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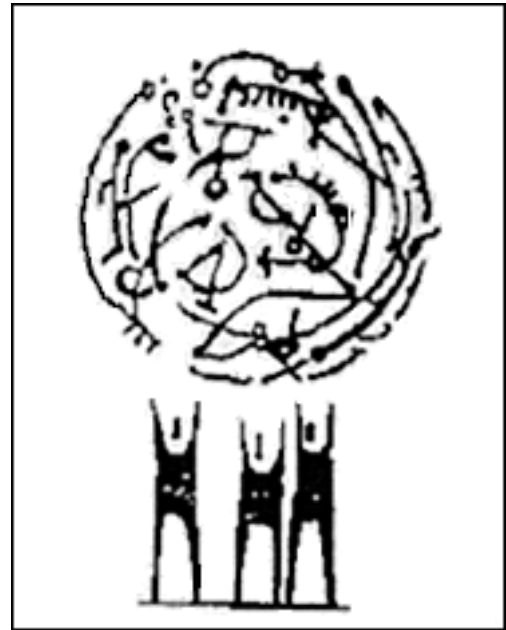


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From Myth to Market: Bataille's Americas Lost and Found

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I do seem attracted to trash, as if the clue--*the clue*--lies there.
Philip Dick, *Exegesis*(1)

A complaint to the management! Miffed, patrons of the "Cabinet des Médailles" groused in a petition to the director of the Bibliothèque Nationale of a section head who failed to appear at his post at the appointed hour.(2) Where was Bataille? Sleeping, maybe. We have it on real authority that he enjoyed a nap. Recalling that he would doze during Kojève's course, Queneau described his inattentive friend as "the fly on the orator's nose."(3) Marked down on his day job at the BN for "his lack of assiduity,"(4) he proved vulnerable to the identical charge at the famous Friday evening lectures: "He was not a listener of exemplary assiduity," noticed that expert on laziness, author of *Le Dimanche de la vie*.(5) An old habit, an old science. "I have been patiently developing a method that will enable me to dream in the most humble of circumstances," young Bataille wrote to his cousin sometime in 1922. Just staring at a cheap tie, he said, could do the trick. (6) The "pure and decided use of poverty," was Benjamin's term for the operation.(7) The entirety of experience, properly mismanaged, could be a discount warehouse of fantasy roles.

It couldn't hurt a fly, the dialectic. And not that there would be, at least in this insignificantly distracting case, anything like the temptation, the insult being so scaled that the machine would only most mildly mind. Breton once accused Bataille of reasoning like a man with a fly on his nose.(8) Wrong fly, wrong nose, Lacan, the offending librarian's friend and fellow Kojève student, helps to grasp. Does he understand why Nietzsche required the expression "fly happiness," and why the figure of the merest fly, in Augustine's *Confessions*, triggered the great medieval and early modern debate over that weakest autoaffection, *vana curiositas*? For the conjuring away of agonistic confrontation, to brake the aggression involved in the experience of the spectacle of a contrasting sufficiency, to vanquish that less lovable Lacanian bug, "the great winged hornet of narcissistic tyranny,"(9) what serves is something that is almost nothing: "A flash of lightning--but that is too much, as a bolt of lightning can be taken to be a sign of the presence of the Father of the gods. . . . A buzzing fly, if it passes into this field, is sufficient to cause me to shift my bearings elsewhere, to take me outside of the field of the visibility of the i (a)."(10)

It is through some initial attention to what this "i (a)" is shorthand for, and to its relation to the disrupting fly, that we can develop the sharpest sense of an unknown Bataille, one whose role in the canon is deserving of an entirely different basis. On the (not easy!) condition that we forgive the French-centeredness of the remark, it is now hard to disagree with the recent words of Sollers: "One day, it is to be hoped, we will realize that the explosive center of twentieth-century thought was Georges Bataille rather than those whose names have come to obscure his, or those whose names have come to be automatically associated with his."(11) Sollers went on to say, irrefutably, that wrenchingly poor knowledge has been demonstrated of what is actually contained in the twelve volumes we now know to be inappropriately called by Gallimard the *Oeuvres complètes* of Bataille. Towards the end of his life Bataille widened his experience to a sphere that one would not, on the basis of the way we find him characteristically represented, have imagined natural to him. Entirely overlooked

has been his uncannily prescient analysis of how consumerism would play an inspirational part in the demise of communism and the Soviet Union. He came to notice what he felt to be the ethical superiority of the market with an impressive logic, one that parallels that of Generative Anthropology, that independently reinforces its claims. "Esthetic form remains sacrificial," Gans writes, "but sacrifice is no longer understood as a necessary feature of social organization."[\(12\)](#) In Bataille's development we notice the sharpest awareness of the necessity of this separability, as well as the historical and moral necessity of the blurring of post-modern esthetic patterns--what Gans terms "ironized sacrifice"--into the patterns of market exchange.

There are flies that undo what Freud called the ego ideal--which Bataille termed alternately the heterogeneous element, or "the sovereign"--and there are those who towards it are fatally drawn. There are flies of convergence, flies of unconvergence. Hegel: "A consciousness that opens up to a subject-matter soon learns that others hurry along like flies to freshly poured-out milk, and want to busy themselves with it."[\(13\)](#) The "freshly poured-out milk" of flies, writes Anne-Lou Steininger in her masterfully sinister book-length poem on the sociology of flies, is another fly:

I am Queen of flies.
Swallow the words that fall from my mouth.
It is not enough for me to be immortal:
I am--and of this I boast--universal.[\(14\)](#)

Addressing the worshipful, the monster slips into prose: "To begin, I want to impose upon you a desire without end, the sensation of being cut in two, deprived of your truth . . . like the body and its shadow at sunrise. I will make of you strangers to yourselves, avid for fusion, love and copulation. I will impose myself through lack. . . ."[\(15\)](#) And further impudicity: "I am Queen of flies, the most hated of all. My subjects detest me, they curse, abhor and conspue. . . . They spit in pronouncing my name, hiss when I appear, jeer, rail and rant."[\(16\)](#)

The "i (*a*)" would be the fly within the fly. And it is the function of Lacan's abbreviation to enable us to understand the two fly possibilities, contrasting emotions, contrasting group experiences, to understand that it is the sequestering of the one fly that makes possible the other, the ego ideal, with its social effects. Communicated through the symbol was Lacan's view that Freud's notion of an originary objectless narcissism required the modification that had been supplied by Melanie Klein with her view of the enigmatic partial objects, corralled by that resented thing she called "the self-feeding breast." The "i" would be the narcissistic subject. The *a* is the hoarded object that is no object, the exclusive, unmediated relation with which marks the subject as death-worthy, the form which I must pass to violently through the "i," if I am myself to have an unmediated relation with the world.

Blood-crime will be where the ego ideal was--it can only make a fatal appearance, emerge only into what is contested territory, exclusively in harm's way. Ego ideal can only be imagined towards a reckoning, as inviting terrible comeuppance, projected in collective wish-fulfillment to be a stricken ego ideal, a combustively contrastive, stormed and finally displaced seducer, one that upon its real or imagined justly merited death is pillaged, piñata-like, for its store of "objects," their soul force immediately, angrily drawn into the unsharing control of another, triumphantly constituted upon the emptied prior form. Greedy for the hidden source of his life, Lacan writes: "The patient says to his partner, to the analyst, what amounts to this--*I love you, but, because inexplicably I love in you something more than you-- [the a]--I mutilate you.*"[\(17\)](#) Existing only as delivered to danger, it is, if hoarded, only killingly accessible, this thing the availability of which brings a shaming enchantment to an end. The provocation of an endomorphic impounding thus triggers a markedly stationed sequential pattern--identify, *then* don't identify--the serial distribution of the experiences of absolute custody and lack over a diversity of bodies and moments, the airless passage of the undecidable wrenched in this flayer's zone from one frame directly into another. This form of the raw object constitutes and undoes the extrasocial force of ego ideals in the course of its subcutaneous, alternatively, starkly, enriching and impoverishing travels. This sequence pattern--recognizable, of course, as sacrifice--results in the awareness that exclusive access to unmediated relations will issue in the sense that if I were to succeed in achieving my goal there would be, certainly, those around me who will kill to get what I have. Spinoza in the *Ethics* wrote that "The joy that we feel in seeing our enemy suffer is an impure joy because it is always mixed with sadness." Melanie Klein used the term "envious superego" to label this depression, this entropy-generating awareness of the potential violence of the offended other. Sacrificial ritual would be this specific type of "envious superego" formation--the invidious transfer of the object that is no object, that of the passage into and out of the damaged ego ideal of the outrageous individual that we are warned against becoming for the sake of the production of sugar-coated envious superego--the guilt-ridden self-licking ice cream cone.

But there needn't be this cruel pedagogy of the beautiful; the daunting learning that occurs as the exhilarating vertical arc, the loving/killing movement of identification, is followed by steep descent back to a now poisoned, self-intimidated self love. There was not only the depth model, the going in after the object. It could be differently transindividual, the object that is no object, as we have seen Lacan notice. There could be an object that did not produce the murderously preachy hieratic separation. The fly can be what Lacan called "the elective object," *a* uncoercively housed, the *a* without the mighty outwork of the "i," from the destruction of which we receive our bad conscience:

This kind of object can have the power that is sufficient to put in question the reality and the coherence of the illusion of the self. It suffices that there move into the field of the Other something that can anchor the subject, but that can at once cause the consistency of the Other, or more precisely of that which is there as the field of narcissistic investment, to be weakened, to vacillate, to be questioned. (18)

The subject is happy--too happy, cf. Augustine--to lose its texture in favor of an infinitely proliferating patchwork of attentions. The relief--happy, but not death-worthy, the other no longer a rival, no longer death-qualified, one no longer has a self one feels required to pull things towards. Because of the unhousedness of the object, desire has been deceived downwards, deceived into desiring what is undesirable. Desire is realized *out of* rather than *into* danger.

Nodding off before the vaulting negation, Bataille could only continue, finally, to be inside the system, surprise with distracting insignificance from within this philosophy that he would never renounce. ("My thought is tributary to the interpretation of Hegel developed over several years in an influential course taught by Alexandre Kojève at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes." (19)) Was Bataille himself the missing discomfort Hegel required to be entirely himself? "Beyond all knowledge is non-knowledge and whoever becomes convinced that beyond his knowledge he knows nothing, if he were to possess the rigorous lucidity of Hegel, would no longer be Hegel, but would rather be the aching tooth in the mouth of Hegel. Is a sore tooth the only thing that the great philosopher is missing?" (V, pp. 422-23). Tributary was Bataille's full career to the question of the redemptive potential of "the elective object" that offered relief from the pattern that I have termed "the sequence." Early in life, reconciling his experience of the logic of Kojève with that of French anthropology and sociology, Bataille concluded that "sacrifice is a ritual analogue (or 'displacement') of traditional narrative and speculative dialectics." (20) The fly, the toothache? The discovery of a soft spot in the dialectic, something that was sacrifice without being sacrifice. The spirit that exalted itself as absolute had vulnerable basis in just anything at all, in what was not beyond reach, but just rather unworthy of it.

Bataille's relevance is due to his being an at once unconscious Kleinian and an unconscious pacifist loosener of her view of partial objects. The outflanking of the master/slave story is achieved through the realization that there are forms buried within the contours of the Hegelian master, and that unbothered access to them explicitly becomes the issue of issues for Derrida, Lyotard, and Deleuze, all of whom bring up Klein early in their careers, and pointedly. Bataille sees that sacrifice is about releasing an object only to see it returned to a provocative captivity that causes the cycle to endlessly rebegin. The noticing of this pattern will organize much of what we think of as post-structuralist thought--in evidence, for example in Derrida versus Husserl and Lévi-Strauss and Foucault, in Foucault against Freud, etc. From Bataille to Deleuze, there will be the struggle to bifurcate the heterogeneous in order to shed the identification with the aggressor.

"The heterogeneous element is missing in Freud," he said (II, p. 171). But the discovery of the group-bonding powers of what he also termed, drawing upon Tarde, the heterogeneous element, (21) was not to be his originality. What was also labeled "the sovereign" was indeed not missing in Freud, who had been fully aware of its magnetic powers in the crowded-up, because fattened, figure of the ego ideal--familiar quarry in "On Narcissism, an Introduction," in *Moses*, in *Totem and Taboo*, and in the essay on group psychology. The problem was finally less that it was lacking than that it was present as unautopsied, its inner resources unexamined. Required was the supplement of object relations theory--we have seen friend Lacan notice--as damagingly absent in Hegel/Kojève as it had been in Freud. (22) Bataille will take up residence in a Hegelian loophole. It is his discovery of the possibility of the nonviolent transference of the partial object--*near* lost in Hegel--and its integration into his view of the fate of ritual that led him to implicitly criticize any notion of a preobjectal state by passing first into and then out of Klein (of whom he was unaware) on his way to presage the adjustments that would come to drive the garrulousness of critical theory.

It is important to insist, for what follows, that direct access to strangeness does not suffice. A valuable aid in understanding Bataille and the revealing history of his object preferences is Malebranche's *De la Recherche de la vérité*, a book that had an important role in the legitimization of curiosity. Dangerous, Malebranche felt, are those things that are insufficiently

strange, as they provoke little in the way of a controlling drive:

There is nothing so difficult than to apply oneself to a thing for a long time without wonder, the animal spirits not carrying themselves easily to the necessary places in order to represent it. . . . It is necessary that we deceive our imagination in order to awaken our spirits, and that we represent the subject upon which we wish to mediate in a new way, so as to excite in us some movement of wonder.(23)

In Malebranche the object had, if necessary, to be artificially charged with difference in order for there not to be generated the scorned inert response. What is the difficult form if not the *a* not yet detached from its hoarding, therefore energizing, matrix? There must be a drumming up of wonder for the sake of its productive beating down--that is, the sequence. The mind inflames itself with wonder to move to new levels of thrusting intelligence, of manipulative vigilance. This is what Blanchot termed "persecutive prehension": "At certain moments, this hand feels a very great need to grasp: it must take the pencil, this is necessary, this is an order, an imperious requirement." (24) It is the function of the aggravation of wonder to cause us "to examine things with the . . . highest level of exactitude." (25) But if wonder is minimal there is a stalling into a poor wonder that is not transformed into a manipulative drive. When wonder was minimally wonder, enticed was the soul to "enjoy its riches rather than to dissipate them" in vigorous inquiry. (26) Wonder, lazy rather than busying wonder, could be an occasion for the unproductive self-pleasure that had been noticed by Augustine and by La Bruyère in his description of the stunned tulip collector, passive in weak delight before the inert glory of his treasure. The splitting of *curiositas*, therefore, between passive and aggressive versions. The strong object--the wonder impatient for our appropriating touch--may be described as a form that collapses Klein's breast *with* its contents; the weak version would be the correction tirelessly supplied by that field we term "critical theory"--the object without the "i," without matrix, the depredation-inciting contour, the trussing that excites the appetite to dominate.

Malebranche's points are to be put in touch with those of G. H. Mead who expands upon what Whitehead called "the pushiness of things." (27) There is agreement with Freud, in notice of "the identification of the inner effort of the organism with the matter of the object." (28) The thing is said to stimulate an organism to act as the thing acts upon the organism. The action of the thing is the organism's resistance to any pressure that arises when a hard object is firmly grasped by the hand. The rigidities of the object, through which it brings itself into hurting range, excite the best efforts of the hand. "The distant object, setting in train the responses of grasping and manipulation, calls out in the organism its own inner nature of resistance." (29) The organism in grasping and pushing things is associating its own effort with the contact experience of the thing. The hand moves only as much as its reference moves. One arouses in her or himself an action which comes also from the inside of the thing. "The vision of the distant object is not only the stimulus to movement toward it. It is also, in its changing distance values, a continual control of the act of approach. The contours of the object determine the organization of the act in its seizure." (30) Thus the significance of the properties of the thing--the intensity of a predatory relation--depends upon the extent to which the features are epistemologically aphrodisiac, the extent to which we are driven by them to blaze a way into the heart of an enigma.

Now Mead's support of Malebranche has the virtue of alerting us to a trap, one that may be described as organizing the entire anxiety system of critical theory. Through attention to Mead on the exotic form, we see *that distance is something that participates in its own overcoming*--distance creates narrative, excites disciplinary triumph, and consequently envious superego. Why is it that "[w]e cannot eliminate from the dialectics of the extant what is experienced in consciousness as an alien thing." (31) Distance there must be, if there is to be a free subject: "There is truly no identity without something nonidentical." (32) And it is the duty of art to base itself in this understanding, says Adorno: "[M]odern art is constantly practicing the impossible trick of trying to identify the non-identical." (33) But if this distance is to be no deceit, if it is not to draw one onto the rocks by the power of its solicitation, it can broker no killing return. Because it moralizes access to strangeness, there can be no happiness in *capturing* power. Adorno: "The spell cast by the subject becomes equally a spell cast over the subject. [. . .] The subject is spent and impoverished in its categorical performance; to be able to define and articulate what it confronts. . . the subject must dilute itself to the point of mere universality, for the sake of the objective validity of those definitions. [. . .] The objectifying subject contracts into a point of abstract reason, and finally into logical noncontradictoriness, which in turn means nothing except to a definite object." (34) And: "The more autocratically the I rises above entity, the greater its imperceptible objectification and ironic retraction of its constitutive role." (35) "Where the subject feels altogether sure of itself . . . it will be least subjective." (36) In so far as there are social acts, there are social objects, and social control entails bringing the act of the individual into relation with this social object. And what is the social object? The distant object, because it produces envious superego. Thus distance is required, distance is impossible.

Strangeness must be bonded with failure--Adorno on the work: "its enigmatic quality is a deficiency, a condition of want."[\(37\)](#)

The necessary trick: in preshrunk wonder to preserve distance without invoking process. If "we recognize the identity of resistance and effort,"[\(38\)](#) how are we to frustrate distance from participating in its own, autonomy-ruining overcoming? The object must be a prelude to a release from the object--this is the sequence: "The primacy of the object, as the potential freedom from domination of what is, manifests itself in art as its freedom from objects."[\(39\)](#) But not just any provocative object will do, for the sequence must be unkillingly experienced. If there is to be a yielding to the object, required will be help from the object itself, Malebranche noticed. The eye moves as much as its reference moves, according to the energizing sufficiency of immersive qualities. Adorno says that "It is not the purpose of critical thought to place the object on the orphaned royal throne once occupied by the subject. On that throne the object would be nothing but an idol. The purpose of critical thought is to abolish the hierarchy."[\(40\)](#) There must be "the primacy of the object," but this has to be experienced by the subject "against its own omnipotence"[\(41\)](#) if there is to be avoided the unfolding of a muscular corrective. The danger is that of which Kant spoke, in his description of what occurs in the sublime, of "a certain . . . substitution of a respect for the Object in place of one for the idea of humanity in our own self--the Subject."[\(42\)](#) The choice: Be the always already small, or suffer the condition of being the agent (and victim) of its forcible and preachy revelation in time. For there to be Malebranche's unmolested lazy wonder, time must be subtracted from the experience of distance so that the small will not be the byproduct of invidious process. The collapse of distance and proximity, the banalization of distance, the defamiliarization of the proximate, the fly as "the elective object" is wonder divided against itself, the self-distance of distance.

It is indeed the case that "Critical theory was the attempt to come into the inheritance of dialectics without spinning victor's fantasies."[\(43\)](#) And this project has the structure of our innocent separation, the division of Malebranche effects. From Lacan's version of the break, to Adorno's distinction between predatory "identification" and the passive "mimesis" that just lets things be, to Derrida on the relation of the voice to the written word, to Deleuze on that between the molar and the molecular, to Lyotard on the relation of saving ugliness to "the beautiful whole," one only, inexhaustibly, encounters the same procedure, however ingeniously varied the labeling.

Focus upon the reflecting subject must be supplemented by attention to the just-any-old-thing medium of reflection. What was the relation of the object to the contour of a body? Could it be a fly on the nose or something that required a bloody removal? Intimate difference inside or out? Only through Bataille's anticipation of Klein as well as prophetic notice of her perceived weakness--her too great display of strength!--will he cease to be diminished by admiration of disastrous greatness, will he shake free from the hurting into and away from the ego ideal as disciplined, disciplining shade. "Theory" is the locus of an endless work of not permitting the existence of the combustible hoarding matrix tissue. To detach envious superego from ego ideal it must inexhaustibly randomize/universalize access to insignificance.

Lacan's discovery that the object could pass from a positional to a distributive economy resembles a development in Kojève of which we must take notice. Our two Malebranche effects (at the center of the relation between Girard and Gans) are what is at the heart of the struggle between Bataille and Kojève. Upon return from a 1959 trip to the East, Kojève added a footnote of consequence to the *Introduction à la lecture de Hegel*. Here he reports deciding that he had erred in predicting that the human adventure would conclude in the American way of life that he associated with the achievement of a socially unprocessed animal existence. Kojève's eventual "American" was imagined to be a no longer an indirect being. His desires would be unmediatedly objectal; he would be undialectically, happily appetitive. Instead of heading towards this goal, we were pushing towards the post-historic snobbery that he discovered in Japan, towards the emerging infinite good of minimalist negativity, one that involved a relation to the world that reduced the struggle for recognition to a *near*-vanishing point. Through useless attention to objects such as those involved in a tea ceremony there is possible a minimally contrastive, self-limiting, almost unusable indifference. At the end of history there is a shift in relation to the object world. The last men do indeed have their objects, but they are without extension. Half way to askesis:

In order to remain human, Man must remain a "Subject opposed to an Object," even if there is the disappearance of "the action that negates the given. . . ." [. . .] Post-historic man must continue to *detach* "forms" from their "contents," not for the sake of actively transforming these last, but for the sake of using them as mediations with which he can present, as a pure form, himself to himself and to others. . . .[\(44\)](#)

In post-historic *farniente*, a world of "elective objects," there is no school of process, involving as it does the permanent

and universally distributed condition of the absence of desiring transformation of objects, there being no inculcating through the moralizing zero-sum episodes of contrastive achievement of "i (a)" status. Minimally dialectical, the mastery that ceases to risk its life, *almost* ceasing to generate a struggle for position, can only be made possible by a poor object idiom. Kojève's late and inadequate coming to the point that the dialectic could be near immobilized if it were to be turned against itself was pressured by his awareness of Bataille's points. A crawl space within the dialectic would be the French loophole, the French exception. Kojève was, as we shall see, becoming French at the moment that Bataille had already become an American, understanding as he finally did the power of a soaring shallowness, the world-transforming, triumphant vulgarity of a new objectality that could only be accepted in the most mystifyingly, incapacitatingly neutered terms by Kojève.

At the outset of Bataille's logic is a pleasure trap, a trap because delight is bonded with a fearsome identification:

In . . . tragedy we identify with a character who dies and in so doing we believe ourselves to be dying while we remain alive. The imagination suffices, but this fantasy has the same meaning as do those classical subterfuges that are the basis of the books and spectacles that are most appreciated by the multitudes. . . . Humanity, everywhere and in its totality, has sought, through a detour, to seize that which death at once offered and hid from its sight. (XII, p. 337)

For Bataille "A man often has the desire to escape useful objects, to escape work and its servitude that is commanded by useful objects" (V, p. 273). And it is through death in tragedy that the escape is achieved.

Sought through this experience was release from the objects of our shaming dependency: "This world of objects that transcends me. . . that locks me into its sphere of transcendence, traps me in some way into my exteriority, and creates within me a network of exteriority" (V, p. 205). Escape, in the form of a not knowing of the useful objects of the world, is available through a terrible detour: "Man needs to offer to himself the perspective of non-knowledge in the form of death" (VIII, p. 194). Deflating news, this, because the tainting of the pleasure would appear to have the status of a destiny. But everything changes, hope rises, when there emerges the possibility of an alternative: "*Know nothing*, otherwise there is fascination" (VI, p. 125). To dislocate sacrifice from the dialectic is to bust any affinity between *nonsavoir* and death, that is, envious superego from ego ideal. Sacrifice and finding result in the revelation of an identical material that brings us from the alienating outside to the inside, that is, materials with which there are (the illusions of) unmediated relations. But it is the presence or absence of some antecedent figurality--Lacan's "i" barring access to *a*--that is opened explosively that changes all. In sacrifice, harsh law that manacles pleasure and disgrace, the partial object has the status of a *compensation*--access to strangeness is moralized. The subject is intimidated as an inevitable consequence of its conquering movements and in this process the object itself is not innocent--it is the bribe or the "pleasure premium" offered to compensate for the suffocating envious superego's installation costs. Because the sovereign as hoarding, exclusivizing ego ideal is the breast *and* object as indissociably kneaded together, access to the object *through* it results in an indentured self-love. Demoralizing is replaced with amoralizing through the recognition of the splitting of Malebranche effects, the employment of one thing that was inaccessible to categories against the other, by uncoupling the anxiety of punishment and the pleasure that the Hegelian master seemed to describe as necessary blur.

"Imagine indifference itself as a power--how could you live according to this indifference?"⁽⁴⁵⁾ One could only *live* in indifference--the question is Nietzsche's--if it could somehow be indefinitely sustained, as was not the case in the target-rich world of Hegel/Kojève. How can one indifference be immediately matched, but not bested by another? How can it be transindividual without being entropically so, that is, *sequentially* so? A possibility--"fly happiness," the torpid subversion achieved by minimizing the extent to which the desire of another might be addressed. The drama of the transferal of indifference is a moralized indifference, an indifference that has been put to work, Bataille will come to conclude, against his teacher. Master of masters would be the engineer of its undoing, the fly on Kojève's nose. A zero-sum economy of indifference would be succeeded by one of infinite good. In the tiny *hauteur* of an Ungreat Refusal, Bataille is not awed into anonymity but through a sly anonymity gives the dialectic the slip, in the famous letter of the fly to his Ben Turpin, December 6, 1937. The complaint is about the presence of sequence in Kojève's thought, the absence of a possibility for the deliverance from the rigidities of a culture of ritualized revenge.

I admit as a likely possibility that as of now history has, excepting for its final episode, come to an end.

However, my own experience, lived with much anxiety, has led me to think that I have

nothing left "to do." (I was reluctant to accept this, and, as you have seen, have only resigned myself to this after having forced myself to do so.)

If action (the act of "doing") is--as Hegel says--negativity, there then emerges the question of knowing if that negativity which "has nothing any longer to do" disappears or continues in the form of "*useless negativity*." Personally, I can only see things in a certain way, being myself exactly this "*useless negativity*" (I would not be able to define myself in any more precise way). I accept that Hegel may have been aware of this possibility, even if he does not locate it at the conclusion of the process he describes. I imagine that my life--or its abortion, or better yet, the open wound that is my life--itself alone constitutes a refutation of the closed system of Hegel.

The question you put regarding me amounts to asking if I am or am not insignificant. Haunted by the possibility of a negative response, I have often posed this same question to myself. Furthermore, as the image I have of myself varies, and as it happens that I forget that I might indeed be mediocre, I have compared my life to those of the most remarkable of men. I have said that at the summit of life there can only be that which is negligible: no one, finally would be able to *recognize* a summit that would be night.

At the moment that it enters into the game of existence as a catalyst of great vital reactions, negativity is not "recognizable as such," neither in works of art nor in the affectivity of religion. On the contrary, it becomes part of a process of assimilation. There is, therefore, a fundamental difference between the objectification of negativity, as it has been experienced in the past, and that which remains possible *at the end*. (46)

And luck was on Bataille's side, for this is what he happened to be, the fly, the toothache. He loved himself as insignificance--insignificance as first love--and thus the ego ideal needn't be lunged at, the envious superego borne. This was a theme throughout his writings. For example, from many years later: "What is within me that is sovereign is the ruin. And my visible absence of superiority--my state of ruin--is the sign of an insubordination that is equal in scale to the starry sky" (XI, p. 131). One might not finally be able to extinguish the dialectic, but it could be set to idle. There was another path to the "suspension of desire" (Hegel), but you had to be lazy to get there.

The degraded subject will need a degraded object--a nothing was needed that would make everything possible. Judith Butler wonders: "What constitutes the latest stage of post-Hegelianism as a stage definitively beyond the dialectic? Are there positions still haunted by the dialectic, even as they claim to be in utter opposition to it? What is the nature of this 'opposition,' and is it perchance a form that Hegel himself has prefigured?" (47) Bataille would rival the gods not by stealing fire, but by finding what it was that fire had left behind, that through which one cannot be endangered and what cannot be lost. Hegel's skull is what Barthes called "the obtuse dimension of the signifier":

The skull bone is not an organ of activity, nor even a "speaking" movement. We neither commit theft, murder, etc. with the skull bone nor does it in the least betray such deeds by a change of countenance, so that the skull-bone would become a speaking gesture. Nor has this *immediate* being the value even of a *sign*. Look and gesture, tone of voice, even a pillar or post erected on a desert island, directly proclaim that they mean something else than what they *simply are* at first sight. They at once profess to be signs, since they have in them a peculiarity which points to something else, by the fact that it does not properly belong to them. A variety of ideas may well occur to us in connection with a skull, like those of Hamlet over Yorick's skull; but the skull-bone just by itself is such an indifferent, natural thing that nothing else is to be directly seen in it, or fancied about it, than simply the bone itself. It does indeed remind us of the brain and its specific nature, and of skulls of different formation, but not of a conscious movement, since there is impressed on it neither a look nor a gesture nor anything that proclaims itself to have come from a conscious action; for it is an actuality whose role it is to exhibit another sort of aspect of the individuality, one that would no longer be a self-reflected, but a purely *immediate* being. (48)

If there was only the experience of the dialectic, and if it and sacrifice had to be decoupled, the trauma from the sequence subtracted, required would be a version of the dialectic that was no longer recognizable as such, the "lazy infinity" that

Hegel had "prefigured."

