GEORGES BATAILLE'S CONCEPT OF SOVEREINGTY:
AN ONTOLOGICAL APPROACH TO INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

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ABSTRACT

BATAILLE'S CONCEPT OF SOVEREIGNTY:
AN ONTOLOGICAL APPROACH TO INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

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The critical tradition in International Relations Theory has placed great emphasis on the metaphysical nature of sovereignty, the concept assumed to be pivotal to the modern states system. The present study offers an explanation for the metaphysics that characterizes the prevailing notion of sovereignty via insights provided by Bataille. The study focuses on the ontological implications to which Bataille's formulation of sovereignty gives rise. Underlying this endeavor is to probe into the ways in which these implications enrich our understanding of sovereignty. One of the most important achievements of Bataille's approach to sovereignty is that it does not treat sovereignty as merely an administrative and legal issue. This achievement is highly critical in the sense that it enables us to realize the metaphysical dimension of sovereignty. This metaphysics has an important potential to render the problematic points in sovereignty visible. Through the analysis of these points, this study

elaborates on the historical development of political authority and state sovereignty. Taking the anthropological data provided by Bataille into account the study claims that with the emergence of modernity, there came into existence a new metaphysical representation of sovereignty.

ÖZ

GEORGES BATAILLE'IN EGEMENLİK KAVRAMI:
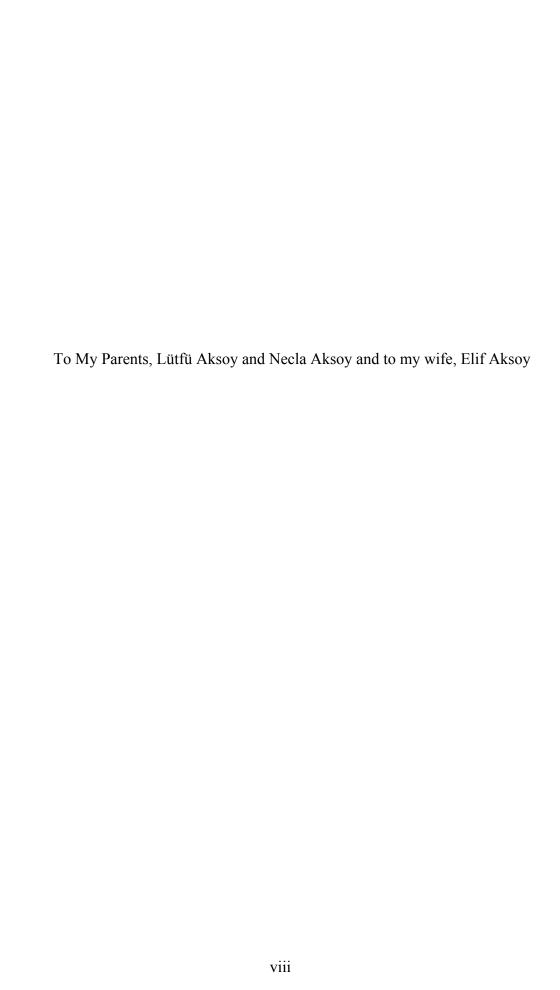ULUSLARARASI İLİŞKİLERE ONTOLOJİK BİR YAKLAŞIM

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Uluslarası İlişkiler Teorisindeki eleştirel yaklaşımlar, modern devletler sisteminde merkezi rol oynadığı kabul edilen egemenlik ilkesinin metafiziksel doğası üzerine vurgu yapmaktadır. Bu çalışma, Bataille'ın ortaya koyduğu yaklaşımlar aracılığı ile, egemenlik nosyonunu karakterize eden metafizik üzerine odaklanmayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu uğraşının temelinde yatan ise, bu çıkarımların egemenlik anlayışımızı ne şekilde zenginleştireceğini ortaya koymaktır. Böyle bir zenginleşme, egemenliğin metafiziksel boyutunu gözler önüne sermesi bakımından da büyük bir öneme sahiptir. Egemenlik çalışmalarındaki sıkıntılı noktaların ortaya çıkmasında bu metafizik boyutun rol oynadığı hesaba katılırsa, Bataille'ın egemenlik kuramının önemi daha iyi anlaşılabilir. Bu noktaların incelenmesi ile, çalışma özne ve egemenlik gibi kavramlardaki ontolojik boşluklara dikkat çekmeye çalışmıştır. Bu temelden hareketle, çalışma siyasal otorite ve devlet egemenliği kavramlarını ele

almıştır. Antropolojik veriler ve Bataille'ın felsefi yaklaşımları ışığında, modernite ile birlikte, yeni bir metafiziksel egemenlik temsilinin ortaya çıktığı iddia edilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Georges Bataille, Egemenlik, İkinci Ölüm

To My Parents, Lütfü Aksoy and Necla Aksoy and to my wife, Elif Aksoy

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The critical tradition in International Relations Theory has placed great emphasis on the metaphysical nature of sovereignty, the concept assumed to be pivotal to the modern states system. Despite the divergent premises and conclusions, there is a common point in this tradition: challenging the mainstream International Relations discourse by problematizing its study of sovereignty. In this challenge, the main impetus consists in the claim that the metaphysical nature of sovereignty serves to conceal the elements that put the official discourse of sovereignty into question. Critical theorists, therefore, emphasizes that this concealment enables the official discourse to formulate sovereignty as a basic principle of political organization. Thus motivated, they try to detect what lies hidden in this official discourse: gender, class, ethnic and religious groups or the disciplinary institutions. But these different points, at the end, tend to converge on the role of metaphysics in this concealment. Therefore, it is not surprising to see the metaphysical nature of sovereignty occupying a central position in their critique.

The same motive shared by the critical theories of International Relations has guided my approach to sovereignty when I try to set out with an aim of dealing with this concept. Proceeding in this direction, I came to realize the tension in the metaphysical representation of sovereignty. With this realization, I also attained the idea that this tension grows more and more apparent when we concentrate on the physical presence of sovereign. This is the main reason in my endeavor to dwell on sovereign as much as on sovereignty. After looking at the issue in this perspective, I take note of how the discrepancy between sovereign and sovereignty is omitted from the sight in the discourse of International Relations. It is easy to appreciate that one of the easiest and efficient way to put a metaphysical configuration into question is to

focus on the real physical beings therein. This last point makes the disappearance of discrepancy between sovereign and the sovereignty all more curious. The reason for this is the fact that critical thought in International Relations is expected to tend to this path which appears one of the easiest way to challenge the metaphysics inherent into sovereignty. Impressed by this point, I was convinced to elaborate on this discrepancy, which would automatically lay open the problematical points both in mainstream international relations discourse and its critical challenger. With this, another issue came before me: how can this be done? It is clear that such an endeavor as focusing on the discrepancy between sovereign and sovereignty can not be put into effect except by taking an ontological inquiry. Nevertheless, there was a great difficulty for this inquiry: the historical configuration shared by both main stream international theory and its critiques. For both veins of thought, the sovereignty is assumed to come into being with the dawn of modernity. Yet modernity is the very process and period during which sovereign figures disappear from the sight. Therefore, it is quite safe to assume that this historical configuration, which conceives sovereignty as a modern phenomenon, disables our imagination from taking sovereign as physical presence into account. This explains why a historical and anthropological analysis should accompany the ontological analysis of sovereignty.

Let's for the moment draw our attention to one of the anthropological and see how our this can enrich our imagination in dealing with sovereignty: according to the anthropological data in our hand, a strange figure called the King of Fire lives in the forests of Cambodia. This figure is deemed to be equipped with supernatural capabilities affecting the cosmic powers by the natives. So strongly believe the natives in his extraordinary capability that they are disposed to see no difference between his will and the fate of universe. This already strange phenomenon becomes all the more curious upon the death of the King of Fire. In the funeral, his body is burnt, and, as James Frazer states, his nails, and some of his teeth and bones are persevered as amulets. The body of any sovereign has always formed the focus of public concern and has always been exposed to extraordinary operations from which the ordinary cadaver is fortunately saved. This being the case, there is hardly anything really surprising for us in this funeral. Yet, as the rituals proceed, something

starts to strike our attention when we catch a glimpse of the kinsmen of the deceased King. These kinsmen, who turn out to be candidates for the place left vacant by the sovereign, act quite contrary to what common sense conjectures in similar circumstances. Instead of being drawn into a struggle for sovereignty, they immediately dash into the depths of forest, fleeing those growing impatient to worship another King of Fire. Frazer concludes they story, stating: "The people go and search for them and the first whose lurking place they discover is made King of Fire..."

Such an escape from sovereignty appears extraordinary for those who hold a conviction that one should chase power by whatever means possible. This anthropological account, seemingly playing off the primitive against the modern man, may lead us to think that for the solutions of problems caused by the struggle for power, the primitive world presents significant opportunities. Yet, my aim in citing this illustration has nothing to do with placing my arguments within the trajectory ranging from Rousseau to Baudrillard. Rather than affording the proof of how far-off the benign primitive man is from the maladies of Western civilization, this illustration testifies to the bewildering diversity of social practices around which crystallize the institutions of sovereignty. If, for the moment, we can resist the temptation to cast the social phenomena into a perspective whose mode of operation consists of negation or endorsement, the infinitely manifold appearances of sovereignty force us take a broader perspective, in which the contradiction is tolerated for no other reason than as an occasion for solution. Accordingly, to the anthropological illustration laying before us the escape from sovereignty, we can easily add another in which quite a different practice and pattern commands the comportment. In another corner of the world, the southern Pacific, a phenomenon of no less peculiarity is reported to have occurred. Within a small span of time, a scaffold is periodically erected at the center of a town. It serves as an altar on which the human sacrifice takes place. The one whose blood is spilt on this altar is not a criminal, nor a prison of war, nor a freak, but the sovereign himself. As if this manner of putting the tenure of sovereign to end was not astonishing enough in itself, we can examine the manner of choosing the new one. After the former sovereign is beheaded, someone hurls the head at the crowd gathered before the altar. The one

who outruns the others and holds up the severed head becomes the new sovereign. If our first example is designated as the escape from sovereignty, we can entitle the second episode as "Run with Sovereign's Head within your Hand."

Whether as chasing or escaping, the social practices gravitating around sovereignty cannot be cast into a single mold. These two strange illustrations of cultural anthropology, therefore, breed an understanding that without pondering on the temporal and spatial alterations, it is hardly possible to discern the nature of sovereignty. Nevertheless, when addressed within International Relations or International Law, sovereignty appears as a sort of monolith so that it gives no room for geographical variance nor for social alterations. This is hardly surprising given that sovereignty has risen in certain periods as a fundamental principle organizing the social space and world affairs. As the arguments on sovereignty run, the discourse of International Relations calls forth an image in which sovereignty is painted in a hue of its historical threshold: sovereignty is that which ascended the throne of *Zeitgeist* as the Christian onto-theology was dwindling and its basic premises were increasingly getting in trouble in maintaining their former directing position. The irritating aspect of this historical narration is, in the final analysis, its impressive performance in effacing the historical. A certain point in a long historical evolution all of sudden turns into an inauguration; and all signs and traces of transformation, as key to the great historical background, disappear from the sight. To render the claim to originality problematic, one may follow the usual track, appealing to such appalling names as the Annales School, Foucault, Derrida. *Long Durée*, Genealogy and Deconstruction, the three ways of attacking at every originality, reveal that only the intervention of a willful hand succeeds in extracting from the whirl of history an original point. For the moment, however, it will be good for us to resist the temptation of these three approaches and to deal with another dimension which is of critical importance for this thesis.

Let us focus on the above-mentioned point: sovereignty has become a fundamental principle organizing social space and world affairs. Between the nation-states and the global conduct, according to Heidegger and Bataille, there is no antithesis or contrast, rather there is perfection or continuation. Relying on those, we

can, therefore, attest to the today's validity of sovereignty. Despite the tides of globalization which engulf the entire planet, the official recognition of sovereignty, as is suggested by the basic texts regulating the world affairs, still holds a strong currency. This gives further testimony to the current validity of sovereignty. As a result, it seems safe to say that sovereignty is a basic organizing principle today. It is exactly at this point, when we recognize sovereignty as an organizing principle, that we have an opportunity to obtain an insight into its nature. When organization or principle is what is in question, that which matters most, we immediately make out, is none other than efficiency. In our undeniably mechanical world, efficiency emerges as the quickest way to the greatest success. Taking this as granted, we are prepared to say that there is an inverse ratio between the efficiency of something and the historical analysis or philosophical speculation concentrating on it. Here, we come across the age-old dilemma as emphasized by Leo Strauss: the tyrant has power to rule over the course of events but no to time to cast reflections either on his reign or on the affairs surrounding him; the philosopher, on the other hand, lives in such a luxury as to be able to speculate on every thing; but possesses no power to put the speculation into effect. If we listen to commonsense, a route to reconciliation for this cleavage emerges. Consequently, the tyrant, turning a deaf ear to the wise, far-sighted and prudent philosopher, is to lose the opportunity of reasonable behavior and good-conduct. In the long run, this renders improbable his holding of the crown, scepter and power. A similar line of reasoning is also at work for the philosopher. If he turns blind to the realities of power, this blindness rob him of the capability to act upon the affairs of the world. Thus, speculation, the key to prudent and good conduct, becomes null and void unless it lures the tyrant lolling on the throne.

Since we emphasize the importance of historical analysis, it is legitimate for us to ask: on what grounds does this dilemma, the duality between knowledge and the practice of sovereignty, manifest itself? Now that the link between power and knowledge has been undoubtedly proven, we are disposed to find the dilemma between the tyrant and the philosopher not too much surprising. However, this does not prevent us from taking into account the questions such as the following: who is it that stands for the philosopher in today's techno-scientific world? What has the tyrant become in a world that allows no room for the political will unless it is

wrought after the patterns imposed by the colossal organizational apparatus? Casting in the Lacanian schema, the matter in hand bears upon how the discourse of science can aptly convert the contingent, arbitrary and subjective in the discourse of the Master into the universal, stable and objective. This theme has been so often explained that we need not to repeat it here. Far more suggestive in this context is the increasingly diminishing distance between these two discourses. Here, we come across a strange symbiosis in which the ruler and the knower coalesce. Consequent upon this, the tyrant is no longer the whimsical, irrational and uneconomical being as he formerly was. And he no longer reigns but rules; hence his authority is said to be the expression rather of a technique than of a will. The tremendous consequences this process has for the philosopher (knower) are as apparent as those for the tyrant. Turning into power-holder, the knower has no longer the luxury of refraining from action. Immured in a world in which the sole criterion is accomplishment and efficiency, he is totally lacking in time for speculation, which is considered to be the key at once to good-life and to good-conduct.

Considering these metamorphoses caused by the symbiosis between the modern ruler and the modern knower, we are spurred to see the two related phenomena. On the one hand, the technically stupefying but intellectually impoverished knowledge deluges the decision-making mechanisms. On the other, the tremendous organizational apparatus has at its disposal an exceptional skill to control, to command and to manipulate the crowds. How the drastic results of this process grow more and more apparent from day to day, I will not dwell on. Nor will I pursue further the trajectory which was poignantly felt with Clauswitz and which reached its climax with Kenneth Waltz. In this context, to afford the proof of how the temple of rationality turns into the cradle of irrationality, hardly more than a passing glance at Kubrick's *Dr. Strangelove* is needed. At the very moment when a catastrophe looms large on the horizon of humanity and therefore when the rationality and the prudence are desperately needed, we bear witness in this film that the realm of sovereignty and high-politics, in which no less than man's survival is in question, transforms into a sort of asylum of lunatics. The implications of this film might be dismissed on account of its being no more than a parody, were it not for the historical background demonstrating that the realm of sovereignty has always been

haunted by irrationality. Whether this site comes before us as the altar of a mythical world in which sacrifice and miracle occurs, or as the court of oriental despot whose thirst for blood can hardly be quenched, or as the endless corridors of bureaucratic structures in which men and women are in hurry to submit their wills to the folders in their hands, it does not matter, an irrepressible irrational element rises to prominence. What is worthy of attention at this point is that which is set forth by the discrepancy between the spectator and the actor. Unlike the spectator who can pierce the thick shroud of representations, the actors, who have entrenched themselves in the symbolic space of sovereignty, lose sight of the irrational in sovereignty.

The actors' inability to perceive the irrational in sovereignty points out that sovereignty, except in certain circumstances, manages to present itself as rational. Because of this, to the actors of its paradigm, sovereignty appears as the defender against irrationality. Taking this last point into account, we can attain the idea of the primary problematic in sovereignty: its metaphysical character. From the critical perspectives challenging the mainstream International Theory onwards, we are acquainted with the metaphysical character of sovereignty. By and large, every problem with which the study of sovereignty is imprinted can be traced back to this bottom line. Social, political and economical blind points in the study of sovereignty can be, at the end, shown to have arisen from this metaphysical dimension. Enthralled by the advances in the philosophy and social sciences, critical and post-structuralist thinkers in International Theory were stimulated to import the fruits of these advances. The efforts of such thinkers as Richard Ashley, Rob Walker, and Cynthia Weber, lend some countenance to the metaphysical character of sovereignty; and we can claim that in a certain aspects of International Theory, the metaphysical character of sovereignty is firmly established today. Since so many feet have trodden this path and since, consequently, it nowadays looks to be a candidate for developing into a new highway, I can legitimately stop beating about the post-structuralist bushes and pursue my thesis on the metaphysics of sovereignty on a quite different track.

First of all, I venture to claim that metaphysics is present not only in modern sovereignty or in its study, but also in every form of sovereignty. Here we touch

upon the mythical foundation of sovereignty. Falling short of such a mythical foundation, sovereignty immediately erupts into a brute physical force. It remains therefore true that sovereignty is sovereignty only to the extent of affording a ground with which it separates itself from the physical force. Only with the help of such a distance can sovereignty efface the violence from its surface. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the constitutive moments when someone or some group erects the banner of sovereignty on political landscape of a country. It is only after the conclusion of violence that the turmoil of human energy solidifies into an order and discourse which gives birth to the closed universe of law and to the mechanical functioning rule. Apart from this violent character of sovereignty (namely, its inability to assert itself without the help of its other to whose effacement sovereignty owes its *raison-d'etre*); it is possible to detect an equally fertile ground to appreciate the metaphysical dimension of sovereignty: *the body of sovereign.*

This line of reasoning impels us to reply such questions as these: How does the body of sovereign enable us to recognize the metaphysical character of sovereignty? How and to what extent does the body of the sovereign differ from ordinary ones? In what points does the regime regulating the bodily affairs of sovereign become distinct from the other bodily regimes? And what do these distinctions tell as regards the metaphysics of sovereignty? Pondering on these questions, we are prepared to say that, regardless of spatial and temporal conditions, the sovereign appears as possessor of two bodies: the *physical body*, which is the abode of earthly blemishes and which wears off under the pressure of time; and the *symbolic body*, which hovers as though above earthly conditions and which, as a result, remains untainted with what the flows of time piles on any physical being. After catching sight of this dual dimension of a sovereign's presence, it is an easy step to reach the metaphysics of sovereignty: an essence, a presence that radiates results for the spatio-temporal condition of man while staying outside the touch of these conditions.

Taking note of this last point, we feel the necessity of unraveling the historical forms assumed by the bodily regimes of sovereign and hence by the metaphysics of sovereignty. For the sake of brevity I skip the details and assert that

as regards the body of the sovereign, or as regards the interplay between his two different bodies, three main historical regimes can be observed. In the magical and mythical thought of pre-feudal world, the sovereign comes to light as a figure who deprived of the physical capacities to enforce his will and authority, employs his supernatural powers to so organize cosmic affairs as to guarantee the well-being of the community. In such a condition, the physical body of sovereign is no more than the accidental abode on which the supernatural force (the symbolic body) happens to perch. Even the slightest sign of physical defect, then, renders it evident that it is high time to set the supernatural force encapsulated within sovereign's body free and let it dwell on another physical body more worthy of sojourn. In an age in which the surgery techniques were much less developed than ours, this process of setting free usually means putting the sovereign into death! As the pre-feudal forms were swallowed by the feudal ones and as the mythical and magical cosmologies evolved into the onto-theological ones, there can be said to come into existence another sort of bodily regime concerning the sovereign. Within this regime, the physical body is no longer as vulnerable to the whims of public wrath or public anguish. Yet, this does not change the basic condition: his body is still under the intervention of social concern. His physical being, while living, is subjected to the severe rules and taboos so that more often than not he appears as a fragile being to a foreign eye peeping at this regime from outside. As the royal funeral ceremonies lay open, the dramatic twist in this bodily regime comes with the death of the sovereign. It seems, therefore, quite safe to assume that even death does not put an end to the intervention of the public into the body of the sovereign. This is borne out in the embalming, masks, effigies and strange burial or burning procedures bear out. Increasingly unreachable, the body of the sovereign at this stage suggests that the metaphysical representation of sovereignty (namely the sovereign's mystical and symbolic body) has grown so mature that it can prop up the sophisticated and complex bureaucratic structure. The third stage comes when the feudal forms are dissolved under the pressures of the modern. In an age of rationality, it is quite normal that this *bodily* metaphysics would become more and more cumbersome. Whether a Monarch, Tsar, or Sultan, it does not matter; wherever the dawn of modernity broke, the body of sovereign is effaced from the social once and for all. How the emergent *non-bodily* metaphysics of sovereignty comes into existence and what sort of connotations it contains, we will

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dwell on later in this thesis. So, we can ignore the details and concentrate on the implications of these bodily regimes.

Concentrating on the common points in these regimes, we can give substance to the idea that notwithstanding his allegedly sovereign position, the sovereign can by no means be said to be sovereign. So long as he yields his will to the social procedures, so long as he submits to the regulations arranging his life even in the minutest details and, last but not least, so long as he has no option but to comply with intolerably constricting taboos, we have reason to suppose that in the end, his sovereignty is but a symbolic mandate which is imposed, even enforced on his will. In such a peculiarly precarious social position, the need for an ontological inquiry into sovereignty eminently manifests itself. If the metaphysical representations with which sovereignty comes out prevents us from penetrating deeper into the nature of sovereignty, an ontological inquiry focusing on the sovereign and sovereignty as ontological beings offers to help prevent our imagination from being dominated by metaphysical fallacies. It is exactly at this point, namely where the need for ontology in studying sovereignty is most greatly felt, that we realize the importance of Georges Bataille. Apart from its intellectual richness (his close readings in anthropology, ethnology, psychoanalysis, political economy and literature), his understanding of sovereignty is, in the end, the expression and the outcome of an ontological inquiry. Since the details of this inquiry are to be found in the following pages, it suffices to state that Bataille's formulation of sovereignty allows us to unwrap the metaphysical representations and to take note of the ambiguity in sovereignty.

When we look at Bataille's understanding of sovereignty and proceed in the direction it indicates, we are forced to conclude that from an ontological point of view, sovereignty is *nothing*. Expressed in phenomenological terms, such a conclusion gives substance to the idea that sovereignty is *impossible.* All these broach the subject of why Bataille is placed at the center of this thesis. In each conceptualization, Bataille succeeds in casting a question mark on the phenomena which makes its appearance as sovereignty. Ontologically speaking, when sovereignty assumes a physical presence, an ambiguity hangs over it. In Bataille's

writings on sovereignty, we can scarcely miss the stress placed on this ambiguity. Indeed, we are not misguided if we assume that at the care of all his formulas and accounts lies the motivation of showing the impossibility of sovereignty. The impossibility of sovereignty, vouched for by Bataille's definition of sovereignty as NOTHING" brings the paradoxical position of sovereignty to prominence all the more clearly: so long as sovereignty flashes into being, and so long as it assumes an integrated and consistent physical presence, namely so long as we *see* sovereignty enduring in time (duration), what stands before us is a metaphysical entity. In a sense, it remains true to say that as a *physical being*, sovereignty should be *metaphysical.* Otherwise, sovereignty does not solidify into a physical presence whose basic ontological mode, as that of every *physical being*, is duration and interdependence. Without such a petrifaction, sovereignty remains an *experience* which vanishes into NOTHING, and upon which nothing can be founded. We shall deliberate upon this point in Chapter III, and so, we can cease pursuing this matter further. Nevertheless, it seems unfair to close this issue without drawing attention to the complexity always at work in Bataille's text. Accordingly, if ontology denotes the impossibility of sovereignty, sovereignty as *experience* also indicates that the ontological universe, despite the contrary impression, is far from being a perfect and impervious closure.

From what has been said so far as regards Bataille, it is hardly difficult to infer that his views on sovereignty are, on the whole, the crystallization of a complex intellectual edifice. Taken in its entirety, Bataille's oeuvre can be said to attain so complex and so sophisticated a structure that isolation of one theme in way as to eclipse the others would cause us to miss the essence not only of Bataille's oeuvre but also that of sovereignty itself. It is because of such a conceptual density that we endeavor to take a closer look in Chapter I at the intellectual background from which unfold Bataille's formulations of sovereignty. In this chapter, three related dichotomy which form the backbone of Bataille's intellectual imagination are brought under scrutiny. First is the division line passing through the social world and splitting it into two different compartments. These are called by Bataille *homogeneity* and *heterogeneity*. Homogeneity is the world of utility where the practical rationality holds a sway over the human-beings as well as things. Heterogeneity, contrarily, is a

realm in which practical rationality is thwarted and encounters the impossibility of articulating the social. The second dichotomy this chapter dwells on is between taboo and transgression. Corresponding to the division of the social into homogeneity and heterogeneity is the interplay between taboo and transgression. Homogeneity is the world of taboo allowing only certain directions in which humans can give vent to energy. Transgression is the common name of the occasions when the barriers erected before human energy fall apart and when human energy, thus, unleashes itself. The last dichotomy given in this chapter is the one between accumulation and consumption. Taking these three together, we take notice of the pattern leading us to Bataille's understanding of sovereignty: on one hand, there is the homogenous world where man accumulates and acts according to a notion of utility under the banner of taboo. On the other, there emerges a heterogeneous world where man discards utility and indulges in a useless consumption, transgressing the limits of permissible.

After drawing the background in Bataille's formulation of sovereignty, the distinctive traits of this formulation are already apparent. So, in Chapter II, I dwell on these traits with a view of presenting, in detail, what Bataille understands by sovereignty. The critical importance of this chapter lies in the fact there is a considerable difference between the common usage of the word sovereignty and what Bataille means by the same word. A closer look will reveal that this difference is not arbitrary or an accidental act. This difference is a telling clue as to his textual and intellectual strategy by means of which he manages to escape from the entrapment of metaphysically loaded dualities. Strangely, Bataille never hesitates to use the very vocabulary of the philosophical and conceptual language which he constantly attacks. Motivated as if by the showing the gaps in the signification process, he urges us to notice that if pushed to the limits, the concept starts to signify its other. Accordingly, sovereignty has not only different meanings to those we usually refer to but also has one which is the opposite of what is usually signified. Thus we catch the glimpse of paradoxical position of sovereignty: as Derrida demonstrates in his article on Bataille, sovereignty comes only at the expense of sovereignty. Without risking sovereignty, one cannot be sovereign but only be something *posited* as sovereign. The importance of this chapter, therefore, can be said to consist in manifesting the twist to which Bataille subjects the concept of

sovereignty. This being assumed, it is hardly surprising that Bataille's book, *La Souveraineté*, is given central place in this chapter. In this book, we bear witness to an attempt to place his views on sovereignty dispersed through several decades within a consistent perspective. Considerable in this regard is to show how Bataille, via his definitions, carries sovereignty from the narrowly defined limits of the political to an existential plane. Yet this act can by no means be taken as the sign of effacement of the political in favor of an abstract philosophical speculation. Far from it, this existential plane also saves the political from a reduction as a result of which the essence of the political is drained. Consequently, in the second half of this chapter, special attention is given to the political implications of sovereignty as an existential matter while its historical evolution is also taken into account.

In the following chapter, we will focus on Bataille's relation with Hegel. The question immediately presenting itself is why Hegel rather than Nietzsche? Given the fact that Bataille's formulation of sovereignty is, in a sense, a reply to the implications of the Slave/Master dialectic, an exclusive focus on Hegel appears as an important component of a thesis taking Bataille's sovereignty as its center. After a brief introductory note on the French reception of Hegel during the first half of 20th century, which made a great impact on the intellectual development of Bataille, the chapter shifts to the theme of how Bataille's sovereignty diverts from Hegel's autonomy. Here we again come across Bataille's textual strategy: he never tempts us to a return to the pre-Kantian or pre-Hegelian philosophy. He endorses to the fullest degree that man is Negativity. Yet, this never hinders him from catching the sight of the missing link in *this* Negativity. So long as Negativity is permitted to appear in the guise of Positive results, how is it plausible is to call it Negativity? Additionally, so long as autonomy is tolerated only in useful forms, how reasonable is it to evaluate it as a substantial one? As we proceed in this direction, a theme which has important implications for the following chapters grows more and more apparent. The divergence between autonomy and sovereignty reveals to us the problematic point in the political discourses which triumph over others, implanting the ideal of autonomy and values originated from it in the considerable part of humanity. In order to render this problematic point evident, the last part of this chapter deals with the question: whether this autonomy, which is embedded in a discursive thought and filtered

through official recognition and official language, is a bona fide autonomy or rather a kind of regulation?

Puzzling over the disjunction between autonomy and sovereignty, we realize that another issue comes into view: subjectivity. In Chapter IV, the issue of subjectivity occupies the center owing to the opportunities it offers to deepen the implications incited by the contrast between autonomy and sovereignty. Like preceding ones, this chapter also testifies to Bataille's textual maneuver earlier referred to. Unlike Heidegger or French anti-humanism, he does not cast away the concept of the subject. As usual, he forces us to face its other as its true appearance. When trailing along the chains of signification to the extremity, we are brought to see that the concept caves in, becoming unable to register the coordinates of the very thing of which it is presented as the epitome. Moved on to see the dark side of subjectivity, this chapter sets out with a general discussion on subject and subjectivity. In this part, Heidegger's inquiry into the origin of subjectivity as a threshold of modern metaphysics sheds considerable light upon the background of the issue. After this general discussion, Bataille's formulations come to the fore, which mark the inherent inability of the discourse boasting about man's capability to subjectivity. The themes we see fit to discuss within this context convey the notion that so long as we remain within the paradigm of subjectivity, we run the risk of mistaking agency for subjectivity. With his definitions of sovereignty, Bataille tries to show that the reverse is the case. For the true subject to come into existence, the subject should be one way or another, divested of the mantle of agency. In the light of this, the chapter comes to a close, pointing out that under the sway of agency, one cannot be an *end in itself*, but is a means for something.

After these general ontological inquiries in which all possible routes to weed out the metaphysical elements pervading our vocabulary are explored, we turn to the issue of state sovereignty. To a great extent, we can speak of the final chapter as an attempt to probe the implications which Bataille's understanding of sovereignty has for state sovereignty. Casting reflections on the ontological condition of sovereignty, this chapter makes a comparison between two sovereign figures taken from Mozart with a view to demonstrating the impossibility of sovereignty. This impossibility

suggests that whenever a sovereign insists on sovereignty, what befalls him is death. In other words, a sovereign who stays alive and who consequently endures in time, is already reconciled with the symbolic dimension of society, the result of which is that he *is* no longer a sovereign, but is *posited as such.* In this inquiry, our basic motive is to avoid the other metaphysical readings laying in ambush. Drawing on Bataille's formulation "consumption beyond utility", we might treat modernity as an historical threshold heralding the death of the sovereign. Our concern in this context is to afford the proof that even before modernity, the sovereign was already dead. And this leads us to a formulation which differentiates between two deaths of sovereign (the symbolic and the real), and which portrays the process of modernity (necessitas, dignitas non morritur, Augsburg, Westphalia, French Revolution…etc) as a long way in which the second death of the sovereign has been trumpeted. In order to avoid the suspicion that what is in question here is the arbitrary treatment of the social material in hand, I feel obliged to highlight that my argument on the second death of the sovereign derives its tone, in the last analysis, from the findings of cultural anthropology and social history.

CHAPTER 2

DEFINITION OF BASIC TERMS

In this chapter my aim is to provide a theoretical introduction for the study of Bataille's conceptualization of sovereignty. The concept of sovereignty as developed by Bataille is part of the larger context of his thought. Sovereignty is one of the key terms that occupy a crucial place in this system. However, without a due consideration given to this larger context, our understanding of Bataille's sovereignty loses much of its substance. This line of reasoning conduces me to study three theoretical conceptualizations with which Bataille has been concerned throughout his intellectual life. Moreover, focusing on them serves as an important theoretical background to understand Bataille's conceptualization of sovereignty. Accordingly, in the first section, I will study the dichotomy developed by Bataille around the concepts of homogeneity and heterogeneity. In the second section, I will direct my attention to another binary structure developed this time by the concepts such as taboo and transgression. In the following section I will dwell on the issue of consumption as formulated in another opposition between accumulation and consumption, which is a dominant theme in Bataille's thought.

2.1. *HOMOGENEITY AND HETEROGENIETY*

The first theoretical elaboration of homogeneous and heterogeneous elements of society came into being in the context of stupefying rise of fascist movements and their seizure of political authority. Bataille tried to deal with this phenomenon in his article, published in 1933 when Hitler came to power, '"La Structure Psychologique

du Fascisme."[1] Though he was under the strong influence of Marxism at the time, he, interestingly and eloquently, differed from the general tone of Marxist writings which sought an understanding of the roots of this phenomenon in deeper structures of society and which tended to dismiss –or at least minimize- the role of the so-called super structure. Such an *economism* for Bataille only served to increase our misunderstanding which, at the end, led Marxist movements to a failure to influence the social forces that fascist movements were very successful in mobilizing and that, Bataille thought, could also be used in the service of the proletarian revolution. To understand the success of fascist movements within the bourgeois world, which has thwarted the possibility of proletarian revolution despite the serious crises, Bataille developed his conceptualization of *homogeneity* and *heterogeneity*. This attempt is at once a sociological explanation –a technical device to understand general condition of society- and a tool for a normative reading which, out of the complex dialectics between homogeneity and heterogeneity, shows the possible realms where true human emancipation becomes conceivable.

Let us now see what Bataille meant by this conceptualization. All human societies, for Bataille, consist of two different parts, or two different sections. Consequently, we see two different aspects of human condition organized according to variant imperatives emanating from these different but closely interrelated spheres. Unlike the heterogeneous society, or more precisely heterogeneous part of the society, the homogenous society is the realm of work and production where human beings act according to the strict rules of the principle of utility. Utility takes the role of the basic concept to delineate the boundaries of this society, and truly manifests the basic characteristics of it. "Production is the basis of social homogeneity. The homogeneous society is productive society, namely useful society."[2] Here homogeneity means the organization of the society and individuals in it according to the general principle of utility. The basic maxim of homogeneous society is that the value of something depends on its capability of being useful. Being useful means that something is in the service; it is not for itself but for other than itself; thus it is

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[11] Georges Bataille, "La Structure Psychologique du Fascisme," **Œuvres Complètes I Premiers Écrits 1922-1940** (Paris: Gallimard, 1970), p. 345.

[2] **Ibid**., p.343.

exposed to a 'validity' not found in itself or not determined by itself, but determined by a general system of reference that codes everything useful or not.

In this world where the everyday life of production occurs and where the material human needs are satisfied, elements are charged with value to the extent of the part they play in production. The striking aspect of value, e.g. value derived from nothing but the function makes it clear that elements in homogeneous world are by no means independent. Everything is *interdependent*. Thus, as opposed to being 'in itself' a homogenous element gains its value only in regard to its place in the function of production. This interdependence, the basic condition of homogenous world, signifies the *commensurability* of elements, a term to which Bataille assigns a central place in the separation between homogenous and heterogeneous spheres of life.

> Homogeneity signifies here the commensurability of elements and the awareness of this commensurability; human relations are sustained by a reduction to fixed rules based on the consciousness of the possible identity of delineable persons and situations.[3]

The etymological inquiry of the word homogenous would show that everything in this world, like an inescapable fate, shares a certain identity, a kind of sameness. If something is commensurable with another thing, then they can be thought to yield to a common denominator.[4] This common denominator is, in the age when principles of market economy organize the homogeneous part heterogeneous part, is money; "calculable equivalent of different products of collective activity" that serves as the "foundation of social homogeneity and the activity arising from it."[5] Important to notice here is that this section of society, despite the strict instrumental rationality at its base and economism at its functioning, has certain *irrationality* which, as manifested in the case of money, makes the total closure of

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[3] **Ibid**.

[4] For a general explanation of the homogenous element and heterogeneous element see Georges Bataille, "The Use Value of D. A. F. Sade," **Visions of Excess**, Allan Stoekl ed. and trans. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Pres, 1989), p. 98. "This *[heterogeneous]* element itself remains indefinable and can only be determined through negation. The specific character of fecal matter of or the specter, as well as of unlimited time or space, can only be the object of a series of negation, such as the absence of any possible common denominator, irrationality, etc."

[5] Bataille, **Ibid.,** note 1, p.354.

society by homogeneity impossible, and that provides certain space for psychological forces: money is nothing but just a physical object, just as others which have no meaning.[6] Denominator (money or utility) is nothing but a physical object or abstract principle with no meaning in itself.

Having drawn on the commensurability and reduction, at once as the characteristics of homogenous society and as its basic organizing principle, one thing that immediately strikes our attention is that not only physical objects (commodities, capital…) are caught in the web of homogeneity, but also human beings are seized by it. This is how Bataille puts this into words in "La Structure Psychologique du Fascisme": "it is exactly in the middle segment of the so-called capitalist or bourgeois class that the tendency to reduction of human character takes place."[7]

But there are elements that cannot be reduced to a common denominator. They are *useless* and cannot be symbolized in and by the system of homogeneity. The heterogeneous, in Bataille's terminology, indicates that it concerns elements that are impossible to assimilate.[8] As homogeneity recalls the sameness despite apparent differences, the heterogeneous section of society comprises elements that resist assimilation by useful activity. Thus these elements have no value –no use value- in the process of production. Essentially, these are what the homogenous part of society expels from its boundaries so that normal course of affairs can sustain its smooth functioning without serious interruption. Therefore uselessness, in Bataille's view, gains positivity: the useless element signifies an autonomy with regard to the homogeneous system; it is *nothing* amidst the world of things, *nothing* outside the process of symbolization.[9] It is thus a *thing in itself*.

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[6] Žižek study of the separation between the money as empirical mater and the money as sublime matter can be useful to elucidate this point, though not directly related with the topic at issue: Slavoj Zizek, **Sublime Object of Ideology** (New York: Verso, 1989), p. 18-19

[7] Bataille, **Ibid**.

[8] Bataille, **Ibid**., p. 356.

[9] There are two possible readings of "nothing outside the process of symbolization.." It is nothing because it is outside process of symbolization (exclusion); it is outside the process of symbolization because it is nothing (utility). In both senses, Nothing is negative. Yet it obtains, through the *act* framed in heterogeneous, positivity by signifying the lack at the heart of the homogeneity. This is also where Bataille's split, homogeneity/heterogeneity, is considerably close to Lacan's symbolic and real.

If the homogenous realm is defined with utility and if something acquires a meaning and value through its usage, *affectivity* draws the boundaries of heterogeneous society where elements useless for other elements exist for themselves. Thus it can be argued that heterogeneous elements are found at the margins of the world of work, "at the point where different realities meet."[10] Thus we can see heterogeneity in "bodily exhalations (blood, sweat, tears, shit); extreme emotions (laughter, anger, drunkenness, ecstasy); socially useless activity (poetry, games, crime, eroticism); all of which take the form of a *heterology* that homogeneous society would like to definitively expel. [11]"

The structure of heterogeneous society has considerable complexity compared to the world of homogeneity. The meaning is not clear here, and almost everything is ambivalent and equivocal. Something heterogeneous, generally, lives in a situation of undecidability; heterogeneous thing, in Habermas's words, "simultaneously entices and attracts even as it terrifies and repulses. If simulated, it releases shocking effects and represent a different, higher level of reality."[12] Another difference can be found in that while homogeneity is one-part, the heterogeneous society mainly consists of two parts which have as different relations with each other as they have with the homogenous part. At one time we see in the heterogeneous something base, mean, repulsive. At another time we see in it the noble, glorious, prodigal. Correspondingly, the heterogeneity in Bataille's formula consists of two parts. One of the subsections is what Bataille calls *imperative forms* of heterogeneity, where the sadistic character inherent to every political authority shows itself. As shall be seen, this dichotomy in heterogeneous world has important implications, as shall be seen, for Bataille's general approach to the state theory and the general account of sovereignty.

In this chapter, the concept of nothing in this sense is slightly dealt when we look at the heterogeneous part of society. But it will be significantly handled in Chapter II where this nothing is encountered as one of the concepts of which Bataille's view on Sovereignty consists.

[10] Michael Richardson, **Georges Bataille** (New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 36

[11] **Ibid**.

[12] Jürgen Habermas, "Between Eroticism and General Economics: Georges Bataille"*,* in **The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity** (London: Polity Press, 1990), p. 218.

But before dwelling on this split at the center of heterogeneity, I think that it may be very useful to take a glance at the relationship between the homogeneous and heterogeneous spheres wherein the enormously sophisticated structure of Bataille's theory of society lies. At first sight, one can possibly get an impression that in the dichotomy between homogeneity and heterogeneity, another duality is added to the list of dichotomies that western rationality and metaphysics has drawn and impose on our imagination. But this duality moves in a pattern that is not suitable to the general mode. An approach proving that the constitutive moments in the dualities are arbitrary interventions brings the fact to prominence that the duality cannot sustain the signifying process within the limits essential to the structure of the system. Nevertheless, Bataille's dichotomy is at variance with this general model; and this becomes apparent when we recognize that the relationship between these worlds is, by no means, stable, pure and complete. An undecidability, an impossibility haunts these worlds and allows these worlds neither to be entirely independent nor to be absolutely ordered. Formulation of these worlds in Bataille's intellectual universe is marked by critical gesture characteristics of Bataille: "the gesture by which two terms which apparently exclude each other violently are placed in a relationship of mutual conditioning."[13]

The fact that the homogenous and the heterogeneous worlds exclude each other while continuing to mutually condition each other manifests itself in the violent relationship between them: world of homogeneity is founded upon the exclusion of the heterogeneous element,[14] because of the fact that this element cannot be assimilated, reduced in the sphere of useful activity. The license for the entrance into this world is stipulated on the condition that something has meaning and value. This element should not interrupt the normal course of affairs of homogeneity. Thus "all violence," one of the most conspicuous heterogeneous elements in Bataille's universe, "is excluded from this course of existence."[15] However, the fact that the

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[13] Joseph Libertson, "Bataille and Communication: From Heterogeneity to Continuity," **MLN Comparative Literature**, (Vol: 89, 1974), p. 677.

[14] **Ibid**.

[15] Bataille, note 1, p. 355.

world of homogeneity excludes violence, creating a space in which violence has no rule, never indicates the total abolishment of violence: there is ineffaceable violence inherent both to the drawing of the boundaries between the homogeneity and heterogeneity and to their maintenance and preservation. This permanent, ineffaceable violence only awaits interruption of normal course of affairs to conspicuously show its never-diminishing existence. It is, therefore, natural to conclude that homogeneity needs for its existence the forces that it expels from its boundaries.[16]

Important to highlight is the split between homogeneity and heterogeneity has validity in both micro and macro levels. This means that the split is to be observed both as an individual and as a social phenomenon. Accordingly, individual, just like society, is cut through by the homogenous and heterogeneous sections. In the case of individual, these spheres made their appearances as consciousness and unconsciousness. Considering this point, we easily see that both the heterogeneous and unconsciousness denote a realm that is conditioned –act of exclusion- yet cannot be completely determined by the homogenous (consciousness). Bataille calls our attention to what is common between heterogeneity and unconsciousness when he says, "the exclusion of heterogeneous elements from the homogenous realm of consciousness formally recalls the exclusion of the elements described (by psychoanalysis) as unconscious, which censorship excludes from the conscious ego."[17] Thus we can come to the conclusion that the same mechanisms which through certain acts –exclusion, censorship, repression- give rise to the homogenous (identity, commensurability, effectivity) and heterogeneous (non-identity, incommensurability, affectivity) structure, form and shape at once social environment and individual psyche.

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[16] These forces are the imperative forms of heterogeneity, which play crucial role in Bataille's views on authority in general and on fascism in particular. Bataille aptly states: "As a rule, social homogeneity is a precarious form, at the mercy of violence, and even of internal dissent. It forms spontaneously in the play of productive organization, but must constantly be protected from the various unruly elements that do not benefit from production, or not enough to suit them, or simply, that cannot tolerate the checks that homogeneity imposes on unrest. In such conditions, the protection of homogeneity lies in its recourse to imperative elements that are capable of obliterating the various unruly forces or bringing them under the control of order." **Ibid**., p. 356. Violence inherent to homogeneity will be discussed in the following section in the context of taboo.

[17] **Ibid**., p. 367.

