

# Introduction

## Matthew Taylor

It gives me great pleasure to serve as a guest editor for the post-conference issue of *Anthropoetics*. I would like to thank Eric Gans for this opportunity even as I acknowledge his substantial guidance and assistance in preparing the issue—so substantial that it would be better to think of me as a “guest co-editor”! As co-organizer of the 2024 conference, I would also like to express deep gratitude to the other organizers, Kiyoshi Kawahara and Ian Dennis, and the event management of my wife Emi Taylor. The 2024 event simply could not have taken place without their generous and diligent support. In addition, several conference participants pitched in at crucial junctures.

A few more words about the conference are in order. The 17<sup>th</sup> annual conference of the Generative Anthropology Society and Conference (GASC) was held in Tokyo, Japan, in June, 2024, under the theme “Rapprochements East and West: Culture, Philosophy, Religion.” It was a singular event for participants, bringing together scholars from Japan, China, Europe, Oceania and North America, and representing diverse cultural, philosophical and religious perspectives. While most participants were physically present at the Tokyo venue, others presented remotely. Contributions were groundbreaking and thought-provoking. They extended the work that was begun in the 2016 conference in Nagoya, particularly the dialogue with Buddhism, yet also took applications of generative anthropology in new directions.

I hope that this spirit is represented in this issue. Most papers were submitted by conference participants, and half were presented in Tokyo. We are also fortunate to have a new contributor, Gregory J. Lobo, offering a critical take on GA’s fundamental concepts (about which, more below). Please note that other papers from the conference will be appearing in the Spring, 2025 issue. In addition, the text of Eric Gans’ outstanding featured lecture, “Sartre, Nishida, and the Origin of Nothingness” has been published already, in two parts, as [Chronicles 802](#) and [806](#) in *Chronicles of Love and Resentment*. He has continued to dwell on related themes in other Chronicles, including [Chronicle 811](#).

Particularly welcome in the current issue is Kiyoshi Kawahara’s study, “Language generation from the perspective of esoteric Buddhist philosophy and *ba* linguistics.” It is his second contribution to *Anthropoetics*. I was privileged to co-organize both the 2016 and the 2024 conferences with Kiyoshi Kawahara, who has been a close colleague and friend for the past decade. Since he is a linguist, semiotician *and* a Buddhist monk, the importance of his perspective in the encounter of GA with Buddhism can hardly be overstated. As might be expected, the paper in this issue aligns closely with the 2024 conference theme, and the

aspirations for “rapprochement.”

Kawahara introduces two important figures for understanding language in the philosophical tradition of Japanese Buddhism. One is ancient: Kukai (774-835), a foundational figure for Buddhism in Japan whose concept of language developed within the Yogācāra school of Mahayana Buddhism. The other figure is modern: Toshihiko Izutsu (1914-93), a leading philosopher, polyglot and scholar of comparative religion. Making use of Izutsu’s extension of Kukai on language, Kawahara’s study delves into the deep structure of consciousness, which is nevertheless deeply *communal*; from the GA perspective we could say “scenic.” This structure of consciousness shapes the generation and expression of language out of the chaos of feeling and experience, and it could be said—in a real sense—to create the reality it describes.

Tomoya Fujihara, a promising young scholar of religion, approaches language from an entirely different angle in his contribution, “The Origin of Language from the Perspective of Language Functions in Aphasic Patients.” This paper was the winner of the GASC student award at the Tokyo conference. It was Fujihara’s second presentation at a GASC event, and is his first contribution to *Anthropoetics*. His examination of the effects of brain injury on language leads to a substantial exploration of language itself, taking into consideration central concepts of GA. To my knowledge, it is the first study of its kind in GA, and opens up new directions for thinking about language, including language origins. The effect of Fujihara’s paper is not dissimilar to encountering the writing of the neurologist Oliver Sacks: after reading, it is difficult, even impossible, to think about language and meaning the same way.

Izumi Dryden has been a regular participant at GASC events, including Tokyo 2024, always making unexpected connections in her talks between great writers and thinkers, with the common thread of music. Her contribution, “Music in Nature and Nursing: Musico-Philosophical Perspectives on the Ontological Dichotomies of Charles Darwin and Florence Nightingale” is Dryden’s second to *Anthropoetics*. In this paper she reprises her 2023 presentation at the GASC event in Palo Alto. As she develops her own “musico-philosophical” approach, Dryden ties together Charles Darwin, Florence Nightingale, and GA—again under the unifying theme of music. Music not only consoled Darwin and Nightingale in their darkest hours, and inspired them in their work; it also became an important component of their theorization, whether about therapeutic practice or evolutionary origins. As Dryden puts it, “music serves as a tool for **deferring conflict**—whether through evolutionary adaptation or therapeutic care—in line with GA’s understanding of how symbolic forms maintain social cohesion.”

The place of music in Charles Darwin’s thought was further developed in Dryden’s paper for the 2024 GASC conference in Tokyo, and hopefully we will see it in written form before long, in a future issue of *Anthropoetics*. On a personal note, I have known Izumi Dryden

since she was an undergraduate in my academic writing course at Kinjo Gakuin University, and she and her husband Laurence have been my good friends for years. It is immensely gratifying for me to see that Izumi Dryden's love of musical, literary and theoretical genius—already evident in her essays as a university student—has developed into this well-articulated tapestry of originary thinking.

Finally, we welcome the thoughtful study of Gregory Lobo, "*Homo imaginatus: Generative Anthropology, prefrontal synthesis and the origins of the human.*" This is Lobo's first but we hope not last contribution to *Anthropoetics*. Though he has not yet presented at a GASC event, Lobo's keen interest in GA as a hypothesis on human origins coincides with a trend that was also evident in Tokyo 2024. A striking number of presentations—half of them—focused specifically on human origins. Though Lobo dissents from GA's originary hypothesis, it is in a thoughtful and generous way which invites more dialogue.

Like Tomoya Fujihara, Lobo makes localized brain function an important element of his thesis, applying Andrey Vyshedskiy's work on prefrontal synthesis. Perhaps the most intriguing aspect of Lobo's conjectures is the chicken-egg paradox of children, genetically equipped for language, who do not inherit it directly from their parents. In this scenario, it is children who develop the first linguistic communication system (a real, observed phenomena). Thus, to steal a line from Wordsworth, the child is the parent of the human! Lobo's disagreement with GA is not unlike GA's with mimetic theory: when and how do we impute symbolic capacity to a hominid with no symbolic capacity? Yet Lobo recognizes the value of GA's scenic intuition, and seeks not to "refute" it, but to reconcile it within what he sees as a larger context. GA cannot but benefit from such serious engagement with its central premises, whether favorable or unfavorable, and hopefully the conversation started by Lobo is the beginning of many more.

We hope that readers can enjoy and profit from these highly original papers, each taking generative anthropology in new directions. We also remind readers to follow up this issue with the issue to appear in Spring, 2025, which will feature more papers from the Tokyo conference.

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