An unmediated relation is the consequence of the encounter, Hegel adds: "The *pure* category as being is present for consciousness in the form of *being* or *immediacy*, is the object as still unmediated, as merely given, and consciousness is equally unmediated in its relation to it." (49) An immediate return of attention and desire to the self is the result. When consciousness has the pure category as its object: "Consciousness has cast away all opposition and every condition affecting its action; its starts afresh from *itself*, and is occupied not with an *other*, but with *itself*." (50) Not occupied with another, but, crucially, not having been occupied with another during this scandalous shortcut, desire returns, innocent, untempted. So thoroughly "occupied not with another" that the dead weight of envious superego is not produced.

For Hegel, singleness is a philosophical nothing that demands nothing for thought; something heterogeneous acquires meaning only when it is transferred into the homogeneous environment of concepts and generalized contexts. Whereas in Klein's beautiful form what is lost in violence is the skin, with Hegel's skull there is no flesh to lose. There is not the experience of something *becoming* forsaken. The hand that reaches toward this object would be like a thought without a need, that wished for nothing, that would be like nothing. But there would still be the reaching that weakens any impression of sufficiency. One remains active, but for nothing; one needs but to be without need.

Relationless in idiotic (*i.e.*, invulnerable) self-pleasure, the skull produces something akin to esthetic contemplation, but certainly not in Hegel's sense. In the *Aesthetics* the profiles of Greek statues are held beautiful because the flatness of their features communicated an absence of needy tension towards an external (shaming) thing that there might be some dependency upon. Neither statue nor skull is a reaching physiognomy, but one dips beneath the need that the other is quite indifferent to; one is a subject become object, the other a dumb object. But as the impression of absence of reference is in the skull yoked to the imagery of what is *beneath* rather than beyond effort and desire, it is experienced in a mode of failure, an inadequacy that releases from an attachment at the very instant it is produced, and hence attention is ceaselessly remobilized in an ostinato-like pattern, freed to then form the new bonds that are fated to be freshly disillusioned in their inevitable turn. Here one goes out to an object only to reveal by the choice of the inconsequential that it was only the illusion of need that brought about this movement outside the self. Despite momentary appearance, we say to ourselves, as we are positioned before these forms, trivially rapt for a moment but in the instant released from an unimpressively coercive spell, they do not finally have the strength to not desire, as much as they seek to convince that this is not the case. Objects of this ilk make possible an immediate return of desire to the self rather than the identification with a larger whole that is alone master of these objects. The uselessness of "the elective object" causes it to not exist at the intersection of other worldly desires, and thus through its embrace the phantasmagoric anteriority of one's desire is established, in the absence of a threat of the cataclysmic birth of the ego ideal at the expense of the ruin of another. But assertion of priority is nevertheless made *through failure*--there is no object, but this is expressed through the dependency upon an object. This was Hegel's premature discovery of "low materialism," of "useless negativity." The skull is not the *caput mortuum* of Melanie Klein, the inside already having been given up.

While for Hegel the non-identical is in view only as a restraint upon the powers of the subject, for Bataille it will prove the emancipation of a certain aesthetic subject--crowd-parting charisma inhibitor--that he will come to equate with the redeeming *American* potential he acquires the duty to urgently advance as the discovery of a political center and the panacea of a redeemed *homo oeconomicus*. The crack in the dialectic--the self-pleasure of insignificance that collapses the moments of the dialectic--would be large enough to contain a reinvented America, reformed away from the habits of Aztec happiness whose only apparent rudeness obscured what was finally a regimented prissiness, so very different from the animal self-presence that is the nothingness of the dialectic's end Kojève thought he had found in his very different America.

Bataille had been at work (!) on the issue of negativity's tactical retreat long before facing the challenge posed by Kojève. To embarrass him he needed only to resurrect the private science mentioned above. Writing to his cousin in 1922: "It is at present absolutely certain that I am now in Madrid, but am in neither of the states of mind that you might imagine me to be in--enthusiasm or despair. Instead, I live a condition in which despair and enthusiasm have become blurred." (51) The new state functionary, having just completed his studies at the Ecole des Chartes, about to assume a position at the Bibliothèque Nationale, wrote to his cousin of his new, modest science of pleasure:

My scientific mission is off to a good start because, as if by a miracle, I have discovered a new science, one that is cause for rejoicing and congratulations. Most unfortunate folk fantasize in a manner that is entirely lacking in scientific rigor, and this is general calamity. There may be methods to enhance the pleasures in smoking tobacco or opium, in tasting

exotic coffees, but there are none for profoundly savoring a fantasy. There is no method for imagining burning kisses and perfumed sunsets while studying faces that are no more expressive than a German beer mug or a cheap tie. That is why I have patiently invented a method that will enable me to fantasize in the most humble of circumstances.(52)

Desire could be deceived into realization. Unassimilability would be founded upon falling outside of the interpersonal agon. Benjamin: "The existence of Mickey Mouse is such a dream for contemporary man. His life is full of miracles--miracles that not only surpass the wonders of technology, but make fun of them. For the most extraordinary thing about them is that they all appear, quite without any machinery, to have been improvised out of the body of Mickey Mouse, out of his supporters and persecutors, and out of the most ordinary pieces of furniture, as well as from trees, clouds, and the sea."(53) If he did not go timid, if his resource were other than his own abject self, he would be certain to be usurped by the dialectic for its own use.

Deleuze remarked that the speed of a philosophy is decisive. There was a dialectic within the dialectic, a fluctuation in the intensity of its fluctuations. Derrida gravely misrepresents when he writes: "[S]overeignty is totally other. Bataille pulls it out of dialectics."(54) And it is from Kojève's error in not seeing that the dialectic could be differently timed (*i.e.*, that there are differing degrees of separation distancing correction from excess), the error in not noticing that the sovereign can be experienced in differing intensities, that no positive politics can follow. "Democracy," says Bataille, "is founded upon a neutralization of forces that become relatively weak and free; it excludes all explosive condensation" (I, p. 469). As Kojève came himself to grasp in his famous footnote, there was a split within the field of heterogeneous phenomena--between the banal and the extraordinary, the movement from one to the other being the essential progress, that of the deliverance from revenge. There are two sovereigns, one proving sustainable, the other not. These two figures with their two temporalities, oppositely provisional, one, the envious superego-mitigating temporality of just anything at all, immanently, the other externally scheduled for death, one, immanently distressed, figure of autogenous disgrace, that escapes the *consequences* of a negation (while remaining a negation), the other that does not. To correct Kojève is to notice the camouflage, the zone of an internal alteration, the separability of the economic from the historical. The collapse in indolence results in the compression that eliminates the phase information involved in the issue of a *successor*. Low heterogeneity, to use the language of Bakhtin, is microdialogic--"an intra-atomic counterpoint of voices and their combination only with the bounds of a single, dissociated consciousness."(55)

"The goal of poetry is the same as that sought in sacrifice, that of making as vivid as possible the experience of the content of the present instant" (XI, p. 102). The illusion of desirelessness is achieved through both procedures, but in one case there is a modernly unacceptable price to pay. The irony of transgression marks the one that is admonitorily ephemeral: "The immense happiness of God, his measureless *jouissance*, was proposed to our misery in the same manner as formerly the happiness of the sovereign was proposed to the misery of his subjects. The sovereign of Sade, the integral man, whose imaginary figure Sade substituted for the poverty of the life of the prisoner that he actually led, does not himself escape the negation he performed" (X, p. 701). Something is given body only for the sake of its instructive removal. And the object accessed along this hard path, through this cruel temporality, reflects the effort to reach it. Thus: "The infinite inferiority of God when compared to man is due to man's potential to limit himself to the stupid and shift." (V, p. 485). It is the embracing of human limits that makes possible the saving release: "Sovereign thought involves the thoroughgoing separation of the world of things from that of subjectivity" (VIII, p. 454). This is to say that the sovereign can only be *uninterruptedly* experienced as a relation rather than as a body, a body that would always be subject to a brutally instructive undoing.

Needed and supplied by Bataille through proudly assumed mediocrity was the blurring of the stations of the dialectic's visibly fraught version of the imperative to identify *then* don't identify over several persons and moments into its collapse--causing it to appear in a single individual in no perceivable elapsed time. As the pre-1959 Kojève lacked this simultaneity, this double identification the moments of which are just too quick to be chastizingly instructed by, he was without means to cause the economic to break from history, to cause the undoing of what Keynes called "the fallacy of saving." If there were to be that freedom of insignificance that produced the palliative rubato within the dialectic, then there would need to be that separation of the Malebranchean doubles, that is, the emergence of a found object logic.

It is the aleatory that will make possible the "separation of the world of things." "My doctrine of chance is that part of what I have said that is external to the logic of Hegel. The rest can be absorbed into it" (X, p. 659). For Bataille, "What is sovereign can only arrive through the arbitrary, through chance" (VIII, p. 273). "Sovereign art involves *the access to a sovereign subjectivity that is not dependent upon rank*" (VIII, p. 450). The unembedding of the object through

indifference, rather than passive hoarding as sign of indifference, involves a social consequence, a social precondition. Sacrifice versus the *trouvaille*--the product displaces the process in one case, the reverse is true in the other.

It is in his allergy to the sequence that Bataille proves most Nietzschean. From *Human all too Human*:

We must display our unhappiness and from time to time be heard to sigh, be seem to be impatient: for if we let others see how happy and secure in ourselves we are in spite of suffering and deprivation, how malicious and envious we would make them! We have to take care not to corrupt our fellow men; moreover, they would in the instance referred to impose upon us a heavy impost, and our *public suffering* is in any event also our *private advantage*.[\(56\)](#)

And from the same text: "*To one who is praised*--So long as you are praised think only that you are not yet on your own path but on that of another."[\(57\)](#) The danger:

The behavior of those who admire Sade resembles that of primitive subjects in relation to their king, whom they at once adore and loathe, and whom they cover with honors and narrowly confine. In the most favorable of cases, the author of *Justine* is in fact treated as any given foreign body; in other words, he is only an object of transports of exaltation to the extent that these transports facilitate his evacuation (his peremptory expulsion). (II, p. 55)

A vitalistic philosophy had to be a *barely* visible arrogance. On the cheerful asceticism of the philosopher:

A voluntary obscurity . . . a modest job, an everyday job, something that conceals rather than exposes one; an occasional association with harmless, cheerful beasts and birds whose sight is refreshing; mountains for company, but not dead ones, mountains with *eyes* (that is with lakes); perhaps even a room in a full, utterly commonplace hotel, where one is certain to go unrecognized and can talk to anyone with impunity. . . .[\(58\)](#)

What he seeks is to live nameless and lightly mocked at, too humble to awaken envy or hostility, with a head free of fever, equipped with a handful of knowledge . . . as it were a poor-doctor of the spirit aiding those whose head is confused by opinions without their being really aware who has aided them! Not desiring to maintain his own opinion or celebrate a victory over them, but to address them in such a way that, after the slightest of imperceptible hints or contradictions, they themselves arrive at the truth and go away proud of the fact! To be like a little inn which rejects no one who is in need but which is afterwards forgotten or ridiculed! To possess no advantage, neither better food nor purer air nor a more joyful spirit--but to give away, to give back, to communicate, to grow poorer! To be able to be humble, so as to be accessible to many and humiliating to none! To have much injustice done him, and to have crept through the worm-holes of errors of every kind, so as to be able to reach many hidden souls on their secret paths! For ever in a kind of love and for ever in a kind of selfishness and self-enjoyment. To be in possession of a dominion and at the same time concealed and renouncing! To lie continually in the sunshine and gentleness of grace, and yet to know that the paths that rise up to the sublime are close by! That would be a reason for a long life![\(59\)](#)

The project of French Nietzscheanism will be develop the requirement of the poor objectality here already sensed to yoke a requirement of a redemptive modesty to the work of freedom, that is, add speed to Hegel. Kojève did not protect the master from himself and neither did Nietzsche, fully, so Bataille noticed, because they had no sufficiently developed object relations theory. Nietzsche's "Caesar with the soul of Christ" could only be found in the streets. In a remark that summarizes the entire development of Bataille: "Sovereign, no, collector of cigarette butts" [Souverain, non, ramasseur de mégots] (V, p. 556). Sovereign must be replaced by *ramasseur*, the true sovereign because unrecognizable as such, invulnerable as such. Bataille's furtively finding undandy is not the opposite, but rather the hyperdialectical undoing of his impeccable double. Happy with almost nothing, this unselective receiver from an anonymous and unknowing hand unaware of its own unintended generosity brings to an end the struggle Baudelaire's *soleil couchant* had sought to fan from an all but extinguished spark. The *ramasseur* would be that figure delivered from revenge, his gutter, "the space towards which he who crosses over is moving," "the bridge to the highest hope."[\(60\)](#)

The peaks were savingly beyond reach. The dialectic must "be heard to sigh," asceticized in Nietzsche's sense, tailored down to the requirements of the French pacifism of post-World War I France that so clearly suffused the positions of Bataille. There was the cunning of this laziness, a slacker version of negativity that could overwhelm by underwhelming the working model, thereby revealing "Identity's dependence upon the nonidentical."[\(61\)](#) Through laziness--a negativity that is minimally contrastive, "useless negativity," he would reach escape velocity, robbing the dialectic, through a different schedule and circumstance of return, of the perception of the plurality of its moments. The timing is everything: "The sovereign operation *that owes authority to itself alone, simultaneously expiates this authority*. If it were not expiated, it would be of some use--it would seek an empire, seek to endure. But authenticity refuses sovereignty these things. Sovereignty is impotence, absence of duration, hateful or delighted destruction of itself" (V, p. 223). Bataille *contra* Kojève--there is another, parodic dialectic, its moments so intensely compacted that it appears at a standstill (Benjamin). One could limit its sway through the immanentization of its effects, the collapse of outside and inside, through the privatization of the configuration in a system of internal regulation that facilitates a mutual recognition and security: Duthuit, in a letter to Breton, 18 November 1943: "In contrast to our enemies, Bataille felt that each should practice upon himself and not upon others these experiments that were supposed to lead simultaneously to joy and death."[\(62\)](#) The insignificance that would allow for something other than Hegel/Kojève's scene required an object, and here, we have seen, the master came to agree with the student.

The issue is shame, and its solution in its deployment against itself. In his stooping to a derelict objectality Bataille reaches the conclusion of the neoclassical tradition as Gans has described it,[\(63\)](#) the historical destiny of which was to escape from the culture of shame through the association of beauty with the entirety of experience. "*What is for you the most human thing?*" Bataille asked himself. "To spare someone shame," he answered. "What is the meaning of a freedom that is fully achieved? To no longer be ashamed before oneself" (V, p. 265).

Shame, Sartre said in a Kojève-inflected passage, is all about an outside:

Shame is nothing. . . but the experience of having the feeling that my being lies outside of me, engaged in another being and thus defenseless, lit up by another being and thus without defense, lit up by the absolute light that emanates from a pure subject [. . .] Shame is the sense of an *original fall*, not due to the fact that I may have committed this or that sin, but simply due to the fact that I have fallen into the world, in the middle of things, and that I require the mediation of the other in order to be who I am.[\(64\)](#)

And it thus has its basis and solution in an objectality. Hence the logic of Freud, writing that "At the very beginning, it seems, the external world, objects, and what is hated are identical." And: "As an expression of the unpleasure evoked by objects, [hate] always remains in an intimate relation with the self-preservation instincts."[\(65\)](#) The relation of hate to objects is older than that of love. "Thus at the very beginning, the external world, objects and that which was hated were one and the same thing."[\(66\)](#) From Bataille's "La Souveraineté":

A thing is alienated, it exists always in relation to some other thing, but if it is seen to be in relation with all possible things, with the entirety of experience, then it is no longer determined, alienated. It is no more one thing than would be this, the thing that I imagine in front of me, that I cannot name, and that being neither table nor brook, could according to an entirely arbitrary will, be either a brook or a table, or whatever. (VIII, p. 341).

Shame would thus be about the availability of the experience of not telling the difference. There are, via an outside, two avoidances of the outside--the not being able to tell the difference that is universally shared, versus the tragedy of the contrastively experienced person who cannot tell the difference. The dialectic is about the tragedy of the one--before whom one is, for a moment, supplicant--who cannot tell the difference; it is the intimidating *telling* of the difference of the one who cannot tell the difference. Unintimidating banal strangeness is about the atomized universalization of not telling the difference, the not telling the difference that will not be told. The move from the subject to the *just anything*--narcissism's rescue--is the transfer from time to space--that space that is the neutral corner into which an unmolestable sufficiency can repair, where the sovereign can be free of itself. From one Malebranche possibility to the other:

Above all, it is a matter of not submitting oneself, and with oneself one's reason, to anything that can give borrowed authority to the being that I am, or to the reason with which this

being is equipped. This being and its reason can only be submitted, in fact, to something *lower*, to something that cannot, under any circumstances, serve to mimic any authority whatsoever. (I, p. 225)

From 1929: "The wretched apes and hooped gorillas of the Gauls, unspeakably behaved, surpassingly ugly creatures, staggering prodigies that constitute a definitive, comical and horrifying response of the human night to the platitudes and arrogance of idealism" (I, p. 161). The gorilla--crowd pleaser, "an extreme performer," (67) no eventless object--is the breast *and* the object *a* in provocative keeping, in indivisible amalgam--our lightning bolt. It is because it does not provoke the desired lazy, undermotivated response, because it *confronts* the idealist, that it is to be avoided. The end of this form is the end of sequence, in possession as the gorilla is of chthonic traits. The prodigious enhancement that one can locate in this figure--in what Bataille called "Icarism" in his critique of the leader of the Surrealists--is accompanied by a loss that is preserved through insignificance. (68) Bataille's complaint of Breton on the grounds that he admiringly focused upon perfection packed forms, majestic forms that encouraged angry response, that is, the kindling of sacrifice, is in effect a critique of sacrifice as servile through an effect of synecdoche. "We must . . . distinguish between two radically opposed categories of seduction. The inability to distinguish between them has resulted in the most absurd misunderstandings . . ." (I, p. 203). This is Bataille's version of the Malebranche opposition. Adorno: "The indissoluble, in the face of which [philosophy] capitulated, and which Idealism slid away from, is itself a fetish in its 'thus-and-only-thusness'--that of the irrevocability of what is. The fetish dissolves in the fact of the insight that it is not just the way it is and not otherwise, but that it has become under certain conditions. This process of becoming disappears and dwells in the subject-matter." (69) The gorilla is a trap: "The idol of pure original experience is no less of a hoax than that which has been culturally processed." (70)

An indifference that wants to escape paying for indifference is a scavenger, and a lazy one. There would be rescue from the jostling of the narrative, at least if one were willing to go through its trash. A do-nothing subject would need its object similarly reclined, an object of an entirely exposed interiority, emerging from no jealous habitation--at once surface and subcutaneous. With this inside object that was outside, announced would be an indifference to which others would not be compelled to subject themselves. Desequenced, indifference would be shared. The imbalance described by Hegel was something Bataille always opposed. From his praise for Céline's first novel: "We can no longer play the insignificant game of Zola, that of borrowing one's own grandeur from the misfortunes of others, while remaining oneself at a safe distance from their misery" (I, p. 322). To be avoided was this hieratic separation: "The gravitation about the sovereign city impoverishes the existence of those cities that surround" (V, p. 103). Struggled towards instead would be the miracle of the Beckett protagonist: "In the face of an infirm, imperfect indifference, how not to be, finally, indifferent?" (XII, p. 93).

Why was Kojève everything and why also was he nothing? Sartre wanted to agree with him on everything, but something got in the way--something that was nothing. What freedom expert Sartre considered to be a frustration to the subject in Hegel had the potential to be the saving sore tooth. Hegel's occupational deformation caused him to mislocate freedom in a capacity to transform without remainder, that is, in the working negativity Bataille judged to be a trap. Laziness can always use an excuse--say, an object you can do nothing with. But Sartre--famously fearful of being governed by the inert--didn't recognize freedom in the toothache, couldn't always find the subject's freedom in what work left over, described the irritant that will be the basis of Bataille's entire departure. There was something that remained unmetabolized, that would always block an ideal efficiency:

Kojève says: to work is to deny the tree in order to make it into a table, while preserving it (the wood) in the table. I would like to agree. But in this way one conserves the tree as in-itself and as unsurpassed exteriority, inertia, passivity, identity. There is therefore a resistance to the dialectic at the very heart of the dialectic. Description of the manufactured object. If we are to have a *true* dialectic, the *thing* transformed into a utensil by *work* has to lose its thingness in the instrument it becomes. (71)

Sartre's disappointment was Bataille's--and later, Derrida's--consolation. The possibility of staking identity upon a passivity here escaped him. There would be sadness in achieving what he regretted not achieving. Bataille noted the fall into sociability and a subdued objectality involved: "In general, the world of things is experienced as degrading. It involves the alienation of the person who has created it. A fundamental principle: to subordinate is not only to modify the subordinated element but to be oneself modified. The tool changes at the same time the nature of the man: it subjects nature to the man who makes and uses it, but it links at the same time man to tamed nature" (VII, p. 297). The found object is the unmaking of the tool that is shameful, as "the fashioned tool is the embryonic form of that which is not the self."

And "The tool introduces exteriority into the world . . ." (VII, p. 297). As "All communication between men is rich with refuse [*déchets*]," (VI, p. 279), and as it is the *déchet* that opens the subject (as we noted in Lacan), it stands to reason that Bataille would see things in the following way: "The cogito of Sartre is the impenetrable, timeless atom, the irreducible basis. For me there exist only relations, a tangle of relations existing in time. The atom opens into a current in the form of a language, words exchanged, books written and read" (VI, p. 408). Bataille's pre-humiliation takes the form of an open-Klein position: "The wound of incompleteness opens me up. Through what could be called incompleteness or animal nakedness or the wound, the different separate beings *communicate*, acquiring life by losing it in *communication* with each other. The fate of finite beings leaves them at the edge of themselves" (V, p. 249). The membrane that demarks the subject is open weave: "And this edge is [always already] torn" (V, p. 362).

Before the left-over the pleasure in the subject's inefficiency is or is not attached to resentful response, this according to whether the object's abandonment is associated with a pressed antecedent figurality. The remainder is the yield of destruction, and the trace of it in the *déchet* is the sign of a subject that has lost its solidity. "In a paradoxical fashion the subject negates itself to the extent to which it is involved in the mockery of appropriation and spends without hope of profit" (XI, p. 302). The incapacitated subject can have two meanings. Whether it has the one or the other is determined by the absence or presence of a relation of an exemplary figure to the experience of destruction, whether or not there is an edge that is always already torn. For there to be the undoing laziness, loyalty would be required to what Hegel had noticed but for which he had no enthusiasm. The epigraph to *The Theory of Religion* is from Kojève: "Born of desire, action tries to satisfy it and can do this only through a negation, the destruction or at least the transformation of the desired object" (VII, p. 283). Bataille will come to see the agency of transformation as decisive. This is the case as: "This is the fundamental principle: to subordinate is not simply to modify the subordinated element, but it means to be modified oneself as well" (VII, p. 305). Before the untransformable, one is unemployed. But how does one come to be unemployed? Is the untransformed, untransformable material made available through a subordination or through chance distribution, through an edifying destruction or its absence?

Alertly pouncing upon a most unusual sentence in Bataille, Blanchot shows where subsequent sympathies lie: "Sacrifice does not tell men to kill, but rather to abandon and to give." (72) In the choice of the unrepresentative remark there is quailing before the oppressive posterity of the identification in death. More characteristic is this in which the inheritance is clear, where it is clear that there is such a thing as harm's way: "[The sacred] is the ultimate in murderous power, and the sacrifice that produces this effect most frequently involves a murder" (XI, p. 243). And from 1957: "In its major form . . . sacrifice is the ritual putting to death of a man or an animal" (XII, p. 468). To say that the arrival of the object occurs through anonymous release is to relieve it of a *spoils status*, detaching it from the tutelage of the muscular absolutism of the sequence. This inertia of the object that follows use is a strength the subject will not be allowed to use against itself. What remains is what is not the tool--all hangs upon where it is located--inside or outside a figure, beneath or beyond the tool.

But was the absence of the tool just something to be suffered? Sartre: "There is emotion when the world of tools suddenly disappears." (73) Bataille saw two emotions, one the enemy of the other--fantasy and pleasure. It is the schedule of the object that counts, the conditions of the availability of the *déchet* with or without the memory of catastrophic process attached.

First of all one must oppose to one's normal state a calm that approaches sleep. It is necessary to shun any image, to become a self-absorption so complete that you remain impenetrable to any image. Nevertheless this self-absorption can only be made possible with the aid of an image--a precise image of peace, of silence, and night. (V, p. 515)

Image versus image equals the figure versus "the elective object." Bataille will complete the scattering of desire nervously begun by Kant, who, critical of Aristotle's protagonist orientation, refound beauty in what is dispersed throughout the natural world.

A requirement of passivity follows. Bataille, like Adorno, notices the primacy of the object in subjective experience. Consciousness, writes Adorno, in harmony with Bataille, is modeled after objectivity: "It is not true that the object is a subject, as idealism has been drilling into us for thousands of years, but it is true that the subject is an object." (74) "Whether or not there is autonomy depends upon its adversary and antithesis, on the object which either grants or denies autonomy to the subject. Detached from the object, autonomy is fictitious." (75) Both dialectic and sacrifice are about seeking the object of unmediated relations through a detour. And needed will be "an object that is not an object" (V, p. 29),

but all would depend upon the clocking of its undoing and the agency involved in the object's not being this object. There is a busy negativity that causes the loss of the distinctness of the subject: "Negativity is action, that action that consists in the taking possession of things" (V, p. 384). In the experience of the process involved in the loss of the object, at stake is the subject's autonomy that can never prove detached. "When the subject proclaims itself a . . . master of all things . . . it reveals the extent to which in consuming the object it is beholden to the object,"(76) Adorno says. The master cannot long be master: "The practice makes it a part of what it thinks it is ruling; it succumbs like the Hegelian master."(77) In response there must be shrinking of wonder through the velleitalization of objectality, the finding of an object that sets the sociological tension a notch too low, minimizing the play of the dialectic's rude law of attraction. If there is to be an uncoupling of dialectic and sacrifice, the objects of sacrifice and the found object are to be unbonded. Denis Hollier has noticed that Bataille quickly lost interest in the grotesque natural forms that absorbed him in the *Documents* period (1929-31)--extravagant vegetation, outrageously colorful posteriors of apes... It was the thoroughly anticultural character of these extravagant objects that caused them to constitute a capitulation that, we understand through Mead, caused them to be finally coercively cultural. It is the only *halfway* hopeful consciousness that proves the winner. The insult of the gorilla left the compact group *more* than unscathed. Raw insistence upon the wholly alien--powerless fetish--will constitute an appropriation of the alien, and at the same time a hypersocialization. In order to keep the movement outside the self from taking a shaming (re)turn, a condition of indifference must not be realized in violent passage through a *figure* of indifference, but via the mediation of an open-sourced *déchet*.

For a subject to be not given over to resentment's scheduling and its tutelage of cruelty, an object must be unintegrated out of *indifference*: "Low matter is exterior, foreign to the aspirations of human ideals, and does not allow itself to be reduced to the great ontological machines attached to these aspirations" (I, p. 225). And: "This being and its logic can only submit to that which is *lower*, to that which can have no relation with any authority whatsoever" (I, p. 225). "My indifference is my Empire" (V, p. 538), one that is only unassailable if there is an underwhelming of the dialectic, if it is the case that "What most appeals to me is the impression of *insignificance*" (XII, p. 489). Indifference is unalterably first and last love, but what of the moment in between? There is always self-love at the onset and at the end, but the question is how to keep it from being mobilized against itself, how to block a self-hatred from functioning as mediation of self-love and vice versa.

This is done through the enfeebling of a solicitation. You behave as the object behaves. "The low element presents itself as above all passive" (II, p. 167). Passive, it finds a corrective for one Malebranche effect in another; the result is *nonsavoir*, in Freud's terms "the naïve,"(78) an invalidism of the ego ideal that resists the ethical asperities of the uncamouflaged ego ideal. Bataille will fill that space with his own and our indifference through his choice of an object of unsequencing indifference. Looking back at the relations between the members of the Collège de Sociologie, Pierre Klossowski notes the importance of an unaggressive relation, an attachment that did not involve a provocative digestion and thus not a forced release from a threatened figure: "We would never have remained as attached to one another, and gotten through our disagreements, if there had not been the focus upon *a shared space* within which thought could focus upon the *strangest* of objects that would come to our attention, not for the sake of *understanding* them, but in order to *bond* ourselves to them"(79)

The sore tooth had another name. "In developing his philosophy of work . . . Hegel suppressed the element of chance," Bataille wrote (V, p. 341). "For God I have substituted chance" (VI, p. 135). Packed with perfection, God, with combustive allure, is hoarder of indifference, through the negation of chance: "To will to be everything--or God--is to suppress . . . chance (VI, p. 140). And as exclusivizer of indifference he incites to the contrastive response that is sacrifice: "The idea of God is the casing of an exploding bomb--divine impotence and misery are to be contrasted with the human experience of chance" (VI, p. 135). As "the free play of indifference" (X, p. 245), chance, what is released by and into indifference, releases indifference into an economy of infinite good. In chance there was no subject before the object. Chance, "a state of grace, a gift of heaven" (V, p. 320), freely discharges sovereignty into the world, revealing it to be relation rather than substance. Not the residue of figurality, it is the open secret, the availability of unmediated relations not dependent upon violent transfer. The chance arrival is the nimbus-free detail--nothing sucked from its hoarding frame. By choosing the unhosted rather than the hosted partial object, Bataille peels away from the envious superego unmediated relations that are fused in sacrifice. No passing through the figure on the way to the junk that is now low-lying fruit, no hurting into and away from the ego ideal. The two negativities are to be seen in terms of two returns--via killing and unkillng access. When the experience of the object is randomized, there is no looking for the ego ideal. "What gives Proust's lesson a privileged character is no doubt the rigor with which he reduces the object of his *search* to an involuntary find" (XI, p. 391).

