foucault is explicit in his denial of origins. In “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,” Foucault’s genealogical reading of Nietzsche, for instance, entertains an originless emergence of “things” through a process of nigh-infinite bifurcations. Foucault claims that Nietzsche’s supposed intended meanings for the German words *Herkunft* and *Entstehung* emphasise a newfound suspicion of an *Ursprung*. Foucault emphasises that Nietzsche, in his later writings, replaces *Ursprung* with *Herkunft* (descent) and *Entstehung* (development) in order to emphasise the notion that there are “numberless beginnings” instead of a singular metaphysical origin.

Even if there are numberless beginnings, they must in fact begin, no matter how bereft of an original “essence,” as Foucault gestures. Yet despite being claimed as “Nietzsche’s closest successor,”99 Foucault fails to take into account Nietzsche’s explicit thinking about the origin of the human and of language, regardless of the semantic variations available for the German words related to origin, descent, and development. Conversely, Nietzsche consistently uses *Ursprung* in its semantic context regularly in the original German *Zur Genealogie der Moral*. Foucault’s focus is on clearly mapping out the impossibility of a metaphysical origin, precisely because metaphysical thinking relies on origins. Nietzsche, on the other hand, is explicitly attempting to situate the origin of language in non-metaphysical terms.

By the measure of the admission or denial of origins, the two modes of theoretical discourse can scarcely be reconciled. For Nietzsche, the metaphysical, the transcendent, have their origins in the origins of the human and of human language. For Foucault, a genealogical analysis aims to trace the non-origins, or the traceless bifurcations of events, that emerge into a history that form the subject. In typically

postmodern thinking, flying against the notion of origins, Foucault writes in “Nietzsche, Freud, Marx”: “There is nothing absolutely primary to interpret because, when all is said and done, underneath it all everything is already interpretation.” Yet, just because Nietzsche famously declares that there are no facts, only interpretations, does not equate to an outright dismissal of “originary” thinking on Nietzsche’s part. Foucault may be right in suggesting that a genealogical analysis of history “opposes itself to the search for origins,” but Nietzsche does indeed account for human origins quite specifically, maintaining his account of human origins throughout his intellectual life. This cannot be ignored. Although Foucault’s focus is primarily on the Genealogy of Morals, where Nietzsche develops a radically new form of historical analysis, nowhere in the text does Nietzsche discredit the idea that we cannot seek out human origins. For example, Nietzsche portends it is precisely the Foucauldian position of steering away from origins, not examining them, that is a mistake. Rather, Nietzsche declares that it is a fundamental anthropological insight when we think about human origins. In On the Genealogy of Morals, published nine years after Human, All Too Human, Nietzsche writes: “With regard to a moral genealogy this seems to me a fundamental insight; that it has been arrived at so late is the result of the retarding influence exercised by the democratic prejudice in the modern world towards all question of origin.” For Nietzsche, to peer into human origins, in his words, is a “fundamental insight” towards understanding the human.

Derrida, too, goes to great lengths to denounce the very idea of an origin. For example, the second half of Derrida’s Of Grammatology is primarily based on a reading of Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s essay on the origin of language. Through a literal reading of Rousseau’s essay, Derrida argues the nature of language is originless, by situating language in the metaphysical. What is of interest in Derrida’s thinking, in terms of his ideas about origins, is that he appears to conflate an origin with metaphysics, much like Foucault. Naturally, this is where his deconstruction

100 Foucault, Nietzsche, Freud, Marx, 22.
101 Ibid.
102 The original German text, Zur Genealogie der Moral, uses the word Ursprung.
begins, with a critique of metaphysical origins and not of material origins. He claims that the history of Western metaphysics has always attempted to uncover a foundation, a beginning, or what he coins a “presence.” For Derrida, the thought of origins represents the centre of the hierarchical structure of Western metaphysical thinking as a kind of Archimedean point. Of course, Derrida brings this assumption of an origin into question.

In *Of Grammatology*, Derrida claims that the problem of the origin of language, like Foucault, resides in the metaphysical. He claims that he has escaped the old arguments rooted in metaphysical error by a “hair’s breadth.” By examining Rousseau’s own metaphors and arguments in his “Essay on the Origin of Languages,” Derrida’s aim is to turn Rousseau’s own arguments against him. Yet, instead of following the traditional hierarchy of metaphysical opposites, Derrida’s aim is to remove the very system of oppositions that make such a metaphysical argument possible. Rousseau claims that language originates from primitive speech and song as a primitive cry. From this articulate, primitive cry emerges speech, where need ultimately transcends into desire. According to Rousseau, writing is a step removed from language. Here, Derrida begins his critique of Rousseau. He writes: “what emerges is the fact that language, once it passes beyond the stage of primitive cry, is ‘always already’ inhabited by writing, or by all those signs of an ‘articulate’ structure which Rousseau considers decadent.” What Derrida means by “writing” is the separation of the articulate cry into its various parts. For him, the origin of language is nothing but the variations of articulation that characterise language as it is performed or experienced. Derrida rejects Rousseau’s original self-present articulate cry as the point of origin. Instead of an original articulate “presence,” Derrida contends that there is an originless “difference,” of all forms of human communication, whether it is speech, writing, or thinking. For Derrida, instead of an originary event, or gradual emergence, there is a continuity of the perpetual construction of language. Moreover, we are unable to even speak of the origin. Rather, because we are not present for the origin, we can only ever know it through its traces; the origin can never be reached because we are too late. In *Originary Thinking*, Eric Gans too echoes this point. He writes: “If lateness is fundamental to the human condition, then no one can be present at the origin, and
lacking such presence, we cannot speak of an originary event at all. Hence Jacques Derrida argues that the origin at which we are not present can be known only through its traces; its status itself need not even be discussed.”

Conversely, in *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, Deleuze’s primary study of Nietzsche, there is no mention of Nietzsche’s ideas about human origins at all. Yet, in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Deleuze (and Guattari) attempt to negate the notion of origins by invoking the concept of the “rhizome.” For Deleuze and Guattari, the rhizome is the philosophical concept that “rather than [to] narrativiz[ing] history and culture, the rhizome presents history and culture as a map or wide array of attractions and influences with no specific origin or genesis, for a rhizome has no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, intermezzo. The planar movement of the rhizome resists chronology and organization, instead favouring a nomadic system of growth and propagation.”

Again, we have a philosophical system that refuses to engage even with the notion of an origin.

Yet an exposure of the “errors” of a metaphysical origin of language propagated by these thinkers is not necessarily an exposure of the material, actual origins, as Nietzsche and Gans have attempted to account for, however varied in their theories and conclusions. Nietzsche’s most influential interpreters, particularly from the French post-structuralist wave, all claim that Nietzsche somehow liberates modern philosophy by rejecting the possibility of origins through a radical break with metaphysics. Where is this evident? And, if it is evident, why are there no counterclaims? Such a blatant oversight, and reinterpretation of his work must be reconciled, however. These interpretations of Nietzsche might be charged with being more “Nietzschean” than Nietzsche by turning a blind eye to both the era and climate in which he was situated—nineteenth-century Europe—and to his frequent writings explicitly dealing with human origins. To claim that origins have their origins in non-origins, as these self-professed Nietzscheans have done, is not only a reductio ad

absurdum, but a great misfortune and misunderstanding in Nietzsche scholarship. Whether it be Derrida’s negation of the metaphysics of presence, Deleuze and Guattari’s rhizomatous map of reality, or Foucault’s infinite genealogical burrowing, these postmodern philosophical concepts strive to reduce the importance of human origins by deconstructing it to a non-originary event. Foucault, Derrida, and Deleuze all claim they owe some debt to Nietzsche for this strand of thinking. Yet perhaps there is a new way we can examine Nietzsche in light of the work he has produced on human origins.

A New Way to Read Nietzsche: the Work of Eric Gans

There is another way Nietzsche may be examined. Aside from Löwith, who methodically examines Nietzsche’s corpus from *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* onwards, the thinkers that have been examined in this chapter are charged with only peripherally engaging with Nietzsche’s oeuvre, ultimately in the service of their own, individual “postmodern” philosophical persuasions. These thinkers never seriously take into consideration Nietzsche’s writings on the origin of language and of the human. Yet Nietzsche deals specifically with matters concerning the origin of language (and of the human proper). In some instances, it is explicit; for example, we see it right from the outset, in Nietzsche’s early notes “On the Origin of Language,” “On Music and Words,” and in a work that concerns itself largely with the formation of metaphors, *On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense*. These works are arguably the foundation of what I deem to be Nietzsche’s anthropology of the instinct of language, of language as resentment. Indeed, Nietzsche’s notion of the instinct of language appears all the way up to his later works. Nietzsche’s idea of the instinct of language, I argue, directs much of his later work. His early work contains much speculation about origins, particularly the origin of language. In the history of criticism, however, we now know that this is rarely noted. Foucault, for instance, even criticises Nietzsche’s assumptions about origins. I argue that Foucault’s rejection of origins through his reading of Nietzsche is at least willful, and in many respects, inherently incorrect. The concerns at large in Nietzsche’s early works permeate the later works, even direct or orient the later works. Indeed, Nietzsche’s
early conclusions about human origins are the core of what Karl Löwith describes as Nietzsche’s central teaching: the “cosmology and anthropology of the eternal recurrence of the same.” Therefore, we have a principle for reading Nietzsche, a potential way of seeing his oeuvre as a whole. My reading of Nietzsche’s work will demonstrate that his very early ideas on “the instinct of language” and “metaphor” are the preliminary themes for his philosophy as a whole.

Given that Nietzsche has written explicitly on the origin, development, and function of language, it is essential that we look at his work at the very least as a contribution to a theory of human language. One way of situating Nietzsche as a theorist of origins is to reflect on generative anthropology. Eric Gans, who proposes a theory of the origin of language, claims Nietzsche to be “the first genuine theoretician of the scene of representation.” Gans writes: “Nietzsche’s particular modernity reflects the fact that, in contrast with his predecessors who took the human scene of representation as an a priori ethical model, Nietzsche situates the emergence of scenic self-consciousness, in its ethical as well as its esthetic mode, in human history.” Utilising Gans’s notion of the origin of language as a way of viewing the human, I will argue that Nietzsche is a theorist of origins—even more so than generative anthropology would anticipate. The conclusions drawn about language, by both Gans and Nietzsche, expose fundamental differences in matters concerning the ethical. They also shed light on the nature of language and of the human itself. Nietzsche’s conclusions about the origin and function of language lead him to suspect that language itself cannot verify the truthfulness of any given phenomena. Gans, on the other hand, claims language is coeval with the ethical itself. For Gans, language is fundamentally ethical. For example, in Gans’s chronicle, “Originary Ethics,” he writes:

Language is ethical in the most fundamental sense of being indispensable to the establishment of the originary human ethnos or communal group. The reciprocal emission and reception of a sign representing a common

106 Löwith, Nietzsche’s Philosophy, xxi.
108 Ibid.
sacred object provides a model of equal status with respect to a “transcendent” object that can be intended but not (immediately) possessed. This model establishes the scene, with a human periphery and a sacred centre, as the model of all human interactions.109

The gambit of this thesis is to consider reinterpreting Nietzsche as a theorist of origins through the lens of generative anthropology, in the hope that each theory of the origin of language will illuminate the other—that utilising generative anthropology as a way of reading Nietzsche will help us look at both generative anthropology and Nietzsche anew. Gans’s minimal theory of the origin of the human will be used as a yardstick to assess Nietzsche’s theory of the origin of language throughout this thesis.

What is at stake between Nietzsche’s and Gans’s divergent theories is the question of the ethical in relation to language and resentment. Gans considers language to be the foundation of the ethical, where resentment remains on the periphery. Nietzsche, on the other hand, calls for the suspension of the ethical in order to “produce new metaphors,” so as to annihilate resentment. For Nietzsche, humans are language-using animals because language “is the fundamental human drive to produce representations.” Yet, despite the difference in conclusions about language, the theory on the origin of language as proposed by Gans shares many synergies with Nietzsche’s idea that the best way of apprehending the human is by looking at its origins, from first premises. Gans claims that the best way to understand the human is in its most minimal terms. For Gans, the origin of language signals the origin of the human.

**The Scenic Imagination**

Gans offers the originary hypothesis as a new form of humanistic analysis in *The Scenic Imagination: Originary Thinking from Hobbes to the Present Day*, where

generative anthropology provides the heuristic key for an inquiry into tracing both the history and the anthropological import of those thinkers found primarily in the Western philosophical tradition. Generative anthropology is a field of study premised on the theory that the origin of the human was a distinct, punctuated event—although this may have occurred many times across disparate locations in time and space—whence all things human are generated. The scenic, for Gans, denotes that all human thought is generated through the representation of an original event where the first sign—or gesture—was transmitted by a protohuman onto others in near simultaneity.

The scenic, for Gans, offers a topographic model of the human: an economy of thinking, where one can situate concepts in terms of centres, margins, and exchanges. Indeed, the emission of the first sign was the moment of the birth of the human as human. For, not only is all human thought generated through the representation of a scene, the horizon of human thought is itself scenic. Indeed, the emergence of the human coincides with the birth of the scene. Of course, non-scenic thinking would be any form of thinking that does not engage human culture, language, or consciousness as fundamentally human phenomena. Gans’s minimal thesis of the human, then, is that the human is “uniquely characterized by scenic events recalled both collectively and individually through representations, the most fundamental of which are the signs of language.”

Consequently, scenic thinking involves the ability to generate or theorise a scene of human origins: Gans calls this the scenic imagination, where the only conceivable way to found—and generate—human culture is via a beginning of the human. Gans’s focus in The Scenic Imagination, then, is to situate the importance of each of the thinkers he examines with respect to their anthropological insight—into thinking in terms of the “scenic.” Each thinker Gans engages with in The Scenic Imagination appears to generate (theorise) a particular scene of the human. Yet despite the ability of these thinkers to posit a scene, Gans’s contention is that they generate “too much order from too much preexisting culture.” Gans calls

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111 As the title suggests, from Hobbes right up to modern scientific hypotheses of language origin and/or acquisition.
112 Ibid., 18.
this inability to formulate an originary hypothesis a particular “quandary.” The heart
of this quandary, Gans claims, lies in the history of the scenic imagination.

Gans’s point of departure is Hobbes. He begins by putting forth the proposition that
Hobbes’s “Leviathan” constitutes the first generative model of a human institution.
In other words, there are no prerequisites beyond the specifically human for such an
institution to exist. Nevertheless, Gans’s contention that there is “too much order
from too much preexisting culture” relates to Hobbes’s thought experiment of the
“Leviathan,” which he sees as too “dependent on the emergence of socioeconomic
reciprocity in early market society.”113 This means an already established mode of
symbolic activity must exist before Hobbes’s social contract theory can fully
accommodate a genuine generative anthropological model. In short, Hobbes already
assumes what he is attempting to explain. His scenic thinking, therefore, inevitably
falls short of a genuine, originary theory of the human. Furthermore, Gans claims
that there is always in Hobbes an irredeemable reliance on the metaphysical or some
postulate that in itself requires explanation. For instance, Gans’s criticism of
Hobbes’s scenic thinking is that he relies on a “metapolitics”; similarly his criticism
of Freud is that he relies on his “metapsychology.” Ultimately for both thinkers Gans
challenges the validity of their originary models by reminding us that they could not
theorise a scene of origin as the very foundation of human existence.

Therefore, The Scenic Imagination situates the variety of generative models of the
human from the Enlightenment onwards. Gans chooses the Enlightenment as the
defining moment where human institutions are conceived of as self-generating. For
Gans, a “generative model” is one that outlines a scene in which the human can be
situated. For instance, we have the father of the scientific method, Francis Bacon,
generating “a scene of objective empirical knowledge protected from the ‘idols’ of
collective mimesis.”114 Gans proposes that Bacon, here, has constructed—or
imagined—a scene of human representation that avoids the collective mimesis of
violence; in its place, we have a scene that triggers modern scientific inquiry.
Similarly, Gans describes Hobbes’s political philosophy, found in Leviathan, as

113 Ibid.
114 Ibid., 9.
theorising a scene that situates the human as a political animal. The only prerequisite required for Gans’s selection of scenic thinkers is that each of these thinkers must in some way attempt to specifically situate the human within a scene of the human. Gans employs the same approach when he imagines a particular scene Nietzsche generates for the human.

Indeed, Nietzsche’s philosophy, for Gans, is placed in the metaphysical category, precisely because it does not explore the human beyond the declarative sentence; indeed the fatal theoretical flaw of all philosophy, according to Gans, is its presupposition that the proposition is the fundamental linguistic category. Rather, generative anthropology’s emphasis lies within the emergence of the ostensive/imperative and the emergence of the sacred (centre). If Gans’s hypothesis is correct, generative anthropology’s primary concern with philosophy, as a tradition of thought, is its inability to conceive of how the proposition (declarative) itself can be accounted for. A question that must be asked, then, is: Does Nietzsche’s postulation(s) on the origin of language offer a morphogenetic account of the emergence of propositions? There is a fundamental case to consider when examining Nietzsche’s theories on the origin of the human in relation to this question. There is a body of work that contends Nietzsche’s early work on the origin of language reveals more than just propositions, particularly Claudia Crawford’s *The Beginnings of Nietzsche’s Theory of Language*. Not only is it well known Nietzsche received his professional training as a classical philologist; his unpublished early notes such as “On the Origin of Language,” “On Music and Words,” and *On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense*, indicate a young Nietzsche very much preoccupied with language as, at least, a foundational event for the human. Notably, one might argue that Nietzsche’s revival and “greatest teaching” of the “eternal recurrence” is, indeed, both an application of his earlier theories on language and an attempt at a reversal of metaphysics, as will be discussed in chapter 4. Ultimately, the aim of reexamining Nietzsche in light of generative anthropology is to give new emphasis to just how tantalisingly close Nietzsche was to a fully developed theory of the origin of the human. It is generative anthropology, however, that expands Nietzsche’s scenic imagination by rearticulating the central importance of the originary sign as the foundation of the human.
In the introduction to *The Scenic Imagination*, Gans states: “Nietzsche replaces the triumph of historical reason with the triumph of the individual will over the imprisoning force of falsely universal truth. This paradoxical struggle of the Nietzschean self with its ‘own’ representations has been the obsession of philosophy ever since, arguably even of analytic philosophy, haunted by the same paradoxes in a more dryly schematic form.” 115 It is important to note that Gans employs the term “representation” in his critique of philosophy and its singular preoccupation between the self and the external world. What does Gans mean when he states that the Nietzschean self has its “own representations”? Why is the struggle of the self with its own representations paradoxical? In the generative anthropological sense, to truly have one’s “own representations” is paradoxical precisely because the self cannot distinguish between the “own-ness” of the self and the external world. In other words, if the human is the measure of all things, then there is no way to observe or verify whether or not the self is its own, as it cannot know what-is-not. Indeed, the predilection towards categorically designating philosophy as a language-based pursuit is always aimed at the declarative.

There are many elements in Nietzsche’s work, I believe, generative anthropology might have reason to reexamine. First, through an analysis of *The Scenic Imagination*’s “Nietzsche’s Scenic Utopia,” accompanied by *Signs of Paradox*, I will endeavour to situate one of Nietzsche’s important early works, *The Birth of Tragedy*, within a more comprehensive framework than that offered by current generative anthropology scholarship. In order to understand Nietzsche’s originary scene, closely aligned with the Dionysian dithyramb, we must examine his earlier theory of language, where he claims language ultimately arose from the outpouring of a universal “Will” through music. Although Nietzsche would reject the universal “Will” as early as *On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense* (1872), we find, in his earlier works, the most explicit propositions concerning the origin of language. Once we have a clear indication of Nietzsche’s view on the origin of the human, found in his early works, the later part of his philosophical work will be examined. We will

115 Ibid., 14.
now move our discussion to Gans’s position on Nietzsche’s philosophy as a kind of “vision” for a “scenic utopia.”

**Gans: Nietzsche’s Scenic Utopia**

*In Nietzsche’s eyes, the scene of aesthetic representation is constituted by the suspension of the ethical.—Eric Gans*¹¹⁶

In the chapter entitled “Scenes of Philosophy” in *The Scenic Imagination*, Gans conceives of Nietzsche’s philosophy as exemplifying a scenic imagination aimed at a particular vision of utopia.¹¹⁷ In the words of Gans: “[Nietzsche] replaces the petty pleasures of worldly exchange and conflict with a utopian communion in death and life.”¹¹⁸ Gans rightly contrasts Nietzsche with his “predecessors,” with Nietzsche being the first thinker of modernity to posit the human scene of representation as both an ethical and aesthetic model. Indeed, for Gans, Nietzsche identifies the “emergence of self-consciousness, in its ethical as well as its aesthetic mode, in human history.”¹¹⁹ In other words, consciousness and all other modes of expression of the human are situated within the domain of the human; that is, since the ostensible origin of the human, all thought, culture, invention, and history can be attributed to the human and not some otherworldly phenomena.¹²⁰ For Gans, Nietzsche’s ethical and aesthetic dimension for a human anthropology is what distinguishes him from his predecessors. Nevertheless, Gans rejects Nietzsche’s aesthetic model of the human. Gans states: “[i]n Nietzsche’s eyes, the scene of aesthetic representation is constituted by the suspension of the ethical.”¹²¹ In fact, the origin of the human for Gans is ultimately an ethical matter (we will discuss this matter shortly).

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¹¹⁶ Ibid., 137.
¹¹⁷ The title of this section is “Nietzsche’s Scenic Utopia.”
¹¹⁹ Ibid., 132.
¹²⁰ In many ways, Ludwig Feuerbach’s “Essence of Christianity” is the first pioneering work to situate religion in the world of the human and not the metaphysical.
¹²¹ Ibid.
Gans contends that Nietzsche’s early work, *The Birth of Tragedy* (1871), develops an originary hypothesis of sorts. The work explores the beginnings of Greek tragedy and how it was relevant to nineteenth-century European culture. Nietzsche’s configuration of the Greek god Dionysus was originally utilised for an aesthetic theory that functioned in opposition to the Apollonian: the Apollonian–Dionysian duality. The brilliant beams of rationality, reason, and architectonic perfection of the ancient Greek world could not function without the dark, androgynous, violent impulses of music, tragedy, ecstasy, boundary dissolution, and irrationality. Dionysus represented the underlying chaos and suffering of all existence. The extrusion of Apollonian form from the formlessness of the Dionysian, for Nietzsche, worked in a fragile balance that allowed for the creation of the dramatic and particularly the tragic arts of ancient Greece. Nietzsche believes that this dynamic had not been repeated since the rise of ethics with the post-Socratics. The overarching theme of *The Birth of Tragedy* is that the tragic hero attempts to make Apollonian sense in an unjust and chaotic Dionysian world. Ultimately, the hero dies unjustly, as in the plays of Sophocles. Gans equates Nietzsche’s famous aesthetic duality of the Dionysian and Apollonian with the opposition between the sign and the sacred centre of the original scenic event, which marks the advent of language, the ethical, and the fundamental human categories. He writes: “The discharge of Dionysian energy into Apollonian form is the process by which the unconscious mimetic rhythm of desire is transformed into a formal opposition between sign and sacred object; in other words, it is a model of the original event.”¹²² In generative anthropological terms, the Dionysian represents the absence of the sign and formlessness of a “horizontal,” non-human activity, where Apollo would represent the emission of the sign. Indeed, Nietzsche’s Dionysus, for Gans, bears a close resemblance to the *sparagmos* (the dismemberment of a victim). Apollo is the visual configuration (the sign) that represents the sacred, Dionysian centre of mimetic desire.

Yet, however closely the Nietzschean Dionysian/Apollonian dichotomy is aligned with the originary hypothesis, Gans asserts that Nietzsche’s formulation of the origin

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of aesthetics always falls short in describing a specific scene of origin. For Gans, Nietzsche is still reliant upon the aesthetic to already be in place before the emergence of the Apollonian sign. He writes: “Nietzsche’s theory of the scene begins in medias res with the aesthetic already in place and the Dionysian ‘witches’ brew’ of sacrificial ritual well behind us.”\(^{123}\) In other words, Nietzsche’s “hypothesis” finds itself in the impossible position of presupposing the existence of the Dionysian before the emergence of the ostensive sign. Indeed, Gans admits that Nietzsche’s scene “eliminates the constitutive tension between sacred centre and human periphery” by means of a perfect equilibrium between both the formless (Dionysus) and form (Apollo), thus deferring violence in one sense.\(^{124}\)

*The Birth of Tragedy* can be accurately situated in generative anthropological terms—but what of Nietzsche’s later works that omit the Dionysian–Apollonian dichotomy? It was Nietzsche’s aim to obliterate the oppositions by exposing dichotomies as a by-product of the arbitrariness of the sign; it was Nietzsche’s very *suspicion* of the validity of the sign that pre-empted his relentless critiques of the Graeco-Roman, Judaeo-Christian traditions of the West. Indeed, Nietzsche became well aware of the problem of the impossibility of oppositions—they can only be invented by human language. Nietzsche’s solution to this was to “dehumanise nature” and “naturalise man.” Briefly, this task set by Nietzsche was to remove the sign world (anthropomorphisms) from the external world; in the process of this removal, man would come to realise his authentic place in a world of “becoming.” It is here where Gans only hints at Nietzsche’s later ontological doctrines of Dionysian becoming, the will to power, and eternal recurrence. He writes: “Nietzsche’s appreciation of the human centrality of the scene of representation made him its first genuine theoretician; his uncritical affirmation of his discovery led him to invert, with the most terrible consequences, the Judeo-Christian tradition in presenting the scenic as the transcendence of the ethical, ‘beyond good and evil’.”\(^{125}\) Instead of situating the scene in terms of the origin of the ethical, Nietzsche’s Dionysus (for Gans, at any rate) depicts the scene as transcending its originary function: the

\(^{123}\) Ibid., 134.  
\(^{124}\) Ibid.  
\(^{125}\) Ibid., 139.
deferral of violence. For Gans, Nietzsche’s hypothesis on the birth of the aesthetic is one without originary violence. He writes: “Nietzsche’s eirenic picture of the aesthetic scene masks its originary violence; the world of art is a world of unanimity without contradiction, of collective suffering with neither agent nor victim.”126 Gans claims that Nietzsche’s vision of the collective suffering of a Dionysian existence, humanly conceivable only through the guise of the Apollonian form, is the first truly anthropological theory to place the human on the scene of representation. Gans may well be right to suggest that Nietzsche’s Dionysian/Apollonian scene of aesthetic representation embodies the suspension of the ethical. An exploration of Nietzsche’s suspicion of language, however, is required to situate his philosophy of the “eternal return” and the “Dionysian” in scenic terms. At the conclusion of his critical originary analysis of Nietzsche, Gans leaves us with the idea that we are still yet to see what the world makes of Nietzsche’s Dionysian model of the human. Gans writes: “We will be able to evaluate objectively Nietzsche’s anthropological achievement only when neither the Right, as in the Nazi era, nor the Left, as in our own, is able to exploit this transcendence for its own ends.”127

A multitude of question marks and Nietzschean nooks arise when we read Gans’s originary analysis of Nietzsche. Clearly, a most prominent concern—to be raised by those who would dare presume to be experts in Nietzsche’s “philosophy,” no doubt—would be that Gans never appears to draw on either Nietzsche’s early work on the origin of language nor on the central tenets of his thinking: the will to power, and eternal return, which, I argue, stems from his inherent position on the arbitrariness of the metaphor. Gans only ever seems to examine Nietzsche’s early work The Birth of Tragedy, accompanying that examination with a brief acknowledgement of The Genealogy of Morals underlined by Nietzsche’s “will to power.” Indeed, there is a legitimate concern that Gans brings to bear a somewhat nuanced reading of Nietzsche’s thought. One question would be: How would one situate Nietzsche’s position on the origin of language in light of what we know Gans has written about Nietzsche, and in light of what he has not? Nevertheless, before we

126 Ibid., 138.
127 Ibid., 139.
begin to examine this in detail, we must first travel to the beginning of Nietzsche’s professional academic career.

In the following chapter, I will offer an originary analysis of the unpublished works “On the Origins of Language” (1869), “On Music and Words” (1870), *The Birth of Tragedy* (1871), the published works *On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense* (1873), and *The Gay Science* (1882), where I will emphasise the central importance Nietzsche has given to the position of language as both a precursor to consciousness, and the fundamental characteristic that defines what it is to be a human, however suspicious he may be of the human. Indeed, it is essential for us to gain a more comprehensive understanding of Nietzsche’s emerging position on language in order to appreciate the originary complexity of his thought in light of generative anthropology.
Chapter 2:
An Originary Analysis of Nietzsche’s Theory of Language

The drive toward the formation of metaphors is the fundamental human drive, which one cannot for a single instant dispense with in thought, for one would thereby dispense with man himself.—Friedrich Nietzsche

The sign points before it imitates; its horizontal, metonymic relation to its referent turns back on itself as verticality, metaphor.—Eric Gans

The main goals of this chapter are (1) to situate Nietzsche as a theorist of both human origins and language origins, and (2) to provide an originary analysis—the study of the human in its most minimal terms—of his developing theories of the origin and development of language, which I argue greatly influences his wider philosophical inquiries into the ethical, resentment, the will to power, and eternal return. This chapter will pay particular attention to the divergent claims made by Nietzsche and Gans in terms of the relationship between language and the ethical. It is important to examine the ethical in light of language precisely because both Gans and Nietzsche make bold claims about the ethical, which, again I argue, derive from their understanding of the function and origin of language. Nietzsche’s ideas about resentment, the will to power, and eternal return will be examined in detail in following chapters. In order to provide an originary analysis of Nietzsche’s theory of language, however, one must begin with the fundamental tenets of the originary hypothesis; that is, the function of language is essentially ethical, the deferral of

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violence through the aborted gesture of appropriation on the scene of human origin. I make the claim that Nietzsche’s suspicion of the sign, however, leads him to also be suspicious of the ethical.

The primary texts examined in this chapter from Nietzsche’s works will be “On the Origins of Language,” “On Music and Words,” On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense, and The Gay Science. These texts position Nietzsche first and foremost as a theorist of the human and of human origins. In other words, Nietzsche specifically theorizes about the origin of language and what generative anthropology refers to as the minimal categories of the human in the above works. What is ultimately brought to our attention in them is Nietzsche’s idea that it is precisely because language is a most recent development in the human, so too is the ethical. In order to conduct an originary analysis of Nietzsche’s theory of language, I will also examine Gans’s Signs of Paradox: Irony, Resentment, and Other Mimetic Structures, which claims that language and the ethical are coeval. Indeed, both Gans and Nietzsche concede that there is a fundamental relationship between language and the ethical. Therefore, by examining the main arguments espoused in Signs of Paradox about the nature of language, in concert with Nietzsche’s own thinking about language, this chapter will open up a dialogue between each thinker’s position on the ethical.

What are we to learn from positioning Nietzsche as a theorist of origins, however? Further, what are we to learn from the analysis and comparison of Nietzsche’s philosophical-philological approach to language, morality, and value, and the figuration of the human as this appears in Gans’s hypothesis on the origin of the human? Is there something we can learn from these two approaches in concert? Examining Nietzsche’s theory of language, I argue, is relevant to not only philosophy of language, but to philosophical anthropology, the field of inquiry that allows Nietzsche and Gans to cross paths. Both of them, I argue, share a quality in that they

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3 The early works, On the Origins of Language, “On Music and Words,” On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense, and the middle work, The Gay Science. Of course, these periods of Nietzsche’s writing are to be read as a continuity of thought, not as distinct, abrupt changes in his thinking. Nietzsche’s ideas about language are rarely examined in contemporary scholarship, particularly in their relationship to his later works. As we have seen in the previous chapter, many scholars risk explicating only some of the elements of Nietzsche’s work to suit the needs of their own hypotheses. In contrast, a more insightful way to study Nietzsche’s work—as I have set out to do in this thesis—is in chronological order, to examine whether there are any major linguistic themes that remain present in his later thought.
both theorise transcendence out of immanence. In other words, both theorise that the
human is responsible for the transcendent and the metaphysical. Despite the
predominantly Heideggerian interpretation of Nietzsche that situates Nietzsche as the
last metaphysician, Nietzsche, I argue, theorises a non-transcendent origin of the
human, and is therefore separate from his postmodern interpreters. Nietzsche often
looks to origins as a strategy to critique longstanding intellectual presuppositions on
religion, philosophy, ethics, aesthetics, science, and the like.

However, despite the topical proximity of Nietzsche and generative anthropology,
there is a divergence in thinking about the ethical in relation to language. Gans, on the
one hand, claims that the emergence of language is also the emergence of the ethical.
Nietzsche, on the other hand, considers the ethical to have emerged from the aesthetic
phenomenon of language, which is, according to him, representative of an error in the
development of the human. By accounting for the minimal elements of Nietzsche’s
theory of language, I aim to provide an insight into his configuration of the ethical.

First, I will consider the intellectual climate of nineteenth-century Europe, which was
more concerned with human origins than any previous century. In this section, I will
consider Nietzsche’s own ideas about human origins as very much a product of the
age. Examining Nietzsche’s close affinity with the works of theologian, Johann
Gottfried Herder; philologists Jacob Burckhardt and Friedrich Ritschl, and most
notably Gustav Gerber will allow us to have a more comprehensive understanding of
Nietzsche’s theory of the origin of language and of the human proper. From here, I
will engage with Nietzsche’s early period of writing on the origin of language: his
and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense. These earlier works of Nietzsche’s will also be
examined with the help of the ideas found in Roger Hazelton’s “Nietzsche’s
Contribution to a Theory of Language,” Claudia Crawford’s The Beginning of
Nietzsche’s Theory of Language, and Joao Constancio’s Nietzsche on Instinct and
Language. Thereafter, I will provide a detailed analysis of Nietzsche’s idea that
language is “false consciousness,” as posited in The Gay Science. I will explore
Nietzsche’s notion of language as false consciousness in relation to Gans’s
understanding of language as being inherently paradoxical—as posited in Signs of
Paradox—in the sense that the sign is simultaneously intangible yet functions as a
catalyst for the mutual understanding between individuals. What is also important in
an examination of *The Gay Science* is that Nietzsche’s suspicion of
language/consciousness as false leads him to a critique of the ethical.

As has been discussed in “Nietzsche’s Scenic Utopia,” Gans claims Nietzsche’s
vision of the human is an expression of aesthetic elitism stemming from
resentment. In other words, not all of us will gain access into Nietzsche’s vision of
the world. I will argue that Nietzsche has somewhat more to offer generative
anthropology than this, in terms of a discussion of the value of language as the most
important characteristic of the human. Most importantly, I will show that Nietzsche’s
thinking on the emergence of the human is not only more closely aligned to
generative anthropology than has previously been suspected, but also that his thinking
asks fundamental questions about language that generative anthropology might take
into consideration.

Nietzsche was first and foremost a philologist. Indeed, Nietzsche had published a
substantial amount of work dedicated to the origin of many human characteristics:
tragedy, aesthetics, consciousness, religion, values, the value of values, as well as
language. One line of argument proposed by this dissertation is that Nietzsche’s
doctrine of eternal recurrence (discussed at length in chapter 4) has diverted the
attention of Nietzsche scholarship from the very origins of Nietzsche’s early thoughts
on language that are, indeed, tied into and deeply influence his later works. Yet before
we begin to explore Nietzsche’s three periods of writing, we must consider—however
briefly—both the intellectual climate of nineteenth-century Europe, and that era’s
obsession with human origins.

