

# Nietzsche's Early Theory of Language in Light of Generative Anthropology

**Kieran Stewart**

**Department of Humanities and Communications Arts  
Western Sydney University  
Penrith South DC NSW 1797  
Australia  
[Kieran.Stewart@hotmail.com](mailto:Kieran.Stewart@hotmail.com)**

## **Nietzsche's Interpreters**

Even a brief literature survey of the major interpretations of Nietzsche's thought highlights the tremendous variation that exists between them. Such a paradoxical and divergent historical reception of Nietzsche is indicative of his wide-ranging thought. René Girard claims that Nietzsche's legacy remains tied to his 20<sup>th</sup> Century interpreters: Heidegger, Derrida, Foucault, and Deleuze. Indeed, the last century has witnessed Nietzsche as: the Heideggerian Nietzsche, who characterises beings as such as the will to power; the Deleuzian Nietzsche, the creator of new values through the affirmation of eternal return; the Foucauldian Nietzsche, the father of genealogical analyses and power relations; the Derridian Nietzsche, who claims that truth, as well as Nietzsche's texts, is as elusive as 'woman' and open to inexhaustible interpretation; the Löwithian Nietzsche as the coherent systematic philosopher of the single idea of the eternal recurrence of the same; and the Klossowskian Nietzsche, whose thought is irrevocably linked to his fluctuating valetudinary states.

What does this tell us about the main preoccupations of the interpretations of Nietzsche? Perhaps Nietzsche himself is to blame for such widely divergent readings. Towards the end of his productive life, Nietzsche famously asks his readers whether or not his project has been understood at all. In the brilliant and bizarre autobiographical effort, *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche asks: "Have I been understood?"<sup>[1]</sup> Although we can no longer respond to the man himself, it is certain that such a divergent historical reception of Nietzsche is indicative of his wide-ranging thoughts.

Apart from Nietzsche's twentieth-century interpretations being utterly divergent, they all seem to miss one aspect of Nietzsche's thinking: that he was first and foremost a classical philologist, deeply entrenched within 19<sup>th</sup> Century thinking about origins. The aim of this paper is to demonstrate that Nietzsche's early conclusions about the origin and function of

language greatly influence his later thinking—for which he is most famous—about consciousness, truth, and the ethical. After a brief introduction to *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872), I will concern myself with Nietzsche's theory of the origin of language, as espoused in *On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense* (1873), in light of Eric Gans's chapter "The Two Varieties of Truth" in *Signs of Paradox: Irony Resentment and Other Mimetic Structures*. My aim here is to examine the minimal elements of Nietzsche's theory of language, as the arbiter of his ideas about the truth-value of language, in contrast to generative anthropology's model of the origin of the human. Although there are some very obvious—and not so obvious—topical proximities between generative anthropology and Nietzsche's model of language, there is a divergence in thinking about consciousness, truth, and the ethical in relation to language. For Gans, the ethical comes before the aesthetic contemplation of the sign on the scene of representation. For Nietzsche, the ethical and truth are relegated to mere tributaries of the aesthetic emergence of language, where all individuals are ostensibly in the centre of a scene.

The late philosopher of language, Wilbur Marshall Urban, claims in his *Language and Reality* that the entire history of Western philosophy can be described in terms of the high or low evaluation of language. Nietzsche's suspicion of language, I argue, places him in the latter category. I argue that Nietzsche's views about truth and the ethical reside in his early conclusions about the relation between the "truth-value" of a word and its relationship to an object. Nietzsche characterises language as an aesthetic phenomenon, where the ethical becomes a mere relic generated by what he calls, in *The Gay Science*, the "error of consciousness."<sup>[2]</sup> I claim that generative anthropology offers a solution to not only Nietzsche's, but also the post-modern suspicion of language. Gans clearly outlines the problems with Nietzsche's thinking in *The Scenic Imagination: Originary Thinking from Hobbes to the Present Day*. Gans writes: "Nietzsche replaces the Marxian 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."<sup>[3]</sup> Indeed, the postmodern Nietzschean solipsism in which so many thinkers have found themselves in "the prison-house of language," I argue, can be directly attributed to Nietzsche's thinking about language as an instinct or artistic drive whose function is to produce metaphors, where the ethical is a mere consequence of the slow, drawn-out development of the "sign-language" that constitutes human consciousness.