It is the indifference of the artist that makes possible the chance arrival. "Let the author be indifferent to that which he

writes. . . ." (XII, p. 94). Chance brings to an end the inevitability of the exclusive means of access here described: "Self-intimacy can only be experienced through a *thing*: this thing that is finally the opposite of a thing, the opposite of a product, of a piece of merchandise: something that has been consumed, a sacrifice" (VII, p. 126). Thus the centrality of chance for Bataille, what he felt absent in Hegel, that thing that amounted for him to a politicized objects-relations theory. The figure of chance, the ventilated rather than the irremediable breast, breast without matrix, without supporting material--that which is always releasing its objects, not hoarding and then releasing, rich and poor simultaneously, making possible the unmediated relation that is not experienced contrastively. Chance is the negation of a consequent objectality, against the experience of an antecedent resented figure. "Sovereignty . . . is the object that is forever unavailable, the object that no one has seized, that no one will ever seize for this definitive reason: we can not possess it in the form of an object and thus we are reduced to eternally seeking it" (IX, p. 305).

An example from painting:

The paintings of Delacroix and Courbet are often marked by an eloquence that seeks to convince us about a meaning that the painter has assigned to the objects that are represented. Whatever rebellion there is here is limited to the proposal of a new convention. It is only beginning with Manet that the painter comes to substitute for a grid of convention the revelation of an unanticipated element that is meaningless, or the revelation of the incongruity of things as they are (this incongruity that it was the duty of the traditional painter to mask: "He has enormous feet," said an irritated Gleyre to Monet, "and that is just the way you have painted them." (XII, pp. 373-74)

To paint the big feet such as they were would cause them to appear to be unhoarded by the artist, or, because of incongruity, even by the attached subject. Chance subtracts the burning sense of injury and the killing process that follows. The objects no longer have the status of the details of a desecration, and the subject no longer fatefully receives its light from some hypersubstantial other. When the object arrives by invisible agency there is no wonder broker to pass through, and thus indifference is blocked from being bonded with culpability.

The sovereign is not to be strained towards: "The essential point is that it cannot be consciously attained, sought, for to seek it results in its unavailability" (XII, p. 345). "While we seek something, whatever it might be, we do not exist in the sovereign state, but rather subordinate the present to that future moment that will follow it" (VIII, p. 207). Chance is linked to the experience of the absence of effort as unlocatable through ubiquity. If the goal of the classical struggle for recognition is to appear before the other as *sans effort*, Bataille adjusts to seek to achieve effortlessness without process and contrast. *Satori* is found in a passive relation with a "concrete nonsense" (VI, p. 160), not through a figure: "*Satori* is only achieved in the Zen experience through the details of a comical etiquette. It is the pure immanence of a return to the self. In place of transcendence, an ecstasy--the emptiest, maddest abyss--that reveals the fusion of the self with the entirety of the real, of the absurd object with the absurd subject. . ." (VI, p. 159). "*Satori* can only be realized without effort: it is the nothing that provokes it, that arrives unexpectedly from the outside" (VI, p. 159).

"'Why,' asked Zarathoustra, 'was it necessary for the lion to become a child?'" (VI, p. 169). Because chance is "his majesty the baby": "The lion is *the will to power*, but is not the child *the will to chance*?" (VI, p. 169). "Only an absolute solitude and disorientation make possible the sovereign. It is like the experience of the full brightness of the sun, and as such it cannot be endured. Imagine this: an infant dependent upon no one, gifted with infinite intelligence and strength employed to satisfy all of his most capricious desires, without ever seeing in the other anything more than a baby's rattle" (X, p. 704). A sustainable sovereignty, that is, not subject to reversal, this figure who cannot tell the difference will escape correction.

The thing-in-itself, goes the logic of Hegel, is to be discovered in its truth through the loss of immediacy, and what appears to "external reflection" as an obstacle is in reality a positive condition of our access to truth. The truth of a thing appears because the thing is not available in its immediate self-identity. The remainder that concerned Sartre is not here present:

And self-consciousness is thus only assured of itself through sublating this other, which is presented to self-consciousness as an independent life; self-consciousness is *Desire*. Convinced of the nothingness of this other, it definitely affirms this nothingness to be for itself the truth of this other, negates the independent object, and thereby acquires the certainty of its own self, as *true* certainty, a certainty which it has become aware of in objective form. . . .

And:

Indeed, the grasp of an object consists in nothing else but that an I will make the object its own, will penetrate it, and will bring it into its own form, i.e., into the universality which immediately is definition, or into definition, which immediately is universality. In visuality, or even in visualization, the object is still something external and strange. By grasping it, the being-in-and-for-itself which the object has in visuality and visualization is transformed into posited being; the I penetrates it in thought. Yet the object is in and for itself as it is in thought; it is phenomenal as it is in visuality and visualization; thinking voids the immediacy of our first encounter with it and thus turns it into a posited being. . . .

The goal for the object: to be a feature of self-consciousness, to have no other moments or definitions than the I itself.[\(80\)](#)

This "Hegelian fury of disappearance" (Adorno) does indeed make its appearance in Bataille. But this Hegel Bataille supplemented with the Hegel of the *déchet*. His sacrifice has its idealistic tendency, in that it involves an effort to take things unlike the subject and make them identical to it. The principle of sacrifice is destruction, "desire having as its object the absence of an object" (XII, p. 541). "The ultimate goal of man is the destruction of what he has made" (VII, p. 437). Access to "interior experience is through this object that is no object. And: "There is in the *interior experience* of which I speak an element that I believe to be ungraspable: some 'thing' is there destroyed, some 'thing' is there transformed into nothing . . . and the object comes to coincide with the subject" (XII, p. 408). Self-intimacy can only be communicated on the condition that there is a thing: this thing is finally the opposite of a thing, the opposite of a piece of merchandise. It is something that has been consumed, a sacrifice. Because the experience of intimacy is a consumption, it is a consumption that expresses it and not the *thing*, of which it is the negation:

I have said of the sacrificial death that it reveals the *absence* of the victim. Would this absence constitute the ultimate meaning that sacrifice . . . offers as spectacle? It is clear that an object that has been proposed to our attention, in as much as it is a distinct object, addresses our practical intelligence, associated in our minds as it necessarily is with the possibility of producing it, of using it. . . . If I see a horse in a barn, it is the animal that men raise and harness that I see. It is to the extent that it is destroyed or diminished as a distinct entity that it has the power to move me. Putting to death a horse involves its suppression as a distinct animal: the dying horse is . . . what I myself am. The suppression of the object through death is the elimination of the barrier that separates me from the animal. Now it is the same thing that I am--like me it is a presence at the edge of an absence. There no longer remains either a distinct *object* or a distinct *subject*. (XI, p. 102)

Sacrifice is the *production* of the *déchet* that stands in for the hope of an absence of an object that must be expressed objectally. Anticipating Klein's critique of Freud's view of a primitive objectless state, Bataille writes: "Waking to interior life, the spirit is nevertheless in search of an object. It renounced the object that action has proposed in favor of one of a different nature. But it cannot do without the object, its existence not being able to turn back upon itself without it" (V, p. 137). There is the first step of the ego-ideal identification: "a desire to become oneself the sun (it matters not whether this be a blinding or blinded sun). In the case of the eagle, as in the case of my own imagination, the act of looking directly at something equals an identification" (II, pp. 14-15). Often Bataille emphasizes in sacrifice the movement away from use: "destruction is the best means to negate the utilitarian relation between an animal or a plant" (VII, p. 61). Destruction of use value here, as in Kant, is a mask behind which the angry homing in on the ego ideal is obscured. But in Bataille there is no lack of occasions of self-unmasking. Here there is no mistaking the resentment provoked by a contrasting prosperity: "Seduction involves the appeal of destroying that which seduces us" (X, p. 635). Or: "In sacrifice, the victim is chosen so that its perfection accentuates the brutality of death" (X, p. 143). And here the role of anger could not be more clear: "the sovereign operation involves the putting to death of a king" (V, p. 458).

But afterwards, "there is a *déchet*" (III, p. 541), the sight of people not seeing. Sacrifice would be the transformation *within* what Bataille calls the heterogeneous field. This left-over is the partial object, transferred from the contrastive ego-ideal figure to the resentful group. But here one *worries* one's way back to self-love. "It is the thing--and only the thing--that sacrifice seeks to destroy in the victim" (II, 14-15), he writes, reminding us of Lacan on the object *a*. The destruction makes possible the change of address, making possible the objects required to move from a shaming externality to the inside of the subject. The stricken form is opened and reveals that which had been hoarded: "Sacrifice substitutes the

spectacle of the blind convulsion of organs for the ordered life of the animal " (X, p. 93). We recognize in sacrifice the object *a* ("it is that little piece that has been ripped out of something" (81)) as he writes that "The necessity to . . . throw some part of oneself *outside of oneself* remains the principle of a psychological . . . mechanism that can in certain cases only conclude in death" (I, p. 265). This object, on the condition that it be understood not to be the result of a catastrophe, has the potential to cause sacrifice not simply to be the dialectic at its rudest.

Thus the impeccable logic of Derrida in protest against Sartre's famous claim:

Bataille above all is not a new mystic. That which *indicates itself* as interior experience is not an experience, because it is related to no presence, to no plenitude, but only to the "impossible" it "undergoes" in torture. This experience above all is not interior: and if it seems to be such because it is related to nothing else, to no exterior (except in modes of nonrelation, secrecy and rupture), it is also completely *exposed*--to torture--naked, open to the exterior, with no interior reserve of feelings, profoundly superficial.(82)

If the subject is always already open, it will not, forcibly, be *now* open, *now* not open. Exposed to violence, says Derrida, but invulnerably so, it must be added, because without a strength hoarded inside. It is thus not provocative of any external threat because an opposition cannot strengthen itself through the spilling of an exclusive resource. "What attracts us in the destroyed object (in the very moment of the destruction) is the power it has to question, to ruin the solidity of the subject. Thus the goal of the device is to destroy us as objects (to the extent to which we have remained deceived, and locked into our enigmatic isolation)" (XI, p. 484).

Nietzsche: "Art in the service of illusion--that is our cult."(83) This is refined by Bataille who notices that "Art . . . proceeds . . . through successive destructions . . ." (I, p. 253). But all will depend upon a *scheduling*. A fragmentary jotting found in his papers after his death : "Beauty, the power of seduction, necessary for poetry in advance of destruction. Hence the necessity of power" (V, p. 455). On beauty: "It is desired for the sake of its degradation" (X, p. 143). Beauty is the precursor form of the envious superego, a hardened, hardening ally. What Klossowski has to say on Ingres reveals the resentment not always clear in Bataille. The spectator of his "la Grande Odalisque" is degradingly excluded from access to a body. As she awaits her absent master (and the spectator is not the master), "[She] is insulting to our mediocrity."(84) "The décor within which we find her is of a sumptuousness that is wounding to us." And then there is the imagined price: "We see her, the one inaccessible to us, the explosive spectacle, the beautiful one who will pay the price."(85) Bataille: "Author and reader, each independently avoids the mutilation, the annihilation. Each limits himself to the prestige of success" (IX, p. 305). The "success" would be the avoidance of death that would be at once the flattening safety of the envious superego--all power granted over the Odalisque is a trick.

"Sacrifice is the negation, the destruction of the world of knowledge" (XII, p. 511). That is to say, production of the object with which one has unmediated relations. But what price the fun? Bataille sees that sacrifice resists the charismatic. In sacrifice the charismatic exists in order to not exist, but the sacrificial critique of the charismatic equals the envious superego. As sacrifice is revealed to be the replacement of one provocative membrane with another, Bataille changes the direction of his attack on the charismatic, "ironizing sacrifice," to use the Gans expression. Necessary was the creation of an unmurderous will, the will that does not suffer from itself. Therefore the conditions of access to the object were central.

In Nietzsche there is no notice of this price of a loss of spontaneity, of sacrifice as the normative sequence. To solve the problem of Kojève, Bataille had to address what was equivocal in Nietzsche. And this could only be done with the *ramasseur*:

Affirmation of life even in its strangest and sternest problems, the will to live rejoicing in its own inexhaustibility through the *sacrifice* of its highest types--*that* is what I called Dionysian, *that* is what I recognized as the bridge to the psychology of the tragic poet. Not so as to get rid of pity and terror, not so as to purify oneself of a dangerous emotion through its vehement discharge--it was thus Aristotle understood it--: but, beyond pity and terror, to *realize in oneself* the eternal joy of becoming--that joy which also encompasses *joy in destruction*. . . . And with that I again return to the place from which I set out--*Birth of Tragedy* was my first revaluation of all values. . . .(86)

Or:

What does the Renaissance *prove*? That the reign of the individual can only be brief. The prodigality is too extreme; it has not even an outside chance to collect or to capitalize, and exhaustion follows at its heels. There are times when everything is *squandered*, when even the force itself with which one collects, converts into capital, and piles riches upon riches is squandered.[\(87\)](#)

Confronting Bataille with a problem that was central to him was the juxtaposition of the sacrifice of these passages with the Nietzschean goal of deliverance from revenge. "Of primordial importance" (VI, p. 329), Bataille said of this Klossowski remark: "But for Bataille to not be guilty is finally not to exist at all. To be or not to be guilty, this is the dilemma, because for Bataille, to be without guilt is not waste . . ." (VI, p. 328). Bataille demonstrated understanding of this point when he wrote that "Sacrifice creates conscience . . ." (VII, p. 533). And "The drive to destruction that is explosively revealed in the festival finally constitutes a conservative wisdom that orders and limits" (VII, p. 313). The disciplinary dimension that throws its taint on this pleasure had escaped Nietzsche, and Bataille at first as well, whose indignation over the charismatic contrastive had blinded him to the danger of confusing success with an entropic culpability that was another form of servitude, this time self-servitude. He didn't always see sacrifice as a trap in which a critique of the charismatic is used to create another flatness, another limitation of spontaneity. Bataille sees that the sovereign in sacrifice, as opposed to the sovereign of chance, only relocates the problem of transcendence along a different axis; as still a sequence, it remains an internalization of external authority.

The full fantasy of the archaic procedure is about a passage: "The putting to death reveals. . . the *absence* of a victim. The ritual has the virtue of fixing attention upon the burning moment of a passage" (XI, p. 101). The problem of the transition had to be solved with progress from Klein to the anticipation of critical theory's modification. The nature of the communication depends upon whether or not the *déchet* is associated with disaster, as we have seen. "Through the status of object as *catastrophe* thought lives the annihilation that constitutes it as an infinite, dizzying fall. Thus it has only catastrophe as its object--its structure is catastrophe" (I, p. 94). He had to unmetonymize the relation between catastrophe and the form. The dialectic was about not loving yourself first--transforming fantasy into pleasure--and sacrifice follows. But the murderous dimension of fantasy remains as a freezing memory. If ritual is about first loving something great--ego-ideal totem--then the availability of the *déchet* communicates intimidation together with the pleasure that would be a feature of the experience. But it is the case that "In sacrifice, the sacrificer identifies with the animal struck by death. Thus he dies while watching himself die, and even, after a fashion, dies of his own volition, as one with the sacrificial arm" (XII, p. 337). More Klein: "The sacrificer is himself hit by the blow that he strikes. He succumbs and is lost with the victim" (V, p. 176). "In sacrifice, the sacrificer identifies with the animal that is struck with death. Thus he dies, seeing himself die" (XII, p. 306). And from *La Littérature et le mal*: "There is the tragic link between punishment and sovereignty" (IX, p. 293). "The negation of others becomes the negation of oneself" (X, p. 174). The object restores the subject's access to itself, but *conditionally*--ubiquitously martyred is the fantasy of the individually realized ego ideal.

The separability of the moments is the index of moralizability, measure of spontaneities denied. The sovereign as ego ideal is precursor substance of sacrifice, pointing doomily towards the inevitability of its process. "The grounding principle of the heterogeneous economy is that death is assumed at the outset" (II, p. 458). It will always be crashed and bled out. As in Klein, the passage is always implied by the ego-ideal, whether a resentment has or has not been acted upon: "Sovereignty is in its essence guilty, and one could say that, in a sense, it is the same thing as guilt" (XII, p. 164). The provocative luster of the ego ideal is inseparable from representation itself: "The image . . . is already sacrificial; to represent is already a murder" (IX, p. 321). It follows that a requirement for culpability results in "the necessity of a *spectacle*, or, more generally, of *representation*" (XII, p. 337). Thus representation is tightly associated with envious superego. "The weakness of sacrifice was due to its eventually losing its power by finally imposing an order of sacred *things* that were no less servile than real objects (VII, p. 328). "The sovereignty of sacrifice . . . is dubious" (V, p. 476). "Sacrifice is the communication of anguish. The only true sacrifice is a human sacrifice, and the knife that delivers the victim to the power of death is there *for me*. Through my experience of the victim I am able to picture myself as taken down by a destructive rage . . ." (V, p. 442). The goal of sacrifice is to "negate egotism" (V, p. 444). The environment of the dialectic is rich in opportunities for entropic lessons. In sacrifice, Bataille seems to be saying, "It is because I sought that I did not find" (III, p. 510). The "hard message" (V, p. 444): sought, rather than found; sovereignty of ego ideal always imposes a liquidation; the figural delivers one to the envious superego. The object of sacrifice is the one that is *sought*. Contours are devoured as indifference is alloyed with culpability--in the overlap, Klein's object, Klein's trap.

Bataille comes to see, with Adorno, that the spell cast *by* the subject would be no less one that is cast *over* the subject. Both are driven by the "Hegelian fury of disappearance." The *déchet* can point in either direction:

The subject is spent and impoverished in its categorical performance; to be able to define and articulate what it confronts, so as to turn it into a Kantian object, the subject must dilute itself to the point of mere universality, for the sake of the objective validity of those definitions. It must cut loose from itself as much as from the cognitive object, so that this object will be reduced to its concept, according to plan. The objectifying subject contracts into a point of abstract reason, and finally into logical noncontradictoriness, which in turn means nothing except to a definite object.[\(88\)](#)

And in the same spirit Bataille wrote (late, in 1959): "If we seek to grasp something that escapes us, and, what is more, if what escapes us ceases to escape us, there is the certainty that we are destroying our sovereignty, that we are subordinating ourselves and that we are destroying the experience of the sovereign of which we have had a glimpse" (X, p. 669).

Sacrifice is "at once the richest and most agonizing of experiences" (XII, p. 338), Bataille writes, kneading together elements the delinking of which was to be his life's work. A destruction and a happiness *can* be perceived to be the same thing: "A satisfaction and a rending coincide . . . in *pleasure*. This coincidence occurs in sacrifice" (XII, p. 339). To put it in these terms is to see envious superego and ego ideal as fused: "It is humanity everywhere and in its entirety that has always sought, through a detour, to grasp that which at once death offers him and obscures from view" (XII, p. 337). There must be the separation of death from the experience so that addictive pleasure and humiliating fantasy are not pressed together indistinguishably. "The excitement announces a depression" (III, p. 533).

"Nothing is more essentially perishable than the sacred and the poetic. . . . But, as they die, sacred or poetic moments leave a variety of residues at the moments of their disappearance" (XI, p. 105). Indeed. But there is the humiliated versus pre-humiliated, a distinction of which Bataille is very much aware: "The sacred that the sacrifice exposes to view is different from the experience of the poetic--it provokes a cowering horror linked to a humiliated attitude" (XI, p. 102). "And as the sacred involves the suppression of the sacred object, in the same manner, poetry involves the suppression of poetry" (XI, p. 105). But it occurs in different temporality and with different agency. "Destruction is no less necessary to poetry than it is to sacrifice; but in poetry the destruction is experienced without constraint . . . (XI, p. 102). "Each true poem dies at the same time that it is born, and its death is the condition of its realization" (VII, pp. 394-95). The simultaneity is key to the avoidance of the oppressive message. And: "[N]othing is as desirable as that which will immediately disappear" (I, p. 560). Thus Bataille's affection for the famous concluding moment in Hugo's "Booz endormi":

. . . quel dieu, quel moissonneur de l'éternel été
 Avait en s'en allant négligemment jeté
 Cette faucille d'or dans le champ des étoiles.

[. . . what god, what harvester of the eternal summer
 Had, in departing, carelessly tossed
 This golden scythe into the field of stars.]

"The object sold in a hardware store has been subtilized by the metaphor, lost into a divine infinity. But the black element has disappeared. . . . The experience of destruction no longer emerges *from outside* . . ." (my emphasis) (XI, p. 104). Spatio-temporal decisiveness lost in the use/not use blur, veined with failure, there is the absence of an external agent of humiliation. "Poetry is a negation of itself" (XI, p. 21). "In general, a sacred language is a destroyed language. In the sacrifice of a lamb, the lamb is destroyed by the knife not only as living creature, but as word-identical-to-the-object" (V, p. 462). On Prévert: "The words in his *Cortège* are destroyed through a process of arbitrary association. Here we find the professor and the porcelain of everyday life confused to become *porcelain professor*. A *windmill of eyeglasses*, or a *watch in mourning* in the same manner the explosion of objects that had been defined by their use" (XI, p. 104-5). Bataille noticing the Malebranche effect as he at the same time reminds us of the Russian formalists: "If poetry introduces the strange, it does this through the path of the familiar. The poetic is the familiar dissolving into the strange, and dissolving us at the same time. But it never dispossesses us of everything, for words, the dissolved images, are suffused with emotions that have already been experienced, attached as they are to objects that attach us to the known" (V, p. 17). As the goal is to compress into indistinguishability the discrete, *diphasic* moments of sacrifice, there is thus praise for "le merveilleux sordide" of Beckett (XII, p. 85).

Bataille can be found failing to make what for him is the saving distinction:

Modern painting . . . perpetuates the obsession associated with the image of sacrifice and the destruction of objects that is its defining operation. . . . The man who is caught in the trap that is our life moves within a field of forces of attraction that is organized around that flashing point where solid forms are destroyed, where those objects of use are consumed as in a furnace of light. It is finally the case that the character of contemporary painting--fourth of July of objects [*feu de la Saint-Jean des objets*]-has not been understood to be related to sacrifice. In a fundamental way, what the surrealist painter seeks so passionately to see as he produces his images does not differ from what the Aztec crowd came to see at the foot of their pyramids where hearts were ripped from the victims. (XI, p. 482)

Here is the *process* by which the sublime figure is transformed into a rind. Still here is the idea of the figure and its crowd: "The painting of former times, that had no autonomy, was but part of a majestic edifice that was proposed to the crowd as an intelligible totality. I insist upon this fundamental point: the great didactic monument--whether it be a castle, church, temple or palace--that the past has inexhaustibly built and rebuilt, this monument that spoke and proclaimed authority--had as its function the forcing of the entire crowd to its knees" (IX, p. 127).[\(89\)](#)

But the mass begins a dimming process in Manet, in whose paintings we begin to take note of the sharing of indifference to the subject that we saw Bataille notice fully developed in Beckett: "the spectator reproduces his profound apathy" (IX, p. 133). Indifference produces a found object relation for the spectator: "In the details themselves we notice the independence of each part" (IX, p. 127). Art now preemptively sheds its Kleinian skin and thus begins to cease to define identity through outraged contrast, for the painter associates his genius with chance. "Chance alone suits him" (IX, p. 127), it is said of Manet. Thus "the presence of a sovereign element imposing itself from without, we now discover within" (IX, p. 128). No imbalance, no "majesty given from without" (IX, p. 135). In these pictures "the . . . absence of unity that characterizes the relation between the objects described refers us to the more profound unity of indifference" (IX, p. 153). On these objects--"The only thing that saves them from indignity is the active indifference that is the special quality of Manet" (IX, p. 154). Because the indifference is active, rather than passive, he preempts our own role in a process that would otherwise involve the forcible exposure of an object.

Bataille may say that here "It is the majesty of just anybody and of just anything" (IX, p. 147), but movement in this direction is not complete, as there remains the residue of a crime: "The 'Olympia' is barely distinguishable from a crime or the spectacle of a death. . . . Everything here glides us towards the *indifference* of beauty" (IX, p. 147). The chain of custody ends a bit later. "Impressionism liberated painting from the servitude to which it had been submitted . . . and that submitted it to the subject represented. . . . In Impressionism the painter gained *autonomy*, but Cézanne was alone in taking powerful advantage of this freedom" (IX, p. 135). Bringing serial ownership to an end, royal apples replaced royal persons and the royal crimes to which they will fall prey:

In *The Voices of Silence* Malraux spoke of the royalty of the apples of Cézanne.
The expression is appropriate, yet we ask ourselves: in what does this *royalty* consist?

I would suggest that this enigmatic thing that is *royal* was that which in the past was felt to be that which, in the person of the king, negated the men who were indistinguishable from other men. But, for [the critic] Kahnweiler . . . that which the painter puts on the canvas is an emotion, his emotion. It is true that the feeling of a man before a king is an emotion. Cézanne would thus, using as his raw material real-world objects, put on his canvas objects that are moving. This clock, this house, or this tree are indeed majestic. But their majesty, their royalty, owe nothing to another. These objects are nothing in themselves and no one attaches to them the least dignity. *Except Cézanne*. Except the *emotion* of Cézanne. (XII, p. 378)

In Lacan's terms, the goal here is the peaceful separation of *a* from "i". The emotion of Cézanne must be an indifference, as ended through it is any metonymic relation with the gorged subject. The apple is not Lacan's lightning flash, associated with the father of the gods. And it is thus that Cézanne's indifference to the nothing apples blurs with his otherwise unaccountable love for them. This indifference always already releases the object, cordially assigning "collector of cigarette butts" status, this "mimetics of social inferiority" (Burke), to the viewer. "The principle of equivalence is resisted by the species, a species constituted through constant exclusions, in the issuing of curses against that which it situated at a rank beneath the one it had attained" (VIII, p. 373). There is a collective redemption when no one can tell the difference.

"I have concluded that poverty is the cure" (V, p. 258). The poor form of the royal apple that comes to us by way of an indifference, agency of an anonymous surfacing, is the cure for this: "Royal sovereignty, the prestige of which is ruined or something that is in the process of being ruined, is a degraded sovereignty" (XII, p. 27). Not subjecting us to a royal persona, the fruit leaves us unincited to admonitory royal crime. The *détournement* of sacrifice, the ironization of sacrifice of Gans. Our relation to the apples, as is the artist's, is parodically proprietary. What is sovereign today is the "secret royalty" of the apples of Cézanne (IX, p. 135), the possession of which is no invitation to dispossession. This is so because they are not in the possession of "the royal person" (XII, p. 119) who would provoke "the true royalty of crime" (IX, p. 293). Poverty is always the cure for having something that is too much before one. If poverty is there at beginning, no cure is necessary. In Cézanne one is always already poor. "But the modern writer reaps . . . a major privilege over those 'kings' he has succeeded--that of renouncing that minor power of kings, that major privilege of not being able to do anything, and of reducing oneself, in active society, *in advance, to paralysis and death*" (my emphasis) (XII, p. 28). The object is not sovereign, but produces a sovereign not perceived from without as such.

Could the Soviet Union be Cézanne? Did the painter anticipate what would be the internal and external politics of the Soviet Union? There was for a time the hope. Bataille on the historical opportunity of a Stalin as political post-Impressionist:

He who exercises a supreme tangible power should have as his goal the prevention, in any way possible, of all domination over things. Things should be freed of all particularized subordination. They should henceforth be subordinated only to indifferenced man. In this way the man, who has this power available to him, and who voluntarily renounces any joy in the objects he administers, becomes the equal of the sovereign his predecessors had dethroned. (VIII, p. 392)

Not the equal but the superior, because invulnerable, because unhoarding. Of vast significance was this issue of the painterly state: "The challenge of which I speak--that of the exhaustion of a surplus without war--is the one faced by a world of production that has escaped dependency upon subjectivity" (VIII, p. 455). But the failure of which he speaks must be immediate: "All the luster of poetry reveals itself outside of those beautiful moments it attains. Compared with its failure, poetry crawls" [*comparée à son échec, la poésie rampe*] (III, p. 532). Timing is a factor in the economy as well--the simultaneity of mastery and its loss being the key. The political problem occurs, world peace is menaced, when it is not the case that "[I]t is a thing that, in the same instant, is not a thing" (VIII, p. 512). Recognition must be won and lost in the same moment.

Religion destroys the object that the profane preserves. The destruction of the object is undesirable because of the envious superego's daunting, but no less disastrous is the preservation that can only give birth to the religious. Thus, "The profane world must, in its turn, be destroyed as such. That is to say that all within the capitalist world that transcends and dominates man, must be reduced to the status of an immanent thing, via a subordination to a consumption by man" (VII, p. 437). "It is a question of extending religious action into the profane world" (VII, p. 437). If simultaneity is the key to poetry, it is no less the solution to world peace--the always already destroyed would have to be the model.

