

Birth of *Homo Mimeticus*: Nietzsche, Genealogy, Communication

Nidesh Lawtoo
(KU Leuven)

Abstract:

This article develops a genealogical account of the birth of *homo mimeticus*—out of mimetic communication. While genealogy tends to be suspicious of stable origins, a key advocate of the genealogical method such as Friedrich Nietzsche was deeply interested in diagnosing the evolution of non-verbal forms of ‘communication’ that, in his view, gave birth to language, consciousness, and culture. For the Nietzschean mimetic theory this article proposes, mimesis is thus not simply an image far removed from reality but an all too human, embodied, and relational form of communication that makes *Homo sapiens* an eminently social species. I argue that Nietzsche’s genealogy of the origins of language (out of mimetic reflexes) opens up a timely alternative to both the Scylla of (post)structuralist accounts of arbitrary linguistic signs and the Charybdis of speculative hypotheses on founding sacrificial murders. In the process, it may also pave the way for recent re-discoveries of the role mimesis played in the birth of that thoroughly original species we call, *homo mimeticus*.

Keywords: consciousness, evolutionary psychology, Nietzsche, mimesis, poststructuralism, subjectivity.

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The analysis of sources is perhaps more lucid and certainly more complete if we not only try to find out where humans came from, but also where they are, and where they may be going.

– André Leroi-Gourhan (1964: 10)¹

From now on therefore, *historical philosophizing* will be necessary, and along with it the virtue of modesty.

– Friedrich Nietzsche (1997: 17)

Genealogy is generally suspicious of searches for origins, yet this does not mean that it cannot diagnose specific forms of mimetic communication that gave birth to humans. Close to thirty years after the publication of *Mimesis: Culture, Art, Society* (Gebauer and Wulf 1995 [1992]), we can confirm that as we enter deeper into the twenty-first century, the problematic of mimesis can no longer be confined to realistic representations of reality to be considered from a safe aesthetic distance. Rather, as Gunter Gebauer and Christoph Wulf convincingly showed, mimesis should be considered as an all too human condition, or ‘*conditio humana*’ (1995: 1), that animates social, anthropological, and aesthetic phenomena constitutive of the history of Western civilization—and, perhaps, of *Homo sapiens* tout court.

In order to further the heterogenous history of our mimetic condition, which in Gebauer and Wulf’s wide-ranging study goes from Plato to Derrida, I take a genealogical step back to the *pre*-history of *Homo sapiens*—to leap further ahead to the current re-emergence of what we propose to call *homo mimeticus*. While we have no written traces of this long and obscure period, genealogical lenses will help uncover mimetic principles that were not yet known in the early 1990s, yet inform the transdisciplinary theory of mimesis we now propose in the 2020s. At the most general level, my goal is to unearth a mimetic hypothesis on prelinguistic forms of bodily communication that have been neglected in the past century dominated by the linguistic turn, yet arguably played a pivotal role in the origins of language, consciousness, and by extension, civilization, in terms consonant with the ‘mimetic turn, or return of mimesis’ (Lawtoo 2017: 1222).²

Since Charles Darwin's *The Expression of Emotions in Men and Animals* (1872), the role of emotions and facial expressions in the development of language has fascinated philosophers, anthropologists, and palaeontologists. In what follows, I will not reiterate the various hypotheses on such a controversial topic, which traverses Western thought and goes from Plato to Locke, Rousseau to Herder, Saussure to Wittgenstein, among others (see Aarselff 1982; Defez 2013). Instead, I will be strategically selective in my approach by continuing to carve up intellectual space between two of the most powerful theorists of mimesis in the late twentieth century, mimetic theorists with whom Gebauer and Wulf's *Mimesis* ends and with whom *Homo Mimeticus* begins: namely, Jacques Derrida and René Girard. I discussed elsewhere how, despite their obvious differences, these two French thinkers both posit mimetic principles at the origins of human culture and civilization: that is, writing and scapegoating, or, to use their language, the *pharmakon* and the *pharmakos*, with all the similarities these twin concepts entail (see Lawtoo 2019b). I now take a step further by inscribing my genealogy of *homo mimeticus* in an untimely figure who has been aligned with the linguistic turn in the past century, yet, at a closer look, develops a hypothesis on the origins of language in line with the mimetic *re-turn* we are currently promoting in the present century: Friedrich Nietzsche.

My wager is that that Nietzsche's mimetic hypothesis on the birth of language and, by extension, consciousness, not only anticipates poststructuralist concerns with the linguistic sign and its 'arbitrary' relation to the referential world; nor does it solely provide a genealogical account of the role of violence and sacrifice in the origins of culture and morality—though he does both, thereby paving the way for both deconstruction and mimetic theory. More important for us, Nietzsche also anticipates, by over a century, an evolutionary hypothesis on the origins of language and consciousness currently at the forefront of contemporary developments in evolutionary anthropology, palaeontology and, more recently, the neurosciences. In the process, he provides both philosophical substance and historical perspective to recent returns to affect, performativity, and materiality in critical theory constitutive of the post-literary mimetic turn. Looking back, genealogically, to the birth of human communication will thus bring us back to contemporary concerns with what this special issue proposes to call 'the mimetic condition'.

Birth of Language: Out of a Mimetic Stimulus

Due to the spell cast on the structuralist and, later, poststructuralist generation, Nietzsche's theory of language has long been confined within a linguistic ontology not deprived of idealist tendencies – tendencies that Nietzsche's thought contributed to overturn. Due to the interpretative brilliance of readers like Jacques Derrida, Paul de Man, and Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, it is now well-known that, in a youthful text published posthumously and previously largely unknown except to Nietzsche specialists, titled 'Truth and Lies in an Extramoral Sense' (Nietzsche 1992 [1873]; trans. modified), Nietzsche develops a hypothesis on the origins of language that was taken to anticipate structuralist and poststructuralist insights. Nietzsche, in fact, conceives of language as a metaphorical process in which 'nerve stimuli', as he puts it, are transferred (metaphor, from *metapherein*, to transfer) into an arbitrary 'image' and, later, into a 'sound' (1992: 635) twice-removed from what the stimuli originally signified, generating an arbitrary chain of images and sounds, signifieds and signifiers that constantly differ and defer meaning away from its origins. After a number of iterations, this view eventually led to the foregrounding of a relativist Nietzschean phrase posthumously collected in the fragments of *The Will to Power* that was repeated like a mantra in the 1980s and 1990s, and was taken as a slogan for postmodernism *tout court*: namely, 'there are no facts, only interpretations of facts' (1968: §481, 267).³