Beyond the above concerns, two fundamental questions must be taken into
consideration in this chapter: (1) Was Nietzsche aware of the limitations of
philosophical language in terms of its inability to account for the origin of language?
Some Nietzsche scholars indicate that he was. (2) Did he show glimmers of a truly

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4 Nietzsche’s conception of resentment will be examined in detail in the following chapter.
originary hypothesis that can stand on its own without the support of generative anthropology? Indeed, if Nietzsche’s propositions on the emergence of language hold up to scrutiny from generative anthropology, this would justify a reorientation of the way in which Nietzsche scholars view his work; that is, it would justify viewing him as a theorist of origins.

**Nietzsche as Nineteenth-Century Thinker**

In order to gain a more nuanced understanding of Nietzsche’s theory of the origin of language, it is extremely important to give an account of the intellectual climate of the nineteenth century, which inevitably influenced his work on not only the genesis of language, but his entire oeuvre. If one were to think of a century where the focus of intellectual energy would echo Plato’s obsessions and demand a theory of the origin of language (the human), then surely one would think of the nineteenth century. If the eighteenth century was one of wearied romantics in search of meaning in the shadows of the Enlightenment, the nineteenth century would be the age that struck the final nail in the proverbial coffin of a human- (or God-)centred model of the universe.

The nineteenth century would bear witness to the natural sciences becoming fully fledged professions. Out of this era emerged Charles Darwin, whose *The Origin of Species* set the agenda concerning discussions on the origins of man in an objective, empirical, rational way. Nietzsche’s thinking too is inherently Darwinian. Although Nietzsche only sporadically mentions Darwin—and when he does so it is always to rebuke him—his explanatory terms “drives” and “instinct” can be understood only in a Darwinian sense. Nevertheless, the great shapers of the nineteenth century belong to a period that would denounce the promise of a universal knowledge through reason. Indeed, Nietzsche’s project, as I argue, was one of a reinterpretation of all human knowledge through a rigorous examination of language. Despite Nietzsche’s ambitious project, however, philosophy, once the queen of the sciences, has retreated
in part because of Darwin and rational scientific investigation.\(^5\) Now, in the second decade of the twenty-first century, Darwin’s hypothesis that all life emerges from a common ancestor (the notion of “common decent”) remains the most revolutionary scientific discovery since Nicolai Copernicus’s astronomical observations, which led to a model displacing the earth as the centre of the cosmos. During (and after) the nineteenth century’s scientific pursuit of a theory concerning the origin of the human, however, a great number of philosophers, anthropologists, and linguists would attempt to unravel these mysteries through means that were not considered scientific; namely, through reflections on language. The sheer number of serious intellectual works engaged with human origins—particularly with the origin of language—in the nineteenth century reflects the existential anxiety faced in the knowledge that the human was becoming decentred. This was also true of theoretical anthropology; while it examined “other” cultures, it also contributed to the decentring of the West. Indeed, nineteenth-century thought in the West would rapidly change its position from the human being in the centre of a cosmos divinely ordained, to a clever species of ape, gradually adapting over millennia. One of the many aspects of modernity is the death of an enchanted world and the rise of a mere “higher” animal. A great anthropological chasm was left in the wake of nineteenth-century discoveries/realisations, one that would require what Gilles Deleuze’s refers to as a Nietzsche who had to consider—indeed, evaluate—the very value and sense of “value” and “sense.”\(^6\) Indeed, Nietzsche’s preoccupation with the value and sense of the human would lead him to the problem of creation itself.

Besides the natural sciences, which have dominated popular consciousness since the nineteenth century, one popular method for understanding the origin of the human has been to study language, its function, and its origins. Linguistics begins not in the nineteenth century, however, but in the late eighteenth century, with a student of Immanuel Kant, Johann Gottfried Herder, and his *Treatise on the Origin of Language* (1772). Herder’s work, whose romantic contention that language was a divinely

\(^5\) Indeed, this is true for the humanities in general. Nevertheless, there are those who still consider philosophy the “queen” of the sciences. See: P. Churchland, *Neurophilosophy: Toward a Unified Science of the Mind-Brain* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1986).

bequeathed, “reflective exercise of the soul,” greatly influenced nineteenth-century European trends in thinking. After Herder’s work, we see a mass of literature devoted to the genesis of language, until an eventual banning of the discussion of this question by the French Academy of Sciences in 1866. Notwithstanding this, the towering philosopher of the nineteenth century, Nietzsche, also shared the obsession of the age. Although a vigorous “anti-Darwinist,” through reading Wilhelm Roux’s *The Struggle of Parts in the Organism,* Nietzsche was greatly influenced by nineteenth-century contemporaries such as Herder (who was a preeminent philosopher and theologian), philologists Jacob Burckhardt and Friedrich Ritschl and, most notably, Gustav Gerber, through his *Language as Art.* For a topic rarely discussed in academic circles after the ban in 1866, a young Nietzsche was still devoted to the question of the genesis of language; he set out to answer this question of questions first by means of sketching out the relationship between Schopenhauer’s “universal will” of music and the later development of language as a secondary phenomenon. For Schopenhauer, music is that which expresses the universal will of all existence. For a young Nietzsche, following Schopenhauer, the word itself is entirely dependent on what he would deem “the absolute sovereignty of music.” This position of the sovereignty of music would go through many transformations, but it was nevertheless a position he held until the end of his active career.

Nietzsche would continue to develop—and redevelop—his theory of the genesis of language and the human from an explicitly philosophical problem (as opposed to a scientific one) to an anthropological problem. When we assert that Nietzsche’s approach to language was philosophical, however, it is by no means a series of statements on the origin of language. Rather, Nietzsche’s work on language is, as is true with most of his work, primarily suggestive and evocative. However, at the very least, Nietzsche’s developing theories of the origin of language remain consistent. Nevertheless, one sees the sweeping changes between a young Nietzsche’s *Über Wahrheit und Lüge im außermoralischen Sinn* (On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral

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7 After the Darwinian revolution, Roux’s *The Struggle of Parts in the Organism* postulates that there exists a kind of Darwinian “struggle” at all levels of the organism, where even the organs, tissues, cells, molecules are competing with one another for survival. After reading Roux, Nietzsche would propose that the struggle for survival is really the will to power.

8 Nietzsche was vehemently opposed to the Darwinian notion of “self-preservation,” and instead proposed that organisms strive towards a violent multiplication and extension, that is, the “will to power.”
Sense), where his early theory emphasises the emergence of a community of humans as a consequence of a consciousness of language through the natural instinct of metaphor creation, and *Götzen-Dämmerung, oder, Wie man mit dem Hammer philosophirt* (Twilight of the Idols, or How to Philosophise with a Hammer), which is indicative of a mind that is no longer preoccupied with origins, but rather attempts to recreate language itself, and thus recreate its values. In other words, language essentially becomes the transformative element for the human. In these later years, Nietzsche figures language to be a form of action and, in turn, the arbiter of values.

The Search for the Origin of Language: Johann Herder’s “Instinct” and Gustav Gerber’s *Language as Art*

In contrast to the vast body of work claiming that Nietzsche was a theorist of non-origins (Foucault, Deleuze, Derrida), Claudia Crawford’s work, *The Beginnings of Nietzsche’s Theory of Language*, presents Nietzsche as a theorist very much preoccupied with human origins. Crawford, for example, proposes that the early works of Nietzsche—“Vom Ursprung der Sprache” (On the Origin of Language), “Zur Teleologie” (On Teleology), and “Musik und Worte” (On Music and Words)—indicate a clear interest in the study of the origin of language. Nietzsche’s early work on the origin of language, indeed, continually informs his later works. The much later work *The Genealogy of Morals* (1888), for example, upholds and applies Nietzsche’s early theory on language. Not only is it important to take into consideration Nietzsche’s own conclusions about the origin and development of language, I assert it is also important to uncover what thinkers and works are responsible for shaping Nietzsche’s position on language. Examining the intellectual influences on a young Nietzsche points to a thinker fascinated, even obsessed, with the origin of the human. Many scholars neglect this point. Moreover, Nietzsche’s early studies on language indicate that he was influenced by the nineteenth-century trends of the suspicion of
the “limited value” of symbolic language right from the beginning of his career, which would greatly influence his later works.9

From 1865 until the Birth of Tragedy, Nietzsche’s early works on language origins was “hidden.”10 Indeed, many of Nietzsche’s earlier works were not published until after the Second World War. Unsurprisingly, Nietzsche’s first influential thinkers—beside Schopenhauer and The World as Will and Representation (1818)—were also dedicated to uncovering the “riddle” of the origin of language and, indeed, of the human: Herder’s Treatise on the Origin of Language (1772), Friedrich Albert Lange’s Geschichte des Materialismus (History of Materialism), Eduard von Hartmann’s Philosophie of Unbewusst (Philosophy of the Unconscious), and most importantly Gustav Gerber’s Die Sprache als Kunst (Language as Art). From 1865 until the publication of On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense (1873), a primary concern of Nietzsche’s was to find a plausible hypothesis for the origin and development of language. Indeed, other scholarly works agree with this contention, such as Claudia Crawford’s The Beginnings of Nietzsche’s Theory of Language, which supports the notion that Nietzsche was, indeed, a theorist of origins.11 Crawford’s work on Nietzsche’s theory of language is the only one to comprehensively survey Nietzsche’s speculations about the origin of language in a systematic way.

Since the emergence of the Western rational tradition, humans have been interested in the origin, function, and meaning of language. Nietzsche is no exception. The origins of what we may consider to be the first philosophy of language—at least in Western history—should be credited to Plato’s Cratylus. A dialogue begins with Cratylus and Hermogenes, who cannot come to terms with whether the words/sounds/grunts we utter are a true representation of the objects we refer to. For the first (and only) time, Socrates is invited to argue over “the correctness of names.” In short, Socrates concludes that names (ὄνομα) come from the “imitative significance of primary

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9 In no way is this section an exhaustive illustration of Nietzsche’s intellectual influences. Rather, the aim here is to indicate Nietzsche was very much preoccupied with the origin of language and the human right from the beginning of his professional career.


sounds, corresponding to single letters of the alphabet.” Socrates’ conclusion differs greatly from the Saussurian understanding of the structure and development of language, where the signifier is arbitrary. Platonic semantics, however, falls short in its ability to satisfy a hypothesis for the genesis of language because modern thinking no longer gives credibility to a transcendental model of human language. Clearly, the greatest difficulty in constructing a valid human anthropology lies in the riddle of the origin of the human sign: to use language to critique itself is nothing short of a performative contradiction. Claude Magnion, for example, echoes this sentiment in his essay, “Nietzsche’s ‘Origin of Language,’” where he asks: “how does one, positioned within consciousness, prove that which is beyond or outside the realm of consciousness?” In other words, is language sufficient to prove the existence of say, a rock, by means of symbolic representation? Or, is it sufficient to just symbolically represent a rock, and therefore, to prove its existence? Indeed, one of the major considerations Nietzsche had in relation to verifying the external world through language is twofold: (1) the plausibility of grasping the “thing-in-itself” through symbolic representation, and (2) the determination of whether or not language is sufficient to justify life, considering it is the fundamental characteristic par excellence of the human. The above problems involved with language were given very much consideration by a great number of thinkers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

For Nietzsche, All thinking must have an origin. Nietzsche’s “beginning theory of language” begins with the “unconscious” and “instinct.” Both of these terms were borrowed from Hartmann’s Philosopie of Unbewusst (Philosophy of the Unconscious) (1869) and Herder’s Treatise on the Origin of Language (1772). On the one hand, the unconscious aspect of language, which Nietzsche borrows from Hartmann, represents the inability of the human to recognise language as essentially figurative. On the other hand, instinct, which Nietzsche borrows from Herder, is the precursor to language itself. Nietzsche places a heavy emphasis on the unconscious and instinct, which are the necessary elements that allow language to emerge. As some scholars observe, for Nietzsche, language originates from a human instinct

through the unconscious. For Nietzsche, all human characteristics emerge from the instinct of language: consciousness, community, religion, ritual, science, resentment, and so on. Crawford, for example, aptly summarises Nietzsche’s early idea for a model of the origin of language. She writes: “There is first a continual physiological unconscious origination of language through instinct, and then consciousness, community, the pathos of truth, and science, grow out of these origins as secondary, weakened processes.”\(^\text{14}\) Nietzsche attempts to describe language as a secondary process that is doubly removed from reality. Quite simply, language, according to Nietzsche, is a secondary characteristic of the human, emerging through a herd instinct. Nietzsche appropriates the term “herd instinct” from Herder’s own theory of language.

The most significant influence upon Nietzsche’s early theory of language, however, was Gustav Gerber’s *Die Sprache als Kunst* (Language as Art); Gerber himself was influenced greatly by Herder. Gerber’s *Language as Art* presents language as a purely aesthetic phenomenon. He demotes both the linguistic terms of syntax and lexicon as purely descriptive terms that fail to grasp what he calls *Lebendigen* (living language). Indeed, Gerber designates language as an unconscious form of creativity, resulting in what he calls the art instinct. For Gerber, the first step in the development of language lies in the “thing-in-itself,” which prompts a nerve stimulus. The notion of a “nerve stimulus” being prompted by an outside force to produce language will appear in Nietzsche’s thought time and again.

Many of Gerber’s ideas are echoed throughout Nietzsche’s early works, particularly *On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense*, where Nietzsche’s focus is on rhetoric and metaphor. Crawford, for example, agrees with Gerber’s very significant influence on Nietzsche when she writes: “Gerber offered Nietzsche a new metaphor, that of rhetoric, for a body of ideas concerning language which Nietzsche already had in place by 1871.”\(^\text{15}\) For Nietzsche, the idea of the production of metaphors is a recurring theme in his later works. With the help of Gerber, Nietzsche becomes highly suspicious of the “certainty” or “honesty” of conscious productions that stem from

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\(^{14}\) Crawford, *Beginnings of Nietzsche’s Theory*, 223.

\(^{15}\) Ibid., x.
metaphor. According to Crawford, for “Nietzsche’s beginning theory of language, conscious language provides only an image of an image, a symbol of a symbol, and after Gerber, a metaphor of a metaphor.”

Echoing Gerber’s theory, Nietzsche offers this hypothesis in the notes On Truth and Lie. In this essay Nietzsche contends that language first originates from a nerve stimulus triggered by the instinctive imagination, which we are unconscious of, as a response to the outside world, where we at once see the primacy of an individual, and the artistic uniqueness of language evolution. Crawford, for example, emphasises the notion of an individual uniqueness in terms of language, where “the individual has a unique unconscious and artistic language of his or her own in images.”

When the individual translates these images into sounds that can be understood by a community, the image “loses its uniqueness and becomes merely conventional, becomes herd language.” Not only is the early Nietzsche deeply influenced by Hartmann, Herder, and Gerber concerning the relationship between a “herd language” and the language of the individual: one can also find this influence in later works, such as Thus Spoke Zarathustra, and The Gay Science, where Nietzsche presents a genealogical interpretation for the human need for communication. In fact, all of Nietzsche’s work presupposes that language cannot be trusted, as it is a removed, secondary process of the human drive, or “instinct” to artistically represent the “thing-in-itself,” which is gradually transmogrified into the communal need for “self-preservation.” Now, having given an account of Nietzsche’s early influences, I will shift focus to a discussion of his early works, which heavily emphasise the development of language as an aesthetic phenomenon.

Nietzsche’s Notes “On the Origins of Language” (1869)

“On the Origins of Language” (1869) is Nietzsche’s first work on the origin of language. An analysis of this work is important for two reasons: (1) “On the Origins of Language” presents Nietzsche’s position on language as a product of instinct. Consequently, Nietzsche would utilise instinct in his later works as a model for the

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16 Ibid.
17 Ibid.
18 Ibid.
19 Zarathustra speaks: “Once you have renounced me, only then will you find me again.”
human; (2) it highlights the notion that Nietzsche from the beginning perceived that language must have originated from the human, and not been divinely created. It predates *The Birth of Tragedy*, his first published work, by two years. It begins with a riddle:

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\textit{Althes Rathsel: bei Indern, Griechen, bis auf die neueste Zeit. Bestimmt zu sagen, wie der Ursprung der Sprache nicht zu denken ist.} \textit{(Old puzzle: with the Indians, Greeks, up to the present. To say with certainty how the origin of language is not to be contemplated.)}\]

The riddle concerns the question of how one ought \textit{not} to theorise the origin of language. Nietzsche presents the origin of language as a riddle because his position—at the time—was that the very perceptibility of the origin of language lies beyond human memory. Another reason for Nietzsche to posit the question of the origin of language as a riddle was to indicate that to pinpoint the origin would be no easy undertaking. In “On the Origins of Language,” originally written for a lecture series on Latin grammar, Nietzsche gives a brief historical account of the intellectual developments of theories of the origin of language, beginning with Plato’s *Cratylus* and ending with Schelling. Nietzsche consequently rejects all previous theorisations of the origin of language, claiming that these thinkers were all unable to theorise the origin of language without the help of something non-human. For instance, when Nietzsche criticises Lord Monboddo’s theory of the genesis of language, he writes: “he [Monboddo] still must resort to super-human help: the Egyptian demon-kings.” Despite the failure of the thinkers of Nietzsche’s time—and before—to give a credible account of the origin of language by means of the divine, what other possibilities remain for Nietzsche to give an account?

For Nietzsche, language is a consequence of instinct (Ger.: \textit{Instinkt}): “It remains only to consider language as a product of instinct, as with bees—the anthill, etc.”

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20 Ibid., 223.
21 Nietzsche rejects theories of the origin of language that range from Rousseau, Maupertius, and Monboddo, to De Bossset.
22 Ibid.
23 Ibid.
Nietzsche is distancing himself from the transcendent, otherworldly source of language, and attempting to give the origin of language a wholly human dimension. Clearly, then, Nietzsche’s idea of anthropology would stem from a description of “instinct.” So, what is instinct for an early Nietzsche? He claims that instinct is not the product of conscious reflection, nor is it the “consequence of bodily reflection.” Rather, instinct, for Nietzsche, is part of “the innermost kernel of a being.” In other words, all things human, including language (and consciousness), derive from the drives of the instincts. For Nietzsche, the instincts are the basest driving force for all organic beings. The fundamental reason for Nietzsche to shift the emphasis of the origin of language from something diachronic (that is, something developing over time) to something synchronic (that is, instinct) is to emphasise that the instinct of language is synchronous with the human. Indeed, if the instinct to create language is the effect, the human is the cause. Nietzsche explains his position on instinct. He writes:

Instinct is not, however, the result of conscious reflection, not merely the consequence of bodily organization, not the result of a mechanism which lies in the brain, not the effect of a mechanism coming to the spirit from outside, which is foreign to it, but the most particular achievement of individuals or of the masses, springing from character. Instinct is one with the innermost kernel of being.\(^24\)

The “innermost kernel of being” for Nietzsche, in its most general sense, describes the most basic, primitive “drives” of all organic beings; every characteristic of a “species” derives from the instincts. Yet despite the vagueness of Nietzsche’s early analogical conceptualisation of instinct in “On the Origins of Language,” he would later develop a more nuanced and complex conception, particularly in book 5 of *The Gay Science*, where Nietzsche claims instinct “is neither the conscious work of individuals nor of a majority.”\(^25\)

\(^{24}\) Ibid.

\(^{25}\) Ibid.
After renouncing theories of the origin of language from Plato to Rousseau, Nietzsche would echo Kant’s *Critique of Judgement* for its recognition of the correlation between the teleology of nature (nature as an end in itself) and worldly phenomena that can exist without consciousness. In “On the Origins of Language,” for instance, Nietzsche writes: “The right insight [into the origin of language] only has currency since Kant, who in *The Critique of Judgement* recognises teleology in Nature as something actual, but on the other hand, emphasises the wonderful antinomy that something expedient can be without consciousness. This is the reality of instinct.”

From the outset, instinct is the progenitor of language, which in turn is the progenitor of consciousness, and so on. Nietzsche claims that the reality of instinct is this very correlation. At the end of “On the Origins of Language,” Nietzsche quotes Schelling’s *Philosophie der Mythologie*, regarding the nature of language.

Since without language there could be nothing philosophical, and in general no human consciousness is thinkable, the foundation of language cannot lie in consciousness. Yet, the deeper we look into it, the more surely it is discovered, that its depth far exceeds that of the most conscious productions. It is with language as it is with organic beings; we think we see them come blindly into existence and at the same time, cannot deny the unfathomable intentionality of their formation even in the smallest detail.

Let us pause for a moment to consider Schelling’s claims. Shelling here is claiming that language is the very foundation of human consciousness. Simply put, without language, the human would not exist. Nevertheless, the “depth” of what drives “organic beings” is something that operates far beyond, or beneath, our conscious productions. Nietzsche approves of Schelling’s notion that all “organic beings” are “blind” because their instinct (that is, the instinct of language in humans) presupposes consciousness. Nietzsche’s reason for examining the various theories of the origin of language in “On the Origin of Language” is, through Schelling, to draw attention to a

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26 Ibid.
fundamental problem that exists within this field of inquiry: that is, all human thought is possible only through the instinct of language.

“On the Origins of Language” is an essential work of an early Nietzsche because it equates the human production of language to the instinctive qualities of a worker bee or a soldier ant. This text is also important in relation to generative anthropology as it allows us to peer into the very beginnings of Nietzsche’s career as a theorist who situates language as something deriving from the human, and not some otherworldly phenomenon. As his thinking progresses, however, Nietzsche elaborates upon the notion of instinct having primacy, arguing that the relationship between language and thought is both rhetorical and figurative. In other words, the production of language is the fundamental characteristic allowing humans to represent the external world. The word, and therefore metaphor, according to Nietzsche, is the lasting paradigm of language.

Nietzsche on Music and Language: Notes from a Lecture “On Music and Words”

According to an early Nietzsche, the origins of language and music are inseparable. Indeed, music (Dionysian) and language (Apollonian), for Nietzsche, work in unison to create new metaphors. In order to gain a greater appreciation of Nietzsche’s development as a theorist of origins, and to gain a greater appreciation of his way of thinking in The Birth of Tragedy, I will examine a fundamental characteristic of Nietzsche’s theory of language, the relationship of the sign to music. The essential theoretical aim of this section is to understand Nietzsche’s view of music as emerging in unison with symbolic language as an “artistic instinct,” or drive, to recreate the external world in the image of the human. The important distinction to make here is that Nietzsche proposes that language (and music) does not have a metaphysical source, but, indeed, a human one.

Through a close examination of Nietzsche’s “On Music and Words,” followed by an examination of Maria Branco’s “Nietzsche on Metaphor, Musicality, and Style: From
Language to the Life of the Drives,” Kathleen Higgins’s *Nietzsche on Music*, and Roger Hazelton’s *Nietzsche’s Contribution to a Theory of Language*, I will assess the importance of Nietzsche’s position that neither the symbolic sign nor music can emerge without the other. Indeed, this early formulation of the symbiosis of music and words echoes Nietzsche’s position on Greek aesthetics, the Dionysian/Apollonian opposition. More importantly, Nietzsche’s position on the relationship between music and language finds resonances in Gans’s *The Beginning and End of Aesthetic Form*, where Gans claims that “any discussion of esthetic form should take music as its model.” After an examination of Nietzsche’s position on music and language I will engage with Gans’s position on music’s relationship to language.

In order to emphasise the importance of the relationship between music and symbolic language in Nietzsche, I will now examine the lecture “On Music and Words,” which was delivered one year before the publication of *The Birth of Tragedy*. In “On Music and Words,” Nietzsche divides the “essence” of language into two fundamental categories: the tonality of the speaker and gesture-symbolism of the speaker. The basis of his argument as postulated in “On Music and Words” is that there exists an artistic drive to tonality, which is a fundamental characteristic in the emergence of language. Indeed, Nietzsche considers that language *itself* has a dual origin: that of the “connection of tone with metaphor.” He writes:

> the enormous universality and originality of vocal music, of the connection of tone with metaphor and idea guarantee the correctness of this utterance. The music of every people begins in closest connection with lyricism, and long before absolute music can be thought of, the music of a people in that connection passes through the most important stages of development. If we understand this primal lyricism of a people, as indeed we must, to be an imitation of the artistic typifying Nature, then as the original prototype of that union of music and lyricism must be regarded: the duality in the essence of language, already typified by

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Nature. Now, after discussing the relation of music to metaphor we will fathom more deeply this essence of language.\footnote{29}{Friedrich Nietzsche, “On Music and Words” (1871), accessed January 1, 2016, http://nietzsche.holtof.com/Nietzsche_various/on_music_and_words_and_rhetoric.htm.}

Indeed, this “artistic typifying Nature” is a continuation of Nietzsche’s position of the origin of language as a natural, instinctive development. One might consider Nietzsche’s view of the origin of language as the dual origin of language. Yet according to Nietzsche, what drives this artistic imitation of Nature is an even more primitive bodily sensation response deriving from the instincts. Nietzsche proposes that the emergence of tonal language derived from the “unfathomable” sensations of pleasure and displeasure, which are symbolised through the “tone of the speaker.” Conceptual language, however, or what Nietzsche deems “gesture-symbolism,” is preceded by the tone of the speaker. He writes:

All degrees of pleasure and displeasure—expressions of one primal cause unfathomable to us—symbolize themselves in the tone of the speaker: whereas all the other conceptions are indicated by the gesture-symbolism of the speaker. In so far as that primal cause is the same in all men, the tonal subsoil is also the common one, comprehensible beyond the difference of language.\footnote{32}{Ibid.}

In terms of the two categories of the dual essence of language, we can extract what Nietzsche considers to be the most important element to language, its tonality as a universally “primal” expression of the “unfathomable,” which Nietzsche would later coin the Dionysian. Indeed, in The Birth of Tragedy, Nietzsche describes the musical sonority of the Dionysian and the imagetic Apollonian in perpetual reciprocation, thus making new metaphors possible. It is the tone of the speaker, for Nietzsche, that symbolises the first metaphor. Of course, if we are to consider Nietzsche’s position of language as “pure metaphor,” then we must reject the notion of a rigid, semantic meaning attached to the symbol itself. Instead, what we are left with is a tonal expression or “primal melody” of pain and pleasure, stemming from an
incomprehensible, primordial Dionysian “Will,” as he calls it later on, discharged through the Apollonian drive to represent the incomprehensible. Beyond this, Nietzsche considers the gestural-symbolic aspect of language to be a secondary phenomenon. He considers the consonants and vowels of symbolic language to be nothing other than “positions of the organs of speech.” He continues:

in short, gestures--; as soon as we imagine the word proceeding out of the mouth of man, then first of all the root of the word, and the basis of that gesture-symbolism, the tonal subsoil, the echo of the pleasure-and-displeasure-sensations originate.\(^{30}\)

Nietzsche claims that there is a “tonal subsoil” found beneath all “gesture-symbolism.” In other words, gesture-symbolism is the expression of a pain–pleasure stimulus emanating from the subsoil of universal tones, through a strophic repetition developing consonants and vowels all the way down to the muscular movements of the organism.

We are now familiar with Nietzsche’s position on the origin of tonal language through the response to pleasure and displeasure emanating from a “Will”; however, he reveals that the “Will” is not the origin of music.\(^{31}\) He writes: “the Will is the object of music but not the origin of it, that is the Will in its very greatest universality, as the most original manifestation, under which it is to be understood as all becoming.”\(^{32}\) Indeed, the “metaphorically unapproachable Will” is “the proper content and object of music.”\(^{33}\) Tonal language, for Nietzsche, originates “beyond all individuation”; it is the most basic imitation of nature. Therefore, one should assert that Nietzsche considers music and symbolic language to emerge simultaneously. Before ending his lecture, Nietzsche gives an example of Beethoven’s last quartets, which describe the fallibility of gesture symbolism in favour of the purely sonorous creation of imagetic metaphors. He writes:

\[^{30}\] Ibid.
\[^{31}\] In hindsight, we are to be wary of Nietzsche’s oversimplification of the “tonal subsoil” of all languages, which he considers a universal linguistic basis. One wonders whether Nietzsche had considered the various Chinese languages’ use of pitch inflections.
\[^{32}\] Ibid.
\[^{33}\] Ibid.
During the highest revelations of music we even feel involuntarily the crudeness of every figurative effort and of every emotion dragged in for purposes of analogy; for example, the last quartets of Beethoven quite put to shame all illustration and the entire realm of empiric reality. The symbol, in face of the god really revealing himself, has no longer any meaning; moreover it appears as an offensive superficiality.\(^{34}\)

To extend the above passage, it must be noted that Nietzsche regards Beethoven’s last movement of the Ninth Symphony as an adequate expression of the Dionysian excitement that allows for allegorical, symbolic expression, where, all of a sudden, there is “something to communicate” to the crowd. In other words, individuation arises out of Dionysian formlessness through symbolic communication vis-à-vis a tonal language.

It is clear that Nietzsche’s preoccupation in “On Music and Words” is focused on the relationship between the formation of language and music. Nietzsche’s obsession with the creation of new metaphors through the relationship between music and language is found throughout his oeuvre. According to Nietzsche, the creation of new metaphors is dependent on the musical sonority of a kind of primordial Dionysian instinct. In a similar vein, Nietzsche scholar Maria Branco points out that there exists “a dynamic, infinite and creative process” linking music, the muscles, and symbolic gesture for the creation of metaphor.\(^{35}\) In “On Music and Words,” and The Birth of Tragedy, Nietzsche considers the vocalisation of music to be the fundamental driving force in creating, and in the process, destroying metaphors. Branco points out, for example, that “Nietzsche valorizes vocal music as a guide for a theory of language, declaring that ‘we must regard the duality in the essence of language’ which is prefigured by nature as the original model of that combination of music and poetry.” According to Nietzsche, music and language are inseparable at their origin. Through Nietzsche’s assessment of the naturalistic, instinctive emergence of language, coupled with music, Nietzsche hints at the scene of human origin, beginning as a kind of

\(^{34}\) Ibid.

natural vocalising sonority; thus removing the origin of language away from a metaphysical source, and into a human one. It is clearly evident that Nietzsche maintains his position on language in *The Birth of Tragedy*. Branco, for example, asserts:

"The relationship between music and language, like the relation between the Dionysian and Apollonian drives, brings about a comprehensive and expressive gain that is not purely logical, but aesthetic or sensitive, and a heightened intelligibility to both spheres. Music prevents its textual metaphor from reducing itself to a fixed or determinate meaning, and text allows music to show itself in its most concrete, sensitive dimension and not as abstract or “absolute” music." 36

Indeed, the cause of distress at the “Socratic” removal of words from music is that the delicate balance between the creation of ever-new abstractions through the synthesis of music and language is destroyed. Instead, the gesture symbolism of words becomes concepts. Nietzsche elaborates on the formation of concepts in *On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense*.

Nevertheless, there are those scholars who disagree that Nietzsche considers language to have a dual origin. For instance, Kathleen Higgins’s *Nietzsche on Music* discusses the absolute importance of understanding Nietzsche’s position that he considers music to be “a transcendental precondition for the possibility of language.” 37 At the outset, Higgins contends that music is a more fundamental human category than language because it transcends symbolic representation. Yet, what meaning does music convey without its Apollonian representation? Through an examination of *The Birth of Tragedy*, Higgins examines Nietzsche’s position on the “meaning” of music. Higgins goes so far as to claim that music is “the paradigmatic vehicle for the expression of this Dionysian mode of self-understanding.” 38 She claims that what we find in

36 Ibid., 41.
38 Ibid.
Nietzsche is the “startling suggestion that we can communicate at all only because ours is a world in which music is possible.” 39 Why is it the case that music is required for humans to communicate? What is the basis of Higgins’s argument here? Higgins tells us that “the human capacity to experience music, according to Nietzsche, is something like a transcendental precondition for the possibility of language.” 40 Indeed, what makes this capacity to experience, and, in turn, to re-present music in the form of symbolic gesture possible, requires, as Nietzsche argues, a catalyst such as the Dionysian/Apollonian synthesis. As Nietzsche claims, music is the “paradigmatic Dionysian art.” 41 For Nietzsche, music is the direct expression of all that underlies existence. Yet, unlike Higgins, I contend that, along with Branco, symbolic language, which stems from a tonal vocalisation of the “unfathomable,” is represented for us to conceive of music.

As opposed to Higgins, Roger Hazelton maintains the position that an early Nietzsche was primarily dedicated to a theory of the dual emergence of language and music. Hazelton offers a general overview of Nietzsche’s theory of language during both Nietzsche’s early and late periods of writing in “Nietzsche’s Contribution to the Theory of Language.” In his article, Hazelton correctly suggests that Nietzsche’s early influences, during his academic and philological career, in terms of a theory of language, were primarily Herder and Gerber, along with Burckhardt and Ritschl, seen through the lens of a Schopenhauerian esthetical doctrine of a universal “Will.” Hazelton, for example, writes: “Nietzsche is primarily interested in the problem of the origin of language, which he approaches by discussing the relations between language and music.” 42 Moreover, and unlike Higgins’s proposal, Nietzsche rejects any effort to trace the origin of music to more “specialized phenomena such as feeling, ideas or images.” 43 Instead, Nietzsche claims that tones can produce both metaphors and feelings, but metaphors and feelings cannot produce tones. Hazelton offers an insight into Nietzsche’s contribution to the theory of the relationship between the origin of music and the origin of language when he writes: “Unlike music, language depends

39 Ibid., 663.
40 Ibid.
41 Ibid., 667.
43 Ibid.
on pictures and concepts and the like, arising in the effort to communicate them. It owes a curious dual allegiance, to its source in tone and to its objects in the phenomenal realm.”\textsuperscript{44} This is the very same tension that exists between the Apollonian and the Dionysian in Nietzsche’s \textit{The Birth of Tragedy}, in which he explores this musical/linguistic (Dionysian/Apollonian) dichotomy in depth. Hazelton quotes Nietzsche as writing that a gesture-symbolism is “a strophic text to that primal melody of the pleasure and displeasure-language … as our whole corporeality stands in relation to that original phenomenon, the Will, so the world built up out of its consonants and vowels stands in relation to its tonal basis.”\textsuperscript{45} Ultimately, music, for an early Nietzsche is an essential step for language to emerge, playing an integral part in the development of the human.

Music, for Nietzsche has the ability to create new metaphors, but language has the ability to recognise music as music. Nietzsche scholar, Douglas Smith, writes: “Music then has the capacity to generate myth by translating its Dionysian intuition into an allegorical image.”\textsuperscript{46} Indeed, if music provides the immediate insight into existence, it is the symbol, the metaphor, that furnishes Nietzsche’s Dionysian, primordial unutterable with its human representation.