Stalin could not live up to the vanguard destiny that had been thrust upon him. No Manet, much less a Cézanne, Stalin was that thermonuclear threat, the Ingres of Klossowski. An economic miracle--an economics that became poetry in Bataille's sense--was not something that could be achieved in the Soviet Union. It could not become the simultaneity of "a splendor infinitely ruined" (V, p. 262). Stalin may personally have been "the man of renounced sovereignty" (VIII, p. 454), but accumulation remained a mortal threat at the international level. Wherever there is accumulation without immediate destruction, others would test themselves against this success. "In effect, it is the quest for sovereignty by the alienated man . . . that is basis for agitation in history" (IX, p. 305). The problem of wealth-generating antagonism *may* have been solved, in the Soviet Union, at the level of interpersonal relations, among the members of the national group, but not between this group and other groups. The imbalance-producing, reversal-inciting sovereign now appears in the form of an entire hoarding country, and this provocative hoarding of a mortally weighted national subject drives fatally to war. Absent in the struggle between the Soviet Union and the United States appeared to be the state version of this saving alternative: "Sovereign art involves . . . *the access to sovereign subjectivity that is independent of rank*" (VIII, p. 450). World-threatening shame would only be brought to an end through the equal availability of the mediations of omnipotence--an upward leveling through the universalization of access to the royal apple, "the elective object."

It is a previously lusterless lodestar that emerges as what will rescue us from violent exchange. Stalin failing to be Keynes, America became the hope for the poetic economy. In a 1948 lecture Bataille had argued that American culture was marked

by an internal violence, heritage of Puritanism, that would cause it to inexhaustibly accumulate, thus inexhaustibly tempting itself and others to violently squander in war the obscene surplus that had been amassed. The religious would fatally *follow* the profane. Deritualization-- Bataille here anticipating Girard--can only lead to universal destruction. If it is the case that "Sacrifice cannot be for us what it was at the beginning" (V, p. 289), it is because of the fact that the consequences are no longer livable. The Soviet Union was argued to have been itself reactively forced in this situation to mimic the enemy in its heaping up of flame-worthy materials. But it proved fatally to be without the developmental flexibilities that would make available any possibility of an exit from the rigidities that an outside threat might be said to have imposed. If the Soviet Union could be other than this accumulation, it could only be the catastrophe of the dilapidation of this accumulation.

In 1956 Bataille wrote that *Homo americanus* was now striking out beyond the phase of accumulation (XII, p. 446). World peace--the denarrativization, the desequentialization of the exhaustion of accumulation--would now be achieved through an America reformed away from the culpabilizing, entropy-producing habits associated with Aztec happiness. On display here, in the phenomenon of the mass market, was the realization of the ideal of "immediate consumption" (VII, p. 436), that made possible the passing into one another of the profane and the religious, made possible "the complete separation of the world of things . . . from the world of subjectivity" (VIII, p. 454) that characterized a sustainable, pacific sovereign that would be relieved of its burden of Hegelian irony. Adorno: "The new is intimately related to death."⁽⁹⁰⁾ This is the genius of it: destruction is within the form, and not external to it. Egalitarian consumption is the achievement of a society that has renounced the sovereign, that is, achieved it (VIII, p. 452). The porous (pacific) subject is a metonym for the aerolith object. The critique of the "fallacy of saving" was to be lived at every moment--in the new, the sovereign not as concentration of resources but as relation. The community that imitated everything did the same as imitating nothing. Only America could be this: "The suppression of the subject and the object would be the only way to not end in the possession of the object by the subject, that is to say the absurd rush . . . of the being seeking to be the *all*" (V, p. 67).

This positive development in American culture would appear to be the result of a final step in the process of the immanentization of the dialectic that Bataille described as a Christian inheritance: "Their myths associate social ignominy and the cadaverous degradation of the torture victim with divine splendor. In this way religion assumes the total oppositional function manifested by contrary forces, which up to this point had been divided between the rich and the poor, with the one group condemning the other to ruin." (VII, p. 113). "Naturally," Bataille responded in reaction to a remark of Sartre. He had said to Bataille: "Sin, for you, has a dialectical value, that is to say that it disappears on its own. It has the role of pushing you towards the position in which you can no longer recognize it as sin" (VI, p. 347). But culpability cannot simply vanish, for Bataille goes on to say that "As in every dialectic, there is the moment of overtaking but there is no suppression" (VI, p. 348). Redone is the career of the sinner through the tightening of his schedule, rescheduling the dialectic as a quasi-simultaneous occurrence. Culpability could not disappear, but could be vitiated into the invisibility of a stilling vibration, in the revving towards but not achievement of escape velocity. According to this logic, the found object is the conclusion of Christianization. "My only concern is with the human tribunal, and I would like to deceive even this, and what's more without actual deception," Kafka wrote to Felice. The goal: "to become so pleasing that in the end I might openly act out my inherent baseness before the eyes of the world without forfeiting its love--the only sinner not to be roasted."⁽⁹¹⁾ Only in the consumer economy, in the idea of the new itself--that simultaneously wins and loses the struggle for recognition--does poetry reach escape velocity from gravitational field of myth.

Two mobs, one nastier than the other. Bataille dreamt: "An icy fever seizes hold of me. I sensed the presence of the lapidating crowd . . ." (III, p. 232). But this Aztec group proved effortlessly vulnerable to a derealization. On that famously vague female figure depicted in Manet's "A Bar at the Folies-Bergère": "The crowd that is actually in front of her appears merely as a reflection, as a luminous spectacle in the mirror." The reasons for the transformation: "[T]he subject of the paintings of Manet is less destroyed than outdated, left behind" (IX, p. 157). What does it mean to say, as Bataille does, that Manet "disappoints expectations"? The focus of a potentially resentful attention is *already* small. Myth clouds into the market. What was the immaculately sealed breast is not destroyed, but scatters its contents throughout all of life. "A sacrifice in which everything is victim"⁽⁹²⁾ The subject that reflects the object that is no object is a subject that is no subject. The neutralization of the difference between charisma and demystification--nothing can thwart the promise of its grace. As the crowd fades with the sequence that is all its energy, with the end of *sequenced* destruction, in the birth of the new--in which, as Adorno noted, death is *immanent*--there is the emergence into full relief of the figure of economic man.

"The esthetic of market society thrives on its hostility to market exchange," Gans writes.⁽⁹³⁾ This is correct for the two contrasting reasons that have been noticed by Joseph Schumpeter: on the one hand the market encourages the development

of empathic moralities designed to compensate for the disruptions it inevitably produces, and, at the same time, in an antagonistically complicit maneuver within a larger structure of antagonistic complicity, the market generates unpunishably delinquent individuals who must be spectacularly available as models to suggest the desirability of adopting those dynamizingly contrarian roles that are, according to Schumpeter, the market's major source of strength. As we shall see, Bataille is allied with Generative Anthropology in his refusal of all antagonistic complicity. In his embrace of the market, he betrays the imperative to betray.

J.-M. Besnier wrote of Bataille: "The intellectual of pathos [L'intellectuel pathétique] seeks every opportunity to produce the emotion of empathy."⁽⁹⁴⁾ But in Bataille there is no notion of empathy, only the differently timed movements into and out of identification with the ego ideal figure. We should not confuse remarks such as the following with an empathy: "I only live *fully, entirely* in the moment on the condition that I do not hide or steal my plenitude from my fellows. Put differently, my plenitude will belong to me only on the condition that it coincides with that of others" (XI, pp. 93-94). The group can only be made possible through the antisocial, with the poetry that he describes as "an absence of community" (XI, p. 131). There is only the group through the heterogeneous element, there are only different degrees of heterogeneous intensity that produces a drive to identify that must come to an end. Empathy is only achieved through killing and through death and temporarily--there is only the speeding of the process from identification to the absence of identification. Empathy is no synonym for Bataille's heterology that has copped a plea, his stealth ego ideal that keeps narcissism and sacrifice from necessarily entailing one another. On Manet and identification: "He wasn't . . . supremely self-certain. He hesitated. He neither knew how to be apart nor to be together with them. He did not have within him, as did Baudelaire, that something full and strong that was at the same time a curse" (IX, p. 122). Leiris said that Bataille, in 1924 or 1925, had the idea of creating an organization that would be called "Oui"--in response to the Dada "Non." It would have been "a movement of acquiescence to all things. An absolute nonresistance."⁽⁹⁵⁾ To solve the problem of shame within the dialectic is to tighten the interval between *oui* and *non* to the verge of invisibility. The only alternative to the new--an intimidating, because exploding, God.

Another betrayal--in Bataille the extravagant figure is replaced by the process of the market. The Baudelairean subject is replaced by the unhoused poetic object. "It is a thing that, in the same instant, is no thing" (VIII, p. 264). "Nothing is more desirable than that which will immediately disappear" (I, p. 560). And through it the market rules: "If one seeks to govern the world, one must renounce the project of governing it: the degoverning of the world" (VII, p. 612). Poetry could no longer be a niche experience, but needed to become the whole picture, that is, the market that offers something that immediately becomes nothing: the only paradise not just promised, but--such as it is--delivered.

As introduction to a last betrayal, this betraying nullification by a professor of French who hands over France to what it most decidedly is not:

In general, French philosophy since the war can be viewed as a series of very acute commentaries on German philosophy. Paris has thus played a mediating role in the cultures of the world: it has taken German categories and rethought them in connection with the very real challenges to Aristotelian metaphysics posed by the end of colonialism and the rethinking of questions of hybridity in theory, culture, and race. True, this mediating role is something of a demotion; French thinkers are not, in general, nearly as original as they are taken to be. But the mediating role is important.⁽⁹⁶⁾

This same critic has argued that the single most salient feature of modern French thought is its "porous" character:⁽⁹⁷⁾ And French theory is just "woven together out of other things," writes an equally benighted colleague.⁽⁹⁸⁾ This contentless universalism is said then to justify the routine nonmention of the Frenchness of French theory--it happens so easily because there is little that is French about it!

In urgent opposition to this insensitive caricature, it is to be noted that modern French thought is dominated by a highly recognizable trait, that of marking philosophy with what I would term "the prowess of poverty." Bataille wrote that "Poor means (the poorest) alone have the virtue of operating a break--rich means are too charged with meaning and come between us and the unknown . . ." (V, p. 29). And in his posing of his own nothingness as *ramasseur de mégots* against Kojève's conquering dialectic, he was far from alone in drawing unanswerable apotropaic powers from the heritage of the Latin notion of poverty that blurred into the ancient prestige of the withdrawn agricultural nobility (cf. Montaigne). Examples are hard *not* to find. On the final page of *Tristes tropiques*, Lévi-Strauss describes his ideal of detaching (*se dépendre*) from any controlling, mastering relation with the world, of lazily locating the only happiness possible in

something that is nothing. Required is

[t]hat opportunity, vital to life, *to detach*, and that consists--Farewell savages! Farewell travels!--during the brief intervals in which our species accepts to interrupt its hive-like activities, in seizing the essence of what it was and continues to be, beneath thought and beyond society: in the contemplation of a mineral more beautiful than all our works, in the scent located in the heart of a lily that is wiser than all of our books, or in the blinking eye, heavy with patience, serenity and reciprocal pardon, with which we meet with in the course of an involuntary exchange with a cat.(99)

Examples of this patriotism: Foucault's affection for the anonymous outcast, Lyotard's praise for "la laideur," and Derrida's affection for ruined forms.

Greatness, Adorno said--"the instinct against it is specifically French."(100) The tastes of theory are mirrored in popular literature. "Who benefits from progress?" Emilie Carles wrote in her 1977 best-selling memoir of the French peasant life of the first half of the century.

Why must we have eight-hour days? With a work day of four to five hours, unemployment would be eliminated and everyone could have a job. Let us learn to live very simply: one table, four chairs, a bed: that's all we need, let us learn to make use of our leisure time, get as close to nature as possible . . . Learn to live by knowing how to live and let live. Never take anything in life but flowers, and from flowers, only the perfume; drop the religion that has the largest number of followers: I am talking about the religion of money.(101)

From the Fourth Republic humor of *Les Carnets du Major Thompson* of Pierre Daninos. "[The French might appear] to be charmed by one of their *great* men who speak to them of their *greatness*, of their *great* civilizing mission, of their *great* land, of their *great* traditions."

But that of which they truly dream is to withdraw, after a good *little* life, in a *little* quiet corner, on a *little* patch of land of their own, with a *little* woman who is happy with her *little* inexpensive dresses, who will cook good *little* dishes and who will know how to very agreeably from time to time invite over some friends for a *little* game of belote.(102)

It is this modesty that Bataille betrays when he comes to insist that poetry must become the world, that the entropic esthetic must become the churning economic. Hegel's lazy infinity grew up in Bataille to become a very busy little infinity. A slow starter, as infinities go, unimposing as a beginner, perhaps, but a fast finisher, the only finisher. Sartre liked to tease Bataille for being a state-employed librarian, while writing of Aztec horrors in the evenings. The real irony was elsewhere--an institutional bourgeois betrays his class--one impossible choice is replaced by another in the baleful discovery of an Americanization to which one is necessarily given over. Only through American mass culture can a community continuously, liberatingly, be the opposite of itself. "There is evil when passion has become servile, when it has put itself in the service of a legal power and can only be coldly exercised. True passion is naturally in a state of revolt and never wants to associate itself with legal authority. Generally it does not have power as a goal, but rather is in quest of ruin, a measureless expenditure that rapidly destroys power" (XI, pp. 248-49). Every object must be consumed upon emergence if a conquering orientation is to be avoided, if weakness is to break its drive to press against strength, if there is to be an unsequencing indifference. American mass culture as the only sustainable heterogeneity, the heterogeneity blurred away from predatory focus, the heterogeneity that is not always collapsing into alienated successor forms. The only ever renewable fire? Self-betrayal, the renunciation of the full measure of national otherness, the loss of control of national destiny. Better red, white, and blue than dead, argues Bataille in acknowledgement and acceptance of a shift in social dominance. Communism must lower itself, betray itself, embracing what is utterly opposed to it, he felt. And the same might be said of his feudal France. America right or wrong. Watered down, trite yet blandly acceptable, yet uplifting at the same time, shy difference now steps forward, transformed, gains insistence and impatience, appears ready for work. In a final flourish of the dialectic, a final tightening, the immemorial--bitter necessity--turns on a dime.

Notes

1. Quoted by Lawrence Sutin, *Divine Invasions: A Life of Philip K. Dick* (New York: Harmony Books, 1989), p. 154. [\(back\)](#)
2. Michel Surya, *Georges Bataille: la Mort à l'oeuvre* (Paris: Séguier, 1987), p. 482. [\(back\)](#)
3. Raymond Queneau, "Premières confrontations avec Hegel," *Critique* (August-September 1963), p. 695. [\(back\)](#)
4. According to Surya, p. 482. [\(back\)](#)
5. Queneau, "Premières confrontations avec Hegel," p. 695. [\(back\)](#)
6. Georges Bataille, *Choix de lettres, 1917-1962*, ed. Michel Surya (Paris: Gallimard, 1997), p. 27. [\(back\)](#)
7. "Experience and Poverty," in *Walter Benjamin. Selected Writings*, Volume II, trans. Rodney Livingstone and others (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 734. [\(back\)](#)
8. *Manifestos of Surrealism*, trans. Richard Seaver and Helen R. Lane (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan Press, 1972), p. 184. [\(back\)](#)
9. *Ecrits* (Paris: Seuil, 1966), p. 122. [\(back\)](#)
10. *Le Seminaire. Livre VIII; Le Transfert; 1960-61* (Paris: Seuil, 1991), p. 436-37. [\(back\)](#)
11. "La Société de Bataille," *Le Monde des livres*, April 30, 1999, p. I. [\(back\)](#)
12. "Sacrificing Culture," *Chronicles of Love and Resentment*, No. 184, October 9, 1999. [\(back\)](#)
13. *Phenomenology of Spirit*, A. V. Miller trans., (Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 251. [\(back\)](#)
14. *La Maladie d'être mouche* (Paris: Gallimard, 1996), p. 40. [\(back\)](#)
15. *La Maladie d'être mouche*, p. 65. [\(back\)](#)
16. *La Maladie d'être mouche*, p. 111. [\(back\)](#)
17. *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: W. W. Norton, 1977), p. 268. [\(back\)](#)
18. *Le Seminaire. Livre VIII*, p. 437. [\(back\)](#)
19. *Oeuvres complètes*, Vol. XI (Paris Gallimard, 1988), p. 93. Future references to Bataille's works--unless otherwise indicated--will be from the *Oeuvres complètes*, Vols. I-XII (Paris: Gallimard, 1970-88), and will appear in the body of the text. All translations are my own. [\(back\)](#)
20. Dominick LaCapra, "Temporality of Rhetoric," in *Chronotypes*, ed. John Bender and David E. Wellbery (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), p. 124. [\(back\)](#)
21. Tarde wrote "Avec l'hétérogène se constitue l'homogène." *Les Lois de l'imitation: étude sociologique* (Paris: Alcan, 1900 [3rd ed.]) p. 77. [\(back\)](#)
22. Bataille: "Alexandre Kojève ne développe pas une autre pensée que celle de Hegel." *Oeuvres complètes* Vol. VIII (Paris: Gallimard, 1976), p. 403. [\(back\)](#)
23. *De la Recherche de la vérité* [1674-75], 6th ed [1712], in *Oeuvres*, Vol. 2, p. 204. *Oeuvres de Malebranche*, 20 vols., ed. Geneviève Rodis-Lewis (Paris: J. Vrin, 1962-67). [\(back\)](#)
24. "The Essential Solitude," in *The Station Hill Blanchot Reader: Fiction and Literary Essays*, trans. Lydia Davis and others, ed. George Quasha (Barrytown, N. Y.: Station Hill, 1999), p. 405. [\(back\)](#)
25. *De la Recherche de la vérité*, p. 205. [\(back\)](#)
26. *De la Recherche de la vérité*, p. 207. [\(back\)](#)
27. *The Philosophy of the Present*, ed. by Arthur E. Murphy (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), p. 121. [\(back\)](#)
28. *The Philosophy of the Present*, p. 124. [\(back\)](#)

29. *The Philosophy of the Present*, p. 123.[\(back\)](#)
30. *The Philosophy of the Present*, p. 191.[\(back\)](#)
31. *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E. B. Ashton (New York: The Seabury Press, 1973), p. 191.[\(back\)](#)
32. *Negative Dialectics*, p. 120.[\(back\)](#)
33. *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), p. 33. [\(back\)](#)
34. *Negative Dialectics*, p. 139.[\(back\)](#)
35. *Negative Dialectics*, p. 177.[\(back\)](#)
36. *Negative Dialectics*, p. 39.[\(back\)](#)
37. *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 186.[\(back\)](#)
38. *The Philosophy of the Present*, p. 126.[\(back\)](#)
39. *Aesthetic Theory* (nt), p. 259.[\(back\)](#)
40. *Negative Dialectics*, p. 181.[\(back\)](#)
41. *Negative Dialectics*, p. 188.[\(back\)](#)
42. *Critique of Judgment*, trans. James Creed Meredith (New York: Oxford University Press, 1952), p. 106.[\(back\)](#)
43. Peter Sloterdijk, *Critique of Cynical Reason*, trans. Michael Eldred (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), p. 375.[\(back\)](#)
44. *Introduction à la lecture de Hegel*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1947), p. 437. [\(back\)](#)
45. *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1966), p. 9.[\(back\)](#)
46. *Choix de lettres, 1917-1962*, p.132-33. [\(back\)](#)
47. *Subjects of Desire: Hegelian Reflections in Twentieth-Century France* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), p. 176.[\(back\)](#)
48. *Phenomenology of Mind*, pp. 200-201.[\(back\)](#)
49. *Phenomenology of Mind*, p. 209.[\(back\)](#)
50. *Phenomenology of Mind*, p. 237.[\(back\)](#)
51. *Choix de lettres, 1917-1962*, p. 26.[\(back\)](#)
52. *Choix de lettres, 1917-1962*, p. 26-27.[\(back\)](#)
53. "Experience and Poverty," p. 734.[\(back\)](#)
54. "From Restricted to General Economy," in *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), p. 256.[\(back\)](#)
55. Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, trans. R. W. Rotsel (Ann Arbor: Adris, 1973), p. 184.[\(back\)](#)
56. *Human, All Too Human*, Vol. I, trans. Gary Handwerk (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), p.289-90[\(back\)](#)
57. *Human, All Too Human*, p. 290.[\(back\)](#)
58. *Genealogy of Morals*, in *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, trans Walter Kaufmann (New York: The Modern Library, 1968), III, 7, 109.[\(back\)](#)
59. *Daybreak*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 189[\(back\)](#)
60. See Heidegger: "The space of freedom from revenge is where Nietzsche sees the superman's essential nature. That is the space toward which he who crosses over is moving--the superman." *What Is Called Thinking?* trans. J. Glenn Gray (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), p. 88.[\(back\)](#)

61. *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E. B. Ashton (New York: Seabury Press, 1979), p. 120.[\(back\)](#)
62. *V. V. V.*, no. 4, (February 1944) p. 47.[\(back\)](#)
63. In *Originary Thinking. Elements of Generative Anthropology* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), pp. 150-163. [\(back\)](#)
64. *L'Être et le néant* (Paris: Gallimard, 1943), p. 349.[\(back\)](#)
65. "Instincts and their Vicissitudes," in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. James Strachey, 24 vols. (London: Hogarth Press, 1953-74), Vol. 14, pp. 133 and 139.[\(back\)](#)
66. "Instincts and their Vicissitudes," p. 133.[\(back\)](#)
67. Term of Geoffrey Hartman, *The Fateful Question of Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), p. 122.[\(back\)](#)
68. See especially "Le Jeu lugubre," in II, pp. 211-16.[\(back\)](#)
69. *Negative Dialectics*, p. 62.[\(back\)](#)
70. *Negative Dialectics*, p. 368.[\(back\)](#)
71. *Notebooks for an Ethics*, trans. David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 64. Laziness could always set you back to work, if you weren't careful. Bataille on the role of the left-over in philosophy and religion:

Through philosophy man has always been able to appropriate to himself the tangible elements of the world, but as in every process, this appropriation has regularly produced a *déchet*, in such a way that the operation has always been inexhaustibly rebegun. It would be possible to characterize the *déchets* of the philosophical order as "total *déchets*," the mention of which cannot be made without creating a sense of unease or of the ridiculous, as for example, in the case of the words "nothingness," "infinite," "absolute," etc. . (II, p. 424)[\(back\)](#)
72. Quoted in *The Unavowable Community*, trans. by Pierre Joris (Barrytown, N. Y.: Station Hill Press, 1988), p. 15.[\(back\)](#)
73. *L'Imaginaire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1940), p. 100. [\(back\)](#)
74. *Negative Dialectics*, p. 179.[\(back\)](#)
75. *Negative Dialectics*, p. 223.[\(back\)](#)
76. *Negative Dialectics*, p. 179.[\(back\)](#)
77. *Negative Dialectics*, p. 180.[\(back\)](#)
78. *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious*, trans. James Strachey (New York: W. W. Norton, 1963), p. 182.[\(back\)](#)
79. Pierre Klossowski, "De Contre-Attaque à Acéphale," in *Change*, No. 7 (Winter 1970-71). Quoted in Vol. XII, p. 638.[\(back\)](#)
80. Quoted in *Negative Dialectics*, pp. 174-75.[\(back\)](#)
81. *Angoisse*, May 8, 1963, p. 10. (unpublished transcript of the seminar)[\(back\)](#)
82. *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), p. 272.[\(back\)](#)
83. *Nietzsches Werke*, (Leipzig: C. G. Naumann/A. Kroner Verlag, 1895-1913), Vo. XII, p. 89.[\(back\)](#)
84. "La Revocation de L'Edit de Nantes," in *Les Lois de l'hospitalité* (Paris: Gallimard, 1976), p. 21.[\(back\)](#)
85. "La Revocation de l'Edit de Nantes," p. 22.[\(back\)](#)
86. *Twilight of the Idols*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Penguin Books, 1968), p. 121.[\(back\)](#)
87. *Werke in Drei Bänden*, ed. K. Schlecta (Munich, 1966), Vol. III, p. 825.[\(back\)](#)
88. *Negative Dialectics*, p. 139.[\(back\)](#)

89. It is Hegelian to have a problem with this: In devotion, Hegel said, "Consciousness . . . can only find as a permanent reality the grave of its life." *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 132.[\(back\)](#)
90. *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 31.[\(back\)](#)
91. *Letters to Felice*, trans. Elizabeth Duckworth and James Stern, ed. Erich Heller and Jurgen Born (New York: Schocken Books, 1973), p. 100.[\(back\)](#)
92. *Inner Experience*, tr. Leslie Anne Boldt (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988), p. 130.[\(back\)](#)
93. *Originary Thinking*, p. 165.[\(back\)](#)
94. "Georges Bataille, intellectuel pathétique," *Esprit* (Jan-February 1996), p. 145.[\(back\)](#)
95. Remarks made to Bernard-Henry Levy, reported in *Les aventures de la liberté*, (Paris: Grasset, 1991), p. 183.[\(back\)](#)
96. Françoise Lionnet, "Performative Universalism and Cultural Diversity: French Thought and American Contexts," in Jean-Joseph Goux and Philip R. Wood, eds., *Terror and Consensus; Vicissitudes of French Thought* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), p. 123.[\(back\)](#)
97. Lionnet, p. 123.[\(back\)](#)
98. Naomi Schor, "Universalism and Diversity," in *Terror and Consensus*, p. 132.[\(back\)](#)
99. *Tristes tropiques* (Paris: Plon, 1955), pp. 479-80.[\(back\)](#)
100. *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 187.[\(back\)](#)
101. *A Life of her Own; The Transformation of a Countrywoman in Twentieth-Century France*, trans. Avriel H. Goldberger (New York: Penguin Books, 1992), pp. 259-60.[\(back\)](#)
102. *Les Carnets du Major Thompson* (Paris: Hachette, 1954), pp. 18-19.[\(back\)](#)

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The Sacrificial Aesthetic: Blood Rituals from Art to Murder

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The concept of the "sacrificial esthetic" introduced in Eric Gans's *Chronicle* No. 184 (<http://www.anthropoetics.ucla.edu/views/vw184.htm>) entitled "Sacrificing Culture" describes a situation in which aesthetic forms remain sacrificial but have evolved from a necessary feature of social organization to a psychological element of the human condition. Gans concludes that art's sacrificial esthetic is essentially exhausted as a creative force and argues that the future lies with simulations, virtual realities in which the spectator plays a partially interactive role. His most significant claim is that "This end of the ability of the esthetic to discriminate between the sacrificial and the antisacrificial is not the end of art. On the contrary, it liberates the esthetic from the ethical end of justifying sacrifice." The consequence of the liberation of the ethical justification of sacrifice is the main concern of this essay.

Throughout the history of art we have encountered images of blood, from the representations of wounded animals in the cave paintings of Lascaux through century after century of brutal Biblical images, through history paintings depicting scenes of war, up through the many films of war, horror, and violence. Blood is now off the canvas, off the screen and sometimes literally in your face. It is no coincidence that this substance has intrigued artists throughout history. Blood is fascinating; it simultaneously represents purity and impurity, the sacred and the profane, life and death.

There are many expressions of the aesthetic that manifests itself in blood and flesh. The most familiar examples are evident in the current popularity of tattooing, piercing, branding and body modifications. These comprise the basic prerequisites for entry into the worlds of Modern Primitives, Vampire Culture, and The Fetish Scene. These highly ritualized subcultures evolved out of various aesthetic genres such as: Happenings, Body Art, Performance Art, Ritual Art, the Gothic Movement, and Hollywood. Originally the goal of these artists was personal transformation and attempts to reclaim the spiritual. The result was unconventional forms of the sacred manifested in art that attacked fundamental values of Western culture, provoking censorship on many levels of society. The culture war began. In this essay it will be argued that aesthetics now ideologically freed from ethical responsibility to society has evolved into an authentic sacrificial culture inclusive of ritual murder.

The Flesh

A phenomenon in contemporary art has been occurring in which blood is no longer merely represented but is actually being utilized for various art forms. Performance artist Chris Burden did not paint or sculpt a crucifixion; in 1974 in a work entitled "Trans-Fixed" he had himself crucified to a car. In the 1970s Burden's art performances also included having himself shot with a gun, punctured, burned and run over by a car. Burden's body became the ultimate sculptural material, the ultimate object.