Given the importance of this dichotomy between the homogeneity and the heterogeneity, which exerts an enormous effect on every field of the social -psyche as well as its environment- one may ask the questions: What is the mode of interaction between these two poles? How are the boundaries that separate them sustained, amidst the incessant flux of the social? And more importantly how and when are these drawn –so that it becomes possible for us to see duality at the very heart of the social? These are the questions, the answers of which not only show the complexity of Bataille's system, but also save him from the charges of what Derrida would call "the metaphysics of presence"; namely a troublesome obsession with dualities that has generally characterized Western philosophy. But before looking at these questions, a certain detour seems very helpful which brings to our attention another question that, not so much mainly ontological as the above-mentioned questions, concerns the epistemological side of the issue: how can we know heterogeneity? This question becomes all the more crucial when we recall that the heterogeneity is the world of the irregular, the affective, the incommensurable and that it is the world of all that which shakes the very ground under the feet of knowing -the act of knowing in the academic and scientific sense of the word. These characteristics of the heterogeneity prevent the intelligence from accomplishing the imperatives of instrumental reason, and they also make it to face the bottomless abyss, unless it is –already- subjected and exposed to the mechanism of reduction, rejection, exclusion and repression.[18]

The immediate answer we find in Bataille's writings to the question "how can we know heterogeneous world?" is simple: we cannot know it; we cannot know heterogeneous elements *as such* so long as our intellect, our mode of thinking is already framed by science –homogeneity itself.[19] Science is enlisted in the service of

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[18] Here the metaphor of abyss is taken from Bataille. In Bataille's oeuvre, it is possible to come across another metaphor for this phenomenon: *blind point*.

[19] In Bataille's words: "heterogeneous elements excluded from the latter *[homogenous]* are excluded as well as from the field of scientific considerations: as a rule science cannot know heterogeneous elements as such." **Ibid**., p. 361. We can also find a similar account in 'Use Value of De Sade': "It must even be added that there is no way of placing such elements in the immediate objective human domain, in the sense that the pure and simple objectification of their specific character would lead to

homogeneity; it is the product of the world of work. Since science is structured within the realm, where regularity and commensurability –through reduction and assimilation- are reigning and where being useful and effective is the sole aim, the modes of thinking present in science are alien to heterogeneity. Consequently there is only one single option for science when confronted with heterogeneity: to conquer it, to render it; or to abandon it, or at least dismiss it from the sight. In this way, the basic dichotomy between heterogeneous and homogeneous elements has an epistemological dimension; and this dimension conditions science's attitude toward heterogeneous world. The reality of heterogeneous elements is not of the same order as that of homogenous elements.[20] All these show the reason why science cannot know heterogeneous elements as such: if science knows a heterogeneous element, this element has always already lost, as an outcome of this act of knowing, and its heterogeneous character has been reduced to an identity and assimilated to a meaning. Since all that is known by 'science' is necessarily known in the form of a reduction, "the cognitive relation of a subject to heterogeneity must be contamination of heterogeneity."[21]

In this account of heterogeneity and homogeneity, there emerges a strangely volatile system of priorities. First is the initial epistemological priority of the homogenous: we can only know homogeneity. Thus any investigation of heterogeneity must begin by homogeneity and then spill over heterogeneous elements as a kind of contagion. Second is the ontological priority: epistemological priority of the homogenous is counter balanced with the ontological priority ascribed to the heterogeneity. The scene of homogeneity is formed within the wider scene of heterogeneity through the act of exclusion of certain elements which resist assimilation and reduction, and through the act of purification of this sphere from these elements. Thus the act that forms homogeneity –contrary to the act that knows

their incorporation in a homogenous intellectual system, in other words, to a hypocritical cancellation of their excremental character." **Ibid**., note 4, p. 98

[20] Bataille, note 1, p. 362. Bataille's view on the position of science vis-à-vis heterogeneous world is traceable to Durkheim's approach in **The Elementary Forms of Religious Life**. For the impact of Durkheim on Bataille in the context of the notion of the sacred. See: Michele Richman, "The Sacred Group: A Durkheimian Perspective on the College de Sociologie," **Bataille Writing the Sacred**,. Carolyn Bailey Gill, ed. (New York: Routledge, 1995)

[21] Joseph Libertson, "Bataille and Communication", note 13, p. 677.

heterogeneity- starts in heterogeneity; 'the priority of heterogeneity is thus a condition for the very homogeneity of these objects. Homogeneity, in this sense, is heterogeneity *alterée*.[22]

However in addition to this initial reading, depicting homogeneity as none other than just a part in general heterogeneity –a gesture we are familiar with from deconstruction-[23] there is another reading in Bataille's universe whose contour did not manifest itself so much in 1930s as in 1950s: both the homogenous and heterogeneous are the result of the act of exclusion; they both emerge out of the act of exclusion. Thus, here the matter is not an ontological priority that one of the parts has vis-à-vis the other. In this sense heterogeneous world never signifies a return to a phase prior to exclusion; and this becomes apparent with the strange and complex interplay between taboo and transgression, which is a crucial characteristic of Bataille's intellectual universe.

2.2. *TABOO AND TRANSGRESSION*

In the previous section, where Bataille's conceptualization of the homogenous and heterogeneous parts of society is outlined, one thing becomes clear: man has a dual life. The relationship between the parts of this duality is not a simple matter of exclusion or mutual conditioning but a highly complex structure in which separateness of the elements (exclusion) necessarily and inevitably brings mutual conditioning, or mutual conditioning can only take place on the condition that elements exclude each other. However, there are some questions on whose answers we vaguely dwelled and for which a detailed account should be given in order to elucidate this complex structure. Out of this account, there emerges Bataille's conceptualization of sovereignty. In the most general way, these questions can be given as follows: where can be found the roots of this division – heterogeneity/homogeneity? (or its continuation in more subtle forms such as

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[22] **Ibid**.

[23] Bataille had great influence on Derrida. Here the affinity between Derrida's typically deconstructive reading and Bataille's reading of homogeneity and heterogeneity is striking.

profane/sacred, work/play, reason/violence); when and how does it become possible for man to attain such a dual world? Through what kind of mechanisms can this duality be sustained (not only consciously but also unconsciously; not only intentionally but also unintentionally)? Asking and answering these questions take us to another afford us ground to clarify how Bataille pursues the roots of sovereignty in anthropology.

In *Eroticism*, a great amount of energy and endeavor is reserved by Bataille to understand the nature and origin of taboo: Where can one find early traces of taboo? When and in a response to what are taboos erected? What is the effect of this erection for the conduct of the behavior of species that finally, in a long process, took the name and the shape of Homo sapiens? If it is the taboos that draw the limits of possible/impossible in a decisive yet permeable manner; and if it is the taboos that differentiate the basic characteristics of man's behavior from those of animals, then we must look for the origin of taboos as Bataille did at the remote places in time where humanity gave its early appearances. This strange relation of man with nature, this ambivalence which is no other than the brand of man –separateness from nature yet closely tied with it- can be traced back to the time when man for the first time introduced tool into this world thereby transforming it into two worlds: the world of his own –human nature or human world *Lebenswelt* …- and a world which we refer to as nature. Unlike other animals man has the capacity to invent, use and advance the tool.[24] Bataille extrapolates from this capacity -man's capacity to use tool- the existence of the world of work, early signs of homogeneity, in which man, guided by rationality though it is still primitive according to our standards, fulfills the requirements of survival and life process.[25]

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[24] Georges Bataille, **Eroticism: Death and Sensuality**, Mary Dalwood, trans. (San Fransisco: City Light Book 1986), p. 43. Bataille in this section explains this with regard to Neanderthal man: "we have evidence of his technical skill left by numerous and various stone tools. This skill was remarkable enough in that if he had not given his considered attention, going back on and perfecting his first idea, he could not have achieved results that were constant and in the long run greatly improved."

[25] Here it is important to underscore the fact that Bataille opposes Levi Buhl's description of primitive man as one bereft of rationality. **Ibid.**, p. 43.

The decisive shift from animal to man, this lacerated wound at the *sur*face of nature, was carried through with the establishment of world of work which Bataille succinctly and subtly expresses in a footnote of *Eroticism*: "Work made man what he is."[26] But this world needs the repression of impulses which, because of their relentless move toward immediate satisfaction, can give harm to the order built up by reason. It is, therefore, safe to assume that the world of work can only survive behind the protective walls we call taboo. Then the main function of taboo is to combat violence, and world of work excludes the contagious violence with taboo.[27] Bataille established a strict correlation between man's being engaged in work and his aim of curbing violence, holding it within certain limits. Despite separation from nature, despite the fact that man has built up the rational world, there remains within him a latent violence that, "if unchecked with taboos, may ultimately reduce this order to ruin."[28] So man identifies himself with work, which in turn organizes and orders everything, thus cuts himself off violence which acts against the order tended in the opposite direction.[29] Work, a rational order carried out with certain mechanism, makes for the first time man aware of the violence in the presence of a fragile world always open to turmoil. This point becomes apparent when it comes to the taboos on death: if they cease to exist, man has to encounter the violence which haunts this world in the guise of death. Then to exclude the manifestation of violence brought about by death we see that there emerged the customs of burial.

Even if Bataille emphasizes that the customs of burial contains the first taboo, he calls our attention to the fact that there are numerous taboos within a given community which restrict the behavior. In this manifold forms, in this arbitrary and variable complex Bataille uncovers and makes us discern "a fairly simple and constant nucleus. Nearly everywhere can be found this solid core and the surrounding fluidity and mobility. This mobility obscures the significance of the

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[26] **Ibid**., p.41.

[27] **Ibid**.

[28] **Ibid**., pp. 40-44.

[29] **Ibid**., p. 45.

nucleus."[30] Bataille detects a universality in taboo that becomes unfathomable, indefinable, amorphous in the course of time, which blurs the core of this universality with diverse and multiple forms. Then, with the help of detecting this universality, this nucleus that underlies every taboo, Bataille can reduce every taboo (taboos on death, taboos on sexuality…) to a single element, to a single function: the function of taboo is to combat violence. "Its shape and its object do change; but whether it is a question of sexuality or death, violence, terrifying yet fascinating, is what is leveled at."[31]

There is a complex edifice Bataille develops to understand taboos. This edifice shows itself in a consecutive process in which one element triggers the subsequent one, and the subsequent one triggered by another. In this process everything changes but the constant nucleus to which every element, after process began, can be reduced. Man makes tools; since he makes tools, he works and produces; since he works, he sees violence as external himself; since he alienates himself to violence; he develops reactions to the manifestations of this violence. In this way there emerge the first taboos which regulates man's demeanor in the absolute face of death, and subsequently taboos which introduce certain restrictions on man's sexuality. This three-part constitution shows the basic line that separates man from animals: work, attitude toward death and restriction of sexuality: "the generality of behavior that is essentially human –work, awareness of death, sexual continence- goes back to the same remote past." [32] Thus, this nucleus, this subsisting link between taboo and violence shows the role that taboos had in the emergence of man's dual life that Bataille conceptualized from the early 1930s.

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[30] **Ibid**., p. 53.

[31] **Ibid**., p. 51.

[32] **Ibid**., p. 30 We can find a lot of points to show the consecutive process at work in Bataille's approach to taboos. Apropos of the relationship between work and taboo, Bataille writes: "work demands the sort of …where the wild impulses worked out on feast days and usually in game are frowned upon. If we were unable to repress these impulses we should not be able to work, but work introduces the very reason for repressing them." Bataille, **Eroticism**, note 24, p.41. Taboo is tied by Bataille to sexuality within the context of work: "All we can say that as opposed to work, sexual activity is a form of violence, that as a spontaneous impulse it can interfere with works. A community committed to work cannot afford to be at its mercy during working hours, so to speak. We would then be justified in thinking that, from the first, sexual liberty must have received some checks which we are bound to call a taboo without being able to say anything about the cases in which it apples. At most we could assume that initially the time set aside for work determined the limit." **Ibid**., p. 53.

The movement of taboo is accompanied by another movement which opens what is closed by the taboo: *transgression*. This is the natural outcome of the fact that man has a dual life, a sign testifying to the fact that world of work and its rationality do not exhaust the possibilities of man. The reason of this lies in the fact that the homogeneity and rationality still stand in need of violence to exclude violence. Thus one does not err in saying that the circle drawn by the homogeneity and rationality cannot be full and well closed. Indeed both taboo and its transgression do belong to the same mechanism; they both are the manifestation of the same underlying mechanism, which, because of man's dual life, leads up to the taboo in certain circumstances and to the transgression in others. They, transgression and taboo, can be shown to complement each other; "just as diastolic movement completes a systolic one, or just as explosion follows upon compression."[33] Therefore the restrictions imposed by taboo on violent impulses, in the process from animal to man, could not spawn a final conclusion, and eradicate the impulses from the texture of the social once for all. Restrictions, far from capable of a final cut – refusing violence altogether- just cause the impulses to jolt and seethe more fiercely and to rise on a higher level for a vent: "Taboos are not only there to be obeyed. There is always another side to the matter, it is always temptation to knock down the barrier; the forbidden action takes on a significance it lacks before fear widens the gap between us and it and invests it with aura of excitement."[34]

Then we come to another important conclusion Bataille draws regarding taboo: taboo is there in order to be violated. But what is the precise relationship between taboo and the act of transgression? It is not difficult to see that transgression does not deny taboo, does not destroy taboo; it just suspends taboo. As regards taboos, we can say that it does not eliminate impulses against which it is set; it cannot complete the circle. It is because of this structure that Bataille does not hesitate to put an insurmountable discrepancy between the transgression as a human act and animal behavior: transgression is not the same as a back-to-the-nature movement. Transgression has nothing whatsoever to do with animality: once taboo is

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[33] **Ibid**., p. 65.

[34] **Ibid**., p. 48.

injected into the social world, the road back to the nature is closed off once and for all. Bataille makes it clear when he states: "once the obstacle is overthrown what outlasts the transgression is a flouted taboo … Transgression piled upon transgression will never abolish the taboo."[35] But there is another movement in Bataille's system that does not reveal itself to a superficial reading, and that negates any conclusion affixing ontological priority to taboo by making transgression just a function of it. Taboo has the capacity to displace itself to accompany the movement of transgression –"what outlasts the flood of transgression is taboo"- and, in Bataille's system, transgression has the status of *privileged failure*[36] –it cannot go beyond the taboo. But these are also the signs of the lack that opens itself at the heart of the taboo; they also mark the cleavages at the surface of taboo and make it open to penetration by transgression. There is a spiral movement here whose strange circulation between presence and absence makes us conclude: "limit –taboo- is not an entity whose mode of being would be transgression's other. On the contrary, the modality "excess within containment" defines both these concepts.[37] This conceptualization of the duality, taboo/transgression, strikes our attention when we remember the fact Bataille incessantly underscores that taboo expunging affective elements from the scene is itself an affective reaction: "but the taboos on which the world of reason is founded are not rational for all that. Calm opposite to violence would not suffice to draw a clear line between two worlds… only unreasoning dread and terror could survive in the teeth of the forces let loose. This is the nature of the taboo which makes a world of calm reason possible but is itself basically a shudder appealing not to reason but feeling, just as violence is."[38]

In the light of this explanation, we can cast a glance at a thorny issue: the relation between transgression and dialectic. Dialectic occupies such an intricate and such an important place in Bataille's system that a passing mention of it within the limits of this section hardly satisfies our curiosity. Nevertheless, it may serve as a

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[35] **Ibid**.

[36] The term belongs to Libertson, "Excess and Imminence: Transgression in Bataille" **MLN Comparative Literature** (Vol: 92, 1977), p. 1008.

[37] Libertson, **Ibid.**, p. 1013.

[38] Bataille, **Eroticism***, note 24, p. 63-64.

preliminary note to the subject which we encounter in the following chapters. In this sense, special attention will be paid to this theme in Chapter III whose subject matter is uneasy relationship between Bataille (sovereignty *out of* dialectic, in both senses of "out of") and Hegel (sovereignty through/after dialectic).[39] At the most basic level, the issue revolves around the question whether Bataille's vision of transgression leads astray the movement of dialectic. This question was forcibly asked by Sartre who accused Bataille of replacing "dialectics and revolution with the paralyzed revolt of transgression."[40] The solution to this issue cannot be given in absolute terms since there is an ambiguity that marks Bataille's approach to dialectics. On the one side, we see Bataille very close to Hegel under the influence of Kojeve's reading of *Phenomenology*. The most conspicuous reference to this can be found in a small footnote of *Eroticism* where Bataille discusses the transgression in the context of eroticism: "There is no need to stress the Hegelian nature of this operation which corresponds with the dialectic phase described by the untranslatable German 'aufheben': transcend without suppressing."[41] Thus we can partly understand Michael Richardson in criticizing Foucault's neglect of dialectical character of Bataille's thought.[42] Whether play of transgression eliminates dialectics or not, it is clear that there is an ambiguity in Bataille's approach as subsequent chapters will show, a case which Derrida points out as follows:

[39] For this point, see Bataille, "Hegel, la Mort et Le Sacrifice," in **Œuvres Complètes XII : Articles II 1950-1961** (Paris, Gallimard, 1988), p. 326.

[40] Nick Land, **Thirst for Annihilation: Georges Bataille and Virulent Nihilism. An Essay in Atheistic Religion** (New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 59.

[41] Bataille, **Eroticism**, note 24 , p. 36.

[42] Richardson writes: "Foucault treats transgression in a way that could hardly be further from Bataille's own approach…. It would have been impossible for him to reject Hegel as Foucault did. This is especially so in what Foucault reacted against most of all was the Hegelian dialectic, and especially against the dialectic of master and slave." Michel Richardson, **Georges Bataille** (New York: Routledge, 1994), pp.6-7 Foucault, far from being unaware of the dialectic, poses the question in terms of the language of philosophy in a age when the death of God dwindles the limit in front of transgression. Although Foucault investigates transgression partly rescued by the death of God from the centripetal force of dialectics, he is aware of the dialectical character of Bataille's transgression: "The limit and transgression depend on each other for whatever density of being they possess: a limit could not exist if it were absolutely uncrossable and, reciprocally, transgression would be pointless if it merely crossed a limit composed of illusions and shadows." Michel Foucault, "A Preface to Transgression" Robert Hurley and Others, trans. **Aesthetics, Method and Epistemology**, James Faubion, ed. (New York: The New Press, 1990), p. 73.

Can one, as Bataille says, understand the movement of transgression under the Hegelian concept of *Aufhebung*, which, we have seen often enough, represents the victory of the slave and the constitution of meaning? Here, we must interpret Bataille against Bataille, or rather, must interpret one stratum of his work from another stratum… we will perhaps sharpen the figure of displacement to which the entire Hegelian discourse is submitted here. In which Bataille is even less Hegelian than he thinks.[43]

2.3. *EXPENDITURE AND GENERAL ECONOMICS*

The notion of consumption has a significant place in Bataille's intellectual universe, playing a crucial role in his notions such as sovereignty and general economics. Moreover, what Bataille formulates as consumption also includes such themes as erotism, death, sacrifice; the themes that have never ceased to be dominant throughout his intellectual life. In this section, my aim is to outline Bataille's intellectual trajectory centered on the issue of consumption. This intellectual trajectory first started systemically in a 1932 article,[44] "La Notion de Dépense", and unfolded itself, after 18 years of study Bataille engaged to develop the notion of expenditure in order to understand human condition, in *Part Maudite*. This study, despite certain reservations, represents a culminating point in Bataille's life. I want first to dwell on the concept of expenditure by taking a general look at Bataille's 1932 article; then proceed to consider general economy in the form it takes in *Part Maudite.*

In the two preceding sections, I pointed out that in terms of Bataille's thinking there is always a certain duality which cannot be cast into the mold that has shaped the Western thought, and that is always open, because of the hierarchical structure into which the duality is put, to a deconstructive moment. In Bataille's approach, the logic of binary oppositions of homogenous and heterogeneous, taboo and transgression is shaped by *mise-en-jeu,* apparent brand of Bataille's intellectual movement. According to this logic, the presence of one of the elements in binary

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[43] Jacques Derrida, "From Restricted to General Economy: A Hegelianism without Reserve" **Writing and Difference***,* Alan Baas, trans. (University of Chicago Press, 1978), p. 275.

[44] Georges Bataille, 'La Notion de Dépense,' **Œuvres Complètes I Premiers Écrits 1922-1940** (Paris: Gallimard, 1970), p. 305.

relationship cannot be independently thought from that of other. The two elements are thus inserted into non-hierarchical relationship: the presence opposing itself to a certain absence, *lack*, gets turned into a kind of absence as when we see, in previous sections, that homogenous society is itself at the end a kind of heterogeneous entity, and taboo should transgress in order to be taboo. The same binary logic gives shape to Bataille's approach to the issue of consumption. But in his article, "La Notion de Depense", the *mise-en-jeu*, a critical gesture in which notions are exposed to a kind of displacement whereby the same dissolves into the other and the other shows itself as always-already the same, is not so much emphasized as in *Part Maudite*. In *Part Maudite* Bataille invokes the concept of consumption as a cosmo-philosophical 'system,' and relates consumption in a 'meaningful' context to eroticism, sacrifice, sovereignty… In the "La Notion de Dépense" the decisive factor was the Marxist view, under the strong influence of which the hatred Bataille felt against bourgeois society gave sociological and anthropological analysis upper hand vis-à-vis textual movements in the service of revolution.

The article is on Bataille's opposition to reducing the "human activity to processes of production and conservation."[45] Bataille distinguishes between two groups of consumption: productive and unproductive consumption. In the first group, the productive activity of society determines the mode and the regime of consumption. Here, because of the overwhelming influence of production impelled and induced by calculation and rationality, consumption is "represented by the use of the minimum necessary for the conservation of life and the continuation of individuals' productive activity in a given society."[46] What is interesting here, even in the first glance, is the complexity of Bataille's thought. In this complexity the conceptualization and the place of a term are implicated, if not determined, by other concepts which are not directly related to the context under discussion: Accordingly the first category, productive consumption, devoting the products of human activity exerted and employed on terrestrial energy to the process of production, to the useful activity. It is easy to see that this mode of consumption also signifies a homogenized sphere; a homogeneity, behind whose walls man's activities, consumption included,

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[45] Bataille, **Ibid**., p. 307.

[46] **Ibid**.

are organized according to the imperatives of production and under the shadow of taboos. There is also another kind of consumption which cannot be assimilated the productive processes and which thus breaks with the useful consumption. Such an *unproductive* consumption comes into being when the productive processes cannot absorb the surplus energy. This kind of consumption is represented by "luxury, mourning, war, cults, the construction or sumptuary monuments, games, spectacles, arts, perverse sexual activity."[47] Bataille calls this consumption spending or expenditure (l*a Dépense*.)[48] What converges within a single paradigm such diverse and variant activities is the code they share: "all these activities, at least in primitive circumstances, have no end beyond themselves."[49] Just like servile consumption, a term Bataille uses to indicate the first category of consumption signifies the sphere of homogeneity where every element is ordered with regard to an end, and where they relate to each other according to utility; unproductive consumption, having no end beyond itself, refuses to enter into relation ordered and calculated by utility. It is, therefore, not too much to say that it rejects the meaning gleaned from the useful, and thus it belongs to the heterogeneity where a drastic shift dominates social landscape from interdependent to independent, from order to excess, from servile to sovereign.

Loss without return is the basic principle that underlies unproductive expenditure. This loss, which represents the inability of homogenous part of society to take the excess back to the circle of production, serves as proof for Bataille's principle of loss. According to this principle, the main idea is that human subjects are finally motivated, not by rational economic calculation (economism, always assumed in classical economy theory), but rather by the impulse to sacrifice and squander.[50] Within the frame of "La Notion de Depense", in which human condition is represented by a deep chasm where homogeneity -rationality, utility, calculation- is not capable to cross, we see the germs of an intellectual trajectory which has

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[47] **Ibid**.

[48] "Now it is necessary to reserve the use of the word expenditure for the designation of these unproductive forms, and not for the designation of all the modes of consumption that serve as a means to the end of production." Bataille, **Ibid.** note 43, p.307.

[49] **Ibid**.

[50] Scott Cuttler Shershow, "Of Sinking: Marxism and the 'General' Economy," **Critical Inquiry** (Vol: 27, 2001), p. 471.

unremittingly occupied the studies of Bataille. Even if this project reached its zenith in *Part Maudite*, it is impossible not to discern its basic contour in 1932: criticizing the pattern of consumption and the function of wealth in bourgeois society. Bataille's main target is the rationalist conceptions "developed by the bourgeoisie, starting in the seventeenth century." What Bataille opposes to in this conception is the "strictly economic representation of the world." This worldview striving to restrict consumption to production condemns unproductive expenditure as deviate, abnormal, outcast; in brief as something which should be excluded, if not completely repressed or uprooted.   In this sense, Bataille's aim can be said to consist in demonstrating that what this worldview praises is itself a kind of deviant. Here we come to realize the importance of Bataille's anthropological readings which affords the proof that there is no necessity that production comes first, overshadowing the consumption. All in all, production should be in the service of human end, not vice-versa.

With the aim of disapproving the rationalist conception, Bataille draws on the anthropological data from which he derives the empirical knowledge to criticize western culture.[51] Having densely influenced by Marcel Mauss' *Gift*, Bataille turned his eyes to the social interactions of primitive peoples. There he finds the unproductive expenditure, *potlatch*, where conservation of lives and accumulation of goods are discarded by the desire to loss and destruction. This mode of expenditure shakes up the status of rationality principle by showing that the paradigm, rationality principle, and its agent, *homo-economicus*, hold not the eternal truth. In *potlatch* though acquisition and wealth emerge at the end of process, they can be conceived as the side-products. So, we can say that the guiding motive in *potlatch* is always giving (loss). [52] In a tone highly reminiscent of Max Weber, Bataille grasps the drastic change with the development of Christianity:

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[51] **Ibid**. According to Shershow, we can summarize the intellectual project of both Bataille and Mauss as "enlisting anthropology in the service of a utopian cultural critique." **Ibid**., p. 474.

[52] Utopian vision of Bataille that something ought to come after the bourgeois world and his desire to grope in the dark bottoms of human condition for the empirical evidences of this vision lead him seemingly to a highly affirmative reading of Potlatch: "As a game, potlatch is the opposite of a principle of conservation…An activity of excessive exchange replaced heredity (as a source of possession) with a kind of deliriously formed ritual poker. But the players can never retire from the game, their fortunes made; they remain at the mercy of provocation. At no time does a fortune serve to

In so-called civilized societies, the fundamental obligation of wealth disappeared only in a fairly recent period. The decline of paganism led to a decline of the games and cults for which wealthy Romans were obliged to pay; thus it has been said that Christianity individualized property, giving its possessor total control over the products and abrogating his social function.[53]

Bourgeois society, after discarding feudal organization, is the perfection of this model: "Everything that was generous, orgiastic and excessive has disappeared… The representatives of the bourgeois have adopted an effaced manner: wealth is now displayed behind the closed doors in accordance with depressing and boring conventions."[54] While social life was drained of the excesses represented by unproductive expenditure, antagonistic character of social relations explicit in the function of potlatch -humiliating, defying, challenging- was dimmed by means of bourgeois ethics, which on the one hand brought expenditure in the service of production, and which on the other hand confined the social function of wealth – expenditure without return- to charity to ameliorate the antagonism of lower classes.

After 18-year study, Bataille's reflections on this issue bloomed with the *Part Maudite*.[55] Bataille's aim was to show in a systematic way the existence of general

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shelter its owner from need. On the contrary, if functionally remains –as does its possessor- at the mercy of a need for limitless loss, which exists endemically in a social group." Bataille, **Ibid**, note 44, p. 308. Against this idealized reading of potlatch is the question that immediately strikes our attention: can potlatch be thought to represent a social space that is emptied from rationality, calculation, and other parasitic elements or at least a space in which these elements are assigned to a secondary, degraded status? Or is it a space that, despite the accent cast upon the desire to loss and destruction, is surreptitiously haunted by rationality? These are the basic questions whose answers and whose effect on Bataille's approach to sovereignty are pursued in the following chapters. But suffice it to say, at this point of the study, that Bataille was aware of this point, though he depicted, relying on Mauss, loss without any return found in North American tribes is the ideal potlatch: "…it [potlatch] is constituted by a considerable gift of riches, offered openly with the goal of humiliating, defying and obligating rival. The exchange value of the gift results from the fact that the one who receives the gift, in order to efface the humiliation, and respond to the challenge, must satisfy the obligation (incurred by him at the time of acceptance) to respond later with a more valuable gift, in other words, to return with interest." **Ibid**. For a detailed discussion which at the same time acts as a source of inspiration for Bataille, see Marcel Mauss, **The Gif: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies**, Ian Cunnision trans. (New York: The Norton Library, 1967).

[53] Bataille, **Ibid**., p.315.

[54] **Ibid**.

[55] Georges Bataille, **La Part Maudite Œuvres Complètes VII** (Paris : Gallimard, 1976). For a detailed account of the process from "La Notion de Depense" to La Part Maudite, see Jean Piel, "Bataille et le monde: de la notion de dépense à La part maudite," **Critique** (vol : 195-196, 1963), p.721.

economy which could not be restricted to economic understanding of bourgeois society, at least without devastating consequences. Bataille speaks, at the beginning of his study, of difficulties in defining the subject matter he has focused on: it is a book on political economy. But what sort of political economy can one find in *Part Maudite*? The main line of reasoning in "La Notion de Dépense" ushered in the answer: a kind of political economy which does not obey to relegate consumption to a secondary status, where the meaning of consumption is tied to production; a political economy which allots primary status to the notion of expenditure in the study of political economy. Hence Bataille makes his study distinct from those of economists.[56] *Part Maudite*, with backdrop expounded in 1932, is a study of the problems of political economy (both problems of political economy and political economy as a problem) from the perspective of philosophical anthropology, which charges anthropology to find the evidences to establish the truth of philosophical viewpoint. Having gone beyond the field, whose boundaries, internal and external, are strictly drawn by the academic division of labor, and where the legitimacy of a thought depends on its compliance with the imperatives of the compartmentalization, Bataille with *Part Maudite* gave birth to an excessive object (impossibility for a study to confine knowledge within parceled fields) about an excessive subject (impossibility for an economy to retain surplus, excess, within itself). With this twist, economical representation of the world based on restricted viewpoint of scarce resources is replaced with excess of resources: "… it is not necessity but its contrary, luxury, that presents living matter and mankind with their fundamental problems."[57] Hence, with inversion of fundamental economic question, "the key problem is no longer the use of scarce resources but unselfish expenditure of superfluous resources."[58]

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[56] Bataille, **Ibid.**, "I had to add that the book I was writing did not consider the facts the way qualified economists do, that I had a point of view from which a human sacrifice, the construction of a church or the gift of a jewel were no less interesting than the sale of wheat." p. 27.

[57] Bataille, **Ibid.**, p. 25. Bataille also points out differences between scarcity based restricted economy and general economics: "From the particular point of view *[from restricted economy]* the problems are posed in the first instance by a deficiency of resources. They are posed in the first instance by an excess of resources if one starts from the general point of view." **Ibid***.,* p.39

[58] Habermas, "Between Eroticism and General Economics," note 12, p. 234.

To accomplish what he set out to do, Bataille looks at the 'problem of political economy' with a perspective emerged from a combination of such diverse fields that one can find in it political economy being exposed to the premises and principles derived from biology, cosmology, geophysics. Bataille wants, in this way, to combine his attempt to find anthropological evidence (for the fact that *homo-economicus* is by no means the basic criteria for human condition) with a macro-level movement (cosmic-*Lebensphilosophie* as Habermas calls it). By means of this, it becomes apparent that restricted economy is not only against human nature, but also it contradicts nature in general. Bataille rests his main argument upon a general biological fact[59]: any living system "receives more energy from its surrounding milieu than it can profitably use up in simply maintaining its existence."[60] The source of this excess is the sun "which founds and funds the whole economy by being pure gift of energy without return."[61] Initially, this surplus energy is consumed for growth by the system. Nevertheless, the surplus cannot be wholly circumscribed by the process of growth. Growth of the system comes to stagnation, to a standstill – either internally with the saturation of the system to absorb energy for the growth or externally with the pressure of life, that is the abundance of other systems depended on the same energy movement. After growth's coming to its limit, the persisting surplus energy unabsorbed by the growth –because sun still shines above us- has to be spent or destroyed without return, without gain. This last point, this excess of the energy, without being brought within system in a useful way, is that which is out of the control of the system: "If the system can no longer grow, or if the excess cannot be completely absorbed in its growth, it must necessarily be lost without profit: it must be spent, willingly or not, gloriously or catastrophically."[62]

Bataille, changing from the perspectives of restrictive economy to those of general economy, "accomplishes a *Copernican* transformation: a reversal of thinking

[59] Even if Baudrillard is motivated by similar premises, he criticizes Bataille because of the biological elements in his system. For a detailed explanation of this point, see "La Mort chez Bataille" in Jean Baudrillard, **L'Échange Symbolique et la Mort** (Paris, Gallimard, 1976), pp. 236-43.

[60] Geoffrey Bennington, "Introduction to Economics I: Because World is Round." **Bataille: Writing the Sacred**, Carolyn Bailey Gill, ed., note 19, p. 49.

[61] **Ibid**.

[62] Bataille, note 55,. p. 21.

and ethics."[63] A shift takes place with the insight of general economy between terrestrial space dominated by scarcity and general solar system dominating with excess. The moral language of Bataille append this cosmological reading with political economy: "The disciplining power of morality, the abhorrence of luxury, the prohibition of sovereign violence and exclusion of heterogeneous"[64] thwart that which once humanity accomplished unconsciously, but not so much catastrophically as that which Bataille witnessed while studying on the subject matter. Thus man, conditioned and accustomed to see issues in terms of scarcity and accumulation, should consciously learn to spend lavishly without return: either man will recognize the movement that excesses itself, or will comply with the consequences; either humanity will learn to destroy energy or the energy will destroy man. If humanity's ignorance refuses what Bataille calls glorious expenditure, catastrophic forms of squandering will doom humanity to "imperialistic adventures, global wars, and in our day ecological pollution and nuclear destruction,"[65] in which not only goods but also lives of humanity are consigned to destruction.

At this point, I confine myself with the task of giving the outline, in a highly loose manner, of general economy; the ground on which the endless play of sovereignty is played. The expense of this confinement is the omission of critiques without which our understanding of general economics is frail.[66] Accordingly, one may consider the cosmology in general economy misleading because of its ignorance

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[63] **Ibid**., p. 25.

[64] Habermas, "Between Eroticism and General Economics," note 12, p. 235.

[65] **Ibid**.

[66] It may be necessary to point out that besides critiques in these introductory notes implications of General Economy for epistemology is left untouched besides critiques. The following passage makes it possible for us to glimpse at the epistemology necessitated by General Economy: "… a kind of bold reversal that substitutes dynamism, in harmony with the world, for the stagnation of isolated ideas, of stubborn problems born of an anxiety that refused to see. How without turning my back on expectations, could I have had the extreme freedom of thought that places concepts on a level with the world's freedom movement? It would serve no purpose to neglect the rules of rigorous investigation, which proceeds slowly and methodically. But how can we solve the enigma, how can we measure up to the universe if we content ourselves with the slumber of conventional knowledge?" **La Part Maudite**, note 55**,** p. 11. Bataille terms the new 'knowledge' he demands to understand the 'general movement'   -general movement of solar energy in globe, in body, in text, in discourse- "unknowledge"**.** We will see the importance of this concept for Bataille's view on Sovereignty in the following chapter.

of Newtonian physics, because of Bataille's insistence on antique cosmology.[67] One may consider Bataille's call for conscious expenditure as metaphysical, metaphysical in the pejorative sense of the term.[68] One can also read in it the fate of transcendental philosophy since the curse weighed on man is contingent upon the shape of biosphere.[69] One can bring forward as defect Bataille's failure to catch the transformation of capitalism whereby austere bourgeois culture has been punctured all over with the rising consumer capitalism.[70] One can even descry a mishap, an *abyss*, that general economy can fall into, and where it is, before vanishing, reaped for the ideological endorsement of postindustrial capitalism.[71] An endorsement taking place when one, in the vertigo of intoxication of general movement, loses the sight that radical break with restricted economy by general economy can not be serious until death strikes the game.[72] These are occasions for embarking on, rather than discarding, general economy and its accursed share. A share that discourse, episteme and philosopheme on the one hand; law, order and system on the other can not tolerate within; but to which they unwillingly express their unrecognized gratitude for the condition of possibility.

The aim of this chapter has been to present a theoretical background to serve as a conceptual introduction to Bataille's understanding of sovereignty. Thus rather than embracing an exhausting approach which covers the whole range of Bataille's thought, I have found it appropriate to pick out three conceptualizations which I think bring an important insight into our understanding of Bataille's views on sovereignty. For the moment, it is enough to emphasize that every conceptualization

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[67] Marc Kessel, "A Sovereign's Anatomy: The Antique in Bataille's Modernity and Its Impact on His Political Thought," in **Cogito and the Consciousness***,* Slavoj Zizek, ed. (London: Duke University Press, 1998), p. 221.

[68] Habermas, note 12, p. 235.

[69] Bennington, note 59, p. 52.

[70] Jean-Joseph Goux, "General Economics and Postmodern Capitalism" Kathryn Ascheim and Rhonda Garelick, trans. In **Yale French Studies** 78 (1990): 206-224

[71] Shershow, "Of Sinking," note 50.

[72] The passage from **Inner Experience** shows this point clearly "In a sense, the condition in which I *would* see would be to get out of, to emerge from the 'tissue'! And doubtless I must immediately say: the condition in which I *would* see would be to die. At no moment would I have the chance to *see*!"

dealt with here (homogeneity/heterogeneity, taboo/transgression and accumulation/consumption) has direct relation with the issue of sovereignty, as, I hope, the following chapters will make apparent. Heterogeneity, transgression and consumption denote all the occasions –physical, temporal, spatial- for sovereignty to emerge and show itself. Equally important to emphasize is that Bataille avoids constructing the relations between concepts in hierarchical terms in these conceptualizations. It is therefore right to argue that every hierarchical status ascribed to a concept in the above mentioned binary relations is counterbalanced by a textual movement which prevents the relationship from being molded into a fully articulated hierarchical structure. This textual movement also prevents the concepts from being situated into the positions of superiority and inferiority. The same logic also influences Bataille's approach to sovereignty. Herein lies, I think, the reason of the breakthrough that one might expect from Bataille in making sense sovereignty.

CHAPTER 3

BATAILLE'S CONCEPTUALIZATION OF SOVEREIGNTY

In the preceding chapter, we have shown the conceptual background playing decisive role in Bataille's formulation of sovereignty. Now, we can directly look at this formulation and for this, Bataille's book, *La Souveraineté*, seems to be the good place to start. Bataille begins this book with a cautionary remark to warn the reader not to take what he understands by sovereignty as a theme of international law or political theory. To begin with, we can argue that Bataille considers sovereignty basically as the opposite of what is servile and subordinate. Having thus differentiated his idea of sovereignty from the political concept that has formed subject matter of political theory, international law and state sociology, Bataille provides us with a list containing categories designated to show who possesses what he understand by sovereignty. In the preliminary remarks of the book, he outlines four basic categories according to which sovereign character is attributed to certain personalities. The first category established by Bataille is the institution of kingdom whereof the constitutive figures are the kings of the past such as the chieftain, pharaoh and king of kings. The second category may be called sacred, a category according to which the sovereign position is held by the divinities ranging from the vague and indistinct powers of animism onwards through totemic or mythological figures to the omnipotent God of different monotheisms. The third category consists of all those credited by the feudal and priestly order with certain hierarchical prestige, rank and the functions emanated from them. And the last category is peopled by *men* irrespective of any contingent social and political positions,

identities and functions so that it is quite safe to assume that what Bataille understands by Sovereignty is the characteristics of all men.[73]

Granting this, the importance of the last category becomes quite manifest. As easily seen, the difference of this category lies in the fact that in other categories, a mechanism of distinction based on rank and hierarchy is operative so that only to a limited number of people do the doors of sovereignty remain open and that the ordinary man, if we understand by this the man for whom these doors are already closed, is robbed of a sovereign character. It is therefore not too difficult to realize the crucial significance that this last point would take in the general oeuvre of Bataille. This all-inclusive category of sovereignty discards a misreading highly likely to give the impression that Bataille is disposed to praise the feudal institutions in which exclusion was going hand in hand with arbitrary oppression. Having this last group included in his schema of sovereignty, Bataille therefore makes it clear that his interest in the feudal world stems not from a yearning for a return to the past, but from his desire to regard the feudal figures as a model with the help of which the basic characteristics of sovereignty are shown in an eminent degree: consumption beyond utility. This model, based largely on sovereign figures having played a decisive role in the past, enables Bataille to show that a sovereign being (a being beyond utility, work and efficiency) does not owe its conception to the whimsical and fanciful imagination of a philosopher. Accordingly, a sovereign is a historical being, and that is why we should look at the history if we want to understand this being. This being the case, it is, however, important to emphasize that Bataille's showing sovereignty to be basically the general asset of all human beings demonstrates that his conceptual frame is guided by a principle other than reactions stirred against the modern world stirred. This is what Bataille makes clear when he states at the very beginning of his book: "I shall always be concerned with the apparently lost sovereignty to which the beggar can sometimes be as close as the great nobleman, and from which, as a result, the bourgeois is voluntarily the most far removed."[74]

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[73] "…elle appartient essentiellement à tous les homes qui possèdent et jamais n'ont tout à fait perdu la valeur attribuée aux dieux et aux dignataires."   Georges Bataille, **La Souveraineté Œuvres Complètes VIII** (Paris : Gallimard, 1976), p. 277.

After the general consideration of the scope of sovereignty, it seems appropriate to turn to the question: What are the basic elements of the sovereignty to which a beggar is entitled as firmly as a nobleman? The answer would reveal itself when these three figures -beggar, nobleman and bourgeois- are put into the close scrutiny in order to fathom their basic characteristics. The only common point one can find between a beggar and nobleman lies in the position they tend to take in the face of utility. They are useless classes in that they are disinclined, if not inflicted with certain inaptitude, to take part in the working process, and also in that they are disposed to consume what others produce without bearing the burden of work. As can be easily inferred, they hardly have a place in social life as the productive forces. In contrast to them, the bourgeois' position as the productive agent of social life is quite obvious so that it is possible to speak of this class as being anchored into a concept of utility. If so, it is not too much to say that his identity is determined by the value it creates, and that to maintain this identity he must strive after the ways to remain useful. While beggar and nobleman consume their sources without paying a due attention to the principle of utility, bourgeois always consumes in strict accordance with the utility determined and sought by an intelligence always calculating the future outcomes. Therefore, the resemblance between beggar and nobleman and their common difference from bourgeois help usher in one of the basic elements of sovereignty: Sovereign is the one who consumes what can by no means be justified by necessity –subsistence- or utility. Or as Bataille puts very clearly: Life *beyond utility* is the domain of sovereignty.[75]

Another element in Bataille's determination of sovereignty becomes apparent with the help of the contrast he shows to be between the present and the future time: Utility denotes a man who lives in the future, who sacrifices his present for the sake of an outcome he anticipated for in the future. Sovereignty, as long as it be taken as the denial of utility, can only be conceived to be present in the moment (which belongs neither to past nor to future). Hence sovereign prevents the future (anticipation) from muddling with the moment and from dominating over it. So long

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[74] **Ibid.,** p. 198.

[75] **Ibid**.

as one gazes into the future and takes it as a guide of the conduct, it is plausible to suppose that future has prevailed over him. Accordingly, he is by no means a sovereign being, but a being that is in service. Suppose this granted, it is not difficult to understand that however sublime this service would be and however elevated it would remain from the mire of work and practice, the present moment (the chronological modality of sovereignty) happens to have been sacrificed for the sake of future, if there is a concern about future. Therefore, it is quite safe to assume that living in a present moment enwrapped by the shadow of future, man's basic existential condition is to be in service. What is no less important is to catch a glimpse of the point that this existential condition (to be in service) has always already been accompanied by a preposition (having already been *pre*-positioned): *of*. Correspondingly, so long as he acts in a way motivated by the future, man can be described as a being that is in the service *of* someone or something, viz. as a being whose value is derived not from itself but from the success he shows in rendering this service. "What is sovereign in fact is to enjoy the present time without having anything else in view but his present time."[76]

Thus we come to another element in Bataille's definition of sovereignty: *enjoyment*. From what has been said so far, an inference can easily be drawn that sovereign is the one who enjoys. A definition that links sovereignty to enjoyment urges us to get a distinct notion of enjoyment which does not endorse an unwarranted uniformity between the pleasure principle and this enjoyment. Since enjoyment happens to come into being only after the satisfaction of needs having been accomplished, we are quite prepared to say that enjoyment cannot be reduced to a satisfaction, and that it has always a surplus character. (It is useful at this point to refer to a maxim generally cited when psychoanalytically motivated concerns attempted to plumb the depths of this concept: every enjoyment is a surplus enjoyment) Thus it is always of a character that exceeds the needs. This is also true for the concept of desire as is formulated by Lacan and Zizek as an impulse whose object of satisfaction (an object that finally brings this impulse to a rest) is impossible to attain. Quite apparent is that the object of desire is impossible in that nothing (it may be illuminating to remember Bataille's definitions of sovereignty:

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[76] **Ibid**.

Sovereignty is NOTHING) can stand for the object after which desire chases. Considering this, it is not too difficult to understand what is singled out by Bataille in claiming that "Beyond need, the object of desire is, *humanly*, the *miracle;* it is sovereign life, beyond the necessary that suffering defines."