But is Nietzsche's thought as relativistic as this decontextualised phrase makes him appear to be? What is certain is that genealogy as he practised it fosters what he calls, in *On the Genealogy of Morals*, an 'art of interpretation [das lesen als *Kunst*]' that requires, among other things, 'an acute sense of discrimination in matters of psychology', as well as 'some schooling in history and philology' (1996: 10, 5). This transdisciplinary, psychologically-oriented, interpretative approach leads to a method of reading Nietzsche will often refer to as 'perspectivism', which is not the same as relativism for it entails a diagnostic sense of discrimination that is particularly sharp when it comes to 'mimetic pathologies' (Lawtoo 2013: 27–83). Now, as Nietzsche's perspectival thought unfolds into his middle and more mature period, this self-proclaimed 'philosophical physician' (Nietzsche 1976: 35) continues to sharpen his genealogical lenses to reveal how mimesis does not simply take the form of an image far removed from material reality – a view

that inverts a vertical Platonic ontology to unmask the illusory and arbitrary nature of the world of ideas (his negative thesis). Rather, his genealogy develops horizontally, on a plane of immanence, by fostering a diagnostic evaluation attentive to ‘nerve stimuli’ that tie humans to other humans in intersubjective, relational, and communicative terms that are far from arbitrary in nature—if only because they are tied to bodily reflexes that generate forms of unconscious mimicry out of which *Homo sapiens* is born (his positive thesis).

Consistently in his career, from *Human, all too Human* to the fragments collected in *The Will to Power*, Nietzsche pays close diagnostic attention to the involuntary tendency of humans to mimic with their bodies in order to understand with their psyches. To that end, he develops what he calls a ‘genuine physio-psychology’ (Nietzsche 2003: 53) that bridges ontological dualisms that divide the body from the psyche, self from others, mimetic *pathos* from linguistic *logos*, but also animal from human, nature from culture, among other structural binaries. As Nietzsche succinctly puts it in *Human, all too Human*, it is thanks to an involuntary imitation that mirrors others’ expressions and emotions that ‘the child still learns to understand its mother’ (1995: §216, 143–4). There is thus a mimetic principle at the origins of individual communication at the level of the development of the child, or ontogenesis. But as the adverb ‘still’ indicates, Nietzsche has a longer genealogy in mind. Thus, he immediately doubles down on the diagnostic as he specifies that ‘thus people learned to understand one another’ (143): namely, on the basis of what he calls ‘an ancient association between movement and sensation’ (1982: §142, 89). It is crucial to note that this association is mimetic without being arbitrary or metaphorical insofar as it leads the ego to unconsciously mirror the movements seen in the other outside, and by doing so, feel the other’s sensation inside. This is one of those philosophical arrows directed toward the future Nietzsche addressed but did not get to see; yet it entails, in embryo, a hypothesis concerning the birth of consciousness of a genial species that is not simply *sapiens* but also *mimeticus*—or better, a species that becomes *sapiens* because it is already *mimeticus*.

For Nietzsche, in fact, imitation is paradoxically central to human originality. Mimesis serves as a relational matrix, or womb, out of which language and consciousness are born, both individually and collectively. In fact, contrary to dominant existential interpretations, Nietzsche is arguably

the philosopher who did most to push birth (rather than death) to the forefront of philosophical consciousness. Since I have discussed elsewhere Nietzsche's account of the birth of the ego out of the 'mimetic unconscious' at the level of the development of the child (or ontogenesis) (Lawtoo 2013: 27–47; 2019a: 38–50), and sophisticated accounts of Nietzsche's *individual* psychology attentive to mimesis already exist (see Lacoue-Labarthe 1986; Staten 1990; Parkes 1994; Siemens 2001; Emden 2005),⁴ let me now take an additional genealogical step to find out how 'ancient' the association between 'movement and sensation' actually is in Nietzsche's *relational* psychology. This also means that we need to give closer consideration to his genealogy of the birth of a mimetic, all too mimetic species (or phylogenesis).

Nietzsche discusses phylogenetic evolutionary processes at different moments in his career, but it is probably in *The Gay Science* (1882) that he goes furthest in his diagnostic. In a brilliant section of Book V titled, 'On the "genius of the species"' (1974: §354, 297–300), Nietzsche makes clear that when he speaks of an *ancient* association between movement and sensation, he means it literally. His compressed genealogy of the origins of both consciousness and language goes back to prehistoric times, to the origins of the species. That is, an original species whose genius, he argues *contra* Romanticism, does not stem from a supposed transcendental subject considered in autonomous isolation – for Nietzsche posits an evolutionary 'need for communication' (298) with others at the origins of consciousness. Nor does it rely on a conception of consciousness that frames mimesis as a stabilising visual representation that realistically mirrors the external ego – for Nietzsche argues, *contra* idealism, that life is 'possible without seeing itself in a mirror' (297). Rather, both consciousness and language, for Nietzsche, stem from involuntary, and in this sense *un*-conscious, mimetic relations with other human beings who are part of a social network of pre-linguistic, intersubjective, and bodily communication. As Nietzsche makes clear, this hypothesis does not fit within arbitrary conceptions of the linguistic sign caught in what he now derogatively calls 'the snares of grammar' or, alternatively, 'the metaphysics of the people' (300). Instead, it promotes an intersubjective, and thus relational psychology rooted in a network of mimetic communications as its evolutionary possibility.

As in 'Truth and Lies' Nietzsche's starting point remains immanent and physiological, but the focus is now *not* on mimesis qua arbitrary image

far removed from material reality in the abstraction of a linguistic chain. Rather, his diagnostic focus is on mimesis qua physio-psychological instinct that connects humans attempting to survive in the animal and natural world. While Nietzsche's genealogical focus is on the emergence of human consciousness and language, it would be a gross misreading to consider his genealogy as anthropocentric. His evolutionary perspective transgresses the human/animal opposition for it goes beyond the nature/culture binary still dominant in the past century but increasingly obsolete in the present century. Hence, Nietzsche clarifies at the outset that 'physiology and the *history of animals* place us at the beginning of such comprehension [of the problem of consciousness]' (1974: 297; emphasis added). For Nietzsche, then, to begin to comprehend the emergence of *Homo sapiens*' distinctive characteristics (i.e., language and consciousness) we need to start with the physiology of animals, including that most thoroughly mimetic animal, which, as Aristotle also saw, is the human animal (Aristotle 1987: 34).