[images/interview "Interview with Chris Burden" <http://www.artnode.se/burden/>] Artist Gina Pane does art performances that consist of self-inflicted cuts to her body including her face. In 1971 she performed "Escalade non-anesthésiée" in which she climbed a ladder that had blades attached to the steps. In 1972 in a performance entitled "The Conditioning (part I of "Auto-Portrait(s)," she laid down on an iron bed with very few crossbars that had fifteen long candles burning underneath. In 1974 in a performance entitled "Psyche" she knelt in front of a mirror, put on make-up and proceeded to cut into her face with a razor blade. In 1975 in a performance entitled "Le corps pressenti" she made cuts between her toes with a razor blade so that the blood would create permanent stains on a plaster cast that her feet were resting on. [images "Gina Pane" http://www.geocities.com/SoHo/Lofts/8344/gina_pane.html] In 1974, artist Marina Abramovic performed a work entitled "Rhythm O" in which "she permitted a roomful of spectators in a Naples gallery to abuse her at their will for six hours, using instruments of pain and pleasure that had been placed on a table for their convenience. By the third hour, her clothes had been cut from her body with razor blades, her skin slashed; a loaded gun held to her head finally caused a fight between her tormentors, bringing the proceeding to an unnerving halt."⁽¹⁾ The same year artist Petr Stembera performed an action entitled "Narcissus #1" in which he stood gazing at a self portrait which was placed on an altar surrounded by lit candles. Blood was drawn from his body with a hypodermic needle; then Stembera proceeded to mix the blood with his own urine, hair, and nail clippings, finally drinking the mixture in front of his altar. These are just a few examples of the use of blood in performance art.

Beginning in the 1960s and culminating in the 1970s there were several European artists who used animal and human blood in violent actions that focused on the body. The most famous of these were a circle of Viennese artists that included Hermann Nitsch, Gunter Brus, Otto Muehl, and Rudolph Schvartzkogler. These artists utilized several artistic mediums inclusive of painting, assemblage, drawing, photography, and collage. They also created and participated in what was referred to as action-happenings. However their work was fundamentally different than the American Happenings and Fluxus movements in that it was based on the tradition of Surrealism, which accounts for the overwhelming prevalence of blood and violence. Their work, which influenced many American artists in the 90s, became known as Viennese Actionism and their interests included the cult of Dionysus, the rituals of the Catholic Church and the psychoanalytic theories of Sigmund Freud, Karl Jung, and Wilhelm Reich.⁽²⁾ Hermann Nitsch did a series of performances titled "Orgies-Mysteries-Theater" that frequently entailed the dismemberment of animals, large quantities of blood and traditional religious symbolism. [exhibition review "Bloody Man: The Ritual Art of Hermann Nitsch" <http://www.zhurnal.ru:8080/staff/gorny/english/nitsch.htm/>] A 1974 performance entitled *48th Action* at the Munich Modernes Theater involved the disembowelment of a slaughtered lamb whose entrails and blood were poured over a nude man, while the drained animal was strung up over his head. Art Historian RoseLee Goldberg describes Nitsch's performance in terms of ritual:

Such activities sprang from Nitsch's belief that humankind's aggressive

instincts had been repressed and muted through the media. Even the ritual of killing animals, so natural to primitive man, had been removed from modern day-experience. These ritualized acts were a means of releasing that repressed energy as well as an act of purification and redemption through suffering.(3)

Hermann Nitsch is still conducting his Orgies-Mysteries-Theaters; now they last as long as six days and are often protested by animal rights activists. [image/information "The Official Hermann Nitsch O.M. Theater Website" <http://dogbert.inreach.com/vissol/index.html>]

Brus and Muehl were more concerned with creating political statements through the use of photography and collage; however, their images also entailed blood-drenched bodies and violent mutilations. In the book *Out of Actions* Hubert Klocker, curator of Collection Friedrichshof, Vienna, states, "Nitsch and Schwartzkogler employ the magical gesture by assuming the role of the shaman or the priest. Brus, on the other hand, uses the body as a projection surface for the subconscious collective potential. It then turns into an expression of the sacrificial act.(4) The most controversial of these artists is Rudolph Schwartzkogler, who participated in Nitsch's actions and created works that he referred to as "artistic nudes--similar to a wreckage" in which he performed self-administered mutilations. Schwartzkogler died violently on June 20, 1969 prompting several conflicting reports regarding the circumstances of his death. Art critic Robert Hughes in a 1972 issue of *Time* magazine stated:

Schwartzkogler seems to have deduced that what really counts is not the application of paint, but the removal of surplus flesh. So he proceeded, inch by inch, to amputate his own penis, while a photographer recorded the act as an art event. In 1972, the resulting prints were reverently exhibited in that biennial motor show of Western art, Documenta V at Kassel. Successive acts of self-amputation finally did Schwartzkogler in.(5)

Art historian Kristine Stiles claims that this is one of the notorious myths surrounding performance artists and that the real cause of Schwartzkogler's death was that he plunged to his death by jumping out a window while obsessed with Yves Klein's photomontage "Leap into the Void," which falsely depicted Klein jumping from a second story window. She also states that Schwartzkogler had begun experimenting that year with physical health regimes which he hoped would cleanse and purify his own body and mind.(6) In either account, Schwartzkogler's death was a violent act inspired by his immersion in the aesthetic and has the quality of a failed purification ritual. [article/images 'Rudolph Swartzkogler' <http://www.brainwashed.com/axis/schwarzkogler/rudolf.htm>] This incident inadvertently created an aesthetic mythology in which suicide is hailed as the ultimate performance art, the completed sacrifice.

Similar examples of extreme body modifications in performance art can be found throughout the world and are strikingly similar to religious rituals that entail blood. ["Body Modification Ezine" <http://www.bme.freeq.com/index.html>] "Performance artist Michael Journiac made a pudding with his own blood and offered it for consumption by his audience."(7) This is similar to the practice of autosacrifice by Aztec priests who drew their own blood as an offering.(8) Australian artist Stelarc suspends himself in different environments by ropes attached to hooks driven through his flesh. Although he claims "that these works are only involved with transcending normal human parameters including pain,"(9) they are strikingly reminiscent of rituals among some Plains and Northwest Coast tribal groups of North America. [image/video "Suspension" <http://www.stelarc.va.com.au/suspens/suspens.html>]

Performance artist Fakir Musafar has made it quite clear that his intentions are to perform live demonstrations of religious rituals and practices. Influenced by National Geographic and Compton's Picture Encyclopedia, "by the time he was twelve, Fakir had begun a systematic, personal exploration of virtually every body modification and ritual practice known to man."⁽¹⁰⁾ A small sample of his performances include hanging by fleshhooks while performing an Indian O-Kee-Pa ceremony, penis stretching with weights while performing sexual negation rituals of the Sadhu of India, having one-pound weights attached to his chest with fishhooks enacting mystical practices of the Sadhu of India, and corseting his waist enacting an initiation ritual of the Ibitoe. Fakir Musafar has been performing rituals and body modifications for over forty years. [images/magazine "Fakir Musafar's Home Page, Bodyplay Magazine, and Piercing School" <http://www.bodyplay.com/>]

The Blood

The use of blood in performance art can be likened to the use of blood in Girard's theory of sacrifice. Girard refers to the two natures of violence as harmful violence and beneficial violence and proposes that ritual is nothing more than the regular exercise of beneficial violence which is achieved through sacrificial rites: "The physical metamorphoses of spilt blood can stand for the double nature of violence. . . . Blood serves to illustrate the point that the same substance can stain or cleanse, contaminate or purify, drive men to fury and murder or appease their anger and restore them to life."⁽¹¹⁾ This is consistent with artist Barbara Wiesen's explanation of why she uses blood as a medium in her art works: "because I wanted to provoke multiple responses that might both attract and repulse at the same time."⁽¹²⁾ For Girard, "The function of ritual is to 'purify' violence; that is, to 'trick' violence into spending itself on victims whose death will provoke no reprisals."⁽¹³⁾ Blood rituals are necessary to redirect violence onto inconsequential victims in order to purify the community of the terror of uncontrolled killing.⁽¹⁴⁾ Girard states,

Only blood itself, blood whose purity has been guaranteed by the performance of appropriate rites--the blood in short, of sacrificial victims--can accomplish this feat. . .

The properties of blood, for example, vividly illustrate the entire operation of violence. . . . Blood that dries on the victim soon loses its viscous quality and becomes first a dark sore, then a roughened scab. Blood that is allowed to congeal on its victim is the impure product of violence, illness or death. In contrast to this contaminated substance is the fresh blood of newly slaughtered victims, crimson and free flowing. This blood is never allowed to congeal, but is removed without a trace as soon as the rites have been concluded.⁽¹⁵⁾

The artist becomes or enacts the sacrifice, the stage represents sacred space, the performance is held in sacred time, and significantly the blood is fresh, crimson and free flowing. A classic example of performance art as blood sacrifice is a performance entitled "Bloodbath" by Minnesota Artist Billy Curmano. Press releases announced that "The artist's own blood is shed in a human sacrifice intended to focus attention on global violence."⁽¹⁶⁾ At the performance, which was symbolically held on Saint Valentine's Day, Curmano was dressed in white and sitting next to a globe of the world; the audience was informed that his blood would be spilled as a sacrifice to ease the need for suffering and death."⁽¹⁷⁾ Since Curmano had promised that he would supply his own blood for the sacrifice and would not

mutilate himself on stage, a nurse sat next to him and extracted a dozen vials of blood by needle from Curmano's arms as a drum beat in the background. During the ceremony Curmano opened each vial with his teeth and spilled his blood on the globe while a voice offstage announced the names of countries in conflict.(18) Although this encompasses all aspects of the use of blood in sacrifice, it is basically a non-violent performance.

The Pain

The use of blood in performance art is often extremely violent and similar to another religious concept, mortification. In a wide variety of religious traditions mortification occurs in the context of initiation rituals. "The term mortification derives from the Latin *mortificare* (to put to death) . . . some practices of mortification seem intended symbolically to assimilate the initiate into a deathlike condition that is to precede an initiatory rebirth."(19) The practices refer to specific forms of bodily discipline, ranging from sleep deprivation to ritual forms of abuse. Deprivations are ways of symbolizing death: the dead do not speak, eat, drink, or sleep. Violent rituals can be seen as endurance tests that serve as a rite of passage into adulthood. The significance is not the violent act but a symbolic death and rebirth.(20) Christian mortification can be seen as an element in the more general practice of asceticism. The concept is derived from the Pauline ideal of participation in the crucifixion of Christ by putting to death the desires of the flesh. This self-imposed martyrdom was a way that Christians could recapture some of the self-sacrificing intensity of the early church.(21) This included various degrees of self inflicted violence, such as fasting, sleep deprivation, self-flagellation, the wearing of what is referred to as a hair shirt, "really a scourge worn as a belt against the naked flesh, the rope made more painful by being knotted or by the addition of metal nails."(22) The goal of this self-infliction of pain was to experience ecstatic union with God. In his book entitled *Holy Anorexia*, Rudolph Bell describes the life of Catherine Benincasa, one of the many medieval women who tortured themselves as a form of Christian mortification:

from the age of sixteen or so she subsisted on bread, water, and raw vegetables. She wore only rough wool and exchanged her hairshirt, the dirtiness of which offended her, for an iron chain bound so tightly against her hips that it inflamed her skin. For three years she observed a self-imposed vow of total silence except for confession. . . . three times a day she flagellated herself with an iron chain. . . . each beating lasted for one-and-one half hours and blood ran from her shoulders to her feet.(23)

In her book, *Mutilating The Body: Identity in Blood and Ink*, Kim Hewitt eloquently stated: "Catherine's religious devotions rewarded her with visions that led her to believe she experienced mystical union with God. She was canonized as a saint by the Catholic Church and became a model for holy anorectics for the next two centuries."(24) In an interview with Andrea Juno and V. Vale in the book *Modern Primitives*, British performance artist Genesis P-Orridge recounts one of a series of art performances entitled "Coum Transmissions" that has strikingly similar characteristics to mortification practices:

Instinctively, without pre-planning, I started to do cuts--scrape my body with sharp nails (not razor blades; to me, that didn't feel ritualistic enough; it had to be a dagger or nail or implement. . . I was pushing myself to the point of being declared near dead. At the last Coum Transmissions action in Antwerp . . . I

started cutting a swastika shape into my chest about 9" square with a rusty nail; then I turned it into a Union Jack (the British Flag), and then just scratched and cut all over the place.(25)

After that performance he was rushed to the hospital where he had a near death experience inclusive of astral projection [interview "Coum Transmissions" <http://www.brainwashed.com/tg/coum.html>] Another example of an art performance that exemplifies mortification practices is that of Sheree Rose and Bob Flanagan entitled "Autopsy." Flanagan lies nude on an autopsy table while he is whipped, beaten, strangled, pinched with clothespins, has various objects inserted into his rectum and has his penis sliced with a knife. The title has obvious references to death, and although Bob Flanagan does not speak in this performance, in earlier interviews he relates how "frequent near death encounters modified his concepts of gratification and abstinence, reward and punishment, and intensified his masochistic drive."(26) [film review "EUFUS: Sick: The Life and Death of Bob Flanagan, Supermasochist" <http://www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/societies/filmsoc/films/sick.html>] The rationale behind both Genesis P-Orridge and Bob Flanagan's art performances are that they are means of achieving spiritual transformation through imposed or self-imposed pain and violence leading to deathlike conditions. The question remains: how does one distinguish this activity as performance art from other acts of sadomasochism? In response to a similar question Genesis stated:

I've met genuine masochists and they're usually rather dull, because they don't give you any intellectual explanation at all, nor are they interested in one. . . I'm interested in heightened awareness, and I'm interested in learning more and more--about not just myself, but what is possible through the achievement of--not early trance states, but altered states in the true senses.(27)

This presents the conception of sadomasochism as a form of spiritual art which corresponds to the concept of mortification in initiation rituals and Christian asceticism. [film review "Not So Sick" http://www.pathfinder.com/time/magazine/1997/dom/971103/acine.not_so_sick.html] It also corresponds to Bataille's philosophy of sacrifice, which is equated to eroticism. Bataille states:

It is the common business of sacrifice to bring life and death into harmony, to give death the upsurge of life, life the momentousness and the vertigo of death opening onto the unknown . . . if we now consider the similarity between the act of love and the sacrifice. Both reveal the flesh. Sacrifice replaces the ordered life of the animal with a blind convulsion of its organs. So also with the erotic convulsion; it gives free rein to extravagant organs whose blind activity goes on beyond the considered will of the lovers.(28)

Bataille's concept of eroticism posits an interpretation of sadistic and masochistic acts as a form of ritual sacrifice.

Another example of an artist who employs sadomasochism in his performances is Ron Athey. Athey incorporates piercing, bloodletting and tattooing in his art events to create rituals of redemption. Ron Athey is HIV positive and a former heroin addict. In a 1993 performance entitled "Martyrs and Saints," Athey hung nude strung up to a column with long needles inserted into his head in such a manner as to represent a crown of thorns. His stated artistic intention is to achieve redemption through self-mutilation. [interview "FAD: Ron Athey's Saints" <http://www.fadmag.com/items/athey/athey.html>] Another

example of what could easily be construed as masochism is the work of French multi-media performance artist Orlan, who has been undergoing a series of cosmetic operations as art performances. She incorporates religious imagery, food, and comments on spirituality and its connection to the body while fresh blood is running down her face and body. During her performances she receives liposuction and facial reconstruction while reading aloud and eating. The title of her performance is Image/New Image(s) or the Re-incarnation of Saint-Orlan and her intended goal is to transform herself into a living saint. At the current time Orlan has undergone nine separate operations towards her physical transformation. She states, "It is no longer plastic surgery, but revelation."⁽²⁹⁾ [images "Orlan"

<http://www.rtb.be/interieurnuit/metamorphoses/orlan.html>] Orlan's ritualized surgeries are reminiscent of the mortification practices of the many medieval women who tortured themselves to achieve spiritual ecstasy. This postmodern mortification further exemplifies the philosophy of George Bataille, "The urges of the flesh pass all bounds in the absence of controlling will. . . . If a taboo exists, it is a taboo on some elemental violence. This violence belongs to the flesh."⁽³⁰⁾ According to Bataille's concept of eroticism, the violent masochistic acts performed by Genesis P-Orridge, Bob Flanagan, Ron Athey, and Orlan are means of achieving spiritual ecstasy through the mutilation of the flesh precisely because these violent actions are prohibited in Christian doctrine. Taboos shape transgressions and the fluctuation between the two give rise to religious phenomena. There is no reason to doubt an artist's claim that acts of self-mutilation and violence in their work provide a personal transformation for them. What becomes questionable is the decision to practice these violent rituals in the context of performance art, which is then further complicated when the intention is to redeem or transform the audience.

The Crisis

From both historical and religious perspectives, the use of blood in performance art fails to accomplish religious rituals of blood sacrifice or ritual mortification because "rites involving blood always require the participation of the group or community."⁽³¹⁾ When saints and monks performed private individual rituals they had the full support of the Catholic Church, and when mortification occurs in the context of initiation rites, the ritual is part of an established cultural tradition, but artists do not have a collective doctrine of beliefs or a community of believers to support their rituals. However, this is not the only reason why the use of blood in performance art does not succeed as religious ritual.

René Girard proposes a concept he calls "the sacrificial crisis" which occurs when the entire sacrificial structure fails. According to this concept rituals can fail in the following ways: 1) when the sacrificial victim loses its mimetic relation with the community, creating a situation in which the sacrificial substitute is recognizably different from other members of the group; 2) when there is an unequal balance between pure and impure violence; and 3) when the rite is not believed in by the community. Furthermore, ritual failure can cause more harm and unleash even more uncontrollable violence. According to Girard "anything that adversely affects the institution of sacrifice will ultimately pose a threat to the very basis of the community, to the principles on which its social harmony and equilibrium depend."⁽³²⁾ Violent Performance Art fails as ritual on all three counts and significantly represents a breakdown of American culture as defined by Girard's concept. When performance artist Gina Pane burns her feet and hands, gashes herself with a razor and makes slits in her eyelids,⁽³³⁾ the audience is not experiencing a sense of communal catharsis; these acts only serve to provoke a sense of horror at this vision of apparently inexplicable violence. An example of sacrificial victims losing their mimetic relation to society is performance artists who are HIV positive or use HIV positive blood. This fails as ritual

because the blood itself is designated as "polluted," making the artist an unacceptable surrogate sacrificial victim for a healthy community. Girard states: "If the gap between the victim and the community is allowed to grow too wide, all similarity will be destroyed. The victim will no longer be capable of attracting the violent impulses to itself: the sacrifice will cease to serve as a 'good conductor,' in the sense that metal is a good conductor of electricity." (34) An example of ritual failure occurred in a performance by Ron Athey. Athey pierced himself with needles, then carved designs into an assistant's flesh, afterward hanging paper towels blotted with HIV-soaked blood above the audience, which caused a commotion in which members of the audience fled from the auditorium in panic. This exemplifies Girard's concept of a sacrificial crisis: when the blood rite goes wrong it only serves to set off a chain reaction of uncontrollable violence.

Many of the previously cited works are situated on the edge of mainstream American culture and occasionally shocking even to veterans of the New York avant-garde art world. In order to gain a fuller understanding of the phenomenon of the use of blood in contemporary art it is necessary to examine these works from the perspective of religious and social prohibitions. Let us examine how current censorship of art evolved from the Biblical prohibition of images. In his essay entitled *Art and Disturbation*, philosopher Arthur Danto addressed the topic of violent performance art which he termed "the arts of disturbance." "Reality must in some way be an actual component of disturbational art, and usually reality of a kind itself disturbing: obscenity, frontal nudity, blood, excrement, mutilation, real danger, actual pain, possible death. . . It is disturbance when the insulating boundaries between art and life are breached." (35) According to Danto, Disturbational art is a regressive movement; instead of going forward to its transfiguration into philosophy, it goes backward to the beginnings of art, and our involvement with this art puts the viewer in an entirely different space than anything the philosophy of art has equipped us for. (36) Danto proposes that "the aim of the disturbatory artist is to sacrifice himself so that through him an audience may be transformed . . . it is an undertaking to recover a stage of art where art itself was almost like magic--like deep magic . . . in brief, it is an enterprise of restoring to art some of the magic purified out when art became art." (37) Although in agreement with this characterization, I would specify that the expression "when art became art" should be taken to mean when Judaic/Christian ideology subjugated this form of the aesthetic with biblical prohibitions on image worship. In his essay Danto suggests that disturbational art is what provoked the iconoclastic controversies at various times in history over the making of graven images:

You after all have to ask yourself why there has been at various times in history such intense controversy over the making of graven images, why there have been movements of iconoclasm at all. It is a struggle against the use of dark powers on the part of artists who, by making an image of x actually capture x. (38)

What Danto is describing is the religious concept of idolatry. The use of blood in art, specifically when the intention of the artists is spiritual redemption, would constitute an idolatrous act because artists are substituting themselves for the idol or the scapegoat. The artist is becoming another god, violating the biblical prohibitions as stated in the second and third commandments "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" and "Thou shalt not make for yourself a graven image." (39) The use of blood in performance art also has striking similarities to rituals of blood sacrifice in form, content, and ideology, which is exactly what the prohibitions forbid. The violent use of blood in art will always be seen as deviant in American society because self-mutilation cannot be culturally sanctioned in a society founded on

Judeo-Christian values. Bataille posits an explanation for this:

Transgression in pre-Christian religions was relatively lawful; piety demanded it. Against transgression stood the taboo but it could always be suspended as long as limits were observed. In the Christian world the taboo was absolute. Transgression would have made clear what Christianity concealed, that the sacred and the forbidden are one, that the sacred can be reached through the violence of a broken taboo.[\(40\)](#)

The ideal that the sacred can be achieved by transgressing religious commandments is an extremely frightening concept that would both politically and religiously undermine American culture. This explains why the works of artists are taken so seriously that they provoked a Supreme Court decision to regulate decency in art. From a Christian perspective, the concept embodied in these artworks that violence, sex, and ritual is a means of achieving the sacred constitutes blasphemy. Since the American legal system is fundamentally based on patriarchal Christian principles, it is no surprise that artworks incorporating blood, urine, excrement, semen, and violence will not receive any public funding on the grounds of obscenity. That would be the equivalent of financing the demise of the current American political and religious structure.

Although religious and government opinions on the subject are obvious, the response of the viewing audience needs to be addressed. Whereas artists may achieve individual spiritual transformation through their work, choosing to exhibit or perform publicly entails viewer response and participation. When an artist posits himself as a sacrificial scapegoat during an art performance, the experience of the audience is determinedly meaningful in interpreting the event. Interestingly enough, Danto's view of disturbing art in aesthetics and Girard's theory of sacrifice in religion hold the same position in regard to the significance of audience participation. According to Danto the viewer's choice of whether to participate in a violent action or not is what distinguishes performance art from anything the philosophy of art has equipped us to construe as art.[\(41\)](#) According to Girard, the viewer's choice of whether to participate in a violent action or not is what distinguishes performance art from acceptable ritual. So it is no coincidence that violent performance art does not fit into Danto's Hegelian construction of the history of art and without audience participation represents what Girard refers to as "a sacrificial crisis," for in each case violent art is neither beneficial to nor culturally sanctioned in art or religion. This provides a non-biblical explanation of why the use of blood in art is a secular form of idolatry. It represents a struggle between those who would retain the ethics and morality of a monotheistic patriarchal society and those who believe in other ideologies. The principal point is that American art, religion, and culture cannot allow for the use of blood in contemporary art for the same reasons that blood is prohibited in the Bible: it is a threat to the fundamental principles of the Judeo-Christian world view.

However, the fact remains that artists are increasingly using blood and violence in art and audiences are attending. This art can be referred to as "postmodern mortification" because it represents a spiritual attempt by artists to dismantle personal and societal boundaries through physical sacrifice as a ritual form of purification. Although it was demonstrated that this fails as religious ritual, it is a ritual process nonetheless. What will define the progress of this genre is not so much the artists as the audience. If audience participation begins to take place, participation being defined as religious interaction and communal transformation, performance art will no longer be positioned in the category of the aesthetic but will be designated by society as a new religious movement.

The Scenes

Ritual participation has been achieved and can be encountered in what is referred to as The Vampire Scene, The Goth Scene, The Fetish Scene, and The Body Art Scene, each of which is fundamentally based in aesthetics. It was the acceptance of the aesthetic use of blood in contemporary art that popularized these movements by sanctioning blood ritual. The significant difference is that ritual participation of audience members is required in the Vampire, Fetish, and Body Art Scenes, producing an authentic form of the sacrificial aesthetic.

Vampire culture like other religions consists of people who have committed themselves to an ideology, maintain ethical tenets within a hierarchical system, participate in rituals specific to their clans and in which aesthetics holds a significant, often magical place of significance within the group--aesthetic being broadly defined as symbolism, style, language, religion, art, presentation of self, appearance, and other cultural expressions. The Vampire Scene evolved from a combination of cultural myths, legends and the romanticized Hollywood image. Modern Vampyres signify themselves by spelling vampire with a "y," which distinguishes them from Hollywood, mythological, and fictional references. The "Vampyre Scene" refers to individuals, groups organizations, events, businesses, and so on, who all share an interest in the Vampyre lifestyle. One particular group has an intricate network of members and is referred to as "The Sanguinarium." This term is derived from the Latin word for blood "sanguis," and signifies how Vampyres regard each other, as in "of the blood." The Sanguinarium promotes a common Vampyre lifestyle comprised of etiquette and aesthetic and other tenets. [images/information "The International Vampyre Connection" <http://www.sanguinarium.net>] The manifesto found on their web page states:

The Sanguinarium is a network of individuals, social organizations and businesses for which the vampyre/vampire is a metaphor, representing a community interest in fetishism, the Occult, theatrics, art, lore as well as individual and spiritual expression and exploration . . . The Sanguinarium's final goal and purpose is to bring together all people who enjoy and find pleasure in darkness, occult, vampyrism and dark fetishism.(42)

Vampyres also distinguish themselves from Goths and the Gothic Scene, although aesthetic styles are similar and many times they attend the same clubs. The differentiating criteria are that Goths do not become members of clans or adopt the vampyre ideology. Many people are introduced to the Vampyre scene through the role-playing game "Vampire: the Masquerade," others through the erotic nature of the lifestyle and many more through popular literature such as Anne Rice's *The Vampire Chronicles*. Members congregate at Havens (Vampyre nightclubs) and Courts, which are social events or "town meetings" held in specific geographic locations. There is a sophisticated system of Courts and Havens throughout the United States and Europe. For example, The Court of Gotham includes all of metro New York City and the following Havens: Long Black Veil, The Bank, Alchemy, Contempt, and Mother. Another example is the Court of Lost Angels which encompasses Los Angeles and Southern California and whose havens include the Fang Club in Los Angeles, Bar Sinister, Coven 13 and Absynthe in Hollywood, Vampiricus and Release the Bats in Long Beach, Repent in Anaheim and many more. [images/information "The Fang Club" <http://www.fangclub.com/findex.html>] Currently the Sanguinarium lists ten Courts on their web site each containing many Havens. This demonstrates that Vampyre culture is not a passing fad but an extensive, highly organized community whose members number in the thousands.

The Sanguine Ankh is the symbol (sigil) of the Sanguinarium. Designed by master metal smith D'Drennen, it allows members to identify each other worldwide. It was derived from the ancient Egyptian symbol of eternal life and refers to the priest of the Egyptian god Horus' use of the bladed ankhs for bloodletting rites. The hierarchical structure of Vampyre culture is referred to as The Three Pillars. The lowest level consists of Fledglings who are either new to the lifestyle, inexperienced, or who are children of Vampyre adults. They are signified by having no prefix before their name and no stone in their sigil. After a period of initiation Fledglings can become Calmae, which signifies experienced members of the Clan, coven, or circle, and they wear a red stone in their sigil. The highest level is that of the Elders who are the most experienced and influential members of the Sanguinarium. They consist of leaders and founders of clans, owners of havens and fangmakers (dentists who make permanent fangs for members), and they have a purple stone in their sigil. [artifacts "Sabretooth Emporium"
<http://www.sabretooth.com/main.html>]

Use of language and etiquette is very significant in the Sanguinarium, which claims to promote chivalry, honor, style, and creativity. The expression "The Awakening" alludes to initial attraction to the Vampyre aesthetic, which is also referred to as the "birth to darkness" or "the becoming." A Sire is a Vampyre parent, including parent and child, lovers, friends--anyone who guides a fledgling to his Vampyre nature. The fledgling or childe is an initiate until moving up to the next level. Mundanes signify non-Vampyres and people who do not support the lifestyle. Swans refer to those who are aware of the culture but choose not to partake. Black Swans are people who are tolerant of the lifestyle while White Swans are those who disapprove and try to persuade family members or friends to get out of the scene. It is interesting to note that black is a positive term and white is a negative term in Vampyre culture. Other forms of etiquette include Vampyre or Scene names, which are pseudonyms derived from various historical, mythological and biblical sources. Prefixes such as Lord, Lady, Marquis, Marquise, Mistress, and Master denote status in a clan. There are also distinctive Vampyre greetings; in the Gotham Sanguinarium, this involves joining of hands, a kiss on each hand, followed by a mutual kiss on each cheek.

Other aesthetic characteristics include clothing, referred to as "garb," which usually reflects a historical era such as Victorian or Edwardian, and an assortment of fetish, corset, bondage, and so on. Preferred colors are usually red, black, and purple. Silver jewelry is preferred to gold since it is less representative of the rites of the Catholic Church. Music is dominated by Gothic; other genres include Industrial, Classical, Punk, Techno and a variety of other forms. Some of the more popular Vampyre bands include Inkubus Sukkubus, Type O Negative, Nosferatu and Malkador. Wine is the drink of choice and some members will also partake of absinthe although it is illegal in the United States and most European countries.

The code of conduct is enforced by the Elders in a tradition that is known as the "Black Veil." "The Black Veil" is comprised of eight ethical tenets of which the first and most important is to keep sanguine secrets confidential among members. The philosophy of the Black Veil includes secrecy, vampyre names, individuality, honor thy blood, respect, courtesy, and safety of the blood. Punishment entails excommunication from a clan for various lengths of time, according to the violation. It is significant to mention that these tenets only apply to the Sanguinarium and that there are many different sects and belief systems among vampires who are not part of this particular fellowship.