An analysis of enjoyment, cursory though it must be in view of this context, suffices to abruptly bring before us another theme playing a decisive role in Bataille's elaboration of sovereignty: the relationship between miracle and sovereignty, or the miraculous character that sovereignty should take whenever it comes into being. If sovereignty is that which is beyond utility, if it is that which denies primacy of future over present, and if it is that which enjoys rather than accumulates, then it is clear that what Bataille understands by sovereignty is outside the routine of everyday life. Sovereignty comes to the scene when the well-functioning routine of everyday life, based on the calculation of future outcomes with a view to utility, ceases to operate. Thus miraculous is (some)thing which breaks the smooth continuation of events. It erupts at the heart of routine, and violates the duration.[77] It is possible to further this idea in pointing out that despite the monopoly the religious thought has always attempted to hold over it, miracle can by no means be regarded as of divine character. The miraculous is what exceeds the limits of that which appears as "possible," and also within which the chronological sequence flows, without interruption, from the past into the unknown depths of future. Thus defined, miracle is not directly related with the utility to which it has no choice but to being chained whenever a ruler or a ruling class exploits it to justify its sovereign position in the eyes of its subjects (especially by presenting such omens as fertility of crops, prevention of a plague, heal of certain diseases, victory in war or such like) And this has been the case ranging historically from the most primitive animistic tribes up to the renaissance empires of Europe. So, far from being predestined by a universal law, (divine in character, political in purpose) the miraculous can be conceived as a subjective, albeit socially conditioned, experience, and it can not be confined within the horizons of onto-theological thought. Bataille recommends such a reading of miracle by giving a striking example: the brilliance of the sun. This

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[77] It is interesting that despite the considerable divergence with Bataille, Carl Schmitt also points out the same situation: Carl Schmitt, **Politische Theologie: Vier Kapitel zur Lehre von der Souveränität** (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1996), p. 43

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miracle consists of a feeling arising out of a situation open to anyone without permitting the distinctive color of exclusion, discrimination and rank to be imposed upon. For a miracle to come about, according to Bataille, hardly more than the "brilliance of the sun, which on a spring morning transfigures a desolate street" is required.[78]

Now, we have seen that miracle is the ontological basis (or non-basis) of sovereignty. We have also noticed that the miraculous moment can not be fully grasped by the onto-theological thought striving to so formulate it that a certain type of authority and its institutions would finally ensue. Holding out for the widest possible rendering of the idea of miracle, Bataille seems to have mapped out the ontological basis according to which sovereignty is the fortune not of a distinct social group or layer but of every one. The condition to take part in miracle is laid open to *the* experience. Yet, if this is one side of the matter, the other side immediately grows more and more apparent as the attempt to widen the inclusiveness of miracle is moved further to its logical conclusions: it becomes clear that when the distinctive color imposed upon it by the onto-theological thought fades away, the scope of the objective dimension of miracle is rendered open to all. Those objects and occasions which Bataille considers fundamental to all can be said to be beauty (sublime), funeral, death, laughter, eroticism, poetry, happy tears, sacrifice …etc.

Such a broad list urges us to ask the question: isn't it disconcerting, if not arbitrary, to gather so many divergent things ranging from beauty to funereal under the same banner stamped with the name, sovereignty? This point makes Bataille face the problem of morphology which can give an account of the underlying unity of aspects. Such an approach necessarily brings the issue of method to the fore. Without understanding the methodological approach Bataille assumes, it would be difficult to fully appreciate what Bataille says on sovereignty. Method in Bataille's formulation of sovereignty is not something adjacent to the process as a post sign that guides the course of research. It is, as shall be seen, the very experience where it is no longer possible to distinguish ontology from epistemology. Method for Bataille is the

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[78] Miraculous manifests itself in the form beauty, of wealth, of violence, of funereal and sacred sadness. For this point, see Bataille, **Ibid.**, p.200.

process itself. Let's look at the reason he gives for his reluctance to give an account of morphology through which we can discern, if not realize, the kernel that lies beneath all these diverse occasions: "A morphology describing complex domains could only come after a posing of fundamental problems. It might be final result, which would come at the end. I prefer to examine what is essential, without lingering over the question of method."[79] It is clear that for Bataille research is no less than what is equivalent to experience. It is not something which moves along paths of knowledge predetermined by the method already chosen. However, it is quite apparent that this reluctance to linger over the issue of method and to give an outline of morphology is itself a kind of method. Then it seems necessary to look more thoroughly at Bataille's approach in which the strange interplay of epistemology and ontology brands not only knowing but also being.

In Bataille's formulation of sovereignty, it is not possible to find a clear demarcating line between knowing and being. Ontological understanding of sovereignty is always brought along with a certain epistemological approach. To understand this interplay, it is useful to remember the basic characteristics which Bataille cites as element of sovereignty: sovereignty is the miraculous moment. As already emphasized, for this miracle element to come into existence, no more is necessary than to transcend the routine and to break the duration of chronological sequence. Thus the moment, if it is miraculous, can not ever be placed into the chronological sequence (basic temporal modality of everyday life) without at the same time giving rise to troubles. Accordingly, it is quite safe to assume that there arises the epistemological issue of how to know sovereignty –sovereign moment- since knowledge itself implies duration. Knowledge, as Bataille says, can by no means be conceived to be a sudden illumination of mind –a moment-, so it is none other than the unfolding of discourse: To know is always to strive, to work; it is always servile operation, indefinitely resumed, indefinitely repeated. Knowledge is never sovereign; to be *sovereign* it would have to occur in a moment."[80] In the light of what has been said as regards the object of desire, we are prepared to say that the whole issue here gravitates around how to handle an object, which brings the

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[79] **Ibid.,** p. 201.

[80] **Ibid.,** p. 202

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operation of intelligence to a halt and which, thus, has no room for the intelligence to unfold (duration) itself and yields thereby knowledge. It is only when a certain object is stripped of its material dimension and takes on a miraculous character that it can be regarded as one which can successfully resist being articulated by the suppressing interest of intelligence. "Only by canceling, or at least neutralizing, every operation of knowledge within ourselves are we in the moment, without feeing it. This is possible in the grip of strong emotions that shut off, interrupt or override the flow of thought."[81]

From what has been said as regards the miraculous character of sovereignty, it is not difficult to draw an inference that miraculous moment as an experience is nothing but a rupture, a fissure. Duration untainted by rupture, on the other hand, signifies an ontological modality which can be labeled as *being in the future while occupying a position within the present time*. Even the slightest effort shown in the direction of expanding on this modality would suffice to manifest one of the concepts which Bataille has always had for the cardinal points of his understanding of sovereignty: *anguish*. Accordingly, so long as man find himself torn between future and present, that is to say, so long as man find his present moment organized with an eye to the future which cannot ever be ascertained, we can safely assume that he is an *anguished being*. Man's occupying a two-sided temporal dimension, set apart by the abyss of uncertainty, makes us talk of man's natural condition as being in anticipation. Anticipation is the mode of living necessitated and fashioned by the sacrifice of the present time for the desired outcomes. Therefore we can see that the thread which weaves the texture of anticipation is none other than the impulse for the preservation of the unproblematic and undisrupted extension of duration, and also that taking measures is critically called for to overwhelm the elements tending to deviate from the duration. In the light of this, it is not too difficult to understand what is in question here: sacrificing the present time for the future or, more expressively, putting the present under the control of a future that can be anything but uncertain. Only when this mode of living breaks up as is occasioned by a heterogeneous matter can the miraculous moment be talked of as having come into being.[82]

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[81] **Ibid.**, p. 203.

Having mapped out the underground connections found among miracle, sovereignty and anticipation,[83] we can proceed a littler farther in this direction. If a certain type of object in certain conditions is capable of bringing the anticipation to the verge of collapse (indeed what is said to be trembling on this verge is the whole mechanism causing anticipation), it can be legitimately asked how and in which conditions it comes about that an object (matter), surpassing the objectivity, within which it is embedded, and the anticipation, with which it is mostly shaded, would dissolve into the indistinct (immaterial) zone of NOTHING. On our confronting such a question, we seem quite prepared to admit that what matters here is scarcely less than the line with which the boundary between *impossible* and possible is drawn. If the possible is a realm where duration unfolds itself (past ends up in future, and cause in effect), then *impossible* can be conceived to be an occasion (not a place but a moment), such as is capable of wringing the two components of the experience (the subject and the object) out of duration, making them suspend in the void. Even this ontological sketch, trivially as it is drawn, would suffice to convince us of the border line character of miracle and thus of sovereignty: in no other zone than in *impossible* can this miracle (sovereignty) flash up; and when this comes about, however shortly and abruptly, the *impossible* can be taken to have already turned out to be a part of the possible. Thus formulated, this ontological sketch, as easily seen, lands us in Bataille's other definition of sovereignty located in the same ontological basis as miracle: *impossible yet there it is.*

In consequence, what Bataille tries to convey is that in so far as our way to knowledge is paved by the paradigm determined in the direction of science, there is said to be nothing but two options laid open to us: If it cannot be made to fit (mainly via exclusion and assimilation) into the frame of knowledge the moment cannot be so thoroughly grasped as to give birth to knowledge. If otherwise, the attempt to locate the moment (sovereign and miraculous) within the frame of knowledge can by no means be accomplished except by resorting to certain violence –repression in the

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[82] "Le rire ou les larmes se déchaînent dans le vide de la pensée, que leur object fit dans esprit." **Ibid.**

[83] L'instant miraculeux où l'attente se résout en RIEN, nous détachant d'un sol où nous rampions, dans l'enchaîénement de l'activité utile. » **Ibid.**

course of which the miraculous in moment happens to be gradually diminishing. (we cannot know the miraculous [heterogeneous] before losing the sight of what is thoroughly heterogeneous in it, or, expressed in Bataille's parlance, barely before it is totally homogenized). It is, therefore, not surprising to see Bataille recommend "going in the wrong direction on the paths of knowledge." The circumstances of knowledge being so antithetical to miracle (repression, assimilation, anticipation, duration), it is not too harsh to conclude that only going in the wrong direction on the paths of knowledge can the ground be attained for the principle of sovereignty: "In any case, this way of going in the wrong direction on the paths of knowledge –to get off them, not to derive a result others anticipate- leads to the principle of sovereignty."[84]

In this light, the critical importance that the issue of method tends to attain in Bataille's conceptualization of sovereignty is made evident. Only by being off the right course, in which theory always runs ahead and experience always follows close on its heels, and only by dissipating the shades of method spread over experience can it come about that the void between sovereignty and knowledge is to be minimized. It is important at this point to take particular note of the impossibility of total overlap between knowledge and sovereignty (total eradication of this void). Seen from this side, what Bataille tries to put forward (reversing the hierarchy so as to give the primacy to experience itself) becomes quite understandable. In this regard, it is enough to mark the basic mode of operation out of which theoretical endeavor yields scientific knowledge: explaining. If the Latin *"explanare"* (smoothing out) is highly suggestive of the fate the heterogonous element is sure to attain when subjected to scientific investigation, it can hardly pass unnoticed that the prefix *"ex"* sheds light on the insurmountable discrepancy between experience (both subject and heterogeneous object) and scientific processes. These two points being read together, it appears that such an insistence on scientific methods as the ultimate judge at any rate lends a hand to the operation whose outcome, if it is successful, is dismissing heterogeneity from view.

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[84] **Ibid.**, p. 208.

The need for a cautionary remark at this point is more and more strongly felt: on account of Bataille's formulation of the antithetical relationship between sovereignty (miracle) and knowledge (science) as two duelers of whom just one would see the end of day, the image of a theoretical or methodological anarchist may be called into being. Bataille's oeuvre being taken as a whole, it seems safe to say that nothing is further from the truth than the assumption that science should be dismissed from view in understanding of sovereignty. Giving lie to the creed taking the science as the ultimate judge of experience, Bataille does not deny the importance of science. It is therefore small wonder that Bataille's vehement reactions against methodology and science never culminate in a point in which our understanding discards science in its conceptualization of sovereignty. Here, no more is at stake than Bataille's insistence on calling attention to the phenomenological *blank point* which evinces the impossibility of going too far in the directions of science or miracle (if we go too far in the direction of science, we have nothing at the end but the homogenization of miracle; or if we go too far in the direction of miracle, it tends to take the character of duration, solidifying into at once an epistemological ground and a regulatory framework). However it may be the case that a phenomenological impossibility imperviously set science (knowledge) and miracle (sovereignty) apart, one has to rely on what is nearest to hand, namely data coming into existence throughout the scientific process, so long as one is bent on understanding Bataille's definition of sovereignty. So, it is not quite implausible to see Bataille emphasizing throughout his writings the importance of science to understand sovereignty. What Bataille opposes is the fetishistic approach to science in which science holds the monopoly of understanding the human condition. Bataille problematizes this monopolistic approach rather than the role of science.[85]

Even while Bataille proclaims that he will not dwell too much on methodology, it is clear that there is a method discerningly guiding Bataille; a

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[85] One of the places where Bataille defends the importance of science is the history of eroticism. Without science we cannot study eroticism. But the study that only handles the issue –eroticism- from the scientific perspective says little. Thus rather than eroticism being put under the cold gaze of science, it must be science itself that should be in the service of eroticism. Otherwise, we see eroticism –this one of the most enigmatic fields of human life- as a realm to be conquered, the only prize of which is the lack of understanding. See for this point, the first chapter of *L'Histoire de L'Erotisme*. Georges Bataille, **L'Histoire de L'Erotisme. Œuvres Complètes VIII** (Paris : Gallimard, 1976).

method only by means of which it is possible to formulate sovereignty in such manner as Bataille develops it. "I wanted to present the development of my thought, disclosing in the course of time, little by little, unexpected relations, rather than offer a theoretical statement of those relations or of the method I followed."[86] Thus it may be said that Bataille sets out not with a predetermined frame according to which to define the basic elements of sovereignty, but with the experience that one is sure to realize that the rational world, the world of practice, is by no means complete. Accordingly, Bataille concentrates on the occasions where this incompleteness eminently manifests itself. Though these occasions spread over so vast an area as to be highly likely to frustrate any attempt to reduce them to a common denominator, the piercing gaze of Bataille, accustomed to the perspective of French sociology of sacred, remarks in the array of these disconcerting elements a common ground: the absence of common ground. The common ground within which these occasions can be conceived to stay neatly is none other than the *absence* of such a ground. How Bataille has unchained sovereignty from the rationalistic conceptualizations and how he thereby has made sovereignty merit a constitutive element of human condition rather than a theme which is to be examined within the domains of legal and political thought, this becomes quite evident with this twist. Hence, the twist enabling Bataille's approach to sovereignty to elude from being is tainted by the metaphysics of presence. Consequently, it is not surprising to see Bataille bringing forward the definitions in which the borderline character of sovereignty (neither truly experience nor theory, neither presence nor absence) is made evident to the most eminent degree: "sovereignty is the life beyond utility," "anticipation dissolves into nothing," "impossible yet there it is."

The strict adherence to scientific and rational thought does not allow one to catch what is basic in these moments, namely their borderline character. Scientific knowledge, always on the trail of generality, tries to sweep the disturbing elements away, which, due to their capacity to resist to the homogenization, Bataille calls miraculous (heterogeneous). Accordingly, the basic mode of science is sure to bring one to the verge of alienation whereby the misleading impression is gained that total control over life is attainable. In order to avoid such an alienation, firstly we should

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[86] Bataille, note 1, p. 206.

gain a firm footing in scientific data (here, even a glance at Bataille's immense and vast anthropological readings), and secondly we would rather proceed in a direction in which experience is no more treated as if under the yoke of theoretical and scientific approach, as if deprived of independence under the control of this approach. This shift from theory to experience is what most clearly characterizes Bataille's method. To understand this point it is of help to look at Bataille's dealing with the strange phenomenon: happy tears. He wonders why one tends to cry in moments of happiness. The crucial part lies in the manner in which such opposite moods of human psyche as these are wedded. Only when an event (miraculous) topples down the hierarchy set by mind in such way as to arrange the human psyche in distinct compartments can it become possible that happiness and tears come together. Thus to understand the miraculous moment and sovereignty, it seems critically urgent that instrumental reason and scientific mode of knowing not be allowed to mold all the objectivity and all the acts of subject therein into the general pattern of cause-effect relationship; and this is emphasized in the following passage on the paradoxical phenomenon of happy tears: "So it is easy to see, if I have been understood, how the paradox of tears [happy tears] which would hinder me did I not have this position, could appear to me, quite on the contrary, at the apex of a thought whose end jumps the rail on which it is traveling."[87] To concentrate on "which would hinder me did I not have this position" in the passage signify that if Bataille had been within the paradigm of instrumental reason which ascribes everything its value according to its place in causality, it would have still remained impossible for him to discern in the paradox of happy tears something which lay the ground for his understanding of sovereignty.

Though there are the signs of hesitancy in Bataille's book *La Souveraineté* to settle the account with the morphology of sovereignty, Bataille's approach to sovereignty seems gradually to be developing into a kind of morphology. It is critically important to emphasize once more that instead of furnishing his conceptual horizon with a common denominator from which sovereign instances take their momentum, Bataille tends to pursue this horizon into its ultimate limits where the practical rationality is no more successful in arranging and organizing the objectivity

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[87] **Ibid.**, p. 209

as before. Highlighting this point (*non*-basis of sovereignty), we seem finally to gain a legitimate ground to ask such questions as follow without miring sovereignty with certain metaphysical fallacies: what lies underneath so much diverse phenomemona? What is that which unites them? The answer Bataille gives is the uncalculated reactions always to be found overwhelming in these phenomena. An unreasoned impulse gives a sovereign value to the miraculous: "the impossibility suddenly changed into a reality. Sense of miracle dissolves the necessary which binds and subjugates us."

What grows strikingly apparent is that even when Bataille moves closest to the influences of the rationalistic and scientific domain, he, at any rate, manages to determine the experience itself to be the ultimate ground over such mechanical procedures as would be demanded by morphology, epistemology, category and so on. Seen from this perspective, it seems safe to assume that even our concern to give a morphological account is itself but a sign of predicament; a predicament which Bataille tries to get out of by refraining from morphology at the outset. It is in experiencing rather than in knowing that the subject comes to catch a glimpse of *non*-basis of such sovereign moments as poetry, laughter, eroticism, death, happy tears and so: They are hardly less than the moments where the routine of every day life, which normally makes its appearance as if to be unceasing or endless, is held suspended by the emergence of heterogeneous elements. Such a thing makes its appearance as a miracle before being taken back into the routine. This is exactly the place which it is necessary to look at in order to understand sovereignty, at least to realize what Bataille understands by sovereignty.

3.1. *THE SCHEMA OF SOVEREIGNTY*

In his book *La Souveraineté,* Bataille, after defining the basic elements of his understanding of sovereignty, attempts to give the schema of sovereignty. For those who are already acquainted with Bataille's views on anthropology and cosmology, there seems scarcely anything baffling in this schema. But it should be admitted that his schema deviates a great deal from the ordinary form it normally tends to take

when sketched to treat sovereignty as a political or a legal issue. In sketching this scheme, Bataille mainly places the emphasis on the anthropological readings that mark the centre of his understanding of sovereignty. Consequently, sacred, profane, matte and death are some of the themes around which Bataille's conceptual universe never ceases to gravitate, rise to prominence as the elements laying the foundation of this scheme.

Bataille undertakes to sketch the schema of sovereignty by probing the ways how the exterior world assumes the shape of objectivity upon which the subject can exert his will. No sooner did such a dawn (the transformation of indistinct materiality into the objectivity) break than we see man having already obtained the thing with the help of which his will had found the vent to transform environment: the tool. "The objective world is given in practice by the tool."[88] Here the tone of Bataille bears close resemblance to that of *Théorie de la Religion* where he builds his arguments on the phenomenon of religion on a similar basis. Since the scheme presented in *Théorie de la Religion* expands a great deal on the process during which the world modifies into two compartments (subjective and objective world), it is not surprising to find there a much more detailed account in *Theory of Religion* on this subject. This being assumed, we can turn our attention to *Théorie de la Religion*. This time, Bataille starts to draw his schema not with the emergence of the tool –a level that already ushers in the arrival of mankind- but with the inorganic world and then with what Bataille calls "*animality*." *Immanence* is what falls, as the mode of existence, to the lot of animality. In default of transcendence, which requires such agencies as man, spirits or God (agents capable of getting out of the immanence), there cannot be said to exist a qualitative difference between nature and animal. Suppose this granted, it seems hardly rash to conjecture that in such a situation, no mention can be made of such modalities as duration, subordination and autonomy; the notions for the coming into being of which it should be waited until the man's making his appearance.

As easily supposed from this reading, it is only with the transformation of matter into tool, and it is only with the capabilities brought about by such

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[88] **Ibid.**, p. 213.

transformation that we can talk of the undisturbed continuation of immanence as being broken and interrupted by a qualitative difference. When some part of being is posited outside the whole, into which it is already embedded, and thus when it is marked with a distinction, with which it can be posed as against its milieu (which is what happens when man creates or uses tool), we can no longer see immanence but an objective world already articulated and transcended by a will. Yet, the tool, despite its significance in the interruption of continuity, can by no means be conceived to be value in itself. The sole value it can obtain can be derived from no other ground than its conformity with the anticipated result.

Having determined the place of object in Bataille's schema of sovereignty, we seem to have reason for a brief digression into details bearing on this point. Basically, tool can be said to involve two main functions. First, as can be easily remarked, it enables the subject to get a distinct notion of himself, making him recognize *non-I*. This function is accomplished by interruption that we have already talked about. Apart from this, tool also has another function: it forms a dual relationship between subject and object. In using tool not only the object but also man himself becomes a tool. A closer examination of the relationship between tool and man makes evident that in the world of practice (a world that had come into existence no sooner than the emergence of tool), man, while putting object to useful activity, is himself put to the useful activity (work). The reason why Bataille constantly defends the idea that in the world of practice man himself is a tool is not difficult to understand: in working and in using tool, man is situated or situates himself in the sequence of duration. In this sequence he is not the value (end) but a means which is in the service of an anticipation steering activity to the desired outcome. Thus man in this world takes his value not from himself (as an end in itself) but from the degree of success he obtains for the anticipated outcome. This being apparent, it is not mistaken to claim that as long as man is involved into the world ruled and regulated by the imperatives of practice, he can be anything but useless (sovereign or an end in itself). "The world of practice or of things is the world in

which man is subjugated or simply in which he serves some purpose. Man is alienated therein."[89]

However fundamentally the human condition is wrought by practice and work, it is simply mistaken to claim that all the possibilities pertaining to man can be entirely exhausted within this domain. On the occasions where the world of work encounters difficulty in articulating these possibilities, we see a quite distinct phenomenon blossoms out which is uninformed by the laws of utility and rationality of work. This place, whose heterotopic character is quite evident, is none other than *sacred*. Since this character of sacred (its antithetical position to the world of work) affects Bataille as a faculty of merit with the ability to lay the ontological foundation of sovereignty, it is therefore small wonder that Bataille dedicates much of his energy to the study of this phenomenon. Not only the role played by the sacred in primitive world but also its changing place in modern society dominates much of his writings. As hinted at by its title, Bataille gives a much more thorough account of the development of sacred in his *Théorie de la Religion*. Primitive man ascribes a dual character to the things surrounding him. Considering the elements of the objective world (things) as having been donated with powers constantly intervening into the affairs of world, man tends to stretch this idea of innate powers to the extent of sorting malignant and benignant ones.

Due to the inaptitude for realizing behind the events befalling him rather the objective laws than surreal or unreal forces, the primitive man came to look upon some things as demonic or dangerous creatures and upon some others as fellow ones. Thus a consciousness manifests itself with the effect of which the impulse to work and utility (thinghood) had been suspended by another movement. A movement whereby the thing (subject or object) tended to surmount the walls of utility and thus to take a sacred character. In the course of the progress of the human mind, a great number of beings had been manifesting themselves as occupying this place of the sacred. It is quite apparent that whatever the particular shape the sacred assumes, its importance, it is quite apparent, lies in the fact that a natural given grows more and more heterogeneous. With this effect, it becomes impossible to treat this given as a

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[89] **Ibid.** p. 214.

thing under the yoke of practical rationality bent on reducing everything to homogeneity. Upon the whole, we are driven to speak of the world of work as being haunted by contradictions. This surplus character in the virtue of which an object (man included) transcends the dull sameness of the objective world (something being more than the natural given that it objectively is), we come across in Bataille's description of the sacred: "The sacred differs profoundly from the natural given, which the action that created things first denied. The sacred *is* [italics by Bataille] in a sense natural given. But it is an aspect of the natural given that reveals itself through the effects that have escaped the negating action of work, or that actively destroys the coherence established in work."[90]

Once the door of our theoretical considerations is opened to the sacred, we can not so quickly shut it as to leave this issue of death outside. The phenomenon of death further bears the contradictory character of sacred out in furnishing the proof of the fact that thing –man- can by no means remain identical (with itself) in the course of time. In Bataille's sketch of sovereignty, death turns out to be an opening so that what it accomplishes at the end can be nothing but to give lie to the creed in duration and thus in homogeneity of the world of things. "Whole natural given assumes insofar as it cannot be assimilated, cannot be incorporated into the coherent and clear world."[91] In this fashion, death therefore proves that as a being destined to NOTHING of death, man's existence in the world –the existence he has in the objective world- can be anything but everlasting. The negative function of death grows more and more apparent when it disrupts the coherence and well-functioning of the world of practice. So, we can take notice of the two crucial roles given by Bataille to death in the schema of sovereignty. The first is its negative function or its passive role. We become more conscious of this passive role as we visualize it as a zero point (NOTHING) where every form of energy (quite irrespective of being immanence or transcendence) ought to succumb. Equally important is to highlight that this zero point has nothing whatsoever to do with absence as it would be suggested by the term 'zero' in our imagination. Correspondingly, this zero is quite opposite of what this word suggests in at first glance. Instead of suggesting the

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[90] **Ibid.**, p. 215.

[91] **Ibid.**, p. 216.

philosophical concept of absence, it marks a zone in which energy is so condensed and in which the presence is so overwhelming over its distinct manifestations that no scope is allowed for the articulation to operate adequately. Hence, death makes no room for the operation without which our imagination can not even steal a glance at the things in the world, and so cannot help but face NOTHING. The articulation being condemned to cave in frustrating the expectations of practical rationality, this zero point (death as not an absence of being but overabundance of beings) affords us a clear manifestation of the vanity of (total) control over life. The reign of the world of practice cannot be intact and complete except when one succumbs into the fallacy of duration (identity) prevailing over the flow of time.[92] If the ontological foundation of social life is in the hands of devouring NOTHING (death), it follows that the curbs on the manifestations of death in the social world are strictly called for. This counter movement, aiming at erasing the traces of death on the face of homogenized society, begets the building of the limits that regulate death by putting it under definite forms, whenever it perches on the social life. Once such a movement as would be required to counterbalance the terror of death dawned upon humanity, social life came to make its appearance more and more as a vast ground covered with the host of laws, customs and institutions, all of which one way or another endeavor to push death into predetermined zones in case it frequents the social life. So it is time to turn our attention to another theme that has formed the core of Bataille's conceptual universe: transgression.

3.2. TRANSGRESSION

Although it may be the case that taboos and prohibitions save the social life from trembling on the verge of the abyss opened up by death, the records of social history can easily illustrate the other side of the issue. While taboos, laws, and regulations undertake to impose their distinctive color upon social life, the result is always the same: whatever the power in their hand, death always permeates the barriers laid before it and manages to wander around the avenues of social life. Were it but a question of efficiency (the futility of everyone before death and of everything

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[92] In the chapter that follows this passive role of death is to be discussed.

before time), it would be said that the counterbalance between taboo/transgression can be made to be privileged moment in the ontological foundation of social life. With the taboo's building the barriers, the human energy undergoes a process in which it achieves a great deal of accumulation and aggregation. Being channeled by these barriers, human energy acquires a vigor and strength which, had it not been for such a concentration and aggregation, would have been impossible to come into being. What makes this point merit further attention is that these barriers can never be so secure as to enjoy an everlasting soundness before the flood of human energy. So, there comes a moment when the concentration behind the barriers achieves so high a pitch that even the streams released under control cannot relieve these barriers from the weight imposed by the concentration behind them. In such cases as this, it is quite apparent that the flood of energy would be sure to overflow the limits channeling the movement in a certain direction; and this takes place when the impulse to transgression ripples across and prevails over social life. "The limits give passion the contracted movement that it did not have in animality. Thus we come to one of the Bataille's strange dialectics whose detailed explanation was given in preceding chapter. Civilization can only be possible with the erection of the interdiction of killing."[93] But this same act causes human movement to take a much more explosive intensity. The passive negation of death introduces ban on killing which opens the road to active negation.[94]

From such a reading, an inference can easily be drawn that it is rather by the agency of active negation than that of passive one that death could pave the way to sovereignty. Ontologically speaking, death, through its negative function (manifesting the lack opened up in homogeneity), gives rise to the interdictions aiming at repelling death. This *same* impulse also favors another movement which at length can not help but crush the walls erected by the first movement. Passing from a passive agent of death (complying with the imperatives of taboo) to an active participant in the process (murder), man happens to be already steeped in the zone in

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[93] **Ibid.**, p.220.

[94] "Mais, au delà de cette négation passive, la révolte active est facile et lil est inévitable qu'elle ait lieu finalement: celui que le monde de l'utilité tendit à réduire à l'état d'une chose étrangère à al mort, en conséquence au meurtre exige à la fin la violation de l'interdit qu'il avait accepté." **Ibid.**, 268.

which the ban on certain acts is suspended: transgression. In an ontological approach which regards society as woven by two contradictory movements (taboo and transgression), the political connotations can barely be passed unnoticed. No more than a passing reference to Schmitt's definition of sovereignty (sovereign is the one who decides the state of exception) is required to afford proof of how quickly and utterly Bataille's definition of sovereignty assumes a political color whenever it touches the political issues. This ontologically exceptional position and sovereignty are interwoven to such an extent in which it is safer to point out that only in the instances of transgression, only in the course of transgression can sovereignty flash into being. Taking this last point into account, we come close to the conclusion that sovereignty that is registered by or within a law, or sovereignty that registers itself as a law is but a *failed sovereignty*. But before proceeding further in this direction, a brief digression into the historical conditions of what has been so far put forward in a quite abstract manner seems to be in place.

3.3. *HISTORICAL CONDITIONS OF SOVEREIGNTY*

In endeavoring to acquire the due knowledge of Bataille's idea of sovereignty, it will certainly be improper if we turn a deaf ear to the political connotations inherent in his schema of sovereignty, abstractly as they may be made out. However, addressing the political dimension of a concept, whether it be of sovereignty or not, immediately calls to mind a conceptual context whose political consideration remains quite unattainable except when our theoretical imagination is spurred to take the historical conditions into account. Besides, the fact that ontology without history always runs the risk of being entrapped by a reification of some sort lays before us the utmost importance which the historical conditions of Bataille's ontological frame could attain. Stirred by such considerations, we have reasons to turn our attention to the historical condition of sovereignty; and this Bataille also himself attempts in his *La Souveraineté*. It is not too much to say that in this historical account Bataille demonstrates that his understanding of sovereignty, abstract though it must be in view of its ontological foundation, has nothing to do with that of a philosopher who whimsically molds the reality into his intellectual

scheme. So, it is plausible to say that in his historical readings, Bataille is moved on with the aim of seeking the determination of such certainties as quite clearly prove that sovereignty is rather the essential part of human condition than a metaphysical imposture on history and reality.

Before dwelling on the details of the historical conditions, we see Bataille reiterate the basic ontological condition of sovereignty. The distinctive character of sovereignty, according to Bataille, lies in the moments in which the keen sensitivity indulged by nothing but the present (moment) effusively comes out of the dull continuation of chronological time. The tentative list of such cases as capable of putting an end to the subordination by the future of the present moment is to be as follows:"[95] With the morphologically motivated question as to the existence of a domain that, beyond particular manifestations, envelops each particular effusion.[96] We take particular note of the need for a historical reading: the difference between modern man and archaic man, whose varying responses in the face of these effusions shed a great deal of light upon the importance of historical understanding of sovereignty. The ethnographic and anthropologic data, which is always nearest to hand if the aim is the historical account of sovereign moments, lend a hand to Bataille's formulation of sovereignty by pointing out how the ways of dealing with these effusions differed as time went on; how these effusions had found a more legitimate place in primitive social settings than in modern society; and how and why these sovereign moments had been gradually put under the yoke of utility and practical rationality. Accordingly, once these effusions overwhelmingly blossom out at the heart of public life of archaic man through rituals and the festivals, the reaction of modern man is barely different from the utmost indignation which repels their public, if not private, manifestations as severely as possible; and this the public management (health, education…etc) and the monopoly of violence nicely illustrate.

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[95] **Ibid.**, p. 234. In this section Bataille also gives us what he calls "rather complete list of those effusions: Le rire, les larmes, la poésie, la tragédie et la comédie –et plus généralement toute forme d'art impliquant des aspects tragiques, comiques, ou po2tiques- le jeu, la colère, l'ivresse, l'extase, la danse, la musique, le combat, l'horreur funèbre, le charme de l'enfance, le sacré –don't lesacrifice est l'aspect le plus brûlant- le divin et le diabolique, l'érotisme (individual ou non, spiritual ou sensual, vicieux, cérébral ou violent, ou délicat), la beauté (liée le plus souvent à toutes les formes énumérées predécédemment et don't le contraire possède un pouvoir également intense), le crime, la cruaté, l'effroi, le dégoût, reprséntent dans leur ensemble les formes d'effusions…".**Ibid.**, p. 277.

[96] **Ibid.**, p.230.

Therefore it can be supposed on legitimate grounds that the sovereign occasions cannot find any place within the margins of modern social life except when they are so tamed as to be stripped of their heterogeneous and violent character.

The main element responsible for this change is what Bataille calls the recent change "in the minds of men in which hierarchy between sacred and profane is changed."[97]   In the mind of primitive man, certain privilege is accorded to miraculous so that miraculous (impossible yet there it is) seems to delimit the reign of the world of work and rationality with the help of its heterogeneous character. Since sovereign effusions enjoy as much legitimacy as the routine of everyday life, primitive man by no means views them as pathological, for the removal of which an appeal is immediately made to the cures of practical rationality. So, it is rendered quite understandable that primitive man balks at treating heterogeneity as if to deal with a problem of mechanics. Highly important to highlight therefore is that in the primitive mind, upon which the idea of useful (profane) did not so monopolistically dominate as upon the modern mind, and in which the poetical character still holds a firm footing, these effusions had always room in the public space for their legitimate expression and manifestation. So, we can infer that irrational, as in the sense of preventing smooth functioning of work, always assumes in such a social setting a legitimate public character. To the extent that this inference is true, we have reasons to believe that primitive man, bereft of the strict compartmentalization and hierarchy of practical rationality, has an advantage over the modern man to make out the deep unity behind these effusions in a global way.

Having drawn the contrast between modern and primitive man in this way, we seem to stand in need of a closer inspection of the situation of modern man, who, right from the beginning, is prevented from seeing the deep unity among sovereign moments. Of course, the reason for this is the fact that these moments cannot find adequate public vents so long as rationality recognizes and treats them no more than as the instances of control, repression and assimilation. Therefore, modern man is seen as disposed to relegate the heterogeneous elements to the zones that are so dark as to thwart the gaze, accustomed to the light of the world of work, to discern these

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[97] **Ibid.**, p. 225.

nocturnal elements menacing the coherence of framework laid by rationality. But this process of repression never yields the desired outcome without exception. Thus, from time to time, these nocturnal elements can find ways to surmount the barriers, making their inroads into the heart of social life. Once this happens, they make their appearance as the fissures on the surface of homogeneity. Inasmuch as the requirements of practical rationality prevail over modern man to involve his relations in the yoke of utility and discipline, he cannot help but look upon heterogeneous elements as but an anomaly. In this direction, the approaches treating these elements as other than malady are conceived to be a kind of anomaly.[98] Having excluded from the public space of normal –possible- there is only one way left to the irrational to see the daylight: *assimilation*.

As seen in the previous chapter, Bataille's writings can be regarded as having been impressed by a concern to resist full domination of rationality (homogeneity) over human life and especially over the heterogeneous, namely the miraculous elements. It is clear that if Bataille is right in thinking the exclusive emphasis on the rational thought to be responsible for the subordination of the miraculous to the ordinary and of the heterogeneous to the homogenous, then there seems to be only one question that, once asked, finally enables Bataille to probe the space within which a sort of legitimacy is afforded to the irrational and miraculous.: "Is the world we have conceived in accordance with reason itself a viable and complete world."[99] Given the moments in the face of which rational thought is helpless except by resorting to exclusion and suppression, it is not quite possible to reply this question in an affirmative tone. Rational thought is what rivets us to the domain of useful. So long as we remain attached to this domain (the possible) dictated by the rationality and protected by taboo, the overall meaning of these different effusions passes unnoticed. The reason why Bataille has not given up casting doubt over the complete

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[98] "…mais c'est la2 justement ce qu'une conscience éclairée par le progrès des connaissances rejette dans le clair-obscur, douteux et condemnable, auquel la psychanalyse donna le nom *d'inconscient.* L'homme moderne ignore ou méconnaît, il tend à dénigrer ou à nier ce que l'homme achaïque a tenu pour soverain." **Ibid.**, p. 273.

[99] **Ibid.**

closure of rationality, we come to understand when taking this last point into account.[100]

So far, we are prepared to say that the hegemony of rationality can be thought to be the main reason for the failure in taking note of the ontologically distinct domain of sovereignty beyond the separate effusions. However it may be true, such a reading runs the risk of bringing us to the brink of an idealization that calls up the image of primitive man as a sublime being. Unless due attention is paid, Bataille's formulations of sovereignty seem to call out the archaic world as an ideal image; a kind of reading which does injustice to the subtlety of Bataille's formulations. We should not conceive of Bataille as entertaining an idea recommending a return to the archaic or even feudal forms and times.[101]

So long as Bataille's reading of sovereignty does not fall prey to a kind of reification in which traditional forms of sovereignty flare up as idealized types, the same can also be said of the remnants of these forms that are so refined as to find place within modern life. Bataille carries his antipathy to these remnants farther to the point of conceiving them to be the significant factor in rendering modern man alienated in the face of sovereignty. Hence Bataille's words: "crudeness of the traditional forms of sovereignty that subsists." What Bataille here mainly refers to is the institution of royalty. As this institution had irradiated a vast array of moments where the sovereign instances effusively broke out, mostly mingled together, the archaic man is made to discern the distinct domain of sovereignty by the agency of this institution. No matter how important the royal forms were in presenting the global picture of sovereignty, they have nonetheless suffered from a crudeness which does not fail to stamp them with a "childish character"[102] This crudeness, according

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[100] Here it seems necessary to note that there is no antagonistic attitude on the part of Bataille's critics of science or rational thought. Bataille's main concern is to resist fetishistic emphasis on rationality so as to strangle other modes of approach to reality. For this aim Bataille has never stopped to ask questions that expose the lack at the heart of rational thought, a lack that seems to obliterate the total closure of reality by rationality. "A nous en tenir à la connaissance, qu'ordonnent et garantissent la pratique et la raison, nous pourrions croire à la possibilité d'une mise en ordre de toutes choses, qui exclurait le risqué et le caprice, et fonderait sans limitation l'authenticité sur la prudence et la recherché de l'utile. Mais si la connaissance, le premier mouvement du moins de la connaissance, était servile ?" **Ibid.**, p. 272.

[101] For Bataille, "We can only go further, without imagining for a moment the possibility of going back."

to Bataille, prevents us from realizing the true nature of sovereign forms whose list is given above: "If we wish in turn to have an acquaintance with sovereignty, we must have other methods."[103] Thus we can safely point out that behind Bataille's insistent emphasis on the royal and feudal forms of sovereignty lies not a romantic yearning for a return to past. For Bataille, royalty is scarcely more than a model (a conceptual device with a historical background) that could be employed, with profit, for understanding sovereignty not as a metaphysical configuration but as a historical issue. The significance of royalty stems from its capability to present before us a distinct realm within which the separate (even contradictory) effusions overlap: royalty as dazzling façade and king as a supernatural being: "All the miraculous sensations, happy or unhappy, that are connected with the effusions I have spoken of were destined at a single point to flow freely, abundantly." "King was a reflection of the global sovereignty implied in the impulse of the throng."[104]

Considered as a whole, it is not wrong to say that Bataille seems to have been in the pursuit of such a perspective as could escape from the blind alley that causes our theoretical imagination to flutter from one extreme to the other: either the belief in progress (techno-scientific world of rationality) or the return to past (romantic reaction against the mechanization of man and world). It is only when we take the particular note of this perspective that we come to understand why Bataille makes such merit of royal and feudal institutions. However, the irrational impulse that statures the social space via the royal manifestations has also another merit. We can say that in the modern world, rationality seems to dominantly minister to the problems of modern man (an ego undergone utmost individualization or atomization). It follows from this that modern man is deprived from the occasions of encounter with sovereignty unless there are these remnants. Accordingly, it seems safe to conclude that only by musing over these remnants and over the historical background opened up by them can modern man be conceived to have the insight into the sovereignty that is rather a historical and ontological condition than a

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[102] **Ibid.,** p. 229.

[103] **Ibid.**

[104] **Ibid.,** p. 231-233.

metaphysical configuration. In the modern age in which sovereignty has become a riddle unless it be totally suppressed and eliminated as something loathsome, modern man has these remnants and their historical context for attaining the objective knowledge of sovereign forms.

This point being assumed, we can say that the doors of what primitive man immediately and unreflectively (sovereign experience) has in hand remains closed for the modern man except when he reflectively and meditatively has this experience in his grasp. In drawing on this point suggested by Bataille, it would be simply mistaken to stretch this comparison between modern and primitive man to establish a hierarchical relation out of which springs an ideal image of archaic man always having the upper hand at the end of the day. Not to increase the confusion, let us take a closer look at the mystical thought. Even if Bataille never ceases to advocate the importance of mystical thought, he can by no means be taxed with embracing a system of thought which, on all account, tries to dismiss the deficiencies of mystical thought from view. The achievements of mystical thought (transcending the given objectivity and suppressing the utility and calculations) are stamped with the question marks according as they are subjugated, after the moment of dissolution, by another closure. What causes the question marks is the fact that this closure is at the end what restores some sort of rationality and utility (and also anticipation) in the very void created by the mystical impulse. So, we can say a kind of rationality and utility ensue even though they are quite apart from those of the homogenous world of work and labor. Generally speaking, mystical thought causes at length the miracle, in which the fitful gleams of NOTHING emerge, to take on the appearance of *some* thing, however unworldly and irrational its character (God, saint, King …etc.). And this is exactly the place where Bataille finds mystical thought to be deficient.

From what has been said so far, a certainty can be drawn that for Bataille, neither rational thought nor mystical thought are the ways relevant to understand sovereignty if only because they cause our theoretical imagination to be trapped within a deadlock. Given that both approaches hardly yield the desired outcome (gaining the deeper understanding of distinct moments of sovereignty), it is not so surprising to see Bataille in the pursuit of the methods that enable him to go beyond

this duality. For man for whom the triumph of rationality is certain, what is nearest to hand in order to understand sovereignty is no other than the separate effusions with which the sovereignty flashes into being in his consciousness. Accordingly, Bataille suggests that "we must start from the sovereign moments in order to recover unity." But rational man, if he is so to be worthy of this name, cannot turn a deaf ear to the past experience where this unity was still tangible. It is clear that the difference of Bataille's thought lies at this point: neither does he reject the importance of rational thought; nor does he show signs of willingness to disparage the mystical thought as something impossible to be maintained in the rational world. Bataille's constant interest in the ethnographic and anthropological data which date back to prehistory proves clearly that without the help of rational thought, it is impossible to look upon the human phenomenon of the past as a sort of riddle under the cover of which our way to (the knowledge of) sovereignty is to be found.

We can, therefore, claim that Bataille underlines the importance of rational thought and anthropology, ethnology, psychoanalysis and several other branches of knowledge which make their appearance as privileged domains to understand sovereignty. On the other side of the fence, confronting us is another Bataille who, utterly influenced by the medieval mystics, strives to penetrate deeper beneath sovereignty not with the piercing, albeit detached, gaze of a theoretician but with a frenzied mood of a shaman or a mystic: the (inner) experience where he thought to achieve the experience of unity; a kind of unity that the frenzy of festivals or the splendor of royalty would lay open. According to Bataille, the modern man is burdened with finding a way to reconcile these two poles if sovereignty is to be thoroughly understood. "What is in question is to recover that comprehensive view, which meeting our thought's requirements of cohesion, by means of the particular views we may form of sovereign moments."[105]

In archaic times, "sovereign institutions existed objectively." But in modern times, sovereign moments, as Bataille says, could only appear from within. Primitive man can not be thought to have objective knowledge of them. The merit of royalty is that its objective presence renders this subjective experience possible. Here we see a

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[105] **Ibid.**

direct reference to *King's Two Bodies*. By this second body which is beyond mere physical existence and which occasioned the subjective experience of "impossible yet there it is," royalty lays before us the global unity of the effusions. In the aura of the mystical body of the king, mere physical existence, as the object of possible, dissolves into nothing. This model of the interplay between subject and object should be what guides our investigation of sovereignty. "Now it is possible to go from a subjective knowledge to an objective knowledge of those moments. We speak of laughter, of tears, of love, beyond the experience we have of them, as objectively conditioned impulses."[106] The laughter, tears, eroticism…etc. are important not so much in virtue of their objective basis as in virtue of the subjective dimension from which they really issue, taking the main impetus. Even the rational man of modern times can attain in these moments the experience akin to that sparked by the phenomenon of King's Two Bodies.