\textbf{The Scene Revisited}

Before I begin an originary analysis of Nietzsche’s early thinking about the origin of language, it will be beneficial to the reader to revisit Gans’s originary scene of human representation as postulated in the introduction to \textit{The Scenic Imagination}.\textsuperscript{47} For Gans, the origin of the human is a protoscope where a group of hominids surround a central object of desire. Since not all of the members of the group can acquire the object (perhaps a recently deceased or dying animal) all at once, were they to try, an outbreak of violence would be inevitable. At this instant appears what Gans calls the

\textsuperscript{44} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid., 49.
\textsuperscript{46} Nietzsche, \textit{Birth of Tragedy}, xii.
“aborted gesture of appropriation.” One member of the group emits a sign or signal that re-presents the central object of desire through a gesture that at once points to the object and, at the same time, defers acquisition. In other words, we have a gesture of rescinded appropriation that functions to defer violence, and becomes a referent in-and-of-itself. This, Gans claims, is the event of the emergence of human consciousness. Language, then, emerges from the symbolic representation of a central object of desire.48 This symbolic representation, or sign, constitutes the deferral of what would normally be the outbreak of violence. The mediation of the sign replaces the object of desire with something imaginary and intangible. Because of the sign, all in the group can now “imaginarily possess” the representations of the central object (although the centre cannot be possessed, but only its representation) instead of it being appropriated through violence. The sacred centre—now represented by the sign—increases the mimetic activity of the protohumans; the new locus of collective attention now becomes the scene of possible violence due to the asymptotic increase in mimetic activity. Subsequently, the early humans must have perpetually re-presented the scene of human origins in order to survive. Not only is the sign an ostensive act of deferral leading to the birth of the human, it is the scene where the “name-of-God” emerges. Gans writes:

The sign that designates the inaccessible centre may be called the originary name-of-God. What humanity has from the beginning designated as God is not the object that occupies the centre of the circle but the Being of the centre itself, which subsists after the destruction of its original inhabitant and whose will, conceived as the force that held the circle and its centre in equilibrium at the moment of the emission of the sign, guarantees the sign’s timeless meaning. What we understand as God’s immortality is of the same nature as that of the sign, which belongs to an ontological universe beyond mortality to which we have access through the scene of representation.49

48 Ibid., 2.
49 Ibid., 3.
The paradoxical invention/discovery of God is reliant upon, and animated by, the emergence of the intangible yet conceivable sign; it is the impossibility of accessing the centre through the sign that creates the name-of-God and the originary resentment that follows.\textsuperscript{50} Because the emitted sign is intangible, it cannot be appropriated. Therefore, language, for Gans, functions as the ethical.

\textbf{Nietzsche, Gans, and the Aesthetic}

The music of a Dionysian chorus, for Nietzsche, is the definitive model for experiencing—as opposed to representing—the “essence of nature” or “Will” of existence.\textsuperscript{51} For Nietzsche, music is the fundamental precursor to conceptual language and is an essential component for the particulars that comprise symbolic language. Furthermore, Nietzsche considered symbolic language a secondary phenomenon, ultimately deriving from the wellspring of vocalised sonority. One might safely posit, then, that what Dionysian music is to Nietzsche, is what the sign is to Gans, however tangentially. For Nietzsche, the Dionysian lies at the heart of the origin. For Gans, it is the ostensive sign that creates the centre around which there is a human periphery. For generative anthropology, however, the sign must precede everything else human for there to exist a human at all. Following Schopenhauer, Nietzsche considers music, or the Dionysian, as “the unmediated language of the will.”\textsuperscript{52} Nevertheless, as we will discuss in the next section, Nietzsche would eventually separate himself from the classic transcendent model of the origin of language (from consciousness, to language, to communication) to a human anthropology (instinct to language/communication, to consciousness). The aim of this section is not to oppose Gans’s originary analysis of Nietzsche’s first published work. Rather, the aim is to uncover the essential, minimal sections of Nietzsche’s work that have perhaps been overlooked. Indeed, the relationship of Dionysian music to the allegorical image, is the most fundamental element of this work that deserves examination.

\textsuperscript{50} Gans remains agnostic about which ontologically precedes the other: God or the sign.
\textsuperscript{51} Nietzsche, \textit{Birth of Tragedy}, 26.
\textsuperscript{52} Ibid., 89.
The most decisive and important element of Nietzsche’s early theory of language in terms of an engagement with generative anthropology is his proposal that music—or, at least, the human recognition of music—arrives alongside the transmission and communal recognition of the sign. Nietzsche proposes that everything essentially human stems from a primordial urge to create metaphor from music. What interests us here is the separation of music and the symbol. How does generative anthropology reconcile Nietzsche’s motivation for the origins of tragedy out of the “spirit of music”? Music is, of course, non-representational; it is essentially what Nietzsche refers to as the Dionysian. The sign, then, is the aborted gesture of appropriation that presents an object. In other words, music, for Nietzsche, is the very precondition on which language relies. Can one draw any logical synergies from the ideas set forth in “On Music and Words” and The Birth of Tragedy with generative anthropology?

One way of analysing the proximity of Nietzsche’s notion of the role music plays in the creation of language is to examine Gans’s article “The Beginning and End of Esthetic Form.” As the title suggests, the aesthetic form has a beginning and an end. The aesthetic form begins with the “opening” of a mimetic crisis (either real or representational), and it ends with a formal closure, thereby deferring mimetic conflict. We are already aware that Gans considers the originary aspect of language to have the double function of deferring conflict and of representing the originary scene, not to uncover truths. Nevertheless, in “The Beginning and End of Esthetic Form,” Gans attempts to utilise music as the general model for the aesthetic. Indeed, the aesthetic for Gans is a “crisis-deferral.” For him, all cultural phenomena stem from a collective crisis of sorts. Indeed, to defer what Gans calls “real violence,” the collective must enact and reenact a controlled form of crises and deferrals through the various aesthetic forms. Gans contends the aesthetic form, “music, like language, constructs a temporal sequence of elements presented in a well-defined order, subject to often complex rules of composition or ‘syntax,’ but without any ‘semantics’ to speak of.” Gans recognises music as the most complete “esthetic form.” What is the aesthetic, for Gans, however? Gans claims that the aesthetic is simply the experience of form; the aesthetic is also the mimetic repetition and reproduction of an

event. He further claims that this repetition of an event is something wholly representational, where we are able to “imagine it to be real without believing it to be so.” Gans’s definition here of the aesthetic becomes clear when we examine the relationship between language and art. He writes:

This operation becomes less mysterious if we reflect on the obvious parallel between art and language. Words too are not real in the worldly sense, and yet we understand them by constructing imaginary models that correspond to their meaning, whether we believe in their truth or not. It is the strength of this parallel that makes it appropriate to consider all art, even so nonobjective an art as music, as a form of representation.

Thus far, we know that Gans’s position on the aesthetic is the representation of “worldly” phenomena, music notwithstanding. From here, Gans takes pains to relate contemplation with the aesthetic experience. He writes:

The esthetic experience is that of form. The signs of language and other sign-systems are “transparent” to their meanings. In everyday communication, we do not contemplate words, we consider what they are trying to tell us and take the appropriate action. But we contemplate art and take as a result of this contemplation no worldly action at all, since art does not refer to the world.

So, if we are to analyse the nonobjective aesthetic form of music, what is it that we are actually contemplating? Gans claims what is actually happening during an experience of form is an oscillation between “a form-of-object-as-desire” and “the form-in-itself.” In other words, if we are to take the aesthetic form of music as our case in point, the spectator “oscillates between an imaginary belonging to the world of the artwork and awareness of the formal barrier to this belonging.” In short, there must exist an operation of formal closure of an object of perception if there is to exist

54 Ibid., 10.
55 Ibid.
56 Ibid.
57 Ibid., 11.
the aesthetic. Therefore, for Gans, the ostensivity of the sign precedes music. Let us take into consideration the following statement. Gans writes:

It is not sufficient that man perceive musical relations; he must have the potential to experience them as significant with sufficient force to make their formal closure, independently of reference to other activities (including the other arts), an adequate motivation for the oscillatory experience we call the esthetic effect. It is not enough to be able to hear music; one must be capable of perceiving it as beautiful.58

We cannot ignore the fundamental difference between Gans’s notion of music as existing only through the sign’s formal closure, and an early Nietzsche’s supposition that symbolic language is constructed out of an instinctive, Dionysian, musical intuition. So, how do we account for Gans’s proposition that the sign must come before the presentation of music in light of Nietzsche’s position that music precedes language by means of a Dionysian instinct that transforms into an allegorical image (sign)? Indeed, Gans’s proposition that ostensivity must precede the aesthetic clearly indicates that symbolic language must logically precede the “experience” of the aesthetic. The only fundamental distinction to be made between Nietzsche’s theory of language and Gans’s is that of the formal closure of the sign needed to contemplate the pure aesthetic form of music. Nietzsche, by contrast, relies on an external nerve stimulus that is transmuted into a sonorous-like gesture, and then into a first metaphor. Nevertheless, Gans, like Nietzsche, is careful not to reduce music to a mere element of an originary sign. Rather, Gans “integrates” music into his minimal hypothesis. He writes:

But if human musicality cannot simply be deduced from the originary hypothesis, neither is it merely posited. It must be integrated, as I have attempted to do here very briefly, into a model of the scene of human origin. This is a model that tends toward the deductive while remaining fundamentally narrative. By adding “musicality” to it we do more than

58 Ibid., 18.
merely increase its content. We understand the capacity to appreciate the play of pure form as a necessary consequence of man’s fundamental capacity for linguistic representation; but this necessity cannot be said to be inherent in the concept of language, or in the concept of the human. This extension of the concept is the originary model for Kant’s “synthetic a priori.”

Indeed, this “capacity to appreciate the play of pure form” is the same capacity for symbolic representation. In some ways, this is not at odds with Nietzsche’s theory of language; there is only a reversal in Nietzsche’s scene of origin. Nietzsche contends that if the human is musical, then the human can speak. Gans, on the other hand, claims that if the human can reproduce an external event through formal closure, then she/he has the ability to recognise music as an aesthetic form. He writes:

We conclude that if man can speak, he must be musical. But we cannot deduce this abstractly, because there is no abstract Idea of speech or music to refer to. There is only human speech, and human music. To study either speech or music, or both, is to engage in anthropology.

There is no denying that a synergy exists between Gans’s idea that music and language stem from the human and Nietzsche’s contention that language and music have a dual essence. In other words, both theorists contend that the transcendent emerges from the immanent. Now that an account of Nietzsche’s early thoughts on language (“On the Origins of Language” and “On Music and Words”) have been provided, I will discuss the topical proximities and distances between Nietzsche’s later development on a definitive account for the emergence of language with that of Gans’s work Signs of Paradox, in relation to On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense (1873).

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59 Ibid., 19.
60 Ibid.
From Nietzsche to Gans: *On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense*, and *Signs of Paradox*

I will now move the discussion to *On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense* (1873), where besides Nietzsche’s early lecture notes (“On the Origins of Language” and “On Music and Words”), there is nowhere else in his work that gives such a complete description of a theory of the origin of language. Indeed, *On Truth and Lie* is the precursor to all of Nietzsche’s thinking about the origin of language, where his position changes very little right up to *Ecce Homo* (1888). Yet how does Nietzsche’s unfinished work, published over one hundred years ago, compare to Gans’s hypothesis of the origin of language? First, Gans would suggest that a “theory” does not equate to a scene. A theory still assumes the existence of the declarative sentence, without offering a hypothesis for the declarative sentence itself. Nevertheless, Nietzsche, I argue, depicts a compelling scene of human representation in *On Truth and Lie* by deflating universal constants and questioning the epistemology of objective truth through a particular understanding of the origin and function of language. Drawing upon *On Truth and Lie*, I will evaluate the precise elements in Nietzsche’s work that remain valid in comparison to Gans’s hypothesis on the origin of language, as found in *Signs of Paradox*, paying particular attention to the chapter “The Two Varieties of Truth.”

*On Truth and Lie* is a critical text for generative anthropology to examine for several reasons: (1) It is Nietzsche’s first well defined, established attempt at dealing with what he calls the “genesis of language.” One aim, then, is to see where Nietzsche’s theory of language aligns with generative anthropology and where his explanation of language has shortfalls. (2) Nietzsche’s notion of “truth” as an established convention is not, I would argue, outside the realms of generative anthropology. Indeed, Gans’s hypothesis on the origin of language models the originary sign as an arbitrary convention of sorts (even if every word is “the name of God”). The importance of the sign is not whether or not it is arbitrary, but its paradoxical function as appropriating the external referent and becoming a sacred, remembered moment. (3) Nietzsche designates language as being entirely within the arena of the human; there is no metaphysical intervention. Similarly, one of generative anthropology’s fundamental
assertions is that the emission of the first gesture triggers the event of the emergence of the human as human. (4) It is in this text where Nietzsche also develops a thesis of the genesis of concepts from words. Again, Gans offers a hypothesis on the birth of conceptual thought in “Plato and the Birth of Conceptual Thought,” in Signs of Paradox. Indeed, there many intriguing passages to be found in Nietzsche’s early account of language that appear, at first hand, to complement Gans’s originary hypothesis in more than one way. For example, we have both parties in agreement on the social cohesion that emerges from the use of language. Not only this, but Nietzsche describes the human mind as something that arose for the preservation of the individual and group through the “simulation” of the external world: a clear synergy with Gans’s notion of the purpose of the aborted gesture of appropriation. At first glance, Nietzsche is at an historical disadvantage due to the magnitude of rational inquiry about language origins made since his death. Nevertheless, Nietzsche’s theory still resonates with contemporary thinking on the origin of language. For instance, Nietzsche contends that language is a phenomenon that gradually developed in unison with consciousness, which in turn was the precursor to human communities. The fundamental structures of generative anthropology, I contend, are in agreement with Nietzsche on many levels. For one, Gans agrees with Nietzsche’s notion that language must have emerged communally in order for the sign to be reciprocated. I will examine this contention below.

According to the first section of On Truth and Lie, language is something that arrived quite late, perhaps through the synergies that existed through musical tonality and imagetic representation (as was discussed previously). What do we make, however, of Nietzsche’s understanding of the function of language? What is its purpose? Once language begins its precarious journey, what is its meaning for the human? And what is its relationship to the human? Written one year after The Birth of Tragedy (1872), On Truth and Lie is a work whose focus orbits around the notion that the established “truths” designated by the conventions of language are merely a socially, obligatorily imposed consensus whose function is to both create and maintain order within a community. Simply put, this text challenges the certitude of human knowledge through a natural-cultural theory of both the origin and development of language. Indeed, humanity has, according to Nietzsche, forgotten that our arbitrary lexicons are
merely nerve stimuli (triggered by external phenomena) converted to images, then sounds; finally we “believe” we know something about an “X” and so make our moral value-judgements based on these false, all-too-human assumptions. Yet as the title suggests, Nietzsche’s early work is about the relationship between truth and human language through the lens of a non-or extramoral sense. It was Nietzsche’s early contention in this work that the origin of symbolic language was an impulse, or “will,” to imitate an object as a response to pleasure–pain nerve stimulation. Although this text does not explain the direct passage from horizontal animality to symbol-using humans, *On Truth and Lie* does offer a complete account of Nietzsche’s theory of the emergence and limitations of language.

Nietzsche introduces *On Truth and Lie* with an allegorical fable on the invention of knowledge. He claims that a certain type of “clever animal” (humans) once inhabiting the earth had invented “knowledge.” Moreover, “after nature had drawn a few breaths,” the clever animals had to die. From this passage, Nietzsche reminds us how “shadowy and flighty, aimless and arbitrary” the human intellect appears in relation to a nigh-infinite cosmos. Nietzsche gives us an account of exactly what this shadowy “intellect” is. He writes:

> The intellect, as a means for the preservation of the individual, unfolds its chief powers in simulation; for this is the means by which the weaker, less robust individuals preserve themselves, since they are denied the chance of waging the struggle for existence with horns or the fangs of beasts of prey.⁶¹

Nietzsche’s contention is that the “intellect” is a means for the preservation of the individual by means of simulating various external phenomena. What does Nietzsche mean here by the intellect unfolding its powers in simulation? Of course, to simulate something is to imitate it. Indeed, the chief function of the human, for Nietzsche, is to imitate something it sees and hears in the external, languageless world. Interestingly, the above passage from Nietzsche is startlingly close to Girard’s mimetic theory—we

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will arrive at this thought later. Nevertheless, according to Nietzsche, the imitation of an external object is then incorporated into the body first as a nerve stimulus, then down the causal chain from word to sound. Here we arrive at the word. He writes:

The “thing in itself” (for that is what pure truth, without consequences, would be) is quite incomprehensible to the creators of language and not at all worth aiming for. One designates only the relations of things to man, and to express them one calls on the boldest metaphors. A nerve stimulus, first transposed into an image—first metaphor. The image, in turn, imitated by a sound—second metaphor.62

Here, Nietzsche is pointing out that it is quite impossible to “know” the “thing-in-itself” by means of a perception that stems from a nerve stimulus into an image-sound (word). Indeed, every word is merely the metaphorical representation of the relationship between external phenomena we presuppose to exist with us. Nietzsche identifies that, as a consequence of the human only ever able to value the relation between itself and the eternal world, the “X” thing-in-itself remains forever hidden from our purview. From this premise, Nietzsche turns his gaze to the notion of “truth.” In a most famous passage, he writes:

What, then, is truth? A mobile army of metaphors, metonyms, and anthropomorphisms—in short, a sum of human relations which have been enhanced, transposed, and embellished poetically and rhetorically, and which after long use seems firm, canonical, and obligatory to a people: truths are illusions about which one has forgotten that this is what they are; metaphors which are worn out and without sensuous power; coins which have lost their pictures and now matter only as metal, no longer as coins.63

Here, we must entertain that the way in which this “sum of human relations” has taken hold of (perhaps invented) “truth” is by means of a slow, drawn-out, gradual

62 Ibid.
63 Ibid.
process seemingly spanning generations in order to become a sign system whose participants have lost a gesture’s original poetic and rhetorical singularity. These metaphors, which first arrive as nerve stimuli, then as images, then finally sounds/gestures/grunts were originally a kind of outburst in reaction to the external world. The relaying back and forth of these same “metaphors” over the long distances of time betrays the human memory. We arrive at the present with an endless combination of these metaphors, but we have forgotten their origins as having little significance when discussing the idea of “meaning” or “truth.” What is ultimately important in On Truth and Lie, in relation to generative anthropology, is Nietzsche’s emphasis on language as lacking truth. The only “truth” arising from language is the “pact” made between individual humans for the sake of social cohesion. Indeed, if each nerve-stimulus response is entirely unique and individual, there cannot be anything beyond a sum of relations, but only the imperfection of metaphors.

I will now summarise Nietzsche’s proposal of the emergence of language as proposed in On Truth and Lie. Nietzsche outlines a hypothesis for the gradual development of language. For the creation of language, there are three steps to be taken: (1) There exists a nerve stimulus from the external world that is transposed into an image, for instance, a rock. (2) The now transposed imagetic nerve stimulus becomes, for Nietzsche, the first metaphor. (3) The image is responded to by an acoustical “drive” (sonorous articulation) that attempts to simulate the external image: the second metaphor. What is of interest here, in terms of generative anthropology, is Nietzsche’s emphasis on the origin as being a “nerve stimulus” that is expressed through metaphor, derived from a primordial “drive.” Indeed, Nietzsche posits that metaphor cannot give a true account of the “thing-in-itself” by the very nature of being anthropomorphic. Nietzsche’s suspicion is that the human has no verifiable way to obtain truth through metaphor; everything human is metaphor, even our truths. Perhaps one day we will find another intelligent, conscious life-form that can verify our projections and representations of “objects” as holding some truth correspondence. For, as Nietzsche proclaims: “One is always wrong, but with two,

64 Nietzsche uses the German word uebertragung for metaphor, which is literally translated from Aristotle’s use of the Greek word metaphorein. This encapsulates the Aristotelian idea that words can exchange and transfer their meaning. Nietzsche finds this to be proof that word assignment is not only arbitrary, but “pure metaphor.”
truth begins.—One cannot prove his case, but two are irrefutable.” 65 Nevertheless, we are a suspicious lot who may even suspect the validity of the “signs” emitted by a future interstellar neighbour.

Ultimately, Nietzsche considers the guttural, sonorous articulations of the early human as a mere reaction to an external stimulus through an ancient “drive.” It is this interaction between drive and metaphor that forms the basis of Nietzsche’s arguments in *On Truth and Lie*. As has been noted, generative anthropology’s account of the emergence of language and the human arrives with a scene. As we take into consideration Nietzsche vague conception of a nerve stimulus, could we not find proximity between the generative anthropological scene and Nietzsche’s external stimulus? I will discuss this shortly.

### An Originary Analysis: On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense?

On the one hand, Gans’s originary hypothesis is inherently universalist. Gans claims that all humans originated with the emergence of language on a scene, where the gesture of appropriation is aborted through the paradoxical function of the sign as a gesture of representation. Indeed, this suggests that there is a minimal, universal claim to be made for the human: language. On the other hand, we have Nietzsche explicitly stating that there is no universal, objective truth, whether it be from the sciences, language, or religion. Ultimately the first forms of human language, for Nietzsche, were “artistic” impulses, experienced by individuals on individual levels; hence, the imperfection of collective metaphors. These artistic impulses (arising from a *drive* to represent the external world) were gradually replaced with linguistic conventions for the sake of communal cohesion. Clearly, Nietzsche is demonstrating the problem of “truth.” Accordingly, for him, the foundation of language is the “drive” to represent external phenomena (for instance, a rock). If, indeed, each individual responds to a particular external stimulus via an imagetic symbol, then we must characterise each individual response as closed off from another’s individual response to the same

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stimulus. Therefore, each human metaphor is entirely distinct from every other. Hence there cannot be any communion, for Nietzsche, between the thing-in-itself and symbolic language charged by an instinctive “artistic drive” to represent stimuli. According to this logic, the very metaphysical notion of “truth” is ultimately erroneous. One theoretical manoeuvre to reconcile Gans and Nietzsche is to consider generative anthropology’s position on the notion of truth in relation to the originary hypothesis as found in Signs of Paradox.

In On Truth and Lie, Nietzsche writes: “whence in all the world comes the urge for truth?”66 The chapter “The Two Varieties of Truth” in Gans’s Signs of Paradox considers the problem of truth in relation to his hypothesis of the origin of language. For Gans, there are two distinctive variations of truth. The first category of truth is the ostensive (the truth of faith); the second, the declarative (the truth of reason). Language begins with the ostensive; that is, the first sign/grunt/gesture’s “intention” was to directly demonstrate its object of inquiry. Ostensive truth, for Gans, simply means “significance is prior to signification.”67 Of course, the ostensive emerges before declarative truth. Indeed, if we were to peer beyond the propositional thought of the declarative we would arrive at the original ostensive gesture that was to simultaneously defer violence and produce formal closure of the originary sign. To go beyond propositions, toward the ostensive, means, for Gans, the escape from the “metaphysical prison-house of language,” whence ostensive truth “liberates from the formal propositions of metaphysics.”68 Yet what is ostensive truth? Obviously, ostensive truth must be explained through a “model of the familial declarative conception.”69 Here Gans offers the analogy of a child pointing to a cat, but the child declares the cat to be a “dog.” The use of the ostensive in this example “cannot be understood as simply equivalent to the use of the correct sign.”70 What is vitally important for the ostensive truth of the sign, according to Gans, is the “significance prior to signification; the question of whether it is appropriate to use a sign at all [pointing to the cat] outweighs that of the appropriate sign to use [using the incorrect

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66 Ibid.
67 Gans, Signs of Paradox, 52.
68 Ibid., 51.
69 Ibid., 52.
70 Ibid.
declarative “dog”].”\textsuperscript{71} In other words, we cannot conceive of the originary, ostensive sign as having a correlation to an assigned meaning. Rather, Gans claims the ostensive truth lies in the potential of something worth being re-presented in the first place, something a “nascent community” of protohumans can draw their unified attention to, and something that may be a cause of mimetic violence (if the gesture was not to be uttered or enacted). In other words, the thing that is to be signed through an ostensive gesture must be charged with the potential for the protocommunity to perceive it as a source of unity or disunity. For Gans, the truth of the ostensive is the “birth of the human.”\textsuperscript{72} Why is the ostensive truth the “truth of faith,” however? Gans would content that the “gesture of representation” (the first sign) instead of a “gesture of appropriation” is the communally accepted truth “as revelation of central Being.”\textsuperscript{73}

In other words, the ostensive sign (or, pointing to an object of dual relevance: unity and disunity), for the emerging community of protohumans, reveals not the object in-itself. Rather, the ostensive sign “recognises an object that can only be represented.”\textsuperscript{74} The sign that replaces an object in its absence is the emergence of the imperative (declarative). Gans claims that there is a tension in the absence of the ostensive, which leads to the “awaiting characteristic of the imperative.”\textsuperscript{75} In other words, the imperative is the “making present” of what is now absent from the scene. For Gans, this making present is an expression of desire.

Let us go back to Nietzsche’s theory of language as espoused in \textit{On Truth and Lie}. What are we to make of Gans’s contention of ostensive truth in relation to Nietzsche’s theory of language? It would be useful to remember Nietzsche’s position that the representation of a nerve stimulus is an \textit{instinctive}, superfluous, overreaching “artistic drive.” An obvious observation is that this “artistic drive” corresponds to Gans’s notion of the desire that stems from the imperative, making the absent referent present in the imagination. Yet can we reconcile Gans’s ostensive sign with Nietzsche’s theory? Towards the end of the first section in \textit{On Truth and Lie}, Nietzsche offers a

\textsuperscript{71} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{72} Ibid., 53.
\textsuperscript{73} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{74} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{75} Ibid., 54.
striking example of the problem of truth in metaphors by examining the formation of concepts. He writes:

Everything which distinguishes man from the animals depends upon this ability to volatilize perceptual metaphors in a schema, and thus to dissolve an image into a concept. For something is possible in the realm of these schemata which could never be achieved with the vivid first impressions: the construction of a pyramidal order according to castes and degrees, the creation of a new world of laws, privileges, subordinations, and clearly marked boundaries—a new world, one which now confronts that other vivid world of first impressions as more solid, more, universal, better, known, and more human than the immediately perceived world, and thus as the regulative and imperative world. Whereas each perceptual metaphor is individual and without equals and is therefore able to elude all classification, the great edifice of concepts displays the rigid regularity of a Roman columbarium and exhales in logic that strength and coolness which is characteristic of mathematics. Anyone who has felt this cool breath [of logic] will hardly believe that even the concept—which is as bony, foursquare, and transposable as a die—is nevertheless merely the residue of a metaphor, and that the illusion which is involved in the artistic transference of a nerve stimulus into images is, if not the mother, then the grandmother of every single concept.76

To go back to first premises, for Nietzsche, “a word is the image of a nerve-stimulus in sounds.” Yet there is a fundamental difference between Nietzsche’s artistic transference of a response to a nerve stimulus and Gans’s hypothesis. On the one hand, Nietzsche is referring to the artistic drive, or instinct, to utter a word. On the other hand, Gans is referring to the production of the sign as self-demonstrating something significant for it to be uttered in the first place. For one, Nietzsche must rely on the aesthetic for the human to emerge as a human. In the face of generative anthropology’s originary sign, we must declare that Nietzsche has come compellingly

76 Ibid.
close to a logically plausible hypothesis of the origin of language. Nietzsche’s theory of language as espoused in *On Truth and Lie* closely approximates many fundamental theoretical postulates found in the originary hypothesis: (1) the emergence of a community with language, (2) the emergence of human consciousness as language, (3) the primacy of language as an anthropological model for the human, and (4) the recognition that language is something immanent, not transcendent. If only Nietzsche had taken a step further to consider the importance of the primacy and function of the sign itself.

Indeed, Nietzsche’s Apollonian response (the sign) to a Dionysian flux of nature (external stimulus) does give an indication of the ostensive, but it offers no transition to the imperative. We have here in Nietzsche’s theory as espoused in *On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense* an ostensive without communal recognition. Indeed, Nietzsche, like Gans, understands the problems with truth. For Nietzsche, there are no metaphysical truths, but only anthropomorphic ones. Ultimately, Nietzsche would conclude: “this conceptual edifice is an imitation [artistic process] of temporal, spatial, and numerical relationships in the domain of metaphor.” Yet if we are to reconcile Nietzsche’s early theory of language with the originary hypothesis, we must align his thinking with Gans’s proposition that there exist three steps in the evolution of language: the ostensive, imperative, and declarative. For Nietzsche, language is not communally reciprocated as such. Instead, a single individual, or protohuman, allocates a sign to an object (this is a pure expression of the will to power, as will be discussed later), where resentment is the outcome for other individuals for not having allocated the sign first.

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The Gay Science

*The Gay Science* (1882), represents what most Nietzsche scholars agree to be the beginning of his middle period of writing, and the end of his relationship with Richard Wagner. *The Gay Science* is a work that houses many ideas on language. Yet, the work indicates no real change in Nietzsche’s thinking about language as emerging from an instinctive impulse, as outlined in *On Truth and Lie*. Rather, Nietzsche utilises his theory of language in *On Truth and Lie* to illuminate many other philosophical problems, as we will see. What this indicates is that Nietzsche implements the same logic as Gans, by examining human problems from human beginnings. By examining problems from a point of reference, from an origin, *The Gay Science* covers a wide array of subjects, including science, religion, morality, metaphysics, and mathematics.

What is interesting about this book is that, quite often, Nietzsche will examine a particular subject from first premises, which he considers to be constituted by the error of language and consciousness.

This work marks the beginning of many of Nietzsche’s mature ideas, such as the first glimpse of his philosophy of the “eternal return.” More importantly—and rarely attested to by scholarship—it is an explicit examination of the origin of the human and of many human categories, including the ethical. Not only this, but Nietzsche’s late addition to *The Gay Science* indicates that his thoughts on language and consciousness remain consistent from 1883 (*On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense*) to 1888 (book 5 of *The Gay Science*). The titles of the aphorisms speak for themselves: “What preserves the species,” “Consciousness,” “The consciousness of appearance,” “On the origin of poetry,” “Origin of knowledge,” “Origin of the logical,” “Origin of sin,” “Of the origin of religion,” “Origin of ‘good’ and ‘bad,’” “On the origin of scholars,” “Once more on the origin of scholars,” “On the origin of religions,” “On the genius of the species,” “The origin of our concept of knowledge.”

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78 See chapter 4 for a detailed analysis of Nietzsche’s “eternal return” in light of generative anthropology.
Here, I will examine key aphorisms found in *The Gay Science* that are emblematic of, and a continuation of, Nietzsche’s earlier work that tackles the problem of the origin of language (and consciousness). I will also examine the possibility that Nietzsche’s view of consciousness in *The Gay Science* allows him to also discredit the ethical aspect of language as a mere aesthetic phenomenon. Finally, I will analyse selected passages from *The Gay Science* alongside Gans’s *Signs of Paradox* in order to explore where Nietzsche’s view of language and the ethical lies on the originary scene of human representation.

From the outset of book 1 of *The Gay Science*, under the aphorism entitled “The teachers of the purpose of existence,” Nietzsche declares that there exists an ancient instinct responsible for the preservation of the species. Regardless of the conscious intentions of an individual, Nietzsche claims that this instinct encompasses the singular task of the human. He writes:

> Whether I contemplate men with benevolence or with an evil eye, I always find them concerned with a single task, all of them and everyone of them in particular: to do what is good for the preservation of the human race. Not from any feeling of love for the race, but merely because nothing in them is older, stronger, more inexorable and unconquerable than this instinct—because this instinct constitutes the essence of our species, our herd.79

Indeed, wherever Nietzsche speaks of consciousness in *The Gay Science*, he declares it to be something that has emerged quite recently alongside language (language and consciousness are the same thing in Nietzsche’s thought) and that stems from the instinct for the preservation of the species. In book 1, under the aphorism “Consciousness,” Nietzsche examines consciousness as the latest development of the human, which, for Nietzsche, is the most “unfinished” and “unstrong.” He writes:

Consciousness is the last and latest development of the organic and hence also what is most unfinished and unstrong. Consciousness gives rise to countless errors that lead an animal or man to perish sooner than necessary, “exceeding destiny,” as Homer puts it. If the conserving associations of the instincts were not so very much more powerful, and if it did not serve on the whole as a regulator, humanity would have to perish of its misjudgments and its fantasies with open eyes, of its lack of thoroughness and its credulity—in short, of its consciousness: rather, without the former, humanity would long have disappeared.  

Thus, according to Nietzsche, the fundamental mechanism to conserve the human is the instinct for preservation. Nietzsche continues:

This ridiculous overestimation and misunderstanding of consciousness has the very useful consequence that it prevents an all too fast development of consciousness. Believing that they possess consciousness, men have not exerted themselves very much to acquire it; and things haven’t changed much in this respect. To this day the task of incorporating knowledge and making it instinctive is only beginning to dawn on the human eye and is not yet clearly discernible; it is a task that is seen only by those who have comprehended that so far we have incorporated only our errors and that all our consciousness relates to errors.

