

Benchmarks/Abstracts/Keywords

[Thomas F. Bertonneau](#) is a widely published author of scholarly and popular articles, now numbering in the hundreds, on a broad range of topics. He has written about twentieth-century American poetry, the nineteenth century novel, on Traditionalist writers such as René Guénon and Julius Evola, and aspects of science fiction, both in literature and film. His recent articles include studies of Nicolas Berdyaev, Oswald Spengler, and Joseph de Maistre. He has contributed an extended introduction to Aristeia Press's new edition of Colin Wilson's classic 1958 study of Western cultural decadence, *The Age of Defeat*, and his commentary on Maistre's *Generative Principle of Political Constitutions* will preface a new translation of that work to be issued by Imperium Press in 2020. Bertonneau has been associated with Generative Anthropology since the mid-1980s and can boast that its innovator, Eric Gans, served as co-chair of his dissertation committee. Bertonneau is a semi-retired English professor who has taught at SUNY Oswego since the fall of 2001. Bertonneau's satirical series concerning political correctness at Upstate Consolation University may be accessed through *The Orthosphere*.

Article: [Two Eccentric Theorists of the Origin of Language: Oswald Spengler and William Olaf Stapledon](#)

Abstract: Under the postmodern dispensation a general disdain has limited speculation concerning the origin of institutions, including the origin of language. Where such speculation persists, it tends to follow a gradualist model influenced by the stereotypes of Darwin's theory of the origin of species. If the advent of language were one with the advent of the sign, however, gradualism would be ruled out. There is no half-way stage between the insignificant and the significant. As Eric Gans has demonstrated in his *Scenic Imagination* (2008), speculation on the origin of language was, if not prolific, nevertheless persistent during the 18th and 19th centuries. The adequacy of the discussion varies, but the recognition that a genetic understanding of language forms a necessary phase in the proper understanding of human nature and consciousness struck such writers as Condillac, Rousseau, Herder, and Maistre as obvious and in need of research. The present essay examines the linguistic speculations of two writer-thinkers that fall outside the temporal parameters of Gans' *Scenic Imagination* – Oswald Spengler and William Olaf Stapledon, whose authorships belong to the first half of the 20th Century. Spengler and Stapledon anticipate Gans' generative anthropological theory of the origin of language in that they are (a) *punctual*, (b) *deferential* with respect to violence, (c) founded in the *ostensive*, and (d) allied to the emergence of a *transcendental dimension*. The works under examination are Spengler's *Decline*, Vol. II (1922), and Stapledon's *Last Men in London* (1932).

Keywords: Spengler, Stapledon, ostensive, Eric Gans, language origin

Ian Dennis is Chair of the Department of English at the University of Ottawa and Secretary-Treasurer of the Generative Anthropology Society and Conference. He is the author of four novels, of the Girardian study *Nationalism and Desire in Early Historical Fiction* (Macmillan 1997), and of *Lord Byron and the History of Desire* (Delaware 2009), a work of literary criticism making substantial use of both mimetic theory and generative anthropology. He was the chief organiser of the 2009 GA conference in Ottawa, and co-organiser in 2013 at UCLA and in 2019 in New York City.

Article: [Human Beauty and Reciprocity in the Market World: A Preliminary Inquiry](#)

Abstract: This article asks whether human beauty can be thought of as a form of firstness and/or “deferred reciprocity” as these concepts have been developed by generative anthropology. The terms are first defined, it is noted that economic firstness is a familiar but not exclusive form and that others also deliver significant human benefit, but that some forms of firstness produce no such results. Is human beauty a “going first” that can in principle be usefully followed, or is it a biological happenstance? Its mediated condition, like any other aesthetic value, is noted, as is the way both desire and resentment are generated by the market upon which human beauty is valued and rewarded. The feminist critique of a “beauty myth” is considered as an expression of such resentment, and as a basically Romantic disavowal of mimetic desire. Some of the achievements, limitations and paradoxes of this critique are examined, including varying claims as to inherent or constructed identity. Originary analysis of the issue is then offered, and the pain, frustration and alienation as well as pleasure involved in all experiences of beauty are explored. Eric Gans’s claims for the communal power of the screen star Carole Landis are invoked but seen as somewhat historically limited, and the decline of the beauty pageant is discussed. Tentative conclusions as to other ongoing benefits of human beauty are sketched, and a fundamental similarity to other kinds of aesthetic experience is noted: all beauty enriches life and extends the human capacity for deferral.