It is already pointed out that rational thought, which is necessary for having objective knowledge of sovereignty in hand, can not claim such a reign over the sovereign moments as a tyrant would enjoy over his subjects. The reason for this should be looked for in no other place than in the ontological basis (non-basis) of sovereignty. They are such sudden openings that rational thought has barely time to catch them. With the endurance of this opening in time (duration) and in space (scope), practical rationality can gain the ability to catch them, coming to terms with this openings. Nevertheless, a closer look reveals that this duration is nothing but a process at the end of which sovereignty is merged with homogeneity, becoming a part of the routine. If so, we are driven to admit that the moment when rationality takes a firm footing in sovereign effusions is none other than the one when the sovereign character vanishes. Therefore, it is safe to assume that the sovereign character of miraculous moments (effusions) shrinks back with the touch of rationality and what remains in hand is a lifeless object. Let's remember the ontological condition of sovereignty: sovereignty is NOTHING; what should strike our attention in this condition is that scientific thought (practical rationality in general) cannot proceed but in the world of *things*. This formulation expresses as a logical necessity the impossibility of *relationship* between the discourse of science

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[106] **Ibid.**

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and sovereignty. Taken as a whole, the threshold between the ontological world of science and non-ontological world of sovereignty takes the appearance of an isthmus tending to vanish whenever the practical rationality is moved to confront the effusions flying over this border. What can be caught at the end, if success is on the side of rationality, is just a lifeless object that can by no means stand for these effusions themselves.

"But as we depart in this way from both the domain of positive and practical knowledge of objects and that of subjective and gratuitous beliefs, we meet with the subjective experience of objectlessness: what we experience henceforth is NOTHING. This disappearance corresponds to the objects of those effusions that acquaint us with sovereign moments: they are always objects that dissolves into NOTHING, that provoke the moment of effusions when the anticipation that posited them as objects is disappointed."[107]

Of such a reading, it might be said that two points immediately rise to prominence. First, had it not been for the above mentioned ontological dimension, what Bataille formulates as sovereignty could have ebbed into the metaphysics of presence which hardly fails to contaminate our reading of sovereignty, whether it be legal, political or ontological. Sovereignty is NOTHING; it is not an identity sustaining its unity through time and place. We grow more conscious of this point to the extent that we pay heed to the fact that only after the physical body (of sovereign) comes to be dimmed out by the dazzling aura of nonphysical body can one claim sovereignty. Even in this case, in which sovereignty comes closest to the verge of metaphysics of presence (royal institutions put this experience into circulation so that the foundation of political sovereignty could be laid), we can stand witness to the sudden opening in which the physical body (presence) dissolves into NOTHING. Another point that attracts our attention dwells upon the question of how this kind of understanding of sovereignty can be situated within a political context, and how it can be used as a preliminary sketch of political ontology. The immediate reply to such a concern is, of course, that such a link is already established (maybe tacitly, but somewhat certainly). Bataille's reading of sovereignty, which draws on the ontological formulations rooted in subject-object relationship, gravitates around such concepts (NOTHING, impossible, homogeneity) as would allow the initial glance to

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[107] **Ibid.**, p. 234.

get an impression that his understanding is not directly relevant for a political reading. Bataille's oeuvre being taken as whole, it does not take too long to realize that this impression seems not very likely to land us in the right conclusions. How Bataille's ontological reading leads to a political reading remains to be seen; here it may just be mentioned that the disciplines motivated by the aim of penetrating deeper into the political phenomena, the disciplines ranging from political theology to mass psychology, look upon the sovereign occasions and their concepts as the privileged domain to focus on, if only because it teems with the implications without which the inner nature (of the emergence) of authority relations can scarcely be remarked.

3.4. *THE FIRST POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS*

In the first section of *La Souveraineté* Bataille seemed to be giving an account of sovereignty that is so ontological as to give an impression that he consigns the political dimension into oblivion. Nevertheless, Bataille's agenda can be considered to be furnished with the considerations and issues bearing on political dimension. Yet, we should avoid the conclusion that Bataille's reading in this section comes to irradiate its political views just with the gentle touch of a theoretical approach. It should be also mentioned that having been accustomed to the oddities of Bataillian text, our mind does not boggle at the political account of sovereignty which squeezes the large span of human history (starting nearly 12 000 BC.) into several pages; nor at his choice to close the section where we start to make out the political meanings amid the host of ontological formulations with a subsection commenting on the contemporary situation of modern art. These twists, with which Bataille never fails to frustrate the smooth theoretical proceeding bent on understanding his views, might easily seem to be in place inasmuch as the overall movement of Bataille's oeuvre is taken into account.[108] However it may be the case, I endeavor to dwell on this

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[108] Nothing is more foreign to Bataille's text than a smooth continuation in which text does not undergo any serious interruption. As a figure who played a decisive role in exerting a great influence on such diverse persons as Barthe, Kristeva and Derrida who one way or another contribute to discredit the idea of fullness of both author's and text's identity, Bataille constantly makes his texts the subject of subversion.

section, viewing it such as enables us to notice how political meanings of sovereignty are sketched, albeit preliminarily.

Bataille starts this section by making out a case for a distinction to be made between objects that he considers useful and those he considers useless; and the last ones Bataille terms as sovereign objects. Without difficulty, an etymological reading reveals the relations of superiority inhering in the word sovereignty. It can be noticed that in such a contrast, the aim is to afford a proof for a realm within which matter finally finds a way to elude from subordination it has undergone in the hands of practical rationality. Against this realm we have already seen the other one in which the objects are enveloped in the relations of utility and subordination. Even if it remains true that some objects grow apart from others in being entrusted with some privileged position, the distinction can by no means be taken as a proof of their ability to go beyond the utility and subordination. These privileged (sovereign) objects can exceed other objects of inferior position only in value which necessarily evolves out of utility. This last point illustrating the impossibility of taking hierarchical differences for an ontological distinction (leap), we can conjecture that in the world of useful objects, *interdependence* is the sole modality to which every relation among these objects is to be cast at the end, however great the variations these relations have been undergoing in the course of time. Insofar as practical rationality gains ascendancy over the objective world, which is what happens in the ordinary flow of daily routine, we are therefore driven to admit that everything, whether it be subject or object, is always already engulfed in the web of interdependence. Hence in the web in virtue of which subject or object can be anything except *in itself*. The true subversion of interdependence when the nebulous domain (the world of heterogeneity) erupts from the encoding of rationality (the world of homogeneity) is brought about by the *thing* in the face of which this encoding process gets thwarted.[109]   In the light of this failure, owing to which some

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[109] To understand the shift from object-object to object-subject, Bataille gives the example of a passerby in the street. This passerby is a *thing*, an object, a body wandering across the street. But one can see that this passerby is different from other things other objects that exist in the street. Then it becomes possible to realize that this thing is not only a thing, it is a fellow human being and a subject. May be this passerby, this body still wandering across the street is a brother. This represents another negation of the thingsness of passerby, whereby it becomes clear that thingness of objective world is never full.

part of the objective world manages to elude from the yoke of rationality (violence of the subject), we feel disposed to admit that the objective world is far from being a monolith making its appearance as if to be maintained in perfect closure. Instead, this world, given the non-ontological dimension overshadowing it, calls up the image of a sphere besmeared with rifts through which the sovereign mode of existence (*being in itself*) is constantly breathed into it.

This last point being assumed, an idea can easily dawn upon us that even when the non-ontological presence of miracle does not rage through the objective world, so even when the shape of this world remains intact despite the rifts upon it, we cannot say objects enjoy a full and perfect identity. This last point is immediately laid before our eyes when we see the correspondence between the thing and its identity wanting. Nowhere is this lack better illustrated than in the emergence of subject. In view of our space conditions, if not of the capacity of the author, this issue would not be given as much consideration as its subtleties make merit of. But suffice it to recall Bataille's example of the passerby in the street: this passerby is at the end nothing but a *thing. It* is so steeped in the physical environment (objective world) that according to the objective perspective, it is just a part of objectivity with no merit of qualitative difference from others. However, so long as this objective world does not solidify into perfect closure and presence (we should recall the rifts upon it), nothing can at the end prevent the odd phenomenon called *recognition* from blossoming out and firmly entrenching itself in this world. Upon the emergence of recognition, it is clear that this *thing* immediately turns into a man, subject or passerby. It is possible to notice that even this change cannot be taken as the last one, that the thread of recognition proceeds to the higher steps, giving rise to a gradation, and that *thing* is impregnated with a bundle of identities according as it stands at *this* or *that* point in the scale of recognition. So, the *thing*, turned into a passerby in being so recognized by us, could show the tendency of stepping further so that it can appear to be gradually breaking with the objective world, even though it sticks at the end fast in it; and this the great distance between the *thing* recognized merely as a *passerby* and the *thing* recognized at once as a *passerby* and as a *brother* clearly puts forward. Not to multiply the confusions aroused my inaptitude to adequately map out the ontological foundations upon which the categories of object and subject stand, I

think it is quite sufficient to point out that in each recognition the issue is nothing but the negation that the *thing* has been undergoing. So, we see a passerby taking his stroll in the street; but this *passerby* can hardly see the light of the day unless the *thing* is negated. [110]

Of course, we are given leave to dismiss from view the political connotations such an ontological reading intimates. But this leave is not to be so easily granted when it comes to the subject-to-subject relationship. Accordingly, even if we may look askance at the political will floating about the world of objects and subjects, the same we cannot do once our attention is attracted by the specific realm in which subjects come and stand together as subjects, bearing certain types of relation to each other. Refusing thus to hold out for the widest possible rendering of the idea of political[111], we are nonetheless driven to admit that in the web weaved by the relations among subjects, there is said to have been a political will successful in imposing its distinctive color upon it. Hardly more than a brief glance at the different levels by the gradation of recognition is needed to bear this claim out: the determination one's level denotes his place within the symbolic space of society in which this one finds himself already wholly immured. We can immediately observe this political dimension when it is taken into account that this symbolic space, within which subject seems to be beset and besieged with care, control, charges, offers, imperatives and so on, is what gives the subject his status; and secondly that the legitimate scope with which to enjoy, when to enjoy and how to enjoy (rights) is strictly determined by this very status imposed by the symbolic space, and finally that the recognition, both as a reason and as a result, never comes true except along with the subjects stuck with an index of rights and duties. An attentive look can not miss the fact that this very ontological dimension in whose political connotations we have reasons to believe is the very realm where Bataille chases after the concepts and ideas to formulate his understanding of sovereignty. So, it stands to reason that

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[110] "Frère, en un sens, désigne un object distinct, mais cet object précisément porte en lui la négation de ce qui le définit comme object. C'est un object pour moi, ce n'est pas mio, ce n'est pas le sujet que je suis, mais si je dis qu'il est mon frère, c'est pour être assuré qu'il est semblable à ce sujet que je suis." **Ibid.**, p. 289.

[111] One of the clear illustrations of this point, we see in Zizek claiming that every ontology is always already political.

Bataille's understanding of sovereignty, despite the detailed ontological formulations, is a *political* one.

This shift from *object to object* to *subject to subject* is an important key in understanding Bataille's sovereignty, because it is the basis on which Bataille's understanding of sovereignty develops and obtains a political character. Even if one can resist looking upon the subject to subject relationship as a political act at the beginning, it is beyond doubt that a subsequent development, whereby one part ceases to be subject and becomes an object, is political act. We can suggest that in this political dimension, the political character of Bataille's sovereignty manifests itself.

After taking note of the political in Bataille's sovereignty, what remains to be seen is the complex relationship between object and subject in Bataille's perspective. It is only after Descartes and the dawn of modernity that in the philosophical vocabulary a transformation came to make itself felt which exposes the concept of subject to a highly *subjective* reading, resulting in a compartmentalization out of which the world around us has developed into the two distinct worlds: the world of objects and that of subjects. Accordingly, the concept of subject that was hitherto standing in the philosophical vocabulary for all that exists had undergone such a drastic change as could expel those which are not human-beings from its borders. The complexity in Bataille's approach lies in his unwillingness to take this dichotomy in static terms and in his gaining the ability in discerning what is concealed therein. Taking this compartmentalization of the world as the ontological foundation, we cannot catch sight of the crucial question whether or not human beings too are immured in the world of objects. Or we can ask dramatically: despite the glorious image of man crowned with dazzling ideals and symbols, does not a sense of frustration steal over us when we drop our eyes from its head to the lower parts, seeing how swiftly and readily man is consigned to the world of objects in case it is necessary. Not to swerve from the theme, which is highly likely to occur in an attempt to render the details of this conceptualization, it seems in place to turn our attention to how Bataille does not succumb into the illusion so established as to convince us to consider the world of objects as *no man's land.*

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In this regard, it is hardly rash to conjecture that Bataille's formulation of sovereignty, imprinted with the idea of consumption beyond utility, enables him to make a difference in his treatment of the relationship between subject and object. Nonetheless, the reverse can be stated with equal plausibility; so much so that his complex conceptualization of subject and object relationship, as is revealed by his willingness to impinge on the border separating objects from subjects, paves the way to his formulation of sovereignty originated not from initially politico-legal bases but from the ontological depths capable of illuminating the human condition in its generality. All in all, we, who already became accustomed to the impossibility of zooming in on certain parts of Bataille's oeuvre at the expense of blurring the others, should be quite prepared to seek the determination of what is common among his understanding of sovereignty and his conceptualization of subject. Upon seeking this determination, it does not take us long to catch a glimpse of this common point: *work*. The reification that always inflicts the readings of sovereignty with the metaphysics of presence and on the readings of subject/object relationship with certain metaphysics can be comfortably dispelled once this *work* is taken into consideration. No sooner does this *work* make its appearance than our readings of sovereignty and the subject/object relationship turn off the routes in which they are sure to be confused up by metaphysical readings.

Accordingly, the accounts of one's being sovereign and subject cannot be settled once and for all by one's involvement in a category of human-being which remains abstract so long as it does not undergo a down-to-earth process, such as Bataille's readings illustrate. If it is accepted that one's entitlement to being sovereign or subject is determined not through abstract conceptualizations and categories but through one's place in the endless circle of production (work) and consumption (leisure), we seem to have ground to claim that man, whatever his merits, can never be sovereign insofar as he works. To be one who works in the circle of production and consumption is tantamount to being in the service of consumption; and quite irrespective of its sovereign character, this consumption for whose sake man is put to the work deprives him from his sovereignty. The only way to sovereignty passes through one's radical negation of work and of being useful;

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which is no less than going beyond the symbolic space of society if the *work* in question here is not so defined as to be confined within the limits of physical force. Now, we can easily proceed to the other category, namely to subject. If will (free and rational will) is what assigns man the status of subject (among other things) and if independence and emancipation from bondage are the important conditions for subjectivity, we can never automatically make sure of man's entitlement to this position. This point seems to be true so long as we do not make sure of whether what we see as the subject is the embodiment of "free will" worked and shaped after such requirements of work process as control, discipline, practice and readiness to submission. Not to dwell too much on this point, which, if not already, runs the risk of growing tedious, we may close this matter by pointing out that Bataille does not opt out of the conceptual vocabulary of western philosophical, political and legal discourse such as sovereignty and subject. Accordingly, he chases after the occasions where they cannot fill the space allocated to them and thus where they appear incapable to fulfill the functions enjoined on them. Proceeding in this direction, he manages to breath a new meaning into these concepts, suggesting the idea that political, legal and philosophical discourses can by no means exhaust all the possibilities of creating meaning (thus of making sense).

According to Bataille, only the affirmation of subjective character leads to sovereignty: identity of sovereign and subject. Without a clear understanding of this, it is impossible to understand sovereignty. This point becomes apparent when the full title of this section is read: the identity of the sovereign and the subject and consequently of understanding of sovereignty and self-understanding. The only criterion that distinguishes a sovereign life from the servile one is affirmation of subjective character. This sovereign value, independent of any circumstances, can be obtained insofar as the subject asserts the subjective character in the face of objects.[112]

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[112]"s'affirmant comme sujet, it est souveraine par rapport a la chose (l'animal)."**Ibid.**, p. 285. «Machinalement, je mets sur le même plan ces choses qui généralement m'apparaissent dans la dépendance ou2 elles sont les unes des autres sans précellence et ces choses que je mange, qui me servent, qui sont, par rapport au sujet que je suis, des objects *serviles*. Ainsi, machinalement, l'ensemble des choses, et, ;plus généralement, l'ensemble des êtres, m'apparaissent-ils sur le plan des objets *servile*. **Ibid.**, p. 284.

3.5. *WORK AND THE HISTORICAL FORMS OF SOVEREIGNTY*

If there is only one thing that should be kept in mind after the comments of the last section, I think it ought to be none other than the role demanded of *work* in demarcating the division line between subject and object. Our elaboration on work shows that the division line between subject and object can be said to be depleted of the metaphysical contents. The importance of this point is quite easily appreciated if it is remembered that it is these contents which settle subjects and objects so as to be found confined in mutually exclusive categories. Despite this rigid compartmentalization, we note how volatile the division itself is and how slippery is the ground on which *subject* stands: hardly more than the slightest touch of *work* would suffice to see subject tumbled into the inferno of objects. In this regard, we feel disposed realize that *work* can shed light on the background of utility that never fails to turn man into an object whenever he finds himself somewhat enlisted in work. Even this passing mention makes evident that defined so antithetically to utility, Bataille's understanding of sovereignty can not be conceived of as parting company with Enlightenment, if by the Enlightenment we mean the rejection of treating man as if to be a means. Bataille's emphasis on work and utility convince us of the sheer fragility of man's sovereignty and lends some countenance to the conjecture that Bataille's understanding of sovereignty is nothing but the radicalization of enlightenment. And this radicalization must be regarded as of immense significance so much so that Enlightenment's ability to come up to ideals and expectations fostered by itself is severely questioned. It is only against the background of this radicalization that we can readily grasp that the emancipation from physical bondage alone falls behind the ideal that advocates treating man as an end in itself. And this gap between the Enlightenment as an ideal and Enlightenment as articulated in social practices calls immediately forth the importance of the case for distinction between one's subjectivity and sovereignty as categories and their actual conditions. And this last point being assumed, we can realize it urgent to conceive of sovereignty to be engulfed not with metaphysical stamps but with the waves of contingencies incited by temporal and spatial conditions. It is, therefore, by taking the changing patterns of work process as well as the historical forms of sovereignty into account that we can gain a deeper insight into the nature of

sovereignty. After this introductory note, let's turn our attention to these very forms, in the guise of which sovereignty has come before our eyes throughout history.

The period of human history in which human communities consisted of hunting and gathering individuals seems to be good point to start with. In this period, the characteristic that most strikes our attention is that the social power had not undergone a massive transformation, the result of which was the condensation of power, hitherto floating loosely within the community, in the hands of certain figures. This can also be said of the metaphysical forces (ghosts, souls of ancestors or spirits of nature) with as much plausibility as of social forces. Even though there are always distinct forces (the elder, the more talented on the temporal side, and the metaphysical forces donated with higher capacities on the mystical side), it would be simply mistaken to claim that the distinctions could yield to a hierarchical organization, in the normal sense of the word.[113] Power having been so loosely diffused, this social structure can not be said of favoring a system or a type of organization, within the limits of which individuals, drawing on unequal distribution, took the advantage of their favorable position. Corresponding to this social structure, there can be said to emerge a *work* pattern: man can by no means be conceived of as working in the service of a transcendent figure whether it be chef, king, God or well-being of society. Accordingly, it seems fairly safe to conclude that man, at this stage, is not coerced to work by someone or something that is already excluded from this process; so it is equally safe to say that he works for himself or for the community with which he is not so much separated as our modern conceptualization (antagonism between part and whole, individual and society) is trying to convey. In such a social setting in which the relatively equal distribution of burdens and benefits was not only a matter of words but also of facts, we have reasons to believe that *labor* was not a serious problem, or more properly expressed, it had not been so taxing a process as when the division of labor and hierarchical organization prevailed upon this process. Seen from the perspective of Bataille unequivocally imputing the loss of sovereignty to *work,* labor, of course, still prevents man from being sovereign. Nevertheless, what a difference such a social setting can make to sovereignty is easily realized

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[113] For the details of this process see: Gérard Mendel, **La Révolte contre le Père** (Paris : Payot, 1972) and G. Davy, **From Tribe to Empire: Social Organization among Primitives and in the Ancient East** (London: Routledge, 1996).

when we take into account that the effects of work and labor to which man would happen to be bounded were only of a *temporal* character. The confirmation of this temporal character can be drawn from the absence of a transcendental figure exempted from work and thus gained the ability to enjoy and consume what others produce. Since man, in producing to satisfy the material needs, was not in the service of such a figure at this stage, we can assert that the moment when he stops laboring is the one when the doors of consumption open for him. Upon considering this temporal character, it becomes quite understandable for us to entertain the idea that the loss of sovereignty cannot be taken in absolute terms. This is to say that in this social setting, man lost his sovereignty only when he had been forced to work; and also that not controlled or propped up by the bureaucratic machine or by the market forces, the social structure at this stage could come nowhere near to the system which allows this enforcement to take a permanent character. All in all, primitive man, bereft of his sovereignty just for the satisfaction of his *own* needs, could immediately regain it no sooner than this satisfaction would be in hand.

Not to descend on the particulars of this human condition and not to pursue my considerations into the later historical stages, both of which require a detailed anthropological account, let me digress into a political reading that blinks behind this historical account and that seems to be significant enough to justify such a digression. Even if we hold out the narrowest possible definition of the political and by this dismiss from our view the political in this stage, we should be brought to see that this primitive social setting tends to assume a distinctively political color when expanding into a structure in whose configuration the relatively equal distribution of burdens and profits was about to diminish by time. An attentive look may not miss how a great deal of light this point may throw upon our modern political philosophy which time and again sets forward the details of the process from the pre-political to the political in terms of state of nature (the primitive world with no serious distinction to nature) and state of law (the civilized world based on legality). So, whether the transition from the lowest stage of primitive society to the primitive society of feudal hues is man's salvation from intolerable anarchy recalling such drastic images as human sacrifices and cannibalism, we may deliberate upon endlessly but without yielding a clear view (because normative considerations would

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always be there to immediately perch on the anthropological data); but one thing which finally disperses the mist of normative considerations from our theoretical horizon is the fact that by whatever factor be set in motion, this process is none other than the uneven concentration of surplus in certain hands. From this, it is therefore fairly easy to infer that this concentration, whose other side shines as the rise of legality and order, was marked by the inequality in distribution of burdens and profits. This point being assumed, the question may be raided of the ontological priority that asks which sides (legality and inequality) of the same historical coin had a greater weight. Should we omit, for the time being, the zone of indistinction between pre-political and political, we are quite prepared to say that unequal distribution and the exploitation ensuing from this inequality had run ahead, outweighing in terms of ontological priority the rise of legality.

This light sketch indicates the altering character (historical form) of sovereignty, as the social surrounding had undergone massive transformations in the course of which social forces tended to develop into exclusively personal figures. Sovereignty that had been the asset of every one without exception was swallowed up by these transformations. So the new form of sovereignty that rose to prominence with the effect of these transformations resulted in the unequal distribution of burdens and benefits, so long as it entailed the concentration of surplus within certain hands. To what this unequal distribution gives testimony, we may easily fathom out unless we are deluded, by the optimistic belief in progress, into conceiving of it as the indispensable price to be paid for a better future: while someone or some group was being relieved from the burden of labor, unequal relations demanded from others as much additional labor as to compensate the vacant portion left by relieved one(s). Had this inequality been there just to give rise to a social structure in which some portion was exempted from the burden of production, it could have been overlooked simply as a mechanical problem: insofar as the compensation of the lost labor power had required barely more than lowest level of material, physical and spiritual satisfaction such as this primitive level lacking complex division of labor enjoined on its members, it could by no means take too long for one to regain his sovereignty. In default of the social complexity that enabled the needs and their satisfactions to have

been diversified and augmented, one's deprivation from sovereignty could by no means take a permanent character.

However, the real issue lurking behind this anthropological account is clear: out of the transformations that had led to an uneven share of burdens and profits, the unequal distribution of power would ensue. Inasmuch as it is difficult to breath into those gaining the upper hand in this unequal distribution a kind of good-will that stirs them towards not taking the advantage of their position, we are driven to admit that powerful ones, drawing on the power in their hand, had tended to bend others to their wishes, even if this can have taken place incidentally at the beginning. Taking all these into consideration, we may glean the impression that the primitive society which had been divulging the seminal signs of the above-mentioned transformations was on the brink of a process which resulted in world empires and oriental despots. How this process had run its course we will not pursue further; but even this brief account may lead us to ask what makes these transformations merit such a mention in this context. We may answer that this process is none other than what solidifies the system of temporal loss of sovereignty into a sort of social condition, under the influence of which the temporal loss takes on a permanent character; whose climax the coerced labor of oriental despots or the slave labor of the Greek and Roman world has clearly, albeit dramatically, illustrated.[114]

In this journey from the system of temporal sovereignty (and also temporal loss of sovereignty) to that of permanent sovereignty (and also complete loss of sovereignty) it is not difficult to map out the connection (in the mode of a reverse ratio) between the lost sovereignty of the greater part of community and the concentration of it within limited circles. So, in such a social setting as would allow some portion of its members to enjoy limitless sovereignty, the consumption beyond utility indulged by them cannot be in hand except at the expense of others whose life, deluged with the imperatives of the privileged class, can be valued (or may be

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[114]"La Souveraineté traditionelle est soulignée d'une facon voyante. C'est la souveraineté de l'exception (un sujet seul, entre autre, a les prérogatives de l'ensemble des sujets). Au contraire, le sujet quelconque maintenant le valeur souveraine opposée à al subordination de l'object possède cette valeur en partage avec tous les hommes... Un glissement se produit de cette manière, qui tend à reserver la souveraineté à l'exception." **Ibid.**, p. 285.

tolerated) according as they serve this privileged class to enjoy the consumption beyond utility. Of course, the most striking aspect of this point seems to be falling within the jurisdiction of political economy; yet instead of turning our attention to the aspect that can only be adequately addressed by political economy (an indispensable branch of knowledge to understand who exploits whom in what conditions and with what consequences), it appears to be in place to pursue the issue of concentration of sovereignty into the very territory of ontology.

It is not necessary to remind ourselves of the immense importance of the ontological background of sovereignty that we dwelt on at the beginning of this chapter. In this context, we have already noted that the critical part in Bataille's formulation of sovereignty is played by the ontological concerns about mapping out the underground connections between sovereignty and subject/object conceptualization. Having looked back at this ontological dimension in the light of the above-mentioned concentration of sovereignty, we can not lose sight of what matters here: insomuch as man loses his sovereignty by reason of being enforced to work in the service of someone else, he is hardly entitled to be subject any more than the tool used by *this* man in rendering this service. Suppose this granted, we manage to see how much our philosophical imagination has been incapacitated by the philosophical terminology which prevailed upon us from 16. century onwards; a terminology which takes man as subject. If we do not stop at this point to stickle for a name [of a category] that would be worthy enough to denote the human presence, we notice the great mischief which should be the focus of our concern: reification, which is to say firstly that a category is determined to denote human-beings in all its inclusiveness, and secondly that historical, temporal, spatial and topographical conditions are excluded as being no more than contingencies, and finally that whether it be incidentally or not, to be human is immured in a [conceptual] vacancy. Hence, this category turns into a vacancy which could either be easily filled up by whatever content if a political will resolutely shows the sign of proceeding in a certain direction, or which could not be adequately filled up at all when a political will seeks ground to express itself as a decision. Therefore, the compassionate discourse of colonialism (the burden of white man) or the gobbledygook of Nazism (the final solution) represents the first way so that these ideologies fill the vacant

concept of being human with a content from which a certain part of humanity are expelled on account of their inability to come up to the standard laid out by this content. This point lays before us in all its clearness the fact that such a vacant conceptualization as this is too feeble to resist a particular will set in motion to imprint this conceptual vacancy with its own interest. To this we can add a second movement which is what happens when a particular will seeks to refrain from a decision and an action. If in the first movement the conceptual vacancy makes its appearance as a fertile ground to yield whatever crop is wanted of it, we find the second movement in the image of a mire that would be too volatile to permit a political will to stand squarely and articulate itself. And this mire-like region is that in which the particular wills take refuge in their attempt to suspend a political decision and action when these are dramatically required, as is the case in such plights as genocide and famine. So, it is not difficult to come to the conclusion that of the two directions it does not matter which way one choose so long as there is only one destination: a particular will, in groping its way to the desired outcome (by whatever name we can call it: reason of state, national interest, democracy, human rights for example) always makes use of this conceptual vacancy. Therefore we can think of the concept of subject as a metaphysical edifice under the roof of which we readily discern, if not the smell of blood, the inadequacy of an intellectual device. Since this issue of subject and subjectivity forms the backbone of the last two chapters, it seems to be in place not to descend into particulars and to turn our attention to the political implications of the ontology found at the background of Bataille's sovereignty. But before proceeding further in this direction, we are tempted to put into words what Bataille's ontological formulation of sovereignty has brought to us as a considerable insight: contrary to the discourse of modern humanism, it is barely more than a breadth of hair that separates subject from object, and this very hair on which man's ascendancy over the objects of the world depends melts swiftly into the air no sooner than the discourse of utility descends on him; in which case we find him working, whether this working be economical or symbolical.

3.6. *BATAILLE'S DIFFERENCE FROM THE POLITICAL REALISTS IN FORMULATION OF SOVEREIGNTY*

In the light of what is set forth so far in this chapter, we have already gleaned the impression that Bataille's understanding of sovereignty stands out against a background that consists of rich and complex philosophical, ontological and sociological components. It is therefore small wonder that with such a composite character having had great impact in its formulation, Bataille's sovereignty quite noticeably stands apart from the political readings that treat sovereignty just as a matter of constitutional or international law. So, we can imagine a student of political science moving about the shelves of a library to conduct a research on sovereignty whose brow is furrowed by the confusion, if not by the frustration, immediately experienced at the moment he opens up Bataille's *La Souveraineté* and skims over the table of contents. Plausible though this visualization may be, the sense of irrelevancy between Bataille's understanding of sovereignty and that of political theory cannot be maintained if this student has such a luxury as to muse over the thinkers like Hobbes or Schmitt on the political character of whom, especially in their formulation of sovereignty, no one can reasonably cast the shadow of doubt.

Since it is not our aim to furnish proof of the fact that Bataille is a thinker of merit with political inspiration; so we do not stand in need of proceeding forward in this direction. Nevertheless, even the basic definitions set forth by Bataille seem sufficient to build the argument that there are certain underground streams between Bataille's formulation of sovereignty and that of Hobbes and Schmitt. Even a stealing glance would successfully single out the basic tenets in Bataille's formulation of sovereignty that we have reason to believe stand on the common ground with those of Hobbes and Schmitt. I think the main impetus for such a context seems to be rooted in the pivot of immanence/transcendence. Let's start with Hobbes who we may plausibly consider to be set apart from Bataille with a sort of air of antithesis and contrast especially when the issue is sovereignty. Reading them side by side, we can nevertheless get the idea that they appear to formulate their view on sovereignty from the base of immanence. In this regard, Bataille seems to be in

accord with Hobbes to the extent in which for both of them, the process that would lead to the rise of transcendental sovereignty originated from an initial stage in which sovereignty is the asset of everyone quite irrespective of personal distinctions.[115] In such a stage as would allow everyone to enjoy sovereignty, Hobbes recognizes some elements that, according to him, spur man to realize the unbearable consequences of everyone's enjoyment of sovereignty: the absence of a mechanism to curb the violence which is sure to break out so long as everyone has enjoyed unrestricted sovereignty, and the resultant anarchical condition within whose perimeter, in virtue of the lack of regulatory mechanism, one can scarcely make sure of his survival. It is only after dreadful consequences ensued and became unbearable that man traded his absolute sovereignty for his survival, devolving the crucial part of this sovereignty on a mechanism (Leviathan) which rules over them, demanding from the sovereign wills the submission. This passage from the anarchy (immanence) to the Leviathan (transcendence) has been so often accounted that we need not repeat it here. So, it is enough to underline that Hobbsian construction of civil society starts with the immanence in which individuals, in default of such factors (law, rule, regulation) as would accord their energies to a common good, are devoured with a sense of insecurity. At the end, the survival instinct prevails upon the will to sovereignty; and consequently a transcendental mechanism comes into being that is able to weigh down the individual wills and urge them to co-exist without succumbing into a fight-to-death condition.

It seems scarcely worthy of mention that the conceptualization of this passage to civil society should draw on a sort of data or reading that can be called anthropological. Of course, the anthropological data in Bataille's hand were culled from sources that rely more on the direct contact and eye-witnessing than on speculation (let's remember how anthropology reared up in 19. century and reached its maturity in the first half of 20. century). It follows from this that Bataille's conceptualization of the passage to transcendence is at variance with Hobbes' and therefore sets the stage for a different reading of sovereignty. Vital as this effect of anthropological data may be, it would be simply mistaken to lose sight of another

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[115] Even the most powerful one cannot assure of his survival in this environment. Hobbes clearly expounds this point: in a way, he has to sleep, a condition in which he is found helpless.

one that can be considered to unfold a series of implications of critical importance. In a word, we can say of the divergent views of Bataille and Hobbes as regards sovereignty (or of the any divergent views as regards sovereignty quite irrespective of the name of the thinker) that the sources of their divergence lie in the different attitudes before death. First of all, for Bataille, there is no such necessity as to favor the survival instinct and, correspondingly, to resist death. The social history of death, especially that which concentrates on the change from feudality to modernity, affords us the proof that survival instincts' holding a monopoly over social life is rather a historical construction given rise by certain social, political and economical conditions than a timeless truth. How and when the sovereignty of survival took off, how firmly it established its dominion over the psychological and cultural dimensions in Europe of that time, and what sort of relationship it gave rise to between death and political sovereignty, we shall reckon with in the last chapter.

For the time being, it seems enough to highlight that what would be the problematic point in death-civil society-survival tripod for Bataille is the reasoning which tricks us into assuming a false dichotomy. This false dichotomy plays an important role in the account of the passage to the transcendental sovereignty. Even if we admit that the dichotomy between death and survival is not false on its own account, it remains true that it accounts for barely more than half of the matter and, what is more, that its expressive power grows in proportion as the other half is involved in obscurity. Accordingly, we find Bataille setting the dichotomy in another perspective which determines the possibilities not between death/survival (or anarchy/civil society) but between death/slavery (or freedom/survival).[116] It is against this shifting background, very important for Bataille's understanding of sovereignty that we grow more and more conscious of the fact that the choice to be made between death and survival cannot be looked upon as a real one.[117] If only because this choice consists of two alternatives which, contrary to the representation, vary not in substance but in tone. Seen from this perspective, what is in question in anarchy/hierarchy dichotomy nails us down to a decision that is to be made not

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[116] How Bataille was influenced by Hegel we will study later.

[117] For a critique problematizing taking death and survival in absolute terms, see "L'Extradition des Morts" in Jean Baudrillard, **L'Échange Symbolique et la Mort** (Paris, Gallimard, 1976), p. 193.

between good and bad but between bad and bad. What is meant by this is the want of an Archimedean point that, being at pain to save the scale of justice from the tap of an arbitrary hand, can tell us which one is worse in two alternatives. In this light, we feel ourselves disposed to say that the moment bringing the immanent form of sovereignty to the end can by no means be illustrated as a requirement of pure rationality which an individual ought to obey if he is endowed with and steered by this faculty.

When the development of human mind is taken into consideration as a whole, it is not too much to say that our [modern] mind is so much accustomed to compartmentalize the reality, assigning each of them an independence of their own. The natural outcome of this is that dialectic, which calls upon us to view the alternatives as mutually-exclusive unless they are subdued by a synthesis, has come to be the main way to theorize relations. It is quite understandable if such a dialectical attitude might see in Bataille's defense against the monopoly of survival a kind of doctrine that raves about destruction and devastation. In order to absolve Bataille of such a charge, it would be enough to point out how much this dialectical attitude dismisses the conceptual complexity, condemning our theoretical mind to be situated in a one-dimensional perspective. It is only with the help of the one-dimensional conceptualization of man, which switches the direction of normative understanding to an image of man as a rational actor, that the social and political system swept aside death, making room for a public space tolerating the interactions only when they are in harmony with utility and rationality. Yet the public representations of death in the anthropological and historical records can completely win us over to the idea that, contrary to the one-dimensional representation, man consists not only of a rational part but also of an equally significant irrational one. On the other hand, we can hardly dismiss the possibility of considering Bataille as a thinker, who tends to diminish the importance of rationality. Be it as it may, a hermeneutical approach even of a mediocre quality would be enough to establish the idea that the conspicuous place of death in Bataille's oeuvre along with other

irrational elements can be roundly accounted for when viewed in the context of the intellectual trend which the period was generally showing.[118]

When taken into consideration in its entirety, Bataille's oeuvre abounds with occasions pointing out how clearly he conceptualizes the human condition to be consisting of two essential components and how aptly he formulates the relations between them so that without the one, the other can not be half so insightful as when they stand together and throw light upon the human condition. It is beyond any doubt that Bataille's formulation of social space such as is divided into two components (homogeneity and heterogeneity) insistently lays before us the necessity of taking homogeneity (rationality) into account.[119] Since a great deal of consideration is devoted to this point in the previous chapter, we can skip the details. It would therefore be sufficient to remind ourselves of the fact that within the limits of the previous chapter, we are moved on to see that the irrational and rational elements in Bataille's sociology can get entangled to the point that it is difficult to set them apart without doing injustice to its dynamic character. Nowhere does the dynamic character of Bataille's [sacred] sociology come out more clearly than in his formulation of the complex relationship between taboo/law and transgression/crime. As is already shown, the relationship between taboo and transgression must be regarded as of a dialectical character from which the movement laying the foundation of certain prohibition can not help but plant the seeds of transgression in the very foundation itself. If this first movement is completely dialectical, there is a second movement tempting us to consider one more time the portrayal of social space as being totally engulfed in dialectical motion and rhythm. Whatever the amount of energy standing behind the dialectical movement, it can never outstrip the amount of energy that circulates in solar or somatic forms. Looking through such a prism, we quite easily make out what is meant by the incomplete character of dialectic in the relationship between taboo/transgression: the amount of energy of which the prohibition avails itself cannot swallow up the general sum. The clear

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[118] To substantiate such a claim, it seems enough to cite such names as Heidegger (death as ontological possility), Jünger (his views on front battles of Great War and his figure of *Arbeiter*), Benjamin (Destructive character).

[119] Georges Bataille, "La Structure Psychologique du Fascisme » in Œuvres Complètes I : Premiers Écrits 1922-1940 (Paris : Gallimard, 1970), pp. 339-371.

meaning of this is that there is always some remnant that cannot be registered within the dialectical movement; so that the synthesis that each time comes true always falls behind the totality. Correspondingly, however endless the variations, the thread of dialectic cannot steer the movement (thesis-antithesis-synthesis) into a final moment after which, the social texture being so densely weaved as to be a perfect totality, the need for a dialectical motion is no longer felt.

Seen in this light, we catch a glimpse of where Bataille and political realists grow apart in their approach to the passage from immanent sovereignty to transcendental sovereignty. Leviathan (Hobbes) or the public authority deciding on the state of exception (Schmitt) cannot dismiss all violence from the public scene. Of course, the remaining violence offers a considerable pretext to authority to sustain the violence with which it has established its law. From wherever we may look at the issue, we are, however, brought to see that whether it be of law-preserving violence or transgressive one, law (prohibition) cannot weed out the irrational elements having the potentiality (or even the actuality) to jeopardize the very security (survival) that civil authority always presents as its reason of state. Here, the issue cannot be conceived of just as a matter of efficiency/inefficiency. The difference between Bataille and political realists as writers of sovereignty grows more and more apparent when we realize that the issue is of a larger scope than to be addressed within the normative problematic of efficiency of law. That law cannot see the light of day except by giving rise to a desire and occasion for transgression, or except in a way as to give a definite form to the very energy and impulses of immanence (multitude) which otherwise is found only to be hurled across the social space; is this not the idea at which a political realist recoils?

Before proceeding further in this point that draws our attention to the strange interplay between law and transgression, it would be more in place to limit our concerns to the contributions we can hope of Bataille in explaining the transformation from immanent forms of sovereignty to the exceptional sovereignty. His main contribution lies in the fact that his formulation of sovereignty brings to light what is usually passed unnoticed under the cover of discourses centering our understanding of sovereignty on survival and public order. It is at two fundamental

points that these discourses can be shown to ignore the essential part of sovereignty which in fact should have formed the focus of theoretical concerns. Of course, the importance that Bataille's formulation of sovereignty has attained consists in calling attention to these points. One of these points can said to be the unequal relations ensuing during and after the emergence of a transcendental figure exclusively claiming to possess sovereignty. In this light, it is apparent that the capability of public organization presenting the unequal relations as the normal course of affairs has a great part in concealing these relations.

The contribution of Bataille is that he, with his formulations, enables us to take note of what the discourses of survival and order omitted from the picture: the sovereign is the one who enjoys and his subjects are the ones who are forced to extra work to make this enjoyment possible. So, this factor of enjoyment can hardly be said to stand between the extreme alternatives of death and survival (anarchy/hierarchy) without giving rise to a sense of uneasiness in the agreeable account of civil order. So much so that taking this concealed dimension (enjoyment/work) into account naturally does not conjure up so congenial an image as would be the case in which nothing more than the choice between death and survival is at stake. It can be easily understood that in calling attention to this missing link in liberal views on sovereignty, Bataille appears to be motivated by Hegelian (Slave/Master dialectic) and Marxist (political economy) premises. We are already accustomed to speak of Bataille as capable of involving more than one perspective in formulating his views on an issue. It is therefore small wonder that besides Bataille of Hegelian phenomenology and Marxist political economy, there is another Bataille making use of French sacred sociology (Durkheim, Mauss, Hubert) and psychoanalysis. This second perspective enables Bataille to make another point which looks incongruous, not only the liberal account but also the Marxist views on authority: *the role of sacred*. To make sense of authority relations, Bataille urges us to see the irrational element lying at the foundation of these relations. The emergence of authority relations, their taking definite forms, and their reproduction in the course of social life, all these cannot be called into action unless brute physical force is shrouded by the network of symbolic relations setting forth the index of meanings. This index can be conceived to be the main reason for the discrepancy between that

to which a subject is exposed and that to which he *thinks* is exposed. But for Bataille, it is of utmost importance to highlight that the creation of this index and the resultant matrix of *possible* by no means operates in such a mechanical way as Marxist critique of ideology usually indicates: in this symbolic space covering the authority relations within an aura of legitimacy, there are some striking aspects, which the account of ideology depicting man as a passive agent shaped and directed by the requirements of base structure can not fully explain.

Contrary to this image suggesting the irrational behaviors of individuals as being affected, favored, and fostered by the ideological mechanisms, Bataille argues that there is a kernel whose irrational character does not take its stimulus from the logical interplay between upper and sub structures. This irrational kernel manifests itself as desire. Here the ambivalent structure of sovereignty and authority relations immediately grows more apparent if the double nature of this desire is taken into consideration. Accordingly, subject, having undergone the renunciation of his sovereignty, is given only one chance to give vent to this desire: seeing his desire embodied by a figure (sovereign) constantly irradiating a sense of terror and fascination. This inherent ambivalence cannot be successfully caught forever within the matrix of possible recommending obedience to the sovereign, and thereafter the desire (the irrational kernel) folds back upon itself, renouncing the renunciation of its sovereignty. No longer tolerating the representation, the desire to be sovereign passes beyond any representation. But historical conditions taken into account, we can safely assume that such an ambivalent character of sovereignty as causes the subject, to fluctuate between contradictory impulses (fascination/terror, amazement/repulsion, and worship/hatred) is exactly what has dwindled with in the course of modernity. The importance of this ambivalent character of sovereignty urges us to turn our faces to the phenomena where this inherent ambivalence was not yet totally suppressed and removed within the bureaucratic organization. Therefore, it is time to embark on the historical journey which we left when the march of humanity had come to the brink of feudal and royal institutions.

3.7. *THE ROYAL AND FEUDAL FORMS OF SOVEREIGNTY*

From what has been said in the previous section, it is apparent that besides the death/survival dichotomy, there is also another root of sovereignty, which is the contrast between labor and enjoyment. Accordingly, the whole picture of renunciation of sovereignty implies not only the exchange between death and survival (unrestricted freedom and restricted legal freedom) but also a surplus labor compensating the enjoyment of others. Having realized the material dimension of sovereignty, we can mark the exploitation to be rooted in every form of exceptional sovereignty. In the previous section, it is emphasized that there is an important difference between Bataille and orthodox Marxism. For him, there is also a psychological dimension; and if this dimension is overlooked, the result will be the impoverished understanding of sovereignty. This context is exactly what Bataille illuminates in his article, "La Structure Psychologique du Fascisme" written nearly 30 year before *La Souveraineté.* As seen in the first chapter, the main motive in this article is the evaluation of the development of fascist forces, in which the psychological factors are not relegated to a secondary status overshadowed by the gigantic economical structure. These psychological forces, which always take great part in the emergence of sacred or miraculous moments, had long been dismissed by Marxism as of inferior position. Marxist thinker as he is, Bataille could not yet be content with such an attitude. For him, a great part in the success of the fascist movement was played by their ability to realize the importance of the forces belonging to psychological structure. This sudden and undisputed success on the part of fascist movement incites Bataille to search for the reasons of Marxism's failure in the distance which Marxism tries to keep open between its theoretical foundations and this psychological structure. Whereas the Marxist movement concentrated upon the material dimension of the society and consequently viewed the sacred as something to weed out in the road to progress, the fascist movement gathered up the sacred and irrational forces and gained an important success in overthrowing the established order. Thus what Bataille endeavors to put forward in this article can be said to be the importance of psychological forces generally deemed as irrational.