Clearly, the above passage indicates Nietzsche is suspicious of consciousness to the point that he considers consciousness a recent and unfinished development of the human. The above passage also hints at another of Nietzsche’s philosophical aims, that is, to naturalise language and consciousness into the stronger instincts, to be a second nature, and guided by the will of the instincts or drives. Yet, not only is Nietzsche suspicious of the sign world (consciousness) because it is a late, recent, retroactive development, but he also claims that there is an excess of consciousness by means of the evolutionary need for humans to communicate quickly and

80 Ibid.
81 Ibid., 74.
effectively. He writes: “Where need and distress have forced men for a long time to communicate and understand each other quickly and subtly, the ultimate result is an excess of this strength and art of communication.”\(^{82}\) In the same aphorism, Nietzsche emphasises the notion that the sign is merely a surface reality; consciousness is merely a web, or collection of surface symbols whose utility is merely the “pressure of the need for communication.” Nietzsche writes:

Supposing that this observation is correct, I may now proceed to summarise that consciousness has developed only under pressure of the need for communication; that from the start it was needed and useful only between human beings (particularly between those who commanded and those that obeyed); and that it also develops only in proportion to the degree of this utility. Consciousness is really only a net of communication between human beings; it is only as such that it had to develop; a solitary human being who lived like a beast of prey would not have needed it.\(^{83}\)

Nietzsche continues:

Man, like every living being, thinks continually without knowing it; the thinking that rises to consciousness is only the smallest part of all this—the most superficial and worst part—for only this conscious thinking takes the form of words, which is to say signs of communication, and this fact uncovers the origin of consciousness.\(^{84}\)

The superficiality of consciousness, for Nietzsche, is precisely why he is suspicious of the sign world, of words, of consciousness, of language. The words that are thought and executed or communicated consciously are the most “superficial” and “worst part” of consciousness. According to this passage, words, or “signs of communication,” reside in the instinct for the need to communicate within the herd, or herd instinct. Nietzsche writes:

\(^{82}\) Ibid., 298.
\(^{83}\) Ibid., 299.
\(^{84}\) Ibid, emphasis in the original.
In brief, the development of language and the development of consciousness (not of reason but merely of the way reason enters consciousness) go hand in hand. Add to this that not only language serves as a bridge between human beings but also as a mien, a pressure, a gesture. The emergence of our sense impressions into our own consciousness, the ability to fix them and, as it were, exhibit them externally, increased proportionately with the need to communicate them to others by means of signs.\(^85\)

According to this logic, consciousness engenders language and language develops consciousness. As Nietzsche says, the two go hand in hand. There exists a drive that “drives” us to “exhibit” signs externally. Yet as the community of speakers grows, the “need” to exhibit these external signs apparently grows. Nietzsche continues:

The human being inventing signs is at the same time the human being who becomes ever more keenly conscious of himself. It was only as a social animal that man acquired self-consciousness—which he is still in the process of doing, more and more.\(^86\)

In no way, according to Nietzsche, are we ever able to understand a universe in utter chaos by means of human language. He writes: “The total character of the world, however, is in all eternity chaos—in the sense not of a lack of necessity but of a lack of order, arrangement, form, beauty, wisdom, and whatever other names there are for our aesthetic anthropomorphisms.”\(^87\) To conceive of a theory of language as an aesthetic phenomenon allows Nietzsche to critique human “knowledge” and “logic” in the aphorisms “Origin of knowledge,” and “Origin of the logical.” In “Origin of knowledge,” Nietzsche rebuffs his ideas in *On truth and Lie*. He writes: “Over immense periods of time the intellect produced nothing but errors. A few of these proved to be useful and helped to preserve the species: those who hit upon or

\(^{85}\) Ibid., 168, emphasis in the original.
\(^{86}\) Ibid.
\(^{87}\) Ibid.
inherited these had better luck in their struggle for themselves and their progeny.”88 In “Origin of the logical,” Nietzsche elicits the same idea: that which stems from language cannot be trusted. The aphorism is worth quoting at length. He writes:

How did logic come into existence in man’s head? Certainly out of illogic, whose realm originally must have been immense. Innumerable beings who made inferences in a way different from ours perished; for all that, their ways might have been truer. Those, for example, who did not know how to find often enough what is “equal” as regards both nourishment and hostile animals—those, in other words, who subsumed things too slowly and cautiously—were favoured with a lesser probability of survival than those who guessed immediately upon encountering similar instances that they must be equal. The dominant tendency, however, to treat as equal what is merely similar—an illogical tendency, for nothing is really equal—is what first created any basis for logic.89

The above passage, written in 1882, is clearly echoing Nietzsche’s theory of language in On Truth and Lie. For example, in On Truth and Lie, Nietzsche postulates the formation of concepts. He writes:

Let us still give special consideration to the formation of concepts. Every word immediately becomes a concept, inasmuch as it is not intended to serve as a reminder of the unique and wholly individualized original experience to which it owes its birth, but must at the same time fit innumerable, more or less similar cases—which means, strictly speaking, never equal—in other words, a lot of unequal cases. Every concept originates through our equating what is unequal. No leaf ever wholly equates another, and the concept “leaf” is formed through an arbitrary abstraction from these individual differences, through forgetting the distinctions; and now it gives rise to the idea that in nature there might be

88 Ibid.
89 Ibid.
something besides the leaves which would be “leaf”—some kind of original form after which all the leaves have been woven, marked, copied, colored, curled, and painted, but by unskilled hands, so that no copy turned out to be a correct, reliable, and faithful image of the original form.\textsuperscript{90}

In the aphorism, “Cause and effect,” Nietzsche states that nothing can be explained in terms of cause and effect. Why? Again, it is the aesthetic anthropomorphisms we utilise to represent the world that fail to perceive what is actually there. Nietzsche writes: “How could we possibly explain anything? We operate only with things that do not exist: lines, planes, bodies, atoms, divisible time spans, divisible spaces. How should explanations be at all possible when we first turn everything into an image, our image!”\textsuperscript{91} Of course, for Nietzsche, the image is the first step in the process of metaphorisation. Yet even beyond \textit{The Gay Science}, Nietzsche continually describes language and consciousness as surface phenomena. For example, in \textit{Beyond Good and Evil}, the commentary and addition to his self-proclaimed magnum opus, \textit{Thus Spoke Zarathustra}, he offers the attentive reader a close inspection into the utilisation of his understanding of the function of consciousness as espoused in \textit{The Gay Science}. Nietzsche explicitly states in \textit{Beyond Good and Evil} that “consciousness is a surface phenomena” where “the greatest part of conscious thought must still be attributed to instinctive activity.”\textsuperscript{92}

\textbf{Signs of Paradox: Eric Gans}

The fundamental proposition put forth by Gans in \textit{Signs of Paradox: Irony, Resentment, and Other Mimetic Structures} is that the human, including all human culture, was spontaneously generated “through the deferral of violence through representation.”\textsuperscript{93} In \textit{Signs of Paradox}, Gans proposes a new way of looking at both

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{90} Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{91} Nietzsche, \textit{The Gay Science}, 172.
  \item \textsuperscript{92} Nietzsche, \textit{Beyond Good and Evil}, 73.
  \item \textsuperscript{93} Gans, \textit{Signs of Paradox}, 35.
\end{itemize}
the human and the history of thought; he calls this originary thinking. Nothing short of a new way of looking at the human, Gans proposes with exactitude what originary thinking constitutes. For Gans, originary thinking constitutes, in a sense, the formalism of paradox; without paradox, thinking becomes impossible. Naturally, his book is dedicated to the relationship between paradox and the minimal elements of the human, stemming from language: irony, resentment, and other mimetic structures. Gans also accounts for the plausibility of his “new” way of thinking. He writes: “The purpose of originary thinking is not to supplant other modes of thought, but to provide a common point of departure that persists as a link between them.”94 Indeed, what establishes a link between modes of thought is the representation of the collective transmission of the first sign. The origin of language, then, is the fundamental characteristic that appears to situate the human as human. Gans opens his critique in *Signs of Paradox* by distinguishing between the “horizontality” of non-human animal activity and the “verticality” of the human sign. Gans claims that all things that are characteristically human “coincide at the moment of human origin, where the emission of the sign creates the subjective from the objective, the transcendental from the immanent.”95

In the first part of *Signs of Paradox*, “Paradoxical Thinking,” Gans opens his inquiry by admitting that trying to determine what language *is* is nothing short of a bootstrapping operation. In other words, the paradox is that we cannot explain, through our use of language, the meaning and origin of language. Why *paradox*? What kind of paradox? This section will provide a detailed analysis of “Paradoxical Thinking” in order to understand how generative anthropology requires paradox and mimesis as its only presuppositions in order to be a valid hypothesis. Gans contends: “Paradox is the privileged road to understanding the human, because paradox reveals the seam—the umbilical hole—in the hierarchy of sign and referent that is the essence of human language.”96 The event of the emergence of the sign provides a vertical transcendence from horizontal animalistic tendencies. The sign emerges through a

94 Ibid., 4.
95 Ibid., 3.
96 Ibid., 13.
conversion of an imitative gesture of the original mimetic model’s gesture towards an object of desire.

This all begs the question: Where does Nietzsche’s theory of language fit in relation to the originary scene of representation as proposed by Gans?

Nietzsche’s Ideas about the Ethical in relation to Language

Language is in the first place ethical.—Eric Gans

We have here, in Nietzsche’s theory as espoused in On Truth and Lie and The Gay Science, the sign cut off from reciprocation, from the collective centre, as an individual artistic image, and the ethical therefore has no place within the aesthetic emergence of language. For Nietzsche, there are no metaphysical truths; there is only what Nietzsche refers to as metaphors, metonyms, and anthropomorphisms, which bear no relation to Nature. Ultimately, Nietzsche would conclude by stating: “this conceptual edifice is an imitation [artistic process] of temporal, spatial, and numerical relationships in the domain of metaphor.” From the early, unpublished writings of On Truth and Lie, up to his later works (The Gay Science, Beyond Good and Evil) Nietzsche draws many of his conclusions about the world from his theory of language as an artistic process, which lacks any objective truth whatsoever. Throughout his active career, Nietzsche maintains that metaphor has no truth value or truth relation to the phenomenal world. He is therefore suspicious of the world of signs, specifically in relation to the conceptual. Generative anthropology has had quite a bit to say about Nietzsche; to quote The Scenic Imagination: “Nietzsche was both the first genuine theoretician of the scene of representation and a dangerous mystifier whose historical hypothesis presents the scenic as the transcendence of the ethical ‘beyond good and evil.’”

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97 Ibid., 12.
98 Nietzsche, On Truth and Lie, 2.
Nietzsche’s originary scene of aesthetic representation does not require the ethical. Furthermore, we have an “instinct” or “drive” towards the formation of metaphors. To relegate human language to being a mere instinct is to relegate the human to animality, to a kind of Darwinian nihilism, placing the human in the category of a mere higher order of animal. Nietzsche is conscious of this, where he later attempts to “naturalise man.” Nevertheless, Nietzsche’s theory of language assumes what he detests the most: a rigid dichotomy of commanding and obeying between both the drives and individual humans. In other words, Nietzsche proposes a scene of which the sacred centre is not the object of communal recognition to defer violence, but rather an instinctive drive to dominate nature, where he adamantly concludes everything is “will to power and nothing besides.”

Gans, on the one hand, claims that language is coeval with the ethical—the deferral of violence through representation. Nietzsche, on the other hand, considers the ethical to have emerged from an aesthetic drive towards the formation of metaphors. The ethical exists as a kind of “slave drive” in service of a “social utility,” which according to him represents an error in the development of the human. Yet, if one were to think about generative anthropology while reading Nietzsche, one could not help but notice his profound understanding that language is the essential characteristic of the human, regardless of whether it has been developed from an “instinct” or proto-artistic impulse. On the one hand, Gans declares, “human experience, as opposed to that of other animals, is uniquely characterised by scenic events recalled both collectively and individually through representations, the most fundamental of which are the signs of language.”

Nietzsche, on the other hand, would contest the notion that language and/or consciousness has any value in representing the external world—or any value at all—because language itself is derived from the lower instincts.

Where Gans claims there is a series of singularities of scenes of representation, each echoing or representing the original scene, through communal recognition from the periphery to the centre, Nietzsche proposes a flux of drives and affects prompted by external stimuli, which are themselves incomprehensible by reason, stimulating the

nerves into an imagetic representation into an acoustical drive, forming metaphor. Language, for Nietzsche, is the “conserving association of the instincts,” where “all our consciousness relates to errors.” Yet the danger in Nietzsche’s originary scene of human representation lies precisely in his aesthetic vision of the production of metaphor, where Gans rightly suggests that the “paradoxical struggle with the Nietzschean self with its ‘own’ representations has been the obsession of philosophy ever since, arguably even of analytic philosophy, haunted by the same paradoxes in a more dryly schematic form.” The originary hypothesis, I argue, offers a solution to the symptoms of a postmodern uncertainty of language, the Nietzschean crisis that has plagued modern thinking, that is, thinking the self out of the self. What I have tried to impart is the idea that by looking at the minimal elements of Nietzsche’s understanding about language, its origin, and function, may give an indication of his particular formulation of the ethical. If language for Nietzsche is an instinct or drive towards the formation of metaphors, he is seeking the deeper Dionysian instincts, which are bereft of an imagetic Apollonian structure, concepts, but are rather a superfluous creativity where only the individual is on the scene of representation. Nietzsche’s theory of language is a language governed only by a proto-artistic instinct, or drive towards the formation of ever-new metaphor. What Nietzsche fails to take into account, however, is a minimal hypothesis of the origin of language that incorporates the primacy of the ethical and the ostensivity of the original sign. To think of language as some retroactive regulator of the instincts in the service of social utility, which relegates the ethical to an artifice of the aesthetic impulse to represent the external world, is a dangerous way of thinking about the human that continues today, in one form or another.

In the next chapter I will explore Nietzsche’s notion of resentment as the fundamental driving force of morality. Not only does Nietzsche suggest resentment is the cause of a morality based on metaphysical faith, but Gans also positions resentment on the originary scene of human representation.

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102 Nietzsche, Gay Science, 84–85.
103 Gans, Scenic Imagination, 14.
Chapter 3:
Nietzsche, Girard, Gans: On the Origin of Resentment

That lambs bear ill-will towards large birds of prey is hardly strange: but is in itself no reason to blame large birds of prey for making off with little lambs.—Friedrich Nietzsche¹

Resentment is the interiorization of weakened revenge.—René Girard²

What I call originary resentment is the resentment directed at the central object of the originary event—hence away from one’s fellows on the periphery—when the object’s very designation/sacralization by the sign makes it inaccessible to its designators.—Eric Gans³

This thesis offers a new reading of the work of Nietzsche by drawing on the resources of generative anthropology. Resentment is an idea central to both generative anthropology and Nietzsche studies, and to studies of René Girard, whose work in mimetic theory makes significant contact with Nietzsche’s thought, and serves as the intellectual forebear of generative anthropology. Although resentment is understood somewhat differently among Gans, Girard, and Nietzsche, these differences will allow us to clarify precisely what is at stake in the re-reading of Nietzsche presented here. The aim of this chapter, then, is to configure Nietzsche’s own conception of resentment in generative anthropological terms. This particular reading of Nietzsche’s *On the Genealogy of Morals* allows us to situate him as a theorist of human origins,

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and also to offer an insight into how his theory of human origins orients his ideas about the ethical.

As has been discussed, Nietzsche’s status in postmodernism is paradoxical. His position as a father of postmodernism is paradoxical precisely because, in a flight from postmodern thinking, whose theories postulate the denial of human origins, Nietzsche offers—in *On the Genealogy of Morals*—an account of the origin of language, morality, religion, and most importantly for this chapter, *resentment* (henceforth: resentment). Nietzsche, like Gans, also considers resentment to be at the heart of the development of the human. Similar to Nietzsche’s project, and also a flight from postmodern thinking,⁴ generative anthropology examines the human with respect to origins: the origins of language, the ethical, the aesthetic, and of resentment. Nietzsche, Girard, and Gans bear differences and similarities in their understandings of resentment. For Nietzsche, the “man of resentment” has only one weapon, the memory of the symbolic to be used against the “forgetful master.” By following his theory of the Judaeo-Christian desacralisation of violence, Girard defines resentment as the interiorisation of weakened revenge. Finally, Gans considers resentment to be the outcome of the internalisation of the sacred centre, where resentment is the consequence of the inability of any given individual to possess the sacred centre. Generative anthropology posits an “originary resentment,” where all individual humans become defined as individuals precisely because of resentment. The fundamental question to be asked in this chapter is: Can we account for Nietzsche’s conception of resentment in relation to a generative anthropological framework? And if we can, what might this offer us in hermeneutic terms?

There is also another important source to be integrated into re-reading Nietzsche’s philosophy in light of generative anthropology: Girard’s work on mimetic theory. Girard’s work is important to examine in relation to Nietzsche for two fundamental reasons: (1) mimetic theory is the precursor to generative anthropology, and provides it with some of its signal features; and (2) Girard’s analysis of Nietzsche’s ideas about

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⁴ I concede that the term “postmodern” is a problematic one. No thinkers discussed in chapter 1 have ever accepted the label of “postmodern” for themselves. Nevertheless, postmodern thinking points to the intellectual attitude of not accepting theories of origin.
resentment will allow us to draw a closer link between those ideas and generative anthropology’s notion that resentment is an indispensable human category—that without resentment there would be no human as we know it. I will examine the shift in the value and origin of resentment with respect to each of these three thinkers: from Nietzsche’s vehement account and critique of resentment as an internal force of reactivity to “life,” to Girard’s position that resentment is a consequence of the blocking of revenge, and, finally, to Gans’s position that resentment is a direct outcome of the first re-presentation of an object of desire, which is something wholly inaccessible, and therefore resented from the periphery. Girard, and more importantly, Gans, offers a new and plausible way to situate Nietzsche’s notion of resentment from the perspective of looking at human origins.

Gans asserts that Nietzsche is the first to situate resentment correctly by placing it close to human origins. Indeed, Gans directly borrows Nietzsche’s conception of resentment in order to situate it after the originary scene. In contrast to Nietzsche, however, Gans offers a view of the punctual genesis of language and culture, where resentment arises immediately after language. For Gans, resentment emerges when a periphery of humans is unable to attain a sacred, central object of desire that triggered language. Gans calls this form of resentment “originary resentment.” For Nietzsche, on the other hand, the origin of resentment stems from the “slave’s” internal reaction to the “master”; resentment is that which is in direct opposition to those external, active forces of life that are able to discharge power effectively and naturally.

There is good reason to believe that Nietzsche’s theory of human origins directly influences his thinking about the emergence of resentment. There are two factors that lead one to believe so:

(1) Nietzsche claims that resentment emerges from an internal scene of representation, which is ultimately reactive and introspective, as opposed to active and instinctive. The claim made by Nietzsche that resentment emerges from an internal scene shares resonances with generative anthropology. A dichotomy exists between the “master,” who is far better equipped to forget, and who discharges his desires through action, and the man of resentment, who can only react internally to
the master through symbolic representation. Indeed, an internal scene of representation is precisely what defines resentment in Nietzsche’s thinking. Resentment, for Nietzsche, is action turned against itself into representation.

(2) Nietzsche’s suspicion of symbolic representation as a late and superficial development of the human animal interacts on a number of levels with his theory of the “man of resentment,” and the “slave revolt of morals.” For example, in *On the Genealogy of Morals*—a main focus of this chapter—Nietzsche claims that the man of resentment requires “external stimuli” in order to exist, where resentment’s “action is fundamentally reaction.” In opposition to this, Nietzsche argues, the noble type of man requires no external stimuli, nor an internal scene of representation.

The structure of this chapter is as follows. First, I will return to Gans’s hypothesis of the origin of language, where he claims “originary resentment” marks the birth of the self. For Gans, resentment is not a Nietzschean “drive” as such, but rather a fundamental element in the structure of the originary scene of representation. Second, I will trace Nietzsche’s development of the idea of resentment as espoused in *The Genealogy*. This work is Nietzsche’s first serious attempt to theorise the origin of resentment, which, he contends, derives from the internal reaction of the “priestly caste,” “cunningly” deceiving the forgetful masters through symbolic representation.

Furthermore, Nietzsche considers resentment to have flourished in the Judaeo-Christian tradition. I will specifically engage with the first essay of *The Genealogy*, entitled “‘Good’ and ‘Evil’, ‘Good’ and ‘Bad,’” which introduces Nietzsche’s understanding of the origin, function, and consequences of resentment. Third, I will give a necessarily brief summary of Girard’s mimetic theory in order to shed light on his own analysis of Nietzsche’s position on resentment, which is deeply rooted in the idea of the surrogate victim. From here, I will examine Girard’s essay “Dionysus Versus the Crucified,” where Girard assesses Nietzsche’s conception of resentment—that resentment is one of the effects of Judaeo-Christian ethics. For Girard, the revelation of the victim makes victimage progressively more difficult, eventually forcing it to retreat into an internal scene—the withholding of violence becomes its internalisation. Christian resentment is precisely what denigrates Nietzsche’s vision of
a Dionysian world of continual destruction and creation, of will to power. The fundamental difference between Nietzsche and Girard is that the former sees resentment as the cause of Judaeo-Christian ethics, whereas Girard sees it as an effect of the same. From here, I will consider the difficulties that arise in both Girard’s and Nietzsche’s accounts of the value and origin of resentment.

Further, I will investigate Gans’s position on resentment in relation to The Genealogy. I will point out some key similarities that exist between Gans’s idea of “firstness” and Nietzsche’s conception of the master. Through an examination of Originary Thinking: Elements of Generative Anthropology, I will situate Gans’s idea of originary resentment with Nietzsche’s, where both thinkers consider resentment to be an indispensable category of the human. For Nietzsche, however, resentment is something that must be “overcome.” For Gans, resentment is that which allows culture to perpetuate. Finally, I will present Nietzsche’s position on resentment as a direct orientation of his theory of language.

For Nietzsche, a prerequisite for the emergence of the man of resentment is his internalisation of language. He considers language as re-active, instead of being an active discharge of energy springing from the all-encompassing will to power. For Nietzsche, an immediate willing to act is opposed to an internalised re-action. Consequently, resentment allows for an internal scene of representation to take place and be remembered. To have a memory is a burden, a sickness, for Nietzsche. An internal scene of representation, in Nietzsche’s philosophy, is to hold onto and remember events. In certain respects, generative anthropological thinking is congruent with Nietzsche’s position. Yet, for Gans, originary resentment is the internalisation of the no-longer-accessible sacred central object, where this object engenders resentment precisely because of its inaccessibility. Situating Nietzsche’s conception of resentment in relation to both Girard and Gans allows for a further investigation into the minimal elements of Nietzsche’s thinking about the human, the ethical, and the origin of language.

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5 The next chapter will deal more specifically with Nietzsche’s conception of the will to power.
What Is Originary Resentment?

*All resentment is generated by exclusion from the centre, and resentment of others reflects our sense that someone else is closer to the centre and its significance than ourselves.*—Eric Gans

Generative anthropology is a field of inquiry that hypothesises the punctual origin of language, where the human proper is generated from an originary scene. Resentment, too, has a place in this originary scene. For Gans, the first linguistic sign is an “aborted gesture of appropriation,” where this gesture is a re-presentation of its referent. Hence, the birth of the human proper is a scenic event. As has been discussed, the scenic, for Gans, denotes that all human thought is generated through the representation of an original event where the first sign—or gesture—was transmitted by a protohuman onto others in near simultaneity. The scenic, for Gans, offers a topographic model of the human: an economy of thinking, where one can situate concepts regarding the human in terms of centres, margins, and exchanges. The emission of the first sign was the moment of the birth of the human as human. For, not only is all human thought generated through the representation of a scene, the horizon of human thought is itself scenic. Indeed, the emergence of the human coincides with the birth of the scene.

We can imagine the physical structure of the first scene to be circular. What leads to the first linguistic event is the mutual attraction between the protohumans for a central object. Since not all protohumans can consume the desired object at once, one member of the group (the first) emits a gesture, a sign, or a grunt to designate a referent that becomes immediately understood by all other members. Once the object has been designated, and then consumed, the now absent object is “remembered” by its referent. This, in turn, creates a centre, where the now sign-emitting humans stand on the periphery of the absent object. The missing original object becomes the sacred

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centre. Thus, the sacred centre is resented precisely because it cannot be obtained, because a re-presentational gesture does not make the now missing desired object appear. According to Gans, resentment is inherent in the structure of the originary scene of human representation. Resentment is, in some sense, coeval with the birth of the individual, of the internal scene in the mimetic subject.

According to Gans, resentment is the one human category that cannot be deconstructed, for “only resentment can know resentment; yet resentment knows nothing, since it distorts the reality of what it observes.”\(^7\) What is deemed “originary resentment” emerges immediately after the first symbolic representation in the originary scene. For Gans, in order for resentment to exist, it must emerge after the origin of language. In the introduction to *Originary Thinking: Elements of Generative Anthropology*, Gans examines the emergence of the individual—or self—as directly linked to originary resentment. Originary resentment, for Gans, is the “first mode of self-consciousness.”\(^8\) Why is the discovery of the self triggered by originary resentment, however? According to Gans, originary resentment is predicated on an individual’s focus on the originary sacred central object. Of course, the object is desired because other participants desire the same object, following the rules of mimetic attraction. Yet, the sacred object is impossible to obtain because the centre designated as such, as a sign, is impossible to obtain, at least in material terms. Therefore, there emerges an originary resentment immediately after the spontaneous emergence of the first sign. Gans writes: “The center, the object of a given participant’s desire, is inaccessible for the very reason that it is desirable, and therefore also the object of the convergent desires of the others. Yet originary resentment does not focus on the other peripheral humans, but on the centre that refuses itself to desire.”\(^9\) In other words, originary resentment is not resentment directed at fellow human beings (as both Nietzsche and Girard attest), but the central referent in the absence of the physical object. Gans writes:

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9 Ibid.
What I call *originary resentment* is the resentment directed at the central object of the originary event—hence away from one’s fellows on the periphery—when the object’s very designation/sacralization by the sign makes it inaccessible to its designators. What makes this the origin of the specifically human phenomenon of resentment is that it is focused in the first place on the sacred centre itself, accessible during the originary scenario, the designation/consecration of the central object would be followed by the *sparagmos* in which the object, *but never the sacred centre itself*, is divided and consumed. Thus in distinction to animals in conflict, who remain fixed in pecking-order rivalries, humans experience resentment through the mediation of the sacred.  

Hence, originary resentment is directed at the sacred centre because it is desired but not accessible. The outcome is an internalised, individual scene cut off from the originary event. Yet, how does resentment function in terms of the creation of the self, as Gans claims? As Gans suggests, once the sacred centre is no longer accessible, after the community has devoured the object, the remembrance of the now missing object becomes resentment. To desire the sacred centre after it has dissipated through the *sparagmos* is to resent it. The *sparagmos*, for Gans, is the immediate dismemberment of the sacred object after its designation. Resentment takes form through an individual scene of representation via memory. Hence, since there was no sacred centre before the first aborted gesture of appropriation, there was also no internal scene. Thus, resentment has its origin immediately after the first gesture for the desired object. For Gans, resentment can exist only through the mediation of a sacred centre.

In *A New Way of Thinking: Elements of Generative Anthropology*, Gans cogently makes the fundamental connection between resentment and the origin of language by calling the first sign emitted the “name-of-God.” The originary resentment of the sacred centre, or name-of-God, is coeval with the perpetuation of a human

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community. Gans also claims that it is resentment, “Nietzsche’s resentment,” that prevents violence and leads to culture. Gans writes:

If we seek to interpret the meaning of the first sign, to be sure, it represents the object and may therefore be said to mean it. But what the sign “means” under these conditions is the central object of a desire too powerful to be exercised. The object, in other words, appears by its very desirability to interdict its own possession. This power attributed to the central object is precisely that characteristic of sacred beings. We may therefore give as the “meaning” of the originary sign as the-name-of-God. Such an attribution must also create in the peripheral participants an originary resentment of the central object that each individual desires but cannot possess. The fundamental function of the human and its representational culture is to prevent mimetic violence, which is characteristically internalised as resentment, Nietzsche’s ressentiment. It is resentment rather than violence per se that is the primary focus of culture.\(^\text{11}\)

Each individual desires either to be as close to the central object as possible or to consume and possess it for oneself. Yet, it is impossible to possess that which is intangible, to obtain the sign that designates the central object. Gans considers resentment to continue beyond the originary scene, where resentment has its origins. Indeed, all of culture, for Gans, is the perpetuation of resentment towards the inaccessible centre. Gans writes: “No use of language can represent, and defer by representing its own resentment, yet all of culture is nothing but this attempt.”\(^\text{12}\)

Gans’s contention about the emergence of resentment at the origin of the human brings us back to Nietzsche’s idea that resentment is the internalisation of symbols, a reactive force directed at the “forgetful” masters. Of course, Nietzsche considers forgetfulness to be essential to action. Indeed, forgetfulness is central to Nietzsche’s ethical project. Ultimately, for Nietzsche, resentment replaces action. Yet before returning to the conception of the origin of resentment as espoused by generative

\(^{11}\) Adam Katz and Eric Gans, The First Shall Be the Last: Rethinking Antisemitism (Brill, 2015), 6.

\(^{12}\) Gans, “Beyond ‘Generative Anthropology.’”
anthropology, an important question will be raised: How does resentment as designated by generative anthropology differ from the groundbreaking work in *The Genealogy*?

**The Birth of Morals**

*The Genealogy* is not only Nietzsche’s critique of Judaeo-Christian morality par excellence; it also provides a model for the origin of resentment, a resentment that predates the history of the Judaeo-Christian tradition.\(^\text{13}\) This work has greatly influenced the work of both Girard and Gans. Arguably his most famous work after *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche’s genealogical interpretation of the history of morality aimed to discredit the then fashionable interpretations of this history, such as that espoused in English utilitarian philosophy (John Stuart Mill, Jeremy Bentham), psychology (Paul Rée), and in social Darwinism (Herbert Spencer). The essential premise of *The Genealogy* is Nietzsche’s claim that Judaeo-Christian values are the historical product of a struggle lasting for millennia between two types of morality: a master morality and a slave morality.\(^\text{14}\) At the heart of this struggle is resentment. Master morality precedes slave morality and is governed purely by a will to power; its ethic is an active, ruthless self-affirmation and forgetfulness. In Nietzsche’s terms, aristocratic morality is an active expression of the will to power. Slave morality, on the other hand, is driven by a resentment of the former, obsessed with self-preservation and with revenge against the masters, and marked by a yearning for another world, which has also been invented by those afflicted with resentment. The “yearning” is for another life, the next life. The slave revolts against the master by internalising the action that can never take place: violent revenge. Through intellectual cunning, and the ability to remember, the priestly caste takes revenge

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\(^{13}\) Much research has already examined Nietzsche’s ideas about *ressentiment*. Nevertheless, a brief exposition of *On the Genealogy of Morals* is essential in order to clarify the three configurations of resentment that are found in Nietzsche, Girard, and Gans, respectively. See: J. Hills, *Nietzsche and Scheler on Christian Morality* (2006), and J. Fruncillo, *The Development of Ressentiment in Nietzsche’s Genealogy of Morals* (2007).

\(^{14}\) See aphorism 11 in Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*. According to Nietzsche, the aristocratic, noble type(s) of morality were a prominent characteristic among the “Roman, Arab, German, Japanese nobility, Homeric heroes,” and “Scandinavian Vikings,” who all seemed to share the “same need.”
against the master. Slave morality, for Nietzsche, becomes the dominating morality of our age, the morality of resentment and the morality of the sickness of remembering.

Not only does Nietzsche attempt to situate two types of moralities, he attacks his contemporaries, whose positivistic propositions about morality are deeply reflective of Darwin; that is, their theory of human morality is predicated on notions of evolutionary necessity. Instead, Nietzsche argues that the vital forces animating the development of morality are the workings—and interplay—of the active (Dionysian) and reactive (resentful) forces or drives of the will to power. For Nietzsche, questions about “truth” and the “ascetic” are also intricately linked to moral value judgements deeply seated in resentment. Nietzsche considers that the slave aims to establish concrete, universal truths. Yet The Genealogy proves that Nietzsche’s interest in morality is anthropological through and through, where terms such as “morality” and “morals” are used as neutral markers to indicate sets of values and beliefs throughout history. I will now investigate the first essay of The Genealogy, “‘Good and Evil,’ ‘Good and Bad,’” whose main concern is the origin of the morality of resentment.

First Essay: “‘Good and Evil,’ ‘Good and Bad’”

As I said, the pathos of nobility and distance, the enduring, dominating, and fundamental overall feeling of a higher ruling kind in relation to a lower kind, to a “below”—that is the origin of the opposition between “good” and “bad.”—Nietzsche 15

In the first essay of The Genealogy, Nietzsche sets out to investigate the origin of the “value of morals” by examining the etymological roots of certain ethical terms. Nietzsche claims the most fundamental insight gained from a genealogical interpretation of morals stems from an examination of the historical transformation of these terms: “good,” “bad,” and “evil” [Ger: Gut, Böse, Schlecht]. Nietzsche argues that the concept “good,” for the masters, was originally used in opposition to “bad,”

where bad would constitute everything dull, ugly, weak, and reactive. Anything that was unable to discharge energy into action was considered bad. In short, the “slaves” were considered “bad” as they were incapable of action. The “good” was representative of all that is beautiful, strong, active, and energetic. In short, the “good” was what the masters felt themselves to be. What is most important for the purposes of this chapter, however, is Nietzsche’s introduction of the concept of resentment, which is the “priestly caste’s” inversion of the notions of “good” and “bad” with “good” and “evil.” Nietzsche charges the priestly man of resentment with inverting the active, which once was constituted by “good” and supplemented the self-creating force of “bad” with “evil.” In this sense, the energetic, self-creating values of the aristocracy had now become “evil,” while the man of resentment had slowly become the “good.”

For Nietzsche, in the presumably earlier stages of humanity, there existed knightly aristocratic peoples who considered themselves masters, declaring themselves to be good [gut]. Nietzsche contends that the good, for the masters, can be summarised into a simple equation pertaining to aristocratic values. He writes: “good = noble = powerful = beautiful = happy = God-beloved.”16 For Nietzsche, the aristocratic values of the “good” were guided by the instincts. Nietzsche draws the conclusion that these values were not governed by an internal scene, but rather by the less refined instincts, which appear to be active, more primordial, and trustworthy. The greater number of those who were “bad” or “common” resented the so-called masters. At some point in history, according to Nietzsche, the higher men of resentment, the priestly types, had become creative themselves through the use of language and the internal transformation of the active into the reactive. The slave morality of the “men of resentment” developed a new way of evaluating the world through symbols, through an internalised, reactive vision of the world. Through an internalisation of active forces and the inversion of good and bad, the men of resentment now deemed themselves to be good. According to Nietzsche, the masters were no longer considered bad by the men of resentment, but “evil.” Nietzsche writes: “the judgement ‘good’ did not originate with those whom ‘goodness’ was shown! Rather it

16 Ibid., 20.
was ‘the good’ themselves, that is to say, the noble, powerful, high-stationed and high-minded, who felt and established themselves and their actions as good, that is, of the first rank, in contradistinction to all that is low, low-minded, common and plebian. It was out of this pathos of distance that they first seized the right to create values and coin names for things.”\textsuperscript{17} Thus, the value judgements of aristocratic morality were already self-established through the “pathos of distance.” In other words, the distance between those that were able to forget and those that were able to remember.

Through the instinct of forgetfulness, the masters had no real conception of the value of good, bad, or evil. According to Nietzsche, these self-established, self-ordained, forgetful aristocratic values were preserved through hunting, war, competitions, sacrifice, dancing, sport, and anything else that involved strenuous physical activity.

The slave revolt of morals, on the other hand, begins only when resentment (as a force, a drive) has itself become a creative agent and turns inwards on itself. Nietzsche writes: “The slave revolt in morals begins when \textit{ressentiment} itself becomes creative and ordains values: the \textit{ressentiment} of creatures to whom the real reaction, that of the deed, is denied and who finds compensation in an imaginary revenge. While all noble morality grows from a triumphant affirmation of itself, slave morality from the outset says no to an “outside,” to an “other,” to a “non-self”: \textit{this} no is its creativity The reversal of the evaluating gaze—this \textit{necessary} orientation outwards rather than inwards to the self—belongs characteristically to \textit{ressentiment}.”\textsuperscript{18} The impulse to revenge emerges from the inability of the resentful to act.

The slave declares ‘no’ to an outside force, but needs these very outside, active, “external stimuli” in order to become creative, or reactive at all. In other words, the active forces of the will to power are also a necessity for the development of resentment. Nietzsche writes: “In order to exist at all, slave morality from the outset always needs an opposing, outer world; in physiological terms, its needs external stimuli in order to act—its action is fundamentally reaction.”\textsuperscript{19} Hence, the inward

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 21.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 22, emphasis in the original.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid.
“reaction” of an active, instinctive master morality is precisely the driving force of resentment. One must ask, however, whether Nietzsche’s master morality requires an external stimulus for the masters to be creative, to be active. Nietzsche continues: “The opposite is the case with the aristocratic mode of evaluation: this acts and grows spontaneously, it only seeks out its antithesis in order to affirm itself more thankfully and more joyfully. Its negative concept, ‘low’ [niedrig], ‘common’ [verbreitet], ‘bad’ [schlecht], is only a derived pale contrast to its positive basic concept, which is thoroughly steeped in life and passion—‘we the noble, we the good, we the beautiful, we the happy ones!’” For Nietzsche, the noble live in an open “trust” with themselves, while at the same time they live their lives out in a “certain naïveté.” Whereas, on the other hand, the man of resentment, according to Nietzsche, “is neither upright nor naïve in his dealings with others, nor is he honest and open with himself.” The man of resentment cannot live a life in openness or trust precisely because his hatred for the master had never been discharged into action.