This is not the first time that Nietzsche establishes a genealogical connection between the human and the animal world via the medium of mimesis. Already in *Daybreak* (1881), in a section titled 'Animals and Morality,' Nietzsche had in fact established a link between human imitation and animal 'mimicry' in terms that lead to a loss of individuation that is as physiological and bodily as it is psychic and moral. For Nietzsche, in fact, there is an evolutionary 'parallel' between animal mimicry and human mimetism: just as mimetic animals 'adapt their colouring to the colouring of their surroundings' via the 'chromatic function' in order to 'elude one's pursuers,' he writes, so 'the individual hides in the general concept of "man", or in society' out of 'prudence' (1982: §26, 20–1).⁵ Paving the way for Roger Caillois' diagonal connection between human and animal 'mimicry' (1938) as a pathological condition, Nietzsche considers 'mimicry' negatively here, as a dissolution of individuation that renders the ego porous and open to influences that generate social conformism. Part of his unmasking operation whereby the high value of human (Christian) morality is overturned and reframed in terms of low animal (evolutionary) instincts, Nietzsche diagnoses human mimicry as an animal defence mechanism of survival whereby the singular hides under the general, aggressive personal drives dissolve into fearful gregarious norms. Thus, Nietzsche states: 'the animal understands all this just as man does, with it too self-control springs from the sense for what is real (from

prudence)’ (1982: 21). Interestingly, this mimetic search for prudence, for Nietzsche, stretches to in-*form* philosophical prudence. Thus, he reframes the ‘sense for truth’ characteristic of idealist and moral philosophers in terms of a ‘sense for security man has in common with the animals’ (21). In an arrow contra idealism and moralism, Nietzsche specifies: ‘The beginning of justice, as of prudence, moderation, bravery—in short, of all we designate as the *Socratic virtues*, are animal: a consequence of that drive which teaches us to seek food and elude enemies’ (21). This is how social security is gained and individuality lost: subjected to mimetic drives, humans become general, average, and lose personal consciousness in pathological terms Nietzsche often associates with ‘slavery,’ the ‘many,’ or the ‘herd’—all of which are characterised by a mimetic consciousness. Death of the individual mastery, birth of social slavery: this is, in a nutshell, Nietzsche’s dominant genealogical perspective on the pathology of mimesis.

And yet, Nietzsche’s diagnostic evaluation of mimesis is never unilateral for the pathology is always followed by what I call a balancing *pathology*—that is a rational discourse (or *logos*) internal to mimetic affect (or *pathos*) that is characteristic of the mimetic turn more generally. Thus, in an inversion of perspectives, in *The Gay Science* Nietzsche stresses the formative, rather than deformative, properties of animal/human mimicry. In fact, his focus is now on an evolutionary formation, or better metamorphic trans-formation, that leads to the birth of human consciousness and language out of intersubjective forms of mimetic communication constitutive of what he calls, not without irony (notice the quotation marks), ‘the “genius of the species”’ (1974: 298). His evolutionary hypothesis, in fact, goes back, via ‘whole races and chains of generation’ (298) to the dawn of *Homo sapiens*, in order to account for its natural descent—and cultural ascent.

Nietzsche provides a *patho-logical* supplement to Darwin’s theory of *biological* evolution along *bio-cultural* lines that depart in original ways from universalising metanarratives of *cultural* evolution that held sway in the twentieth century. Thus, he does not posit a violent murder, or sacrifice, at the origins of culture on the basis of a racist connection between ‘savages,’ ‘children’ and ‘dull-witted people’ qua obsessive ‘neurotics,’ as Sigmund Freud speculates in *Totem and Taboo* (1940: 15)—a psychoanalytical thesis that neatly fits an Oedipal myth but is hardly considered a hypothesis in the social and evolutionary sciences. Nor is Nietzsche in line with René Girard’s

creative reformulation of the Freudian hypothesis of a founding murder in which violence is directed against a sacrificial victim, or ‘scapegoat,’ to put an end to a ‘crisis of difference’ and install morality, law, and culture more generally, as he suggests in *Violence and the Sacred* (1977[1972]: 1–118) – a speculative, a-historical move central to Girard’s mimetic theory, which opens up alternative explorations (see Antonello and Gifford 2015). While Nietzsche is indeed attentive to the violent and unconscious origins of culture, positing aggressive instincts based on *ressentiment* at the foundations of morality, he also explores a different, less violent, more cooperative and communal, but not less thought-provoking route to the origins of consciousness and language: he zooms in on the role played not so much by mimetic rivalry and sacrificial death but by unconscious mimicry and intersubjective collaboration central for affirming the collective survival of a fragile, precarious, yet eminently collaborative species.

As we now turn to see, it is Nietzsche’s cooperative mimetic hypothesis that comes closest to Darwin’s evolutionary account of ‘social habits’ such as ‘language’ as a supplement to his main focus on genetic evolution.⁶ More recently, it is also receiving the support of new developments in evolutionary theory that cross the nature/culture divide and span perspectives as diverse as palaeontology, evolutionary psychology, and the neurosciences, all of which are embryonic in Nietzsche’s genealogy of the birth of consciousness and are constitutive of the mimetic turn.

Genealogy of Consciousness: Beyond Nature and Culture

Nietzsche’s starting point for his account of the birth of language and consciousness goes beyond binary principles; it is neither purely biological nor solely cultural but emerges out of the dynamic interplay of animal physiology and cultural practices. We could in fact say that he performs what the French sociologist Edgar Morin would call a ‘bio-psycho-social integration’ (1973: 185)⁷ to account for a complex process of biological descent and cultural ascent that rests as much on mimetic *instincts* of survival as on a mimetic *culture* of solidarity. Thus, Nietzsche posits the hypothesis that for pre-historic humans ‘the subtlety and strength of consciousness always were proportionate to man’s (or animal’s) capacity for communication [*Mitteilungs-Fähigkeit*] . . . as if this capacity in turn were proportionate to the *need for communication* [*Mitteilungs-Bedürftigkeit*]

(1974: §354, 298). Nietzsche's starting point is as physiological and evolutionary as it is psychological and social. Considering the vulnerability of an animal born too soon, lacking instinctive specialisation, and thus radically dependent on others, Nietzsche considers *Homo sapiens*' biological, psychic, and social need to communicate with others, and thus to rely on others to survive, as the immanent starting point for what he calls an 'extravagant surmise [*ausschweifenden Vermutung*]' (297): namely, and this is his main thesis, that 'the development of language and the development of consciousness . . . go hand in hand' insofar as '*consciousness has developed only under the pressure of the need for communication*' (298; emphasis in original). This may initially sound like an extravagant hypothesis indeed, for it entails a radical overturning of perspectives that, Nietzsche anticipates, will sound 'offensive' 'to older [read 'idealist'] philosophers' (297). The highest peaks of human achievement, namely, consciousness and language, are here not considered as the *cause* of communication but as their *effect*. It is not consciousness or a rational *logos* that brings communication into being. On the contrary, it is a communicative need triggered by affect, or *pathos*, that is the source of our becoming human.