## **The Human Drive Towards Metaphor**

Aristotle's *Poetics* defines metaphors as "the application of a word that belongs to another thing: either from genus to species, species to genus, species to species, or by analogy."<sup>[4]</sup> Nietzsche, however, does not share Aristotle's division of the world into genera and species that correspond to what Kant refers to as 'things in themselves.' Instead, "genera" and "species" are understood as human metaphors, as set out in the work *On Truth and Lie in*

*an Extra-moral Sense*. Nietzsche writes: “if I create the definition of a mammal and then, having inspected a camel, I declare, ‘behold, a mammal!’ then a truth has certainly been brought to light, but it is of limited value, by which I mean that it is anthropomorphic through and through and contains not a single point which could be said to be ‘true in itself,’ really and in a generally valid sense, regardless of mankind.”<sup>[5]</sup> So, for Nietzsche, in response to Kant’s notion of the ‘thing-in-itself,’ metaphor is not a valid picture of the world, where metaphorisation is a “metamorphosis of the world in human beings.” Yet despite the “limited value” of metaphorical truth, Nietzsche’s preference for it is clearly seen from *The Birth of Tragedy* onwards, where his diagnosis of the sickness of modern culture is precisely his preference for metaphor and the critique of concepts.

Basic to Nietzsche’s theory, as espoused in *The Birth of Tragedy*, is his use of the ideas of the Apollonian and the Dionysian. For Nietzsche, the reciprocation between Dionysian musical sonority and the imagistic nature of Apollonian words makes new linguistic creations possible. In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche claims that a Dionysian artist unites with the primordial One and reproduces it in the form of music, and then under the influence of Apollo, music becomes visible in words. The relation between the Dionysian and Apollonian “drives of nature” is the source of the aesthetic and allows for the production of new artistic/linguistic creations. When one drive is suppressed, the other weakens. The weakening of the Dionysian is what Nietzsche calls Socrates’ “logical drive,” eradication of the Dionysian drive and forcing the Apollonian drive to “disguise itself in logical schematism.”<sup>[6]</sup> Nietzsche declares Socrates’ “instinct-disintegrating influence”<sup>[7]</sup> as giving preference to “concepts” over the original, imagistic metaphors that are the source of their production. When a single drive becomes dominant, Nietzsche calls this the decadence of the instincts. This paves the way for linguistic impoverishment, as conceptual language is static and rigid and attempts to make equivalent all singularities, thereby limiting their multiplicity of meanings. This is essentially the premise of the *Birth of Tragedy*. Nietzsche ultimately valorises vocal music as the arbiter of language. He writes: “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.”<sup>[8]</sup> For Nietzsche, music and language are inseparable, as they always include the “tone of the speaker” and the “gestural symbolism of the speaker.”<sup>[9]</sup> Nietzsche associates the origin of music with the origin of language, where there exists “vocal music” and “the combination of sound with image and concept.”<sup>[10]</sup> To sum up *The Birth of Tragedy*, music (the Dionysian) prevents metaphor from being reduced to a fixed or determined meaning, while metaphor (the Apollonian) allows music to reveal itself through imagistic Apollonian representation.

## **On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense**

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.

-Nietzsche

In *On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense*, Nietzsche claims that there is a drive or force towards the formation of metaphors. Here, Nietzsche characterises the human as having two distinct drives: the “drive to truth” and a “drive to form metaphors.”<sup>[11]</sup> Where the *Birth of Tragedy* discusses the relationship between the Dionysian and Apollonian drives, the interaction between language and music, *On Truth and Lie* concerns itself with the three steps toward the creation of words: first a nerve stimulus, then image, then sound.