As we have seen so far, resentment is the product of the internalisation of action. On the other hand, those that are “noble,” for Nietzsche, are characterised by an overabundance of energy, where we see a continual and spontaneous creation of self-affirming values without the need to react to the “outside.” The masters are able to act because they are able to forget. He writes: “The right of the masters to confer names even extends so far that one should allow oneself to grasp the origin of language itself as the expression of the power of the rulers: they say ‘this is such and such’, they put their seal on each thing and event with a sound and in the process take possession of it.” Although the master is considered the inventor of language, he does not remember the event. For Nietzsche, the “words” of the masters are continually created and destroyed, akin to Heraclitus’s flux. The man of resentment, however, is characterised as the cunning, more intelligent, patiently waiting animal; he internalises his actions in order to seek revenge against the noble master.

20 Ibid.
21 Ibid., 24.
22 Ibid.
23 Ibid., 23.
Nietzsche contends that master morality is entrenched in a feeling of fortune, where there is no lying to oneself concerning this feeling of prosperity. He writes: “The ‘well-bred’ felt themselves to be ‘the fortunate’; they did not have to construe their good fortune artificially through a glance at their enemies, to persuade themselves of it, to convince themselves through lying (as all men of resentment usually do).” In direct opposition to this, Nietzsche considers what happiness is to those afflicted with resentment. He writes: “All this is diametrically opposed to ‘happiness’ as understood on the level of the powerless, the oppressed, of those who suppurate with poisonous and hostile feelings, those for whom happiness appears essentially as narcotic, anaesthetic, calm, peace, ‘sabbath’, the expansion of feeling and the stretching of limbs, in a word, a passivity.”

According to Nietzsche, the passive happiness of the man of resentment leads to an inward, resentful, reactive value judgement of the world. The slave revolt in morals, derived from resentment against the active masters, finally achieves “cleverness” through the creativity of resentment itself. Here, Nietzsche makes his final conclusion about the man of resentment. He writes: “His soul squints; his mind loves bolt-holes, secret paths, back doors, he regards all hidden things as his world, his security, his refreshment; he has a perfect understanding of how to keep silent, how not to forget, how to wait, how to make himself provisionally small and submissive. A race of such men of resentment is bound in the end to become cleverer than any noble race, and it will respect cleverness to a completely different degree: that is, a first condition of existence.”

The italicisation of the pronoun “his” [seine] is clearly an emphasis of the internalisation of action, in order to develop an interior world of chimeras and shadows, where the man of resentment himself conceives the “evil enemy.” Once an imagined enemy has been conceived, the man of resentment finally conceives of himself as the “Good man.” On the other hand, the noble type does not allow resentment to take hold because of a surplus of energy that immediately extinguishes hatred, and the noble type simply “forgets.” In contrast to the importance of intelligence as the first prerequisite for those afflicted with the “poison” of resentment, however, Nietzsche claims the early aristocratic

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24 Ibid, emphasis in the original.
25 Ibid., 23–24, emphasis in the original.
26 Ibid., 24, emphasis in the original.
27 Ibid., 25, emphasis in the original.
28 Ibid.
29 Ibid.
people “considered cleverness less essential than the smooth functioning of their unconscious regulating instincts.” Yet, if resentment does happen to occur in the noble man of instincts, Nietzsche claims it is because resentment “exhausts itself in an immediate reaction. For that reason, it does not poison.”

Nietzsche emphasises that the most important and consequential difference between the two words “bad” and “evil” resides in asking the question: “Who is actually ‘evil’ according to the morality of ressentiment?” Nietzsche himself responds to the question by concluding that “none other than the ‘good man’ of the other morality, none other than the noble, powerful dominating man, but only once he has been given a new colour, interpretation, and aspect by the poisonous eye of ressentiment.”

Nietzsche claims that the slave revolt in morals has led modernity into a conflict between two opposing values—that is, the values ascribed to the masters, “good and bad,” and the values ascribed to the man of resentment, “good and evil.” Nietzsche clearly indicates that the latter value system has dominated for at least the last two thousand years with the advent of Christianity. He writes: “For thousands of years, a fearful struggle has raged on earth between the two opposed value-judgements, ‘good and bad’ and ‘good and evil’; and as certain as it is that the second value-judgement has long been in the ascendant, there is even now no shortage of places where the outcome of the conflict remains undecided.” Yet, Nietzsche claims that the great battle being waged between the two opposing value judgements of a master morality and the slave revolt is symbolised best between Rome and Judaea. The dichotomy between Rome and Judaea, between the master and the slave, sheds light on Nietzsche’s ethical project.

30 Ibid., 24.
31 Ibid.
32 Ibid., 25.
33 Ibid, emphasis in the original.
34 Ibid., 34–35.
Resentment Versus the Noble: Judaea Versus Rome

In the concluding pages of the first essay in *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche turns his thoughts to the “slave revolt” of the weak. The resentment of the Judaeo-Christian ethic is aimed at retaliating against Rome, which, according to Nietzsche, represents the triumph of the moral value judgements of the weak. The battle between Judaeo-Christian ethics and the ethic of the “strong” Romans, for Nietzsche, stands as the direct embodiment and symbol of resentment par excellence. He writes: “The symbol for this struggle, written in a script which has remained legible throughout the whole of human history up until now, is called ‘Rome against Judea, Judea against Rome’—so far, there has been no greater event than this struggle, this questioning, this mortal enmity and contradiction.”35 For Nietzsche, the forgetfulness, the exuberant joy, and the happiness of the Roman warrior, philosopher, emperor, who values this life and this world, is no match against the intelligence, cunning patience, and ability to remember of the slave morality of the Jews.

Nietzsche claims that Rome positioned Judaea as its complete opposite, as a people whose resentment was so great that they had to invent an entire other world in order to justify their resentment towards the masters. He writes: “Rome felt the Jew to be something like the incarnation of the unnatural, its monstrous opposite, as it were: in Rome, the Jew ‘stood convicted of hatred towards the whole of mankind’: rightly, in so far as one is entitled to associate the salvation and future of mankind with the absolute supremacy of the aristocratic values, the Roman values.”36 Of course, the myopia and confusion felt by Rome towards Judaea resides in the very misunderstanding that a people could ever want a world beyond this one. Yet, one might be given an indication of the opposition between Rome and Judaea by looking at the perspective of the Jews, at least from Nietzsche’s eyes. He asks: “How, on the other hand, did the Jews feel towards Rome? A thousand signs give us an indication; but it is sufficient to call to mind once more the Apocalypse according to St John, that most desolate of all the written outbursts which vindictiveness has on its

35 Ibid., 35.
36 Ibid.
conscience.” Of course, John’s revelation of the apocalypse, according to Nietzsche, is the literary manifestation of a yearning for the destruction of Rome, and the salvation of the Christian faith.

Nietzsche is clearly opposed to a Judaeo-Christian moral value system that finds consolation in another world, where judgement will be handed out most harshly to those who possess—or are born into—a master, or noble, morality. Not only does Nietzsche conceive of the Romans as emblematic of a noble morality, but he considers the Romans to have attained the noblest morality in history. He writes: “The Romans were the strong and noble men, stronger and nobler than they had ever been on earth, or even dreamed themselves to be; every vestige left behind by them, every inscription is a delight, as long as one has an inkling of what is behind the writing.” Yet it was the “genius” of the Jews, which Nietzsche declares had finally conquered Rome by its intuitive understanding of the power of the mob mentality. Nietzsche continues: “The Jews conversely were the priestly people of ressentiment par excellence, with an innate genius in matters of popular morality.” Nietzsche remains adamant that Judaea had finally conquered the Roman values of superfluity and strength through the slave revolt of morals given through the teachings of the New Testament. He writes: “Which of these is in the ascendant at the moment, Rome or Judea? But there is no room for doubt: consider before whom one bows today in Rome as before the epitome of all the highest values—and not only in Rome, but over almost half the world, wherever man has been tamed or wants to be tamed—before three Jews, as one knows, and one Jewess (before Jesus of Nazareth, the fisherman Peter, the carpet-maker Paul, and the mother of the aforementioned Jesus, Mary). This is most remarkable: there is no doubt that Rome has been defeated.” Clearly, Nietzsche’s concern lies in the ubiquity of resentment that now dominates Western culture. The morality of the strong, the forgetful, is inverted into the morality of memory, of resentment.

37 Ibid.
38 Ibid, emphasis in the original.
39 Ibid.
40 Ibid., 36, emphasis in the original.
Resentment, for Nietzsche, is the cause of the moral inversion of values from the original meaning of the “good” and the “bad” into the “good” and the “evil.” For Nietzsche, Judaeo-Christian morality stands as the pinnacle of a slave morality, which now dominates the instincts. Of course, Nietzsche’s shorthand name for the aristocratic type of morality that he considers to be best observed in Roman culture is Dionysus. Dionysian, animal instinct, for Nietzsche, is the solution and opposition to the Judaeo-Christian tradition par excellence. For Nietzsche, resentment, memory, or internalised action is something that must be overcome.

**Girard: Origins, Mimetic Rivalry, Resentment**

In the introduction to *How We Became Human: Mimetic Theory and the Science of Evolutionary Origins*, Pierpaolo Antonello claims that the thinking of the twentieth century, at least in the humanities, has eliminated any consideration of human origins. He writes: “twentieth-century theorization has progressively expelled any consideration of the origins and the genesis of human culture and institutions, considered as a totally unattainable moment of human protohistory—a ‘lost Object’ to be vigorously ‘put out of mind,’ as decreed by the late-twentieth-century ideological turn against all ‘grand narratives.’”41 The claims made by Nietzsche and Gans couldn’t be further from the “ideological turn” of the twentieth-century theories of human non-origins.42 There is also another thinker who is intimately connected with Nietzsche and Gans, and who also shares the common interest in the origin of the human.

This section will introduce Girard’s theory of mimesis in order to give further clarification to his interpretation of Nietzsche’s conception of the origin of resentment, as well as to his own theory of the emergence of resentment. Much like Nietzsche, Girard considers resentment to be the internalisation of violence, the inability to take immediate action through revenge. Nevertheless, Girard considers

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42 Ibid.
resentment to be the *product* of Christianity, not the *source* of Judaeo-Christian morality, as Nietzsche contends. The aim, then, of summarising Girard’s mimetic theory is simply to gain a greater understanding of his own reading of Nietzsche, in order that we might draw a closer link between generative anthropology, the progeny of mimetic theory, and Nietzsche. Mimetic theory contains a hypothesis on the origin of the sacred, of social order, of resentment, and is also a general theory of the emergence of culture. The most basic premise to be drawn from mimetic theory is that all human desire is borrowed, is imitative. In short, all human desire is mimetic. For Girard, desire is mimetic precisely because all of our desires originate in mimesis. More often than not, however, mimetic desire leads to violence.

In “Violence and Mimesis,” Girard illustrates the workings of mimesis through modelling the interaction of two individuals (A and B) confronted with an object of desire. Girard contends that all appropriating gestures of a desired object are “rooted” in the imitation of another individual (A imitates B’s gesture of appropriation). Hence, if A’s gesture of appropriation is imitative of B’s, we naturally assume that both individuals will reach for the same object. Therefore, since both individuals cannot acquire the same object at the same time, they become imitative rivals. Girard writes:

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[i]f the appropriative gesture of an individual named A is rooted in the imitation of an individual B, it means that A and B must reach together for the same object. They become rivals, for that object. If the tendency to imitate appropriation is present on both sides, imitative rivalry must tend to become reciprocal; it must be subject to the back and forth reinforcement that communication theorists call a positive feedback. In other words, the individual who first acts as a model will experience an increase in his own appropriative urge when he finds himself thwarted by his imitator. And reciprocally. Each becomes the imitator of his own imitator and the model of his own model. Each tries to push aside the obstacle that the other places in his path. Violence is generated by this process; or rather violence is the process itself when two or more partners
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try to prevent one another from appropriating the object they all desire through physical or other means.\textsuperscript{43}

What Girard is suggesting above is that all individuals reciprocally imitate each other’s attempt to appropriate an object, thus becoming each other’s model. For Girard, the process of violence through imitation “throws a great deal of light on much of human culture, beginning with religious institutions.”\textsuperscript{44} From this standpoint, Girard claims that many (if not most) forms of religious prohibitions begin to make sense when they are interpreted as ways to avoid mimetic rivalry becoming contagious within human communities. According to Girard, many religious prohibitions and taboos bear directly on avoiding violence (or on mimetic behavior) by focusing on those objects most likely to incite mimetic rivalry.

Furthermore, Girard claims that unlike the psychoanalytic readings of religious prohibitions and taboos, which dismiss them as irrational fears, Girard contends that taboos and prohibitions “bear on violence, or mimetic behavior, and on the potential objects of mimetic rivalry.”\textsuperscript{45} According to Girard, rituals found in primitive societies “are obsessed with the undifferentiation or conflictual reciprocity that must result from the spread of mimetic rivalry.”\textsuperscript{46} In other words, the rituals—and objects of obsession—of primitive societies reflect a deep understanding of the reciprocation of conflict, which occurs through mimetic rivalry. Not only rituals, however, but also the orientation of the narration of primitive myths owes its origin to mimetic rivalry. Girard writes: “the chaos, the absence of order, and the various disorders that prevail at the beginning of many myths must also be interpreted, I believe, in terms of mimetic rivalry; and so must the natural disasters such as plagues, great floods, or other mythical scourges that often include an element of conflict between mythical partners generally conceived as close relatives, brothers, or identical twins. These themes represent what mythology is unable to conceive rationally, the undifferentiated reciprocity of mimetic conflict.”\textsuperscript{47} The reciprocity of mimetic

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{44} Ibid., 10.
\item \textsuperscript{45} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{46} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{47} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
conflict, according to Girard, is at the heart and origin of all human behaviour. To return to rituals, however, Girard focuses his attention on sacrifice, whether it be a real human sacrifice or a symbolic one.

Sacrifice, for Girard, is a communal ritual where every member of the community who participates is able to purify the social sphere of disorder by means of the immolation of a victim. All the great myths, for Girard, account for the purifying element in a sacrifice.\(^{48}\) The purifying element in a sacrifice is the dissipation of mimetic rivalry immediately after the sacrifice has occurred. Sacrifice, however, can only occur at the “paroxysm of the ritual crisis.”\(^{49}\) How is the entire community purified by the immolation of a victim, however? According to Girard, sacrifice serves as the model for religious ritual because “sacrifice is the resolution and conclusion of ritual because a collective murder or expulsion resolves the mimetic crisis that ritual mimics.”\(^{50}\) Yet, in what sense is there a resolution and conclusion of a mimetic crisis? Here, Girard introduces what is called the “scapegoat mechanism.”\(^{51}\)

The scapegoat mechanism is “that strong process through which two or more people are reconciled at the expense of a third party who appears guilty or responsible for whatever ails, disturbs, or frightens the scapegoaters,” where they now have “a single purpose, which is to prevent the scapegoat from harming them, by expelling and destroying him.”\(^{52}\) How does this mimetic contagion—which ultimately leads to the sacrifice or murder of a victim—occur?

According to Girard, when an object gains the attention of two or more humans, other members of the group will also tend to focus on the object of attention by means of imitation. The reason the other members of the group are attracted to the object at hand is entirely mimetic in nature. All members of the group become attracted to the object because of the “presence of mimetic desire.”\(^{53}\) Thus, because mimesis itself is mimetically attractive, and not all members of the group can acquire the same object

\(^{48}\) The myths that are concurrent with Girard’s assessment about sacrifice as the purification of the community are too great in number to list. To name a few, however, we have “Of the Pestilence of Jutland” (Denmark), “The Hoxter Ghost” (Germany), and “King Aun’s Sacrifice of His Nine Sons to Odin” (Norway).

\(^{49}\) Ibid., 11.

\(^{50}\) Ibid.

\(^{51}\) Ibid.

\(^{52}\) Ibid., 12.

\(^{53}\) Ibid.
at the same time, the group becomes progressively undifferentiated and conflictual. Each individual becomes an obstacle and model to each individual who is in the way of the mimetically attractive object, to the point where the original object of attraction becomes irrelevant. Therefore, Girard contends that because mimetic rivalry emerges from mimetic attraction, violence also emerges. He writes: “The model is likely to be mimetically attracted by the desire of his imitator. He becomes the imitator of his own imitator, just as the latter becomes the model of his own model. As this feedback process keeps reinforcing itself, each constitutes in the other’s path a more and more irritating obstacle and each tries to remove this obstacle more and more forcefully. Violence is thus generated.”

Violence is not originary; it is a by-product of mimetic rivalry. Girard writes: “Violence is mimetic rivalry itself becoming violent as the antagonists who desire the same object keep thwarting each other and desiring the object all the more. Violence is supremely mimetic.” The intensity of the feedback loop of the effects of desiring an imitator escalates to such an extent that the object is ultimately no longer relevant. What is now relevant, however, is the need to end mimetic rivalry. Eventually, the members of the community focus their attention entirely upon a single individual through what Girard refers to as a “transfer of antagonism” once the original object of desire becomes irrelevant. Girard writes: “sooner or later a snowball effect must occur that involves the entire group minus, of course, the one individual, or the few against whom all hostility focuses and who become the ‘scapegoats,’ in a sense analogous to but more extreme than our everyday sense of the word ‘scapegoat.’”

Girard’s response to the reason that an arbitrary victim is chosen by a group to be destroyed is precisely because, unlike the original object of desire that cannot be consumed equally, the victim himself becomes an object of desire that the community can all share in his destruction. Girard continues: “Whereas mimetic appropriation is inevitably divisive, causing the contestants to fight over an object they cannot all appropriate together, mimetic antagonism is ultimately unitive, or rather reunitive

54 Ibid., 12–13.
55 Ibid.
56 Ibid., 13.
57 Ibid.
since it provides the antagonists with an object they can really share, in the sense that they can all rush against that victim in order to destroy it or drive it away.”

Girard describes this entire process as “the true paradox of ritual—which is the genesis and regeneration as well as degeneration of the cultural order through paroxystic disorder.” Furthermore, Girard claims that religion and mythologies form systems of representation that appear to be “untrue of their own genesis.” According to Girard, religions and mythologies that narrate and ritualise the murder of a victim must perceive the victim as having an “enormous capacity for evil.” Hence, religions and mythologies hide the very fact that the scapegoat is indeed a victim.

The above systems of representation position the scapegoat as necessarily “bad” and something/someone that must be destroyed to return communal order. In other words, the collective murder of an arbitrary scapegoat can only be justified if the victim is characterised, not as a victim, but as someone or something evil. Once the victim is destroyed, mimetic rivalry dissipates for a time. According to Girard, if the victim were considered an innocent victim, communal order would not be restored as such awareness would threaten to expose the mimetic basis of victimage. He writes: “An arbitrary victim would not reconcile a disturbed community if its members realized they are the dupes of a mimetic effect.” Therefore, mythic or religious systems of representation must ignore that the scapegoats are really victims and that all of the community are guilty participants in his murder. In other words, the participants involved in the murder of a single individual cannot and must not perceive themselves to be such. Thus, the mythic and religious representations of the event points to the victim as an evil that must be annihilated at all costs. Girard writes: “The victim cannot be perceived as innocent and impotent; he (or she, as the case may be) must be perceived if not necessarily as a culprit in our sense, at least as a creature truly responsible for all the disorders and ailments of the community, in other words for the mimetic crisis that has triggered the mimetic mechanism of scapegoating.”

On the other end of the spectrum of the scapegoating mechanism, however, Girard points to

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58 Ibid.
59 Ibid., 14.
60 Ibid.
61 Ibid.
62 Ibid.
63 Ibid., 15.
the Bible, specifically to the Gospels of the New Testament, as belonging to the one religion that “sides with the victims.”

As the first example, Girard offers “the story told by the eleven brothers to their father,” where this biblical text rejects the perspective of mythology and sees the twelfth brother, Joseph, as an innocent victim, rather than justify his death. According to Girard, Joseph is a “victim of his brothers’ jealousy, the biblical formulation of our mimetic desire.” Girard claims the Bible differs from mythology and other religions in its “ethical demands.” In the Bible, according to Girard, the stories expose the killing of an individual as murder, not as a purging of evil. Girard suggests that many stories in the Bible espouse “the perspective of the victim rather than the mythical perspective of the persecutors.” Yet, even in the Old Testament, an ambiguity remains by the fact that “the responsibility of the victim’s death is placed squarely on the community” and the biblical texts also make sure that God is also “present and responsible.” The Gospels, however, remove the ambiguity of a wrathful God, and replace him with a nonviolent God, “whose demand is for nonviolence rather than sacrifice.” Christ’s death on the cross, for Girard, is the inversion of sacrifice, where Christ’s self-sacrifice exposes the surrogate victim mechanism. Christ’s sacrifice against sacrifice, according to Girard, “reveals its nature and origin by making sacrifice unworkable, at least in the long run, and bringing sacrificial culture to an end.” The Christian message, according to Girard, is the exposure of ritualised sacrifice as murder. This is where resentment comes into play for Girard.

Similar to Nietzsche in many respects, Girard considers resentment to emerge from “the internalisation of weakened revenge.” Nevertheless, Girard contends that Christianity is the cause of this weakened revenge. Christ’s own sacrifice to man, according to Girard, exposes the scapegoat mechanism, leading to the internalisation of violence. The awareness that sacrifice is actually the murdering of an innocent victim, according to Girard, leads to resentment. I will now examine Girard’s

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64 Ibid., 17.
65 Ibid.
66 Ibid., 18.
67 Ibid.
68 Ibid.
69 Ibid.
thoughts on Nietzsche’s ideas about resentment as espoused in Girard’s “Dionysus Versus the Crucified.”

**Girard, Nietzsche, Resentment**

One way to link Nietzsche’s configuration of resentment to Girard’s mimetic theory is to look where Girard examines Nietzsche’s notion of resentment in greater detail. In this section, I will examine Girard’s essay “Dionysus Versus the Crucified” in order to focus upon his interpretation of Nietzsche’s thought on resentment. “Dionysus Versus the Crucified” begins by examining how and why Nietzsche has been interpreted in the twentieth century in the way that he has, and the blunder that has been made by those who have failed to take into account what Girard considers to be Nietzsche’s main preoccupation—a critique of Christianity through the championing of paganism. For Nietzsche, action is required to ward off a reactive, internalised resentment vis-à-vis violence, murder, cruelty, sacrifice, hunting, and war games. These “instinctive” activities of the masters, for Nietzsche, are innocent and healthy discharges of energy. Of course, the pagan traditions are rife with violence, murder, cruelty, and sacrifice. Christianity, for Nietzsche, is the peak of the renunciation of the animalistic discharge of the master, who has no need to remember. For Girard, on the other hand, Christianity exposes sacrifice as the failure to eliminate resentment.

“Dionysus Versus the Crucified” contrasts Nietzsche’s Crucified Dionysus and the Crucified Christ of the Gospels. James G. Williams, editor of *The Girard Reader*, claims that the thought of both Nietzsche and Girard is essentially “Christocentric.” Williams claims that Christ and Christianity are at the very heart of Nietzsche’s and Girard’s thinking. He writes: “the real point of departure for both is the Crucified as the centre of history.” The fundamental difference between these two thinkers is also well summarised by Williams. He writes: “For Nietzsche, the Crucified is the centre of past history but his reign over morality must end with the murder of God and the beginning of a new era. For Girard, the Crucified is the Innocent Victim who

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70 Ibid., 243.
reveals the scapegoat mechanism of human culture and the love that overcomes it.”

Where does resentment lie in this discussion, however? Christianity—or, the religion of the Crucified Christ—for Nietzsche, is the historical culmination of the “slave morality” of the Jewish tradition, which exemplifies resentment par excellence. As has been discussed, the key to understanding resentment, for Nietzsche, is the unconscious, inverted desire of those who consider themselves to be the victims taking revenge against the masters through the remembrance of symbols. Nietzsche’s answer to the domination of a morality he believes to be entrenched in resentment is the Overman [der Übermenschen], emblematic and embodied in the “other” Crucified god, Dionysus, whose “will to power” and forgetfulness annihilates resentment.

In the introduction to “Dionysus Versus the Crucified,” Girard rightly claims that Nietzsche’s “anti-Christian polemics” has been widely ignored since World War II. The ignoring of such polemics, according to Girard, is due to the “contemporary Nietzschean” who no longer sees the relevance of religion after Nietzsche’s declaration that “God is dead.” Indeed, as previously discussed, we come to see many Nietzsches in the twentieth century, but none who has a primary concern with Christianity; and yet, Nietzsche’s last words in Ecce Homo were “Have I been Understood? —Dionysus versus the Crucified.” Girard charges Heidegger with the twentieth-century obscuration of what Girard considers to be Nietzsche’s main preoccupation, that is, the combat between the master morality of paganism and the slave morality of Christianity: the eternal war between Dionysus and Christianity, between Christianity as the precondition for the emergence of resentment, and the immediate animalistic libidinal discharge of energy. It is this indifference to religion that Heidegger assumes that gives Girard the pretext to challenge him.

Girard charges Heidegger as positioning Nietzsche’s thinking as the inversion of Platonism. Girard writes: “Nietzsche’s forced conversion to inverted Platonism is rooted in one essential Heideggerian tenet, which is the mutual incompatibility of religion and thought in the highest sense, the postphilosophical Heideggerian sense … Heidegger on the whole gives an impression of radical indifference to religion, an

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71 Ibid, emphasis in the original.
72 I will discuss the Übermenschen and the will to power in much greater detail in the following chapter.
attitude that has become a model for quite a few people.” Yet despite Heidegger’s predilection to situating Nietzsche as a decidedly non-religious thinker, Girard is adamant in his analysis of Nietzsche as the thinker primarily preoccupied with resentment and its relationship to Christianity. Girard writes: “None of Nietzsche’s achievements as a thinker can be divorced from ressentiment, whether the subject is Wagner, the divine, or Nietzsche himself in Ecce Homo.” Girard claims that despite Nietzsche’s contemporaries, whose positivistic relativising of all religions equated them all, Nietzsche understood the specific uniqueness of Christianity, separated from pagan religions and traditions.

Girard claims that Nietzsche “maintained that the Christian spirit tries to stifle ‘life’ by repressing the most dynamic individuals of a culture. This is the famous ‘morality of the slaves’ verses ‘the morality of the masters,’ the one thing everybody knows about the Nietzschean distinction between paganism and Judeo-Christianity.” According to Nietzsche, it is only the Dionysian impulse, force, or drive to annihilate—even the masters annihilating themselves—that suffices to breed the higher type, the Overman, the Übermensch. Yet, as Girard suggests, Nietzsche is also aware of the horror and violent ferocity attached to the name of Dionysus. Girard goes on to say that Nietzsche is “too honest to dissimulate the disturbing sides, the ugly sides of the Dionysian.” Yet, Nietzsche’s valorisation of—even obsession with—Dionysus is not a lust for violence. In fact, much like Girard, Nietzsche understands that violence plays a major role in the origin of the human, community, and culture.

In light of mimetic theory, Girard writes: “Nietzsche clearly saw that pagan mythology, like pagan ritual, centers on the killing of victims or on their expulsion, which can seem perfectly wanton. He realised that this type of killing, which is reflected in many rituals as well as represented in the myths, is often executed by a large number of murderers; it is a collective deed in which an entire human group is involved.” Yet, what is of most interest to Girard is the emphasis on aphorism 1052

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73 Ibid., 245.
74 Ibid., 246.
75 Ibid.
76 Ibid., 247.
77 Ibid.
in Nietzsche’s unauthorised Nachlass, or, The Will to Power,\(^78\) where he “focuses his attention directly on the collective aspect of the god’s murder.” This aphorism is worth citing in full as it goes to the crux of Girard’s assessment of him. Nietzsche writes:

Dionysus versus the “Crucified”: there you have the antithesis. It is not a difference in regard to their martyrdom—it is a difference in the meaning of it. Life itself, its eternal fruitfulness and recurrence, creates torment, destruction, the will to annihilation. In the other case, suffering—the “Crucified as the innocent one”—counts as an objection to this life, as a formula for its condemnation.—One will see that the problem is that of the meaning of suffering: whether a Christian meaning or a tragic meaning. In the former case, it is supposed to be the path to a holy existence; in the latter case, being is counted as \textit{holy enough} to justify even a monstrous amount of suffering. The tragic man affirms even the harshest suffering … Dionysus cut to pieces is a \textit{promise} of life: it will be eternally reborn and return again from destruction.\(^79\)

Girard contends that Nietzsche considers the collective murder of Dionysus to be equivalent to the passion of the Christ. Yet the difference between them does not lie in their martyrdom. Rather, the antithesis lies in the difference in the meaning of each sacrifice. Girard points out that Nietzsche, as well as the anthropologists, are well aware of the innumerable cults whose origins reside in sacrifice, where all sacrificial religions can and should be equated to each other. Nietzsche, however, “resorts to a single symbol, Dionysus, for countless mythological cults.”\(^80\) Nietzsche, unlike the positivists, who considered all religious cults to be equivalent, understands that there is a fundamental difference between Dionysus (the collective symbol of pagan religions) and Christianity. Nietzsche concludes that there are really only two types of religion: those that celebrate \textit{this} life and all that comes with it (without resentment), and those that beckon another world, who resent this one. Girard writes, quoting

\(^{78}\) See the work of G. Colli and of M. Montinari on the Nachlass.  
\(^{79}\) Ibid., 247–48, emphasis in the original.  
\(^{80}\) Ibid., 248.
Nietzsche: “There are two types of religion, according to Nietzsche. The first one, the pagan, understands that ‘life itself, its eternal fruitfulness and recurrence, creates torment, destruction, the will to annihilate,’ and it says yes to all this; it assumes willingly the worst together with the best. It is beyond good and evil. ‘It affirms even the harshest suffering,’ as Nietzsche puts it. The second type of religion rejects this same suffering, Nietzsche thought.”

For Girard, Nietzsche’s fundamental insight into Christianity is that, despite the most common criticism that it encourages suffering, Christian thought does the opposite: it rejects suffering. In the crucified Christ, Nietzsche envisioned supreme opposition to the Dionysian type of suffering through its very rejection. If the crucified Dionysus represents the justification of the eternal, immeasurable sufferings and joys of life, Christ represents the rejection of all of life’s sufferings and joys.

Beyond the simple equation of a Dionysian “yes” and Christian “no” to life, Nietzsche claims Jesus’ crucifixion is a “hidden act” of resentment. For Nietzsche, Jesus represents resignation to, and revenge par excellence against, the tides of suffering and joy of a primordial, Dionysian celebration of life. Although Girard does not consider Christ’s death as an act of resentment, he echoes Nietzsche’s view of Christ in many respects. He writes: “Nietzsche saw clearly that Jesus dies not as a sacrificial victim of the Dionysian type, but against all such sacrifices. Nietzsche accused this death of being a hidden act of ressentiment because it reveals the injustice of all such deaths and the ‘absurdity’ not of one specific mob only but of all ‘Dionysian’ mobs the world over.” Clearly, Nietzsche’s depiction of the genius of Christ is the rejection of that which Nietzsche considers more fruitful to life: the strong, the masters, and those individuals whose worth is embodied in their ability to create their own values, and to forget them in order to create again. What is fundamentally important to Girard’s reading of Nietzsche, however, is that he indicates what most thinkers have not. Girard focuses his attention on Nietzsche’s singular focus on Christianity. Girard writes: “He [Nietzsche] singled out the biblical and the Christian not because Jesus’ martyrdom is different but because it is not.”

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81 Ibid., 249–50.
82 Ibid., 250.
83 Ibid.
is Nietzsche’s condemnation of Christianity that precisely unveils Girard’s insights into the surrogate victim mechanism. Christianity, for Girard, is indeed the same sacrificial murder as the pagan one, but it is the “silent” and “definitive condemnation of pagan order, of all human order really.”

Girard believes that the Gospels represent a reinterpretation of pagan religious violence in such a way that it invokes guilt in those that enact it.

Yet even before the Gospels, Girard declares that the Jewish Bible gives great insight into the process of mimetic desire and its possible lead-up to violence. By comparing the similar stories of Romulus and Remus and Cain and Abel, where one brother kills another, Girard reveals that there is a fundamental difference between the two narratives, at least in their editorial purview. Where the murder of Remus by Romulus (pagan) is considered a triumph and the founding of Rome, Cain is found guilty of Abel’s murder. From the perspective of the Old Testament, Girard contends that Cain, Romulus, and even Dionysus, having committed the same deed, are all found guilty.

Of course, a Nietzschean reading of Cain’s murder of Abel would be invariably an affirmation of life, of Dionysus, of the active will to power of the masters’ ability to ward off resentment. However, Girard suggests that Nietzsche understands the irreconcilability between pagan sacrifice and the Bible. He writes: “We do not have to share Nietzsche’s value judgement to appreciate his understanding of the irreconcilable opposition between the Bible and mythology … Nietzsche drew attention to the irreconcilable opposition between a mythological vision grounded in the perspective of the victimizers and a biblical inspiration that from the beginning tends to side with the victims and produces not only very different results from the ethical but also from the intellectual standpoint.”

Girard concludes that because of this ethical difference, Nietzsche’s value judgement in valorising the violence of pagan mythology—through his conception of the active master morality—is, as Girard puts it, “untenable.”

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84 Ibid.
85 Ibid., 251.
86 Ibid.
Echoing Nietzsche, Girard claims that resentment is the “interiorization of weakened revenge.” From this definition, Girard contends that Nietzsche himself “suffers so much from it that he mistakes it for the original and primary form of vengeance. He sees resentment not merely as the child of Christianity, which it certainly is, but also as its father, which it certainly is not.” As we have seen, Nietzsche does not consider resentment to be the child of Christianity at all. Resentment—although Nietzsche gives no concrete historical date—emerges well before Christianity. I will discuss this aspect of Nietzsche’s thinking soon. Nevertheless, Girard points out that resentment spreads when violence is hampered or weakened. According to Girard, we can directly attribute the weakening of Nietzsche’s Dionysian violence to the Bible, including the Gospels, which has turned violence into resentment. Of course, violence is not eliminated, but only exposes the innocence of the victim and promotes the bestowal of guilt onto the lynch mob.

After claiming that Nietzsche’s quest to eliminate resentment is “untenable,” Girard turns his gaze to Nietzsche himself by claiming that he resented resentment itself, not fully aware that the real sickness of humanity is not resentment but vengeance. Girard writes: “He [Nietzsche] could afford the luxury of resenting ressentiment so much that it appeared as a fate worse than real vengeance. Being absent from the scene, real vengeance was never seriously apprehended. Unthinkingly, like so many thinkers of his age and ours, Nietzsche called on Dionysus, begging him to bring back real vengeance as a cure for what seemed to him the worst of all possible fates, ressentiment.” And so, the emphasis on the italicisation of “versus” in the aphorism “Dionysus versus the Crucified,” according to Girard, illuminates Nietzsche’s ultimate failure to revive the violence of the primitive sacred. Nietzsche’s resentment of resentment itself, according to Girard, became so unimaginably unbearable, that it led to his own destruction.