Keywords: Generative anthropology, firstness, human beauty, Eric Gans, beauty myth, aesthetic experience

Peter Goldman is Professor of English at Westminster College in Salt Lake City. He is also a founding member and past president of the Generative Anthropology Society & Conference (GASC). Peter teaches classes and has published articles on a variety of topics including Shakespeare, Renaissance literature, and film studies. His current project is a book on Shakespeare and the problem of iconoclasm.

Article: [The Emergence of Aesthetic Self-Reference](#)

Abstract: What accounts for the proliferation of self-referential paintings during the Renaissance? *Las Meninas* by Diego Velázquez exemplifies a new aesthetic mode whereby art reflects upon itself as an anthropological discovery procedure. The role of the King and Queen in *Las Meninas* has been reduced to a small reflected image in the background while the usually peripheral figures of the artist, dwarf, maids, children, and dog are foregrounded. The foregrounding of peripheral figures reflects the Christian doctrine of the equality of souls before God. As a staging or interpretation of the scene of representation (understood in terms of Eric Gans's originary hypothesis), the painting demonstrates that divinity is an effect of the attention of peripheral figures. By doing so, the painting authorizes itself as art, assuaging the potential resentment of spectators. Paintings by Cornelius Norbertus Gijsbrechts and Pieter Aertsen incorporate their own reformation, demonstrating the influence of Protestant iconoclasm. By representing its own negation and destruction a painting actually reinforces its authority by showing the processes of both creation and disintegration to which the painting is subject. The image is more sacred, precisely because it is subject to these historical forces. The various negations of the image serve an apotropaic function, warding off the charge of idolatry by representing the image's iconoclastic destruction.

Keywords: renaissance, painting, self-reference, *Las Meninas*, Diego Velázquez, Eric Gans, iconoclasm

[Adam Katz](#) is the editor of *The Originary Hypothesis: A Minimal Proposal for Humanistic Inquiry*, a collection of essays on Generative Anthropology, and of new editions of Eric Gans's *Science and Faith* and *The Origin of Language*. He publishes regularly in *Anthropoetics*, and posts often on the GABlog. He teaches writing at Quinnipiac University in Connecticut.

Article: [Generative Anthropology as the One Big Discipline](#)

Abstract: This essay argues that Generative Anthropology, or the originary hypothesis, should aim at uniting all the disciplines of the human sciences into a single one. To make this case, the essay hypothesizes the emergence of the secular disciplines (first of all philosophy) out of the disruption of ritual, myth and sacral kingship in the ancient world. Drawing upon David R. Olson's discussions of the cognitive transformations effected by literacy, and, especially, his analysis of the effects of what he calls "the metalanguage of literacy" on organized thought, the essay argues that what has been critiqued as "metaphysics" and has unfolded in the disciplines of the human sciences is the series of abstractions projected onto human activity as a result of the metalanguage of literacy. Drawing further upon Anna Wierzbicka's Natural Semantic Primes, the essay argues that the abstractions used to discuss such "subjects" and thought, morality, politics, and so on, such as

“assumptions,” “concepts,” “norms,” or “society,” are culturally and historically specific articulations, derivatives, and nominalizations of prime words like “think,” “want,” “do,” “see.” The essay contends that generative anthropologists can enter the disciplines through “infralinguistic” practices by, first of all, applying disciplinary concepts to the activity conducted in the discipline itself so as to reveal pragmatically the historicity of the discipline. If the discipline has been re-framed as a succession of events of translations of prime words into disciplinary concepts, the power of operationalizing disciplinary concepts as events of deferral can be demonstrated.