*On Truth and Lie* provides a compelling scene of human representation by deflating universal constants and questioning the epistemology of objective truth by speculating on the “truth-value” of language. I believe this is an important text to examine in light of GA.

(1) *On Truth and Lie* is Nietzsche’s first well-defined, established attempt at dealing with what he calls the *Entstehung der Sprache* or “genesis of language.”

(2) Nietzsche’s notion of “truth” as an established linguistic convention is not, I would argue, outside the realm of generative anthropology.

(3) Nietzsche designates language to be entirely within the arena of the human; here is Nietzsche first non-metaphysical theory of the origin of the human. Similarly, one of generative anthropology’s fundamental propositions is that the emission of the first aborted gesture of appropriation on the scene of representation triggers the event of the emergence of the human *as human*.

(4) In *On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense*, Nietzsche develops a thesis on the origin of concepts from the residue of what he calls “pure metaphor.” Indeed, there are many passages of interest 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 production of language. Nietzsche describes consciousness as something that arose for the preservation of the individual and group through the “simulation” of the external world: a clear synergy with generative anthropology’s idea of the aborted gesture of appropriation, where a proto-human represents an external object of desire. Ultimately Nietzsche contends that language is a phenomenon that gradually developed in unison with consciousness, which in turn was the precursor to human communities. Yet, Nietzsche’s suspicion of language as having no “truth-value” is the beginning of his suspicion of what he calls the “social utility” of consciousness.

*On Truth and Lie* is a work grounded on the notion that established “truths” designated by the conventions of language are merely a socially 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 metaphor and conceptual language. According to Nietzsche, we have forgotten that our arbitrary, singular metaphors 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-judgments based on these false, all-too-human artistic drives towards the formation of metaphors. 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 extra-moral sense.

Nietzsche introduces *On Truth and Lie* with an allegorical fable on the invention of knowledge. He claims that a certain type of “clever animal” once inhabiting the earth had invented “knowledge.” Indeed, “after nature had drawn a few breaths,” the clever animals had to die.<sup>[12]</sup> From this passage, Nietzsche reminds us of how “shadowy and flighty, aimless and arbitrary” the human intellect appears in relation to the world. 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.<sup>[13]</sup>

The contention here is that the “intellect” is a means for the preservation of the individual by simulating Nature. What does Nietzsche mean here by the intellect unfolding its powers in simulation? The imitation of an external object is incorporated into the body first as a nerve-stimulus, then down the causal chain from word to sound. Here we arrive at metaphor. 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.<sup>[14]</sup>

Here, Nietzsche is pointing out that it is quite impossible to “know” the “thing-in-itself” by means of a perception that transposes a nerve-stimulus into a doubly removed imitation. Our stimulus response is merely the metaphorical representation of the relationship between external phenomena we presuppose to exist outside. He declares that, as a consequence of the human only ever being able to evaluate 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.[15]

Here, Nietzsche tells us that this “sum of human relations” has taken hold of “truth” is by means of a slow, drawn out, gradual process spanning generations in order to become an obligatory sign system whose participants have lost the gesture’s original figurative singularity. The relaying back and forth of these same “metaphors” over a long lapse of time betrays the human memory. We arrive at the present with an endless combination of these metaphors, but have forgotten their origins as having little significance in seeking out “meaning” or “truth.” What is ultimately important in *this text*, in relation to GA, is Nietzsche’s emphasis on language as lacking truth. The only “truth” arising from language, argues Nietzsche, is the “pact” made between individual humans, for the sake of social cohesion. Later, in *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche claims this communal reciprocation of “truths” to be the origin of consciousness. He writes:

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.[16]

Nietzsche’s closes *The Gay Science* with something quite similar to the viewpoint of modern, evolutionary epistemology, and which is also close to Charles Darwin’s concerns regarding mankind’s convictions when considering the mind’s slow development from the lower animals:

we have not any organ at all for *knowing*, or for “truth”: we “know” (or believe, or fancy) just as much as may be *of use* in the interest of the human herd, the species; and even what is here called “usefulness,” is ultimately only a belief, a fancy, and perhaps precisely the most fatal stupidity by which we shall one day be ruined.[17] [Nietzsche’s emphases]

Perhaps it is right to think that Nietzsche valorizes a quasi-Darwinian, historical-evolutionary perspective concerning the origin of language, where truth and consciousness develop from a “convention” made possible only by language. The problem concerning Nietzsche’s early theory of language, which is the beginning of his suspicion of just about everything, is the ethical.