Some clans partake of blood drinking and bloodletting. A group of members who imbibe blood are referred to as a "feeding circle" and as opposed to media depictions they do not bite each other on the neck but usually use razor blades to make cuts into each other's bodies and suck the blood from those

cuts. Again it is important to mention that not all members of the Sanguinarium engage in this practice. Other popular customs include fetishism, sadomasochism and bondage & discipline sexual activities. This is inspired by the myth of the Vampyre as hunter. Participants are referred to as Regnant (master) and Thrall (slave); this involves an aspect of Vampyre magick termed "True Name" which is a variation on the sadomasochism safety word.

The Vampyre Scene is a serious and growing phenomenon that holds gatherings where thousands of Vampyres attend. The largest gathering is called "Endless Night" and is held in New Orleans throughout Halloween. Equivalent European gatherings include Vampyria and the Whitby Vampire Festival.

The sacrificial aesthetic is thriving in the form of this new culture. From a sociological perspective, when a group of people participate in a shared aesthetic in which identity and status are organized around a style that is distinguishable from the dominant culture it is referred to as a subculture. The Vampire subculture exists in opposition to the fundamental Judeo-Christian principles of mainstream Western Society. Vampyres pride themselves on practicing the antithesis of Christian ethics and this is apparent in the ritualized sexual and violent activities that permeate their interactions.

The Festivals

Vampyres frequently attend Fetish Scene and Body Scene Clubs, which involve public sadomasochistic activities. It is at the numerous "Scene" clubs where the worlds of body mutilation, piercing, performance art, blood rituals, tattooing, and all forms of bondage and violent sexual activity converge. The Fetish Scene refers to clubs where fetish, sadomasochism and bondage & discipline are promoted and The Body Art Scene refers to body piercing, tattooing, modern primitives, and so on. Performance artists who use blood attend and perform at all of these venues. These Scenes, which are all fundamentally based on violent aesthetics, are not mutually exclusive and usually overlap. The names of these clubs often appropriately reference historical predecessors. For example, a popular Fetish Club in Brisbane and Townsville Australia is called "The Hellfire Club." In eighteenth- and nineteenth-century England, Hell Fire Clubs referred to places known for raunchy sexual and reckless excitement, where hedonistic and occult activities were prominent. The original Hellfire Club was founded by Francis Sashwood in 1751 when he converted an Abbey into a cult headquarters by decorating in Gothic style and pagan statuary. It was rumored that these clubs were linked to Satanism and Witchcraft. Keeping with tradition, the contemporary Australian Hell Fire Club provides its members with an assortment of specially designed rooms, furniture, and devices in which they can imaginatively experience pain/pleasure.

[images/information "Hellfire Club Information Page" <http://www.hellfireclub.com.au/intro.html>] One of the most infamous clubs in London today is appropriately named "Torture Garden." Founded in 1990, it is currently Europe's largest Fetish/Body Art club. Its average attendance is 600-800 people with special events attracting as many as 2000 and it claims to be a major pioneer in the fetish/body art phenomenon. It is a combination of a fetish, S/M, body art, Modern Primitives, straight, gay, performance art, body ritual, fashion, techno/industrial/atmospheric music, multimedia, and cyberspace club. The concept of Torture Garden may initially be difficult to accept, as it encompasses the most extreme manifestations of body piercing, mutilation, and ritual uses of blood in Western culture.

[images/information "Torture Garden" <http://torturegarden.com>] Besides dressing in the latest leather sadomasochism designs, original accessories include catheter bags filled with blood and urine, medical bags filled with blood, and air hoses when necessary. There is every imaginable form of mask, chain, whip, and sometimes even chainsaws and blowtorches are part of the festivities. The Torture Garden also

contains a manifesto that clearly demonstrates the anomalous nature of fetish clubs. Their manifesto boasts:

Torture Garden remains the most radical and alternative club, always on the cutting edge of the latest underground subculture . . . Torture Garden is a world where the bizarre, strange and dreamlike become normal . . . Torture Garden is the apotheosis of all antinomies . . . The dissolution of all oppositions . . . As you mutate with Torture Garden, you reach new peaks of pleasure and eroticism and freed from the shackles of social convention . . . Torture Garden breaks taboos . . . Torture Garden has established an international reputation for encouraging artistic experimentation and transgression . . . [\(43\)](#)

This is practically a textbook definition of ancient festivals in which the deliberate violation of established laws occurred and where scandalous behavior was temporarily acceptable. It also exemplifies Bataille's concept of "orgy" in which he contends that "In the orgy the celebration progresses with the overwhelming force that usually brushes all bonds aside. In itself the feast is a denial of the limits set on life by work, but the orgy turns everything upside down . . . These excesses derive their most acute significance from the ancient connection between sensual pleasure and religious exaltation."[\(44\)](#) In Bataille's philosophy of eroticism he claims that the origin of orgy evolves from the existence of taboos which were set up to prevent murder and sexual violence and that these taboos shape the nature of transgression. Essentially the decadent nature of such clubs as the Torture Garden evolved directly from the violence and sexual prohibitions in Western culture. The manifesto of the club also claims, "At the Torture Garden the boundary between audience and performer disappears."[\(45\)](#) The crucial difference between performance artists who enact blood rituals and activity at the various "Scenes" is that audience participation now takes place. That is the significant criterion, which dissolves the line between the aesthetic and the religious, taboo and transgression, imagination and reality.

Allowing for the fact that the different "Scene" clubs are analogous to festivals, from a Girardian perspective they still do not resolve the problem of the sacrificial crisis. According to Girard "The fundamental purpose of the festival is to set the stage for a sacrificial act that marks at once the climax and the termination of the festivities."[\(46\)](#) He also claims that, "Festivals are based on the assumption that there is a direct link between the sacrificial crisis and its resolution."[\(47\)](#) The problem of Vampyre culture is that it exists in a perpetual state of sacrificial crisis. Without any reference to a surrogate victim and any predominant ritualistic structure it is the epitome of a failing society that has reverted back to its violent origins. Activities in these Vampyre Havens and Fetish Clubs exemplify the concept of a deritualized festival. Girard states in reference to the festivals of failing societies "Instead of holding violence in check, the ceremonies inaugurate a new cycle of revenge. By a process of inversion that can befall all rites and that we have already had occasion to observe in the case of sacrificial rites, the festival ceases to function as a preventive measure and lends its support to the forces of destruction."[\(48\)](#) Bataille's philosophy supports this view: "Orgiastic eroticism is by nature a dangerous excess whose explosive contagion is an indiscriminate threat to all sides of life."[\(49\)](#)

The Sacrifice

Unfortunately, the violence that occurs in these clubs will only continue to escalate until ritual meaning is restored. The logical resolution of the sacrificial crisis as manifested in the various "Scenes" is the sacrifice of an original victim in order to reestablish meaning to future surrogate victims. It is at this point that the line of demarcation between performance and reality collapses and ritual violence erupts into what is designated occult murder. One example is a self-styled vampire clan in Kentucky who were arrested on November 29, 1996 for the murder of a Florida couple. This incident has been sensationalized in books, television, interviews and an HBO special entitled "Vampire Murders."

[images/article "Court TV Verdicts: Florida v. Ferrell"

<http://www.courttv.com/verdicts/vampire.html>] Sixteen-year-old Rodrick Justin Ferrell was the leader of a vampire clan comprising four other teenagers in which rituals included cutting each other's arms with razors and sucking the blood. On the day of the murders, Heather Wendorf, the daughter of the victims, participated in the "embracement ritual" with Ferrell and "crossed over" into the clan by drinking each other's blood in a cemetery. Ferrell then became her sire. That evening Rod Ferrell bludgeoned Richard and Naoma Wendorf to death with a crowbar in their Florida home. The letter "V" was burned into their bodies, symbolizing Rod whose vampire name was "Vassago." Smaller burns on each side of the "V" represented the other members of the clan. After pleading guilty to armed burglary, armed robbery, and two counts of first-degree murder, Ferrell was sentenced to death in Florida's electric chair on February 27, 1998. He is the youngest person on Florida's death row. Another teenage clan member, Howard Scott Anderson, is serving life in prison after pleading guilty to participating as Rod's principal accessory in the double murder. Anderson's plea bargain saved him from the electric chair. Ferrell's attorneys portrayed him as a troubled youth addicted to drugs and sexually abused by relatives. He became involved with Vampires through the role-playing game "Vampire: The Masquerade" and he was initiated into the scene by an older teenager Steven Murphy (vampire name Jaden) who subsequently testified at the trial that:

he initiated Rod into vampirism during a crossing-over ceremony in a Murray (Kentucky) cemetery that involved slashing their arms and sharing each other's blood, followed by a lengthy period of meditation. As the senior Vampire who initiated Rod, Murphy said he became the younger boy's sire and was responsible for his behavior. And although he explained the rules of vampire conduct to Rod, the witness said, his protégé violated those principles when he organized his own band of followers . . . The Wendorf Murders were not vampiric, Murphy explained, because Rod didn't bleed the bodies. "There was no bloodletting. He did not take from them."[\(50\)](#)

This contradicted his earlier testimony that vampires don't kill and are expected to show the highest admiration for life. If vampires do not kill there would not be any knowledge of a distinctive vampiric modus operandi. It came to detectives' attention through John Goodman (vampire name Damien), a close friend of Rod's, that his motivation for the murders was that he was "possessed with the idea of opening the gates to Hell, which meant that he would have to kill a large, large number of people in order to consume their souls. By doing this, Ferrell believed he would obtain super powers."[\(51\)](#) Psychological justifications aside, Rod Ferrell's immersion into the occult clearly demonstrates that he was thinking in religious conceptions of sacrificial murder. This case is just one of many that entail blood rituals and murder. It is simpler to relegate these crimes to aberrant behavior than to imagine that we are living in a

sacrificial climate.

Occult groups that practice ritual murder have an authentic understanding of the sacred nature of violence. You do not have to convince Vampyres or Satanists that humans are violent by nature; as living examples of Girardian theory, they fundamentally comprehend this. This provides an explanation as to why the Elders and High Priests of these groups show no remorse for their killings. The reason why many of their followers recant is that they have been re-indoctrinated into mainstream ideology and subsequently view their actions as crimes as opposed to sacrifice. It is dangerous to view occult criminal actions from a strictly psychological perspective that tends to categorize them as psychopathologies; this relative assumption gives the false impression that these are not logical, rational choices. It perpetuates the denial of occult crime and relegates the offender to the only socially comprehensible category, "the irrational other." Contemporary acts of inexplicable sacred violence are more effectively understood in what I refer to as "ritual anachronisms," which are violent actions that are inappropriate to, or not adapted to, the value system that they are enacted in. No matter how bizarre a murder may appear, it can always be situated as acceptable in some historical era or distant culture. Occult crimes are the natural result of the escalation of violent aesthetics that dispute moral values. Blood Art, Vampyre Culture, The Fetish Scene literally set the ritual stage for sacrifice. Ritual murder is the epitome of the sacrificial aesthetic freed from ethical responsibility to society. What begins as artists experimenting with the use of blood and mutilation as a form of personal transformation escalates to an entire culture founded on the principles of a dark mythology manifested in orgiastic ritual. Once blood rituals turn participatory and ideologically justify sacrifice, idolatry is achieved.

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Some Comments on Generative Anthropology

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Eric Gans writes in *Chronicles of Love and Resentment* 166 (April 17, 1999), that much has been written about anthropology since he wrote *The Origin of Language* (1981), but that "virtually none takes [its] analysis, let alone its general perspective, into account." I, too, wonder. I have in all these years found no reference to this book (or Gans's other books). Why is it so? Not because these works are without meaning and depth. On the contrary. But why then?

The fact, as I see it, is that Generative Anthropology on the one hand and more empirically oriented evolutionary anthropology and linguistics on the other turn their backs on each other. But there is really a great bulk of work done in the 1980s and 1990s that could support the more formal, Gansian way of thinking, and this, conversely, could surely throw some new light on the empirical problems.

The main problem is the acknowledgment of dialectics. Gans's thoughts in this respect, his interest in paradoxes, and so on, contain a great deal of sound dialectics. The empiricists, on the other hand, generally do not recognize dialectics as a profitable way of thinking. Let me try to explain this fact.

Let me start with an example from the world of the physicists. A famous old sentence says: A moving body at a certain moment is in a definite place, and at the same time it is not in this place. The sentence goes back to Zeno of Elea. Hegel discussed it, and the dialectician Engels showed that he did not understand it at all.

Certainly, the sentence contains a strange contradiction. What can it mean--if anything? That a moving body at some definite moment is in a definite place, call its co-ordinates q , is trivial. But what does it mean to say that at the same time it is not in this place? Is it, then, in place r ? No. Such a statement would be an undialectical and senseless (logical) contradiction--unless we ascribe to its author some presentiment of the quantum-physical two-slit experiment, which would be equally senseless. Zeno lacked the modern concepts for expressing a deep thought: he wanted, I presume, to express something that in his time was really inexpressible. Therefore his difficult--or today all too easy--paradoxes about movement and time.

On the basis of modern physics it should not be difficult to give this old statement a meaningful interpretation (see my 1998a). If we interpret "not *being* in this place" as "*moving*" in this place, then at once the problem is solved, but the ancients simply lacked the adequate concept here. Moving means

possessing velocity (v), and more explicitly, we may speak of the velocity v of a body of mass m . This implies the concept of momentum $mv = p$. Now the physicists should begin to listen with some interest. Magnitudes p and q are called "canonical conjugates," being mutually connected in the Lagrange-Hamiltonian formalism. Thus together they express the entire essence of Newtonian physical determinism with its laws of conservation of energy and momentum.

Nevertheless, the physicists have shown no interest at all. They have their formalism and are therefore freed of the hard job of speculating about strange sentences--and the possibility of dialectical thinking--the argument being, of course, that "nature itself" is not dialectical. Nevertheless, the physicists' thinking about nature is inherently as dialectical as all other thinking, which must necessarily be based on human practice--even when not recognized as such. In fact, the whole dialectics of their science--the contradiction contained in the concept of movements as being states--is expressed in this single sentence. Indeed, it determines the conceptual and historical problem of establishing physics itself as a modern science.

In my web paper 1998b (here called *Models*) based on the elementary faculty of all life of anticipating (within some temporal horizon) its future states, I--admittedly in a somewhat formalistic way--offered a general analysis of two forms of generative events: first, a simple one, characterizing what I called Psi-intentionality and, second, the more complicated one of the Gansian "originary scene of representation," which he proposes as the core model of GA, implying the form of intentionality that I called the Omega-form. A somewhat more thorough characterization of these concepts is given below.

The problem of GA to be solved is, in fact, related to that of Zeno's movement paradox just referred to. The moving body was in its position q in a transitional state. It was "no longer" in a position before q , and "not yet" in the position after q . But being "no longer" and "not yet," as I see it, only defines a No-man's-land, so that its "real" place between the boundaries of "No-longer" and "Not-yet" is really undefined (this is, in fact, the core problem of limit theory and the differential calculus). This alone gives us no new concepts.

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The dialectical problem of anthropogenesis is quite analogous. Today we must make a conceptual transition analogous to that which was impossible in ancient times because of the lack of adequate concepts. We must define a generative moment as more than that of a No-man's-land that we must transgress. Rather, we must define the transgression as such; that is, we must create the concept, theory, or model defining the essential point of transgression itself. In everyday language, this might perhaps be expressed in the sense of a "no longer no-longer," and, at the same time, a "not yet not-yet." But surely, such a transgression is difficult to conceptualize as a definable "state"; it can only be analyzed in formal terms.

The philosophical problem of transition is that of a conceptual genesis which Gans partly grasps but, as I see it, none of the empiricists has realized or been interested in at all. The empiricists have nonetheless, in fact, on more or less speculative grounds, collected and discussed an enormous bulk of evidence in the attempt to define the anthropogenetic No-man's-land as such--and have in fact determined at least (!) three different possible evolutionary No-man's-lands. The first one might be at some time before the differentiation of apes and hominids about 5-6 million years ago; another at about the appearance of *Homo erectus* 200,000 or more years ago; and the (presumably) last one at the time of the Upper Palaeolithic 35 to 40,000 years ago. Below I shall try to show the possible relevance of such proposals to

Gans's GA.

In this connection we must, of course, also study the neuronal underpinnings of these mental processes and their possible generative transitions; I would here mention the recent work of Rodney Cotterill (1998). In the second section of this paper I shall try to evaluate this book in relation to the problem of dialectical model-building for the general understanding of intentionality (consciousness) of which, of course, GA is also an essential part.

With respect to GA itself, it is my feeling that Gans somehow is turning his back on these anthropological discussions--seeing himself, so to speak, in high flight across this (or these) No-Man's-land(s). The great thing in this is, surely, that he succeeds in showing that the structure of the "originary scene" really determines the paradoxical structure of the human mind after this transition, along with language, art, and so on. This knowledge too could find empirical support from some (perhaps few!) scholars (see, for instance, Andrew Lock, 1999). But I agree that it is sad to see the empiricists' unwillingness to study the paradoxical appearances of the transgressions as such--this unwillingness being of just the same sort as that of the physicists who lack interest in Zeno and Hegel so long as they find that these philosophers cannot help them in their own work.

What in the Gansian theory of GA must be acknowledged as the most essential point is perhaps just the one that Gans himself has least emphasized--that is, just the point that has especially interested some of the evolutionary anthropologists. This might in itself sound like a paradox--and require its own explanation. In Gans the "originary scene" is characterized as an appropriative situation, with the participants making appropriative gestures, while at the same time concurring about an object of common interest (a prey, for example) with the risk, therefore, of a general conflict of all against all. This would certainly be dangerous for the whole group. To prevent this, a cautious and reasonable reinterpretation of certain appropriative gestures could have acquired existential meaning for all members of the group. Therefore it is necessary that these members (and the appropriative gesture itself) be "so to speak already 'predisposed' to re-present the object even as it performs its practical function" and so "in effect, [bring] to (human) consciousness--this already-existing tendency." (Gans 1997, p. 22)

The essential point worth highlighting is, therefore, that the Gansian "originary scene" is primarily a scene of appropriation; that is, it is a scene mentally determined by the direction from subject(s) to object. Under such conditions, the current level of socialization would certainly be put into question, that is, the achieved sociability would be determined as in all probability not sufficient to prevent violence, at least if no other moment such as, for instance, a special and compelling sign, were brought into play. That is a point of paradox to which I shall return.

But this scene contains a further and more essential paradoxical point. It is in itself defined as a transitional model; it models the transition from an appropriative conflictive scene to a scene mentally defined in quite another way. That is, the scene is now defined by interindividual solidarity within the group. In this way, the originary scene--in a generative NOW--has created a new non-objective world direction; that is, a new direction of attention, so to speak perpendicular to the objective one, has mentally come into being. In *Models* I have called this direction the "allojective," and its polar elements, the group members relative to the subject, the "allojects."

A further paradox appears, then, because of the empirical indistinguishability between the subject itself and its allojects when viewed from the position of an observer outside the scene itself; the allojects, namely, are only defined relatively to the given subject. Further, each single entity can easily change

from being an object to being an alloject, and vice versa. This new conceptual uncertainty will have consequences that I, for the moment, cannot fully foresee; it could, perhaps, be an essential factor in the dialectical understanding of the concept of "resentment" (perhaps also of the ethical problems of war?).

3

In any case, the introduction of this dialectic of objectivity and allojectivity is presumably a most essential shift. What Gans defines is just this very transition from objectivity to allojectivity of the group members and so also the shift from objective interest (appropriation, material fitness in the Darwinian sense, etc.) to a socially determined interest in interhuman relations; that is, the very generative NOW of this transition. I therefore think it would be crucial to give this transition itself a formally strong treatment; I made a first attempt in this direction in my *Models*.

But it should be noted that in the last twenty years just the same shift of attention has been made by other, more empirically oriented scientists as well. This expresses, in fact, a deep and common mental shift from a "normal" Western interest in material "objective" phenomena and goods to a new, broader interest in sociality. But, in my view, Gans himself, in making this essential shift, is not fully aware of its content, range, and necessary material background. Therein I see the above-mentioned paradox.

Let me illustrate the depth of this mental, indeed, political shift of orientation by reference to the book *Machiavellian Intelligence* collected and edited by Richard W. Byrne and Andrew Whiten (1988). Their "Machiavellian" idea is just this shift, which they find expressed along the evolutionary path from monkeys to apes (and humans) through a special mental faculty called a "theory of mind," or "mind reading," and further developed as a theory of human interaction; see for instance (Levinson 1995). This faculty itself must be recognized as being based on some primordial form of inner representation (without outer designation). And, *nota bene*, this faculty was (in the opinion of the authors of *Machiavellian Intelligence*) not evolved through expressions of "objective" interest nor through new methods of appropriation, tool use, and so on, but rather, on the contrary, through expressing new forms of growing interindividual interests, that is, in the terminology proposed above, interests of "allojective" character.

In *Machiavellian Intelligence*, Nicholas K. Humphrey, in a humorous manner, writes:

[The] idea of the intellectually challenging environment has been perfectly described by Daniel Defoe. It is the desert island of Robinson Crusoe--before the arrival of Man Friday. The island is a lonely, hostile environment, full of technological challenge, a world in which Crusoe depends for his survival on his skill in gathering food, finding shelter, conserving energy, avoiding danger. And he must work fast, in a truly inventive way, for he has no time to spare for learning simply by induction from experience. However, was that the kind of world in which creative intellect evolved? I believe . . . that the real world was never like that, and yet that the real world of the higher primates may in fact be considerably more intellectually demanding. My view--and Defoe's, as I understand him--is that it was the arrival of Man Friday on the scene which really made things difficult for Crusoe. If Monday and Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday had turned up as well then Crusoe would have had every need to keep his wits about them. (Humphrey 1988, p. 15)

It must be recognized as a fact that for some centuries such "Robinsonades" really have determined the ideas even of many people who actively oppose them--even as Marx, who energetically opposed all the common bourgeois "Robinsonades," based his political economy exclusively on social forms of appropriation. So also does Gans himself not observe, as I see it, that the turn he has initiated had been initiated already by other more empirically minded anthropologists, on whom he, sorry to say, nevertheless "turns his back."

Thus what in my opinion is lacking here is not calling attention to the "allojective," socially oriented relationships between cultural humans; on the contrary. What I consider to be lacking is attention to the bulk of empirical evidence supporting this shift or transition, the real basis of which had already developed in the course of the nonhuman primate way of life. These primordial non-cultural forms of intelligence (using internal "dumb" representation) were therefore, presumably, of much greater importance than the objective-material forms of simple appropriation (and so, for instance, was the development of tool use). But Gans's starting point is just a scene of appropriation.

Of course, we must ask the question as to *when* and *how* these transitions were actually realized--if not in fact through an "originary scene"? Perhaps they could not be realized in one stroke. It is possible (but, of course, not certain) that it had to be realized through two, three (or more?) such strokes.

The first of these was perhaps the above-mentioned moment of 5-6 million years ago. This could reasonably be considered as conditioning further developments of a richer and more differentiated all-round social life, which could in the long run have resulted in a second transition generating *H. erectus* whose material culture, at least in the view of certain scholars, did not show a great deal of material refinement. This supposition is, however, strongly contradicted by Thomas Wynn (1989) with reference to the Acheulean stone techniques of some 300,000 years ago. For Wynn these techniques demonstrate a spatial competence involving the concept of "artifact as a whole," the divorcing of space from the focus of ego, and the development of perspective:

The construction of perspective requires a complete "stepping out" of the bonds of perception. One must construct not just the objects in space but also the viewpoints those separate objects may have when looking back at ego. Objects and ego can then be conceived as occupying the same space. The evolution of these concepts of space reflects, I think, the development of the very distinct concept of self as an actor in an independent existing world. Such awareness is at the heart of human understanding (65).

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On the other hand, these hominids also had some biologically (anatomical, neurological) modern equipment (larynx, vocal tract, etc.) at their disposal. This new period could therefore be thought of as characterized by some form of vocalization (perhaps, as with Bickerton's "proto-language," lacking any grammar), or, in the terms of Gans's GA, characterized by primordial forms of the ostensive and perhaps imperative, which would be in agreement with the idea of some sort of intentional separation between selves and others.

In the paper cited above, Humphrey also proposes the following:

The outcome has been the gifting of members of the human species with remarkable powers of social foresight and understanding. This social

intelligence, developed initially to cope with local problems of inter-personal relationships, has in time found expression in the institutional creations of the "savage mind"--the highly relational structures of kinship, totemism, myth and religion which characterize primitive societies. [I would like to insert a little question mark here! - RS] By sympathy I mean a tendency on the part of one social partner to identify himself with the other and so to make the other's goals to some extent his own. The role of sympathy in the biology of social relationships has yet to be thought through in detail, but it is probable the sympathy and the "morality" which stems from it is a biological adaptive feature of the social behavior of both men and other animals--and consequently a major constraint on "social thinking" wherever it is applied. Thus, our man setting out to apply his intelligence to solve a social problem may expect to be involved in a fluid, transactional exchange with a sympathetic human partner. (Humphrey 1988, pp. 22, 23)

I think, on the contrary, that just such a mental "fluid" of transactional exchange between early humans could be an essential constraint *against* making a still richer social life. Because, as Stephen C. Levinson says (about humans): "[L]anguage didn't make interactional intelligence possible, it is interactional intelligence that made language possible as a means of communication" (Levinson 1995, p. 232). So material mediation of the interactional possibilities at hand could surely lessen the danger of "mimetic crisis." The "revolution" of the Upper Palaeolithic 35 to 40,000 years ago was precisely one of symbolizing and "art" manifesting new levels of representation. This "revolution," therefore, could be thought of as the third transition. Would it be impossible to propose that the abolition of the above-mentioned constraints might give rise to the development of Gansian declaratives as the attempt to bring such awareness-"fluids" to a standstill? A grammar, then, would certainly be needed to mark and grasp the different meanings of these vocalizations, some of them meaning things, some meaning properties of things, or their movements, and so on. This would certainly imply the genesis of a grammar.

Further: the representation of the actions of things (movements) as analogous to the actions of the humans themselves (using rudimentary grammar) would give the individuals involved a better overview of their whole life-situation than had been the case without such a representation. If in this way things could be viewed as more or less humanlike agents rather than as merely "dead" objects, this could initiate the transformation of the primordial "theory of mind" into a more advanced "theory of properties," the notions of which could then perhaps give rise to the myths and rites that Humphrey had in mind.

Last but not least, such a transition would grant the humans overall subjectivity in the form of Omega-intentionality. This would mean self-referentially to help them to mark their own positions in the world and society underpinning their Egos.

To sum up this first part of the paper: I see Gansian GA as being an essential contribution to the understanding of the transition from animals to humans, that is, the crucial moment of the whole anthropogenesis. In this sense GA also makes an essential contribution to the understanding of these strange beings we call humans. Understanding a concept presupposes the understanding of its genesis.

Yet in the picture of Zeno's paradox it is not enough to conceive movements as such (v). Movements are always movements of *something*, that is, a body with some mass (m), being already before its

interrogation located at q . The abstract concept of "resentment" I therefore experimentally interpret as such a v -concept deprived of its bodily ("touchable," see below) m -moment, not recognizing the essential moment of $p = mv$. In a fully dialectical treatment--of the problems of being a human as well as all other problems of humanity--we have to relate all relevant concepts; metaphorically this means necessarily relating each q to all the anthropological " ms ," " vs ," " ps ," as well as the " qs " to each other.

Lastly, this task must necessarily involve some formalisms (analogous to those of logic and physics); but I would strongly caution against the serious fallacy of modern physicists and technocrats to be content with something like an anthropological "Hamiltonian," thereby forgetting the whole mental, social and material (also ethical and aesthetic) labor of mankind with its dialectical contradictions. Without this labor, mankind would never have been what it is today. To be able to conceptualize these notions is an essential requirement of every full-scale humanism.

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As mentioned above, in my *Models*, I presented a somewhat formalistic picture of a living organism as necessarily capable of anticipation. Further, every organism has a boundary, a membrane, or skin of some sort. Membranes must, on the one hand, let stuff go in and out. On the other hand the membrane constitutes the locus where anticipation is realized. This essential faculty is based on information (not matter) coming in from the outside (realized by the "afference" function) and on the reaction to this information (realized by the outward "efference" function of the motor apparatus).

On the one hand, these functions are all tightly interwoven; on the other hand, to a great extent they also correspond to the difference between appropriative ("objective") and orienting ("allojective") behavior, the latter of which is strongly connected with the psychic functions. Analyzing the neurological and neurophysiological underpinnings of especially these functions, Rodney Cotterill in his recent book *Enchanted Looms* (1998) has tentatively elaborated a "motor theory of qualia." For such "allojective" behaviour Cotterill coined the term "navigation." This "motor theory of qualia" is based on the tight neuronal interplay of the afference and efference functions and so aims at the description of the formation of these "allojects" as the content of conscious awareness. Because Gans's hypothesis about the "originary scene of representation" is itself a theory about the creation of the "allojective" dimension, there is good reason to compare these two theories.

In brief, the principal difference between the "objective" and the "allojective" can be stated by mentioning that the first is directed toward appropriation, the intake of food to be digested in the interior of the organism, the second, in contrast, toward such things as must remain outside the organism.