Language, consciousness, communication. How are these concepts genealogically related? And what does Nietzsche mean by 'communication [*Mitteilung*]' since it does not presuppose language but is the fundamental presupposition for both language and consciousness to emerge? Crucially, for the Nietzsche of the middle period, communication is first and foremost *not* a linguistic form of exchange restricted to arbitrary metaphorical signs, words, or *logoi* considered in abstract isolation; it is rather physiological in origins, intersubjective in nature, and thus social, embodied, and affective in expressive orientation. The physiological dimension of communication, which is manifested in gestures and facial expressions is particularly important for Nietzsche. Thus, he stresses that 'not only language serves as bridge between human beings but also a mien, a pressure, a gesture [*der Blick, der Druck, die Gebärde*]' (1974: 299). If such a form of pre-linguistic, embodied and affective communication is still triggered by 'nerve stimuli,' as in 'Truth and Lies', the focus is now no longer rooted in a disinterested autonomous subject who perceives the world in a condition of epistemic isolation and is caught in the spell of a metaphorical chain of arbitrary associations that lead away from reality, to the creation of ideal worlds '*behind the world*' [*Hinterwelt*] (Nietzsche

1996: 5). Instead, the focus is on an intersubjective, bio-socio-evolutionary dynamic that ties, *patho*-logically, subjects to other subjects, one gesture to another gesture, one facial expression to another facial expression, via an immanent social network of mimetic communication in which the subject feels part of a larger cooperative community striving to survive in *this* world.

How does this pre-linguistic mimetic communication operate? By relying on what nerve stimuli do best: namely, triggering motor movements such as gestures, facial expressions or pantomime endowed with an affective power, or *pathos*. Again, this communicative *pathos*, for Nietzsche is not based on arbitrary *logos*; it rather manifests, physio-psychologically, an unconscious association between *physiological* movements seen outside and *psychic* affects felt inside. What we must add is that for Nietzsche this *pathos* is one of the clearest manifestations of one of his most influential and misunderstood concepts, namely: the 'will to power'. As he puts it: 'The will to power not a being, not a becoming, but a *pathos*' (1968: 339). The concept of 'mimetic *pathos*' which is at the foundation of the theory of *homo mimeticus* I propose, finds thus in Nietzsche a privileged starting point which is not simply pathological for the psychic dissolution it entails; it is also *patho-logical* in the sense that the power of *pathos* triggers a mirroring form of unconscious communication that is not only older than any conscious *logos* but brings both consciousness and language into an evolutionary becoming. Nietzsche specifies this mirroring *patho-logical* mechanism in terms of a 'psychomotor rapport' in another fragment from 1888 central to his genealogy of language, as he writes: 'This is where languages originate: the languages of tone as well as the languages of gestures and glances' (1968: §809, 428). For Nietzsche, this physiological form of mimetic 'transmission between living creatures . . . is the source of languages' and goes back to the 'beginning' (428), but it also continues to cast light on the present as well. Thus, he continues: 'even today one still hears with one's muscles, one even reads with one's muscles' (428). There is thus a muscular, physiological, or better physio-psychological form of mimetic communication that provides an embodied medium of expression that underscores, mediates, and renders possible the emergence of linguistic communication. Or, to put it in our language, a mimetic will to power, or *will to mime*, triggers a mirroring form of unconscious communication in *homo mimeticus* that is not only older

than language or *logos*; it is also *patho-logical* for it brings consciousness and language into being – out of the stimulus of mimetic *pathos*.

We are now in a position to confirm that, for the mature Nietzsche, communication is not based on arbitrary linguistic signs to interpret from a rational distance, but on mirroring bodily movements and facial expressions that convey an unconscious *pathos* as shared or *sym-pathos*. Nietzsche summarises this dynamic succinctly as he states: ‘One never communicates thoughts: one communicates movements, mimic signs, which we then trace back to thoughts’ (1968: §809, 428). This mimetic principle that translates gestures into thoughts via an involuntary psychomotor mimicry is one of the foundational principles of what I call, the ‘mimetic unconscious’. That is, a relational, physio-psychological, and thus embodied unconscious that ties the human soul (*psyche*) back to our animal body (*soma*), makes the ego, for better and worse, porous to external influences, renders it plastic and adaptable and, we now add, emerges from modes of embodied communication that are not based on arbitrary linguistic signs but, rather, on mimicry of physical movements, which are at the origins of psychic sensations and thoughts.

Does this mirroring principle sound familiar? The contemporary reader attentive to recent developments in critical theory that go beyond two-cultures divide will not have missed the rather astonishing fact that Nietzsche, writing in the 1880s, is anticipating, *by over a century*, what has been hailed as a revolutionary discovery in the 1990s: namely, the discovery of a set of neuronal cells that has triggered renewed interest in mimesis at the dawn of the twenty-first century and that has been grouped under the heading of ‘mirror neurons’. Initially discovered in area F5 of the premotor cortex of macaque monkeys by Giacomo Rizzolatti and his team at the University of Parma, Italy, and later found in humans in the ramified form of a ‘mirror neuron system’ (MNS) (Rizzolatti and Sinigaglia 2008; Mukamel et al. 2010), mirror neurons are motor neurons (neurons responsible for movement) that activate or ‘fire’ not only as we perform a movement but also – and this is the discovery – as we see others perform a movement, especially goal-oriented movements such as grasping and holding, as well as facial expressions, images, and sounds, generating an activation of an unconscious sensation in the self. The mirroring mechanism Nietzsche describes via a genealogy that looks back to the mimetic origins of human

practices is thus Janus-faced for it also looks ahead to the future of mimetic theory. In *Daybreak*, he unpacks this mirroring communication thus:

To understand another person, that is *to imitate his feelings in ourselves . . .* we produce the feeling [of others] ourselves, after the *effects* it exerts and displays on the other person by imitating with our own body the expression of his [sic] eyes, his voice, his walk, his bearing Then a similar feeling arises in us in consequence of an ancient association between movement and sensation. (1982: §142, 89; italics in original)