After this general outline, we can turn the theme of this section. In developing his view on sovereignty, and more specifically on feudal forms of sovereignty, Bataille, as it seems, moves along the same lines as indicated above. In feudal forms, the founding moment (and thus most striking aspect) is the renunciation of individuals their sovereignty; yet this renunciation can not be truly understood without taking the irrational elements into consideration. The security or the guarantee of survival was not that which exhausted all the possibilities of the relationship between sovereign and individuals. Sovereign was not only a keeper who guaranteed a certain sense of security, which is very rational in itself. In the awe that the multitude sense before the sovereign presence and before the royal splendor, a feeling of subjectivity (a feeling of being sovereign) is laid before in most lucid and dramatic forms. Emphasizing this irrational dimension, Bataille can be shown to draw near to the studies on mass psychology, which in the same period undertakes to approach to the phenomenon in psychological terms. Even if Bataille has something in common with them, he never shows any inclination to conceive of these forces as pathological. For the subjects, sovereign is a model through which the multitude could recognize their subjectivity (their inherent sovereignty forgotten from the moment of renunciation on). It is not only a legal or contractual representation; the relation of reciprocity is based on a psychological representation as well: "but this does not mean that the masses labor while he consumes a large share of the products of their labor; it also presupposes that the masses see the sovereign as the subject of whom they are the object.[120]

Sovereign can play this role of model only insofar as he lives in the present moment which is not bogged down by labor and work of daily routine. To address the feeling of inner experience he should present himself as the subject which cannot be subordinated by utility. The success of the transference of sovereignty from multitude to sovereign is thus conditioned on sovereign's ability to distinguish itself from what is ordinary. Utility, labor, daily life is nothing at the end but a sequence and a duration; therefore sovereign cannot be thought live in the moment insofar as he remains within this sequence and duration. His sacred or sovereign character could be conferred upon only to the extent that he manages to stay outside the

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[120] Bataille, **Souveraineté,** note 1, p. 241.

duration [of the ordinary]. With all plausibility, we can attest the contribution of Bataille in his finding at the root of sovereignty an inequality which can be sustained by a mystical or an ideological mechanism. To this, we can add his furthering this critical stance by underlining that the function of mechanism is called into action not only by an external interpellation (which is rational in itself at the end despite the manifestations) but by an irrational impulse (the desire of the multitude to have a sovereign representing for them a miraculous existence, something which is impossible so long as one stays within the word of labor).

> The sovereign restores to the primacy of the present the surplus share of production, acquired to the extent that man submitted to the primacy of the future. The sovereign, epitomizing the subject, is the one by whom and for whom the moment, the miraculous moment, is the ocean into which the stream of labor disappears.[121]

For this stream of labor to flow swiftly to the enjoyment of the sovereign, a kind of inner experience is necessary. Transference depends on this experience. First of all, as the passage above shows, there is something Hegelian in Bataille's definition of sovereignty. Sovereign obtains and maintains sovereignty only to the extent that those subordinated to will of sovereign prefer the future to the present (or for the sake of clearness: they prefer survival to death). This implies the slave for whom it is impossible to choose death instead of submission. As a result of this submission, he accepts the labor imposed upon him, trading his freedom with a life devoted thenceforth to the enjoyment of master. Nevertheless, this simple form in which slaves comply with a bare life under the shadow of the master's sword has evolved into the complex forms whose considerable part consists of laying before the public the dazzling royal splendor. The external moment in this conspicuous representation is to evoke wonder in the heart of the multitude by the agency of mystical, divine and prodigal displays. This external representation is accompanied by internal experience in which sovereign becomes not only an externally imposed but also internally desired figure.

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[121] **Ibid.**

Bataille calls this situation the clumsiness of the multitude.[122] Only by means of positing something external –transcendental sovereign- which is exceptional can man realize what they share in common. As emphasized, sovereignty is the primordial condition of man, which is to say that it is a general asset belonging to everybody irrespective of the differences and distinctions.[123] Nonetheless, with the emergence of exceptional sovereign figures, his lost sovereignty come to be an object of sovereign will, by the agency of which this will attains enjoyment. Therefore, we can safely assume that the relation in question here is not the one between subject and subject; but turned out to be the one between subject and object. It is beyond doubt that for such dramatic change to take place, a force is needed which casts a spell on the true nature of relationship. The double function of this force is that it confers on the sovereign and his enjoyment a sublime character, while preventing "even those who let themselves be subordinated from gauging their downfall."[124]

The moment when a large group of people starts to labor for the satisfaction of the needs of others who succumb into enjoyment facilitated by this labor, is also the moment when this group turns into a an object, losing their subjectivity. They are now mere object in the same way as the tools they use. They are useful for the fact that they are assigned to a place in the linearity of useful activity. But these considerations should not lead us to such impressions as reveal that the renunciation from this primordial condition is brought about once and for all. Hence there is always a left-over, a surplus which, so long as it exists, which gives testimony to the fact that man can by no mean completely become a object. The world of things and utility cannot swallow up man except by bringing back a left-over. That is why traditional sovereignty was in the end, despite everything, a relation of subject to subject. It is only with the help of sacred that sovereign gets a miraculous halo

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[122] "Dès l'instant où autres avaient un porte-parole, par lequel ils étaient représentés, le porte-parole des autres était tel dans la mesure où il en représentait l'intimité, non les members qui travaillent, analogues aux choses intertes, aux instruments subordonnés." **Ibid.,** p. 286.

[123]"It is impossible to overlook the fact that sovereignty is man's primordial condition. His basic condition: "if voluntary labor seems to limit this condition, and if violently imposed labor changes it into its opposite, into slavery, sovereignty is nonetheless inviolable." **Ibid.,** p. 284

[124] **Ibid.,** p. 285.

through which his body stripped from the physical dimension and thus ascends over the throne.

As said, subject's becoming an object cannot be thought to be the result of a mechanism that controls the man's behavior only from an external point. There is a desire on the part of who is subjugated. Since there is such an inner aspect, we have reason to claim that the royal sovereignty is at the end a communication. The left-over, the surplus indicated above, is what makes communication possible; and this communicative basis prevents the relationship between the sovereign and subordinate from turning into a relation of subject (sovereign) and object (subordinate). The institution of royalty depends on this communication. And the transference of sovereignty on the part of multitude to sovereign is not something premised upon the willful decision of a rational actor with predetermined set of interest. In every form of authority, there is a mystical dimension. Bataille's sacred sociology directing our attention to this mystical dimension is apt to detect the defective character of this communication. The defective character of this communication is revealed through man's inability to experience the sovereign moment without positing an external object which, with the desire of multitude, has transformed into a sacred presence. Thus man can, by means of this defective experience, succumb to a relation in which he places himself as an object. This mystical dimension of traditional sovereignty depends on *forgetting*: forgetting that the sacredness of sovereign is the outcome of a communication based on defective inner experience. This forgetting is what prevents, as Bataille says, the subordinate "from gauging their downfall."

Therefore, it would not be wrong to argue that this kind of inner experience, in which the sacred presence of sovereign is tremendously felt, has a negative function: without a trouble, man could take an adequate place in the royal representation of sovereignty that renders the reduction of subject to a useful object much more tolerable. This inner experience has nonetheless a positive function: even in this defective form, it is a sign pointing out that man cannot be totally absorbed by the world of useful objects. From this, an inference can easily be drawn that the relation between sovereign and subordinate cannot be maintained everlastingly.

What grows apparent in this inference is the ambivalent character of royal sovereignty. Insofar as man cannot completely and absolutely turn into an object (subordinate), this means that there is always a surplus that the web of royal material and symbolic relations cannot confiscate. This surplus, which we see would play a negative role in the emergence of traditional forms of sovereignty (forgetting of desire), can also play a positive role in challenging the relations of subordination. The hierarchical structure of feudal society is always haunted by this surplus whose lifeless body is to be found at the foundation of this structure (the renunciation). And since the feudal order always shows the same level of success in dispelling this haunting presence, this surplus character appears to be a kind of energy that once unbound from the institutional setting of feudal hierarchy, runs the risk of ruining it. Taken as whole, it is in place to render the details of the identity of sovereign happening to be enthroned at the apex of royal pyramid.

First of all, it is of utmost importance to point out that just like subordinate, the identity of sovereign is not full and the sublime character of this identity cannot be maintained except with the help of some sort of mystical, theological and legal disguises. That this identity is displayed to be as full, as not being traversed by the contradictory forces, and as not being mingled with elements of low character, we claim to be the result of the sacred representation. Sacred and mystical representation lay before us the issue of the second body of sovereign which is, beyond his physical existence, a *corpus mysticum* so presented that it cannot be affected by such temporal and spatial contingencies as illness, death, age and such like. But Bataille, in spite of his concentration on traditional sovereignty as a model, quickly penetrates into the precarious situation of feudal forms of sovereignty: behind the dazzling façade of royal institutions, the identity of sovereign is but the locus of contradictions. In explaining sovereign figures of feudality, Bataille reverses the line of reasoning he chooses to follow in the case of the subordinate subject. In the case of royal personages, we see him first look at the psychological dimension, then look at the material conditions. The psychological dimension of feudal sovereignty denotes a system of communication whereby the sovereign assumes a subjective character. This is the realm where sovereign is seen by his subjects as miraculous. In order to claim to be sovereign (which is to say in order to be able to represent a miraculous

moment), sovereign should irradiate qualities and feelings which could trigger the inner experience of those over whose obedience he puts his claim. Since the subject/object (sovereign/subordinate) relation could not be easily established, a great deal of effort should be put into the service. Even at this point the fullness of sovereign can not be taken in absolute terms. In this regard, it cannot pass unnoticed that sovereign stands in need of recognition from those over whom he claims to have the supreme power. At this point, this passing note on the lack in the sovereign subject seems to be sufficient.[125] We can now turn to the material condition of feudal sovereign.

From the issue of the recognition displaying the dramatic tension of every authority relation, we can therefore make another critical point: the contradictory character of sovereign. The claim that sovereign is the locus of contradiction consists in the fact that despite the spectacle of sacredness through which sovereign gains a second body, royal institutions and feudal forms are the places where the subjectivity of man could only be expressed in crude terms. As said, this sacred presence (and also the inner experience it gives rise to) has been determined by material conditions: surplus production, or more specifically, the production based on landed property. What is important at this point is that man never abandoned his primordial condition- that is his sovereignty- without reservation. Man always, in one way or another strives to be sovereign. The aim here is not so much the satisfaction of material needs as the desire to be sovereign in just the same way as the figure of the exceptional sovereign presents. Sovereign of feudal society had played a figure fostering the feelings of reverence. But these feelings also, as already shown by the ambivalent character of feudal forms, are what keeps the desire to be sovereign alive.

Is not it this fullness of sovereign being (the sacred representation out of which physical presence of sovereign vanishes behind his sublime character) the very thing that makes him vulnerable? Is not it the fate of such a sublime being living beyond physical presence to be condemned to a position where he depends on others to conduct daily and administrative issues? Out of this contradictory situation, we

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[125] This point is further elaborated in the following chapters especially in the chapter devoted to Hegel's slave/master dialectics.

stand witness to a system of feudal or royal hierarchy without whose service the sacred presence of sovereign turn into a helpless creature in the face of profane affairs. Seen from one side, the royal institutions, with their splendor, dazzle the eyes of the multitude. Yet seen from the other side, this dazzling façade immediately turns into a kind of playground where the profane interests (sometimes even those of mediocre quality) conflict with each other to attain satisfaction. In this playground where amid the blinding blaze of power, the monarch himself is no more than the actor (even the plaything) of intrigues.[126]

To understand this point, it seems useful to take a closer look at the relation between rank and sovereignty. It is clear that sovereign always stand in need of those who could run profane affairs in his name. But this movement encounters another on the part of those who perform royal tasks and thus are approximate to the sovereign's sacred presence on account of the assignment on their shoulders of these tasks. Having put themselves into the service of sovereign, they were conferred upon a sacred character emanating from royal splendor. This exchange was also necessary to handle the profane affairs, since the sovereignty of the feudal sovereign always depended on his ability to address the inner experience of the multitude. Only by leaving profane affairs to the hands of those who could manage them in his name could he find ways to spur and precipitate the inner experience of the multitude.

Taking this last point into consideration, we understand that in the emergence of an aristocrat class, the motive does not consist solely in the satisfaction material of needs (that's increasing wealth or the greater share of land) What motivated them is also their desire to gain an access to the supreme dignity that had been represented by sovereign. Needless to say, there had always been a material aspect of the relationship: what sovereign granted was always a benefit for those who accepted.[127] And this benefit was determined by the rank occupied. Thus the landed property of the feudal world takes the appearance of an office. However crucial a part this material dimension plays, it does not exhaust all the possibilities. Having been

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[126] Royalty was, in one and the same movement, splendor and squalor. A considerable emphasis was placed on magnificence, but it was never able to lift itself out of mud. **Ibid.** p. 285.

[127] In this sense, the medieval term *"beneficium"* is highly suggestive.

motivated by the desire to attain supreme dignity, feudal lords managed to convert the relationship of subordination (the position they assumed in the presence of sovereign) into a kind of sovereignty when they appear before the multitude in the name of sovereign.

From what has been said on feudal order, an issue to which we have already referred grows more and more apparent: the lack in the identity of feudal sovereign. Despite the dazzling royal rituals and public displays, feudal lords became servile the moment they assumed the function by virtue of which they became useful. In this way, it would not be mistaken to estimate traditional sovereignty as a product of a social network within which the true sovereignty (the consumption beyond utility uncompromisingly getting rid of any utility whatsoever) is replaced by a division of labor. Furthermore, in this division of labor, everyone standing within this realm plays useful roles, quite irrespective of the sublime character of these roles. Of course, it is simply mistaken to claim this courtly division of labor to be a kind of homogenous society, within whose scope the actors can only be found striped of the sublime character. Yet, this courtly division of labor, whose heterogeneous character is beyond any doubt, has still a servile character.

Upon noticing this point, we can mark the tragic element in the centre of feudal order: as long as man strives to draw closer to the sovereign presence and so long as man yields to the desire to replicate sovereign, he could not help being reduced to a situation which in one way or another mired down the sovereign presence. All in all, we are prepared to say that rank is a kind of degradation at the end. Despite the tendency to develop into a sovereign being, one can only attain the sovereign position, which is tribute to the compliance with the organizational and administrative hierarchy. As is apparent, the price to be sovereign is assuming a function which renders the assumer useful at the end. Considering this point, we can conclude that the price to be paid by the feudal lord to be homogeneous sovereign is none other than the loss of the heterogonous sovereignty.

Bataille calls this tragic dimension of traditional sovereignty stupendous comedy: "anyone who takes it on [rank and the function emanating from it] labors,

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and is therefore servile, the theme of the stupendous comedy with which we have entertained ourselves since the beginning of history appears in this formula in that comedy of splendor, mankind strove miserably to escape from misery."[128] At the basis of this stupendous comedy stands what Bataille calls the clumsiness of man, a clumsiness resulted from the inaptitude to penetrate into the primordial condition of mankind (sovereignty) without positing an external presence already transfigured by supreme dignity: "The possibility that any man has of perceiving his inner truth in others, and the difficulty he has in perceiving in himself account for the disarming aspect of sovereignty." Having failed to see this primordial condition, one was content with sovereignty that had been gained from the service.

Thus, it becomes apparent that despite his constant reference to the feudal forms, Bataille aptly discerns the lack of sovereign in this world. According to him, this form is purely comedy. What give rise to the comic character of feudality at the end is that while man strives miserably to become sovereign, to save himself from the misery of human condition, he could attain this sovereign form of life only by accepting the function, only by consenting to the place determined by feudal hierarchy: the passage from subordination, which is the service of the sovereign, to the sovereignty of the feudatory. It was not a complete sovereignty. In such a setting, the true sovereignty was not achieved since it was never pure benefit (an enjoyment), but in the last instance, it was always, even on the part of the suzerain, in the last instance an office, and even a service."[129]

Against this background of feudal hierarchy depicting feudal lord enjoying a kind of lost sovereignty, it is possible to set the question of the place Monarch, Sultan or King of Kings. Are not the feudal lords in the service of King or Sultan to render his consumption beyond utility possible at the end? And if he occupies the top of the feudal pyramid and all those lords beneath him come into being for the satisfaction of enjoyment (consumption beyond utility), is it still plausible to assert that in the feudal world, we come across sovereign beings only in flawed condition and status. Does not the transcendental figure of Sultan, Despot or King of Kings lay

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[128] **Ibid.**, p. 242.

[129] Ibid.

before us the example of consumption beyond utility in its most untainted and absolute form? This kind of objection poses a menace to our claims but can be parried by observing that once the hierarchy is established as a frame of social existence, nobody or nothing, even the top of this hierarchy, could escape from the fate of being determined by this structure and its relations. Of course, the sovereign is an exceptional figure, that is to say he is the embodiment of exception; but his exceptional character is nothing but a role assigned to him to play (the role which is indispensable for the institution of royalty to reproduce itself, to maintain its spectacle). In this regard, we can make out without too much difficulty that sovereign is the one who is exceptional to the other actors or elements of the system or who is exceptional to the rest of the system; but he is by no means the one who is exceptional to the system itself.[130] If we do not the permit the royal splendor to dazzle our eyes, our claim will be borne out by considering the fact that whatever heterogeneous character be ascribed to it, the royal and feudal hierarchy (or the consumption beyond utility to be found in courtly society) can not surpass the division of labor. "Ultimately, the division does not spare the king himself and the kingship is itself no longer anything more than a function, the least degrading one no doubt, but a function nonetheless."[131] Bataille succinctly summarizes the comedy of feudal sovereignty with reference to one who occupies the apex of this system: "To the extent that the sovereignty that every man possesses –unless he renounces it fo the benefit of another- became, once the multitude had in fact renounced it, the prerogative of one man, this latter accepted it almost inevitably as a political responsibility."[132] Therefore, it remains true that sovereign is thus the one who at once enjoys the moment –a figure that represents the fullness of being, and carries the burden of power –and heavily encumbered by the burden of power.

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[130] In the context of Baroque Drama, Walter Benjamin lays before us the position of sovereign: "Die Ebene des Schöpfungsstands, der Boden, auf dem das Trauerspiel sich abrollt, bestimmt ganz unverkennbar auch den Souverän. So hoch er über Untertan und Staat auch thront, sein Rang is tinder Schöpfungswerlt beschlossen, er ist der Herr der Kreaturen, aber er bleibt Kreatur." Walter Benjamin, **Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels** (Frankfurth : Suhrkamp Verlag, 1974), p. 65-66.

[131] **Ibid.,** p. 248.

[132] **Ibid.,** p. 249.

In such a closed society as this, there were few ways through which an individual could partake of the splendor of royal dignity. One could receive sovereign dignity by birth (hereditary forms of feudal world). Apart from this hereditary path to power and glory, one could also attain the sovereign dignity through working, merit or intrigue (or through all of them at once). A third way to gain access to such a sovereign presence passes through wealth and money; and this the merchant class choose to walk through when they buy aristocratic privileges and titles. It is quite clear that this group of people which grows apart from the rest of the multitude by their varying degrees of approximation to the sacred presence of sovereign forms a tiny segment of the population. The rest is the multitude which could never gain a direct access to the sovereign presence as these classes did. This is the precarious equilibrium of feudal society: on the one had, the authority possessed can only be maintained provided that the dazzling façade of sovereign presence was presented in front of multitude. This means that the desire of multitude for sovereignty was always to be kept alive. One the other hand, when the multitude realizes that behind this dazzling façade was standing nothing but a miserable profane existence, the external representation of desire can become no longer enough to soothe the multitude to submit to the renunciation of its primordial asset. And to this, we can give a name: revolt.

When the multitude comes to see the real nature of feudal sovereignty, the royal spectacles and rituals conferring on the king a second body –sacred existence- are no longer successful in deluding the multitude into revering the sacred presence of sovereign. Following this, the multitude decides to suspend the transference bringing about the transcendental sovereignty and the organizational pyramid of feudal hierarchy. It is manifest that only in such moments in which man refuses to docilely submit to the determination of material and symbolic systems can man claim to taking the true sovereignty in hand.[133] Important to highlight here is that what motivates the multitude is not so much the material gain as the desire to be a sovereign who lives in the present light-heartedly, who also enjoys rather than works. Thus in every revolution there is something abysmal which can only be filled later on by the language of useful. This language is so apt that the revolt, if it is successful, is

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[133] **Ibid.,** p. 252.

colored by a rational reasoning usually pinning down the anger of crowd to the wickedness of tyrant.

Since this issue and the political implications evoked by it are to be the subject of the last chapter, we do not need to examine it further. Suffice at this point to state that revolution, beyond the immediate political and material conditions, marks an existential dimension. To explain, we can base our assumption on the fact that sovereignty is man's primordial condition which is renounced when he accepts being a useful thing and transfers it. Therefore, the only way to regain this primordial and existential condition therefore passes through the destruction of the social schema in which man happens to be not as an end in itself but as means. Clearly, this clearly points out that what takes place here is not to be estimated solely as the manifestation of political freedom but also as the coming into being of emancipation whose existential character we find succinctly and aptly formulated by Camus: *I rebel, therefore I am*. In the next chapter, this point is to be further elaborated in paying special attention to the issue of transgression first in the context of Hegelian philosophy, then in the context of subjectivity.

Before closing this section, I want to underline what goes without saying: the (radically) heterogeneous position of sovereign is that which sets him against the liberal ideals of autonomy, which also favors the idea that sovereignty (being an end in itself) is the primordial condition of man. The difference between sovereignty and the liberal ideal of autonomy is noted with such ontological parameters as the symbolic space, succumbing into a network dispensing out every positive ontological condition of *being in itself*, and being content with an autonomy nesting in the lap of legality, all these render it more and more difficult to define man as a sovereign being. Within Bataille's paradigm, this seems to confirm that the coming into being of true subject is the moment when the homogenous social space sparkles with a destructive and violent character. Or, to gain more secure ground to express this abysmal dimension of the possibility (or impossibility) of sovereignty, we can make use of one of Lacan's formulas: *the only successful act is suicide*.

3.8. *THE PRESENT DAY*

As is clear, Bataille's conceptualization of sovereignty is not a historical search with a philosophical outlook. The main motive that led Bataille in writing his book *La Souveraineté* is to investigate the present condition of sovereignty. Within this context, the focus of Bataille's concern is the rise of the communist world after the Second World War and the world's division into two hostile camps. The theoretical understanding of sovereignty, entitled in *La Souveraineté* "what I understand by sovereignty" is none other than the presentation of Bataille's philosophical outlook. In this presentation, it is possible to observe the theoretical background constantly conducing Bataille to embark on sociological, anthropological and historical readings and investigations. The first volume of *La Part Maudite* can be looked upon as the direct result of this intellectual approach, whose historical and geographical scope range over a vast area covering Tibet, Islam, the protestant World, and the communist revolution among others. Thus, it is safe to assume that Bataille is always in the pursuit of the inner truth of man, which he calls sovereignty, in the social settings. This kind of approach, constantly appealing to the light shed by ethnographical and anthropological data, can be said to be the main characteristics of Bataille's intellectual approach. Even as early as the beginning of the 1930s, we see Bataille having studied Aztecs in comparison with Incas on the basis of the differences of their attitude toward sovereignty.[134] In "La Structure Psychologique du Fascisme," we again stand witness to his concern to focus on the present condition of sovereignty. Written in a period after World War II, three volumes of *La Part Maudiet* can easily be estimated as undertakings taking pain to understand sovereignty in the new historical condition inaugurated by the cold war. In a word, we safely say that behind this historical and temporal concern was standing a practical concern distressed by the conviction that in default of a clear understanding of sovereignty, especially in its new guise (rise of communism and cold war), we cannot do any more than a bystander passively watching an event's unfolding itself. From this, it follows that if we see sovereignty wreaking such catastrophes as

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[134] Georges Bataille, "L'Amérique disparue " in **Œuvres Complètes I : Premiers Écrits 1922-1940** (Paris : Gallimard, 1970), pp. 152-59.

Auswichts or *Gulags* over the globe, we should pursue other ways than repression and assimilation to come to terms with it.

In this perspective, we should take particular note of the fact that the tension between the two world views (capitalism and communism) can be said to be one of the main themes of Bataille's agenda. Important to highlight at this point is Bataille's assumption that they are not different world views especially when their stance toward the sovereignty is taken into consideration. Here Bataille's views seem to be in harmony with those of Heidegger, who argues that liberalism, communism and fascism are not so different as the antagonism among them convinces us to believe. Further focusing on this point, we find this claim of Heidegger to be based on the assumption that so long as they spring from the common source which can be called Western metaphysics, the points of divergence among them cannot be taken to stand for a real distinction. In this way, Bataille's reliance on anthropological and ethnographical readings is shown to be a greatly motivated by his desire to substantiate this claim

It is against this background that we notice what is really involved in Bataille's concentration on feudal society. It is safer to point out that consumption beyond utility (or the enjoyment of courtly society and aristocratic class) is that at which both capitalism and communism take offence. Hence we may assume that the hatred felt against the feudal and royal structures and conspicuous consumption fostered by them is exactly the historical stimulus having incited both capitalist and communist to overthrow and abolish the feudal organization. Since the basic pattern forming the backbone of social organization is consumption beyond utility in the feudal world (conspicuous and useless consumption), every effort for accumulation such as the bourgeois world was after was sure to be brought to naught. In this light, two basic features in whose combination the feudal world finds its distinctive hue appear: the domination of a caste of landed proprietors (gained by birth, service or money) on the one hand and the absence of an obsession with accumulation (continual consumption of available resources for non-productive purposes) on the other.

From these basic characteristics, it is possible to draw an inference that, the feudal world usually tends to succumb into a state of crisis. At this point, a comparison to be made between the capitalist democratic system and the feudal order would be immensely useful. Whereas the capitalist democratic system is in constant economic crisis but enjoys relatively stable authority relations –as is manifested by the lack of great revolutions- the feudal order was always open to the outbreak of violence threatening to overthrow the existing structure. Indeed, we can take notice of reasons for the fragility of authority relations in the feudal order if Bataille's view on sovereignty is brought into play. First of all, this system hinged on the direct exploitation of landed labor. But this relation lacked the subtle ideological mechanisms which enabled the proprietor to sustain it in the long run. Another crucial element in fragility of feudal authority resulted from the double-edged mechanism on which a considerable part of royal legitimacy depends: conspicuous display of wealth to evoke wonder. This wonder conduces at once a feeling of terror and admiration. But this very wonder itself forms the fragile point: terror and admiration could easily be turned into repugnance and desire to enjoy the moment as displayed by the sovereign figure.

Moreover, it is obvious that in feudal society, the competence and skill necessary to develop a subtle and sophisticated disciplinary mechanism was wanting if only because the primacy accorded to unproductive consumption over accumulation had dissipated the very resources that could have been directed towards it. Having refused accumulation, the feudal order seems to have deprived itself of the technical and ideological arsenal propping up the structure of authority. In such a relatively unstable social setting as this, it is hardly surprising that the balance of power on which the institutional structure depends could not be maintained at length. This being the case, dispersal and condensation in the configuration of power is as normal as the ebb and flow of the sea: The delegation of diffuse sovereignty to a single person is always followed by a more or less broad dispersal. The dispersal is itself followed by a new condensation[135]

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[135] "Dans les sociétés où l'emporte le souci des oeuvres souveraines, ce mouvement de systole et de diastole est inévitable : le pouvoir qui ordonne la prodigalité est sans cesse hérarchisé et divisé, ordonné et décomposé. » Bataille, **Souveraineté**, note 1, p. 329.

It is therefore small wonder that feudal sovereignty had always been under the threat of great revolutionary movements with the rise of modernity as is confirmed by the revolutions, ranging from 16. century Protestantism, through the bourgeois revolutions of 17. and 18. century to finally the communist revolutions of 20. century. It is exactly at this point that the distinction between capitalism and communism comes to pale into insignificance. Antagonistic as they may appear, both capitalism and communism can be stated to spring from same philosophical, social and economic viewpoint which takes the elimination of consumption beyond utility (useless consumption) as a purpose of utmost importance.

Seen from the perspective of world history, revolutions of modern times seem to have put an end to the above mentioned diacrotonic and siastonic movement of feudal sovereignty (ebbs and flows in the power configuration). Before modern revolutions, we find in the toppling of the existing authority a pattern in which revolts altered the actors playing the game of royal spectacle but left the basic structure of the game (royalty) unaltered. In the flux where one dynasty chases after another only the names of dynasties change in the course of time. In this way it is possible to find a direct, albeit negative, link between modernity and sovereignty. Even if state sovereignty, as defined by international law on the basis of domestic analogy, is the product of modernity, sovereign life, embodied by the feudal sovereign, has appeared to be vanishing as modernity starts to gain a firm footing in certain parts of the world. All in all, the rise of modernity has put a decisive end to the feudal organization of life, which in the course of history, had evolved into a vast array of institutions, mechanisms, worldviews, ways of life, but which, amid this dizzy diversity spreading over thousands of years as well as thousands of miles, had never ceased to gravitate around a kernel defined, if we make us of Bataille's formulation, as consumption beyond utility.

The distinctive moment of bourgeoisie world lies in channeling the surplus of useful activity (production) to another useful activity rather than to the useless, extravagant and capricious enjoyment of the sovereign. With the disappearance of sovereign use, production (especially the surplus production) can be found to be saved from the centrifugal whirl throwing this surplus out of the circle of production.

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This makes us understand how decisively the individual will has been weighted against the enjoyment of useless consumption and how ardently the surplus is steered into the installation of workshops, factories, or mines. Whereas the feudal world had come before us with a series of churches, castles, palaces…etc. erected with the sole purpose of evoking *wonder,* the bourgeois world rose to prominence with the display of such places as workshops, factories, fairs…in all of which the desire searching for satisfaction was the increase of the means of production.

With Bataille's examination of the bourgeois and communist attitude against feudal sovereignty, the consciousness of their point of convergence comes about. However, it does not follow from this that the differences between them can be consigned into oblivion under the shadow of the common philosophical root. If the vantage point that saves us from losing the sight of the forest amongst the trees makes evident this point of convergence between communism and capitalism, the viewpoint focusing on trees so as to prevent them from being blurred by the forest marks the points of divergence that cannot be omitted. Of course, an initial look may put forward their attitudes before property as the point around which they start to break apart. Plausible as it may sound, we nevertheless have reasons to argue against this opinion. To understand this point, let's look at Bataille's general approach pinning down the difference among social systems to the varying ways of consumption. Accordingly, it is not the existence of property (landed or not) which gives rise to the different character of the feudal world; it is its inclination to useless consumption bringing about the sovereign use (and also the sovereign figure), that is distinctive in this world. The same line of reasoning can also be found in Bataille's approach to the divergence between capitalism and communism. But before further examining how Bataille set capitalism and communism at variance not on the basis of property relations but on the basis of consumption, it seems in place to show this is not unique to Bataille. The name of thinkers coming from such different theoretical perspectives as Rawls and Arendt can be cited to underline this point. If we take a closer look at *A Theory of Justice,* we find out Rawls mentions that even collective property, so long as restricted by the means of production, does not contradict with liberalism. Arendt, in a similar fashion was able to assert in *On*

Human Condition that it is not property but the restless, unquenchable desire for the accumulation of capital that is its basic code of operation.[136]

In the light of this general explanation, we turn our attention to the question as to the difference between capitalism and communism. Succinctly, it is possible to claim this point of difference to be lying in their different mode of accumulation. Though they converge on the hostility they shared for the sovereign forms, communism goes further than capitalism in the struggle against sovereignty. A proof for this claim can be afforded by remarking that communism's strife is always against a social space such as allows sovereign elements to find the way to survive. The hostility of the bourgeois society for feudal forms was so motivated as to overthrow the feudal hierarchy; but not so motivated as to uproot and to completely eradicate these forms. Therefore, it is safe to point out this attitude as the occasion when these two worldviews grow apart. However it may be the case that protestant ethics can be considered to be one of the main motivations behind capitalism, we are driven to admit that sovereign forms of life (of course in tamed versions) in one way of another could subsist in bourgeois society. Total abolishment of any difference among men and total absorbing surplus production can not be brought about in the bourgeois world order on account of its way of social organization tolerating the leftovers of sovereign forms in the form of luxury and acceptable enjoyment. And the eradication of these remnants is what the communism have accomplished.

Important to highlight is that capitalism is the rational organization of social and economic life which has dispensed with consumption beyond utility, but which also gives vent to the sovereign elements in public and private realms only if they are stripped of their extravagant and untamed feudal character. Communism, especially in the form developed by Stalin, parts company with capitalism in that it recoils at the idea of developing tolerance for the sovereign elements, no matter how benign and tamed they have become after undergoing the domestication of rationality. It is clear that such a social setting is noted for its being against the separation of production into subsistence and surplus. All that is produced is that which should be

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[136] Hannah Arendt, **The Human Condition: A Study of the Central Dilemmas Facing Modern Man** (New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1959).

reserved for accumulation. Therefore, in communism, the individual accumulation, in which the decision for accumulation is left to individual choice, is replaced by the collective accumulation which is saved from the irrational effects, which a capricious being as the individual is sure to give rise. So rather than being an antithesis to capitalism, communism is but its *perfection*: total eradication of sovereignty. If the feudal society is the one in which dignity reigns over things, and if the bourgeois world is the one in which the possessions determine dignity, the Stalinist world is the one where neither things nor dignity could reign. With such a view as strives to absolutely terminate sovereignty (consumption beyond utility) society and individuals lose the very ground with which to draw the difference between the world of things and the world of men: everyone, just like everything, turns out be useful once and for all.[137]

Bataille aptly calls this aspect of the communist society as the *sovereign renunciation of sovereignty*. To understand this point, a comparison between the feudal society and communism would be of great help. As seen, the mode of renunciation in feudal society was carried out in such a way that renunciation of individual sovereignty paved the way for the emergence of a transcendental figure. In this mode, the renunciation takes the shape of transference as a result of which an individual or group rises above the multitude, gaining exceptional position. As is apparent, renunciation of sovereignty condemns man to a servile position; and that's why Bataille does not call this situation sovereign renunciation. But in the case of communism, we do not see such a figure which appropriates others' sovereignty so that he stands exceptionally above them. Therefore, we hold on the assertion that in communist society, the renunciation of sovereignty does not give rise to a sovereign. If abolishment of individual sovereignty does not evolve into another kind of sovereignty, it is out of logical necessity that this renunciation is the total abolishment of sovereignty. It is also possible to note that so long as this type of renunciation does not condemn man to a servile condition such as feudal renunciation, this renunciation turns out to be a sovereign renunciation of sovereignty.

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[137] "Sans limitation, le movement communiste est dans son principe un machine à spprimer la difference entre les homes: tout ce qui se nomme distinction doit à jamias disparaître, accablé, écrasé dans les rouages de cette machine. » Bataille, **Souveraineté,** note 1, p. 385.

This highly abstract reasoning becomes quite understandable if we take into account what is lost by this act. In feudal society, the exceptional and transcendental character is the very thing which prevents the loss of sovereignty from becoming an absolute thing. In the royal spectacle, one was still given a chance to get in touch with this inner experience. Since communist society totally abolishes this sovereignty, it seems hardly rash to conjecture that by this renunciation, man also lost the opportunity to realize, even by the agency of an external figure, the sovereignty he lost.[138]

Therefore, communist society can be regarded as the perfect reconciliation between subject and object. As a result of this, Soviet society turned out to be a strange domain that strangles any individual difference. If we recall that the discourse of rationality rendering everything useful for production is the basic mode of social organization, we are quite prepared to conclude that this immanence came to be a machine that transforms man into a means of production. In this society, man cannot be conceived to be living in an alienated condition as alienation is generally considered by us. The absence of alienation does not stem from such a happy condition as is illustrated in *German Ideology*. In such a social setting as is envisioned by Stalinism, the absence of alienation is due to the fact there is no longer something from which to alienate. If we take note of the link between sovereignty and enjoyment, we come to understand what is missing in soviet society as regards sovereignty. Even those who were donated with more capabilities and privileges than a feudal lord could be supposed to have, could not represent the moment when nothing but the present moment itself reigns.

Bataille call this character of Soviet society objectivity of power. Leaving no figure to which the surplus can be channeled, Soviet society manifests itself as pure

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[138] "Si chaque home est proposé à l'indifférenciation parfaite, il supprime en lui-même radicalement l'aliénation. Il cesse d'êtré une chose. En devenant, par une qualification *poly*technique, un accompliseement de la chose, une perfection de l'utilité, par là servilité, il cesse d'être réductible à un élément particulier, comme le sont les choses. Une chose est alénée, elle existe toujours par rapport a autre chose qu'elle, mais si elle est en rapport avec la totalité du possible, elle n'est plus ni determinée, ni aliéné ; elle n'est pas plus une chose qu ne le serait ceci que j'imagine devant moi, que je ne pourrais nommer, et qui n'étant ni table ni ruisseau, pourrait être à volonté ruissequ, table – ou quoi que ce fût »**Ibid.**, 341.

of power relations. We shall further examine this point in the last chapter; so it seems suffice to say that the condition in which Soviet people escape from alienation has nothing to do with the sovereign way of life. The reason for this situation, of course, is found in the predicament of Soviet regime in which the stake in question is no less than the survival of this regime. Confronted with such realities as were gravely casting shadows of doubt over the prospect of revolution, there were very few options for Stalin to guarantee the new born regime. Only by channeling everything to accumulation without which rapid industrialization would not be achieved, could the Soviet regime manage to survive in hostile surrounding.

Among the pages of *Sovereignty*, especially where Bataille spends a great deal of energy in underlining the difference of feudal society from communist and capitalist ones, we can sense that considered as a whole, this book is moved on by a sort of philosophy of history. If human history is estimated by the help of light thrown by Bataille's formulation of sovereignty, we should admit that the course of history takes a certain direction: namely the elimination of sovereignty and the social matrix based on the distinctions and differentiations caused by sovereignty. This may lend some countenance to the immense importance that the phenomenon of the Soviet Union was attaining at that time in the eye not only of diplomatic and political historians but also in that of philosophers. With the birth of the Soviet Union, this prospect for the first time has surmounted the limits of philosophical speculation, say Hegelian thesis on the end of history, and made its appearance as the most urgent and concrete problem of humanity.

Eradication of distinction among individuals was the ideal which bourgeois revolutions have always dreamed of. However it may be the case, it is hardly possible to miss that within the context of bourgeois society, this ideal could not see the light of day except in legal terms. Accordingly, the bourgeois ideal of elimination of personal distinction has become rather a matter of words (legal discourse) than a matter of deeds. As the Frankfurt school aptly illustrates, this legal equality based on the elimination of sovereignty, is an important factor in rendering the economical and material distinctions (exploitation) tolerable.

Whether the social structure is worked after the capitalist or communist model, it does not matter; the issue is always to place sovereignty under the yoke of rationality which recommends to give future, accumulation, utility the precedence over present, consumption, enjoyment. Even in cases where they are not totally destroyed, we come across sovereign elements only in forms justified by a discourse of utility. The presence of sovereign elements gives testimony that there is still a dignity to which subjects aspire. Yet, the calculation being the basic rationale of social life, it can be maintained that this dignity by no means determines the relations of things as it could in a feudal social setting. It is after the historical turn of modernity that dignity, as dignity we nowadays are accustomed to speak of, seeks its determination in the web of objective relations. "In bourgeois society, the concern fo dignity does not cease but it ultimately merges with the desire for the thing. In the place where we had reason to anticipate the dazzling appearance of the subject, in the dazzle of the moment, the reign of money remains.[139] The feudal world is the world of the subject, where the subjective will dominate the world of things.

We may notice that in our trying to get a distinct notion of feudal society with a view of illuminating its sovereign character, we are afforded by the idea that the juncture of modernity can be viewed as the replacement of sovereignty by another guiding principle organizing and arranging the social reality: success. The basic principle laying the foundation of normative matrix and hence the margins of *possible* is how successful the subject would be. Inasmuch as success turns out to be the normative ground to estimate the position of subject, subjective will is steered more and more by the desire to be effective in its actions, transactions and interactions. It seems needless to underline that the more effective a subjective will become, the larger a chasm separates it from sovereignty (being in itself). And this we can take to be illuminating the dramatic transformation that man has undergone since the rise of modernity. A power-holder who in a feudal setting appears as a subject over the things now turns out to be a machine to whom the subjective

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[139] **Ibid.,** p. 325.

character is denied and thus whose identity depends fully on the effectiveness performed.[140]

In the light of what has been said so far, it is not difficult to notice that the main motive urging Bataille to use such a great amount of ink about sovereignty is to reveal the reification inherent in different, albeit related worldviews such as liberalism, enlightenment, the discourse of inalienable rights: the promise that the emancipation would be achieved with the abolishment of feudal sovereignty. The discharging of the exceptional and transcendental sovereign figure (or class) has ended up not in a social setting in which everyone is sovereignty but in another one in which subjective wills appear to be playthings guided by objective laws. Therefore, it is not only the decapitated body of the king but also the enjoyment (uncontaminated by the concerns of rationality, utility and future) that have been consigned into the ashes of history. Now the only thing left to man to gain a consistency for his identity is to be more effective, which is to say to work more, to more efficiently sacrifice the present for the future. Despite the official discourses which blossom out in every corner of life, expounding and applauding the greatness of man, this is the situation.

Considering this last point, we can glean the impression that Bataille's readings of sovereignty are moved on by a normative as well as conceptual background. Underlying his intention is to call our attention to the dreadful consequences of modernity's failure to keep its promises. Besides Bataille's concerns, we have noticed the different philosophical views' stock argument for proving that the technological revolutions could not be accompanied by cultural and normative transformations of a similar success. However, it may be the case that there are still leftovers or remnants the utility and rationality seize, despite the grave consequences and the dangerous prospect looming in the today's horizon. One of the basic reasons of this can be found in Bataille's definition of sovereignty according to which sovereignty come to life not as presence but as non-presence. It does not have

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[140]"Il y a, dans le monde soviétique, une competition qui n'est pas une comedy: rien au contraire n'est plus *sériux*. Du fait que la souveraineté –que la *subjectivité* souveraine- n'est plus en jeu, l'élément tour à tour comique ou sublime manqué enfin. La souveraineté est renoncée : e'est l'objectivité du pouvoir qui s'y substitue." **Ibid.,** p. 386.

a solid ontological base on which to stand squarely; and so long as the practical rationality and utility cannot proceed but on an ontological foundation, sovereignty can by no means be caged forever by their bars. An attentive look will not miss what is implicated by this situation (sovereignty's not yielding itself to the movement trying to totally ontologizing it): the rationality and social setting based on it can be anything but full and complete. Just like the subject which cannot be full because of the inherent lack (let's remember the position of the subject before sovereignty), we can by no means conceive society to be free from of every lack. The lack of society lies in the moments where the sovereign elements flood the social space. These moments afford proof that there are some occasions when the practical rationality, despite its vanity, is doomed to failure in arranging and organizing the social space. "We should finally ask ourselves, then, whether this world, communists or bourgeois, which gives primacy to accumulation is not obliged, in some form, to deny and suppress (or at least attempt to) what there is within us that is not reducible to a means, what is sovereign."[141]

After considering this point, we can gain a valuable insight into what is really at issue in repression: in a fashion similar to individual repression, there is a certain price for society in every case of repression: *return of the repressed*. Behind Bataille's concentration on sovereignty after World War II, the conviction is certainly to be found that holocausts (both in Auswitcz and in Gulags) or modern warfare should be seen as the direct outcome of the dialectic between sovereignty and the mechanism attempting to repress and encode this destructive force. This play between sovereignty (the flow of energy which cannot be rendered useful) and rationality (the mechanism which always strives to encode and shape this flow so as to render it useful) is what has been staged ever since the dawn of human history. It is exactly at this point that we come to take particular note of the remnant (leftover) which the articulating machine of rationality (the homogenous society) can by no means process: the way that this homogenizing process comes to terms with sovereignty determines the mode of repression that sovereignty would undergo.

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[141] **Ibid.**, p. 315. In this way, one of the basic characteristics of sovereignty becomes apparent: it is a hard kernel that social cannot fully articulate and that constantly elude this articulation even though the outcome of this is repression.

Equally important is to notice that this mode of repression decides the form in which the *returned* haunts the very sites from which it is expelled. All in all, we can find out the concern motivating Bataille to dwell so much on sovereignty: the form of return is nothing other than that which is recorded as the fate of humanity throughout history. For the sake of brevity let's reiterate what is conspicuously put forward so far: society decides on the form of which sovereignty will take; but afterwards it is this sovereignty that shapes the ground on which the play of being is staged; the play in which the focus is the life and death of human beings. Whether this play makes its appearance as the festival of archaic societies, or as the courts and battlefields of empires, or as the concentration camps and global wars of modern times, all depends on the irrationality (the lack) of rationality.

CHAPTER 4

HEGEL, BATAILLE AND SOVEREIGNTY AS NEGATIVITY

There are many sources that have contributed to the development of Bataille's ides regarding sovereignty. Nevertheless it is not difficult to distinguish, by the extent of their influence on him, three central figures, De Sade, Nietzsche and Hegel, whose influence it is possible to detect on every aspect of Bataille's sovereignty. Of course, these three cannot be reduced to a common denominator which, had it existed, would have indeed served as a useful ground for reconciliation. But this lack of common ground testifies to the dynamism and hence to the richness of Bataille's sovereignty. Before concentrating on Hegel, it seems beneficial to look at Sade and Nietzsche.