Girard’s assessment of Nietzsche’s formula of the eternal war between Dionysus and the Crucified is in direct agreement with Nietzsche in a sense; Christianity has

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87 Ibid., 252.
88 Ibid.
89 Ibid., 252–53.
allowed resentment to flourish precisely because the collective violence of the Dionysian *sparagmos*—the dismemberment of a victim—is, as Girard says, “weakened.”

The Dionysian frenzy, or discharge of active energy, cannot take place after the crucified Christ without the victim(s) being exposed as innocent, and the perpetrators as guilty. Revenge turns in on itself, where resentment is, indeed, the internalisation and failure of the *sparagmos*. Yet it remains unseen precisely why Nietzsche’s valorisation of a master morality is “untenable” to Girard, other than to question the very tenability of violence.

Despite Girard’s contention that the Apollo/Dionysus opposition, Zarathustra, and the *Ubermensch* are “no longer fashionable,” and “terribly outdated,” he declares, time and again, that Nietzsche’s discovery of resentment is one of the great triumphs in the intellectual world. Indeed, resentment is at the heart of both Girard’s mimetic theory and generative anthropology. Girard ultimately contends that Nietzsche himself was drowning in his own resentment; this is the lesson Girard wants us to draw from Nietzsche’s thinking, that all humans are the sufferers of resentment. In the foreword to Stefano Tomelleri’s *Ressentiment: Reflections on Mimetic Desire and Society*, Girard aptly summarises Nietzsche’s resentment in light of mimetic theory, and explains why Nietzsche’s resentment fails to be justified. For Girard, Nietzsche’s resentment fails precisely because the internal resentment of the “slave” is a failure to obtain that which is always impossible, the “other” who is beholden to an object of mimetic desire. Girard writes:

> At the beginning, the contribution of Nietzsche consisted of limiting the term (*ressentiment*) to the realm of revenge, and later, above all, in greatly strengthening the meaning of the initial *re*, which now indicates an unsurmountable obstacle: the other, the victorious rival. It is failure that transforms the original desire into a desire for revenge, but the revenge cannot overcome this obstacle any more than the original desire, and dissatisfaction increases. Like a wave over a rock, the desire for revenge shatters against the triumphant other and flows back toward the subject.

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90 Ibid., 248.
who is left to become continuously submerged in ressentiment. The result is a very unique type of human being, who in our world proliferates to the extent that, according to Nietzsche, democratic and modern societies can be defined through him: they are the societies dedicated to ressentiment, always marked by this type of man.91

Girard concludes that Nietzsche’s conception of ressentiment is so entrenched in his own thinking, that he is the product of ressentiment itself. Girard continues:

By default Nietzsche thought that the law of ressentiment was not valid for him. Betting everything on this certainty—and this is what he did—meant embracing, almost unerringly, defeat in real relationships with others; it meant being infected with the illness that Nietzsche despised the most: ressentiment. Nietzsche is perhaps the only one to fall into the trap that he set for his fellow humans, and his madness forms part, I think, of his genius, of his increasingly desperate battle against the verdict that his thoughts forced him to bring against himself. The truth emerges in the deranged apologies of Ecce Homo: “Because I am so wise, so great, so beautiful.”92

Girard goes on by stating that Nietzsche thought he could escape his own ressentiment by means of the will to power. Girard contends that Nietzsche considered himself to have a greater will to power than his fellow humans. According to Girard, Nietzsche made the mistake of placing ressentiment into “men’s will to power.” Girard writes:

The philosopher’s error was to measure ressentiment with the rule of what he called the “will to power.” Nietzsche saw in the “will to power” a quality of being individual that, more or less, unfailingly determines the destiny of the individuals … For Nietzsche, those who have little will to

91 Stefano Tomelleri, Resentiment: Reflections on Mimetic Desire and Society (Chicago, IL: Michigan State University Press, 2015), x.
92 Ibid., xiii.
power become necessarily the *slaves* of those who have more of it, who have *domination* engraved in their being.  

Finally, it is Nietzsche’s own resentment, according to Girard, that demarcates the present world. Through Nietzsche’s immeasurably important discovery of resentment, Nietzsche himself stumbled upon his own terrible resentment towards Christ. However, despite Girard’s inversion of Nietzsche’s understanding of resentment, we must compare Girard’s account of resentment to that of Nietzsche’s in relation to the origin of the human, and the origin of the ethical. Girard’s mimetic configuration of resentment—that is, resentment is caused by the desire to possess that which cannot be possessed—differs greatly from Nietzsche’s. In my view, Girard is correct in his assessment of Nietzsche as conceiving the Christian faith to be a hotbed of resentment. He nevertheless fails to recognise that Nietzsche places resentment closer to—in generative anthropological terms—the scene of human origins, and does not consider the Judaeo-Christian tradition to be the seat, or cause, of resentment at all.

**Returning to Origins: Problems with Girard’s Account of Nietzsche’s Resentment**

In *Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World*, Girard accounts for the process of hominisation, quite specifically, by attributing the emergence of the human to a fixation on a cadaver, which is what Girard considers to be the first form of non-instinctual attention. This non-instinctual attention is precipitated by the fact that the quasi object is behind the nascent community’s newfound peace. For Nietzsche, on the other hand, attention is that which emerges from resentment. The reactive force of resentment allows for memory and an internal scene of representation to develop in the first place. Although Nietzsche attributes the origin of language to the masters, he nevertheless declares that the symbols uttered by the masters were of little or no consequence precisely because the masters were able to forget. Rather, it is the priestly caste (long before the emergence of Judaism) that internalise action into

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93 Ibid, emphasis in the original.
symbols. Through an internal scene of representation, the priestly caste were able to deceive the masters through a reactive will to power, resentment.

What are we to make of Girard’s account of resentment in relation to Nietzsche’s? The entire argument concerning resentment drawn between Nietzsche and Girard can be reduced to a single dichotomy, the condemnation or the condoning of violence. For Girard, resentment is a product of Christianity; it is that which reduces violence by internalising revenge. For Nietzsche, resentment is the product of the reactive force of the will to power becoming creative, where action turns inwards on itself. On the one hand, Girard asks us to eliminate resentment through the Word of the Gospels. Nietzsche on the other hand, declares that resentment is something that must be overcome if humanity is to be able to cross the bridge over the abyss into Übermenschdom. Resentment has its place in both thinkers, but it is the value placed on the importance of the ethical that differs greatly between Nietzsche and Girard.

Plato famously credits Socrates for once declaring that all the souls of the righteous are immortal and divine. He writes: “all men’s souls are immortal, but the souls of the righteous are immortal and divine.” Ignoring Nietzsche’s vehement opposition to Socrates in The Birth of Tragedy—where he marks Socrates as the end of tragedy and the rise of rationalism—Socrates’ declaration will be used as an example to raise a fundamental flaw in Girard’s assessment of Nietzsche’s conception of resentment. The problem with resentment is in relation to the value ascribed to two opposing ethical models. One model pertains to the need for resentment in order to weaken and subdue violence. The other model is to eliminate resentment entirely—or, at the very least, to suppress it. For Girard, the Gospels expose the mimetic tension that leads to the immolation of an innocent victim. Resentment, for Girard, is the “interiorization of weakened revenge,” just as Nietzsche explicates. Resentment, for Nietzsche, is the driving force of Judaeo-Christian morality. But, for Girard, Christianity allows resentment to flourish precisely because it has exposed the fallacy of the scapegoat mechanism. Yet, Nietzsche claims resentment is more than just the interiorisation of weakened revenge. Resentment, for Nietzsche, leads directly to an internal scene of representation, of the symbolic, where the man of resentment develops an intellect and remembers. For Girard, it is the scapegoat mechanism that is at the heart of the
origin of the human, where resentment is internalised revenge against the other who possesses an object of desire. Nevertheless, the origin of language, for Girard, is to remain epiphenomenal. In other words, Girard gives no specific account for the emergence of language, other than as the consequence of the immolation of a victim, where the event is remembered and sacralised. The first human institutions—religion and language—emerge from the advent of the sacrifice of a victim, which is memorialised.

We have one thinker who denounces violence, the other who justifies it. Here is what the argument comes down to: the justification or renunciation of violence. Yet, before I assess Nietzsche’s idea that resentment contributes to language and various configurations of the ethical, I will return to Socrates’ statement in order to provide an example of the error found in the argument put forth by Girard about Nietzsche. How would Nietzsche respond to Socrates? I claim he would respond in the same way as Girard responds to Nietzsche’s conception of resentment.

In Nietzsche’s terms, the “righteous” is worlds apart from what we might have expected Socrates to mean by it. Nevertheless, the Nietzschean reversal of the concept “righteous” completely transforms what Socrates is expressing. The righteous, instead of following an ethos to be good, as Socrates would have it mean, is following instincts. For a soul to be immortal and divine, for Nietzsche, is to be a product and recipient of the active forces of the will to power. Of course, Girard is correct when he declares that Nietzsche’s notion of resentment is dependent on the will to power, just as he is dependent on his own theory of mimesis to reveal the “truth” about violence. Yet, although violence does not extinguish resentment—and this is the question Girard raises—what does it matter in relation to how one can justify or renounce violence? It is not enough to invert Nietzsche’s ideas about Christianity and to claim that violence is wrong. Girard claims resentment is that which weakens violence and is necessary for humanity if it wants to avoid total annihilation; resentment is the outcome of the message of the Gospels exposing the false promise of the sacrificial victim. Nietzsche, on the other hand, declares that resentment is the cause of the suppression of the healthy instincts of the forgetful masters. We find no
solution other than to accept the “value” of resentment from one or the other, Girard or Nietzsche.

For Gans, on the other hand, resentment emerges before both Nietzsche’s slave revolt in morals as well as Girard’s failed sparagmos. Herein lies the resolution to the incongruity between Girard’s and Nietzsche’s accounts of resentment. Yet, resentment can be found on the originary scene of representation. By examining resentment from a referential starting point we can construct a model to assess the plausibility of Nietzsche’s conception of resentment as the reactive force of the will to power. Gans’s notion of resentment differs from both Nietzsche’s and Girard’s in one radical sense. It is in specific relation to language, like Nietzsche’s, and the ethical, like Girard’s. Girard does not account for an originary scene of language; Nietzsche, however, does. This is precisely why Nietzsche’s vision of the emergence of language (and resentment) is closer to the generative anthropological account of language. There is a way to examine Nietzsche’s conception of resentment without returning to decidedly opposing ideas about the emergence of resentment. If we are to place the ethical at the origin of the human, we can conceptualise how resentment emerges from originary resentment. For Gans, there exists an originary resentment embedded in all individuals, right back to the origin of the human.

In The Girardian Origins of Generative Anthropology, Gans specifically outlines the function of resentment in contrast to Girard. He writes: “The fundamental function of the human and its representational culture is to prevent or rather defer mimetic violence, which is characteristically internalized as resentment, Nietzsche’s resentment. It is resentment, frustrated, potentially violent desire for an object of which we feel rightly or wrongly unjustly deprived, that is the primary focus of culture rather than violence per se.” For Gans, resentment emerges before violence. Girard, however, claims that resentment does not originate on a scene of human representation. Rather, resentment for Girard is the “internalisation of weakened revenge.” In the chapter “Resentment, Jealousy, and Mimetic Desire,” Gans claims

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94 The fundamental differences between generative anthropology and Girard’s model of the human are discussed at length in Eric Gans, The Girardian Origins of Generative Anthropology (Amazon Digital Services, 2012). The concern of this chapter, however, is to deal with the differences concerning resentment specifically.

95 Ibid., 66.
that despite Girard’s contention that generative anthropology is just a new “social contract” theory, Gans suggests that Girard’s anthropology is a precursor to generative anthropology without a theory of representation.  

Although Nietzsche has no hand in a theory of mimesis, nor an originary hypothesis, he does explicitly account for a theory of human representation, where resentment has a key place in its development. I will now reintroduce Gans’s idea of originary resentment in relation to Nietzsche’s.

The Master Forgets, the Slave Remembers: Resentment and the Continued Suspicion of the Sign: The Birth of the Ethical

In order to exist at all, slave morality from the outset always needs an opposing, outer world; in physiological terms, it needs external stimuli in order to act—its action is fundamentally reaction.—Friedrich Nietzsche

The individual language user has internalized the context of the originary event in a scene of representation, a private imaginary space independent of the community. The contrast between the private and public scenes, between imaginary fulfillment and real alienation from the center, gives rise to the originary resentment that is the first mode of self-consciousness.—Eric Gans

Resentment is intricately linked to language in both Nietzsche’s and Gans’s account of the origin of the human. For Nietzsche, the reactive force of resentment manifests itself in the form of an internal scene of representation. Despite resentment being a “reactive force,” for Nietzsche, it is also the case with Gans that resentment is coeval with an internal scene of representation. The fundamental difference between both accounts of resentment, however, is that Gans conceives of resentment as the birth of self-consciousness, whereas Nietzsche—who argues the birth of the modern human to resentment—claims that resentment is a negation and abortion of this life; resentment

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96 See: www.anthropoetics.ucla.edu/views/home.html, especially the chronicle “Resentment, Jealousy, and Mimetic Desire.”
97 Nietzsche, On the Genealogy of Morals, 18, emphasis mine.
98 Gans, Originary Thinking, 18.
is a sickness. Yet, under closer inspection, might one not make the claim that all that characterises the human, according to generative anthropology, is what Nietzsche constitutes as resentment? Of course, these characteristics are the ability to remember, an internal scene of representation, contemplation of the aesthetic, culture, and the ethical. The master, as Nietzsche attributes, shares synergies with the protohuman, who has not yet “mastered” language. For example, those masters who do find themselves suffering from the poison of resentment immediately discharge it with action instead of internalising it into an imaginary world of symbols. Therefore, the natural order of hierarchy, as generative anthropology contends, continues. For Nietzsche, only those who cannot actively discharge energy, the men of resentment, have been able to remember through an internal scene of representation, an internal act, a re-action. Thus, if we are to take Gans’s idea that the human proper begins with language, we might also deduce that Nietzsche’s conception of resentment is to be configured as his own theory of the birth of the human. This final section in this chapter aims to establish a firm ground on which to examine Nietzsche's theory of resentment in relation to both the origin of language and resentment as espoused by generative anthropology. For Nietzsche, the master invents language, but forgets; the slave remembers and internalises language through resentment.

Nietzsche’s theory of language as espoused in On Truth and Lie greatly influences his thinking about resentment in The Genealogy. Gans, on the other hand, claims that all individuation can be attributed to originary resentment. For Gans, resentment is not a reactive offshoot of the will to power, but the reaction of the individual that emerges from the originary scene. Once the desired, sacred central object has been devoured, the sign remains, but the object cannot be accessed. It is the inability to obtain the centre that initiates resentment. For Gans, resentment is the birth of the self and of culture. Hence, there is a fundamental difference between Nietzsche’s account of resentment as the failed acting out of the active drives in relation to Gans’s notion of originary resentment. For Nietzsche, there must exist “external stimuli,” which is also true for Gans. Yet the difference that exists is the way in which Gans situates resentment—or, originary resentment—at the centre of self-consciousness and in an originary scene. What also separates Gans’s from Nietzsche’s conception of resentment is Gans’s notion that all individuals experience originary resentment from
the “center that refuses itself to desire.” Resentment, for Gans, is the foundation and driving force of all human culture precisely because resentment allows individuals to participate in reimagining the originary scene.

Gans outlines the problem with Nietzsche’s idea contained in *The Genealogy*, that the forgetful master coins the first words. In *Originary Thinking*, Gans writes: “The minimal condition of the perpetuation of language in time—a sign used once and forgotten could scarcely be called “linguistic”—is that the members of the community recall through the sign the referent as something other than the sign. This minimal consciousness of language is all we need to share with the originary community in order to guarantee the continuity of our language with theirs. Similar arguments would apply to potential dialogue concerning other originary categories such as the ethical, the sacred, or the esthetic.” We must ask Nietzsche: How could a language be perpetuated without its being remembered? Without resentment, how could the human continue to represent? Perhaps this is Nietzsche’s point: that a world in flux makes no demands on the human animal to remember. According to Nietzsche, the opposing force of resentment was also bred into the animal man with startling consequences, namely memory. He writes: “Now this animal which needs to be forgetful, in which forgetting represents a force, a force of robust health, has bred in itself an opposing faculty, a memory, with the aid of which forgetfulness is abrogated in certain cases—namely in those cases where promises are made. This involves no mere passive inability to rid oneself of an impression, no mere indigestion through a once-pledged word with which one cannot ‘have done,’ but an active desire not to rid oneself, a desire for the continuance of something desired once, a real memory of the will.”

Perhaps Nietzsche considered the first language users, the masters, to be pointing at the same object again but with a different sign each time; he never elaborates on this, although he does attribute memory to the introverted reactivity of resentment. Gans, too, claims that resentment has a key place in the emergence of self-consciousness, of

99 Ibid.
100 Ibid.
101 Ibid.
remembering the sign and its referent. Indeed, it is precisely originary resentment that at once allows each individual human to know that she or he is conscious, to be aware, and maintains order through the deferral of violence through representation. In light of generative anthropology, one can see a clear indication that Nietzsche’s theory of resentment is a continuation of his suspicion of language, which leads to the ethical, the nonviolent. Nietzsche’s suspicion of language and the ethical changes little from *On Truth and Lie* until the end of his active career, where he considers Christianity to be the latest progenitor of the reactive forces of resentment. Indeed, *The Genealogy*, a work published fifteen years after *The Birth of Tragedy*, continues the theme of the suspicion of the “truth value” of language through an analysis of the origins of the morality of resentment. I would go so far as to suggest that Nietzsche’s early suspicion of language greatly orients his later thinking about slave morality and the intellectual cunning of the men of resentment in general. As we have seen, once resentment becomes a creative force through the priestly types, a slave revolt in morals occurs through the “cunning” trickery of the priests on the forgetful masters, who are eventually consumed by the same reactive force of resentment, of memory. Of course, a fundamental characteristic of the man of resentment is his cleverness and use of language as a weapon against the active forces of the will to power, as opposed to what Nietzsche refers to as the unrefined instincts of the “beasts.” Nietzsche considers that the less ability an individual has to become active, to immediately take revenge, the more the individual reflects, contemplates, symbolises, conceptualises, and resents. Furthermore, Nietzsche envisions the masters as having little time to deal with matters involved in symbolic representation, and who instead are guided by their instincts and an abundance of energy, which is routinely discharged at any cost. For Nietzsche, the intelligence and cunning of the priests—who were the catalysts for the slave revolt of morals—were the inventors of the “knowledge” that Nietzsche speaks of in *On Truth and Lie*. If we were to re-examine several passages in *On Truth and Lie* in conjunction with *The Genealogy*, we would find a direct link between Nietzsche’s ideas about the value of language and the ethical and the famous master/slave dichotomy. In *On Truth and Lie*, Nietzsche writes:

The intellect, as a means for the preservation of the individual, unfolds its chief powers in simulation; for this is the means by which the weaker, less
robust individuals preserve themselves, since they are denied the chance of waging the struggle for existence with horns or the fangs of beasts of prey.\textsuperscript{102}

As has been stated, \textit{On Truth and Lie} is a juvenile work of Nietzsche’s. Yet, if we return to the mature, \textit{The Genealogy}, we find the same view of language, that is, the “weaker, less robust individuals” are precisely the men of resentment, who internalise the world through symbols as a creative re-action to the masters, and who care little about, or do not know, how to contemplate the external world. Nietzsche writes: “In order to exist at all, slave morality from the outset always needs an opposing, outer world; in physiological terms, its needs \textit{external stimuli} in order to act—its action is fundamentally reaction.”\textsuperscript{103} There is one quote, however, in Nietzsche’s first essay in \textit{The Genealogy} that allows one to precisely configure his notion of resentment within a generative anthropological framework and that we should consider before we move onto an originary analysis of his conception of resentment. In the essay “The ‘Good’ and ‘Bad,’ ‘Good’ and ‘Evil,’” Nietzsche writes: “The right of the masters to confer names even extends so far that one should allow oneself to grasp the \textit{origin of language} itself as the expression of the power of the rulers: they say ‘this is such and such’, they put their seal on each thing and event with a sound and in the process take possession of it.”\textsuperscript{104} The above passage comes extremely close to Gans’s idea of the ostensive and its relationship to resentment. Yet, for Gans, resentment does not reside in the internal reactions of the slave. Rather, resentment lies at the heart of the originary event itself, or what Gans refers to as originary resentment. To return to originary resentment, Gans writes:

\begin{quote}
What I call originary resentment is the resentment directed at the central object of the originary event—hence away from one’s fellows on the periphery—when the object’s very designation/sacralization by the sign makes it inaccessible to its designators.\textsuperscript{105}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{103} Ibid, emphasis in the original.
\textsuperscript{104} Ibid., my emphasis.
\textsuperscript{105} Gans, “Sin and Resentment.”
For Gans, the sign that designated the sacred central object eliminated violence from the group by “concentrating it against the central figure.”106 In other words, originary resentment is directed at the centre because the centre designated as such is inaccessible. For Nietzsche, on the other hand, the internal scene of representation is driven by resentment, and the memory of an individual’s inability to generate immediate revenge. For Gans, all individuals resent the centre from the immediate birth of language and the human proper. To return to Nietzsche, we find it is the masters who are accounted for as the bearers of the “origin of language,” according to generative anthropology, and who are already “corrupted” with originary resentment precisely because they cannot access that which they have designated.

The Ethical

The most important distinction to be drawn between Gans’s and Nietzsche’s understandings of resentment is these thinkers’ opposing views of the ethical. For Gans, the ethical is the outcome of the deferral of violence through representation, or what he refers to as the “primacy of the ethical.”107 For Nietzsche, on the other hand, the ethical is a mere tributary of the man of resentment, or “clever animal,” who conjures up symbols in order to dominate the masters. The ethical, for Nietzsche, is an aesthetic phenomenon. Yet Gans claims that language comes first, then originary resentment, then the aesthetic. Indeed, originary resentment, for Gans, is that which motivates the contemplation of the aesthetic. Gans claims that there exists a movement between the imagined possession of a designated sacred object and the recognised impossibility of attaining such a designated object. In *Originary Thinking*, Gans writes:

> Designation by the sign becomes an integral element of the object itself; this distinguishes the esthetic from the sacred object, the force of which is

106 Ibid.
conceived as independent of representation. In the esthetic experience, the individual imagines that the object of desire could be possessed, but must then imagine the object as the inviolate designatum of the sign in order to desire it. This oscillation between imaginary possession and recognised inviolability is characteristic of all esthetic experience, including that of “natural” beauty. What in the originary scene motivates the esthetic experience just described is the originary resentment of the peripheral participant toward the central object. The object is now not merely wanted, it is desired. But (the notion of desire includes its own “but”) it cannot be possessed. Resentment is the desiring self’s reaction to this exclusion. Indeed, the human self is first experienced as such in this resentment of dispossession from the centre.108

Those that are closer to the centre, or fancy that they are (Nietzsche’s masters), and the slaves, those that have resentment directed towards those “closer” to the centre, reveal a direct synergy between generative anthropology and Nietzsche’s position on resentment. Gans’s reflection on the necessity of originary resentment begs the question: How are we to situate Nietzsche’s conception of the masters as the rightful inventors of language in relation to generative anthropology? When one examines the origin of resentment in light of generative anthropology, there is an inherent structural flaw in Nietzsche’s conception of the origin of language being attributed to the masters. Not only does generative anthropology expose this misconception, but it also accounts for the so-called master through what Gans and Adam Katz refer to as “Firstness.” I will examine this concept momentarily.

In The Genealogy, Nietzsche attributes the origin of language to the “masters,” where instead of associating meaning or truth to a word would seal a “thing” or “event” with a pure expression of power, coining them with a sound. Nietzsche writes: “the lordly right of giving names extends so far that one should allow oneself to conceive of the origin of language itself as an expression of power on the part of the rulers: they say ‘this is this and this,’ they seal every thing and event with a sound and, as it were, take

108 Gans, Originary Thinking, 118.
Yet, there are two expressions of power, for Nietzsche. One is the active expression of power, where a “thing” or “event” is coined by a sound, and immediately forgotten. The master has no need to remember, everything is as it is expressed, where it is to be immediately forgotten. The other power expressed is reactive, where the thing or event is indeed remembered, where a memory is forged. The reactive expression of power, for Nietzsche, is resentment. The “priestly caste” is charged with internalising “external stimuli” into a scene of representation through the reactive forces of resentment directed at those who are more powerful, the masters. Nietzsche writes: “In order to exist, slave morality always needs first a hostile world; it needs, physiologically speaking, external stimuli in order to act at all—its action is fundamentally reaction.”

Generative anthropology, on the other hand, claims that resentment is the key to the birth of the self, regardless of the master or slave. Yet, there is a way to position Nietzsche’s notion of the master within generative anthropology; that is the notion of firstness as developed by Gans and Adam Katz. This chapter will argue that the reactive force(s) of resentment, for Nietzsche, is a further development of language. According to Nietzsche, the “cunning intellect” and ability of the priestly caste to remember, to create a scene of internal representation from powerful external stimuli, such as the oppression of the forgetful masters, is the birth of memory.

Nietzsche contemplates the masters as the originators of language. Nietzsche’s master, the founder of language has symmetries with Gans’s notion of “firstness.” Firstness, for generative anthropology gives a key insight into Nietzsche’s model of resentment. Yet, what is firstness? For Gans, firstness is beyond originary resentment, which all individuals experience, the resentment that comes after originary resentment is directed at firstness, or the first individual to invent the sign. We should equate this to the resentment of the man of resentment in Nietzsche’s model. Gans explains the concept of firstness on the originary scene of representation. He writes:

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\text{GA [generative anthropology] first used the term “firstness” in reference not to the center but to the First to abort his attempt to appropriate the }
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110 Ibid., 37.
object by *intending* his gesture as a sign. The first signing gesture is a renunciation of designs on the central object and consequently a source of pacification. In a situation of potential conflict in which all are rivals, the signer renounces appropriating the object in order to designate it as what cannot be appropriated, hence as the source of the group’s resentment.111

Gans positions resentment in simpler, more minimal terms. For Gans, all fundamental human categories, including resentment, must be found on the originary scene of representation. Yet, beyond originary resentment, what is the motivation for the perpetuation of resentment? To answer this question, Gans again considers the idea of firstness. Although firstness, for Gans, does not appear immediately on the scene of representation, it is a prehuman, precondition of the scene, where one or two protohumans must have emitted the sign *first*. Gans writes: “the defining innovation of our species, the conversion of the appetitive gesture through its ‘abortion’ into a sign, must have begun as the behavior of only one or two participants. The specific point of innovation is the *gestalt* of the sign, which is no longer an action-toward intended to grasp the object, but a form, a gesture-in-itself, which as such could be imitated by the others.”112 Nevertheless, we must concede the logical impossibility of the master as the inventor of language if the master cannot remember.

Nietzsche is closer to Gans with respect to resentment than one might initially think. He indeed situates resentment immediately after the origin of language through the masters. Yet how does the ethical relate to resentment for Gans and for Nietzsche? For Nietzsche, moral value judgements, whose origin is found in resentment, stifles life. For Gans, resentment is the “engine” that perpetuates the deferral of violence through representation. To extend this line of argument, we must consider that all participants in the originary scene, through mimetic desire, attempt to be the first to possess the sacred central sign/object. Instead of Nietzsche’s claim that resentment is the outcome of an aborted discharge of energy, Gans claims that originary resentment itself is what created firstness, what creates hierarchy. Nevertheless, the point to make

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112 Ibid.
here is that, for Gans, the ethical emerges before resentment. To equate what
Nietzsche considers to be the masters, Gans agrees that it was the master, or “big-
man” or the first to emit the sign who was the source of the origin of language and the
ethical. Gans writes:

Yet the aborted gesture is nonetheless at a second remove a potential
source of resentment. Unlike the appropriative gesture it replaces, it
demands attention, the joint shared attention unique to our species. We
cannot assume that the First was singled out in the originary event, for if
he met any resistance he could not have inaugurated a symmetrical
exchange. But if this originary firstness was uniquely successful, it is
because it was uniquely able to designate for the first time the central
object as a privileged target of the love-and-resentment that is sacred
significance. Once the scene of representation exists, the one who reveals
it to the others, while transferring his firstness to the center, is also
reinserting himself in an already-existing relationship to that center, and
effectively proclaiming his own derivative firstness in the human
sphere—the prototype of the role of big-man.113

There cannot be an exchange of human reciprocity without firstness, or what Gans
refers to as the “big-man.” In Nietzsche’s terms, there must be a master in order for
language to emerge. The master coins an object with a word, considers his creation
“good” and immediately forgets, which Nietzsche considers to be the “healthy”
instinct of forgetfulness. Yet, the most fundamental difference here is that resentment
must exist for the human to exist, according to generative anthropology. This is the
fundamental flaw inherent in Nietzsche’s evaluation of resentment as the source of
the memory of the sign.

Resentment, for Nietzsche, is the reactive force of the will to power. What about the
active form of the will to power in relation to generative anthropology? What about
the theory itself as a way of understanding the human? It is one thing to declare that

113 Ibid, emphasis in the original.
Nietzsche is a theorist of origins, but quite another to see how he comes to his conclusion about the will to power in relation to his theory of the origin of the human. In the following chapter, I will discuss at length Nietzsche’s concerns with the will to power and the problems his ontocosmology faces in light of generative anthropology, the hermeneutic lens of this dissertation. If we are to understand the scope of the value placed on resentment for Nietzsche, it is essential we explore the will to power, and the eternal recurrence, central elements of Nietzsche’s thinking.
Chapter 4:
An Originary Analysis of the Theory of the Will
to Power and of Eternal Recurrence

The world exists; it is not something that becomes, not something that
passes away. Or rather: it becomes, it passes away, but it has never begun
to become and never ceased to pass away—it preserves itself in both ...
the world lives on itself: its excrements are its nourishment.
—Friedrich Nietzsche¹

What I have called the heuristic function of the originary hypothesis may
also be put in terms of dialogue: whether or not we agree that it took
place, or even that it is meaningful to ask the question, the originary event
provides us with a minimal subject of conversation.—Eric Gans²

Nietzsche’s “eternal return” thought experiment (the focus of which is not
the “hypothesis” of the “eternal return” but on what your answer would
be to the demon) is interested in nothing more than representing what it
would really “mean” what one says and does (what would it mean to
“affirm” one’s existence)—again, something for which no visible proof is
forthcoming.—Adam Katz³

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As has been discussed in the previous three chapters, Nietzsche’s criticism of the ethical—along with his ideas on resentment—is deeply oriented by his theory of language as a fundamental “error” that occurred during the evolution of the human being. Indeed, almost every aspect of Nietzsche’s thought is underpinned by his suspicion of the truth value of language. In this chapter, I argue, the will to power, and the eternal recurrence of the same are part of an attempt to transcend traditional conceptions of the ethical through a renunciation of what makes the human most human: language. Indeed, Nietzsche considers the ethical formulations of “good” and “evil” as derived from an “aimless” and “arbitrary” language. In place of the old conceptions of good and evil—or, what Nietzsche considers an ethics of resentment—he proposes the eternal recurrence of the same as an ethical imperative. Nietzsche claims that the new ethical imperative of the eternal recurrence is “beyond good and evil.” The ethical imperative, then, is to affirm, to say, “yes,” to an existence eternally recurring in the same sequence indefinitely. For Nietzsche, the old conception of the ethical is the product of language, where the man of resentment has gained the ability to remember the sign that the master invented; the man of resentment is re-acting to the forgetful master. As discussed in the previous chapter, these are the active and reactive elements of the will to power (Ger: Wille zur Macht). In an attempt to transcend the ethics of resentment, Nietzsche proposes a new set of values, a “re-evaluation of all values,” which he describes as the will to power, and the eternal recurrence. In works following the famous proclamation of the “death of God” in The Gay Science, Nietzsche attempts to develop a kosmos anthropos in order to finally overturn the “falsity” of an ethics of resentment driven by the error of a reactive, all-too-human language. Where Nietzsche increasingly tries to eliminate the very idea of the human, and with it the centrality of language. Generative anthropology, on the other hand, postulates the central importance of language as the defining feature of the human, where the ethical and resentment are both foundational elements of the human. From a generative anthropological standpoint, Nietzsche attempts to utilise the notions of the will to power and eternal recurrence to transcend—to

4 Nietzsche, On Truth and Lie, 2.
5 Nietzsche, The Will to Power, 539. (WP 539; cf. 13:14[138]).
6 As discussed in chapter 2, language (Sprache) and consciousness (Bewusstsein) are interchangeable. In fact, they are one and the same for Nietzsche.
dehumanise—the human, or to utilise them for what he refers to as man’s “naturalisation.” Founded on the basis that this argument itself takes place within an all-too-human language, it takes for granted the very same thing that allows him to make propositions to begin with: a plausible account of the emergence of representation and subsequently its dispensability.

In light of generative anthropology, Nietzsche’s project, aimed at eliminating an ethics of resentment by replacing it with the will to power / eternal recurrence, fails on two fronts. First, Nietzsche’s theory of language is centred on the declarative, which, as Gans has shown, cannot be the most primitive linguistic form. Nietzsche, in other words, has no account of the ostensive. Second, given the plausibility of generative anthropology’s claim that the ethical is coeval with the human, it is hard to conceive of how the ethical per se could simply be abandoned. The act of designating an object with a sign is also an ethical act because it is the deferral of violence—an aborted gesture of appropriation. Furthermore, originary resentment, for generative anthropology, is essential to the human scene. Therefore, by implication, if Nietzsche aims at eliminating an ethics of resentment, he is also aiming at eliminating the human altogether. Both the ethical and resentment are indispensable elements of the human, whether Nietzsche concedes this or not. Resentment is not something that can be transcended. Rather, resentment is the space in which human culture takes shape.

Regardless of the ubiquitous postmodern interpretations of Nietzsche, which are unable to adequately make sense of the will to power or eternal recurrence, generative anthropology does not necessarily exclude other interpretations of Nietzsche’s oeuvre; it does allow for a minimal subject of conversation concerning his work. The minimal subject of conversation is the one that generative anthropology proposes more generally—the scene of the punctual emergence of the human, where all minimal categories of the human owe their origin. In light of the generative anthropological position that all forms of thinking can be viewed from a point of origin, I will explore for the remainder of this chapter Nietzsche’s two major ideas: the will to power, and the eternal recurrence of the same. In this chapter, I will make the case that each idea does—and indeed must—emerge and take its shape from the scene of human representation. Nietzsche, on the other hand, claims that the human emerges (and
disappears) from an inexorably recurring will to power. As Nietzsche’s Zarathustra famously states, the human is merely a bridge towards the “affirmation” of the eternal recurrence, where there is no room for anything resembling traditional conceptions of the ethical. As Gans states, Nietzsche “presents the scenic as the transcendence of the ethical, ‘beyond good and evil.’” Indeed, the will to power and eternal recurrence are Nietzsche’s direct response to what he considers the error of language, the error of traditional conceptions of the ethical, the age of resentment, and the very belief that there is something that can be designated as “human,” unless the human is a bridge over the abyss aimed towards the affirmation of eternal recurrence. For Nietzsche, language and the ethical are mere tributaries of the aesthetic phenomenon of the world, which is an eternally recurring will to power “and nothing besides.”