This "remaining outside" is essential. Cotterill proposes a veritable exorcism of the "homunculus"; there is nothing like a "soul" or other special essence inside the body or brain representing or bearing conscious awareness as such, no sort of material "intake" with respect to the faculty of anticipation:

Things heard are . . . heard out there. The same is true of things seen. We should be content to leave them out there; there is no need for them to be pulled inside the skull, where there would then arise the problem of enlisting some agency to scrutinize them for us. The brain is an impressive building, but there is no one at home! (Cotterill 1998, p. 238)

What in this paper are called "afference" and "efference" are close to what Cotterill calls "exafference" and "exefference": "*Exafference* and *exefference* refer, respectively, to incoming signals from the environment which impinge upon the sensory receptors (thereby producing ongoing afference signals) and signals sent out to the environment (as a consequence of prior efference signals)" (*Ibid.*, p. 389).

"Inside" the surface of the organism we find--instead of a clever homunculus--"schemata" for anticipation which can be defined in this way: "A schema is a reproducible coactivation of neurons linking a specific pattern of motor-planning activity in the premotor area to relevant activity in the sensory areas, the reproducibility stemming from the fact that schemata are laid down in memory." (*Ibid.*, p. 352; schemata are in *Models*, following Rob. Rosen, called simply "models.")

I am here especially interested in a circuit structure which Cotterill calls the "*master module*." In fact, this structure consists of two distinct structures, the first of which he calls the *core circuit* (including the sensory cortex receiving direct sensory input, the premotor cortex with its working memory, and the thalamic intralaminar nuclei which have gating control of the circulation around the core circuit and back to the sensory cortex). The second circuit also includes the sensory cortex and the premotor area; its third center is the anterior cingulate, from which there is in mammals a special connection to the nucleus reticularis thalami supplying the gating control of the core circuit. This special structure plays a central role by making decisions as to when pain is possible. So this structure serves to avoid danger and also presides over the selection between competing alternatives on the basis of a preexisting internal, conscious plan; it is here that executive attention operates.

In referring to the anticipatory processes of the core circuit, nothing essential transcends what in *Models* had been called "Chi-intentionality" (instinctive, unconscious reactions); so here "there is no *problem* of body/mind, only a *situation* of body/ability-to-simulate-body's-interaction-with-environment" (*Ibid.*, p. 351).

What in *Models* I called "Psi-intentionality" (there presumed to be a mammalian specialty) seems also to be in accordance with the special function of the said connection from the second circuit to the core circuit. Let us therefore hear what Cotterill has to say about this secondary circuit relative to the notion of "navigation." He first offers a concrete example similar to my own about the NOW of a predator's attack on the prey after lying in wait for it, in *Models* assumed as characteristic only of Psi-intentionality:

The latter [the sprinter in his starting block], if he does not deliberately intend to cheat, will be simultaneously experiencing conflicting urges: to react as rapidly as possible, but also to avoid initiating his movements before he is sure that the starter's pistol has sounded. One should look upon the latter tendency as a sort of self-imposed veto . . . the countermanding process [being] just as automatic as the original movements themselves. [. . .] The benefit is in fact a profound one: *the power of real-time choice (or veto-on-the-fly, as it were), even in the absence of free will, would still be an enormous advantage to the animal.* The advantage can be expressed in a single word: *navigation.* (*Ibid.*, p. 342)

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So "navigation"--a term that so nicely characterizes the special Psi-form of intentionality--demands the faculty of real-time choice, or veto-on-the-fly, made possible by the second circuit:

The real-time-choice I am referring to includes the vital extra ingredient of being able to react (deterministically) to stimuli that are generated *internally*, through the agency of short-term memory. Now in order for such memories to be evoked, the system requires some form of priming, . . . [being] supplied by a combination of the intended motor act and the current sensory input. This will guarantee that the unconscious veto mechanism gets the best possible instantaneous information, under the prevailing circumstances. . . . Moreover, we noted that it is particularly efficient for the activation of relevant memories to recruit the same areas that are used for perception. . . (*Ibid.*, p. 428)

Conscious animals (mammals, equipped with the said special neuronal connection) are simply navigators, probing their environments through their muscular movements, that is, they are (at least) psi-intentional. Pain avoidance also necessarily implies "executive attention," attention being the main characteristic of Psi-intentionality. Of course, one can call such attention a form of conscious awareness. The predator lying in wait for his prey and the sprinter in his starting block have to realize "attention," that is, being "aware" of the situation; nevertheless, in the actual moment they act relatively automatically. But I am somewhat dissatisfied by this preliminary definition--the preliminariness seemingly being just the reason why the concept of consciousness has always been such a hard problem for philosophy. It simply lacks a *formal* definition. The preparation for this is the main aim of *Models* as well as of this part of the present paper.

First of all we should note that the only thing an organism can *do* relative to its environment--there being no one at home!--is to *move*. But (ex)efference is no simple form of innervation. It involves at least three neuroprocesses together composing a veritable navigational chart over "muscular hyperspace" and reveals the master module's faculty of triggering preprogrammed motor sequences on the basis of the "knowledge" stored in the schemata.

(Ex)efference always achieves some change in the environment, manipulations of things, movements producing new perspectives for attention, and so on, causing new sensations, (re)afferences being the environmental feedback. But this is not all. In the premotor areas the collaterals of the efference neurons produce for the short-term memory an "efference copy"; through this, reafferences will always be registered differently from exafferences but will also be compared with the efference copies. Efference copy signals keep the nervous system itself apprized of when and how it is probing the environment, the reafference telling the outcome.

Thus Cotterill states that "every muscular movement asks questions of the environment, and our only means of asking such questions is through muscular movement" (*Ibid.*, p. 356). This statement implies that our eye movements serve as questionings of our environment by directing the eyes at certain places "out there,"

the premotor area [being] the source both of instructions to the motor cortex (and hence to the muscles) and of the efference copy passed back toward those regions of the sensory cortex that receive input from the thalamus. In effect, the signals transmitted from the latter routes are "saying" to their target areas: *BE ON THE ALERT!--the premotor area has just given the orders for muscular movements which could lead to a response from the environment!* (*Ibid.*, p. 356)

So far we are still considering Psi-consciousness, not yet the definitive problem of consciousness as we experience it in our daily life, that is, the problem of the specific personal *unity* of "our" consciousness as such.

When we perform a task involving different motor components at the same time, we use different links in our muscular "hyperspace" that are clearly separated but without being clearly aware of the individual elements of this task. This reveals that the master module merely triggers programmed motor sequences, but without thereby coming in inner conflict with itself. Our Psi-intentionality is "unconsciously" asking the decisive "questions" about the environment "out there." Only if during this process the second circuit tells us that one of these actions could lead to dangerous responses (for instance, involving pain) from the environment does it call: *BE ON THE ALERT--BE CONSCIOUS!*

This requires the animal to retain a record of what movements it has just performed, as well as a record of the resulting reactions of both the environment and the creature's own body. This record of the state of the "muscular hyperspace" has been registered through the reporting system of the muscular spindle apparatus (an internal sensory system), which provides information via further internal reafference routes and so gives the organism a full chart of the momentary muscular state and movements of the body. These spindles also play a key role in the generation of the internal feelings usually called "*qualia*." The "hard problem of consciousness," therefore, is in Cotterill's view "no more difficult to explain than any other aspect of the phenomenon, for the fact is that navigation in the above sense requires that consciousness and qualia are inextricably tied" (*Ibid.*, p. 429).

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For this faculty of navigation it is not enough to act automatically or to have schemata merely indicating how the environment usually reacts to muscular probings. Being really "conscious" of a situation means to be able to recognize the specific as well as the general. This means that

qualia arise naturally from the need to monitor the significance for the body of the environment's response to a *volition-provoked stimulus*. It is equally tempting to suppose that the system can mimic the functioning of the stimulus-response loop that closes via the environment, simply by employing the alternative route for the efference copy[,] . . . the signals carried by that part of the circuit . . . possess[ing] all the attributes of the main route. If that were not the case, it is difficult to see how they could adequately perform their task in the scheme. (*Ibid.*, p. 357; italics added.)

What Cotterill here defines as "qualia" is exactly identical to what I called in *Models* "Omega-intentionality."

Let us close this section by briefly returning to the question of why exploitation of the unconscious veto mechanism paradoxically requires us to be conscious. . . . In the model I have been advocating in this book, that concept-using mechanism relates to the anchoring of schemata to what I have called the [core circuit], with planned movement being the *sine qua non*. It is extremely important, however, that consciousness will not be present unless a schema, or a set of schemata, are *actually being activated*. . . . Finally, it is worth noting the connection between these planned movements and . . . *affordance* for

action, these requiring the subject to be an actual agent, rather than a mere mover. (*Ibid.*, pp. 376-7)

I think that these arguments are sufficient to explain the common human feeling, that is, "qualia," of being *one*, the unified awareness of just being an *individual*: "We," that is, the phenomenal qualia experiences of ourselves being "individuals" (in-dividuals = mental atoms = unique creations) are not homunculae in our bodies; there is simply "nobody at home"! Man as the only agent of his life himself has in fact *one* body, whose neuronal processes and circuits with their specific memories, spindle apparatus and other afferences, efference copies, and so on, are taking place in it. But this is happening in such a ramified way that insurmountable discrepancies--and so the body's possible processual partition--must necessarily be controlled (by gating processes) in order to avoid such a partition, which would be life-destroying. So a unified, and certainly unique, conscious "person" can--necessarily!--arise; if this had not happened, presumably the line of the hominids would have died out--at the latest--with *H. erectus*.

To all this we must add that movements imagined via processes in the prefrontal lobe will be registered by their efference copies in spite of the real veto, or "abortion," of their realization. That is, "thought" and "reality" will be automatically coupled and are at the same time clearly distinguished (if not, we would speak of mental disease). Things are sensed (seen, heard, touched), moved, and also thought about "out there"; hence they are recognized as being "objective"--this in contrast to the mere "thinking" about these things happening "in here." (The term "objective" here is not meant in opposition to "allojective" but, conversely, "thought-about" things must be allojects.)

"Thinking," therefore, monitors the significance of environmental responses relative to *possible* volition-provoked stimuli, that is, as moments of a generalized form of navigation. Thinking in this way mirrors real or imagined motor acts including the motor acts necessary in speech. This must all be included in the definition of Omega-intentionality.

Outlook on GA

Now, what can this have to do with Generative Anthropology? Let us compare the situation just described with the "originary scene of representation." The primary ("instinctive") Chi-intentionality is oriented against certain selected objects to appropriate or to avoid the prey or the enemy. The more advanced Psi-intentionality including the "allojects" made a richer "navigation" (orientation) possible by way of the faculty of real-time choice, or veto-on-the-fly.

This is a situation just like that of the "originary scene" before the abortive sign emerged, or, as noted in the first part of this paper, the situation described in *Machiavellian Intelligence* where the allojective interindividual relationships (of the hominids) had presumably been so strongly differentiated and complex that it could be a real problem to secure the inner balance and coherence of the group.

In such situations it was necessary for the individuals to pass from Psi-intentionality to the specific Omega-intentionality with its "qualia." This is the fourth formal moment, or category (so to speak, a *fourthness* in Peircean terms, had he accepted more than three such categories).

8

Precisely analogous to the personal unity obtained by navigating in the world, social unity, the need for collective security, is the crucial matter of the "originary scene." Here fourthness could not be merely

that of individual awareness or qualia; in GA the minimal achievement was the genesis of the hypothetical abortive gesture as the sign. This fourthness is the crucial point in GA, as I see it--a really great point. The essential difference, of course, is that qualia is an individual affair, the sign a collective one.

"Resentment" (a term that has always been somewhat difficult for me) could on this basis perhaps be interpreted as a double inaccessibility; on the one hand, as the inaccessibility of the environmental objects more or less consciously recognized, seen, heard, and so on, but merely of interest for "navigation," not being subject to active manipulation; and, on the other hand, as the inaccessibility of the "inner" qualian moments of awareness, untouchable as such, only modifiable intentionally by way of the agent's "own" outward activities of some sort. The same must also be valid for imagined sensuous impressions, movements, actions, or "thoughts"; these too are processed in the prefrontal lobe and--in spite of the real ("resentmental") veto of their realization--registered by their efference copies.

We should note here, too, that in the originary scene the real agents are subjects having two essentially different ways to represent these untouchable elements, an individual one through the qualia and a social one through the hypothetical sign of language and other forms of representation as well, all of them conditioned by "resentment." This two-fold way of representation, therefore, makes every material thing as such in its double, material and ideal, form of existence, express a dialectical contradiction. That is, we clearly distinguish these material and ideal forms from each other; they cannot be interchanged. On the other hand, under the condition of the omega-intentionality (qualia) they also mutually condition each other; you cannot consciously have the material form of things without their ideal forms, and vice versa.

In a three-fold way this is valid also for the sign (language, etc.) itself--being "fourthness"--by unifying all three '-ject's--subject, object, alloject--in its own untouchable body, thus by its mere existence socially materializing their common nexus which must not be destroyed.

My own hypothesis in this connection is therefore that these two "fourthnesses," different in themselves, are mutually dependent on each other: on the one hand, clearly distinguishable, on the other hand, necessarily to be viewed in unity. It is impossible to imagine the utterance of a (cultural) sign without recognizing the utterer himself as omega-intentional. On the other hand, the phenomena of qualia and attention directed toward the elements of the environment will presumably first acquire their specific form, richness and full "meaning" for the individual when "signed," or "de-signed," that is, when semantically being re-presented in the individual consciousness. Or, in other words, this double "fourthness" itself represents the dialectical contradiction. In the formal manner of *Models* in which I defined the dialectical contradiction, this "fourthness" represents a No-sign and, at the same time, a No-qualia, hence precisely the unity of these negations.

So it must also be recognized that the schemata themselves have been generalized in this process of fourthness. These reproducible coactivations of neuronal linkings in the premotor area and elsewhere (see Cotterill 1998, p. 352) must now be viewed as including as well linguistic (and other) signs, their articulation and interpretation themselves involving afference and efference processes of all sorts. So we could imagine a Cotterillean "master module" enormously enlarged so that it included the whole space of social intercourse, with the individual inhabitants themselves equipped with real "master modules" mutually attuned to match each other so that this collective intercourse can be realized. Is there somebody at home?

On the other hand, the crucial difference between signs and qualia seems to be the "materiality"

("thingness") of the first as opposed to the "ideality" ("mindness") of the second--their opposition nevertheless perhaps annulled in the proposed four-tiered model. Among the proposed models themselves, in the main, there seems to be no great contradiction at all: the abortive gesture-sign of the generative moment for Gans seems in itself to represent a "no-thing"--being just as underdetermined and ephemeral as the qualia of conscious awareness.

With this, I think, we have defined, that is, formally modeled the generative transformation not only of an animal into a human, but also of an animal group into a human society and consequently of the members of the group into (culturally defined) social individuals. Both Cotterill's theory (or, more precisely, the model here abstracted from it) and the theory of GA are, in this respect, minimalist abstract model hypotheses. This is no reproach. On the contrary! In my opinion this is the crucial--and necessary--point from which alone it will be possible to formulate further models for anthropological theorizing in the future, namely, by "dressing" the minimal model in different ways.

It is surely exciting to ask the ontological question of what human society really is and to pose the question of whether there is "somebody at home" there at all. What about kings, parliaments, plans, storehouses, and arms? And what about language and our wonderful arts? Surely, no! There is nobody at home but the social agents themselves (along with their neurons!--these being just the conscious agents who by virtue of their generalized and socialized schemata are also capable of creating material equipment potentializing their bodily equipment--with their objective possibility of new consumption, even of thinking by means of the new information technology! We can simply *do* more than animals and the ancients. Let us try to *do* so as to understand...

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Orality and Literacy : The Development of Philosophy into Logical Thought

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Preface

According to the theory of Generative Anthropology, the ostensive form is the originary form of the linguistic utterance from which the imperative and then the declarative are derived. The first linguistic sign must have occurred in the originary event or scene. As Richard van Oort notes: "By presenting an explicit model of the origin of language--one based on the *scene* of the originary performative context of the first linguistic sign--we seek to introduce precisely what is lacking in metaphysical models of language, namely, the *entire scene in which language must be conceived to have evolved*. It is only with the advent of the declarative, a later development of linguistic evolution, that language can divorce itself from its context, and thus appear to be wholly independent of its scene of production."⁽¹⁾ In our work we attempt to shed light on the process--in the course of historical time and space--in which the true declarative utterance grew out of more elementary forms of speech acts, stripping itself of the context of the actual speech situation. This development originally took place in early Greek culture, bringing into existence the linguistic prerequisites of formal logic and metaphysics. With our historical analysis we intend to underscore the importance of the *originary hypothesis* of GA according to which "the first occurrence of language was in the originary event or scene of language."

Introduction

Scholars have thoroughly studied the development of logic in the subject "philosophy." There is, as far as I know, scarcely any work about the preconditions of logic itself. All the linguistic patterns of logical thinking can be found in the epic poems of Homer. In my present work I propose to show through reference to the most important logical structure of the pre-Socratics that European logical thinking is predetermined by two factors: on the one hand by a traditional or an everyday language,⁽²⁾ on the other hand by the transition from orality to literacy in the early Greek culture.

The Eleatics as the most important champions of logical argumentation

Jonathan Barnes wrote of pre-Socratic thinking that: "Arguments characteristically require complex syntax: 'if' is the philosopher's most important word, and his discourse will be crammed with particles and other sentential connectives--with 'but' and 'and' 'either' and 'or', 'so' and 'because', 'for' and 'therefore'."⁽³⁾ By 'if' Barnes obviously thought of a special form of logical conclusion: "supposed the

case (if) 'p', it follows--with logical necessity--'q'. The first explicit logical(4) assertion of this kind is to be found in Parmenides: B8, 20:

For if it came into being (*ei gar egenet'*), it is not: nor is it if (*oud' ei pote*) it is ever going to be in the future.(5)

To better understand the logic of this inference it is useful to examine the preceding lines: B8,15-21;

And the decision about these things lies in this: it is or it is not. But it has in fact been decided, as is necessary, to leave one way unthought and nameless (for it is no true way), but that the other is and is genuine. And how could what is be in the future? How could it come to be? For if it came into being, it is not: nor is it if it is ever going to be in the future. Thus coming to be is extinguished and perishing unheard of.

Alexander P. D. Mourelatos makes the following comments on the first four lines: "Now if one thing can be certain about Parmenides, it is that he intended the choice between the two routes to be exclusive, involving mutually exhaustive alternatives, that is, contradictories. The emphatic decision (*krisis*) between 'is' and 'is not' in B8, 15f. has the same force as the decision between the two routes in B2, as we can see from the fact that Parmenides refers back to the latter with the remark 'it has already been decided (*kekritai*) as is necessary, to leave the one route unthinkable and nameless [B8,16f.].'"(6)

Line 20 is introduced by two questions: "And how could what is be in the future? How could it come to be?" The questions shed light on the following logical statement, which in fact answers the questions: "For if it came into being, it is not: nor is it if it is ever going to be in the future." Arpad Szabo explains the line convincingly:

Besonders lehrreich ist für uns aus diesem Zitat die Begründung, warum nach Parmenides die Möglichkeit des Entstehens des Seienden gelehnet werden muß. 'Entstehen' heisst: aus dem Nichtseienden Seiendes werden. (Vor dem 'Entstehen' müsste das Seiende *nichtseiend* sein!) Der Begriff des 'Entstehens' setzt also sowohl das Nichtseiende, wie auch das Seiende voraus . . .(7)

[In this quotation, it is particularly instructive for us why the possibility of the coming into being of the existent must be denied according to Parmenides. Coming into being means the coming into being of the existent from the nonexistent. (Before coming into being, the existent must be nonexistent!) Consequently the concept of coming into being presupposes the nonexistent as well as the existent . . .] We have previously seen that "Being" and "non-Being" are mutually exclusive. Consequently, this hypothetic inference shows the impossibility of the "coming into being." (If a "coming into being" existed, the philosophical system of Parmenides would be contradictory, because "Being" and "non-Being" would exist at the same time [not temporal but logical].)

If we look at the discussed inference from the perspective of Zeno we can easily come to the conclusion that this kind of inference(8) is the most significant among the assertions of Parmenides.

The only unquestionably authentic fragment of Zeno is B3,(9) which runs as follows:

If there are many things (*ei polla estin*), it is necessary (*anagke*) that they are just as many as they are, and neither more nor less than that. But if (*ei de*) they are as many as they are, they will be limited.

If there are many things (*ei polla estin*), the things that are are unlimited. For (*gar*) there are always others between the things that are, and again others between those. And thus the things that are are unlimited.

In the first half of the fragment are to be found two interconnected inferences of the kind "if 'p' then 'q'"; their logical necessity is to be understood as evident. In the first statement the word "logically necessary" (*anagke*) joins together the two parts ('p' and 'q') of the inference.

The second half of the fragment contains three sentences. The first sentence is an inference of the type "if 'p' then 'q'." The second sentence--because the inference is obviously not immediately comprehensible--makes clear the logic of the first sentence. The role of the second assertion is shown by the explanatory connective "for" (*gar*). The third sentence emphasizes the necessity of 'q', which is the result of the inference.

This fragment demonstrates that the Zenonic argument is marked by the thought pattern "if 'p' then 'q'." [\(10\)](#)

The influence of Zeno must have been enormous on the subsequent development of philosophy. Arpad Szabo wrote about this influence as follows:

‘Dialektik’ heisst bei ihm [in Aristotle] ‘die Kunst des Debattierens, Disputierens’. Er sagt, dass der Begründer der Dialektik Zenon gewesen sei, [\(11\)](#) da bekanntlich dieser, indem er die Lehrsätze seines Meisters, Parmenides zu verteidigen suchte, die Kunstgriffe des Wortstreit-Führens erfand. In demselben Sinne bekommt Zenon bei Platon wegen seiner erfindungsreichen Gewandtheit im Wortstreit den Beinamen: ‘eleatischer Palamedes’ [\(12\)](#).[\(13\)](#)

[‘Dialectic’ means for him (Aristotle) ‘the art of debate, argumentation.’ He says that Zeno was the founder of dialectic, since he is well known to have invented the art of waging a word-battle as he sought to defend the teachings of his master, Parmenides. In this vain, Zeno is nicknamed the ‘Eleatic Palamedes’ [the legendary inventor of the alphabet] by Plato because of his inventive skillfulness in word-battle.]

Similarly Klaus Oehler assesses the later development of "Wortstreit-Führen":

die Impulse der Sophistik, die Sokratisch-Platonische Reflexion auf die Struktur von Argumentationen, die Systematisierung von logischen Tatsachen in der *Topik* des Aristoteles, --in diesem Dreieck einer einmaligen philosophiegeschichtlichen Konstellation ereignete sich der Ursprung der formalen Logik." [\(14\)](#)

[waging a word-battle: the impulses of the Sophistic movement, the Socratic-Platonic reflection on the structure of argumentation, the

systematization of logical facts in the *Topics* of Aristotle,--it is in this triangle of a unique constellation in the history of philosophy that the origins of formal logic emerged.]

The discussed mode of inference, which we have investigated in Parmenides and Zeno, is relatively often to be found in Herodotus. I shall mention only two examples. The Historian comments on a narration concerning the floods of the Nile. According to this account, the "year-winds" are responsible for the deluges of the Nile. Herodotus criticizes this assertion:

However, the Etesian winds often do not blow at all, and the Nile nonetheless floods. Besides, if the Etesian winds were the cause (*ei etesiai aitioi esan*) other rivers that face these winds would surely be (*chren*) affected in the same way as the Nile and even more so, since, being smaller, they have feebler streams.[2.20](15)

The expression "would be" (*chren*) constitutes a logical necessity here.(16)

On another occasion Herodotus attempts to describe a bird:

If he is indeed like his pictures (*ei te graphe paromoios*), he would be of this kind and this size: . . . [2.73]

The logical content of this inference is to be immediately realized.(17)

For our purpose it is irrelevant whether the inferences in question are indirect or direct.(18) It is important, however, that the soundness of these inferences is due *only* to certain formal relations between the given statements.(19)

The Homeric poems as "oral mirrors" of philosophical language

At the beginning of our discussion the intent to deal with the original linguistic forms of the most important kind of inferences in the pre-Socratics was expressed.(20) However, this task presents some problems. In the Homeric epics there is not to be found, to my knowledge, any purely logical inference of the kind "if 'p' then 'q'." For that reason I must "dilute" the discussed form of inference. We shall look for the following linguistic pattern in the epics: "supposed the case 'p', it follows *in some way*(21) 'q'." This structure occurs in numerous different speech acts in Homer. For a better understanding of "oral mentality," let us take a look at some characteristic occurrences of the pattern in question. Because Hector is fiercely attacking the Achaeans, Odysseus shouts to Diomedes:

Son of great Tydeus, what has come over us?
Have we lost all our power of attack?
Come here and stand with me, old horse. Dishonor
lies ahead if (*ei ken*) Hector fires the ships.[II.11.313-15](22)

The "inference"(23) highlighted above appears here in the form of an *exhortation*. The speech act shows that Odysseus is friendly towards Diomedes. Odysseus doesn't intend to insult Diomedes, but the hard battle situation compels him to call on him to fight together with him. The "inference" which, strictly speaking, gives a reason for an order weakens--in addition to the questions--its provocative character. Therefore I have characterized this "inference" as an *exhortation*; it is even impossible to consider it as a

pure logical inference by separating the "inference" from the order. The force and the comprehensibility of the "inference" depend more on the given speech situation(24) than on its "logical content."

In the *Iliad*'s twenty-first book the river Scamander is excited on account of the numerous slaughtered Trojans:

O Achilles, you are first in power
of all men, first in waywardness as well,
as gods forever take your side. If (ei) Zeus
has given you all Trojans to destroy,
destroy them elsewhere, do your execution
out on the plain! [For (*gar*)](25)now my blue watercourses
back up, filled with dead [Il.21.214-18]

This "inference" is, though stronger than a *request*, weaker than an *order*. The reason for the order (*gar*) and the relatively low social position of the river mitigate the tone of the order. Therefore we have here a speech act that is to be located between a *request* and an *order*. Interesting for us is that the same explanatory connective (*gar*) which we saw in Zeno [B1] supports the "inference."

In the following scene Hera puts Zeus to sleep so that Poseidon may harm the Trojans. Zeus, having woken up and seeing the helpless Hektor lying, is angry with his wife. Hera, however, insists on her innocence and swears that she herself didn't urge Poseidon on. Hera ingeniously tells the truth. For she "only" diverted Zeus' attention from the battle; Sleep informed Poseidon that Zeus' attention was turned from the fight, granting him the opportunity to support the Achaeans. It is clear that Hera wants to deceive Zeus by her oath. Zeus realizes this, for he says:

If what you say is honest (ei de rh' eteon), then rejoin
the gods' company now, and call for Iris,
call for Apollo with his wondrous bow.
Iris will go amid the mailed Achaeans
with my word to Poseidon: Quit the war,
return to your own element. Apollo
must then brace Hector for the fight . . . [Il.15.53-59]

During his speech Zeus is smiling and this shows that he is playing a joke on his wife. This joke however is bitter for Hera. She has to go and support the Trojans notwithstanding her partiality towards the Achaeans. Therefore this speech act--as well as the "inference"--is not a plain *order*; there are also some other nuances such as *joke*, *humiliation*, and *punishment* to be seen.

In the twenty-third book of the *Iliad*, Achilles offers a spear and a cauldron as prizes for a javelin-contest. Meriones and Agamemnon present themselves for the competition. But Achilles is not willing to let them compete against each other. He wants to give the first prize to Agamemnon and the second to Meriones, saying that:

Son of Atreus,
considering that you excel us all--
and by so much--in throwing-power, I'd say
that you should simply carry off this prize.

We'll give the spear, though, to Meriones,
if (ei) you agree. That is what I propose.[Il.23.890-4.]

The structure in question here is obviously a *proposal*. By the first member of the inference--"if (ei) you agree"--Achilles politely weakens the tone of his speech.

In another scene Hektor, after withdrawing from the Achaeans because of their fierce resistance, cries to his warriors:

'Trojans, Lycians, Dardans, fight hard here!
They cannot hold me, not for long,
by making bastion, closed in line together!
No, I can see them break before the spear
if (ei eteon) it is sure I have the first of gods
behind me, Hera's consort, lord of thunder!
Shouting, he cheered them on the attack... [Il.13.150-4.]

Here are to be found nuances like *order*, *encouragement*, *promise*. The "inference" is now strictly speaking a *flaunting* because Hektor suggests to his comrades that the outcome of the battle finally depends on him.

In the twenty-second book of the *Iliad*, Hector remains outside the Trojan city walls, desiring to fight with Achilles. His mother Hecuba, holding her uncovered breast and wailing, says to him:

'Hector, my child, be moved by this,
and pity me, if (ei) ever I unbound
a quieting breast for you. Think of these things,
dear child; defend yourself against the killer
this side of the wall, not hand to hand.
He has no pity. [For (gar)](26) If (ei per) he brings you down,
I shall no longer be allowed to mourn you
laid out on your bed, dear branch in flower,
born of me! And neither will your lady
so endowed with gifts. Far from us both,
dogs will devour you by the Argive ships.' [Il.22.82-7]

This speech act is an *entreaty*. The first "inference," a request, is supported by the second "inference," which in fact is a conjecture. The two together constitute a very impressive entreaty. Here it is the speech situation--e.g. the emotions, the imminent danger--and not a logical compelling force which connects the parts ('p' and 'q') of the "inferences."