This mirroring, non-arbitrary principle allows for an understanding of other minds (or theory of mind) that does not require the mediation of a linguistic consciousness (or theory theory) but perfectly conforms to what has been called ‘embodied simulation’ (or simulation theory), opening up a shared conception of intentionality that Vittorio Gallese designates as the ‘shared manifold of intersubjectivity’ (2003: 171). This also means that the tradition of the mimetic unconscious on which this mirroring mechanism rests also anticipates the discovery of mirror neurons by more than a century. This genealogical point is worth stressing in a culture that often thinks original future-oriented discoveries are primarily on the side of the hard sciences, while the humanities are bound to endless repetition of past ideas. What the tradition of the mimetic unconscious teaches us is that revolutionary discoveries might actually turn out to be *re*-discoveries of ancient principles. The hypothesis of *homo mimeticus* is now finally confirmed on an empirical basis and contribute to promoting a transdisciplinary *re-turn* of mimesis on the critical and theoretical scene.⁸

But Nietzsche allows us to go further, for he also stresses that this genealogical connection is ‘ancient’. His genealogy has thus a broader, philosophical point to make: the reflex of mimesis leads back to the *phylogenetic* emergence of *Homo sapiens*, and this step back allows us to leap ahead to more far-reaching hypotheses constitutive of *homo mimeticus*. Nietzsche, in fact, adds that human language and consciousness emerged out of an all-too-human dependency on others that makes relationality, affectivity, and above all, pre-linguistic forms of communication based on mirroring reflexes constitutive of our species. Mimetic drives, for Nietzsche, are in fact amplified by a constitutive human fragility, dependency, and timidity, which, together,

foster relationality, intersubjective communication, and cooperation. He clarifies his genealogical hypothesis in *Daybreak* in a passage that continues to account for the birth of the ‘genius of the species’ – out of the ‘fragility of human nature’ as follows:

If we ask how we became so fluent in the imitation of the feelings of others [*Nachbildung der Gefühle anderer*] the answer admits of no doubt: man, as the most timid of all creatures on account of his subtle and fragile nature, has in his timidity the instructor in that empathy [*Mitempfindung*], that quick understanding of the feeling of another (and of animals). Through long millennia he saw in everything strange and lively a danger: at the sight of it he at once imitated the expression of the features and the bearing and drew his conclusion of the kind of evil intention behind the features of this bearing. (1992: §142, 90)

Fear, timidity, and fragility are thus at the origins of pre-linguistic forms of mimetic communication that find in mirroring physiological principles a subtle and quick mode of understanding. This is indeed the same hypothesis that informs Nietzsche’s genealogy of consciousness and language in *The Gay Science*, where he states: ‘as the most endangered animal, he [man] needed help and protection, he needed his peers, he had to learn to express his distress to make himself understood’ (1974: §354, 298). Mimetic gestures and facial expressions allowed for this affective distress (*pathos*) to be communicated quickly, via an unconscious mimesis that paves the way for consciousness and language (*logos*).

For Nietzsche, then, the mimetic speed generated by a reflex sympathy (*sym-pathos*, feeling with) provides the immanent foundation on which dialogue (*dia-logos*, through words) rests. Due to their constitutive vulnerability prehistoric humans turned out to be dependent, relational, and cooperative creatures whose ‘consciousness’ was not monadic, autonomous, and individually self-enclosed, but part of a relation of ramified mimetic *pathos* – or will to power – which Nietzsche also calls a ‘net of communication [*Verbindungsnetz*] between human beings’ (1974: §354, 298). We can thus better understand why he says that the ‘will to power is the primitive form of affect, that all other affects are only developments of it’ (1968: §688, 366). Nietzsche, the philologist, uses the term ‘primitive’ literally and, thus, etymologically (from Latin, *primus*, first) to foster a genealogical insight: namely, that the first mimetic *pathos* ties self to others via an originary *will to mime* that gives birth to an

immanent, embodied, relational, and eminently social consciousness. This consciousness is thus not located in the ego but in the social space of communication [*Mit-teilung*] that both connects [*Mit*] and disconnects [*Teilung*] self and others in a double movement between mimetic and anti-mimetic tendencies that Nietzsche often called ‘*pathos of distance*’ (1996: 12), and whose oscillation from mimetic pathos to anti-mimetic distance is constitutive of the mimetic turn, or *re*-turn.

There is again a powerful inversion of perspectives at play in Nietzsche’s mimetic patho-*logy*. The driving *telos* of his genealogy affirms that humans are not social animals because they have individual consciousness. On the contrary, they have a shared consciousness due to their precarious nature that leads them to unconsciously cooperate as social creatures. Hence Nietzsche reiterates the main point of his genealogical inversion, which he considers as nothing less than ‘the essence of phenomenalism and perspectivism’, as he says: ‘My idea is, as you see, that consciousness does not really belong to man’s individual existence but rather to his social or herd nature’ (1974: 299). For Nietzsche, there is thus a mimetic principle at the dawn of consciousness and language characteristic of that original species which is *Homo sapiens*; we echo that the ‘genius’ of the species was ultimately a mimetic genius for it was triggered by the unconscious power of mirroring reflexes at play in *homo mimeticus*. This also means that human power does not stem from a self-sufficient, violent, macho-power rooted only in the sovereign patriarchal individual – though that remains its dominant socio-political manifestation; rather, it is born from a constitutive human, all too human vulnerability to, and dependency on, maternal forms of communication that open up the channels of mimetic *pathos* through which will to power flows – inaugurating more collaborative and future-oriented genealogical steps toward hominisation with which I would like to conclude.⁹

Steps Toward a Hominisation of the Future

Nietzsche’s ‘extravagant surmise’ that an unconscious bodily mimesis of gestures and facial expressions lies at the pre-historical origins of human consciousness and language was not popular in the last century. It remained in the background of rationalist and a-historical philosophical trends in Western thought, which, at one remove, cast a shadow on the (post-) structuralist generation as well. For Nietzsche, in fact, the ‘original failing

of philosophers' is that they tend to consider the concept of 'man' as an '*aeterna veritas*'; thus they do not realise that 'everything *essential* in human development occurred in primeval times [*Urzeiten*], long before those four thousand years with which we are more or less acquainted' (1995: §2, 16; emphasis in original). Nietzsche's hypothesis on the birth of *Homo sapiens* will have to wait till the middle of the twentieth century to find empirical confirmations outside the confines of philosophy. As we have learned to appreciate, his observations often sound extravagant because they are untimely and anticipate discoveries yet to come. He might in fact have been offering a genealogical hypothesis to solve one of the greatest riddles in human evolution. Namely, the so-called 'great leap forward' that occurred around 75,000 years ago and marked a radical turn in the emergence of *Homo sapiens*.