Let's take Sade. Sade represents for Bataille the movement of transgression. Much has been said as regards both the place of transgression in Bataille's universe and the complexity it has obtained via Bataille's subtle theoretical elaboration. In one way or another, Bataille's writings in general and his ideas on sovereignty in particular can be conceived of as a theory of transgression: how the social space and individual psyche are traversed by the movement of transgression, and how this movement is eventually caught by the very limit deemed to be pushed back. It is clear that in this dialectic Sade stands for a transgression that is unbound, out-of joint and beyond any control; a transgression that overflows the every threshold of social space, recognizing no limit but that of destruction. If Bataille endorses the vision that only in crime, namely only by transgression, can man find sovereignty, he endorses it with reservation.[142]

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[142] Georges Bataille, **La Souveraineté Œuvres Complètes VIII** (Paris : Gallimard, 1976).pp. 296-298 Even if Bataille endorses the necessity of crime for sovereignty, he expresses his reservations as

Nietzsche, as previously said, is another figure distinguished among others by the scope of the influence he has on Bataille. The relation between Nietzsche and Bataille can be seen as a case of a perfect companionship unless we notice the several points on which their views diverge, e.g. the connection between power and sovereignty. Derrida draws our attention to this point in claiming that "… Bataille considered himself closer to Nietzsche than anyone else, than to anyone else, to the point of identification with him."[143] The impact of Nietzsche on Bataille is so enormous that Bataille does not see any difference between Nietzche's thought and his own *La Part Maudite* Bataille clearly expresses this point: "I am the only one who thinks of himself not as a commentator of Nietzsche but as a being the same as he."[144] Then we may ask on what ground Bataille was thinking that his *La Part Maudite* is the same as Nietzsche's doctrine. First of all, in Nietzsche's thought Bataille found a vein to resist to the domination of things.[145] Second, Nietzsche, by refusing the reign of things, was in the pursuit of lost sovereignty, an endeavor to which Bataille's book *La Souveraineté* was also dedicated. Third, he was as sensitive as Bataille to the reification of lost sovereignty: both could aptly detect, beneath solemn and impressive figures and structures, the comical and degenerated character of traditional sovereignty. This position enabled Nietzsche, like Bataille, to ward off from the endorsement of the traditional forms of sovereignty, king, priest and God, as the ideals to be attained in the pursuit of lost sovereignty. If it is sovereignty that should prevail over the world, it must be the one that humanity enjoys without permitting anything else to intrude. There should be no mediator between the sovereignty and man; neither God nor priest; neither state nor king; neither morality nor ideology…

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regards Sade, by disapproving to the treatment of the Other as a mere thing. This point has already been dealt with in preceding chapter. So we may skip here the details.

[143] Jacques Derrida, "**Writing and Difference**," Alan Bass trans. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), p. 251.

[144] Bataille, op.cit., note 1, pp. 401-402. The section from which this passage is extracted is titled: L'Identité de la Doctrine de Nietzsche et de celle dont la Part Maudite est l'exposé.

[145] **Ibid**.

If we turn away from Sade for the moment and concentrate on other two of parts in the tripod, it becomes possible for us to see that a considerable part of Bataille's views on sovereignty is imprinted by the tension between Hegel and Nietzsche. The tension between these two in Bataille's views is frequently detectable by Bataille scholars. In, for example, Hollier's article[146], we cannot help but catch the sight of the fact that almost every detail of Bataille's sovereignty, in one way or another, can be considered to fit into the syntax developed out of the tension between Nietzsche and Hegel. Thought of together, Nietzsche and Hegel form so ideal a territory to study Bataille's sovereignty that we may find Bataille's view on sovereignty perfectly taking the shape of this territory. Reading Nietzsche after Hegel –after our social and conceptual universes have become saturated by Hegel, by absolute knowledge and by perfect recognition- would be a faithful summary of what Bataille has tried to attain in *La Souveraineté*.

Given the existence of three central figures shaping not only the counter but also the essence of Bataille's sovereignty, the question initially holding our attention is why an exclusive focus in this chapter is reserved for Hegel among others. Why is Hegel so important that a whole chapter is devoted to the relation between Hegel and Bataille, while Sade and Nietzsche are allowed to appear only as factors helping highlighting the difference between Hegel's autonomy and Bataille's sovereignty? The immediate reply to such a question is this: because the companionship in the case of Nietzsche and Sade cannot be found in that of Hegel, and in order to stir our imagination, discords between points of view are more fertile than the harmonies. And the imagination enriched thus is essential to realize the potential that Bataille's sovereignty implies. In the cracks of the context emerged when Bataille and Hegel are brought together, or in the cracks immediately covering the surface of Hegelian system when the agitation –movement of transgression- is introduced to it, we can immediately find more fruitful grounds to understand at once Bataille's sovereignty and the human condition. But before dwelling on this point, it is worth including a very brief historical account of the French reception of Hegel. This account, in effect,

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[146] Denis Hollier, "From Beyond Hegel to Nietzsche's Absence" in Leslie Anne Boldt-Irons ed., **On Bataille: Critical Essays** (New York: State University of New York, 1985), pp. 61-79.

demonstrates the importance of Hegel for Bataille's intellectual development by clarifying the background of this development.

4.1. *FRENCH RECEPTION OF HEGEL*

French reception of Hegel has a strange history. To know the trajectory of this strange history is crucial to understand Bataille's intellectual development as well as his relation to Hegel. Moreover, this point is not peculiar to Bataille. Indeed, it is possible to detect the imprint of Hegel in all corners of French thought, whether it be Marxism, existentialism or poststructuralism. Hegel was starting to become a philosopher occupying a central place in French thought, as figures such as Wahl, Kojeve, Koyré and others having a considerable effect on French philosophy brought the unexplored dimensions of this philosophy into the focus of intellectual curiosity. From 1920s to the emergence of poststructuralist thought, Hegel's philosophy, especially in its form presented by *Phenomenology*, was appearing as a vital tool for understanding human phenomenon. In the emergence of poststructuralist thought, we can note that it was this reading of Hegel, with the anthropocentric conceptualization at its center, that became the target of criticism. Whether the tone of intellectual curiosity would be endorsement or challenge, it is clear that from 1920s on Hegel's philosophy has maintained a considerable place in French thought.

Considered from the beginning French perception of Hegel nevertheless cannot be thought to be in tune with the above-indicated frame. Until 1920s, there was no such a thing as central place for him in French philosophy: on the few occasions when the silence surrounding him broke, it was as a philosopher of science or logician that he was heard. Therefore, in France, Hegel had appeared at the beginning as a figure whose help could be appealed for the solution of the deadlock between Kantian rationalism and empiricism; a deadlock that had been dominating

the agenda of French thought at that time.[147] Important to highlight is the ambivalent attitude toward Hegel. On the one side, there was a Hegel, having appeared as the formulator of intellectual devices –e.g. concrete universal- that would seem subtle enough to solve the deadlocks of philosophy of science: Hegel of *Encyclopedia*. On the other side, there was another Hegel, having espoused a philosophy of history molded upon a pattern in which individuals would be sacrificed for the sake of universal:[148] Hegel of *Phenemenology*.

The ease with which the French attitude to Hegel equated his pan-logicism with pan-Germanism drove those seeking his help in epistemological issues to consign the parts of his thought, tainted with his ill-famed philosophy of history, into oblivion. Only when the concrete universal was viewed as a sort of conceptual device allowed to operate only within the field of logic but not as a sort of ideal representing the end of history, was Hegel's philosophy licensed to enter into the debates of French thought. But even in the field of logic Hegel's philosophy always encountered reservations, suggestive of totalitarianism deemed to be inherent to such a philosophy.[149]

At that time the criticisms leveled against Hegel's epistemology and philosophy of science centered around two points. One was the assumption that it would not be possible to solve the problems of knowledge by relying on conceptual devices that Hegel had developed. The reason for such a reservation was the conviction that the steps of Hegel's philosophy had not been completely guided by intelligence, and consequently there was in Hegel's thought a dimension highly emotive and hence irrational.[150] Another point of criticism was the charge of totalitarianism which stemmed mainly from the conviction that the only social

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[147] For a general evaluation of French perception of Hegel before 1920 and the effect of Hegel on French philosophy thereafter, see Bruce Baugh, **French Hegel: From Surrealism to Postmodernism** (New York, Routledge, 2003), pp. 1-33.

[148] John Plamenatz, **Man and Society: Political and Social Theories from Machiavalli to Marx vol: 3, Hegel, Marx and Engels and the Idea of Progress** (New York: Longman, 1992),

[149] We can cite the names of André Lalande and Léon Brunschvicg as the most prominent in this regard.

[150] Baugh, **op. cit.,** note 6, 12-13.

counterpart for such a philosophy, conspicuously motivated by the desire to eradicate the gap between the ideal (rational) and empirical external existence could be totalitarianism. Bringing the external world under the yoke of an a priori schemata was considered conducive to a totalitarian project. The critics of neo-Kantians, headed by Brunschvicg, accused Hegel being at once philosophically unsound and politically dangerous.[151]

It is therefore clear that the first period of French reception of Hegel had been dominated by a bundle of hesitations and reservations, if not by an outright dismissal and total objection. This climate began to change from 1920s onward. The shift of attitude to Hegel started to appear with the lectures of Allains and Charles Adler, having held respectively at the Lycee Henri IV (1923-28) and the College de France (1928-29).[152] Given the central place of the latter institution in French intellectual life, it is easy to infer that this shift had already obtained a considerable extent and made its incursions into the heart of French thought. Since tracing the details of this development goes beyond the scope of this study, it is enough at this point to remark that from late 1920s to early 1930s Hegel had already became a prominent figure in French thought. At one time, it was possible in French to complete the education of philosophy without having an insight into Hegel except the one gained by a superficial reading of him.[153] Now, around mid-1930s, Hegel already became an immense territory for whose exploration the important figures of French thought seemed to be on the expedition.

Even a passing mention of the names of those who took their part in this expedition -Wahl, Sartre, Kojeve, Koyré, Bataille, Hypollite, Marle-Ponty among others- shows quite clearly the scope of change in French attitude to Hegel. After his journey to the center of French philosophy Hegel was no longer a philosopher whose

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[151] **Ibid.**

[152] **Ibid.,** pp. 15-17.

[153] Raymond Queneau, "Premières Confrontations avec Hegel," **Critique** (vol : 19, 1963), p. 694. "Après la guerre de 14-18, on pouvait faire des études relativement assez poussées de philosophie (c'est-à-dire atteindre le diplôme de licencié) en n'ayant de Hegel qu'une connaissance des plus superficielles, pis même simple « idée »… Il faudrait les corroborer avec l'examen des « auteurs du programme » et vérifier que, durant ces années, Hegel n'y figure pas."

license to solve the epistemological problems had been conditioned on discarding his philosophy of history. If in the initial period a considerably limited place was given to Hegel's philosophy, mainly because of the mystifications deemed to be present in Hegel's philosophy of history, in this second period it was not Hegel of logic, dealing with the abstract entities, but Hegel of phenomenology, dwelling on the concrete realities of human existence, that formed the focus of attention.

In this second stage, there occurred a shift of focus, and with this shift the existential and phenomenal dimensions of Hegel's philosophy became more prominent than his logic and epistemology. The concepts of Hegel's philosophy came to be thought to contain the views that cast light upon the existential condition of humanity. Let's take one of them: dialectic. It came to be seen as if to provide a key mechanism to outline human history. And inasmuch as human history has been moved by human action according to dialectic, Hegel's philosophy was now a philosophy of action. But action transforms not only the world (nature) via work but also man himself. Therefore through action man accomplishes freedom and autonomy. If there was a part in Hegel's philosophy that should be discarded from the agenda, it was his logic, not his phenomenology, in the eyes of those prominently influential in this period. This reversal was affected by the conviction generally held by those thinkers at that period that the real source of danger was Hegel's logic, which they considered is a project undertaken to grasp (greifen) the whole of external world[154]

Dialectic therefore ceased to be a mechanism with the help of which *Spirit*, standing above history, pulls the strings to give it a desirable shape. Now dialectic was an immanent mechanism of human action. In action, human mind and the external world are brought together; but this takes place not in the abstract way as

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[154] The basic argument was that the true realm of application of Hegel's concept is human phenomenon. Kojève, for example, expressly states his reservations for the attempt to extent the application of these concepts to nature. Alexandre Kojève, "The Idea of Death in the Philosophy of Hegel," Joseph J. Caprino trans. **Interpretation** (Winter, 1973), p. 156. "Drawn into error by the monistic ontological tradition, Hegel sometimes extends to Nature his analysis of human and historical existence." Also see, Alexandre Kojève, **Introduction to the Reading of Hegel,** James H. Nichols trans. (New York: Cornell University Press, 1980). On account of its effect on both French philosophy and on Bataille's reading of Hegel, we can also cite Hartmann's article: Nicolai Hartmann, "Hegel et le problème de la Dialectique du Réel," **Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale** (vol : 38, 1931), pp. 285-316.

suggested by logic, but in the concrete forms presented by the historical development of humanity. Consequently, human action was thought to imply both external world already contaminated by human mind and human mind already imprinted with the necessities imposed on it by external world. Moreover with the emphasis on action, it became easier for the account of historical development of humanity to be a documentation of a process, the end of which is the attainment of autonomy. With this twist Hegel's system turned out to be a philosophy of freedom; and his philosophy of history an account of how the journey set in motion by action ends up in autonomy and freedom.

This reading of Hegel did not fail to attract its criticisms. In 1930s one of the themes on the part of Hegel's readings was to resist to the charges of mystifications. Such a rejection was accomplished by the relegation of his logic in the favor of Phenomenology. This approach endorsed his phenomenology as the focus of attention. It is far beyond doubt that this way of getting around the charges of pan-logicism saved Hegel from being taken as a mere mystical thinker, full of false assumptions and dangerous implications. However it may be the case, another system of thought begun increasingly to make itself felt in dominating the French intelligentsia. At the center of this new thought was the endeavor to show that anthropocentric reading of Hegel itself, with its emphasis on human mastery via action, was also fraught with the very mystifications from which Hegel's philosophy was deemed to be saved. Since it is the second period that formed the background of Bataille's intellectual development, we should turn our attention to Bataille's relation with Hegel, instead of further dwelling on the third period in which the anthropocentric and phenomenological readings of Hegel became the subject.

4.2. *HEGEL AND BATAILLE*

I have sought to give so far a general description of French intellectual environment with regard to Hegel. The aim is to shed light on the general context in which we place Bataille's complex relations with Hegel. This context was so influential for Bataille that it is possible to find that his views on Hegel were shaped

by the issues dominating the agenda of French thought as regards Hegel at this time. It is quite normal that an intellectual, in the period of his formation, is open to the influences from his environment. Consequently, if we consider Hegel one of the key parts of French thought from 1920s on, Hegel's influence on Bataille becomes clear. In this section, a brief summary of Bataille's approach to Hegel is to be given. By doing so, the chief aim is to clarify how Bataille's approach to Hegel had been shaped by the commentaries on Hegel at work in France at that time.

Bataille's first confrontation with Hegel can be found in his articles in Documents at the end of 1920s. One of Bataille's concerns about Hegel was centered around the question whether animal life has history or not. This can be taken, without serious difficulty, as a direct challenge to Hegel. According to Hegel, human life departed from the animal world just by entering into historical time. Man's time is different from the time of animal world just because the latter has no history. History is the difference of man's time, accordingly history is the exclusive property of humankind. Thus by making a case for a history of animal life, Bataille attacked the center of Hegelian phenomenology.[155]

Bataille's other concern was the reduction of totality to a meaningful schema; a schema whose basic counters has already been drawn by reason. The paradox of Hegel's philosophy stemmed, according to Bataille, from his desire to make nature enter into a rational order without any disproportion:[156] In the Hegelian system, considered by Bataille as an extraordinarily perfect system of reduction, every disproportion, namely every element that breaks with the system, is converted to be meaningful, by making it assume a rational form: contradiction. Disturbing for Bataille is this ease with which an element, irreducible to any meaningful form, is made to fit into a rational form. Pan-logicism, alongside the anthropocentric view according to which history is the emblem of humanity, formed the background of Bataille's negative attitude toward Hegel at this period.

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[155] Queneau, **op.cit.,** note 12, p. 695.

[156] For this point see, Georges Bataille, "Le Bas Matérialisme et la Gnose" **Œuvres Complètes I : Premiers Écrits 1922-1940** (Paris : Gallimard, 1970), p. 221.

At this time, one of the chief topics which increased the attention drawn to Hegel was historical materialism. In this context Hegel figured as the pioneer of Marx. It is not surprising then to find Bataille having concentrated on the issue of materialism by taking it as subject matter of one of his articles.[157] In this article, Bataille gave central place to his small but substantial references to Hegel. What motivated Bataille in his interest in materialism and Gnosticism was his willingness to draw a sort of anti-Hegelian dialectic. With its monstrous cosmogonies, imprinted by dualities going beyond any rational imagination, Gnosticism offers, Bataille thought, occasions for rethinking such dualities as mind/body and reason/matter so that the faked reign of reason over matter could be brought to the end.

Once Hegel's system is considered a perfect system of reduction, the only mode of relation of such a system with matter is to bring it under the yoke of reason, assimilating and reducing it to be useful/meaningful. Only in its reduced and emasculated state can it be possible to find matter in the Hegelian system.[158] This is what was most problematic for Bataille. Yet the reign of reason is never full and intact. By appealing to the help of Gnosticism Bataille drove his attention to the occasions where it becomes impossible for meaningful discourse to unfold itself in the face of matter so that it manages to escape from the reign rationality. Beside the matter imprinted by the will of rationality and thus submitted to its imperatives, there is also another kind of matter which refuses to obey, thwarting the process through which everything is arranged to be functional and useful. The gist of Bataille's argument is that it is only with the help of *base materialism* that matter came to be conceived of as being independent from the effect of reason.[159]

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[157] **Ibid.**

[158] **Ibid.,** "Comme la doctrine hégélinne est avant tout extraordinaire et très parfait système de réduction, il est évident que c'est seulement à l'état réduit et émasculé qu'on retrouve les *éléments bas* qui sont essentiels dans la gnose "

[159] One of the main motives behind Bataille in writing "Le Bas Matérialisme et la Gnose" is his dissatitisfaction as regards the mind/matter distinction. In a tone reminiscent of deconstruction, Bataille finds this dichotomy unsustainable after he takes the notice of the fact that materialism turns out to be a kind of idealism. In materialism Bataille sees the idealization of matter. What is problematic for Bataille in materialism is that it takes matter as something ready for transformation, for usage, as a tool, namely as a thing already idealized. For this point, see Denies Holier, "The Dualist Materialism of George Bataille," Hilari Allred trans. **Yale French Studies** (No: 78, 1990), p. 8 "In Gnostic dualism, Bataille was seduced by a contradictory materialism which he opposed to

After "Le Bas Matérialisme et la Gnose," Bataille seemed to fall into a silence with regard to Hegel. However, this period, in which Bataille's allusions to Hegel faded away, is the one which bore witness to the boom in the French interest in Hegel. Given the strong ties between intellectuals and the environment, this silence on the part of Bataille as regards Hegel could not last too long, as one might expect. Queneau was an important figure in Bataille's relation to Hegel at that time. Queneau and Bataille concentrated on emerging literature, as well as the writings of Marx and Engels, centered on dialectic, in order to broach a new way into the subject of dialectic. The result was one of the famous articles written by Bataille: "La Critique des Fondements de la Dialectique Hégélienne"[160]

Inasmuch as this article forms one of the themes in the following chapter, it seems to be enough to give an outline of its main argument without paying heed to its details. In this article, the focus of concern was not Hegel's pan-logicism, as it was the case in Bataille's previous articles, but his dialectic. Bataille's interest in dialectic, at this period, can be conceived of as revolving around the question whether there is dialectic in nature or not. Apart from the issue of dialectic, which had not solely interested Bataille but also the considerable part of French intellectual world, there was also another motivation having stirred Bataille's endeavor to broach another reading of dialectic: to help counter the charges leveled against Marxism (historical materialism) that it suffered from sclerosis. In the period in which this sclerosis was increasingly felt as something that should be left behind if an adequate account of the world could be given, Hegel came to be seen as a source of hope to find a remedy. Though Bataille's attitude toward Hegel at that period was clouded with reservations and rejections, he agreed on the plight of historical materialism. Consequently, Bataille, without having rejected historical materialism, proposed to enrich it with insights taken from what was known as bourgeoisie theories. Among

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physicist's mechanical and rational materialism which, because it is monistic, he called "doddering materialism.""

[160] Georges Bataille, "La Critique des Fondements de la Dialectique Hégélienne" **Œuvres Complètes I : Premiers Écrits 1922-1940** (Paris : Gallimard, 1970), pp. 277-291.

them, Bataille cited psychoanalysis, sociology and anthropology, epitomized around such names as Freud, Durkheim, Mauss.

In Bataille's approach to Hegel, a decisive part had been played by the lectures on Hegel that he attended. Bataille first attended Koyré's lectures on Hegel between 1932-34. The period between 1932-34 also testified to intellectual maturation of Bataille; and it was at this period that Bataille emerged as an original thinker, especially with the effect of such articles as "La Notion de Dépense," and "La Structure Psychologique du Fascisme." Though Bataille continued to write the articles in which it is possible to encounter Hegelian concepts, the reference to Hegel in this period was considerably rare. The decisive turning point in Bataille's relation with Hegel was Kojeve's lectures on Hegel held from 1934 to 1939. Attending to Kojève's lectures was such an enormous impact on Bataille that we find him after these lectures, having discovered another Hegel to draw his attention; another perspective completely different from the one which previously formed the basis of his relation with Hegel.[161]

It was not Hegel the pan-logicist, accused of being a zealot trying to reduce external world to a rational schema; nor was it Hegel the dialectician, appearing to be not so much a source of clarity as that of confusion on the issue of what the proper domain of dialectic should be; nor was it Hegel the precursor of Marx, viewed as having played a considerable part in the making of totalitarian worldview; but it was Hegel the writer of absolute knowledge that came to occupy the center of Bataille's reading of Hegel.

By means of these considerations, it becomes possible for us to take note of the turning point in Bataille's attitude to Hegel. But in marking the differences between Bataille's early and later periods with regard to Hegel, it is important for us to be cautious in taking this difference as a sort of discontinuity. As I shall attempt to demonstrate, Bataille's relation with Hegel has always been so complex as not to

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[161] For the scope of the effect that Kojeve's lectures exerted on Bataille, see Queneau, **op.cit.,** note 12, p. 699.

permit any clear and neat separation to become a defining characteristic of this relation.

Let's set this issue of continuity and discontinuity aside and ask at which point this turn in Bataille's attitude to Hegel emerged for the fist time. The first appearance of this turn can be traced back to *L'Expérience Intérieure*. In a footnote of this book, Bataille gives us the first clues of how much his approach to Hegel had been changed. Since it is possible to read the seminal signs of the new reading of Hegel in this footnote, a little more attention can be given to it in order to evaluate the scope of this new reading of Hegel. What catches our attention in this footnote, even in our first reading, is the tone of praise. "Nobody has extended the possibilities of intelligence as far as Hegel could; no doctrine is comparable with his doctrine for it represents the summit of positive intelligence."[162]

Additionally, what is odd in this footnote is that Bataille criticizes Nietzsche, his (intellectual) life-long companion, on account of his position with regard to *Phenomenology.* However, if Bataille is a thinker, constantly advocating a sovereign form of life, a life only to be attained provided one refuses the laborious way of life in favor of a leisure and idle one, and if he is a thinker, affected considerably by Nietzsche in his conceptualization of this kind of sovereignty, it becomes all the more curious to find him criticizing *Genealogy of Moral,* a defense of noble morality against slave morality.[163] Even a superficial glance at the dialectic of slave and master announces the tragic fate of sovereign, who, having been condemned to an idle and leisure life after his victory over the slave, has lost the opportunity to develop the capabilities affecting the course of history. Thus the master, having enjoyed a mastery over slave did not hold the same mastery over the course of

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[162] Georges Bataille, **L'Expérience Intérieure** (Paris: Gallimard, 1972), p.128. "Personne autant que lui [Hegel] n'a étendu en profondeur les possibilitiés d'intelligence (aucune doctrine n'est comparable à la sienne, c'est le sommet de l'intelligence positive)… Also Bataille claims that without taking into account slave/master dialectic and the successive phases of human history coming after it, we cannot have adequate knowledge on ourselves. "c'est le moment [moment of slave/master dialectique] décisif dans l'histoire de la conscience de soi et, il faut le dire, dans la mesure où nous avons à distinguer chaque chose qui nous touche l'une de l'autre- nul ne sait rien de *soi* s'il n'a saisi ce mouvement qui détermine et limite les possibilititès successives de l'homme).

[163] **Ibid.,** "*La Généalogie de la morale* est la preuve singulèire de l'ignorance où demeura et demeure tenue la dialectuque du maître et de l'esclave, dont la lucidité est confondante. "

history so long as this mastery had ensued work and discipline, that is to say the deployment of the present time for a future end. On the other hand, the slave, having renounced his sovereignty by sacrificing the present time for a future outcome, had gained abilities which in the long run would open the door of mastery, first over nature, then over history. Consequently it turns out to be a historical necessity, according to this schema, that the master, representing a sovereign figure in Bataille's understanding of sovereignty, be overthrown and replaced by the slave in the course of history. When this happens, when the slave takes the place of sovereign, to whom the chance of affecting history is denied because of the idleness of his life provided by the slave's work and labor, humanity would enter into a new age. In this new age, the sovereignty of the slave would represent another sort of sovereignty, which this time could not be obtained by fight alone, as it is exemplified by the idle master, but also by work and labor. Marking the difference between these two forms of sovereignty in this way, Hegel easily came to the conclusion that since it is this discrepancy between fight (master) and work (slave) that sets history in motion, we would come to the end of history after this discrepancy had been erased by a figure (synthesis) whose sovereignty comes into existence not only by fight (thesis) but also by work (antithesis).

My aim here is not to give the details of slave/master dialectic in the form as it is presented in Hegel's *Phenomenology*. The details shall be cited in the following sections insofar as they provide us with the insights into Bataille's sovereignty. Important to notice at this point is that with this twist, *Phenomenology* shifted for Bataille from being a eulogy for slave-like existence, a solace for those who do not have enough courage for a sovereign life, to being a comprehensive system, grasping the movement of human history in its entirety. Now that Hegel stands for the summit of intelligence in the eyes of Bataille, *Phenomenology*, with slave/master dialectic at its center, becomes a system of thought without which it is impossible to understand the history of consciousness: we know nothing of ourselves if we do not understand this movement, depicted by Hegel as determining and limiting the successive possibilities of humanity.

After citing the turn in *L'Expérience Intérieure*, Queneau stops giving the details of Bataille's approach to Hegel; from which we may infer that thenceforth Bataille's position with regard to Hegel did not undergo any considerable change from then on. The most basic characteristic of this new approach to Hegel is that it is almost impossible to categorize Bataille's perspective as Hegelian or anti-Hegelian anymore. After *L'Expérience Intérieure*, we find Bataille developing so complex an attitude toward Hegel that casting it in terms of endorsement or rejection would bring nothing but impoverishment to this perspective. This impoverishment, likely to cause ignorance of the complexity inherent in Bataille's thought, could, on occasion, lead to a misreading of Bataille's sovereignty, by tricking us into drawing easy and possibly unwarranted conclusions.

Our concern at this point is the fact that for Bataille, from *L'Expérience Intérieure* on Hegel ceased to be a figure whose system of thought should be disposed of in order to open a space for transgression. Hegel therefore turns out to be a figure that, with his absolute knowledge, holds the keys to better understanding of dialectic of prohibition and law, which otherwise would go unnoticed. Henceforth Hegel's thought represents no longer just an obstacle, to be overthrown to unleash a movement of transgression. Of course in this later perspective Hegel's system still continues to appear as something which would inevitably be surpassed. But the only way to surpass this system is to go to the end in the direction it has indicated. Hegel's thought forms so comprehensive a system and so encompassing a block that it permits no getting around. The only way to surpass and leave behind Hegel's system is to go through it. It is just because of this complexity at work in Bataille's later perspective on Hegel that *Phenomenology* has started to appear as an ontological ground to which this movement owes its condition of possibility. Now it is time to turn to this Hegel, who, with the help of above-indicated complexity, contributes a great deal to Bataille in giving his understanding of sovereignty its precise form, it seems to be time to turn.

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4.3. *TWO FORMS OF NEGATIVITY AND THE CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND THAT LEADS TO THESE FORMS*

If there is one point that this chapter needs, ultimately, to be made clear, it is the fact that Bataille's relation with Hegel's philosophy is branded with such a complex structure that it is almost impossible for us to decide whether Bataille is Hegelian or anti-Hegelian. Bataille's relation with Hegel is characterized by indecision so that if this relation is forced to yield a definitive conclusion, if it is forced to step out of this indecision, we will be deceived each time by the conclusion thus attained. Without demarcating the lines separating Bataille's sovereignty from the concepts residing over the centre of modern political thought and philosophy such as subjectivity, autonomy and freedom; and without making fully explicit at which points and how Bataille's sovereignty converges and diverges from these concepts, it would hardly be possible to gain insights into Bataille's sovereignty. Thus with the help of this justificatory note, we can concentrate on the points that serve as the background to understand how Bataille's sovereignty differs from the autonomy and what kind of ontological relations can be found between these two existential modes.

There is hardly better source than the article written by Derrida on Bataille that merits our attention if our aim is to gain a deeper insight into this complex relationship and into the Bataille's understanding of sovereignty therewith.[164] Thus, we start with Derrida, who opens his article by asking one of the crucial questions which could be asked on Bataille's relations with Hegel:

> Why today –even today- are the best readers of Bataille among those for whom Hegel's self-evidence is so lightly borne? So lightly borne that a murmered allusion to given fundamental concepts –the pretext, sometimes, for avoiding details- or a complacent conventionality, a blindness to the text, an invocation of Bataille's complicity with Nietzsche or Marx, suffice to undo the constraint of Hegel.[165]

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[164] Derrida, **op.cit.,** note 2.

[165] **Ibid.,** p. 251.

If Bataille is to a certain extent right to assume Hegel as a burden, this burden is not an ordinary one in that we could not unburden ourselves of it as easily as we might imagine it to be. The price of easy unburdening –or of any unburdening- is to be paid by the burden itself having becoming greater than ever.

> Perhaps the self-evident would be too heavy to bear, and so a shrug of shoulders is preferred to discipline. And contrary to Bataille's experience, this puts one, without seeing or knowing it, within the very self-evidence of Hegel one often thinks oneself unburdened of. Misconstrued, treated lightly, Hegelianism only extends its historical domination, finally unfolding its immense enveloping resources without obstacle. Hegelian self-evidence seems lighter than ever at the moment when it finally bears down with its full weight. [166]

But this duality, to which we so far strive to give an expression, is always there, is always ready to appear each time we make Bataille and Hegel or *La Part Maudite* and *Phenomenology* or Sovereignty and Autonomy stand together. In such times we may find Bataille fully endorsing Hegel as one representing the summit of intelligence, a summit beyond which it is impossible to go, or at least hardly possible while we still keep our identities intact. Yet this is hardly sufficient to suggest that Bataille is a Hegelian. In such times we also find Bataille continually thrusting into the center of his thinking such heterogeneous elements, e.g. laughter, ecstasy, poetry, etc. that hardly fail to cause the coherent discourse to collapse. Again this is hardly sufficient to suggest that Bataille is anti-Hegelian.[167] This lack of a stable position on the part of Bataille is far from being a proof of poor performance in formulating a clear position. On the contrary, this is one of the most important resources without which the complexity of Bataille's thought is unimaginable.

This observation lends increased validity to our claim that Hegel forms so universal a system that it is impossible to get around it; the only way to leave it

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[166] **Ibid.**

[167] Derrida's statement on this character of Bataille seems to be worth recalling at this point: "Taken one by one and immobilized outside their syntax, all of Bataille's concepts are Hegelian. We must acknowledge this without stopping here. For if one does not grasp the rigorous effect of the trembling to which he submits these concepts, the new configuration into which he displaces and reinscribes them, barely reaching it however, one would conclude, according to the case at hand, that Bataille is Hegelian or anti-Hegelian, or that he has muddled Hegel. One would be deceived each time." Derrida, **Ibid.,** note 2, p. 253.

behind is to pass through it. If this system represents the summit, climbing to the top is the necessary condition to jump from it.[168] Though Bataille inexorably strives to drag the irrational out of the underground to the light of day in order to give it a legitimate place, he never dismisses the importance of reason. And reason is that which, according to Hegelian philosophy, carries the huge edifice called history to its ultimate stage.

In formulating the relationship between rational and irrational, Bataille does not commit the same mistake as the advocates of reason do: to keep the irrational revealed through heterogeneous elements within a derogatory status. Bataille's difference consists completely in his ability to reject the binary logic favoring rational over irrational, homogenous over heterogeneous, moderate over excessive. Not that Bataille has elaborated a strategy, which, if added to Bataille's theory, enables it to pass through the barriers of deconstruction which otherwise would ruin it. His theory consists of this strategy. Underlying Bataille's thought is a binary logic, being so formulated as to show the ambivalent character of human nature; a nature that is impossible to be cast into a precise and sterile duality.

It is then small wonder to find Bataille advocating passing through all the space marked out by reason. To fully appreciate this point, let's further clarify Bataille's dialectic: Heterogeneous elements owe to reason their condition of possibility in just the same fashion as transgression does to the prohibition.[169] So long as reason is the defining characteristics of humanity and so long as reason is not something that can be thrown away, it falls to us as necessary task to pass through the realm of reason in order to go beyond; to continue to the end, till this reason itself with its motivating principle, *rationality*, comes to appear as utterly irrational.[170] The

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[168] The metaphor of jump has a considerable place in Bataille's thought. So long as sovereignty is tied with transgression, it is abysmal. To Pharaoh standing at the top of pyramid, there is only one act left in order to achieve true sovereignty (the sovereignty completely beyond any utility): jump into the abyss. This point, namely how sovereign can be truly sovereign and how this necessarily implies death will be dealt with in the following chapter.

[169] The details of the dialectic between taboo and transgression are given in the first.

[170] Is not this the situation that today weighs down on us with its grave consequences? Does not Bataille's endeavor to grasp the irrational inherent to rational, that is the irrational remaining always there at the heart of homogenous society of production and science, cease to be a mere metaphysical

longer we keep traveling, and the further we carry our expedition into the remote corners of this realm, the more readily lovely images of progress give way to the scenes of ruin and devastation. By means of which the irrational dimension of rationality, which can be no more kept hidden by a discourse of rationality is glimpsed.

To fully appreciate this point, let's stop further considering this issue for the moment and turn our attention to the contrast between laughter and philosophy, a contrast representing one of the important themes of Bataille's thought.[171] We see that Bataille's laughter in the face of philosophy has certain characteristics, it asks that we go to the end of reason to reach its beyond, in much the same fashion we go to the end of philosophy, that is to say to the end of Hegel, in order to laugh at it. Derrida's sensitivity to this relationship is as follows:

> To laugh at philosophy (at Hegelianism)- such, in effect, is the form of the awakening- henceforth calls for an entire 'discipline,' and entire 'method of mediation' that acknowledges the philosopher's byways, understands his techniques, makes use of his ruses, manipulates his cards, lets him deploy his strategy, appropriates his texts. Then, thanks to this work which has prepared it- and philosophy is work *itself* according to Bataille- but quickly, furtively, and unforeseeably breaking with it, as betrayal or as detachment, drily, laughter bursts out.[172]

Here we are provided with an expression as regards the character of the relationship between laughter and philosophy, or more precisely between Bataille and Hegel. The distinctive trait of Bataille's laughter is that it comes right after the moment philosophy saturates all objective and subjective reality, announcing the end of

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reading and turn out to be a practical matter as the outer limits of our technology, made explicit by drastic developments, makes it impossible to hold the belief in endless and smooth functioning of rationality.

[171] Laughter has so important a place in Bataille's thought that to render an account of it in detail would amount to the same thins as going beyond the scope of this section. In the morphology of sovereignty, Bataille gives place to laughter. See, Bataille, **op.cit.,** note 1, p. 277. The contrast between laughter and philosophy is easily realized if we take into account their different modes of operation: laughter testifies to the moment where there is nothing but the moment itself counts. Thus laughter is useless and hence sovereign. But philosophy is the product of a consideration fastened to a future time (cause-effect). Then it is servile though it can be useless. For detailed account of laughter, its place in Bataille's thought and its connection with sovereignty, see Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen, "The Laughter of Being," **MLN** (September, 1987), pp. 737-760.

[172] Derrida, **op.cit.,** p. 252.

history. This laughter comes only after the movement of philosophy stops, only after the closure is complete. Such an attitude is the point in which the uniqueness of Bataille's relations to Hegel, or as Derrida states, his relations to the entire history of metaphysics becomes apparent:

> Since more than a century of ruptures, of surpassing with or without overturnings, rarely has a relation to Hegel been so little definable: a complicity without reserve accompanies Hegelian discourse, takes it seriously up to the end, without an objection in philosophical form, while however, a certain burst of laughter exceeds it and destroys its sense, or signals, in any event, the extreme point of experience which makes Hegelian discourse dislocate *itself*; and this can be done only through close scrutiny and full knowledge of what one is laughing at.[173]

Nowhere this characteristic of Bataille's relation with Hegel is more apparent than in the conceptualizations of *Unknowledge*.[174] A basic outline of this concept may suffice to give credit to the idea of complex interdependence between Hegel's system and Bataille's *un*system that we have so far tried to sketch out. To understand unknowledge we must first look at absolute knowledge. Absolute knowledge marks out as a period of homogenous state in which there would be nothing in external world that is not already a part of mind or there would occur to the mind nothing that does not take place in external world. The rift between the mind and the external world thus evaporates, and turns out to be something that belonged to an era before absolute knowledge became a definitive mode of being.

Bataille does not oppose absolute knowledge. He takes it seriously, refusing to condemn it as a perfect illustration of pan-logicisim. Absolute knowledge is a fact for Bataille, but he invites us to take a further step, one that can only be taken after absolute knowledge emerges as a definitive mode of being. With the help of this further step, it becomes possible to take notice of the fact that as soon as absolute knowledge is accomplished, a new limit presents itself: "contingent existence of

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[173] **Ibid.,** p. 253.

[174] Such a seemingly abstract concept as unknowledge instantly causes political implications. In order not to diverge from the theme of this section, I skip the details. For these details, see Bataille's conferences on this point. "Les consequences du non-savoir," "Le Non-Savoir et la Révolte,' and 'Non-Savoir, Rire et Larmes' in **Conferences Œuvres Completes VIII** (Paris : Gallimard, 1976).

knower."[175] Whether it is absolute or not, knowledge presupposes a knower; its ontological condition is so much determined by a knower that a knowledge without a knower can be nothing but a possibility. Inasmuch as knowledge's condition of possibility ontologically hinges on that of knower, knowledge can never be absolute, because the knower is by no means complete to the degree that it is required by absolute knowledge. The reason the knower cannot be complete is the existence of death: so long as there is death, the subject cannot be full.[176] "If the reality of the subject is a changing, fragmented, incomprehensible reality, threatened by death, then this also true for the object of knowledge."[177]

It is important to underline at this point that although Bataille endorses the absolute knowledge, the motive for this endorsement is to make absolute knowledge open to unknowledge. By means of our consideration for relationship between absolute knowledge and unknowledge, it becomes possible for us to take note of the fact that Bataille's concepts that appear as anti-Hegelian, become indebted to Hegelian discourse.[178]

As it is constantly suggested throughout this thesis, Bataille never neglects the importance of knowledge despite his adherence to mystical thinking. We, as subjects, are open to the operations of knowledge. Moreover knowledge is so indispensable a condition for us that we cannot reject it as something be thrown away without putting our own identities into jeopardy. Even in formulating his unknowledge, Bataille is highly keen to emphasize this dimension of knowledge.

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[175] Baugh, **op.cit.,** note 6, pp. 84-85.

[176] Here the closeness between Bataille and Heidegger is highly prominent. To notice this point, it is useful to look at Heidegger's conceptualization of *Dasein*'s completeness (Ganzsein des Daseins) with death. For this point see, Martin Heidegger, **Sein und Zeit** (Tubingen: Max Nieyer Verlag, 1986), pp. 235-237.

[177] Baugh, **op.cit.,** note 6, p. 85.

[178] It is exactly at this point that Bataille puts the difference between his project and that of Heidegger: for Heidegger the main question is why there is something instead of nothing? But Bataille asks another question: Why is there something to be known? Why is there this necessity? Batille, **op.cit.,** note 21, p. 128. "Pourquoi faut-il qu'il y ait *ce que je sais*? Pourquoi est-ce une nénessité ? Cette question est distincte de celle de Heidegger (pourquoi y a-t-il de l'être et non rien ?) en ce que'elle n'est posée qu'après toutes les réponses concevables, aberrantes ou non, aux questions successives formulées par l'entendement."

Bataille suggests that there is an identity between knower and knowledge: "I am knowledge."[179] The "knowledge" and "I" are not distinct; they are same. But even in this equation, it is hardly possible to miss the overthrow or trembling to which Bataille exposes two parts of this equation. The identity between "knowledge" and "I" is far from securing the throne of reason and subjectivity. Putting "I" and "knowledge" together within such a context as unknowledge makes it plain that *"I"* is always already an effect of certain knowledge; it is not a natural position to be taken by the subject. Supposing *"I"* natural entails eradicating the traces through which the after-effect character of *"I"* is revealed. If these traces are not eradicated, repression, articulation, displacements as constitutive moments of this *"I"* become overtly readable.

If *I* is the effect of knowledge, *I* can be reduced to a knowledge. Bataille's contribution then consists in showing that the existence of subject cannot be reduced to *I* and hence to knowledge, because of the fact that the movement of knowledge, namely the assimilation of the unknown to the known, exhausts by no means all the possibilities, forming the background of what we may call the existence of subject. It is then hardly too much to say that the unsurpassable gap between knowledge and existence is the mark of the inherent inability on the part of knowledge: however inexorable its undertaking to assimilate all existence to known is, existence, both existence in general and existence of subject in particular, cannot be reduced to knowledge. By referring to the inherent inability of knowledge, we are faced with the questions: "Why can knowledge, or the movement of knowledge not exhaust all the possibilities of existence? Why can knowledge not assimilate existence into the circle it draws? To give better answers to these questions, it seems necessary to turn our attention to another concept, playing a leading role in forming the background of Bataille's system: *blind point*.[180]

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[179] Bataille, **op. cit.,** note 21. p. 129. "La connaissance en rien n'est distinct de moi-même : *je la suis*, c'est l'existence que je suis."

[180] All these epistemological considerations go to the heart of what Bataille understands by sovereignty. If we follow Bataille's philosophy in its entirety, we can notice something akin to hope. And this stems from his conviction that the movement of knowledge shall not be complete. Once accomplished, absolute knowledge represents a return to animal life. Therefore exhaustion of all possibilities by knowledge amounts to the annihilation of sovereignty. For Bataille, sovereignty in the end breaks the circle to which knowledge –or homogenous society- tries to condemn it. This is the

One of Bataille's most explicit statements on *blind point* can be found in *L'Expérience Intérieure.* He there starts with the comparison between mind and eye. Just as there is a blind point for eye, manifested through the fact that eye can see anything except itself, a similar blind point can be detected in the mind. For eye, this blind point creates no serious consequence; but for mind the opposite is true. This blind point in the mind attains much more importance than the mind itself on some occasions in which the operations of mind suffer from unsurpassable gaps. It is difficult for subject to be aware of this point insofar as the subject, namely knower, remains within the horizon of homogenous part of society, from which all elements likely to cause such gaps –heterogeneous elements- are expelled and in which the reign of mind, with linearity thus remaining intact, is firmly established.

To be aware of this point, it is necessary to wait till heterogeneous elements, by means of whose expulsion the linearity of homogeneity is established, start to haunt the sites from which they were once expelled. Thus this linearity, which takes the shape of circularity of knowledge in Hegel's system, cannot be completed except by including a night within it.[181] And this night, when confronted, reverses the movement of knowledge that always occurs from unknown to known, making it experience absolute unknown that refuses to yield itself to the assimilation which, were it not for such a refusal, would eventually reduce this unknown to a known. And insofar as knowledge and reason lose themselves in this night, but not the vice-versa, this point remains more important than the system in which it remains as a blind point.

These conceptual and philosophical nuances between Bataille and Hegel, in all of which Bataille's complex relationship with Hegel does not fail to strike our attention, play considerable part in delineating the difference between Bataille's sovereignty and Hegel's autonomy. So we can now turn our attention to this

most basic lesson of General Economy: this sovereignty will always escape from accumulation, repression, production, assimilation. This is not what man can decide on. Man can only decide whether this escape will comes with catastrophe or with festival.

[181] **Ibid.**

difference. Let's recall the sovereign occasions, which Bataille attempts to list in *La Souveraineté*: poetry, laughter, happy tears, eroticism, death…etc. These are the occasions by means of which this night manifests itself. The whole difference between Bataille's sovereignty and Hegel's autonomy therefore might be said to have consisted in their divergent attitudes toward these occasions. Hegel, as Bataille clearly expresses, knows no aim other than knowledge itself.[182] In Hegel's system, the absolute knowledge is thought to prevail over the sequel as an end point of it, combining every point (moment) on it to one another. The completion of this system therefore hinges on excluding heterogeneous elements capable of breaking the continuity of this sequel. Insofar as the end would be knowledge, such occasions as poetry, laughter, ecstasy, eroticism figure as the moments in the face of which the articulation creating this sequel lives through the breaks, namely the blind points. Important to highlight is that these moments are not in the service of something because of the fact that they damage the very language through which this service is made possible. So, they are not means for other things.[183] Because of this, they break the sequel, leading up to the collapse of absolute knowledge, with which the completion of system is deemed to be accomplished.