Before Menelaus' and Alexander's duel, which takes place in accord with their agreement, Agamemnon speaks to the gods:

O Father Zeus!
Power over Ida! Greatest, most glorious!
O Helios, by whom all things are seen,
all overheard; O rivers! O dark earth!
O powers underground, chastisers of dead men

for breaking solemn oath! Be witness, all:
preserve this pact we swear to! If in fact (*ei men ken*)
Alexandrus should kill Lord Menelaus,
let him keep Helen and keep all the gold,
while we sail home in the long ships.
But if (*ei de k'*) Alexandrus be killed, the Trojans
are to surrender Helen and the treasure--
moreover they must pay a tribute, due
the Argives now, renewed to their descendants.
In the event that (*ei d' an*) Priam and his sons
refuse this--though Alexandrus be killed--
then I shall stay and fight for my indemnity
until I come upon an end to war. [Il.3.276-91]

In this speech are three "inferences." The first two are *prayers* that "ratify a treaty." The third is a *threat* in case of the Trojans' breaking the agreement. The whole speech act is an *invocation* of the gods.

Thetis having communicated to her son Zeus' resolution that Hektor's corpse is to be returned to Priam, Achilles speaks as follows:

Let it be so. Let someone bring the ransom
and take the dead away, if (*ei de*) the Olympian
commands this in his wisdom.[Il.24.139-40]

This is clearly an *assent*.

In an other scene Priam is speaking to Hektor:

. . . Ah, were (*aithe*) he [Achilles]
but dear to the gods as he is dear to me!
Wild dogs and kites would (*ken*) eat him where he lay . . . [Il.22.41-3]

This is a *malediction*.

As Priam doesn't see two of his sons returning back from the battlefield he breaks out:

. . . If (*ei men*) they are alive
amid the Achaean host, I'll ransom them
with bronze and gold: both (*gar*) I have, piled at home,
rich treasures that (*gar*) old Altes, the renowned,
gave for his daughter's dowry. . . . [Il.22.49-51]

This "inference" is a *promise*, an *obligation*. The two explanatory connectives (*gar*) support not a logical coherence--as was the case with Zeno--but the seriousness of the utterance. Afterwards Priam goes on like this:

. . . If (*ei d'*) they died,
if they went under to the homes of Death,
sorrow has come to me and to their mother. [Il.22.52-3]

This speech act is a *lamentation*.

In the twenty-fourth book of the *Iliad* Hekabe tries to dissuade her husband from retrieving Hektor's corpse from Achilles:

. . . If (*ei gar*) he sees you, takes you,
savage and wayward as the man is,
he'll have no mercy and no shame. [Il.24.206-8]

This "inference" is a *warning*.

In the ninth book of the *Iliad* Achilles explains his absence from the battle with the following words:

My mother, Thetis of the silvery feet,
tells me of two possible destinies
carrying me toward death: two ways:
if on the one hand (*ei men*) I remain to fight
around Troy town, I lose all hope of home
but gain unfading glory; on the other,
if (*ei de*) I sail back to my own land my glory
fails--but a long life lies ahead for me. [Il.9.410-6]

Here the two "inferences" are *prophecies*.

Thetis arrives at the house of Hephaestus in order to ask him to forge new armaments for her son. Hephaestus receives her in a friendly manner:

Ah, then we have a visitor I honor.
She was my savior, after the long fall
and fractures that I had to bear, when Mother,
bitch that she is, wanted to hide her cripple.
That would have been a dangerous time, had not (*ei me*)
Thetis and Eurynome taken me in-- [Il.18.394-8]

This "inference" is an expression of *praise*.

In the thirteenth book of the *Iliad* Idomeneus mortally wounds Orthryoneus with his lance. Orthryoneus has previously promised Priam that he would expel the Achaeans from Troy if Priam were to give him as wife his daughter Cassandra gratis. After the fatal strike Idomeneus boasts as follows:

Othryoneus, I'll sing your praise
above all others, if (*ei eteon*) you do your part
for Priam! He had promised you his daughter. [Il.13.374-6]

It is clear from the circumstances that this "inference" is not a plain *praise* or *promise* but rather an *irony*, even a *mockery*. This "inference" could be an *oral "indirect reasoning."* The difference between the oral and logical *reductio ad absurdum* reasoning is that the oral "inference" does not stand in contradiction with other propositions--as is the case with a logical inference--but with the given speech-situation.

After Iris delivers Zeus' order, that Poseidon should refrain himself from helping the Achaians lest Zeus

chastise him, Poseidon shouts angrily:

...The gall of him!
Noble no doubt he is, but insolent, too,
to threaten (ei) me with forcible restraint
who am his peer in honor. [Il.15.185-6]

This "inference" is an expression of *indignation*.

In the eighth book of the *Iliad* Iris was sent by Zeus on a mission: She is to go to stop Hera and Athena, who were about to march out on the battleground in order to help the Achaeans. Iris finishes her speech to the goddesses as follows:

With Hera he cannot be so furious:
her habit is to balk him, say what he will;
but as for you, you are a brazen bitch
if (ei eteon) you dare lift your towering spear against him! [Il.8.421-4]

This "inference" is a *chiding*.

When Achilles is about to return the corpse of Hector to Priam, who had killed his best friend Patroclus, he is filled with remorse:

... Patroclus,
do not be angry with me, if (ai ke) somehow
even in the world of Death you learn of this--
that I released Prince Hector to his father.
The gifts he gave were not unworthy. . . . [Il.24.592-4]

In this case the discussed "inference" is an *apology*.

In the twenty-third book of the *Odyssey* Eurycleia tries to persuade Penelope that her husband Odysseus has already come home. First she speaks about her recognition of Odysseus' scar on the beggar's leg, then she assures Penelope of the certainty of her perception:

...So come with me, and I will set my own life at stake that, if (ai ken) I deceive
you, you may kill me by a most pitiful death.' [Od.23.78-9]

This "inference" is a *bet*.[\(27\)](#)

In some cases the narrator himself makes use of the discussed "inference," *e.g.*, when Hektor is at the Achaean ships the narrator interjects the following remark:

. . . And soon
he would have set the ships ablaze--had not (ei me)
a thought from Hera come to Agamemnon,
to rouse himself and rally his Achaeans. [Il.217-9]

This "inference" is apparently a poetic device. The audience would have surely known that the Trojans wouldn't overcome the Achaeans, and the burning of their ships would have meant their defeat. The poet had the following purposes with this device:

1. The "inference" had to attract attention. For the audience was very likely to be astonished by the mention of an unexpected possibility.
2. This device often emphasized the role of a person or of a circumstance. (In this case the role of Hera is highlighted.)
3. By means of this device it was possible to make a sudden change in the course of events. (In this case: at the urging of Agamemnon the Achaeans start to slaughter the Trojans.)

In order to better understand the situation of an oral performer, let us investigate the reaction of the audience to a similar presentation. Odysseus and Aias are wrestling in honor of Patroclus for the prizes offered by Achilles:

...neither could Odysseus
throw his man and pin him, nor could Aias,
countered by Odysseus' brawn.
At last when the tied match began to bore the soldier (*aniazon*),
Aias muttered: 'Son of Laertes, royal
Odysseus, master mariner and soldier,
hoist me, or I'll hoist you. What happens then
is god's affair.' [Il.23.719-24]

The audience of the wrestling can be compared with the audience of the epic poems, for the epic poet (or poets) tries also to present his stories as if they actually had taken place in the course of the performance. The audience has become bored by the uneventful, longwinded wrestling-match. And this makes Aias angry, this is the cause of his urging. The public must be entertained. As soon as they first knock each other down the audience "looks hard and marvels at the fall."

At last there is movement in the performance, although the match remains a draw. They knocked each other down once again--without a final decisive result. Obviously they are equal in this competition. At the moment in which the audience probably becomes disappointed once more, the narrator intervenes in the action:

They would have roused and tried for a third fall,
had not (*ei me*) Achilles held them back. he said:
'Nor more of this bone-cracking bout.
The victory goes to both. Take equal prizes.
Off with you, so the rest here can compete.' [Il.23.733-7]

In this case the poetic device in question is explained by Achilles: other Achaeans have to compete with each other in order for the performance to remain entertaining.

In one single case the discussed "inference" is used by the narrator as a simile, which may be regarded as a *description*. In the sixteenth book of the *Iliad* Homer presents the Myrmidons launching an attack :

they charged the Trojans--Myrmidons in waves,
like hornets that small boys, as boys will do,
the idiots, poke up with constant teasing

in their daub chambers on the road,
to give everyone trouble. If (*ei per*) some traveler
who passes unaware should then excite them,
all the swarm comes raging out
to defend their young. [Il.16.259-265]

It is probably appropriate to consider this description as an "empirical statement" although in this expression an important function of the simile disappears behind such a label: the entertaining of the audience. However, both moments of this "inference"--the "entertaining" as well as the "empirical" ones--aren't to be thought of outside of the relationship between the performer and the audience, which includes the authority of the narrator, the taste of the audience, the momentary mood of both, etc. To confirm our conjecture let us provisionally suppose that we are dealing here with a logical inference and that the inference is grounded on certain formal propositions. In this case the inference has the following formal structure:

1. The disturbed hornets attack everyone--without exception--who are in their vicinity.
2. Let us suppose that a certain wanderer comes to the vicinity of disturbed hornets.
3. (The conclusion): This wanderer must be (in any case) attacked by the hornets.

We have here a syllogism. To make it clear that it is false to suppose that Homeric men are able to execute a syllogistic inference we must first examine some "Homeric syllogisms" more closely. For example, Odysseus prays to a local river-god after having been thrown out onto the high sea by Poseidon:

Hear me, king, whoever you are. As to one greatly longed-for do I come to you seeking to escape out of the sea from the threats of Poseidon. Reverend even in the eyes of the immortal gods is that man who comes as a wanderer (*aidios ment' esti kai athanatoisi theoisi andron hos tis hiketai alomenos*) as I have come to your stream and to your knees, after many toils. Pity me, king; I declare myself your suppliant. [Od.5.445-50]

This *prayer* has a perfect "syllogistic form":

1. For the immortal gods are all men reverend who come after many toils to them.
2. I'm Odysseus who am coming to you after many toils.
3. So, have pity on me!

If Odysseus were able to carry out a syllogism, he wouldn't have to make a prayer. The "conclusion" would in this case be not a request but a statement. Here the first premise is actually a request, an exhortation to the god: it is not a universal statement. This conjecture is underpinned by the following example. Odysseus was brought by the Phaeacians back to his native land. After unloading Odysseus' gifts they sailed away. When Odysseus wakes up he doesn't recognize his own land and thinks that he

has been deceived by the Phaeacians and brought to a foreign land. Therefore he is angry with the Phaeacians and speaks as follows:

May Zeus, the suppliant's god, requite them, who watches over all men, and punishes him who transgresses. [Od.13.213-4]

Odysseus doesn't make an inference based upon the "fact" that Zeus punishes all men--without exception--who commit a transgression. According to the rule of formal logic the Phaeacians would have to be necessarily punished by Zeus. But for Odysseus this form of reasoning is obviously not at hand. He has to pronounce a *malediction*. The universal statement pertains only to the given speech situation as a psychological underpinning or background of the malediction. My findings are also supported by Alexander Luria who investigated the formal logical abilities of illiterate communities: "(One) . . . factor was the unacceptability of the premises as universal. Rather they were treated as particular messages reproducing some particular phenomenon. Premises deprived of universality yield, naturally enough, only particular information creating no firm logical system or basis for logical inference. Even when the subjects could remember the premise, therefore, they continued to make independent guesses or resort to personal experience." [\(28\)](#)

It is then comprehensible that the *description* discussed above cannot be a genuine logical inference. This pertains also to all "inferences" in Homer. The people in Homer's epic poems are not able to carry out a logical inference of the type "if 'p' then 'q'."

By the time of Xenophanes this situation has changed:

Wenn Xenophanes die Verschiedenheit der Gottesvorstellungen beobachtet, so erkennt er zugleich, daß diese Vorstellungen bedingt sind von Faktoren, die gleichsam in den Verehrern selbst liegen und für diese ganz selbstverständlich sind. Und er sieht ferner, daß eine solche Abhängigkeit ganz unvermeidlich ist.

Die Äthiopier stellen sich ihre Götter plattnasig und schwarz vor, die Thraker aber die ihren blauäugig und rotharig. ... "Ein jeder bildet seine Götter nach seinem Bilde": Das war die Einsicht, die Xenophanes gewonnen hatte. Und um seine These von der Relativität jeglicher Gottesvorstellung möglichst drastisch zu demonstrieren, macht er ein gedankliches Experiment. Vorausgesetzt, die Tiere könnten malen und Bildwerke erstellen, dann würden ihre Götter tierische Gestalt haben und z.B. wie Ochsen oder Löwen aussehen. [\(29\)](#)

[As Xenophanes observes the diversity of god-images, he at once recognizes that these images are dependent on factors which are in the worshippers themselves, being completely self-evident for them. He moreover notices that such a dependency is entirely unavoidable.

The Ethiopians imagine their gods flat-nosed and black, the Thracians imagine theirs blue-eyed and red-haired. "One pictures one's god in one's own image." This was the insight Xenophanes gained. And to demonstrate his thesis of the relativity of the god-images as drastically as possible, he makes a thought-experiment. Assuming that animals could paint and make pictures, their gods would have animal figures and, for example, they would look like

oxen or lions.]

The fragment referred to (B15) runs as follows:

But if (*all' ei*) cattle and horses or lions had hands, or were able to draw with their hands and do the works that men can do, horses would draw the forms of the gods like horses, and cattle like cattle, and they would make their bodies such as they each had themselves.(30)

Here is an implicit logical inference of the form "if 'p' then 'q'." To be able to make such an assertion Xenophanes must have in his mind an abstract Thesis: *every human race forms the gods according to its own shape, and this is likewise the case with all species of animals*. This thesis cannot be found among Xenophanes' extant fragments, it can only be induced from them. The thesis is not directly grounded on personal experiences but rather suggests itself from an analogy: *If some human races form the gods according to their own respective appearances, then not only do all human races behave in this manner, but also all species of animals would, under certain circumstances, behave similarly*. This shows that the thesis can be taken as a hypothesis.(31) This also clarifies the fact that the implications of the thesis (B15) are to be deduced by formal logical processes. For the thesis and its consequences don't directly resort to actual practical experiences. Furthermore the validity of the thesis and its implications don't depend on personal authority or on a certain speech-situation but hinge rather on a detached logical comprehensibility of the thesis and its consequences.(32)

The structure of the argumentation is like this:

1. (unarticulated thesis): Every human race forms the gods according to its own shape, and so do all species of animals.
2. Suppose the case (*all' ei*) that a particular species of animals was able to form shapes.
3. This particular species would form the gods according to its own shape.

Xenophanes was already able to carry out a logical inference of the sort "if 'p' then 'q'."

But what is the difference between a "Homeric" and a logical inference? A "**Homeric inference**" is **not comprehensible and thus not valid(33) without the speech-situation it is embedded in**.

Speech-situation means in my terminology all circumstances accompanying--and at the same time lying outside of--the Homeric utterance: *e.g.*: the speaker, the hearer or the audience,(34) the relationship between the speaker and the hearer or the audience, the motive of the speaking person, the occasion of the speaking and so forth. A **logical inference--in contrast with the "Homeric inference"--is to be construed or reconstructed without any speech-situation**. Besides the given propositions there is nothing else which may be admitted for consideration, not even personal experience.(35)

What might have brought it about that logical inferences emerged from "Homeric inferences"?(36) One thing is sure: The speech-situations must have been eliminated. But could it have been possible that in certain early Greek genres they were abruptly eliminated? In my opinion it is not accidental that this process coincided with the rapid spread of the Greek alphabet. Writing might be the only possible reason for the disappearance of the role of speech-situations in utterances which had previously been

non-logical. A written text does not have the same authority as a speaking person. Sentences may be compared with each other without the influence of circumstances outside the written text. A detached survey of a text makes it possible to discover contradictions or to draw logical inferences on the ground of given--that is, written--propositions.

At first sight it seems obvious that logical inferences arise out of certain "objective Homeric inferences," that is, from *descriptions*. But this assumption deals rather one-sidedly with this mental process. For we have seen that in Zeno's B3 fragment the expression "it is necessary" (*anagke*) connects the two parts ('p' and 'q') of a logical inference. However, this word is to be found on two occasions in the *Odyssey* as an adjective enhancing the force of a word meaning "order": [Od.17.399; 20.344]. It is likely that the compelling force of the order was abstracted from the "order" and then applied to mark the compelling force of the logical inference.

It is instructive to make the comparison between an "oral" and a logical inference.⁽³⁷⁾ In the preceding discussion we saw that Herodotus tries to underpin the reliability of the description of a special bird by using a logical inference:

If he is indeed like his pictures (*ei te graphe paromoios*), he would be of this kind and this size: . . . [2.73]

As Priam is on the way to retrieve the corpse of Hector from Achilles he meets Hermes, who claims to be a follower of Achilles. Thereupon Priam inquires about his son:

If (*ei men de*) you belong
to the company of Achilles, son of Peleus,
tell me this (*age de*), tell me the whole truth: (*pasan aletheien*) [Il.24.406-7]

The common characteristics of these two "inferences":

- 1.They have the formal structure: "if 'p' then 'q'."
- 2.They try to find out the truth with the help of a proposition ('p').

The differences between the two "inferences": in Herodotus the validity or the comprehensibility of the inference hinges on its logical consistency, while in Homer comprehensibility hinges on the given speech-situation, particularly on the personal relationship between the two talking persons. Hermes must be called upon (*age de*) to tell the truth. If Hermes is reliable in the given moment, he will tell the truth. In Homer it is a personal request which goes after the truth, while in Herodotus it is an impersonal logical compelling force. I don't want to suggest by this comparison that logical inferences came into being out of a special sort of Homeric speech-act. It doesn't make sense to look for a *particular* Homeric "inference" which may have been the starting point of the mental process that led to logical inferences. In fact all Homeric "inferences" served in like manner as a basis for the transformation leading to formal logical thinking. In order to comprehend the changes in early Greek thinking it is most important to grasp the differences between logical and non-logical "inferences."

It is perhaps expedient to cast a glance on an "inference" which might be in a transitional state between an "oral" and a logical inference. In the *Seven Against Thebes* of Aeschylus, Eteocles speaks about Thebes' assailants--who are threatening the city with extinction by word and deed--as follows:

Oh! would they might but get (*ei gar tukhoien*) from Heaven the things

whereof they dream, themselves with all their unhallowed boastings; full surely then in utter ruin and in utter misery would they be destroyed (*he tan . . . oloiato*) [550-2](38)

The assailants are boasting about the imminent destruction of the city and consequently--according to Eteocles' *malediction*--if they themselves received that of which they boast then they would perish. Were this utterance a detached statement, it would comply with the requirements of a logical inference. However, this utterance is not to be construed without its speech-situation, that is: without the really imminent danger or without the personal *desire* of Eteocles. As the "logic" of the "inference" is fully conceivable by means of the given "proposition" ('p')(39) the difference between this and a logical inference seems to be a small one. On the other hand, it is likely that people possessing such a "half-oral" mentality would be perplexed by the request to think of this "inference" without its actual speech-situation.(40) They would possibly react by saying that this procedure could have no intelligible motivation.(41) However, it is also manifest that the underlying "logic" of the whole utterance underpins the effect of the "inference." This "half-oral inference" is already--for the reason of its underlying "formal-logic"--rather un-Homeric. And yet as it is built from the underlying speech-situation, it is not a genuine logical inference. I do not mean to single out this one example as a paradigm. There may have been numberless examples of this kind of transition from an "oral state of mentality" into a literate one. Of course oral "situation-thinking"(42) remains extant to this very day, but upon its linguistic foundation formal-logical thinking, triggered by the spread of literacy, has won the upper hand in certain genres such as mathematics and philosophy. I suppose that the process of emergence of logical thinking occurred in several genres simultaneously, each development having been relatively independent of the others. However, the formation of logical inferences had a pattern which, as we have seen, can be described in its main characteristics.

In Herodotus, there is a case where the inference in question is an imperative in spite of the fact that it is a formal logical inference.

According to Herodotus, the Scythian world traveler Anacharsis was shot down by the king of Scythia, Saulius, because Anacharsis celebrated a foreign god. Herodotus then investigates the family tree of Anacharsis:

. . . Anacharsis was uncle of Idanthyrus, king of Scythia, and the son of Gnurus, son of Lycus, son of Spargapithes. So if (*ei*) Anacharsis was of this descent, he should (*istoo*) know that he was killed by his own brother! For Idanthyrus was the son of Saulius, and it was Saulius who killed Anacharsis.
(4.76)(43)

This example shows again that the role of speech situations was sacrificed for the birth of formal logical thinking. Although here the speech situation does not interfere with the argumentation, Herodotus feels the need of stressing the importance of his findings by a personal imperative addressed to the dead Anacharsis. It was a long way for the early Greeks to become accustomed to the impersonal force of logical reasoning.

Notes

1. "Performative-Constatative Revisited: The Genetics of Austin's Theory of Speech Acts," *Anthropoetics* II, no.2 (January 1997)([back](#))
2. When I speak of everyday language I speak of the language of the Homeric epic poems. Everyday language is essentially reflected in the Homeric poems notwithstanding their formulaic character.([back](#))
3. Barnes, J., "Aphorism and Argument," in: *Language and Thought in Early Greek Philosophy*. Ed. by Robb, K. The Hegeler Institute, 1983, p.91([back](#))
4. Explicit, because the inference is based on given, fully expressed statements; logical, because the inference is sound only considering the given statements, taking no account of the given speech situation.([back](#))
5. All the English translations of the pre-Socratics I took over from *The Presocratic Philosophers* by G. S. Kirk, J. E. Raven, M. Schofield, Cambridge, 1983, p.266.([back](#))
6. *The Route of Parmenides*, New Haven, London, 1970, p.71.([back](#))
7. Beiträge zur Geschichte der griechischen Dialektik, in: *Acta antiqua Acad. Sci. hung. I*, 1953, p.386.([back](#))
8. "Supposed the case (if 'p' it follows--with logical necessity--'q')." ([back](#))
9. *The Presocratic Philosophers*, p. 266.([back](#))
10. This conjecture is also supported by two other "genuine" fragments of Zeno.([back](#))
11. Aristot. *Fragm.* ed. V. Lipsiae 1886.fr.65 (Diog.1.9,25): *fesi d'Aristoteles en to sophiste eureten auton (sc. Zenona) genesthai dialektikes* etc.([back](#))
12. Plato, *Phaidrus* 261D.([back](#))
13. p.385.([back](#))
14. Der geschichtliche Ort der Entstehung der formalen Logik, in: *Studium Generale*, 1966, 19, p.459.([back](#))
15. Translated by David Grene, in: *Herodotus. The History*. Chicago, London, 1987.([back](#))
16. About another inference wrote Herodotus thus: "...as necessity proves (*hos he anagke elegkei*)." [2.22] Herodotus here marks the logical connection with the same word (*anagke*) as Zeno.([back](#))
17. Cf. Zeno, B3,1-3.([back](#))
18. It is also in Zeno a direct inference of the type: if 'p', then 'q'. [B1,3]([back](#))
19. Cf.Ernst Heitsch, *Parmenides und die Anfänge der Erkenntniskritik und Logik*, Donauwörth, 1969, p.81.([back](#))
20. Cf. "Form und Gedankenführung sind gerade bei archaischer Poesie nicht voneinander abtrennbar, und was die griechische Geistesgeschichte betrifft, so ist eines ihrer wesentlichsten Probleme das der Ablösung der Archaischen Aussageformen durch eine 'logische' Gedankenführung." [Form and thought-order are not separable in archaic poetry, and one of the most essential problems in the history of Greek thought is that of the dissolution of the archaic forms of speech through a "logical" thought-order.] Hans Schwabl, "Hesiod und Parmenides," in: *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie*, 106. 1963, p.132.]([back](#))
21. Also not necessarily in a logical way.([back](#))

22. Translated by Robert Fitzgerald.[\(back\)](#)
23. From now on I make use of this term in accordance with the second definition I have given.[\(back\)](#)
24. It is also a constituent part of the situation, along with the personality and the social background of the actors.[\(back\)](#)
25. Supplement by me.[\(back\)](#)
26. Completion by the author.[\(back\)](#)
27. Translated by A. T. Murray. In: *Homer: The Odyssey*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1995. [\(back\)](#)
28. A. R. Luria, *Cognitive Development*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1976, p.115[\(back\)](#)
29. Ernst Heitsch, *Xenophanes und die Anfänge kritischen Denkens*, Stuttgart, 1994, p.15[\(back\)](#)
30. *The Presocratic Philosophers*, p.169[\(back\)](#)
31. Luria gives the following summary of the problem-solving abilities of illiterate people living in isolation:

When the conditions of the problem contradicted actual practical experience, the solution most often completely exceeded the capacities of our basic group of subjects. . . . the subjects usually refused flatly to try to solve the problem, declaring that the condition was wrong, that 'it isn't like that', or that they couldn't solve such a problem. (p.126)

...as a result of the cultural revolution [this means among others the introduction of the school education (the author)] we see the possibility of drawing inferences not only on the basis of one's own practical experience, but on the basis of discursive, verbal, and logical processes as well.

It becomes possible to take assumptions as they are formulated in language and use them to make logical inferences, regardless of whether or not the content of the premise forms a part of personal experience. The relationship to logical reasoning is radically restructured; we see the creation of the rudiments of discursive thinking, whose inferences become as compelling as those from direct, personal experience. p.163[\(back\)](#)
32. The word "validity" pertains not to the truth or to the falsity nor to the success or to the unsuccess of an utterance but to the rules by which an utterance "works," that is by which it is to be applied. Thus 'validity' means a sort of human consent to certain rules by which a given utterance is to be applied. In a case of a "logical" assertion the validity of the assertion depends on and only depends on formal logical considerations. (*E.g.* If a "logical" inference is inconsequent and based solely on a personal desire then the given inference is invalid; it cannot be comprehended as a logical inference.) In a case of a "non-logical" assertion *e.g.* of an "order," the validity depends on the actual speech situation that is for example whether or not the order is made under suitable circumstances. (*E.g.* If someone orders to assail a non-existent enemy during a funeral march without having any authority, his/her order is out of place and so the order is not comprehensible and therefore invalid.) As speech-situations are practically countless the rules concerning the non-logical utterances have innumerable nuances. An utterance is valid if it is used according to its most often commonly accepted application rules. It is interesting, however, that in the pre-Socratics the invention of the rules of formal logical reasoning preceded the common acceptance of them. Therefore some of the early Greek philosophers tried to ground the validity of their logical reasoning not only on formal logical rules--which were at the moment largely unaccepted but also on a divine authority--and thus on a speech situation--which was familiar to the people; see *e.g.* Parmenides' goddess or Heraclitus' "logos." This shows that the pre-Socratics concerned themselves more about the common acceptance of their newly invented method of reasoning.[\(back\)](#)
33. For the meaning of the concept "valid" see fn.32.[\(back\)](#)
34. Including also their momentary mood.[\(back\)](#)
35. This is characteristic of an oral community; see Luria, p.102-126[\(back\)](#)

36. Cf. "Wieviele Arten der Sätze gibt es aber? Etwa Behauptung, Frage und Befehl? - Es gibt *unzählige* solcher Arten: unzählige verschiedene Arten der Verwendung alles dessen, was wir 'Zeichen', 'Worte', 'Sätze', nennen. Und diese Mannigfaltigkeit ist nichts Festes, ein für allemal Gegebenes; sondern neue Typen der Sprache, neue Sprachspiele, wie wir sagen können, entstehen und andre veralten und werden vergessen." [But how many kinds of sentence are there? Merely assertive, interrogative, imperative? - There are *innumerable* such types: countless different ways of using what we call "sign," "word," "sentence." And this multiplicity is not stable, given for all time; new types of speech, new language games, as we might call them, arise and others become old and are forgotten.] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophische Untersuchungen*, Frankfurt am Main, 1971, 23§

"Perhaps neither of these abstractions [performative contra constative utterances] is so very expedient: perhaps we have here not really two poles, but rather an historical development." J. L. Austin, *How to do Things with Words*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1962. S.145([back](#))

37. We have already seen an "oral indirect inference" (p.7).([back](#))

38. Translated by Herbert Weir Smith, in: *Aeschylus*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1973 ([back](#))

39. In fact it is not a proposition but a *curse*.([back](#))

40. In this case the curse ('p') would be transformed into a detached statement without the influence of the actual speech-situation. ([back](#))

41. Perhaps they would say that without being in such a danger there were no reason to make such an "inference" without any desire or malediction. ([back](#))

42. The concept was used first by Alexander Luria. ([back](#))

43. Translated by David Grene. The University of Chicago Press, 1987. ([back](#))

[corrected 1/20/00]

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Anthropoetics V, 2 Benchmarks

Doug Collins's third article for *Anthropoetics* is taken from his current research on the anthropological background of modern French thought. The three other contributors to this issue are all new to our journal. **Dawn Perlmutter**'s essay is based on her intensive research into the underground sacrificial side of contemporary culture. **Raymond Swing**'s is a sympathetic view of **Generative Anthropology** from a biological systems-theory perspective. **Gabor Varga**'s article is part of a broad research project on the difference between oral and written ways of thinking that has interesting affinities with GA's ideas on language origin.

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