While the human brain reached its present capacity around 300,000 years ago, key human characteristics, including symbolic creation, the making of complex tools, cave paintings, religious beliefs, music, and language started appearing only much later, around 70,000–50,000 BC. Why so late? ask paleoanthropologists. A traditional (Darwinian) evolutionary hypothesis would look for a genetic mutation responsible for this leap ahead, but this hypothesis would not account for the speed in which such a human transformation took place. An alternative starting point was suggested by the French palaeontologist André Leori-Gourhan, who, in *Le geste et la parole* (1964, 1965) provides empirical support in favour of the (Nietzschean) hypothesis that the origins of language cannot be dissociated from gestures and facial expression. In fact, Leroi-Gourhan argues that the birth of language does not come out ready made from *sapiens*'s brain – like Athena out of Zeus' head, as a 'cerebralist' anthropological tradition that goes from Rousseau to Lévi-Strauss suggested. Rather, it has lower, more immanent, physiological origins for it stems from the foot and the vertical posture (*station verticale*) it allowed, which, in turn, freed the hand for the making of tools and gestures (*le geste*), increased facial exposure via what progressively became a 'short face' (*face courte*), which physiologically allowed for the development of facial and eventual oral communication (*la parole*). As Leroi-Gourhan summarises it: 'Vertical posture, short face, free hand during locomotion and possession of removable tools are really the fundamental criteria of humanity' (1964: 33; my translation). This genealogy of the liberation of the hand attentive to the role of the 'tool for the hand and of language for the face' (34), for Leroi-Gourhan, identifies

the two main poles potentially responsible for the great acceleration of the evolutionary process that led to the full development of *homo sapiens*' unique capacities, including oral and, eventually, written communication (1964: 33). Thus, Leroi-Gourhan continues: 'The prodigious acceleration of progress', characteristic of recent human history, 'is simultaneously connected to the channelling of reasoning into technical operations and to the subservience of the hand to language in the graphic symbolism that culminates with writing' (1965: 260). Before reaching the very recent stage of *écriture* and the externalisation of memory it entails that fascinated poststructuralist readers of Leroi-Gourhan (see Derrida 1967: 124–30; Stiegler 1998: 43–179), it is crucial to stress that it is the interplay of gestures and mimicry that, for the palaeontologist, as for Nietzsche before him, led, via a long evolutionary process of hominisation, to the development of speech, consciousness, and, eventually, writing. Thus, Leroi-Ghouran specifies that 'this reflective thought, which was expressed concretely in vocal language and mimicry [*langage vocale et mimique*] of Anthropians probably since their origins, acquires during the superior Palaeolithic the handling of representations allowing humans to express themselves beyond the material present' (1964: 270). Nietzsche would have fundamentally agreed on the original function of mimicry. He might also have added a mimetic supplement: namely, that the vulnerability, dependency, and lack of specialisation of Anthropians played a key role in developing relational forms of mirroring communication, sharing, and cooperation that, according to more contemporary hypotheses, turn out to be central to the birth of *homo sapiens* – out of the immanence of mirroring reflexes.

Furthering mirror neuron theory from an evolutionary perspective, the neuroscientist V. S. Ramachandran, in a chapter of *The Tell-Tale Brain* titled 'The Neurons that Shaped Civilization', develops a neuro-bio-cultural hypothesis that surprised many but would not have surprised Nietzsche. Namely, that 'mirror neurons play an important role in the uniqueness of the human condition: they allow us to imitate,' and 'miming may have been the key step in hominin evolution resulting in our ability to transmit knowledge through example' (Ramachandran 2011: 132). Taking his distance from a purely genetic view of evolution to account for a complex cultural transformation characteristic of *Homo sapiens*, Ramachandran, like Nietzsche before him, starts by stressing how 'utterly dependent on round-the-clock care and supervisions' (2011: 117) humans are; and again like

Nietzsche he subsequently foregrounds the role of unconscious imitation in general and mirror neurons in particular in the development of language and cultural transmission. Focusing on major technical innovations but also aesthetics, the human ability to read other minds, and self-awareness, Ramachandran builds on Giacomo Rizzolatti's insight that mirror neurons 'may be the precursors of our celebrated Broca's area' – that is, a brain area linked to the 'expressive aspects of human language' (123) – in order to provide a hypothesis for the emergence of language as well. Thus, he argues that 'a primitive gestural communication system [read MNS] [was] already in place that provided scaffolding for the emergence of vocal language' (120).

This hypothesis is in line with our efforts to move beyond the Scylla of structuralist accounts predicated on language considered as an autonomous system and the Charybdis of universal transhistorical hypotheses on founding sacrificial murders. Instead, it opens up a mimetic hypothesis that relies on the powers of mimesis, and the will to mime it entails, for 'translating gestures into words' and, more generally, for passing down cultural practices via imitation rather than genetic mutation. Thus, he concludes that 'increased sophistication of a single mechanism – such as imitation and intention reading – could explain the huge behavioural gap between us and apes' (134). More recently, Rizzolatti considers Ramachandran's hypothesis 'attractive' and lends supports to it by suggesting that thanks to a genetic evolution that led to a 'sufficient number of mirror neurons' in *Homo sapiens*, 'humans liberated themselves from slow Darwinian evolution and were able to set in motion a cultural evolution that rapidly changed the world, carrying us in a very short time to the present world' (Rizzolatti and Gnoli 2016: 182; my translation). An embodied mirroring communication through mien and gestures might indeed have served as a *bridge* between mimetic subjects on the way to the emergence of language, consciousness, and culture, after all – perhaps even playing a role in the 'evolutionary bridge' that made the emergence of the 'genius of the species' of *Homo sapiens* qua *homo mimeticus* possible.

This, I agree, is a daring hypothesis. Sceptics might worry that it is biased by an excessive faith in mirror neurons. I share this worry for I have myself been critical of rationalist interpretations of mirror neuron theories that stress perhaps too much their role in understanding others at the expense of the mimetic and often violent pathologies mirror neurons also trigger (Lawtoo 2019a: 48–50; 2021a, 2021b; Lawtoo and Miller 2020: 109–13).

To be fair to this mimetic hypothesis, however, we should note that it also finds support in recent perspectives developed independently from mirror neuron theory.