To further clarify this point, it seems appropriate to look at one of the sections of *La Souveraineté* in which Bataille evaluates the thought of Nietzsche and Hegel in a common context.[184] Here Bataille makes explicit his closeness to Hegel and expressively states that there is nothing that he does not follow in the overall movement that Hegel's thought represents in his eyes.[185] For Bataille the difference between his own thought and that of Hegel is difficult to formulate because of the close similarity found in both thoughts: both are dialectical and contradiction can constantly resume the development of both.[186]

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[182] **Ibid.,** note, 21, p. 130. "Dans le "system", poésie, rire, extase ne sont rien, Hegel s'en débarrasse à l hâte : il ne connaît de fin que le savoir. "

[183] **Ibid.** "Mais la poésie, rire, l'extase ne sont pas les moyens d'autre chose. "

[184] This section is titled: La Pensée de Nietzsche, celle de Hegel et la mienne. Bataille, **op.cit.,** note 1, pp. 402-404.

[185] **Ibid.,** p. 403. "Il n'est rien que je ne suive dans l'ensemble du mouvement que la pensée de Hegel représente à mes yeux. "

Nevertheless the difference between them yields to a formulation on taking a closer look at the movement of dialectic in their thought. In Hegel's thought the movement of dialectic is stirred by a negativity which constantly produces positive results. In his comparison between dialectics of Hegel and Bataille, Derrida aptly calls attention to this point, remarking that the Hegelian revolution in philosophy, alongside Kantian one, consists in taking this negativity seriously.[187] The innovation Bataille has introduced indicates another turning point: not taking negativity seriously.[188] Far from representing a case for a return to pre-Kantian metaphysics, as Derrida insists, Bataille's innovation brings forth an opening through which this negativity escapes from full absorption into a framework of utility and productive activity. Whereas in Hegel's system the negativity manifests itself as being-always-already-put-into-work, in Bataille's thought a negativity, not yet completely gnawed in the movement of dialectic, producing positive results out of contradiction, appears as a privileged moment. Considering this duality, we can conceive of what Bataille understands by sovereignty as the formulation of this negativity. Then we may say that it is possible to exchange what Bataille understands by sovereignty for the formulation of this negativity: negativity without employment.[189]

By means of this comparison between two sorts of negativity, it no longer needs a great effort to achieve one of Bataille's basic definitions of sovereignty: consumption beyond utility. While Hegel's autonomy is only to be attained with a consumption put into practice by useful activity (work), Bataille's sovereignty comes at the moment this negativity unties itself from such an activity. For autonomy to be achieved, both systems presuppose an identity between subject and object; but with different modes. In Hegel's system, the identity between object and subject comes true with the mediation of work. This identity, in Bataille's system, emerges only in

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[186] **Ibid.**

[187] Derrida, **op.cit.,** note 2, p. 259.

[188] **Ibid.,** p. 259. "The immense revolution [Kantian and Hegelian revolutions] consisted in taking the negative *seriously*. In giving meaning to its labor. Now, Bataille does not take the negative seriously."

[189] For this point, see Alain Arnaud, **Bataille** (Paris: Seuil, 1978), pp. 40-49 and pp. 102-105. Also Tony Corn, "Unemployed Negativity (Derrida, Bataille, Hegel)," in Leslie Anne Boldt-Irons ed., **On Bataille: Critical Essays** (New York: New York State University Press, 1995), pp. 79-95.

evanouissement when the mediation, creating out of negativity positive results, no more sustains its movement, as another of Bataille's formulation makes clear: "anticipation," a gaze fastened on a future result, "dissolves into NOTHING."

In sum, autonomy of Hegel is that of a discourse unfolding itself in time. It comes at the end of a sequel formed step by step by mediation; a mediation capable of converting the confrontation of thesis with its antithesis into a synthesis and making both thesis and antithesis useful. The German term Hegel chooses to define the movement of dialectics, *Aufhebung*, is utterly suggestive of this point: transcending while preserving. In Hegelian dialectic, nothing can escape from the clutch of dialectical movement, which eventually ascribes meaning to the act of negativity, and thus allows negativity no option except to appear only in useful forms. But once we pay heed to Bataille's perspective it becomes clear that the clutch of dialectic is no more as tight as it might be supposed. There are always remnants which the movement of dialectic can not inscribe into a meaningful context. To see the true sovereignty Bataille invites us to turn our attention to these occasions in which discourse faces NOTHING. On those occasions, the boundaries of discourse, behind which meaning enjoys a certain security, are interrupted by gaps and breaks. Consequently, it is only through these occasions that it becomes possible to see negativity without being put into useful activity: negativity that is truly autonomous because of the fact that it no more submits to anything other than itself. Then what Bataille tries to express in remarking that Hegel's absolute knowledge closes while the movement he talks about opens becomes understandable.[190] Hegel's autonomy is a sort of closure, yet Bataille's is opening. Highly important is to take the notice of the fact that this opening should be momentary. Otherwise it becomes another moment in the sequel, yielding to the imperative of future. Therefore, this opening itself, if sustained a little further in time, becomes another closure. Thus, come we another definition of sovereignty Bataille handed to us: "impossible yet there it is."

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[190] Bataille, **op.cit.,** note 1, p. 403. "Le savoir absolu se ferme, alors que le mouvement dont je parle s'ouvre. "

4.4. *CONSCIOUSNESS AND SOVEREIGNTY*

So far our endeavor to mark the difference between Hegel's autonomy and Bataille's sovereignty has already made it clear that the most important dividing line between them stems from their divergent positions on consciousness: whereas autonomy in Hegel's system is realized by the help of consciousness, the achievement of sovereignty in Bataille's is premised on the collapse of consciousness and the break of its functions. But our endeavor in its great part has also put a sufficient emphasis on the complex attitude of Bataille toward Hegel in order to convince us that there is always much more than the issue of simple choice between approval and disapproval when Bataille (sovereignty) and Hegel (autonomy) are brought together. This point becomes all the more clear the more we pay heed to the complexity of Bataille's formulation of sovereignty and transgression: even while binding sovereignty with the collapse of consciousness, with the interruption of work and with the termination of rationality -the necessary ontological conditions for consumption beyond utility- Bataille still endorses the fact that such a sovereignty does not appear in world of practice except as a miracle. It is because of this character that in Bataille's thought sovereignty always manifests as a miracle on which it is impossible to found anything without harming its miraculous character. Here we comes to the another formulation of the difference between Bataille and Hegel: for Hegel what is miraculous is the act of consciousness, which, with the help of Understanding, separates things from their natural context, interrelates them in thought in the form of concept and thus makes them available for work. Yet for Bataille, the opposite is miraculous: subject breaking the interrelatedness, established by understanding among everything, even at the expense of the integrity of its identity.

Since the rift between consciousness and sovereignty forms the significant part of Bataille's relation with Hegel, it merits further attention. What the nature of the this relationship (impossible association) between sovereignty and consciousness is; in which forms this relationship becomes apparent; and how and why the

confrontation of Bataille with Hegel gives us important insights into the dimensions of Bataille's sovereignty; all these we shall inquire presently.

For such a task, Bataille's "Hegel, L'Homme et L'Histoire" seems to be good place to embark on the discussion to the extent in which it is the difference between his sovereignty and Hegel's autonomy, in the form as it is presented from the perspective of consciousness that forms the focal point in the article. In this article, Bataille focuses intensely on the place of death and consciousness in Hegel's philosophy. So, it seems essential to render an account of place and the role of death and consciousness in Hegel's philosophy before dwelling further on the details of this article. Nevertheless, this account, even in passing notes, would be no less than impossible within the limits of this study. Accordingly, to solve this problem of context, it is useful to concentrate on Kojève's article in which the place of death in Hegel's philosophy is dealt with in depth.[191] This problem of scope drives us to shrink from giving the full account of the place of death in Hegel's philosophy. Such an account, if it is rendered, compels us to take the philosophy of Hegel as the center of our study. An account of the primordial role of death in Hegel's philosophy will be rendered by the help of Kojève's, instead of concentrating on original sources. This approach is further justified by the fact that Bataille himself followed the same path, giving more weight to Kojève's article to construct Hegel's view on death and consciousness.

In his article, Kojève starts by remarking that whole of Hegelian philosophy can be summed up by the statement: "The true not only as substance but also as subject." Before explaining why this statement necessarily implies death, a little examination of how and why Hegel comes to this conclusion seems useful. He is a philosopher; and for him philosophy is in the end a search for wisdom. Nevertheless, wisdom is fullness of consciousness. Then the search for wisdom, being defined as the fullness of consciousness, can hardly be said to be satisfied only by an account of Being eternally identical itself, without rendering an account of the very discourse through which this Being is revealed. But after such an account, after noticing the

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[191] Alexandre Kojève, "The Idea of Death in the Philosophy of Hegel," Joseph J. Caprino trans. **Interpretation** (Winter, 1973), pp. 114-156.

existence of discourse, it becomes impossible for the philosopher to take Being infinite and identical. But the perfect identity between Being and the man –indicative feature of Greek ontology- gives no scope for alteration between them. Then with a conceptualization that does not presuppose a perfect identity between man and Being, man is liberated from being a passive agent from whom the capability to alter being is removed beforehand. The natural outcome of this conceptualization is that man becomes an active agent, being endowed with the capacity to separate things from their natural context. This is the work of Understanding; and thus we come the existence of concept: Concept is no less than the thing having separated from its hic et nunc.[192] Therefore Hegel, motivated by the desire for full consciousness, finds himself face to face to with the task of explaining the existence of the discourse through which being is revealed. But let's pass over the details of how Hegel elaborates on such terms as Concept, Understanding, Reason…etc., and concentrate on their relations with death.

By means of concept, man can transcend his natural setting without dying. For, say, animal life, transcending the natural environment amounts to dying. The truth revealed by this fact is that man is not in perfect accord with his environment, and it becomes clear that the lack of absolute determination (perfect accord with the environment) becomes man's basic existential condition. If there were no death and hence finitude, man could not be thought a being whose existential condition is the lack of absolute determination. Without finitude and death, man cannot find the scope to allow him to transcend; a scope without which man becomes identical to himself. So, we arrive at the indispensable connection between death and being of man: insofar his ontological condition is defined as Negativity,[193] human animal cannot be said to be man, without being mortal.

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[192] **Ibid.,** p. 126. "Generally speaking, when we create the *concept* of a real entity, we detach it from its *hic et nunc*. The concept of a thing is that thing itself as detached from its given *hic et nunc*."

[193] To be more precise, we can say that by Negativity Hegel means human act. Negativity is the characteristics of man. Since animal life is by no means an alternative to its environment (water in water), acts of animals, even if they change the environment, do not change it radically. This act still remains the part of this environment. But since there is an unsurpassable gap between man and nature, acts of man pose an alternative to the environment That is why Hegel uses the verb "to negate" to designate human acts. Only by negating can man create *his* world. Ontologically speaking, man is therefore Negativity.

Before going further into the details of the primordial role of death, it seems useful to take note of Hegel's replacement of Greek ontology with Judeo-Christian onto-theology. As Kojève aptly describes in making explicit the Hegelian revolution in philosophy, there is no scope for transcendence in Greek ontology. The reason for this is the conceptualization of Being as perfectly and eternally identical to itself. The difference and hence importance of Judeo-Christian onto-theology originated in the alteration that it had brought about: Inasmuch as being is transcended by God, it is no longer possible to conceptualize it as infinite.[194] Yet as can be easily understood, what we have in view is still far away from the Hegelian formula "true not only as substance but also subject." In Judeo-Christian onto-theology, what transcends Being, namely God, itself turns out to be a substance. God is infinite and immortal, thus not a subject but a substance. More precisely speaking, if God is transcended or transcends itself, the transcended thing can never be claimed to be God. Or if God permits no transcendence –a necessary condition for being God, then this God turns out to be a substance, that allows no scope for subject. Hegel's philosophy, with its aim of rendering an account of Totality[195], an account of Being in its totality, is by no means said to be satisfied and complete unless the subject, alongside the discourse through which Being is revealed, is also taken into account. Then there is only one alternative left to Hegel: rescue the subject from Judeo-Christian tradition that, while giving room for the historicity, individuality, and freedom, has caused all of them to be swallowed up by a substance. It can be noticed with no serious difficulty that through paying special attention to the mortality and finitude of man as something that differentiates man from God, Hegel was able to give an account of the subject, and its basic mode of action (Negativity). In this way, it becomes comprehensible why death plays a primordial role in Hegel's philosophy, and hence why Hegel's philosophy is called a philosophy of Death.

From these explanations, through which the role of death in Hegel's philosophy becomes apparent, we can turn to the *anthropogenetic* role of death. This

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[194] **Ibid.** p. 120. "The Man that Hegel analyzes is on the contrary [that] Man who appears in the Judeo-Christian prephilosophical tradition… And it is that [Judeo-Christian] tradition that transmitted to Hegel the notion of the *free historical individual.*"

[195] When the terms such as Totality, Understanding, Reason are capitalized, the aim is to emphasize that they are used in the sense that they find in Hegel's philosophy.

point is entangled with the issue of the recognition of the extent that it is impossible to think them as separate.[196] Man differs from animals by the voluntary acceptance of death: man risks his life without biological reason, without necessity. The ground for such a situation is provided solely by recognition through which desire is directed no more to a material presence (desire for something used for biological satisfaction) but rather to an absence (desire for desire) instead. Then the birth of man, in Hegel' philosophy, is the struggle for recognition.

Nonetheless, so long as it is tied up with struggle, recognition contains a contradiction, a paradox. For struggle to be real struggle, there should always be the possibility that other can strike back[197], a situation from which it is possible infer that struggle, once set in motion, escalates easily to the point of death: either one or both of the sides of the struggle would die in the struggle. True recognition, then, would not come except by exposing self to death. But it is scarcely difficult to note the contradiction such a conceptualization implies: Recognition, if it is defined as the death of the other, is impossible. It presupposes the death of the very being whose recognition is desired and without whose recognition self can be anything but human being. The process of recognition necessarily ends up in a situation annihilating the very recognition for the sake of which this process is set in motion. [198]

Given what we have said as regards Bataille's sovereignty and its difference from freedom guaranteeing the subject's position in the symbolic space environing it, it is no longer difficult to entertain the idea that this paradoxical form of recognition

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[196] Why does desire for recognition leads to a struggle? Why does a conflict necessarily break out between those who seek recognition from each other? Why is killing impending in the process set in motion by the desire for recognition? For answers given within Hegel's philosophy to such questions, see **Ibid.,** p. 148-151.

[197] James P. Carse, **Death and Existence: A Conceptual Study of Human Mortality** (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1980), p. 350. "It is significant that Hegel puts the matter in terms of murderous struggle between opposing selves … Unless there is some reciprocity, unless the Other can strike back, it is not a true Other but only a thing that can be swept into the Understanding without the least remainder."

[198] To realize how death annihilates recognition, see G.W.F. Hegel, **Phenomenology of Spirit**, A.V. Miller trans. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 114. "This trial by death, however, does away with the truth which was supposed to issue from it, and so, too, with the certainty of self generally. For just life is the *natural* setting of consciousness, independence without absolute negativity, so death is the *natural* negation of consciousness, a negation without independence, which thus remains without the required significance of recognition."

is the point where Bataille and Hegel stand closest to one another. However it may be the case, inconsistency –and paradox- is the last thing to be tolerated by Hegel; and no sooner does it appear than it takes the form of contradiction and turns out to be factor that is functional and efficient. In this way this inconsistency converted into contradiction becomes the key factor in carrying the system to its more complex forms; and herein lies the point of difference between Bataille and Hegel: for Bataille it is only through these inconsistencies, not yet being transformed into a factor, that true sovereignty manifests itself.

In order for Hegel to solve this paradox, it is required that the combat, after which the recognition is deemed to happen, cease before putting to death; and this Hegel proposed in his 1805-1806 Lectures and *Phenomenology*. In those lectures and *Phenomenology*, mere risk of life, rather than actual death, appears to be the sufficient condition of being human. This requirement nonetheless brings no more solution than the emergence of new one. For combat to stop before the moment of death, one of the parties should withdraw from the combat, proving himself incapable of going to the end in the life and death struggle. And since going to the end in this struggle is no less than the indispensable condition for recognition, we can not assume that in such a situation the true recognition takes place. The part capable of going to the end in this struggle proves itself to be worthy of recognition. So, the defeated part recognizes the other without being recognized by this other in return. But the situation of the victor, who henceforth assumes the title of master, is no less fragile: The recognition provided by the vanquished is by no means the true one because the vanquished, insofar as refraining from risking his life in full force, remains an animal. However this inability seems to be distinctive quality of the vanquished, it also affects the situation of victor: so long as not being recognized by the one worthy of recognition, he too remains an animal, according to the schema that links death and recognition inescapably together.

From the ongoing arguments it is scarcely difficult to notice two requirements that, being left unfulfilled, cause the door of humanity to remain forever closed to Hegelian system: the struggle be concluded before its culmination in death, and equally important, the status of human-being be bestowed upon the defeated,

incapable of enduring the work of death. It is only by accepting the humanity of the defeated to whom the title of Slave is ascribed after the defeat that Hegel manages to avoid the paradox of death and recognition. But we may ask how Hegel justifies the humanity of the being who has refused to subordinate the animal life –biological need of self-preservatinon- to anthropogenetic desire for recognition. Hegel's solution comes with the emphasis put on consciousness. Consciousness of death suffices to humanize man and to form the basis of humanity. This is exactly what the defeated undergoes at the moment he recoils and steps back from the struggle. The dread of death makes him conscious of his finitude, and he becomes a human being. With the help of this twist, he proves his worth to be a source of recognition. Thus we arrive at the first stage of human history; a stage that figures in Hegel's system as the world of slave and master.

The subtlety of the arguments Hegel puts forward in explaining the process and the reservations[199] we may keep against them are of secondary importance at this point. Here, the capital question for us is Hegel's shift from "Recognition vs. consciousness" to "recognition via consciousness." In the first form desire for recognition appears to be a kind of irrational impulse entangled so inseparably with death that we may find it resembling, of course with risk of anachronism, to what is

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[199] It is possible to detect reservations from within Hegelian tradition. See Robert R. Williams, **Recognition: Fichte and Hegel on the Other** (New York: New York State University, 1992), pp. 169-185. In the chapter titled "Empirics of Recognition" William's concern is to demonstrate that there are other modes of recognition than slave/master dialectic. "I want to show that the concept of recognition has alternative modes of realization besides master/slave. The general concept of recognition supports such, and finds more explicit realization in love than in domination and servitude... to overlook the discussions of love would be to miss the crucial point that Hegel's concept of love is the germ from which the concepts of recognition and *Geist* develop." For another example of a critique from within, see George Armstron Kelly, "Notes on Hegel's Lordship and Bondage," **Review of Metaphysics** (vol: 15, 1965). Kelly suggest that to Kojeve's anthropological reading of slave master dialectic it is necessary to add psychological dimension if we do not want to run the risk of being reductionist. "What I am about to argue is that lordship and bondage is properly seen from three angles that are equally valid and interpenetrable. One of these angles is necessarily the social, of which Kojeve has given such a dazzling reading. Another regards the shifting pattern of psychological domination and servitude within the individual ego. The third then becomes a fusion of the other two processes... In the interior of consciousness, each man posseses faculties of slavery and master in his own regard that he struggles to bring into harmony." **Ibid.,** p. 784. Beside these alternative readings from within Hegelian tradition, we can cite Bataille's arguments on eroticism as they suggest that the account of the process of human-becoming, which is thought to emerge out of the interaction between fight and work, is not complete unless this third dimension, eroticism, is added to them. The elements that had played decisive role in the the process of human-becoming such as ban on killing, tool making and taboos on sexuality testifiy to the necessity of this third dimension. For a general evaluation of the link between taboo, death and work, see Georges Bataille, **Eroticism: Death and Sensuality** Mary Dalwood trans. (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1986), pp. 40-54.

called today death-drive. Nevertheless, Recognition in its second form, a form attained with infusion of consciousness into the places emptied from death, comes to appear either as a kind of initiation rite of primitive peoples, after which recognition is conferred upon the subject, or as a version of what we call *original position*[200], in which a mechanism is so designed as to yield to a desired situation with its norms and principles determined beforehand.

It is hardly too much to say at this point that the first form of recognition, so irrational as to be no more different from death, is but another expression of what Bataille understands by sovereignty. What is important for us is to realize that Bataille himself is torn between consciousness and sovereignty. But equally important is that Bataille did not take the way Hegel had opted for to solve this paradox. The implications of such an attitude now demand our attention.

As it is already said, Bataille's article "Hegel, la Mort et Le Sacrifice"[201] is a good place to start, if our theme is to study the tension between consciousness and sovereignty, especially in the context in which the basic terms have already been set by Hegel. This article consists in two parts. In the first part Bataille presents us the summary of the arguments given by Kojève concentrating on the primordial role of death in Hegel's philosophy. At the end of this part, Bataille sets the main theme: to compare the Hegelian doctrine of death with what we know about sacrifice.[202] Bataille starts in this part with a precise observation: The problem of Hegel, namely the Spirit's attaining its autonomy solely in the consciousness of death, is already given in sacrifice. In a sense, sacrifice can be claimed, without being inconvenient, to be a response to the Hegelian problematic according to which man, so long as bereft of the consciousness of death, could not transcend the animal life that he had immersed in from the beginning.

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[200] By the original position, I refer to the one of the most significant concepts of today's political philosophy, developed by John Rawls.

[201] Georges Bataille, "Hegel, la Mort et Le Sacrifice," in **Œuvres Complètes XII : Articles II 1950-1961** (Paris, Gallimard, 1988), pp. 326-349.

[202] **Ibid.,** p. 334. "Mais dans les limites de cette étude, je voudrais rapprocher cette doctrine hégélienne de la mort de ce que nous savons du « sacrifice » "

By noting the existence of a common motive thought to be present in the background of both *Phenomenology* and sacrifice, Bataille is far from announcing a scandal of philosophy, a scandal revealed by the fact that an argument, achieved by the employment of the sophisticated and subtle forms of reasoning, has already been tirelessly staged by those who have not even the least knowledge of the implications of what they are doing. Conversely, by determining sacrifice and phenomenology to be stemmed from a common motive, it is no longer possible, according to Bataille, to consider Hegel's attribution of anthropogenetic role to death arbitrary and fantastic. Both for man of sacrifice and for the writer of *Phenomenology*, the question is to make human Negativity manifest; and for both the privileged moment for such a manifestation is none other than death.

If main problematic in Hegel's philosophy is given in terms of the dilemma that man could never have consciousness without the touch of death, yet meanwhile this touch does not come except with the annihilation of this consciousness, sacrifice therefore can be taken as a case of how primitive man could overcome the Hegelian problematic: subterfuge used in sacrifice makes it possible to maintain an experience of death as immediate (direct) as it can possibly be, without annihilation of the experience itself. Hence Bataille explicitly refers to this point: man must live at the moment that he really dies, he must live with the real impression of death.[203]

Notwithstanding the common ground to be found behind sacrifice and *Phenomenology*, the difference scarcely fails to seize our attention. The profound difference between Hegel and the man of sacrifice consists mainly in the place of consciousness given in both systems. Hegel's representation is par excellence conscious. It is for Hegel a matter of taking this negativity into a discourse which occupies the position of a privileged link between consciousness and Totality. Insofar as being motivated by the desire to bring human negativity into the limits of coherent discourse, Hegel is left with no alternative but to discard all forms of

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[203] **Ibid.,** p. 336-337. "sa [man's] mort est créatrice, mais si la conscience de la mort –de la merveilleuse magie de la mort- ne le touché pas avant qu'il meure, il en sera pour lui, de son vivant, comme si la mort ne devait pas l'atteindre, et cette mort à venir ne pourra lui donner un caractère *humain*. Ainsi faudrait-il, à tout prix, que l'homme vive au moment où il meurt vraiment, ou qu'il vive avec l'impression de mourir vraiment."

negativity that are unable to be reconciled with consciousness: *negativity without employment*. By stepping back from negativity without employment into the coherent discourse in which negativity does not appear except by taking upon itself a meaningful character, Hegel closes the door of his system to heterogeneous elements; elements only by means of which Bataille thinks authentic sovereignty would be realized.

Therein lies the difference of man of sacrifice: he lacks the discursive consciousness of what he did, but he has the sensual awareness caused by unintelligible and irrational emotion, an element which Hegelian system lacks. Then it is plain that we are presented by two forms of sovereignty: on the one hand, a conscious, discursive sovereignty, on the other, a naïve form, bereft of the conscious knowledge of what is really implicated in it.

In his comparison between these two forms of sovereignty, Bataille shows no sign of hesitation: it is by no means possible to conclude, he claims, that the naïve is the less absolute.[204] Upon asking why the position of the naïve man is more absolute, we see quite clearly what is at stake in this comparison: both forms of sovereignty are the sovereignty of death and take absolute dismemberment[205] as the final and central experience. So great an experience as that of absolute dismemberment, nevertheless, cannot be claimed to be at hand unless it is already accompanied by excessive pleasure, anguish, sacred horror, which man of sacrifice possesses yet Hegel lacks. Therefore, for the purpose at hand (absolute dismemberment) the means that primitive man has at his disposal seems to be more convenient than Hegel's *consciousness* unfolding itself in time with a discursive thinking.

Then it is seems no longer extravagant to draw conclusion that the naïve man of sacrifice has a considerable advantage in the face of Hegel, for he possesses the sensual awareness, the only factor that can bring about absolute dismemberment.

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[204] **Ibid.,** p. 341. "J'insiste, voulant faire ressortir, le plus clairement possible, après leur [man of sacrifice and Hegel] similitude, l'opposition de l'attitude naïve à celle de la Sagesse –*absolu*- de Hegel. Je ne suis pas sûr, en effet, que des deux l'attitude la moins *absolu* soit la plus naïve. "

[205] By absolute dismemberment, the experience of death is referred to.

Additionally, Bataille turns our attention to another defect in Hegel's philosophy. The blind point in Hegel's *Phenomenology* is quite readily seen if we take notice of the fact that from its beginning to its end, the sacrifice is always already implicated in Phenomenology.[206] Thus, on account of his turning a deaf ear to sacrifice, considering it a mere topic to be dealt with within the chapter titled Religion in *Phenomenology*, but not as a crucial theme inherent to the movement of *Phenomenology,* Hegel misses the chance of knowing to what extent he was right, with what precision he described the intimate movement of Negativity.[207] Therefore, it becomes possible to see the blind point of Hegel's discourse: insofar as consciousness is not conscious of the fact it has always already been accompanied by sacrifice, it cannot be absolute, however great an emphasis is put on it.

Nevertheless, it is also possible to discern the defect in the position of primitive man. A man of sacrifice always doomed to failure in that a meaningful discourse had never fallen short of reducing the authentic sovereignty that primitive man could find in sacrifice to the level of utility: well-being of community, fertility, and fall of rain. We can reiterate the general formula that we earlier put forward as regards Bataille's sovereignty: No sooner does this sovereignty (miracle; the act beyond any meaning, beyond any utility) start to emerge than it is absorbed by a meaningful discourse. And the frame of this formula perfectly fits the phenomenon of sacrifice.

Considering all these points, we can come to the conclusion that we are presented by two forms of sovereignty: one that has emerged out of a meaningful discourse unfolding itself in time; a discursive sovereignty. In this form of sovereignty the difference between the autonomy of man and the symbolic space,

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[206] What we said above as regards blind point (circle of absolute knowledge cannot be closed without including a night within it) becomes quite clear: without the sacrificial gesture, ethical totality cannot be attained. The end of history only comes when the Worker-Soldier sacrifices his life for universal homogenous state. It is only by risking his life for such an ethical totality that Worker-Soldier becomes Citizen. Thus even the act that is thought to bring history to the end can be taken as a kind of sacrifice.

[207] The reason why Hegel does not know to what extent he is right according to Bataille is his inability to detect blind point. "n'ayant pas vu que le sacrifice à lui seul temoignait de *tout* le movement de la mort, l'experience finale –et proper au Sage- décrite dans la Préface de la *Phénoménology* fut d'abord *initiale* et *universalle*, -il ne sut pas dans quelle mesure il avait raison,- avec quelle exactitude il décrivit le movement intime de la Négativité." **Ibid.,** pp. 338-339.

against which this autonomy is asserted, wears so thin that autonomy becomes no more than a symbolic mandate to be assumed by man, if he is to be recognized. In this situation freedom turns out to be another name for regulation. This point is all the more readily seen the more we pay attention to the fact that in an ever-increasing fashion the autonomy of man becomes the subject of discourses and documents issued from the organizations that are themselves likely to menace the autonomy. What is of capital significance for us as regards this form of sovereignty is that it is achieved by means of consciousness. In addition to this form, Bataille brings us another form of sovereignty. Unlike the first form, this sovereignty does not stem from a discourse, so it is not informed from the beginning by a consciousness. Accordingly, this sovereignty would be truly sovereign were it not for the consciousness that arrives afterwards and ascribes meaning and utility to the phenomenon that should be meaningless and bereft of any utility if it is to be sovereign.

It is then small wonder that by defining sovereignty and consciousness radically against each other and by allowing no scope for reconciliation –the Hegelian solution- Bataille condemns his theory of sovereignty to ambivalence. Is not this ambivalence, left necessarily unresolved by Bataille's definition of sovereignty, quite readily discernible in Bataille's own writings on sovereignty? Does not the consciousness, via this ambivalence, manifest itself as an element that constantly haunts Bataille's historical and political readings of sovereignty? To be more exact, does not this ambivalence form the background of historical readings of the book, *La Souveraineté*? Is not the relationship between consciousness and sovereignty that which finally effects the historical movement of sovereignty and determines the shapes of this movement found in the course of history?

To be even more precise and clear, let's turn to this periodization in *La Souveraineté*. In Bataille's historical account, sovereignty passes through such historical periods as archaic (sovereignty of hunters, gatherers and shepherds), classical (sovereignty in feudal forms), bourgeois (sovereignty in diminished forms) and communist (sovereignty that is totally eradicated). If we follow these epochs step by step, we can give credit to the idea that in all movements from one epoch to

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another, history has always been accompanied by certain form of consciousness. Let's then take the first moment: man in the stage of hunters and shepherds possessed sovereignty. The most apparent character of shepherds and hunters is given according to Bataille by their possession of sovereignty and by their lack of consciousness of it. Voluntary respect for sovereignty of the other was a matter-of-fact. Bataille hardly shares the outlook of those, for example Rousseau, who conjure up a representation of golden age in this stage of development. Thereupon we may ask why this period, in which everyone enjoyed such a perfect sovereignty that they needed not submit to any political sovereignty –political authority- and that everyone recognized other and was recognized by this other as sovereign, is less favored by Bataille than feudal sovereignty. To such a question, there seems to be only one answer to give: because they lacked the very consciousness that was to be found in feudal societies. If we note the fact that Bataille detects, behind the dazzling facades of feudal forms, e.g. royalty, only the muddled forms of sovereignty, mired down eventually by the world of practice, we may further ask what merits the considerable attention that Bataille has given to the feudal forms of sovereignty. Given that archaic societies can find place only in the margins of *La Souveraineté* while the feudal forms is one of its focal points, we can ask: what was it that archaic societies had not possessed but feudal forms did? The answer is simple: consciousness. By allowing condensation of sovereignty in one person, king or lord, and by depriving others from this sovereignty, feudal society had achieved what was impossible for archaic society. Those submitting to the exceptional sovereignty of the one became instantly conscious (aware) of what they did not possess, of what they had lost. The contribution of this form of sovereignty is that with the awareness of the lost it had given rise, it helped humanity to claim the very sovereignty from which it was deprived by the exceptional figure of sovereignty.

This situation ended up in bourgeois revolutions on the one hand and communist revolutions on the other, in both of which the main motive was to discard the forms of exceptional sovereignty. Bourgeois society has evolved out of consciousness. And because of this, consciousness easily felt into reification. And the reified consciousness, namely the consciousness without consciousness of itself, turned easily into a great machine assimilating everything into utility. Therefore the

transition from the feudal world to the bourgeois world can be depicted as a passage from the servitude of all except one to the servitude of all against all. Moreover by means of this reification of consciousness, it is too easy to exchange this general servitude for freedom. Communist society, representing a further stage than bourgeois society, takes the strict intolerance to any differentiation based on rank as its basis. With such an outlook, the drastic possibility that man could achieve a perfect thinghood commenced to glimpse. What is the worth (lesson) of this plight that Stalinist society made humanity face? The answer is again simple: consciousness. This situation was so drastic that Bataille thought it would necessarily lead to a consciousness of the reification that remained inconspicuous and hence undetectable in bourgeois world. This consciousness then would drive humanity to be aware of the fact that there are only two alternatives to choose from. Either the rationalization, namely the reign of the consciousness without consciousness of itself, continues but leads up to a situation in which nothing that is not useful would be left; a situation in which everything, including humanity, would be a mere tool, and in which humanity thus would be reduced to being a thing. On the other hand, confronted with such a plight, humanity will develop a consciousness which will finally teach humanity how to deal with sovereignty. This was the concern of Bataille in formulating his General Economy: developing a consciousness that has respect for the sovereignty of man and does not deny consumption beyond utility (sovereignty) in favor of accumulation and repression. Without such a consciousness, only total wars and concentration camps will give vent to sovereignty of man.

Just as Hegel's autonomy (consciousness) is always accompanied by sacrifice, Bataille's sovereignty (sacrifice) is always accompanied by consciousness. Sacrifice is to Hegel's *Phenomenology* (absolute consciousness) what consciousness is to Bataille's *General Economy* (sovereignty), but with one difference: to closure (reconciliation) Bataille always opposes an agitation that always starts anew. The balance of reconciliation is always tipped by the touch of transgression. Absence of reconciliation is the hall-mark of Bataille's thought. It is so to such an extent that in Bataille's system of thought there is even no reconciliation favoring sovereignty: sovereignty that is favored by reconciliation or sovereignty that is reconciled with a

favor becomes a practical and useful thing. This is exactly the source of what is radical in Bataille's sovereignty

In this chapter, what we have in view throughout is the ambivalence inherent in Bataille's views on sovereignty. If this ambivalence is taken as the main theme, it becomes understandable why we attach so much importance to Hegel. As we try to make clear in this chapter, Bataille's relation with Hegel's philosophy is always marked by a tension. On the one hand, we see Bataille that never hesitates to challenge absolute knowledge by giving precedence to heterogeneous elements. On the other hand, we also see another Bataille that always acknowledges the importance of absolute knowledge for such elements.

When we bring Hegel and Bataille together, the most critical point of Bataille's sovereignty becomes obvious: the tension between sovereignty and consciousness. Reading Bataille after Hegel shows us the reasons why we cannot take autonomy as absolute. The more this autonomy is articulated, the wider is the gap between this autonomy and sovereignty. This is the one lesson to be taken from reading Hegel and Bataille together. There is also another lesson: sovereignty unarticulated by a discourse can only be seen as a miracle in phenomenal world. But this momentary rupture is always taken back to the world of meaning and utility. So a discourse always follows on the heels of sovereignty that is in effect unarticulated. Though Bataille has always been interested in heterogeneous elements, he is also quite sensitive to this dimension.

Importance of Bataille's formulation of sovereignty stems from his refusal to take this ambivalence as something to be solved mechanically. If we are sensitive enough, we must make it plain that this ambivalence cannot be taken as something that is merely epistemological, textual, or discursive. It is basically an existential condition. Our elaborations of the dialectic between taboo and transgression (the theme of the preceding chapter) and between consciousness and sovereignty show that this ambivalence is so inherently essential condition that we cannot deal with it as if we are solving a problem of mechanics. As already stated at the beginning of this thesis, this paradox –as perhaps every paradox- is much more beneficial than the

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solutions offered by those who have strong belief that our problem-solving capabilities can settle this issue –like every issue- once and for all.

Underlying the abstract and apparently impractical considerations of the last two chapters is our aim to make explicit the ontological dimension on which our theoretical readings of politics and international relations hinge. So, this chapter can be taken as a threshold after which our theoretical focus will orient itself towards the political conditions of what Bataille understands by sovereignty. Additionally, this chapter is written with the aim of providing the preliminary sketches of the themes that will form the background of the following chapters. First, the theme of the relationship between consciousness and sovereignty that we attempt to formulate here helps us in the last chapter to develop a reading of state sovereignty, a reading that aims at rescuing our political imagination from the duality of nation state vs. global forces. Second, reading Bataille's sovereignty with Hegel's slave/master dialectic gives us the preliminary ideas of the inherent failure to be found in every political sovereignty. Before going much further in our reading of state sovereignty, it seems necessary to take a detour to concentrate on the concept that has important implications for state sovereignty: subject.

CHAPTER 5

SUBJECT, SUBJECTIVITY AND SOVEREIGNTY

It is beyond any doubt that in today's theoretical debates intent on understanding and explaining social and political phenomena, the issue of subjectivity occupies one of the central places. The importance of this issue is more easily realized if we pay heed to the fact that behind the theoretical approaches, it is possible to detect certain position, which is tacitly or explicitly taken with regard to the issue of subjectivity, playing a decisive role. It therefore requires no great effort to recognize that in every cornerstone of modern political and social thought, ranging from Kantianism and Hegelianism, through psychoanalysis and existentialism, down to structuralism and post-structuralism, the issue of subjectivity, namely the issue of how to conceptualize subject, has always played a key role.

What is said as regards the importance of subjectivity for social sciences in general also holds for international theory; and this is what we find less surprising the moment we remember how much international theory is trapped in a dilemma: in spite of its endeavors to lend ever greater validity to its claims of independence, it cannot help but leave its doors wide open to the effects of other fields of knowledge in order that it should develop and improve the conceptual devices necessary to understand international phenomena. A little examination of international theories suffices to substantiate our argument for the importance of the issue of subjectivity to the discipline of international relations. Let us take the debate between classical realism and neo-realism. If approached from the perspective of subjectivity, it becomes no longer difficult to see that in the division of these theories from each other, a great part has been played by their diverging assumptions on subjectivity. When we pay attention to the element with the help of which neo-realism inaugurated a breakthrough in realist thought, we see that this element is none other

than the structural reading of world politics. For us, it is no more than a truism that with structuralism neo-realism had dominated the agenda of International Relations, envisaging a subject (in this case states, not individuals), whose perceptions and actions are already fully mediated and strictly determined by the structure. As is easily appreciated, such an approach is in opposition to that of classical realism, which always allows scope for individual action, even though in the form of the cunning reason of a diplomat. Considered from this perspective, which displays in classical realism the existence of a communicative space to be used by individual, the difference between classical realism and idealism grows thinner to a considerable extent. Given the place of the above-mentioned communicative space at work in both, the only substantial point of divergence between these theories turns out to be the issue of whether actors use this space in association with or at the expense of others.

In addition to idealism, realism and neo-realism, we see that the issue of subjectivity has continued to play a considerable role in the discipline whose main stream assumptions came under fire, as critical theories were looming large on the peripheries of the discipline. From 1980s onward, critical theories have never refrained from ardently challenging the assumptions in higher-profile positions. However, it is not our aim to linger over the challenges posed by these theories and their effects on them for international relations discourse. So, we can skip over the details, concentrating on the part that is related with the issue of subjectivity. For the sake of brevity, we opt for post-structuralist readings of world politics, a theoretical approach forming, along with Critical Theory and Feminism, what is called critical international theory. In post-structuralist readings, the main motive has always been to pose a challenge to the pseudo-structuralism of neo-realism and neo-liberalism. These theories are condemned by post-structural approaches for still clinging, despite the apparent emphasis on the structure of system, to the idea of full, rational and autonomous actor derived mainly from the model of homo-economicus. So, in the light of these explanations, the way the discourse of international relations has

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always been entangled, in one way or another, with the issue of subjectivity from the very beginning to the present becomes clear. [208]

Relying on the circumstances we have attempted to sketch so far, we can therefore claim that the issue of subjectivity -the issue forming the subject matter of this chapter- never ceases to be the factor that has always formed the background of theoretical debates in the discipline of international relations. Being so crucial a point, as we have seen, both for our political and social thought and for the discourse of international relations, the concept of subjectivity therefore deserves a good deal of attention. In order to pay due attention to this issue, it emerges as a necessity for us to untie our theoretical imagination from the orbit of the international relations discourse, where the concept of subjectivity cannot be found except in the forms already mediated and hence distorted by the commonsense and the agenda of this discourse. To render a brief account of subjectivity uninformed by the concerns of international relations seems to be essential in order to draw a conceptual background which enables us to penetrate deeper into the intellectual richness to be found at the bottom of this issue. Moreover, such an account will also provide us with a conceptual setting from which we can considerably benefit in realizing the implications of Bataille's sovereignty for the issue of subjectivity and vice versa. So, we can now turn to this account.

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[208] Since the considerable part of these critical approaches is composed of normative concerns about world politics, it would have been a serious mishap to overlook the relation of the subjectivity with what is called normative theories of international relations. To elucidate this dimension, we can state that what we say about international relations theories in general equally holds for normative international theory, a branch of thought that, besides general explanations of international phenomena, concentrates basically on their ethical and moral dimensions. With regard to normative debates of the discipline, it is possible to maintain that the issue of subjectivity has enjoyed such a considerable currency that it can be conceived of as the chief factor forming the background of debates. In demarcating the dividing line between two main camps of normative theory of international relations, namely communitarians and cosmopolitans, a great part is played by the question of how to conceptualize the subject. According to communitarians, the subject (in this case, individuals not states) is the effect of communal life to such an extent that it becomes hardly possible to talk about a subject that is not already firmly embedded in social or communal setting. To this, cosmopolitans opposes with another conceptualization according to which so emphatic a status is given to the subject that social setting becomes no more than something whose legitimacy –thus its ethical stand- hinges on the service it rendered for the subject.

5.1. *SUBJECT AND SUBJECTIVITY*

Much has been said as regards the place of subjectivity in philosophy and political thought. This importance compels us to ask certain questions that can only be adequately answered if a genealogical approach is taken. Of course, it is not claimed here that a genealogical reading exhausting the issue in its entirety from every perspective will be provided in this section. Far from it, our genealogical concern here serves only as that which stirs our curiosity to ask questions as to the origin of this issue. In this pursuit of the origin, it is possible to start by asking several questions which can help bring this origin to light: how and why has the notion of subject achieved such an emphatic application? From which sources has this application been derived? How has man started to occupy the position of actual and singular subject? Why has *I* so fully been absorbed by "human subject" that they become synonymous to the point that it is no longer possible to clearly answer whether it is the subjectivity that determines this *I* or vice versa?

These are the questions that Heidegger asks in probing the roots of modern metaphysics and in explaining how and why it had become distinct from the ones preceding it.[209] These questions, preponderantly concerned with subject and subjectivity, can hardly be thought to be irrelevant to the inquiry into the origin of modern metaphysics if it is recalled that our understanding of subject that is still in currency and the rise of modern metaphysics emerged simultaneously in their historical evolution. The simultaneity is so certain and the interdependence so solid that it is no exaggeration to say that we can by no means conceive one of them without also taking the other into account. They are one and the same thing.

By calling our attention to this common historical root, Heidegger argues that up to beginning of modern metaphysics, molded firstly by Descartes, our

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[209] Martin Heidegger, **Nietzsche: Erster Band** (Pfullingen: Neske, 1961), pp. 141-2. "Wir fragen: Wie kommt es zu einer betonten Ansetzung des Subjekts? Woher entspring jene alles neuzeitliche Menschentum und Weltverständnis lenkende Herrschaft des Subjektiven? …Wie kommt der Mensch in die Rolle des eigentlichen und einzigen *Subjekts?* Warum verlegt sich dieses menschliche Subjekt in das Ich, so dass Subjektivität hier gleichbedeutend wird mit Ichheit? Bestimmt sich die Subjektivität durch die Ichheit order umgekehrt diese durch jene?"

philosophical vocabulary and imagination could not afford us such a concept of subject as exclusively refers to human-being. With the rise of modern metaphysics, subject, as a philosophical category, started to so exclusively refer to human-beings that the existence of subject necessarily gave rise to the emergence of two worlds: on the one hand, the world of subjects inhabited by human-beings, on the other hand, the world of objects consisted of things.   This tidy compartmentalization accomplished by conferring the status of subject upon human existence pertains to the new world that came after medieval times. Since this new relationship between subject and human being is what was accomplished with modern metaphysics, it implies that the concept of subject had undergone a great transformation. The scope of this transformation becomes plain if we see Heidegger arguing that before modern metaphysics, a break in human thought mainly initiated by Descartes, everything that exists, so long as it is *present*, had been grasped and understood as subject.[210]

As Heidegger makes it clear, the concept of subject before modernity, far from exclusively corresponding to human existence, stood for what is already present, for what lies at the basis (*zugrundeliegen*) A cursory glance at the etymological structure of this word suffices to substantiate this claim. The world subject comes from *Subiectum* in Latin, which means object.[211] Subiectum derives from the verb *sub-icio* whose meaning is to put under, subdue, subjugate, subject to.[212] So it may be claimed without difficulty that before modern conceptualization of man as subject, the concept of subject covered all that was present. By our bringing explicitly to mind Descartes' central role in the birth of this new metaphysics, we can conclude that from Descartes onwards, a new metaphysical reading of man, according to which human-being conclusively turns into Subject, dominated the agenda of philosophy[213]; a development whose effects, whether in

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[210] **Ibid.** "… bis zum Beginn der neuzeitlichen Metaphysik mit Descartes und auch noch innerhalb dieser Metaphysik selbst, alles Seinde, sofern es ein seindes ist, als sub-iectum begriffen wird."