The structure of the chapter is as follows. First, I will offer a selective reading of the Nachlass, or the unauthorised collection of notes found in The Will to Power, where Nietzsche’s idea of the will to power can be most readily explicated through the distinction between quality and quantity. I will examine the will to power and its problems as a theory in light of our understanding of human representation. Indeed, Nietzsche’s theory oddly attempts to disregard representation altogether by claiming that there are no “real” qualities, but only quantities of force. For Nietzsche, qualities are insurmountable barriers between us, and what he considers to be the sum total of reality from which the human cannot be distinguished. However, there is an inherent contradiction between theorising a “reality” that is the totality of the world, and, at the same time, attempting to claim that qualities—or, the verticality of the sign, for generative anthropology—are illusory. The very conditions of possibility for making this argument ultimately undermine the ontology that it hopes to establish. Generative anthropology would insist that the will to power is impossible unless there is a human there to designate/qualify it as such. The will to power, I argue, fails as a theory precisely because a subjectless will to power, the “sum total of everything,” is

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8 Nietzsche, Will to Power, 549. (WP 549; cf. 11:36[26])
9 As opposed to the German anzhal (number) that is more closely associated with the English “quantity,” Nietzsche considers the abstraction of numbers to be yet another human error. Instead, he uses the term quanten (quantum), referring to an undisclosed magnitude. Although he claims that the world is an undisclosed magnitude, it is also finite. See, for example, the aphorism “Number” in Friedrich Nietzsche, Human, All Too Human.
ultimately designated as such by a subject and has no reality apart from it. Second, after an examination of the problems inherent in the theory of the will to power, I will situate the theory within a generative anthropological framework. I will offer an originary analysis of will to power as the inherent appetitive force of the animal. I will analyse Nietzsche’s theory of the will to power, and his notion of “quantities of force,” in relation to the idea of “verticality” and “horizontality” found in generative anthropology. Nietzsche considers language to be the most recent and untrustworthy development in the human, claiming that bodily instincts are the more refined and trustworthy aspects of our nature because they are primordial and closer to what he considers to be the ultimate reality of the will to power, from which we have alienated ourselves. I will consider the arguments put forth by Gans and Nietzsche on the value of language, and the distinction between the verticality of the sign and the worldly appetite of the horizontal. I argue that Nietzsche’s primitive will to power is applicable to only the horizontal world of the non-human animal. For the human, will to power—as Nietzsche conceives of it—is an impossible project.

Later in the chapter, I will discuss Nietzsche’s self-designated “greatest teaching,” where, following Heraclitus, Nietzsche considers the world to be in an eternal flux. Unlike the pre-Socratics, however, Nietzsche contends that everything returns in a self-same manner. The paralysing idea of eternal recurrence is Nietzsche’s last attempt at a radical escape from the ethics of resentment as a way of overcoming the human. On a cosmological reading, Nietzsche’s theory denies any “meaning” precisely because of the endless circularity of the world in the same sequence. In other words, there is no fixed point from which to make relations; an $x$ cannot be designated as an $x$ as such precisely because the $x$ is part of the flux, part of the “one and all.” In *Human, All too Human*, Nietzsche writes: “the invention of the laws of numbers was made on the basis of the error, dominant even from the earliest times, that there are identical things (but in fact nothing is identical with anything else); at least that there are things (but there is no ‘thing’).”¹⁰ There have been few responses from generative anthropology to Nietzsche’s eternal recurrence. A notable exception is Adam Katz’s *The Question of Originary Method: The Generative Thought*

¹⁰ Ibid., 26.
Experiment. Considering there is no forthcoming “proof” of the eternal recurrence, nor any possibility of one forthcoming, Katz claims the eternal recurrence rests on the originary scene of human representation as a self-reflexive thought experiment. We will consider this in due course. Finally, I will engage with the similarities and differences between Nietzsche’s eternal recurrence and the propositions set forth by generative anthropology by looking at the symbol of the Ouroboros. By examining this symbol, one can reconfigure the idea of eternal recurrence within that of generative anthropology. The Ouroboros is symbolic of an eternal recurrence, but also of the formal closure of the originary scene, where all attempts to designate an object recreate the originary scene.

Nachlass: The Will to Power

Nietzsche’s notes (Nachlass) published in the posthumous and unauthorised The Will to Power is comprised of the characteristically ironic aphorisms and parabolic prosody of an iconoclast whose thoughts still trouble contemporary philosophy. Although the will to power is a prominent idea found throughout the manuscript, Nietzsche’s intention was arguably to publish the majority of these notes—if this were ever to occur—as the “attempt at a revaluation of all values.” The Will to Power has been given both the highest praise and the harshest criticism since its publication.11 Although it is not entirely clear whether Nietzsche was to publish the vast collection of notes in The Will to Power, it remains an anthology that must been taken seriously for Nietzsche scholarship. For Nietzsche, everything is a manifestation of the will to power: the morality of the weak, the morality of the strong, existence itself. There is no cause, no subject, no unity, but only will to power. Yet, there are inherent problems with the claim that everything is will to power, which generative anthropology has the potential to highlight.

11 In the introduction to the 1968 edition of The Will to Power, Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale give both praise and criticism to the collection of notes found in the manuscript. They offer praise for the manuscript shedding light on one or two central ideas in Nietzsche’s thought. They nevertheless provide criticisms for its lack of scholarship regarding whether or not Nietzsche had intended to publish these notes at all.
In the preface of *The Will to Power*, Nietzsche resumes his relentless attack on what he sees to be the predominance of Judaeo-Christian morality in the epicentre of nineteenth-century Europe. If one could express in a single axiom Nietzsche’s apprehensions about “modernity,” it is that it is characterised as a false morality, which it takes to be its raison d’être. Not only is all morality false, for Nietzsche, all interpretations—driven by affects—are moral interpretations, and thereby also false. Even today, the deeply ingrained Christian values of the West have led to even self-proclaimed atheists (Richard Dawkins, Michel Onfray, Daniel C. Dennett, Michael Martin, Peter Singer, and others) presupposing—or taking as axiomatic—these very same values, that is, at the fundamental level, values that emulate the teachings of Christ as espoused in the New Testament. Nietzsche’s critique of Christianity, however, lies not in his attack on Christ but on the gross misrepresentations of Christ made by Paul and the establishment of the empire church by Constantine I. Nietzsche’s observation of Christ was that he promoted precisely the opposite of the established Catholic Church. He writes: “Christianity: a naïve beginning to a Buddhistic peace movement in the very seat of ressentiment—but reversed by Paul into a pagan mystery doctrine, which finally learns to treat with the entire state organization—and wages war, condemns, tortures, swears, hates.”

Thus, Nietzsche’s view of Christianity is that of a reactive slave morality seated in resentment. For Nietzsche, by the mid-nineteenth century the church had woken up and found itself without a God; there was nothing to be found but the incomprehensible Christian relics contained within great cathedrals, scattered across Europe like old bones (in some cases they are old bones) whose architecture once represented the grand, energetic movements of their age and were then left only as reminders of two thousand years of error. Indeed, with the death of God, there is no sanctioning whatsoever for a slave morality that has, in Nietzsche’s view, petrified the brain and left it utterly unable to understand the classical, pre-Christian world espousing eternal recurrence.

In the wake of Christianity’s departure, and after two thousand years of moral error and herd-like “slave morality,” Nietzsche proposes a new set of values by which to

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12 Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 56. (WP 56; cf. 13:11[150]).
live in *The Will to Power*; he deems this new set of values “the re-valuation of all values.” Nietzsche writes: “For one should make no mistake about the meaning of the title that this gospel of the future wants to bear. ‘The Will to Power: Attempt at a Revaluation of All Values.’” Yet before these revaluations can be successfully integrated into the world-as-will-to-power, Nietzsche claims we must first live through a final stage of nihilism before we can witness its reality. The final stage of nihilism is, for Nietzsche, a world without the old conceptions of the ethical. From a reading of *The Will to Power*, there are really only two aspects to Nietzsche’s entire intellectual endeavour: the eternal recurrence of the same and the will to power. The only law that exists within an eternally recurring “monster of energy” is, ultimately, the will to power—the will to become eternally. It is Nietzsche’s desire that we return to the pre-Christian, recurring model of a universe found in antiquity.

**The Problems of the Theory of the Will to Power**

Nietzsche’s idea of the will to power, or the perpetual will to (more) power, is one of the most debated aspects of his work. Along with the eternal recurrence, the theory attempts to eradicate traditional metaphysical beliefs passed down from Christian thought, Plato, Kant, and Schopenhauer, such as free will, causality, the duality of soul and body, substance, and unity. In the place of these beliefs, Nietzsche believes the will to power is a radical revision of the human and of reality. The will to power radically revises the human by eliminating agency and subjectivity. It revises reality precisely because the will to power, according to Nietzsche, is the only reality that exists. For Nietzsche, this world is nothing but the flux of quanta—or, irreducible quantities—of force, where everything “else” is illusion, including quality (human qualification), which stems from an all-too-human language as a way of merely describing reality—through giving quantities qualities—that Nietzsche believes evades description. Yet, for all of Nietzsche’s brilliant and novel insights emanating from this particular model of the world, the theory is clearly not without its problems.

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13 Ibid., 3. (WP 3; cf. 12:10[192]).
The first difficulty with attempting to understand Nietzsche’s will to power as a coherent model of reality is that it is not coherently presented. We are left to reconcile disparate lines of argument and a variety of apparent contradictions. Indeed, the first difficulty in attempting to understand the theory is justified by the second. Even though we cannot deny that the will to power is a description of the world—or, a sketch of a theory of the same—we cannot assume that Nietzsche believed what he left were his final thoughts on the subject, or even thoughts that he would deem suitable for publication. Indeed, the comments found in the Nachlass describing the will to power are fragmentary and loosely ordered. Last, to be consistent, the theory of the will to power, as a representation of what it purports to represent, would appear to deny the conditions of its own assertability. For example, the theory of the will to power is a representation of its purported reality, yet the theory proposes that the reality far exceeds the ability of representation itself. For Nietzsche, there are no real subjects that can represent the will to power precisely because everything is the oscillation of wills, or centres of force that command and obey. For Nietzsche, representation is an epiphenomenon of the series of affects that impose themselves on some centre of force. On the contrary, Nietzsche claims that the reality of the will to power still involves the necessity of a qualitative representation of quantities through what he calls “willing centres.” In light of generative anthropology, I will examine the contrast between a subject and a subjectless world shortly.

Components of the Will to Power: Quantities and Qualities

This section will discuss the difference between Nietzsche’s notions of quality and quantity, which are, as Nietzsche suggests, unreliable but necessary linguistic descriptors of the “mechanisms” of the will to power. I will later discuss these ideas in relation to generative anthropology. Examining Nietzsche’s distinction between quality and quantity allows us to decipher the suggested “mechanisms” behind the theory in order to interpret the will to power in light of an adequate theory of representation.

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In its most illustrious form, the will to power is nothing short of the total nature of the world. Nietzsche claims that the will to power is “the tyrannically inconsiderate and relentless enforcement of claims of power.” Yet, for Nietzsche, even language is bereft of the ability to encapsulate the “tyranny” and totality of the will to power’s all-encompassing dominion. Indeed, the reality of the will to power is so far beyond the comprehension of language that Nietzsche claims even conceiving of the words “tyranny,” “force,” “drive,” “will,” and “power” is essentially a futile endeavour. Nietzsche adds they are but “weakening and attenuating metaphors—being too human.” Still, Nietzsche relies heavily on the language of physiology for his conceptual armoury. According to Nietzsche, everything “organic” and “inorganic” derives from the totality of an utterly “inhuman” will to power. Nietzsche goes so far as to claim that the will to power is almost the antithesis of what we normally think of as the human.

In its grand totality, the will to power attempts to obliterate both similarity and difference, object and subject, and cause and effect; Nietzsche claims that the final reality is that “everything else is bound to and conditioned by everything else.” In order to fully appreciate the scope of the will to power, one must read what is perhaps his most famous passage of all, aphorism 1067. Written very close to the end of Nietzsche’s life, the aphorism is worth quoting in its entirety. He writes:

And do you know what the “the world” is to me? Shall I show it to you in my mirror? This world: a monster of energy, without beginning, without end; a firm, iron magnitude of force that does not grow bigger or smaller, that does not expend itself but only transform itself; as a whole, of unalterable size, a household without expenses or losses, but likewise without increase or income; enclosed by “nothingness” as by a boundary; not something blurry or wasted, not something endlessly extended, but set in a definite space as a definite force, and not a space that might be

15 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 220.
16 Ibid., 22.
17 Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, 551. (WP 551; cf. 13:14[98]).
“empty” here or there, but rather a force throughout, as a play of forces, and waves of forces, at the same time one and many, increasing here and at the same time decreasing there; a sea of forces flowing and rushing together, eternally changing, eternally flooding back, with tremendous years of recurrence, with an ebb and a flood of its forms; out of the simplest forms striving toward the most complex, out of the stillest, most rigid, coldest forms toward the hottest, most turbulent, most self-contradictory, and then again returning home to the simple out of this abundance, out of the play of contradictions back to the joy of concord, still affirming itself in this uniformity of its courses and its years, blessing itself as that which must return eternally, as a becoming that knows no satiety, no disgust, no weariness: this, my Dionysian world of the eternally self-creating, the eternally self-destroying, this mystery world of the twofold voluptuous delight, my “beyond good and evil,” without goal, unless the joy of the circle is itself a goal; without will, unless a ring feels will towards itself—do you want a name for this world? A solution for all its riddles? A light for you, too, you best-concealed, strongest, most intrepid, most midnight men?—This world is the will to power—and nothing besides! And you yourselves are also this will to power—and nothing besides! 18

From the passage above we surmise that the will to power is the result of itself, eternally recurring, where there is no “here” nor “there,” no subject nor object. Yet, to pinpoint the particulars of Nietzsche’s attempt to implement his vision of the “world,” represented as a self-serving magnitude, one is forced to discuss what Nietzsche refers to as “quantities” in relation to “qualities.” Everything that populates “the one and the many,” the flux of the “world,” according to Nietzsche, boils down to quantities of force—or, what he claims to be the equivalence of will—within a finite quantity of energy. Nietzsche claims that quantities of force perpetually seek power; the “goal,” then, of seeking power is only to seek even greater power. Power is attained by a quantity of force becoming a willing centre of many quantities of force.

18 Ibid., 550, emphasis in the original. (WP 550; cf. 12:2[83]).
The fundamental problem that arises when we are asked to consider the sum total of the world as “will,” or as quanta of force, is that it asks us to eliminate precisely what entertains the idea. The will to power eliminates what is needed to quantify quantities, that is, qualities. And so, an incompatibility exists within the “reality” of the world as will to power—as subjectless—that yet paradoxically accounts for the subject that represents it as such. So, how does Nietzsche account for the subject in a world he claims to be subjectless?

According to Nietzsche, quantities of force continually oscillate between the active, which accumulates power, and the reactive, which attempts to resist the active. Whether active or reactive, these quantities are still, according to Nietzsche, subjectless, unless the definition of a subject is the “feeling of power” or the accumulation of more power toward a centre. The point that needs to be made, however, about the will to power is that even if it is “true” as a reality, it must be represented by a subject, the human, who qualifies the “true” and “reality.” If there is no subject, no agency to will, why does Nietzsche bother with the term “will” at all? I argue that the language of agency is unavoidable. At first glance, it appears that the will to power, the sum total of everything, owes a debt to what it hopes to refute. The theory of the will to power attempts to eliminate that which makes the theory possible in the first place.

Nietzsche claims the will lies in the necessary illusion of “quality,” or “value.” For Nietzsche, the only quality a quantity of force has is its difference in having greater or lesser power, the struggle between active and reactive quantities, the “ranking of above and below.” These particular quantities are what Nietzsche refers to as “centres of force” (Ger: Kraftzentrum), each blindly orbiting towards power, or resisting greater centres of force that have accumulated more power. To answer the question of why quality is a necessary illusion, Nietzsche provides a complex answer. He claims that to “see” the world as only quantity is impossible within the limits of

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20 “Ranking” here does not give a symbolic representation of a social structure, but another of Nietzsche’s translations of greater or lesser power.
human language. Nevertheless, if the idea of the will to power is to have any “meaning” or value, it is intended only ever for us. Nietzsche writes:

Qualities are insurmountable barriers for us; we cannot help feeling that mere quantitative differences are something fundamentally distinct from quantity, namely that they are qualities which can no longer be reduced to one another. But everything for which the word “knowledge” makes any sense refers to the domain of reckoning, weighing, measuring, to the domain of quantity; while, on the other hand, all our sensations of value (i.e., simply our sensations) adhere precisely to qualities, i.e., to our perspective “truths” which belong to us alone and can by no means be “known”! It is obvious that every creature different from us senses different qualities and consequently lives in a different world from that in which we live. Qualities are an idiosyncrasy peculiar to man; to demand that our human interpretations and values should be universal and perhaps constitutive values is one of the hereditary madnesses of human pride.21

There are two points to be made here. First, Nietzsche is pointing out that the human can only conceive of the “true” nature of the world—quantities—as qualities. Second, quality can only ever re-present power—it cannot be power. The non-representational aspect of the will to power, once we erase the anthropomorphically attributed quality, however, is quite different. Nietzsche writes: “no things remain but only dynamic quanta, in a relation of tension to all other dynamic quanta: their essence lies in their relation to all other quanta, in their “effect” upon the same. The will to power is not a being, not a becoming, but a pathos—the most elemental fact from which a becoming and effecting first emerge.”22 Pathos, then, is the distance between those centres with different levels of quanta from others. Indeed, Nietzsche claims that the very idea of a “unity,” the belief that we are subjects, is necessary for the concept, Being. He writes: “If we did not hold ourselves to be unities, we would never have formed the concept ‘thing.’”23 For Nietzsche, the necessary illusion of quality arises from “mere

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21 Nietzsche, Will to Power, 565. (WP 565; cf. 12:6[14]).
22 Ibid., 339, emphasis in the original.
23 Ibid., 338.
quantitative differences,” which are “something fundamentally distinct from quantity.” Yet a qualification by a perceived subject only arises from a comparative judgement where it is really only differences of power. And for Nietzsche, qualities are an insurmountable barrier for us. Clearly, the for us signals that we as humans cannot escape the all-too-human desire to imbue the reality of the will to power with quality. Qualities, according to Nietzsche, are the only way of comprehending quantities. Indeed, quantities cannot be totalised until they are conceived of as qualities. Therefore, for the subject, quantities can manifest only as signs, and yet, those signs necessarily misrepresent what quantity is in-itself. The question, however, is: For whom is the illusion effective if the subject is itself illusion?

Nietzsche claims that if there were no differences in force, or the difference of force-centres, the world would be “dead, stiff, motionless.” The illusion of quality—indeed, all illusions brought by language—is brought forth by force-will-centres that calculate “their” value based on differences in the accumulation of power. In light of generative anthropology, many questions now arise: How can we deduce the reality of the will to power in the end if it is, as Nietzsche suggests, impossible “for us” to adequately represent the reduction of the world to quantities of force? Is the will to power, whether reality or representation, merely human misrepresentation of the world? Even if the illusion of quality comes from a force-will-centre, is it not our representation in the end that misleads? In Beyond Good and Evil, Nietzsche goes so far as to assert the “I” is not the doer of thinking. Rather, thinking, Nietzsche contends, is the cultivator of the illusion of “I.” Thinking is merely a multiplicity of wills, wills to power. Nietzsche writes:

When I analyse the event expressed in the sentence ‘I think’, I acquire a series of rash assertions which are difficult, perhaps impossible, to prove—for example, that it is I who thinks, that it has to be something at all which thinks, that thinking is an activity and operation on the part of an entity thought of as a cause, that an ‘I’ exists, finally that what is designated by ‘thinking’ has already been determined—that I know what

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24 Ibid., 565.
25 Ibid., 304.
thinking is. For if I had not already decided that matter within myself, by what standard could I determine that what is happening is not perhaps ‘willing’ or ‘feeling’?26

The idea that there is the illusion of a thinker, a subject that thinks, according to Nietzsche, presupposes that a present state of the self compares itself to previous states in order to know what it is. Thus, Nietzsche insists that there is no timeless, will-less subject that governs thinking. Instead, everything is produced by the will to power, from the minutest organelles competing amongst each other for power, up to the human–animal.27 To return to the will to power, the assertion that there is no “I,” leads us to think that Nietzsche had concealed and locked up his theory of the will to power as unthinkable (hence unchallengeable). Yet, in the end, it must be something thought with language by a subject; it must be something that is represented. There is a final question that must be asked before we move on to a generative anthropological response: How might Nietzsche’s idea of willing account for the consciousness of its own presence? Nietzsche never addresses this beyond claiming that consciousness arises from the oscillation of commanding and obeying force-centres. For Nietzsche, language is a false representation of will to power. Ultimately, however, Nietzsche still claims that quality is a human idiosyncrasy. How do we account for this?

For generative anthropology, language is precisely what makes the human a human. In order to conceive of the will to power at all requires conceptual thinking, which in turn must have its origins in an originary scene. Thus, language would have had to emerge before the idea of the will to power. So far, I have discussed the will to power and its fundamental issues and its relation to representation. The next section of this chapter will deal specifically with this problem of representation in relation to Gans’s Signs of Paradox, by bringing the human back to the centre of the discussion, regardless of whether Nietzsche’s ontological claims hold. The problem of the representation of the unrepresentable, however, is not the only problem that arises when we take seriously Nietzsche’s theory of the will to power. The main point

26 Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, 46. emphasis in the original.
27 Nietzsche was fascinated by the work of renowned biologist Wilhelm Roux, who postulated that even at the organic level, individual organs are in perpetual competition with each other. See Roux’s Über die Entwicklungsmechanik der Organismen.
Nietzsche raises about language is its worth, or its value to the “human.” What insights can generative anthropology give in relation to the value of language in light of Nietzsche’s idea of the will to power? Is language itself a kind of will to power? Or, is it something entirely different? something less? something more? Even if we assume Gans’s hypothesis is correct, the question of the very value of language in relation to the human needs to be addressed. I will attempt to address these issues by examining the concepts of “verticality” and “horizontality,” which Gans claims are equivalent to Nietzsche’s discussion on “quality” and “quantity.”

**Mimetic Paradox: Horizontal as Quantity, Vertical as Quality**

*The crux of the origin of language is the emergence of the vertical sign-relation from the horizontal one of animal interaction.*—Eric Gans

This section aims to discuss “mimetic paradox,” and the difference between the “horizontal” and the “vertical”—which Gans discusses at length in *Signs of Paradox: Irony, Resentment, and Other Mimetic Structures*—in relation to Nietzsche’s conception of the will to power as quantity and the illusion of quality. Gans argues that the emergence of the vertical from the horizontal is the creation of the formal closure of the sign in the originary scene, which is the advent of the human proper. On the other hand, the horizontal, for Gans, is the experiential pole of the non-human animal. Gans writes: “the unique event in which the verticality of human language emerges from the horizontal world of appetite is a moment of liberation reenacted in every subsequent act of representation.”

Examining mimetic paradox and the distinction between the horizontal and the vertical throws new light on the problems explored in Nietzsche’s account of his theory of the will to power and his distinction, in this respect, between quality and quantity. Indeed, Gans claims that the horizontal/vertical distinction is the equivalent of quantity/quality. He writes: “The originary hypothesis addresses the mystery of the generation of the vertical from the horizontal, form from content, or, in the old dialectical vocabulary, ‘quality’ from

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29 Ibid., acknowledgements.
‘quantity.’” It is my contention that we can learn something about Nietzsche’s quality/quantity problem by directly engaging with the difference between non-human animal interaction and the emergence of the human vertical sign as quality, according to generative anthropology.

In order to understand the difference between the horizontal and the vertical—or, quantity and quality—we must first briefly examine what Gans refers to as mimetic paradox. Mimetic paradox is the representational correlative of mimetic crisis seen in terms of symbolisation, and therefore, the world in which it engenders. It is the generation of the vertical from the horizontal. Gans writes: “Because mimetic paradox presides at the creation of the ‘vertical’ human sign from the ‘horizontal’ continuum of worldly experience, it stands at the centre of a constellation of categories—irony, comedy, tragedy, evil, and so on—that are conceivable only in a universe of speakers of (human) language.”

It is important to briefly consider the way Gans looks to paradox when deciphering the birth of language and consciousness. Gans ultimately considers paradox to be the necessary precondition for the foundation and function of human language; language cannot meaningfully function without its structural foundations based upon paradox. For instance, Gans tells us: “Paradox is a structure of language; it cannot be conceived without the sign. But neither can the sign be conceived without paradox. The sign that is in the world represents the world it is in; the sign that stands above the world remains within the world of the sign.” For Gans, paradox precedes language precisely because paradox is in a perpetually deferred form:

Paradox itself is paradoxical; that is what makes it paradox. It cannot be reduced to lowest terms, only deferred. But neither is it ever present before our eyes; it is always in a state of deferral.

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30 Ibid., 21.
31 Ibid., 45.
32 Ibid., 35.
33 Ibid.
If language is the vehicle that spins on endlessly as deferral, then paradox is the engine that allows it to do so. For Gans, paradox is “older than language itself.” Without paradox, Gans argues, the “openness” of language would not be possible. Instead of an enclosed system of finite symbols, paradox allows language to stem out into an infinite combination and recombination of symbols of perpetual deferral: “The paradoxical foundation of our systems of representation is a sign not of failure but of openness.” The linguistic efficacy of mimetic paradox is its ability to perpetually defer, and in the process, recreate the original sign, albeit in a slightly different way each time—what Derrida would call iteration. For Gans, paradox is the machinery that has churned out every facet of human thought since the creation of language.

What does mimetic paradox have to do with Nietzsche’s will to power and the conception of the illusion of quality? If we return to the formal closure of the vertical sign, as well as horizontal worldly appetite, we can establish a link between the worldly appetite of the not-yet-human and Nietzsche’s conception of quantity (of power): the horizontal may well be a world of “quantity.” We have two very distinct ways of looking at the human. For Nietzsche, the human is really just part of the one will to power in an eternal flux of quanta. The other way of looking at the human, then, defines the human as the only animal that can re-present an object. If human language—or, the qualification of quantities—is not to be trusted as a way of representing reality, as Nietzsche suggests, can the theory of the will to power itself be trusted to represent the world? In other words, if language has no ability to deliver the truth about the world, what are we to contrast it with? I argue that there is nothing to contrast with representation other than non-representation, the idea of which is itself a form of representation—as far as we know, the human is the only representative of representation.

If we were able to speak to Nietzsche today, we would respond to his theory of the will to power by claiming that the verticality of the sign is, indeed, the qualitative separation from worldly appetite, or quantity. Our separation from pure “quanta” is of course the formal closure of the sign, which brings a qualitative distinction, the

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34 Ibid.
35 Ibid.
vertical separation from the “competing” quanta of will to power. Gans claims that language coincides with human reality precisely because language is that which generates this “reality,” the human reality of qualification and linguistic exchange. Gans writes: “At the origin, language coincides with the human reality to which it refers because it undecidedly generates this reality and is generated by it.”37 In other words, language is the fundamental arbiter of human reality, and it is perhaps the only reality we will ever know. Nietzsche’s theory of the will to power as pure, undifferentiated, unqualified “force” or “quantity,” where quality is only the accumulation of “centres of force,” is ultimately untenable precisely because it is qualified, conceptualised and can only reach us as a force of representation.

Perhaps the non-human, horizontal world of appetite is, as Nietzsche would like us to think, pure quantity. Yet, a pure “quantity,” as Nietzsche would have it, is so far beyond the reach of the human that it is a futile endeavour to even fathom what “it” is. Nevertheless, it is not the case for the generative anthropological idea of the verticality of human reciprocation, of the formal closure of the sign. Rather, for Gans, a sign is a quasi object in and of itself, a referent to the object, and a referent to other signs. The fundamental distinction to be drawn between the horizontal and the vertical is that which is essential for the “human” to be able to designate the world as such. Gans writes: “The crux of the origin of language is the emergence of the vertical sign-relation from the horizontal one of animal interaction.”38 Perhaps the will to power reins in the non-human world, perhaps it does govern their reality; if so, we have no way of ever knowing. But Nietzsche’s attempt to conflate quality and quantity, or, in generative anthropological terms, the horizontal with the vertical, is a fatal mistake as it ultimately takes the declarative as a given—even in the most minimal sense. And, here, he reveals that he is a metaphysician, and it also shows the shape of his metaphysics. Yet, beyond dealing with Nietzsche’s problematic concerning quality and quantity in relation to the horizontal and vertical, it would be useful to consider Gans’s understanding of what the function of language is. Here, the central contention is that language performs what Gans refers to as an aborted gesture of appropriation, which, in turn, both negates and designates the proliferation of power as a quality.

37 Ibid.
38 Ibid., 15.
The abrupt movement from the horizontal worldly appetite of the animal to the vertical closure of the sign is the result of the abortion of a gesture of appropriation. Consider the originary scene, where two or more protohumans are mimetically attracted to the same central object of desire. One protohuman points to an object, and in the process defers violence by producing a sign that is nigh immediately communally reciprocated. Gans writes:

The gesture of appropriation is an act that directly intends a worldly result; its temporality is that of the practical world. In contrast, the sign does not intend its referent directly, but through mimesis of its formal closure. The sign is an object, a product, a whole imitating another whole. The sign points to its referent, but in order to do so, it must be cut off from the possibility of attaining it, must mimic the object’s closure in its own. What is new about the human sign as opposed to the most complex animal signals is that it is the product of a formal consciousness. The sign is a form in that it turns back on itself in order not to appear to be pursued as a gesture of appropriation.³⁹

The fundamental ethic of generative anthropology is deferral, and in that sense language is coeval with the ethical. However, through the guise of the will to power, Nietzsche urges us to strip ourselves of all anthropomorphisms in order to realise that everything is force, quantity, and without meaning (unless meaning itself is the will to power). For Nietzsche, the ethical is but a mere illusion that stems from the “gregarious” and “false” nature of language/consciousness, which indeed, according to Nietzsche, is will to power. Herein lies the intelligibility of a proposed reversal of the will to power through a generative anthropological perspective. Nietzsche concedes that his description is all-too-human, replete with unreliable anthropomorphisms, of resentful wills to power. As Nietzsche would have it, it is impossible to give a descriptive account of the will to power because everything is the will to power, including the reactive language of the slave who remembers.

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³⁹ Ibid., 30.
Nevertheless, it is precisely language that allows Nietzsche to conceive of the will to power—for it to “exist.” On the other hand, generative anthropology brings the human back to the centre of discussion, instead of attempting to eliminate it. Nietzsche understands that the use of language, as a diseased condition, as a reaction to affects, is the key difference to be identified between the human and non-human—the only distinction. Nietzsche takes for granted the very idea of the exchange of signs in a human community, as discussed in previous chapters. For Nietzsche, all things in the world—which is really just the will to power—are erroneously perceived precisely because they are perceived by us. For Gans, on the other hand, all things human are a re-presentation of the originary scene of human origins, where resentment constitutes all cultural endeavours.

What Gans has illuminated is what Nietzsche has struggled with—the paradox of human language. For Gans, language has a double essence as “real and ideal, dualist and monist, ‘vertical’ and ‘horizontal.’” While there is a fundamental statement made by Gans in Signs of Paradox that establishes his position on what constitutes the human. He writes: “This analysis, as my title makes clear, is primarily concerned with paradox … the becoming-form of the human as an emergent dynamic structure that continually absorbs the nonformal into itself. The human is paradoxical because at every point it is both tempted and obliged to represent itself anew. The ‘vertical’ word-thing distinction that is at its core is constantly deconstructed and constantly reconstructs itself.” Again, it is the vertical that allows for the very notions of quantity and quality. Nietzsche does not grasp the double nature of language as vertical and horizontal, or quality and quantity—there is an inherent refusal of paradox with Nietzsche, as he attempts to create absolute distinctions between quality and quantity, even if that aim is ultimately to absorb one into the other. Gans, on the other hand, allows the paradox to stand. Of course, his total denunciation of language, which he considers to be an all-too-human phenomenon bearing no relation to the “apparent” world, is well known. The world is only apparent to Nietzsche because he declares that language has no capacity to circumscribe the “total reality” of the world, or what he deems to be the will to power. As we have seen in The Gay Science,

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40 Ibid., 13.
41 Ibid., 9.
Nietzsche reduces self-consciousness to an insignificant, internal use of language for social cohesion that is also a tributary of will to power. He writes:

The poor things were reduced to relying on thinking, inference, calculation, and the connecting of cause with effect, that is, to relying on their “consciousness”, that most impoverished and error-prone organ! … The whole inner world, originally stretched thinly as though between two layers of skin, was expanded and extended itself and gained depth, breadth and height in proportion to the degree that the external discharge of man’s instincts was obstructed.\footnote{Friedrich Nietzsche, \textit{On the Genealogy of Morality}, 43.}

To claim that Nietzsche is merely the philosopher who is suspicious of language, however, is both unproductive and intellectually hollow. Yet, when we witness Nietzsche’s ideas through the lens of generative anthropology, a new way of thinking that brings the human and human language back to the centre, many elements of Nietzsche’s thinking are revealed in a number of novel ways. In \textit{The Will to Power}, Nietzsche writes that the only purpose language serves is to “form an image of the world, no more!” and that anthropomorphisms are nothing but “perspectival centers of willing and force.”\footnote{Nietzsche, \textit{Will to Power}, 563. (WP 563; cf. 12:5[36]).} Yet, if the will to power is a reality, it must be an impossible one. If the world is mere quantification of the sum of its parts, there must be a qualification that can be communally reciprocated in order to assert the existence of the will to power. In other words, a quantum of power does not “appear” in the human world until it is qualified with a semiotic, until it is designated as such by a subject. Yet, time and again, Nietzsche claims that qualities, established through language, are “illusions,” and “retroactive.” Surely, to qualify a quantity must emanate from language. Again, Nietzsche is assuming that the declarative is the sole linguistic form.

From a generative anthropological standpoint, the inconsistencies found in the theory of the will to power are to be seen precisely where they are posited: in language. Nietzsche claims that there is no agency involved in the will to power other than competing “wills,” which leads to those wills or “forces” that either obey or command
depending on how much “centre of force” a given centre has. The fatal flaw in Nietzsche’s “theory” of the will to power lies in his asking us to conceive of the world as ultimately composed of quantities, where representation has no real meaning. Nevertheless, human interpretation and subjectivity are absolutely essential for endowing the qualities of terms such as “inhuman,” and “quanta.” The fundamental element missing from Nietzsche’s will to power is the very same thing that frames the theory, the human—or, more precisely, human language. Nietzsche claims that the subject, the human, is a mere depository of competing interpretations swayed by competing wills to power. Yet, there must exist something that represents the theory, even if it is something transitory, as Nietzsche would have it. Even though Nietzsche concedes that language inadequately describes that which encompasses all existence—that is, all of existence—the will to power is still impossible without the subject to qualify it as such. In order to conceive of the will to power requires the originary representation of an object, which is then mutually recognised as such through communal reciprocation. The will to power, in generative anthropological terms, is Nietzsche’s scenic vision of the world; it is his interpretation of the world made only possible through interlocution, whether it is the theory or the reality of the will to power that constitutes the theory’s explanation.