## **Types of Truth: Rethinking *On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense* in light of Generative Anthropology**

Gans claims that the human originated with the emergence of language on a scene, where a gesture of appropriation is aborted through the paradoxical emergence 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 to be extracted from language, and we must therefore be suspicious of it. Ultimately the first forms of human language, for Nietzsche, were “proto-artistic” impulses. These impulses (arising from a *drive* to represent the external world in the “image” of the human) were gradually replaced with linguistic conventions for the sake of communal cohesion—and of the development of consciousness, which is a social network of communication, not an individual’s awareness. Clearly, Nietzsche is demonstrating the problem of metaphysical “truth.” Accordingly, for Nietzsche, the foundation of language is based on the “drive” to represent external phenomena (i.e., a rock). If, indeed, each individual responds to a particular external stimulus via an imagistic symbol, then we must characterise each individual response as closed off from another’s individual response to the exact same stimulus. Therefore, each individual human metaphor is entirely distinct from another. 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. One theoretical maneuver to situate Nietzsche’s theory is to consider GA’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?”<sup>[18]</sup> The chapter “The Two Varieties of Truth” in *Signs of Paradox* considers the problem of Nietzsche’s question about truth in relation to Gans’s hypothesis on the origin of language. For Gans, there are two distinctive variations of truth. The first category of truth, for Gans, 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, depends on the fact that “significance is prior to signification.”<sup>[19]</sup> Of course, the ostensive emerges before declarative truth. Indeed, if we are to peer beyond the propositional thought of the declarative, we 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, to escape from the “metaphysical prison-house of language,” whence ostensive truth “liberates from the formal propositions of metaphysics.”<sup>[20]</sup>

Yet what is ostensive truth? Obviously, it must be explained through a “model of the familial declarative conception.”<sup>[21]</sup> Here Gans offers the analogy of a child pointing to a cat, but the child declares the cat as “dog.” The use of the ostensive in this example “cannot be

understood as simply equivalent to the use of the correct sign.”[22] 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 ostensive “dog”].”[23] 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 proto-humans can draw their unified attention to, and something that risks becoming a cause of mimetic violence (if the gesture were not to be uttered). In other words, the thing that is to be signed through an ostensive gesture must be charged with the potential for the proto-community to perceive as a source of unity and disunity. For Gans, the truth of the ostensive is the “birth of the human.”[24] Why is the ostensive truth the “truth of faith,” however? Gans would contend that the “gesture of representation” (the first sign) instead of a gesture of appropriation” expresses the communally accepted truth “as revelation of central Being.”[25] In other words, for the emerging community of proto-humans, the ostensive sign (pointing to an object of dual relevance: unity and disunity) does not reveal the object in-itself. Rather, the ostensive sign “recognises an object that *can only be* represented.”[26] The sign that replaces an object in its absence leads to the emergence of the imperative. Gans claims that there is a tension that exists in the ostensive sign in the absence of its referent, which leads to the “awaiting characteristic of the imperative.”[27] In other words, the imperative uses the sign to demand 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 *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-stimulant is an *instinctive*, superfluous, over-reaching “artistic drive.” One observation is that this “artistic drive” corresponds to Gans’s notion of the desire expressed by the imperative, making the absent referent present in the imagination. Yet can we reconcile Gans’s ostensive sign with Nietzsche’s theory? GA explains the significance of the sign, whereas Nietzsche only accounts for signifying. 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 instinct of an artistic drive 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 GA’s originary sign, we must declare that Nietzsche has come quite close to a plausible hypothesis on the origin of language. Nietzsche’s theory of language as espoused in *On Truth and Lie* reaches a close proximity to 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, (4) and, the recognition that language is something immanent, not transcendent. If only Nietzsche had taken a step further to consider the fundamental importance of the primacy and function of the sign itself, as Gans has pointed out, we may not have found ourselves in such a characteristically postmodern age, suspicious of not only our “own” representations, but others as well. The quintessential importance of the sign is not that it is representative, but that it is reciprocal.