Keywords: disciplinarity, literacy, semantics, metalanguage, infralanguage, practice

[Matthew Taylor](#) is Professor of English at Kinjo Gakuin University in Nagoya, Japan. He teaches courses in English as a Foreign Language (EFL), academic writing, teacher training, and culture. He has written and presented on EFL pedagogy, literature, film, social issues, mimetic theory, and generative anthropology. He has co-authored textbooks for EFL students, including two for academic writing (National Geographic Learning) and one for oral communication skills (Macmillan Languagehouse). His previous articles for *Anthropoetics* have explored mimetic elements in Jane Austen’s *Mansfield Park* and social phenomena in Japan. The article for the present issue shifts to broader though related cultural and economic questions.

Article: [Gods of the Marketplace: The “Work Ethic” from Max Weber to Universal Basic Income](#)

Abstract: Max Weber, from whom we derive the term “Protestant work ethic,” saw work (and buying, selling, and investing capital) as deeply entwined with a religious framework. Weber’s view is amenable to the perspective of generative anthropology (GA), of the human scene with center and periphery. Now, the idea of work is itself being fundamentally re-defined with the increase in automation, the growing ubiquity of artificial intelligence, and the proposal for a Universal Basic Income. In fact, these developments are thoroughly consistent with Weber’s thesis on the “capitalist spirit,” but they clearly undercut the cultural wisdom about the “work ethic” (never articulated as such by Weber). This reflection overviews Weber’s thesis, as well as the “work ethic” meme, in light of GA, and in the same light, examines a string of thinkers who engaged Weber’s thesis: R. H. Tawney, Amintore Fanfani, Christopher Dawson, Michael Novak, Francis Fukuyama, Jean-Pierre Dupuy, and Venkatesh Rao. Rao’s brilliant but excruciatingly cynical anatomy of company hierarchy merits particular attention; in Rao’s vision, the “work ethic,” having sprung from religion, now generates its own religious ecology, in the service of its gods. This reflection will also consider the Catholic social tradition, particularly the social encyclicals of John Paul II, and the question of the “anthropology of work”—in an age when work may be on the verge of becoming obsolete.

Keywords: Max Weber, Protestant ethic, generative anthropology, Catholic social teaching, R. H. Tawney, Christopher Dawson, Francis Fukuyama, Venkatesh Rao

Magdalena Złocka-Dąbrowska is Assistant Professor of Anthropology at the Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw, and a member of GASC since 2015. She is the author of a book, *Analyse de l'œuvre de Georges Dumézil, un maître à penser* (Toruń 2013) and articles that include “Puja. Hindu Temple Rituals”; “Comprehension ethnologique de l'oeuvre de Georges Dumézil”; “Metaphors, Simulacrum and European Imagination”; “Conception de la tripartition: Georges Dumézil et l'ensemble indo-européen” and others. Her current projects, “Consecutio Modorum: Mediation Between Two Concepts of Culture, Analog and Digital”, “Cratos as Cognition: Gans and Dumézil in Dialogue on Language and Violence” and “Generative Anthropology in the Cosmic Realms of the Mahabharata”, enter into the pathway of originary thinking and scenic logic. Professor Złocka-Dąbrowska is the organizer of the 2018 GASC, which was held at the Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University.

Article: [Generative Anthropology's Scene of Origin in Cognitive and Axiological Contexts](#)

Abstract: The article offers an interpretation of the *scene of origin*, the core idea of Eric Gans's Generative Anthropology (GA), in the context of cognitive studies, where “interest centers on the mind” and where language is one of the “goodies” upon which cognitive research focuses. The objective of the presented arguments is to demonstrate that human cognitive abilities can be understood using the heuristic of the *scene*, a procedure which simultaneously offers new axiological meanings. These meanings are found in proposed by the author—figures of cognition, examples of which can be found in Krishna and Arjuna—participants of Kurukshetra Battle from the Hindu Mahabharata.

Keywords: Gans, scene of origin, figures of cognition, axiology, Krishna, Arjuna