In the field of evolutionary psychology, for instance, Michael Tomasello posits a gestural imitation, or pantomime, as central to *The Origins of Human Communication*. As Tomasello puts it: ‘my evolutionary hypothesis [is] that the first uniquely human forms of communication were pointing and pantomiming’, that is, mimetic gestures and expressions which he considers central for human ‘cooperation’ based on ‘shared intentionality’ out of which, he adds, ‘arbitrary linguistic conventions could have come into existence evolutionarily’ (2008: 9). While drawing on evolutionary anthropology and comparative studies on great apes and children, Tomasello argues that, philosophically, the ‘major theoretical arguments’ for shared intentionality and cooperative communication is provided by ‘classic scholars such as Wittgenstein’ (334). And rightly so, for Wittgenstein claims that ‘what we call meaning must be connected with the primitive language of gestures’ (qtd. in Tomasello 1; see also Gebauer 2017). Needless to say, his claim that ‘pointing and pantomiming . . . are “natural” in the way that “arbitrary” linguistic conventions are not’, (9) finds in another classic scholar, who was also a scholar of classics, namely Nietzsche, an additional key ally. Other contemporary studies could be mentioned in support of Nietzsche’s mimetic hypothesis on the birth of language and communication (see Corballis 2002; Armstrong and Wilcox: 2007; Hrdy 2011, Tomlinson 2015), but these must suffice to make my point.¹⁰

What was true for the latest developments in mirror neuron theory is equally true for the latest developments in evolutionary psychology and anthropology: from the awareness of human dependency and vulnerability to the centrality of mimicry and pantomime, the importance of sharing and cooperation to the social nature of human consciousness, these new theories of the origins of communication find in Nietzsche’s mimetic theory an original and so-far unacknowledged precursor who revealed the mimetic, all too mimetic foundations of a thoroughly innovative species we called, for lack of a more original term, *homo mimeticus*.

Post-literary Turn / Mimetic Re-Turn

I have argued that if Nietzsche encourages genealogists to look back to the origins of language (out of mimetic *pathos*), he does so to foster a

perspectival critical discourse (or *logos*) that looks ahead to the possible patho(-)logical destinations of *homo mimeticus*. In guise of conclusion, let me schematically outline the relevance of the mimetic turn for a ‘post-literary’ (Corby 2019) age that is no longer dominated by the primacy of the linguistic turn attentive to the formative power of language (*logos*), but is entangled in a number of mimetic re-turns to more embodied, performative, material, yet not less mimetic, affects (*pathoi*) constitutive of a shared mimetic condition.

It is true that in the past century, Nietzsche’s hypothesis paved the way for theories of language and of cultural evolution that selectively drew on his genealogical, perspectival, and thus patho-*logical* insights to promote the view that mimesis goes beyond good and evil for it operates both as a *pharmakon* and as a *pharmakos*. This lesson has been immensely productive. A number of linguistic-oriented critical inquiries, often via the privileged medium of traditional print literature, paid close attention to the texture of texts. They did so not only to disrupt the myth of presence and the (Platonic) metaphysics it entails, but also to decentre the centrality of the subject, reinstate the power of the unconscious, affirm the primacy of the copy over the original, reveal the mimetic foundations of human desires, and diagnose a type of sacrificial violence that does not originate in rational consciousness. The theory of *homo mimeticus* we are currently developing on Nietzsche’s and other shoulders, remains genealogically connected to this past tradition of critique, especially when it comes to affirming the pathological consequences of the mimetic unconscious. In fact, in *The Gay Science*, after having stressed the role of mimesis in his past-oriented genealogy of language, Nietzsche overturns perspectives to diagnose the pathological side of a future-oriented consciousness as he writes:

Owing to the nature of animal consciousness, the world of which we can become conscious is only a surface-and sign-world, a world that is made common and meaner; whatever becomes conscious *becomes* by the same token shallow, thin, relatively stupid, general, sign, herd signal Ultimately, the growth of consciousness becomes a danger; and anyone who lives among the most conscious Europeans even knows that it is a disease. (1974: §354, 299–300)

Nietzsche’s perspectives change over time but his diagnostic of mimetic patho(-)logies remains double: mimesis not only gives birth to the *logos*

of consciousness; it can also infect *logos* with *pathos* so as to spread contagious pathologies that, he warns us, are particularly intense in ages in which ‘actors, all kinds of actors, turn out to be the real masters’ (303). There is thus significant diagnostic potential in a mimetic theory that draws genealogically on (post)structuralist figures – from Derrida to Girard, Lacoue-Labarthe to Nancy, among others – to unmask contagious affective pathologies that, in the age of ‘(new) fascist’ infection amplified by ‘viral’ infections (Lawtoo 2019c; 2021c), cast a shadow on the present and future.

Mimesis is not a new or original concept; yet the mimetic *re*-turn does not simply echo past theories of language that found in literature their primary source of inspiration. Rather, it introduces differences that are constitutive of a post-literary, digitised, mass-mediated, and increasingly precarious world traversed by fluxes of (hyper)mimetic contagion that operate with increasing speed and potential of infection. Hence, a theory of mimesis for the twenty-first century cannot be restricted to mimetic *desire* alone but must be expanded in order to consider a (post)human receptivity to a more general concept of mimetic *pathos* that includes all affects, good and bad. At the same time, in genealogical practice, Nietzsche offers an alternative foundation for the mimetic *re*-turn for he puts us in a position to see that at the origins of consciousness, language, and by extension culture, is not a cry for murder against a sacrificial victim but, rather, a cry for help *not* to be a victim; neither do we find the primacy of a linguistic trace over the presence of an embodied pantomime but, rather, the speed of intersubjective forms of nonverbal communication animated by a will to mime that bypasses consciousness yet informs, deforms and transforms the mimetic unconscious, nonetheless.

In sum, a genealogy of *homo mimeticus* should not be confused with a hypothesis that hinges solely on scapegoating mechanisms for culture to emerge – as Girard’s mimetic theory suggests; nor does it follow the forward movement of a linguistic *gramme* that leads the subject to slide through a chain of signifiers in linguistic terms of appearance and disappearance that supplement the oral presence of speech and gestures – as Derrida’s deconstruction of mimesis indicates. Rather, for us following Nietzsche, *Homo sapiens* is born out of a mimetic process of pre-verbal communication that is physio-psychological in origins, relational in nature, and immanent in onto-bio-socio-patho(-)logical

foundations. A genealogical focus on mimetic pathos and the perspectival patho(-)logies that ensue turns dependency into relationality, individual weakness into social strength, a lack of fixed biological instincts into an excess of communication, a mimetic communication that gives birth to language and consciousness – out of unconscious gestures and expressions.