## Conclusion

In Nietzsche’s theory as espoused in *On Truth and Lie*, the sign is 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.”[\[28\]](#) From the early, unpublished writings of *On Truth and Lie*, 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, and 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.’”[\[29\]](#)

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 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 when 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.”[\[30\]](#) Indeed, the very origin of the “instinct” is tie up in Nietzsche’s all encompassing will to power. 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 is to think about generative anthropology while reading Nietzsche, one cannot 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.”<sup>[31]</sup> Nietzsche 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 imagistic representation into an acoustical drive forming metaphor. Language is the “conserving association of the instincts.” where “all our consciousness relates to errors.”<sup>[32]</sup> 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.”<sup>[33]</sup> 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 that 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 for the deeper Dionysian instincts, which are bereft of an imagistic 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, in one form or another, continues today.

## Notes

[1] Nietzsche, F. *Ecce Homo: Or How One Becomes What One Is*. Translated by Hollingdale. R. J. Penguin Classics. 2004. p. 104.

[2] Nietzsche, F. *The Gay Science*. Translated by Walter Kaufmann. Vintage Books. New York. 1974. pp. 84 - 85.

[3] Gans, E. *The Scenic Imagination: Originary Thinking from Hobbes to the Present Day*. Stanford University Press. 2008. p. 14.

[4] Halliwell, S. *Aristotle's Poetics*. University of Chicago Press. 1986. p. 105.

[5] Nietzsche, F. *On Truth and Lie in an Extra-moral Sense*. Found at [http://oregonstate.edu/instruct/phl201/modules/Philosophers/Nietzsche/Truth\\_and\\_Lie\\_in\\_an\\_Extra-Moral\\_Sense.htm](http://oregonstate.edu/instruct/phl201/modules/Philosophers/Nietzsche/Truth_and_Lie_in_an_Extra-Moral_Sense.htm).

[6] Nietzsche, F. *The Birth of Tragedy*. Translated by Douglas Smith. Oxford University Press. p. 78.

[7] Ibid. p. 79.

[8] Nietzsche, F. "On Music and Words" found at [http://nietzsche.holtof.com/Nietzsche\\_various/on\\_music\\_and\\_words\\_and\\_rhetoric.htm](http://nietzsche.holtof.com/Nietzsche_various/on_music_and_words_and_rhetoric.htm).

[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Nietzsche, F. *On Truth and Lie*.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Nietzsche, F. *The Gay Science*. p. 85.

[17] Ibid. p. 300.

[18] Nietzsche, F. *On Truth and Lie*.

- [19] Gans, E. *Signs of Paradox: Irony, Resentment, and other Mimetic Structures*. Stanford University Press. California. 1997. p. 52.
- [20] Ibid. p. 51.
- [21] Ibid. p. 52.
- [22] Ibid. p. 52.
- [23] Ibid. p. 52.
- [24] Ibid. p. 53.
- [25] Ibid. p. 53.
- [26] Ibid. p. 53.
- [27] Ibid. p. 54.
- [28] Nietzsche, F. *On Truth and Lie*.
- [29] Gans, E. *The Scenic Imagination*. p. 139.
- [30] Nietzsche, F. *The Will to Power*. Edited by Kaufmann, W. and Hollingdale, R. J. Vintage Books. pp. 549 - 550.
- [31] Gans, E. *The Scenic Imagination*. p. 1.
- [32] Nietzsche, F. *The Gay Science*. pp. 84 - 85.
- [33] Gans, E. *The Scenic Imagination*. p. 14.