Once again, we have Nietzsche denigrating language for its falsity, for its unreliability, as something that cannot “be” the truth of the world, which, to him, is will to power. Nietzsche, however, ultimately cannot reconcile what he wants to replace it with, the theory of the will to power as reality, and his representation of the will to power. Yet, perhaps this is why Nietzsche champions the cosmological theory of the eternal recurrence of the same as a way of bypassing the justification of meaning altogether. Nietzsche attempts to obliterate meaning once and for all through the eternal recurrence. The next section of this chapter will explore eternal recurrence in relation to Eric Gans’s hypothesis and Adam Katz’s exploration of what he calls the originary method.
The Eternal Recurrence of the Same

I want to teach the idea that gives many the right to erase themselves—the great cultivating idea.—Friedrich Nietzsche

The sign is a form in that it turns back on itself in order not to appear to be pursued as a gesture of appropriation.—Eric Gans

This final section—divided into three parts after this preamble—will examine Nietzsche’s idea of the eternal recurrence of the same in relation to generative anthropology. What can we learn from Nietzsche’s—both cosmological and anthropological—theory of eternal recurrence in light of the originary hypothesis? The eternal recurrence of the same, indeed, I argue, shares a peculiar compatibility with what generative anthropology calls the representation of the originary scene. I will be discussing this compatibility at some length in this section. First, I will consider what is essential to Nietzsche’s conception of the theory of the eternal recurrence of the same—that is, both as a cosmological and as an anthropological idea. Second, I will examine the concept of the eternal recurrence in relation to Adam Katz’s “The Question of the Originary Method,” where Katz argues that Nietzsche’s theory is really a thought experiment that asks what it would really “mean” to mean “what one says and does, or what it would mean to ‘affirm’ one’s existence.”

Because of the very nature of the structure of language, Katz claims, there is no forthcoming “proof” of the theory of eternal recurrence. Third, I will draw a conceptual link between the ethical imperative demanded by the eternal recurrence and generative anthropology with the figure of the Ouroboros. The figure of the Ouroboros, I argue, aptly symbolises both Nietzsche’s theory of eternal recurrence as well as Gans’s theory of the formal closure of the sign. In this section I will also take into consideration Nietzsche’s theory of the origin of language in relation to eternal recurrence, which posits that there is either no origin at all, or every single moment is

44 Ibid., 435. (WP 435; cf. 13:14[94]).
45 Gans, Signs of Paradox, 30.
the origin. How can we reconcile these differences between his earlier account of language and eternal recurrence? Or, is Nietzsche forced to ultimately abandon his earlier position on the origin of language?

What Is the Eternal Recurrence of the Same?

The pre-Socratic philosopher Heraclitus understood the order of nature to be in a state of perpetual becoming, or “all flowing” (Gk.: ὀλὲς ῥοές). He proposed that the ceaseless war of opposites striving for unity is the only measure in a reality where there is no permanent existence. For Heraclitus, everything is force against force. In other words, the only fixed “law” in nature, for Heraclitus, is that of perpetual change. In light of Heraclitus, one can easily understand how Nietzsche conceptualised both the will to power and the eternal recurrence of the same. In a similar fashion, Nietzsche’s prophetic teachings in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, and the *Nachlass*, argue to embrace and affirm this necessary and inevitable impermanence of being in a world of flux. As Löwith states, Nietzsche, following Heraclitus, is rearticulating “a most ancient view of the world.” Indeed, Nietzsche considers the eternal recurrence to be the anti-Christian repetition of antiquity. In his brilliant and bizarre autobiography, *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche describes the eternal recurrence as “the highest formula of a life affirmation that can ever be attained.” Appearing first in *The Gay Science*, and elaborated upon in *Zarathustra*, Nietzsche claims that his “greatest teaching” is the idea of the eternal recurrence of the same. For Nietzsche, this world is an eternally recurring will to power. Nietzsche writes: “That ‘force’ and ‘rest,’ ‘remaining the same,’ contradict one another. The measure of force (as magnitude) as fixed, but its essence in flux.” To embrace this concept is to affirm all that appears and disappears in the world. Nietzsche confirms this in *Ecce Homo* by encouraging “the yea-saying to the impermanence and annihilation of things, which is the decisive feature of a Dionysian philosophy; the postulation of becoming, together with the radical rejection

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50 Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, 547. (WP 547; cf. 12:2[158]).
even of the concept being.”

Karl Löwith tells us that Nietzsche’s conception of the eternal recurrence, Dionysus and Zarathustra, are manifestations of one and the same thing.

Nietzsche poses a question: Are we to take this knowledge as a horrifying burden? Or are we to integrate it as a precondition to transform ourselves? The eternal recurrence represents, for Nietzsche, the inverse of the Hindu and Buddhist religious conceptions of eternal recurrence. Instead of seeking liberation from the endless wheel of life and death, Nietzsche calls for us, as Löwith argues, to embrace this inescapable universal law. Löwith corroborates this by stating that “Nietzsche-Zarathustra becomes the teacher of the eternal recurrence, he, too, is reborn, because of a reversal, to be sure. But he is born not to a new and different life in Christ, but to the always same life of the world, which as an eternal cycle comes back to itself in its becoming.”

In *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche claims that his conception of Zarathustra and the eternal recurrence is able to incorporate all of what we know about experience and reality. According to Nietzsche, once one reaches beyond the illusion of being, through the eternal recurrence, one moves toward an affirmation of becoming. In *Nietzsche’s Philosophy of the Eternal Recurrence of the Same*, Löwith claims that “with the idea of the eternal recurrence, Nietzsche is in fact beyond man and time, ecstatically removed from himself.”

Thus Spoke Zarathustra, Nietzsche’s opus magnum and self-proclaimed masterpiece, whose primary message is the eternal recurrence, explicates a shamanic journey, overcoming the ailments caused by stagnant myths (or, as Nietzsche conceived it, religious nihilism), through the “affirmation” of the eternal recurrence and Dionysian ecstasy.

The “tragic artist of the Dionysian type” and the eternal recurrence act as one in Nietzsche’s philosophy as the breaking open of the entire clockwork of “nihilism.”

The artist of the Dionysian type revels in the conception of the eternal recurrence of

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52 Löwith, *Nietzsche’s Philosophy*, 122.
53 Ibid., 62.
54 The idea of the relationship between Nietzsche and the shamanic was explored in my honours thesis.
55 Nietzsche’s understanding of “nihilism” turns out to be any dogmatic mode of life that adheres to the denunciation of certain aspects of life. For Nietzsche, Christianity is the most monstrous manifestation of life-negation and, therefore, the most sinister form of nihilism in world history.
the same; the thought becomes intoxicating. Nietzsche conceives of this as the ultimate Dionysian ecstasy. And, as Löwith points out, it brings the “redemption from perfect nihilism.” Nietzsche’s Zarathustra must fight against all odds in the deepest solitude, for only in solitude, on the edge of madness, can one “awake,” beyond the human, as the Ubermensch. And Zarathustra tells us: “and once you are awake, you shall remain awake eternally.” Once Zarathustra completes his metamorphosis, through the affirmation of the eternal recurrence of the same, he finally reveals that all things that are held dear by man, are of man’s own creation—illusions that must be overcome. Zarathustra is now the creator of values, a free spirit who has cured himself of the illusions of humanity, and is now ready to cure “humanity” by overcoming it. Nietzsche-Zarathustra now has the inner direction to love his own destiny—to love his own fate (L.: amor fati). Emerging from the absolute depths of solitude and desperation, Zarathustra affirms all that comes into, and goes out of, existence. With an emphatic “Yes,” he pronounces:

Did you ever say Yes to one joy? O my friends, then you said Yes to all woe as well. All things are interlinked and entwined together, all things are in love; if ever you wanted one time twice, if ever you said: “You please me, happiness, flashing instant, moment” you wanted everything back! Everything anew, everything eternal, everything interlinked, entwined, in love, O thus did you love the world.

This Nietzschean-Heraclitean joy in eternal becoming, through the eternal recurrence of the same, would become, as Nietzsche saw it, his ultimate contribution to humanity. He tells us in his Dionysian rapture that he becomes “beyond pity and terror, to realize in oneself the eternal joy of becoming” as if to propose that the only way to celebrate existence is to realise oneself as, not human, but a becoming.

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56 Ibid., 63.
58 Ibid., 10.
59 Nietzsche, Will to Power, 536. (WP 536; cf. 13:15[118]).
Despite the inherent contradictions in Nietzsche’s work—pointed out by Löwith—concerning the paradox of the will to power in an eternally recurring flux, Nietzsche nevertheless takes the idea very seriously. In fact, in correspondence with his friend, Paul Réé, Nietzsche proposes that the eternal recurrence is the “most scientific fact.”

Nevertheless, he first proposes the eternal recurrence as a thought experiment before he pursues it as a scientific “fact.” In The Gay Science, under the aphorism, “The greatest weight,” Nietzsche writes:

> What, if some day or night a demon were to steal after you into your loneliest loneliness and say to you: “This life as you now live it and have lived it, you will have to live once more and innumerable times more; and there will be nothing new in it, but every pain and every joy, and every thought and sigh and everything unutterably small or great in your life will have to return to you, all in the same succession and sequence?—even this spider and this moonlight between the trees, and even this moment and I myself. The eternal hourglass of existence is turned upside down again and again, and you with it, a speck of dust!” Would you not throw yourself down and gnash your teeth and curse the demon who spoke thus? Or have you once experienced a tremendous moment when you would have answered him: “You are a god and never have I heard anything more divine.” If this thought gained possession of you, it would change you as you are or perhaps crush you. The question in each and every thing, “Do you desire this once more and innumerable times more?” would lie upon your actions as the greatest weight. Or how well disposed would you have to become to yourself and to life to crave nothing more fervently than this ultimate eternal confirmation and seal?

The first appearance of the idea of the eternal recurrence of the same is of course in the form of a question—a demand even. In your darkest hour, Nietzsche claims, a deity arrives and reveals the absolute reality of the world—every aspect of your life,
all the horrors and joys, will be lived out innumerable times. You are forced to choose between affirming what the demon has told you, or an unimaginable horror, infinitely repeated. Yet, what does it mean to “affirm” one’s existence? I will engage with this question shortly. Despite the plausibility or implausibility, however, of the science behind eternal recurrence, Nietzsche is imploring us to ask ourselves whether we have the capacity to accept an eternally recurring sameness. Of course, there is a certain elitism involved in the eternal recurrence; not every “human” can withstand such a heavy burden, according to Nietzsche. Disregarding the contradictory proclamations found in his theory of the will to power about there not being an individual, Nietzsche asks us whether or not one has the strength to embrace our lives in the same manner ad infinitum. Yet, one might ask: what is the point of embracing an eternally recurring life of sameness if it is already inevitable? And also, how can we reconcile Nietzsche’s earlier ideas on the origin of language if the eternal recurrence is indeed his final and self-proclaimed greatest teaching? To answer these questions, we can look to Katz’s “The Question of the Originary Method,” where the eternal recurrence is conceived of as a thought experiment. The eternal recurrence can be read in two basic ways: (1) the ethical imperative of eternal recurrence that one must affirm every moment one experiences, and (2) the cosmological “fact” of eternal recurrence, where Nietzsche claims that the universe is in fact a finite structure that eternally recurs in the same way. As has been discussed in chapter 1, Löwith claims that the two ways of viewing eternal recurrence are irreconcilable. My aim is not to discuss the incompatibility of the cosmological with the anthropological. Rather, my concern is the idea of eternal recurrence in light of generative anthropology. Indeed, there is much academic commentary to be found on the inherent problems faced with an eternal recurrence. And so, for now, I will leave aside the cosmological reading of the eternal recurrence until I discuss the Ouroboros in relation to generative anthropology.

62 Many scholars have grappled with the problem of reconciling the ethical and cosmological readings of eternal recurrence—of particular note are Karl Löwith and Arthur Danto.
The Generative Thought Experiment

Minimality is a sign of inexhaustibility, not reductionism.—Adam Katz

Without delving into the notion of the apparent meaninglessness of the total reality of the world as eternal recurrence, we must take a step back and consider eternal recurrence as an attempt to think one’s way out of representation, which is also precisely one of Nietzsche’s “goals” concerning the affirmation of eternal recurrence. Adam Katz explores the idea of the thought experiment in great detail. Figuring Nietzsche’s eternal recurrence as a thought experiment, instead of an all-encompassing cosmology—or, even a proof—which Katz also considers to be a thought experiment, allows us to situate his idea on/within the scene of representation. In The Originary Hypothesis: A Minimal Proposal for Humanistic Inquiry, Katz’s chapter “The Question of Originary Method,” examines the implications of the originary hypothesis as a minimal subject of conversation.

What is most important in that chapter for this thesis, however, is Katz’s discussion about Nietzsche’s eternal recurrence in relation to the generative anthropological idea of self-reflexivity, and thought experiments. For Katz, a thought experiment “enacts the paradox of self-reflexivity, that self-knowledge (and, especially, the more acute the self-knowledge) cancels itself insofar as the self known is no longer the self that knows.” In other words, Katz highlights the self-reflexivity of the doubt that anything can be proven in any given thought experiment. Katz claims Nietzsche’s thought experiment of the eternal recurrence is a perfect example of an idea for which no “proof” can ever be given. Yet, Katz considers thought experiments with what he refers to as a generative thought experiment. What is a generative thought experiment, however? Katz writes: “If we view the thought experiment in scenic terms, we can simply describe it as the process of founding and entering; constituting and reifying; exiting and indexing spaces of thinking.” Of course, any thought experiment is an iteration of the originary scene upon which all humanity has been founded. In this

64 Ibid., 112.
65 Ibid., 107.
light, the very foundation of the eternal recurrence (and the will to power) relies exclusively on the scenic, where every sign Nietzsche—or anyone, for that matter—iterates must preclude and anticipate the next.

Katz claims that Nietzsche’s eternal recurrence can be accounted for through what he calls the originary method, which situates eternal recurrence on the scene of representation. He writes: “[O]riginary method is interested in the conditions of articulation of the saving sign, and seeks to situate itself in that infinitesimal instant when the exponentially increasing range and intensity of desires and resentments generated by the latest version of the sign (or, more precisely, by the field of mimetic activity constituted by that version) can and must be given new articulation.”66 Of course, because of the very structure of the scene of representation, there can never be any closure of a thought experiment. The thought experiment must always ‘invent’ new signs to attempt to give meaning to the preceding sign. In this light, Nietzsche attempts to convey, I argue, an “infinitesimal instant,” but he is seeking an ultimate “seal” or closure, where the eternal recurrence becomes the only sign. He asks us to seek for no meaning but the meaning of the will of eternity. Yet, as Katz asks us, what does it really mean to mean when we affirm such an idea? There are several ways to examine this question.

First, we must understand what “meaning” could actually be in terms of the originary hypothesis. Katz suggests that “meaning” is merely the meaning of something as it is in the instant of the transmission of the sign. There is a certain “unthinkability” for a sign to mean anything other than what it is at the instant, because each iteration seeks to qualify the preceding one. Katz writes:

Meaning is nothing more than the unthinkability of anything being any different than it is right now and it is the experience of the sign as confirmation of such that we are, unwittingly or not, requesting when, with whatever level of sophistication, we try to “make sense” of

66 Ibid., 102.
something. And the proof that one has understood is that they emerge as
the sign guaranteeing that sign and instigating its iteration.67

For Katz, Nietzsche has no choice but to move from one sign to the next, forever
deferring his thought experiment of the “greatest weight,” forever deferring the sense
of what it would really mean to “affirm” one’s existence. The only way a sign,
including the sign/vision of the eternal recurrence of the same, can be understood—or
given meaning—is through the iteration of another sign that attempts to designate a
meaning to the precluding sign. Looking at the eternal recurrence as a thought
experiment in relation to the originary method in this way eliminates any possibility
of ever knowing what it would mean to affirm what Nietzsche would refer to as the
last sign.

The ethical imperative of the affirmation of the eternal recurrence, then, is impossible
in light of generative anthropology. The reason for this is that one cannot ever be in
an “instant,” in the centre of the scene of representation, or what Nietzsche’s
Zarathustra refers to as “noon,” where he claims all meaning—except the meaning of
eternity—is obliterated. His eternal recurrence is an attempt at the final closure of the
scene of representation. Yet, generative anthropology includes Nietzsche’s eternal
recurrence as a thought experiment on the scene of human representation, where the
scene is never fully closed because of the very nature of deferral and the human
periphery always denied access to the centre. Indeed, as a function of the sign as the
deferral of violence, an aborted gesture of appropriation, the perpetuation of returning
to the scene for a new iteration, representation is inherently ethical. Katz writes:

deferral is by definition tentative and provisional, the originary scene is
never definitively closed. If signs only mean to the extent that they are
iterable, and iterability needs actual iteration to be demonstrated, what
will have happened to all signs, signification as such, once we get to the
sign that “doesn’t work,” and there is no more iteration? This opening of

67 Ibid., 103.
the scene renders uncertain all meanings, making inquiry impossible by rendering existence problematic.\textsuperscript{68}

Of course the thought experiment of the eternal recurrence “works” as a thought experiment, but it works only to the extent that it must remain open as a thought experiment that requires the iteration of further signs. And so, Nietzsche’s convictions about his great vision of the world are surely misguided if he believes that the eternal recurrence is the final sign. Yet, whether or not the eternal recurrence captures the nature of existence, there will never be proof of this, and so one can or must question the tenability of living one’s life based on this thought experiment, or any thought experiment generated on the scene of representation.

The continual return to the representation of the scene denies us the chance to know what an eternal recurrence of the same would mean, let alone live by. Because of the very nature of deferral as deferral, we cannot ascertain the absolute meaning of any sign until we move to the next sign. Katz writes:

the thought experiment tries to gauge the “reach” of the sign in question: at what point does its meaning dissolve into meaninglessness, become a cliché, a sheer prompt to plug in a particular habit? The only way to carry out such a test is to place yourself inside the sign—completely, inescapably inside—and insist that you find a way out. And the only way out is into some other sign, whose very existence is both precluded and anticipated by the present prevailing one.\textsuperscript{69}

We might imagine Nietzsche burying himself “inescapably inside” the single idea, the single sign of the eternal recurrence, but of course it is arguable he ever found a way out. Nietzsche ultimately asks us to contemplate the single sign of eternal recurrence. He insists that we embrace it as the only reality, the only referent and sign. But this begs the same question: What would it really mean to affirm one’s existence eternally? Katz writes: “Nietzsche’s ‘eternal return’ thought experiment (the focus of

\begin{itemize}
\item[68] Ibid., 110.
\item[69] Ibid.
\end{itemize}
which is not the ‘hypothesis’ of the ‘eternal return’ but on what your answer would be
to the demon) is interested in nothing more than representing what it would really
‘mean’ what one says and does (what it would mean to ‘affirm’ one’s existence)—
again, something for which no visible proof is forthcoming.”  

While Nietzsche attempts to exhaust the possibility of an all-too-human meaning, generative
anthropology convincingly asserts the inexhaustible nature of the reiteration of
meaning. This is markedly different from much contemporary postmodern thinking.

Katz writes: “Insofar as modernity is an attempt to forget our reliance upon the
ostensive, and the postmodern further extends this forgetting by iterating and
intensifying the terror of the sacred centre, the generative thought experiment restores
the ostensive as the opening to thought by representing that ‘x’ as ‘just’ an array of
signs, but an array that can never exhaust what it refers to even while that array’s
distinctiveness is not only in the signifiers’ attempts to do so but to solicit the
participation of others, as signs of one’s signs, in the process. I can know the other’s
pain, indeed, I can represent the other’s humanity, insofar as I contribute to their
‘array.’”

In the same way, Nietzsche’s thought experiment of the eternal recurrence
of the same as an “ethical imperative” is doomed to failure precisely because, through
the very nature of the generation of signs described by Gans and Katz, it—and all
thought experiments, for that matter—will inevitably generate more thought
experiments, and more signs.

**The Ouroboros: A Provisional Synthesis of Gans and Nietzsche**

*Events are openings, not closures. The only acceptable intellectual utopia
is one whose story has a beginning but no end.—Eric Gans*

Thus far, the primary focus in this thesis has been language. In this final section I
wish to briefly reflect on a non-linguistic sign, the Ouroboros, in light of Nietzsche’s
eternal recurrence and Gans’s originary hypothesis. Here, then, is a non-linguistic

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70 Ibid.
71 Ibid., 113.
sign that is able to capture, in visual terms, some of the key formal properties of both the eternal recurrence and the originary scene. While we have every reason to believe that there is intellectual profit to be had in both of these theoretical orientations, it is through generative anthropology that we will be best able to comprehend the eternal recurrence of the same. Through an examination of some of the key ideas of Nietzsche’s eternal recurrence, Robert Yelle’s *The Rebirth of Myth? Nietzsche’s Eternal Recurrence and Its Romantic Antecedents*, Eric Neumann’s *The Origins and History of Consciousness*, Silviano Santiago’s “Ouroboros,” and, most importantly, Gans’s *Signs of Paradox*, I will attempt to uncover some potential conceptual synergies that exist between Nietzsche’s and Gans’s employment of the symbol of the Ouroboros.

![Figure 1. The alchemical Ouroboros, with the Greek inscription “One is All.”](image-url)
Thought to originate in ancient Egypt, the Ouroboros depicts the symbol of a serpentine—or snake/serpent/dragon—creature eating its own tail. Yet, the symbol of the Ouroboros has many interpretations, from the ancient Greek founder of the Hermetic tradition, Hermes Trimegistus, who considered the Ouroboros to be the symbol that unites all religions, to the analytic psychology of Carl Jung, who considers the symbol to be the primal archetype of the collective unconscious. The Ouroboros may also represent a hermaphroditic, primordial, universal unity underlying the inherent duality of the sexes, of both man and woman, and the alchemical simultaneity of the acts of murder and impregnation. Simply put, the Ouroboros is the cosmogonic, archetypal, paradoxical symbol of the alpha and omega, or the “All One.” As an entirely self-contained entity that feeds off itself, the Ouroboros both creates and destroys: there is nothing beyond it, or behind it, or above its perfect model of autogeneration. Neumann’s The Origins and History of Consciousness is engaged with the notion of an origin of the human that is coeval with the rise of consciousness. Despite the analytic psychological explanations of the birth of consciousness given, Neumann depicts the Ouroboros as both the prime symbolic representative of eternity and the most credible model for the emergence and function of human consciousness. He describes the symbolism of the Ouroboros as containing an indeterminate multiplicity of meanings. Neumann considers the Ouroboros to be a symbol that at once “blends, as does the dream, it spins and weaves together, combining each with each. The symbol is therefore an analogy, more of equivalence than an equation, and therein lies its wealth of meanings, but also its elusiveness.”

Neumann’s analogical reading of the Ouroboros opens up an interesting approach even if we have reason to doubt the substantive content that Neumann attaches to it.

The Ouroboros might also be understood as a non-linguistic figure of paradox representing the universal, primordial image of the human. At the very least, for modern eyes, the Ouroboros represents the rejection of linearity in favour of a circular continuity. Although we may only fathom the Ouroboric symbol as a paradox, we

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73 It has been often documented that the Ouroboros pictorially represented the annual cycle of the seasons before the invention of the alphabet. See: Servius, note to Aeneid 5:85.
must situate, if we can, what kind of paradox it is. Neumann asserts: “The symbolic thinking portrayed in these images of the round endeavors to grasp contents which even our present-day consciousness can only understand as paradoxes, precisely because it cannot grasp them.”\textsuperscript{75} In other words, the generation of the paradox, then, represents ability to generate an image whose contents can never be exhaustively, fully determined.

“Ouroboros,” by Silviano Santiago, examines the Ouroboros as symbolic of linguistics. Santiago writes: “This image of the serpent freely moving through the field only to turn back upon itself in such a way that the end recuperates the beginning (or vice versa) could well speak of us of the privileged yet precarious position of linguistics as it embraces and encompasses the whole cycle of western thought so as to postulate itself as that discipline which can best account for the clôture du savoir within our historic-metaphysical age: linguistics has become in recent years, to use one of Greimas’s expressions, the ‘pilot’ for all other sciences.”\textsuperscript{76} He depicts the Ouroboros as “the rejection of a linear in favour of a circular continuity: the adventure into space becomes the space of adventure.”\textsuperscript{77} Essentially, the Ouroboros symbolically represents both the beginning and end of an event—a closure and an opening.

Yelle in \textit{The Rebirth of Myth? Nietzsche’s Eternal Recurrence and Its Romantic Antecedents} describes the Ouroboros as “a circle uniting the two opposed paths of past and present.”\textsuperscript{78} In a similar conceptualisation, Yelle considers the symbol of the Ouroboros to be more consistent with Nietzsche’s eternal recurrence than with any other mythic depiction of an eternal recurrence. For instance, we have “The Seven Seals” from Nietzsche’s \textit{Thus Spoke Zarathustra}:

\begin{quote}
If I be a prophet and full of that prophetic spirit that wanders on high ridges between two seas, wanders between past and future like a heavy
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{75} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{77} Ibid.
cloud, enemy to sultry lowlands and to all that is weary and can neither
die nor live: ready for lighting in its dark bosom and for redeeming beams
of light, pregnant with beams of lighting which affirm Yes! Laugh Yes!
Ready for prophetic lighting-flashes: but blessed is he who is thus
pregnant! And, in truth, he who wants to kindle the light of the future
must hang long over the mountains like a heavy storm! Oh how should I
not lust for eternity and for the wedding ring of rings—the ring of
Recurrence! Never yet did I find the woman by whom I wanted children,
unless it be this woman, whom I love: for I love you, O Eternity! For I
love you, O Eternity!79

In fact, the Ouroboros is quite fitting as a model for Nietzsche’s eternal recurrence.
His eternal recurrence is one without “increase or income; without beginning or
end.”80 Not only can we draw analogies between the Ouroboros and Nietzsche’s
eternal recurrence of the same as the “ring of rings,” but we can also equate it to the
signal thesis in Gans’s The Origin of Language: A Formal Theory of Representation,
the first ever work in generative anthropology, which interestingly depicts the symbol
of the Ouroboros on its cover. The difference in thinking about the Ouroboros
between Nietzsche and Gans is that Nietzsche’s Ouroboros of eternal return is a return
to “sameness.” Gans’s Ouroboros, by contrast, is the simultaneous openness of
language and the formal closure of the sign. Most importantly, the “Ouroboros is
appropriate as a symbol of origination.”81 Generative anthropology, I argue, invokes
the symbol of the Ouroboros for precisely this reason: it is indeed a “symbol of
origination,” and a symbol of the formal closure of the paradoxical sign. The symbol
depicts the formal structure of the originary scene, where a group of hominids have
gathered around an appetitive, mimetically attractive object—the sacred centre. Once
the object is consumed, only the formally closed sign remains, forever denying entry,
because the sign demands re-presentation. Much like Nietzsche’s vision of the eternal
recurrence of the same, the Ouroboros symbolises the cyclical nature of the perpetual

79 Nietzsche, Thus Spoke Zarathustra, 244–45, emphasis in the original.
80 Nietzsche, Will to Power, 551. (WP 551; cf. 13:14[98]).
81 Neumann, Origins and History of Consciousness, 38.
return to sameness. Yet, the generative anthropological positioning of the Ouroboros is that it is a perpetual return to deferral.

For Gans, there is no concern regarding the “external” world, nor any concern regarding whether or not eternal recurrence is a cosmological “fact,” as Nietzsche would have it—for if it were, it would not annul the originary hypothesis. If the world did indeed recur infinitely, there would still be an infinity of scenes of origin. Rather, for generative anthropology, each new return to the scene (or, each time we speak) of origin is a new iteration of itself. It is ultimately the human that cannot escape language (which defines the human as human) once it has been initiated, for if it were to do so, we might have something like the single sign of eternal recurrence. Yet, however much Nietzsche wants to “erase” the human, he cannot escape the paradox of language, or the paradox of the Ouroboros as depicted by generative anthropology. Indeed, every single sign uttered achieves a formal closure, only to revert back to individual originary resentment of the centre. Nietzsche’s fluctuating perspectives of the eternal recurrence, from absolute horror to joyous frivolity, only concretises the idea that it is still the perpetual play of signs that is utterly inescapable, unless one is to revert to animality, or, say, a certain species of madness. It is Nietzsche’s own iterations of a sceneless scene that constitutes his eternal recurrence: a sacred centre with no meaning is a centre that does not point to “God.” Rather, Nietzsche’s centre is the circle itself. Nietzsche’s sacred is the eternally self-creating and destroying, self-regenerating Ouroboros. Clearly, we have a contradiction in terms, a reductio ad absurdum. It is Nietzsche’s insane attempt to be the Ouroboros, the sign itself, that constitutes his generative thought experiment. Yet, his final teaching is still no doubt unwittingly a re-presentation of the originary scene.

If one were to take into consideration the notion that the Ouroboros best represents the paradox of the simultaneity of openness and closure through the depiction of a serpent biting its own tail, we could understand why Gans (or his publisher) would utilise this ancient symbol on the cover of his first work, situating the origin of the human in *The Origin of Language.*
Let us now reconsider how Gans describes the emission of the first aborted gesture of appropriation in *Signs of Paradox*. He writes:

The gesture of appropriation is an act that directly intends a worldly result; its temporality is that of the practical world. In contrast, the sign does not intend its referent directly, but through mimesis of its formal closure … the sign is a form in that it turns back on itself in order not to appear to be pursued as a gesture of appropriation.\(^{82}\)

Indeed, the first sign must imitate this very same closure on its own: the sign itself is the invention/discovery of the very illustration of closure. Through the emergence of a sacred centre—avoiding a near mimetic cataclysm—to an aborted gesture of appropriation, the Ouroboros resonates most distinctively as the prime symbolic depiction of the closure of the first sign itself. Identical to the Ouroboros, the sign is self-contained and formally closed; it is the beginning of consciousness as it at once destroys the external object as the immediate desirable element, while, at the same time, it creates the openness of a self-referential world that forever mediates the external world through its very verticality.

Every sign produced is a harking back to the re-presentation of the original scene, where humans stand on the periphery; they create a new “name-of-god”—or, a new symbol to conceive the Ouroboros—each time a sign is produced to stand in for the now objectless, sacred centre. As discussed in chapter 3, originary resentment is the outcome of an individual not being able to consume the desired object in the centre—because of the aborted gesture of appropriation.

For Nietzsche, only out of the death of “God” and the man who has overcome himself—the illusions manifest in an ethics of resentment gradually formed by reactive language—can will (can be the becoming of) the eternal recurrence. Nietzsche claims that his teaching is at once “the most extreme form of nihilism” and, at the same time, the “self overcoming” of nihilism because the teaching intends to

recognise the meaninglessness of all existence as the only goal. Ultimately, however, Nietzsche’s rejection of the truth value of language invalidates his goal to describe the total reality of the world as a will to power in an inexorably recurring universe. Following Löwith, I claim Nietzsche’s final attempt to eliminate an ethics of resentment through the affirmation of the eternal recurrence is an attempt to falsely situate himself as God. Of course, for generative anthropology, the sign itself is the “name-of-God,” not the resentful individual on the periphery.

As has been discussed, Nietzsche’s last attempt to eradicate any iteration of meaning was by affirming the “one,” the only “fixed law” of eternal recurrence. Yet, from a generative anthropological perspective, Nietzsche’s idea of an eternally recurring cosmos is what Gans considers a “closed” way of thinking that aims at a “final solution.” In Signs of Paradox, Gans writes: “Closed forms of thought are built around apocalyptic events that provide ‘final solutions’ to all the problems within their universe. If we would rid ourselves of this sort of thinking, we must exchange the apocalyptic model of the event for an originary model. Events are openings, not closures. The only acceptable intellectual utopia is one whose story has a beginning but no end.”\textsuperscript{83} What Gans means by eliminating a final analysis is that we, as humans, who represent the scene of origin in perpetuity, are deferring a “final” meaning or “solution” to the world, and thus deferring cataclysmic violence, something to which Nietzsche ultimately falls prey.

The originary version of eternal recurrence, then, is not one of perpetual sameness. Rather, this version of an eternal recurrence allows for inexhaustible novelty, ever-new signs, ever-new ways to imagine the scene. On the other hand, Nietzsche’s eternal recurrence limits itself to the single sign of an infinite sameness that cannot allow any meaning beyond the “meaning” of the eternal recurrence. Nietzsche’s eternal recurrence, then, is a finite, self-enclosed eternity that strikes fear in all but the deranged and mad of the world. Surely, then, an eternal recurrence that allows for a deep understanding of what it “means” to be human, that allows for inexhaustibility, an eternal return to the aesthetic contemplation of the originary sign, represented in

\footnote{Ibid., 7.}
ever-new fashions, is not only comprehensible, but allows us to reach for more “meaning,” something that Nietzsche vehemently rejects. One might ask Nietzsche whether or not his ultimate “goal” of “affirming” eternal sameness was ever going to be worth his while. Evidently, affirming the single sign of the Ouroboros, of Dionysus, of Zarathustra, of the eternal recurrence, was not worth Nietzsche’s while. We might echo both Klossowski and Löwith, who claim it was Nietzsche’s obsession with the single idea of eternal recurrence that led to his madness.

Nietzsche’s eternal recurrence, for Gans, is merely a conceptually aligned set of declaratives, made only possible by the sign. Gans claims that if we are to follow Nietzsche, we must assume that language has been “always already.” Whether or not language, as Nietzsche proposes, is an error, is something deemed irrelevant to Gans. Even if the protohuman “alpha” had “unintentionally” designated the first ostensive, triggering an error in the development of the species, all that matters is that the scene had occurred and is re-presented, forever deferring violence and a “final” meaning.

The late Nietzsche would finally reject the Apollonian force that he claimed gives form, structure, and language to the force of nature, Dionysus. For Nietzsche, there is only the single world of the Dionysian ebb and flow of forces. Yet, conceiving of Nietzsche’s oeuvre through the lens of generative anthropology ultimately shows us generative anthropology’s capacity to incorporate Nietzsche’s thought into its ambit, and not the inverse. Simply put, representation cannot be eliminated by representation, no matter what is being represented. Indeed, generative anthropology allows us to remain open to the ongoing—or perhaps eternal—re-articulation of the paradox of human representation.

Ultimately, Nietzsche does not allow for a generative anthropological space, but generative anthropology allows for Nietzsche. Perhaps it is only by reading Nietzsche through generative anthropology that we can be faithful to him. This theorist of a multiplicity of the endless play of signs who ends up insisting on only one can be saved only by his incorporation into something like a generative anthropological standpoint. As Katz states, the minimal scheme of generative anthropology is not equivalent to a reductionism, but to an inexhaustibility. And so it seems we can only
be faithful to Nietzsche by also taking leave of him. Nietzsche himself asserts that those who are to be true to him, to be the true inheritors and disciples of his philosophy, should learn to forget him. We need not discuss the consequences of implementing a singular vision, a single sign to live by—one need think only of the twentieth century and the horrors witnessed therein.
Bibliography