Sitting on the shoulders of a genealogy of thinkers that understood mimesis as what Gebauer and Wulf aptly termed our ‘*human condition*’, we have seen that the mimetic turn does not simply advocate a return to the old stabilising conception of mimesis understood as realistic representation. On the contrary, if it steps back to the origins of communication not confined within the boundaries of a conscious *logos*, or a transparent *imago*, it is in order to provide a broader genealogical perspective to recent returns of attention to what I grouped under the ancient concept of mimetic *pathos*. Another genealogist of Nietzschean inspiration, Michel Foucault, usefully specifies that ‘affection, perturbation, in Greek is called *pathos* and in Latin *affectus*’ (2004: 754). Indeed, the recent turn to affect and all it entails – embodiment, performativity, contagion, influence, mirroring reflexes, care of the self, etc. – is actually a *re*-turn to ancient mimetic principles. This also means that new critical turns as diverse as the affective turn and the neuro turn, the performative turn and the ethical turn, the new materialist turn and the posthuman turn, among many exiting new turns are currently *re*-turning to the ancient realisation that humans are, for better and worse, vulnerable to the shared experience of *mimetic pathos* constitutive of our post-literary, mimetic condition.¹¹

In the end, a genealogy of *homo mimeticus* goes beyond good and evil. The patho(-)logies of mimesis open up complementary possibilities that look simultaneously in opposed directions: namely, both toward mimetic pathologies that trigger violent rivalries, scapegoating, *ressentiment*, affective contagion, (new) fascism, epidemic contagion, escalating wars, and related sicknesses which, in some cases, can lead to a faith in what is behind the world; and, alternatively, and without contradiction, toward patho-*logies* that strive contra dominant life-negating currents animated by nihilistic forms of *ressentiment* to promote vital bonds of sympathy, cooperation, and what I call ‘chameleon-like metamorphoses’ that promote ‘plastic transformations’ (Lawtoo 2016: xvii, 332–43) in view of renewing our faithfulness to the Earth, here and now.

Birth of Homo Mimeticus

This is a decisive, truly vertiginous and, we are beginning to sense in the age of the Anthropocene, potentially irreversible crossroads in the labyrinthine process of the becoming (un)conscious of *homo mimeticus*. If we want to know whether the Ariadne's thread of our increasingly precarious destiny as a dangerously genial species is still partially in our hands, there is only one way to find out – we shall have to follow it.

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Notes

1. The author translated both Leroi-Gourhan's use of the masculine subject (*'l'homme'*) with the plural 'humans' and used the pronoun, 'they', in order to make clear that the diagnostic of *homo mimeticus* that follows is not limited to 'man' but includes the –gendered, racial, sexual, cultural and other –heterogeneous manifestations of *Homo sapiens*.
2. This *re*-turn to mimesis is central to the ERC-funded project, *Homo Mimeticus* (HOM) and involves contributions by influential figures in literary theory (J. Hillis Miller), continental philosophy (Jean-Luc Nancy), political theory (William Connolly), new materialism (Jane Bennett), feminist philosophy (Adriana Cavarero), posthuman studies (Katherine Hayles), among others contributing to the HOM project. See www.homomimeticus.eu
3. To minimally contextualise the phrase, it is a mimetic and thus mirroring reply *contra* positivism which reads as follows: 'Against positivism, which halts at phenomena – 'There are only *facts* – I would say: No, facts is precisely what there is not, only interpretations' (Nietzsche 1968: §481, 267).
4. Both Staten and Parkes provide incisive psychological diagnostics of Nietzsche's embodied conception of the soul; Emden articulates a historically informed diagnostic of the connection between language, consciousness and the body in Nietzsche's corpus. For an essay that considers Nietzsche's youthful reflections on the origins of language, see Magion 2012. What follows supplements a relational/mimetic perspective to these rich studies.
5. This is arguably the source of inspiration for Roger Caillois' analogy between animal mimicry and a human psychopathology called 'legendary psychasthenia' whereby the patient feels like 'dissolving in space' (1938: 86–122). Nietzsche considers mimicry as an evolutionary mechanism of survival, whereas Caillois sees in it a loss of individuation akin to a psychic death. Still, Caillois' specific attention to the link

between human mimetism, animal mimicry, and death is in line with Nietzsche's insight that due to the 'chromatic function' many animals 'pretend to be dead or assume the forms and colours of another animal or of sand, leaves, lichen, fungus (what English researchers designate 'mimicry').' (Nietzsche 1982: 20; see also Lawtoo 2021b: 279–82)

6. Darwin had noticed that 'the intellect must have been all-important to him [man, that is, humans], even at a very remote period, as enabling him to invent and use language, to make weapons, tools, traps &c., whereby with the aid of social habits, he long ago became the most dominant of all living creatures', while at the same time supposing that 'the largeness of the brain in man relatively to the body, compared to the lower animals, may be attributed in part of the early use of some simple form of language.' (Darwin 1970:132–208, 199, 200). While Nietzsche is often critical of Darwin, his analysis of the origins of language both furthers and complicates a Darwinian evolutionary line of inquiry.
7. For Morin's recent take on the 'complexity of mimesis', see Morin and Lawtoo 2019.
8. See 'The Mimetic Condition: Theory and Concepts', in this special issue, and Borch 2019.
9. I offered an initial account of maternal forms of non-linguistic communication central to the mimetic unconscious elsewhere (Lawtoo 2013: 40–3, 272–6; 2019a). See also Cavarero and Lawtoo 2021: 192–6.
10. If all these studies support Nietzsche's mimetic hypothesis, I can only note in passing that Sarah Buffer Hrdy's account in evolutionary anthropology and primatology builds on Tomasello and others in order to further a cooperative account of the origins of humans' empathic and relational consciousness based on alloparental maternal rearing that resonates with Nietzsche's hypothesis of consciousness as a 'social network', see Hrdy 2011. I thank Ortwin de Graef for this reference that provides further non-violent foundations for my theory of *homo mimeticus* to pursue elsewhere.
11. In addition to all the essays collected in this special issue, traces of the mimetic turn can be found in the following special issues: *Conradiana* 48.2–3 (2016), *MLN* 132.5 (2017), *Journal of Posthumanism* (2022). For more outputs on the mimetic turn promoted in the HOM Project, see <http://www.homomimeticus.eu/publications>

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Birth of Homo Mimeticus

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