[211]   Heinichens **Lateinisch-Deutsches Schulwörterbuch** (Berlin: Tauber, 1931), p. 563. "**Subiectum:** *in der philos. Sprache:* Begriff, Gegenstand."

[212] **Ibid.**

[213] Heidegger, **Nietzsche**, note 2, p. 142. **"**Durch Descartes und seit Descartes wird in der Metaphysik der Mensch, das menscliche "Ich" in waltenden Weise zum Subjekt."

tone of endorsement or negation, still pervade every corner of our political, social and philosophical thinking.

Considering the above, it becomes clear that there is a close relationship between sovereign position of subject[214] and anthropocentric turn in metaphysics. To account the transformation the concept of subject had undergone, it is therefore necessary to give an explanation of the transformation of metaphysics by means of which the anthropocentric turn has become absolutely overwhelming. Seen from this perspective of historical evolution of metaphysics, we encounter two points, of equal importance in shedding light on the decisive turning.

What we have in view as first point is the continuity between the antique and modern metaphysics. Underlying this continuity is their assumption shared as regards the role of man. According to Heidegger, every metaphysics, regardless of historical conditions, implies a question: what is that which exists? The continuity between antique and modern metaphysics is premised upon the assumption of both that in asking and answering this question that man necessarily occupies a privileged position. Given the central place assigned to man in both periods of western metaphysics, the roots of western metaphysics, irrespective of differences, can easily be traced back to Greek metaphysics. In his pursuit of the historical roots of western metaphysics, Heidegger takes Protagoras's maxim (man is the standard of everything) as the most lucid manifestation of this point. [215] After this point being brought to our attention by Heidegger, it is no longer difficult to conceive of the privileged position of man as a golden thread running through all metaphysics and as a common ground unifying its moments to each other, however much they do, in fact, vary.

In addition to this case for unity, we see discontinuity as the second point. The common mediator –that is, man as the privileged being among others- seems not sturdy enough to convince us to disregard differences between antique and modern

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[214] This is the exact phrase that Heidegger uses to designate the situation of modern subject: "Herrschaft des Subjekts."

[215] **Ibid.**, pp. 135-37.

metaphysics, which, if we had been convinced, would have been considered as details, as the variations of the essence. The comparative historical study of world views of different epochs, notwithstanding the apparent intention to register the differences between these views, cannot help forging them into commonalities, on account of fact that the registration is carried out by a tacit or implicit common denominator. So, if we do not give full reign to this comparative method, we come to encounter insurmountable gaps whenever we try to take Descartes as modern Protagoras. What we attempt to imply by referring to general condition of comparative historical study is that the gap between Descartes and Protagoras is much more than the difference that the accumulation of time necessarily imprints on certain thought in its historical evolution. There is a qualitative difference between them, and the gap it occasions can by no means be patched up by the common ground shared as regards the position of man. Why should be so much attention paid to their differences? Confronted with such a question one can reply that their difference (in sum the difference between antique and modern metaphysics) becomes all the more important, the more it is realized that the emphatic place of subject, along with the anthropocentric reading of the world, is what Greek thought lacks, but modern metaphysics takes as its emblem.

Upon noticing this point, it is natural for us to ask such a question: how it is that a worldview, so conspicuously and unequivocally reserving the throne of presence to mankind, as is exemplified by the maxim that man is the standard of everything, does not succumb to anthropocentric readings. To answer this question, an endeavor which seems to be worthwhile if our aim is to grasp the implications of transformation in the concept of subject with the rise of modern world, it is useful to turn our attention once more to Heidegger. Heidegger, being motivated by the necessity of distinguishing Protagoras from Descartes, concentrates on how Greeks interpret the world and the existence of man in it. What Greeks have in view while referring to man as the standard of everything is not a representation of man as a subject, but as a being who enjoys a privileged access to the world of things.

According to Heidegger, what is at stake in Protagoras's maxim is not a human subject but man whose essence is determined by his saying *I*.[216] But to fully appreciate this point, it is necessary for us to look at Greek definition of truth: *aletheia* (ἀλήθεια). The general dictionary definition of *aletheia* is truth which is in opposition to mere appearance.[217] The etymological structure of *aletheia* has important implication: it is compounded of the prefix *a* (not) and the verbal stem *lat* (to escape notice, to be concealed). According to this Greek definition, truth may thus be considered as that which is un-concealed, that which becomes uncovered.[218] From this, it is not difficult to infer how man occupies a privileged position. Insofar as the notice in *aletheia* (that which does not escape notice) does belong to man, it is not too much to say that the essence of man is determined by the special accessibility to the realm of *aletheia* (*Bezirk der Unverborgenheit*) that he exclusively enjoys.

It is exactly at this point that Greek philosophy started to turn out to be what we may call metaphysics of presence. Presence is looked upon as that which strictly corresponds to this realm of *aletheia*. So, with the help of Heidegger we can take the notice of two characteristics of Greek philosophy: while truth is looked upon as something which reveals itself to human notice, the essence of man is determined by his accessibility to *aletheia*, which, were it not for this notice (human gaze), would go unnoticed. On the one hand, truth, insofar as being *aletheia*, is confined to the realm of presence that is itself equated with the notice of man. On the other, the essence of man is restricted (*Beschränkung*) to the access to the realm of *aletheia* (*Unverborgenheit*), as his privileged access to this realm makes it clear. Consequently, *I* is designated in Greek philosophy as the name of man, who submits to this restriction (privileged access) and who allows this restriction to be his basic characteristics.[219]

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[216] **Ibid.**

[217] "truth opp. lie or mere appearance." in Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, **A Greek-English Lexicon** (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), p. 63.

[218] Martin Heidegger, **Sein und Zeit** (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag), p. 33.

[219] "Hier wird also das Selbst des Menschen zum jeweiligen >>Ich<< durch die *Beschränkung* auf das umgebende Unverborgene bestimmt. Die beschränkte Zugehörigkeit in den Umkreis des Unverborgenen macht das Selbstsein des Menschen mit aus." Heidegger, **Nietzsche**., note 2, p. 138.

From this cursory glance at Greek philosophy, we may draw conclusion that ego and truth are entangled with each other to the point in which it is no longer possible to conceive of them apart; a conclusion that only confirms the continuity between antique and modern metaphysics. However, it may be the case that a more attentive look would not fail to see the rupture with which these two philosophical outlooks differ from one another. Though Greek philosophy interprets Being as presence and determines truth as *aletheia*, it never fails to recognize absence, a realm of *Verborgenheit* which remains beyond the *Unverborgenheit*. Moreover, Greek philosophy makes an important concession to this realm by admitting that it is not possible for man to make a decision that draws the boundary between absence and presence. Beyond presence, man is not capable of knowing, without which a decision automatically becomes impossible.[220]

With this twist, Greek philosophy, while not denying the central role of man, becomes quite distinct from the modern metaphysics, which, with its anthropocentrism in force at its heart, shows no sign of hesitancy in grasping the beyond that which *does* reveal itself to human notice. Following Heidegger throwing light upon the basic tenets of Greek philosophy, we can realize the points of continuity and discontinuity between these two different metaphysical worldviews: First of all, man is conceptualized in Greek philosophy as the standard of everything, but the validity of this claim is considered to be in strict conformity with the condition that this *everything* stay within the realm of aletheia. The essence of man is restricted to this realm which, according to Greek thought, also defines the limit of what is present. What is of great interest for us at the moment is to take the particular note of the fact that the emphasis so decisively laid upon *aletheia* (*Unverborgenheit*) had by no means paved the way for the denial of *Verborgenheit*. Moreover, man (or his thought) was never considered to be capable of or entitled to usurp authority such as to define and change the boundary between absence and presence.

All these explanations suffice to convince us that despite its conceiving of man as the standard of everything, it lies outside the Greek imagination to consider "the beyond" of *aletheia* as being subjected to human will. There is no such a view in

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[220] "… bin Ich nicht imstande, weder dass sie sind, noch dass sie nicht sind." Heidegger, **Ibid**.

Greek thought as the one according to which world should comply with human will. Nor is there any trace of thought which regards man as a judge over Being.[221] Sovereignty of man is by no means absolute inasmuch as in Greek thought there is no superiority allocated to man over Being, the exact opposite of modern worldview, according to which man, thenceforth turned into subject, has sovereignty over world. If it is taken into account that the sign of this sovereignty is the limitless search for certainty (*Gewißheit*), whose legitimate scope corresponded strictly to *aletheia* in Greek thought, the difference between Greek and modern thought becomes appreciable.

As has been already shown, there is a marked contrast between the two periods as regards the scope of search for certainty. In antiquity, this search for certainty is allowed to operate within the limits of *aletheia*, whereas in modern times there is no threshold before which this limitless search comes to a halt. According to modern conception, there is neither a beyond into which this search refuses to plunge nor a sacred to which it hesitates to touch. This point becomes all the more clear when we remember that underlying the Cartesian doubt is the relentless search for certainty with which Descartes ascertained the existence of God, which is to say that even God himself could not elude the grasp of human mind.[222] But to fully appreciate this limitless search for certainty, we must turn our attention to another historical predecessor of modern thought: monotheism.

Certainty is the legacy of monotheism. In Greek thought, as is already stated, the limit within which certainty was thought to be operative was strictly determined with *aletheia* whereas what Judeo-Christian onto-theology brought to the light of day

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[221] In the following passage, what we find is Heidegger's lucid and insightful examination of the basic tenets of Greek thought, through which it greatly differs from modern thought: "Der Mensch ist jeweilen das Mass der Anwesenheit und Unverborgenheit durch die Mäßigung und Beschränkung auf das nächste Offene, ohne das fernste Verschlosene zu leugnen und eine Entscheidung über dessen Anwesen and Abwesen sich anzumaßen. Hier nirgends die Spur des Gedankens, dass das Seiende als solches nach dem auf sich gestellten Ich als dem Subjekt sich zu richten habe, dass dieses Subjekt des Richter über alles Seiende und dessen Sein sei und kraft dieses Richteramtes aus unbedingter Gewissheit über die Objektivität der Objekte entscheide. Hier ist vollends nicht die Spur vom jenem Vorgehen Descartes', das sogar versucht, Wesen und Existenz Gottes als unbedingt gewiß zu erweisen." Heidegger, **Ibid.**, p. 140.

[222] For this point and related matters, see Georges Bataille, **L'Expèrience Intérieure** (Paris: Gallimard, 1954) pp. 123-26.

is limitless (unbounded) certainty. Nonetheless, it is necessary to underline that in Judeo-Christian onto-theology, the certainty issued not from this world (*Unverborgenheit*) but from the other world (*Verborgenheit*).[223] Accordingly, the sense of certainty henceforth started to come from sacred; the divine will that is impenetrable for human will and notice.

However, the sense of certainty monotheism envisaged coming from the other world was so absolute and so assuring that it allowed a room for a search for certainty. Having found an omnipresent God never permit events to wander an inch off the right course predetermined by divine will, the onto-theology of monotheism conjured up a world in which there was scarcely anything more inappropriate than the search for certainty. The issue of certainty, as seen from its historical background drawn by Christianity, can not be thought to pertain to modern metaphysics. But modern metaphysics brought forth a vital difference: it replaced God, the steady basis of certainty, with a human subject. This replacement is no longer surprising if we recall that modern metaphysics came into being when the ontologically consistent universe of Christianity started to disintegrate. Having been deprived from the absolute guarantee emanated from the divine will, man had nothing at his disposal except his mind to which hitherto had been given no other option than to follow the path of divine will. This point plausibly explains the shift from *absolute certainty* to *absolute search for certainty*: not being so much a solid ground as God in coordinating the course of events and arranging them coherently within a meaningful discourse, the human mind has been left with no choice but to condemn itself to limitless search for certainty. Faced with the drastic influx of events once held by the will of God flowing in the right course, man had to develop his capacities to attain a ground for absolute and unconditional certainty.

Since our concern is not so much to give a general account of history of ideas as to clarify the historical background out of which the concept of subject and subjectivity emerged, we may skip the details and bring two basic characteristics of this background into focus: on the one hand, with the dethronement of God, man becomes actor, occupying the place once reserved for God. On account of his being

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[223] This suggests that the *Verborgenheit* of antique world turned into Afterlife with Christianity.

wanting in capacities that God had at his disposal to make the universe gravitate around his will, man turns out to be a sort of Sisyphus: the more he ardently strives to attain a ground for absolute certainty, the more this ground is exposed to contingency. Therefore, it may be fairly safe to conclude that this historical background shed light on the transformation in the motives of modern thought. It is no longer the question of antique metaphysics (what is Being?) or the penetration into dogma (revelation) that lies at the basis of modern thought. The main motive turned out to be the question of method: in which way could man, relying solely on his own capacities, achieve the absolute, unconditional ground for truth? [224]

What we attempt to render manifest so far through this brief historical account of how modern worldview came into being is the wider picture through which we gain important insights as regards the rise of the modern subject. The fact that the birth of modern subject was the product of the transformations playing vital role in the emergence of modern metaphysics makes this pictures all the more important. Relying on the basic characteristics of modern thought, we may therefore summarize the consequences of the birth of modern subject and the intellectual parameters at work in this birth as follows: every consciousness (of external world) is reduced to *self-consciousness* of human subject. Inasmuch as this self-consciousness is looked upon as the absolute and unconditional ground for certainty, an insurmountable break intervenes between subject and its environment. Consequently, the *external* reality turns out to be *objectivity* the moment man is confined to the title of subject. The reality of what is real was determined as objectivity through this subject. From then on, reality is no more than the representation by and for the representing subject.

Closely related with the concept of subject and the consequences effectuated by it, two traits of modern thought, on both of which it is hardly possible not to see the imprint of Descartes, gain prominence. One of them is the well-known

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[224] We may assume that it is not until Descartes inaugurated modern metaphysics that the question of method started to occupy such a hegemonic place: "Die Frage der Philosophie kann drarum jetzt nicht mehr nur lauten: Was ist das Seiende? Im Zusammenhang der Befreiung aus den Bindungen der Offenbarungs- und Kirchenlehre heißt die Frage der ersten Philosophie: Auf welchem Wege gelangt der Mensch von sich aus und für sich zu einer ersten unerschütterlichen Wahrheit, und welches ist diese erste Wahrheit?" Heidegger, **Nietzsche,** note 2, pp. 134-35.

mind/matter duality. With the rise of modern thought, mind took absolute precedence over matter. To understand this precedence, it would be useful to look at the process of Cartesian doubt, after which Descartes had sought to attain a solid ground for truth. At the end of the process, we find Descartes formulating a maxim shedding light on this ground: "I think, therefore I am." Upon considering such a maxim as having laid the foundation of modern thought, it is no longer possible to be surprised at the domination of mind over matter: not that mind (I think) depends on existence (matter); contrarily external world ultimately derives the proof of its existence from the fact that *I think.*

The very mechanism rendering the reign of mind over matter (body included) and hence subject over object possible brought about the emergence of another trait of modern thought: isolated subject. Against the possibility that the external world is a mere illusion (let's remember here the process of Cartesian doubt), the mind provides us with a solid and principal ground for philosophy. Given the possibility always lurking behind that the mind of others could be mere illusion; it is not too much difficult to comprehend how self gains supremacy over others: *my* mind is much more solid ground for truth than *others's.* We can thus catch the glimpse of the seminal sign of *atomistic* individual; a conceptualization according to which the relations of *self* with others and external world is relegated to a status that can be negligible since they are far from being capable of touching to the essence.

So far, our main motive is to draw the historical background of the conceptual transformation, a transformation in the course of which man has emerged as subject, and the non-human world as object. The characteristics and attributes this conceptualization of man has brought about; the consequences and implications they contain; how and why they have become exposed to severe challenges; and what all these imply for Bataille's sovereignty, we shall begin to inquiry into in the following sections.

5.2. *SUBJECT AND ITS CONSEQUENCES*

With the help of the preceding explanations intent on elucidating the historical foundation of the concept of subject and the conceptual –theological, ontological, metaphysical- transformations that had prepared the ground for such a foundation, we have already caught the glimpse of two basic characteristics of the modern subject: isolation from the environment and the domination of mind over matter. Considering these two characteristics, it is hardly difficult to realize the other attributes as being derived from them. Without real difficulty, we can see that the absolute rift presupposed to exist between self and its environment by the isolation principle has given rise to the claims for the principle of autonomy. It is highly important to emphasize that these apparently conceptual transformations have brought with themselves the critical implications which could hardly be thought to be restricted within the world of ideas. Therefore, we are not to be misled if we assume that these conceptual breakthroughs, having seen the light of day, have occasioned the utmost practical developments.[225] It is almost impossible not to see the imprints of these conceptual transformations at work in the emergence of modern subject having already been left on the milestones of modern times. To be more precise, let us look at the autonomy principle: no sooner did the autonomy become the defining ontological feature of individual than the independence and sovereignty emerged as the political ideals; the ideals that have been fervently striven for, from thirty year wars all the way through to the decolonization of 20th century. In a similar fashion, the rigidly founded duality between mind and matter that laid down the supremacy of mind as the basic rule has paved the way for the rationality principle. What we say of autonomy is similarly true for rationality principle: no sooner did it become defining characteristics of modern subject than it gained a political dimension. (Suffice it to recall at this point the fact that at the dawn of modern sovereignty, one of the first steps political authority took to consolidate its regime was the confinement of the

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[225] I find it appropriate at this point to shrink back, as much as possible, from the thorny issue of whether thought has precedence over material world or vice versa. Refrained in this way from unraveling this problem and confiscating the last word on the best possible solution, it is much useful to search for a middle point: even if we are orthodox Marxist, we may all agree on that thoughts and ideas, once they saw the light of day, can bring about material changes.

mad and the beggars, a group of people who, along with aristocracy, are merely deviant according to the principle of rationality[226]).

The emergence of subject has been accompanied by a model from which to issue an image of man depicting him as an actor; an actor that relies on nothing except on his *own* mind in conducting and organizing his relations with his natural environment as well as with his social setting. Not without justification, it can be argued that this model, whatever variations it has been subject to and whatever modifications it has undergone in the course of its historical evolution, remains the standard that modern thought has persistently lived up to. It is evident therefore that autonomy and rationality, two basic attributes of modern subject, should deserve further attention, not only because they form the backbone of what we call modern subject, but also because they are the main points that Bataille's sovereignty directly and fiercely challenges. This point becomes much less surprising in proportion as we recall Bataille's hostility to the modern conceptualization of man as a rational and autonomous actor, and how motivated he is to show the impossibility of completely reducing man to this model without bringing about at the same time serious consequences, predicaments and dilemmas.

Within the limits of this chapter, it is by no means possible to render a detailed account of the consequences emanated from this model viewing man as subject and adoring him as actor. In lieu of such an exhaustive reading, we may highlight such of those consequences which we have reason to believe involve important implications for Bataille's sovereignty. Let us start with the isolation to which this model has condemned the modern subject. Elevating autonomy to a status so as to become the constitutive moment of subject necessarily entails certain conceptualization of social dimension. With subjectivism being so determining a factor in the constitution of self, it was automatically relegated to the secondary status. Since subjectivism considers the essence as belonging to the subject, it is natural that in such a world where the subjectivism is the basic organizing principle,

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[226] For this point, see Roy Boyne, **Foucault and Derrida: The Other Side of Reason** (London: Unwin Hyman, 1990), pp. 5-14.

any attempt to lay emphasis upon the social relations as the constitutive dimension of subject would be consigned into oblivion.

Once bereft from this constitutive dimension, as is impelled by subjectivism, society rapidly emerges as a strategic realm into which individuals enter not before their selfhood is firmly and strongly founded. Such a reading easily achieves a political connotation with liberalism, which views society solely as a means for individual ends. If there is such a cheerfully bright image (the subjects, with their predetermined identities, enter into social relations for mutual satisfaction of needs without, of course, putting identities into jeopardy and without doing any harm to the walls separating subject from its environment), there is also another that is regrettably sullen: conflict. Conflict emerges as the direst outcome in such a system to the extent that cooperation does not serve for individual so much as conflict does.

Upon taking notice of this point, we may ask: how and why did it come about that individuals start to become armed with conflicting interests if their behaviors are under the conduct of an inner kernel commonly possessed by everyman, and if there is nothing wrong in itself with this kernel?[227] The immediate reply could be "the scarcity of resources." It needs not to be the inherent evil –wickedness of man- that is to be thought of as the main responsible for breaking cooperation among men and leading them to conflict. In a world not lushly provided with resources, it is a sort of logical necessity that under the pressure of population growth, human needs outgrow that which is available to satisfy them. In such an environment, a conflict naturally breaks out among individuals, however rational in fact they are. Therefore, it is not that an unquenchable lust for power inherently prevails over individual to act in ways that are not truly rational, but it is from the circumstances of the environment, in which individual happens to find himself, that the irrational behaviors arise. With the help of the scarcity discourse, we are driven to say that the inner kernel of the

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[227] In Dialectic of Enlightenment, Adorno and Horkheimer incessantly attempt to drive our attention to this point, in virtue of which the ambivalence in Enlightenment becomes manifest: "The difficulties in the concept of reason caused by the fact that its subject, the possessors of that very reason, contradict one another, are concealed by the apparent clarity of the judgments of the Western Enlightenment." Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, **Dialectic of Enlightenment**, John Cumming trans. (New York: Continuum, 1994), p. 83.

individual becomes saved from the imprints of irrational behaviors into which the carrier of this kernel frequently succumbs in pursuing his interest.

Highly convincing as it may sound, the scarcity discourse is nevertheless far from being a formulation of a natural and logical law under the effect of which irrational behaviors befall an individual without his volition. This amounts to saying that it is much more appropriate to view the discourse of scarcity as a social construction rather than a natural law; and this is what we can learn from social anthropology.[228] Since wickedness (theological conception of man) and scarcity (economical conception of man) do not provide us with necessary ontological ground to explain the eruption of irrational and competitive behaviors among rational individuals, this ground is suitable for further inquiry.

Once set out, this further inquiry brings another trait of modern subject to our attention: the completeness of self. What is meant by this completeness is that the subject is in total control and mastery over his inner life. This total control brings with itself no other thing than the monolithic conceptualization of subject delineating him as a homogenous or at least a homogenized entity.[229] Having thus been purified from the contending motives and having thus obtained a monolithic inner kernel, the individual becomes the basic unit which it is impossible to further divide, as the world *in*dividual clearly suggests. From such a conceptualization, it is no longer difficult to infer how the modern subject becomes the atom of social world and how, as a result, society turns out to be a strategic realm in which struggle and aggression come to be seen as the prescribed modes of behavior: if the individual's integrity is defined as the basic norm and if his identity is thought to be predetermined before his entrance into the social setting, it is natural that every *relation* can be viewed as a

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[228] For this point, see Marshall Sahlins, **Stone Age Economics** (New York: Aldine&Atherton, 1972). Especially the first chapter: "The Original Affluent Society."

[229] As is pointed out by Horkheimer and Adorno in their subjecting Odysseus to close scrutiny with the aim of tracing the roots of Enlightenment therein, to be subject and to be homogenized is one and the same thing. "The subject, still divided and compelled to use force against the nature within as against that without, punishes the heart by forcing it to be patient and, look ahead, by denying it the immediate present. Striking one's breast became later a gesture of triumph… The self –autos- is not spoken of untill verse 24 [of Odysseus], once the repression of instinct by reason has suceeded. If the choice and sequence of words are to be taken as conclusive, the identifical "I" of Homer could be seen as primarily the result of a mastery of nature carried out within the individual." **Dialectic of Enlightenment**, note 20, p. 48.

potential for menace to the individual. In managing his relations, it behooves the modern subject to preserve his identity intact by controlling these relations, and thus to be able to remain within certain limits within which no scope is allowed to the elements considered to be detrimental to the integrity of individual.[230]

Seen from this perspective, it is therefore small wonder how quickly western thought traversed the distance between humanism and homo-economicus and how easily, starting out with the prize of autonomy, it ended up in the price of autonomy: self-preservation. With autonomy having been conferred on individual as his most basic characteristics, and with the alterity, coming from within as well as without, having been expelled from the homogenous realm called self, the identity of subject became so complete as to be too fragile. In such an environment in which every relation with outside has a potential to put the fragile identity of subject into jeopardy, uncertainty can easily culminate at a point where what is now at stake is no less than survival. But the principle of self-preservation would have been much less problematic had it not been for the side-effect that made its appearance no sooner than this principle itself rose to the prominence: (self-) destruction. It seems hardly rash to conjure that in such a system in which everyone is in relentless search for self-preservation (not infrequently at the expense of other self-preservations), destruction looms large, becoming a decisive element. Thus two apparently incompatible elements, one of which is seen as antithetical to the other, joined hands to become the defining poles for both social life and individual behavior.

Compressed within such a realm lying stretched between these two poles, the individual is given no option except to head towards the pole of preservation inasmuch as to do otherwise amounts to the destruction of self.[231] After

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[230] Increasing control over society by health management aiming at social and mental hygien at its possibly highest level affords proof for this point. For this issue see "The Legal Status of the Irrational" in Carolyn J. Dean, **The Self and its Pleasures, Bataille, Lacan and the History of Decentered Subject** (London: Cornell University Press, 1992), pp. 17-58.

[231] To realize how a forced choice of freedom emerges out of the ambivalence inherent to the dialectic between self-preservation and destruction and its epistemological basis, see Horkheimer and Adorno, **Dialectic of Enlightenment**, note 20, p. 30. "... self-preservation repeatedly culminates in the choice between survival and destruction, apparent again in the principle that of two contradictory

consolidating its power, the bourgeois world order was no longer in need of benign description of rationality, a capacity on which humanity should rely in order to free from bondage and thus achieve emancipation. Thenceforth rationality took upon itself a new form: strategy. What is required of modern subject –if he is to guarantee his survival- is to comply with the imperatives of strategy. What is here meant by strategy mainly consists in giving precedence to accumulation. Taking strategic action, which individual should opt for if he is rational enough, therefore enjoins him to conduct his relations in such way as to never permit consumption (the present) taking precedence over accumulation (the future). Hence strategic action becomes equivalent to investment: the more assets the subject has at his disposal, the more secure grounds for self-preservation he will attain.[232]

It is therefore hardly surprising to see that out of such a conceptualization, in which so great a weight is put placed on modes of action such as preservation, accumulation, strategy and investment, power sprung as an element that was no longer in the service of an end. Since power became an end in itself, it has grown to be the defining characteristics of the system. Yet such a conceptualization treating power as a sheer modern phenomenon can give rise to the objections on the part of those conceiving power to be the defining characteristics of human life since the dawn of history. For them, appealing to history which they think abounds with the instances displaying power as the utmost decisive element, as epitomized by the case of Thucydides, would be enough to substantiate the claims for the timeless validity of power. It is exactly at this point that Bataille's historical readings of sovereignty, mainly concentrated on feudal forms, help us resist the advocates of timeless wisdom of power politics. In the feudal world, in which a sovereign will, embodied by a sovereign figure and unaffected by the laws guaranteeing utility, were able to use power without a due attention to accumulation and future results (in short, in a world in which power was at the service of consumption beyond utility), power could be a decisive factor but never a defining characteristics. It is therefore by taking this gap

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propositions only one can be true and only one false… Then, however, nature as true self-preservation is released by the very process which promised to extirpate it, in the individual as in the collective destiny of crises and armed conflict."

[232] It is hardly necessary to emphasize that the basic modes and tenets of modern subject is in strong contras with what Bataille understands by sovereignty.

between decisive and defining into consideration that we can assume without undue temerity that power became a ground reality in modernity.[233]

Out of these explanations, there emerge two points that merit further attention to the extent that our theme is the emergence of modern subject and its consequences. First is the root of this world view according to which man started to occupy a sovereign position, assuming the title of subject. Notwithstanding the representations of scarcity or wickedness, the real source of this system, in which man, endowed with rationality, comes up against the direst necessity of accumulation, strategy and preservation, is to be searched for in subjectivism. As is already stated, subjectivism augurs sovereignty of man, which, so long as God of monotheism is taken as model, entails the achievement of the certainty in its possibly highest form. Inasmuch as sovereignty is defined as being almighty and inasmuch as man is to deserve this, he is given no option but to arduously strive to increase certain capabilities, only by means of which can certainty be obtained.[234]

In this way, we come to the second point: despite subjectivism being the essence of modern world, power has become more objectified than ever. Having been considerably purified from subjective elements (will, caprice, prestige, ostentation…) power turns out to be the objective law of social life before which every subjective will should bow. Objectified to such an extent, power commences to impose itself upon the individual will as bondage, more firmly and tightly enforced by virtue of its being capable of presenting itself as neutral regulatory factor. Relieved from the bondage imposed on him by others who hold power in their hands,

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[233] By calling our attention to the difference between power and will to power, Heidegger conceives it unsustainable to claim that the validity of will to power is equally valid for other ages preceding modernity. "Es ist also nicht so, daß es in früheren Zeitaltern auch schon die Macht gab und dass sie dann etwa seit Machiavelli einseitig und übertrieben zur Geltung gebracht wurde, sondern >>Macht<< im recht verstandenen neuzeitlichen Sinne, d.h. als Wille zur Macht, wird metaphysisch erst als neuzeitliche Geschichte möglich. Was vordem waltete, ist in seinem *Wesen* etwas anderes." Heidegger, **Nietzsche**, note 2, p. 144.

[234] Heidegger clarifies the link between the sovereignty of man and will to power in the form of accumulation and rise of facilities. "Innerhalb der Geschichte der Neuzeit und als die Geschichte des neuzeitlichen Menschentums versucht der Mensch überall und jedes Mal aus sich selbst sich selbst als die Mitte und Maß in die Herrschaftsstellung zu bringen, d. h. deren Sicherung zu betreiben. Dazu ist nötig, dass er immer mehr seiner eigenen Vermögen und Herrschaftsmittel sich versichert und sie zu einer unbedingten Verfügbarkeit stets neu bereitstellen " Heidegger, **Ibid.** p. 146.

the free man is made immediately subjected (subjugated) to power. He is no more a slave of any one person, but of power itself.

In the light of these explanations, we have already caught a glimpse of the model emerging in modern times as a standard, according to which man and the institutions built up by him appear as actors. From the petty bourgeois, whose steps follow hurriedly one another in the crowded streets overshadowed by high buildings, through the multinational corporations, whose operations come to the rest neither before ocean nor desert, down to the great powers, whose capacities recognize no other limit than the extinction of life on earth, every element acting in this system – whatever names given to it (human resources, marketing, power-politics) is taken as an actor. Nevertheless, being an actor is conditioned on the compliance of this actor with certain modes of behavior whose basic characteristics are already given. If being actor amounts to no less than the entrance into the social setting within which this actor is supposed to operate (man in society, firm in market, state in interstate system), the importance of this compliance becomes all the more critical. Unless the actor fulfills the requirements and imperatives emanated from the nature of system, destruction (unemployment, bankruptcy, dependency) inexorably befalls him as an inescapable fate.

What is of capital importance for us at the moment is to take the note of the double reality which we cannot miss insofar as we divide our attention evenly on both sides of modernity. On the brighter side, we see individual emerging as an actor, who, in full capacity, enters into relations with(in) his environment and who fully relies on his faculty of rationality capable of preventing these relations from lurching to undesirable and irrational modes. If, however, we draw closer to the other side, this bright image fades away. Inasmuch as being an actor is taken as equivalent to act in accordance with the imperatives of the system, whose bitterness is soothed by such generic terms as "the rules of the game," what we have in view at the end is pseudo-subjectivism. In short, deprived from every authentic element, which is presented by the system as putting actor into jeopardy, man immediately becomes the plaything whose modes of behavior are already patterned by a logic paying a special tribute to efficiency and utility.

Before concluding this section taking the implications and consequences of the birth of modern subject as its main theme, it is necessary to state that far from having a wholly integrated structure, this paradigm has undergone considerable variations and transformations in the course of its historical evolution. These variations and transformations sometimes were able to achieve such a striking degree as even to lead one to doubt the existence of a common paradigm. However obscured it is by the scattered images drawn by these variations and transformations, this paradigm, viewing man as a subject, in other words as an actor enjoying the capacity to manage and control his relations so that he can thereby achieve desired outcomes, never ceases to be the emblem of modern thought. This close relation between the emergence of man as subject and the birth of modern thought lends further justification to our giving such a weight to the development of modern thought as is found so far in this chapter.

It would be a great mistake to let this hegemonic place enjoyed by the paradigm of subjectivity in modern times to conclude this section without making any mention of the challenges leveled against it. This paradigm has never ceased to be the source of criticism from the mid 19th century onwards, when the dark side of progress, with its direst consequences, started to loom on the horizon of history. Even a passing mention of the challenges to this paradigm would be nothing less than the infringement of the scope of this chapter, which is mainly focused on explicating how Bataille's formulation of sovereignty may enrich our understanding of the issue of subject and subjectivity. However it may the case, we cannot help but cite the names of three such pivotal figures, Marx, Nietzsche and Freud, at whose hands the paradigm of subjectivity receives serious blows.[235] Whether their views were, in the end, a radical breaking point with the tradition, or were, in one way or another, keeping in touch with it, we will not further pursue here. Be that as it may, it is nearly impossible not to detect in Bataille's formulation of sovereignty the imprints of the challenges delivered by them.

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[235] To show the scope of these strikes, it is enough to cite Marx's formulation that "they know not what they do, but they still do," Freud's maxim that "mind is not master even in his own house" and Nietzsche's conceptualization of self as a realm of contending motives and desires.

For the fatal blow to this paradigm, one needs to wait for the Second World War which, all the while of ruining the world, had the effect of dissipating the last remnants of the belief in progress and human mind. With the rise of structuralist and poststructuralist thoughts after WW II, challenges to the paradigm turned out to be the norm rather than exception, as the swiftness with which such theses as "the death of man," "the death of author," "the end of metaphysics" and so forth have dominated the agenda makes clear. For image of man ascribing him the privileged status of actor who enjoys a solid mastery and full control over his relations and environment, it was no longer a simple task to get the audience on its side.[236] Out of the ruins of this catastrophe, among which the scatters of this image are certainly to be found, there arose another image of man. What had been already insinuated by the challenges casting their shadows of doubt over man's capacity to control and master, and what had been successfully hidden by Enlightenment Thought behind the unshakable belief in rationality now became a philosophical norm. When the pseudo-subject that had been previously hidden behind the façade of subjectivity was caught in the gaze of general recognition, it became a common parlance to conceive of subject as the effect, but not as the cause, of the structures and systems in which he finds himself acting. With this twist, the self, once deemed to be the essence and the master of relations, became an articulation of these relations; an articulation with the effect of which its role is reduced to one of automaton.

It is exactly at this historical turning point (before and during the Second World War) that we see Bataille's thoughts and philosophical views growing to maturity. Given the close relation to be found between the thoughts of an intellectual and the environment within which he seeks a place for them, it is reasonable to infer that the issue of how to conceptualize man occupies an essential place in Bataille's thoughts. Considering the basic tenets of Bataille's formulation sovereignty, it is not

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[236] "The crisis of humanism in our times undoubtedly originates in an experience of human inefficacy accentuated by the very abundance of our means of action and the scope of our ambitions. In a world where things are in place, where eyes, hands and feet can find them, where science extends the topography of perception and praxis even if it transfigures their space; in the places that lodge the cities and fields that humans *inhabit*, raking themselves by varied groupings among the *beings*; in all this reality "in place," the misconstruction of vast failed undertakings –where politics and technology result in the negation of the projects they guide- teaches the inconsistency of man, mere plaything of his works." Emmanuel Levinas, **Humanism of the Other**, Nidra Poller trans. (Chicago: Illinois Press, 2003), p. 45.

too much to say that behind this formulation, his desire to introduce another conceptualization of man, relieved from the predicaments of autonomy and isolation imposed on him as the benchmark of being subject, is to be found. Hence, how Bataille's sovereign man poses a serious challenge to the paradigm elevating (or condemning) man to the mastery, and how this man keeps and parts company with other challenges aiming at the dethronement of man from this mastery appear to be the point that merits further inquiry. So, we can now turn our attention to this point.

5.3. *SOVEREIGNTY AND MAN AS AN END*

Let us imagine a scene in which two men are strolling at night under a starry sky, without permitting anything to break the silence enveloping both of them except the sounds of their steps incessantly treading the ground dimly visible in this starlit night. At one moment, one of them halts his steps, and, staring up at the sky, hears a few words escaping from his lips: "When I look up at stars, I cannot help thinking how poor and miserable we are." Upon hearing such a statement, the other yields himself to the temptation to halt and to glance up to the sky. Pondering a little while, he expresses his doubts as to the addressee of pity as he casts his eyes back from the sky and joins his friend, who has already started his stroll: "when I look up at stars, I cannot help thinking how poor and miserable they are.[237]"

Why did we start this section with such a dialogue which shows the reverence and disdain for stars alternately? Our motive having nothing whatsoever to do with astrological concerns, we might reply that in this dialogue, the gist of the historical evolution of philosophical concerns that have always attempted to conceptualize the place of man in existence is given. Of course, this point is realized more easily if the two objects of reverence (or of disdain) in this dialogue are transposed into the general philosophical vocabulary, with the effect of which we can trade "we" in this dialogue for man and "the stars" for existence. Just in the same fashion as in this dialogue, we can find in history of philosophy a similar motion in which the reverence once allocated to existence is seen heading towards man.

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[237] The one who expresses the magnificence of stars is Ernst Kantorowicz. The other who substitutes man for the subject of this magnificence is Erwin Panofsky.

Of course, man's becoming the center from which magnificence radiates has not been accomplished so easily as it happened in this dialogue. Thus, in this evolution there emerged certain intermediary points. Monotheism is one of them; its importance lies in the fact that it is not until monotheism made its appearance that the idea that there exists a discrepancy between existence and its parts dawned upon mankind as an ontological and metaphysical norm. Given the absence of such a discrepancy, we may understand clearly why Greek thought is called "metaphysics of full presence" when it deals with existence, and why no scope is allowed in it for man to pose an alternative to existence. Such a rift as separates the parts from the whole (existence) so that the whole can not be conceived of as a full and compact entity allowing no crack to dwell on it can be assumed to have originated in monotheism.[238] Revolutionary as it was in itself, this innovation nevertheless was suffering from an ontological inconsistency. With the effect of monotheism, the rift that should be found within existence (between it and its parts) was transported to "the beyond" of this existence in the form God and its creation. In addition to the apparent inconsistency that existence is surrounded by what is indeed part of it (let us remember here Hegel's phenomenology), there is also another point through which inconsistency strikes our attention once again: since existence is reduced to the will of God by conceiving it as his creation, we are left with only two options to choose from: either the rift between God and existence remains to be the false one; that is to say the rift cannot be the real one insofar as existence, being reduced to his will, cannot pose an alternative to him. Or the rift becomes a real one, with the effect of which existence starts to pose an alternative to God, but of course, not without putting the ontological status given to God into jeopardy.[239]

In order that man should be subject, it is of necessity that he can not be reduced to the whole in which he lives. There must be a rift between man and this whole whatever name is given to it. Considering this perspective, man's becoming

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[238] Alexandre Kojèève, "The Idea of Death in the Philosophy of Hegel," **Interpretation**, vol: 3, Winter 1979. pp. 120-124.

[239] For a detailed account of this point and related matters, see Žižek's **The Abyss of Freedom** in Slavoj Žižek and F. W. J. von Schelling, **The Abyss of Freedom/Ages of the World** (New York: The University of Michigan Press, 2000).

subject requires no less than bringing this rift once soared beyond this world back from the firmaments. With this gesture, man became negativity, by means of which he can no longer be reduced to Being, nor to will of God. If we follow Derrida, it is possible to say that the Kantian and Hegelian revolutions in philosophy "consisted – it is almost tempting to say consisted *simply*- in taking the negativity *seriously*."[240] Now that man became negativity, capable of posing itself as irreplaceable and irreducible difference, it did not take long for him to become the object of reverence as in the dialogue given above. This point clearly explains how we, departing from the preponderance of Being and passing through the omnipotence of God, have arrived finally at the sovereignty of man.

Since the details, implications and consequences of this transition have already been dwelt on in the preceding sections, we can legitimately leave them behind, asking where the place of Bataille is in this historical evolution; how he intervenes into it with his understanding of sovereignty. To elucidate this point, it is necessary to have a close look at the negativity which has become a philosophical ground norm as man wrested the throne from God. With the help of this look, it is revealed that there is something odd in this negativity: However important a breakthrough this negativity introduces into the philosophical imagination, positivity always follows close on the heels of it. No sooner does this negativity come out than a meaning or a logically organized appearance attaches itself to it.

As negativity, man negates what is given, transforming it into shapes which would have been unthinkable to exist had it not been for such negativity. [241] If this

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[240] Jacques Derrida, "From Restricted to General Economy: A Hegelian without Reserve," in **Writing and Difference**, Alan Bass trans. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), p. 259.

[241] Herein lies the difference between man as negativity and animal which likewise seems to effectuate the differences within this given. Surely, animal life brings alterations to the life of which it is a part, but never to such a degree as to allow it to be considered as radical break; but this man as negativity brings about readily.
The differences brought about by animals remain perfectly to be the parts of the very life to which they are directed. That is why Bataille uses the term "water in water" to describe the animal life; a term with which the idea is clearly suggested that whatever this or that animal does, it does not pose *real* alternative to life, remaining within this life. "tout animal est *dans le monde comme de l'eau à l'intérieur de l'eau*" Georges Bataille, **Théorie de la Religion Œuvres Complètes VII** (Paris : Gallimard, 1976), p. 293. But man can die, without a logical or biological necessity prevailing upon him to act in ways that might bring his biological life to the end. It is only through such an estrangement from biological life that man's negativity can be thought to be a radical break with

negativity is nothing less than what guarantees man the status of subject, and if it thus enables him to be an irreducible difference allowing nothing to abut himself and the larger wholes, of which he is a part, except the interminable and unsurpassable break, it emerges as that without which it is neither logical nor possible to conceive of him as an end in itself, as a sovereign being. But it is exactly at this point that the above-mentioned oddity of negativity starts to meet our attention. How is it possible that negativity is conceived of as something upon which man's sovereignty depends yet it is given no other vent to appear in this world than by yielding itself to a certain positivity that should always be in the service of another positivity? Why is "the night of the world," the phrase Hegel coined to describe this negativity, allowed to take its walk only in day time when the light of the sun destroys every nocturnal element save the shadows dragged by certain positivity? Inasmuch as positivity emerges as being accomplished by the future-oriented outlook, and inasmuch as negativity is taken as no more than the shadow barely perceptible behind this positivity, how is it possible for negativity to be ground for sovereignty that is in itself negation of future? If positivity, the future outcomes negativity produces, always finds a way at the end to enclose negativity within a paradigm or discourse of utility, to what extent is it tenable to claim this "night of the world" to be the basis for man's being an end or for the impossibility of his reduction to a means for another end, so long as the umbilical cord between them is not cut?

Cutting this cord, rescuing "the night of the world" from the hand so clutching at it as to drag it down into the world of meaning, discourse and practice, and looking directly at this night without a logical appearance permitted to intervene between; this is all, we can say, Bataille attempts to accomplish in his writings on sovereignty. If sovereignty, as emphasized by the paradigm of subjectivity, is the essence, then what should be taken at the center is "negativity without employment" (*négativité sans employée*), a negativity stripped of every element that one way or another renders it useful. Considering this point, it becomes understandable that what is at stake in Bataille's formulation of sovereignty around such conceptualizations as

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nature. This theme will be further dealt with in the following chapter within a context opened up by confrontation of Bataille's thought with Hegel's phenomenology. For a general discussion of animal life within this context, see **Théorie de la Religion**, pp. 291-97.

"consumption beyond utility" or "impossible yet there it is" is to present this negativity without employment.

Out of these considerations, there arise two points that strike our attention immediately. First of all, Bataille's understanding of sovereignty can by no means be thought to be antithetical to Enlightenment inasmuch as Enlightenment takes man's emancipation from bondage, his being an end in itself, in short his sovereignty as its most critical impetus. What Bataille's understanding of sovereignty renders problematic is the conceptualization of sovereignty –man as an end in itself- as standing squarely in the tradition in which sovereignty of man is exchanged for the principle of individual freedom. The problematic point in this reduction consists, of course, not in the emancipation of individual from bondage, but in considering man's giving his consent to bondage, with which his acts are effectively controlled, as the absence of it.[242] What is of critical importance is the position of consent: with consent becoming the determining factor in giving legitimacy to authority, the critical moment of enforcement has shifted from the external bondages, which are imposed brutally in case of resistance, to the inner mechanisms, through which enforcement gains a hitherto unimaginable efficiency. Since these mechanisms make the consent fill up the space on which enforcement would operate, it is not so easy to distinguish freedom from compliance or obedience as in the case in which enforcement was carried out by external and physical means.

It is exactly at this point that Bataille's conceptualization of sovereignty intervenes, showing how it is impossible to consider sovereignty as freedom so long as this freedom is none other than the symbolic mandate within which are registered certain norms, rules and regulations to which the individual is deemed obliged to

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[242] Marcuse calls our attention to this point in his discussion of the problem of freedom within the context of Kant's ethics and philosophy of right. "Die transzendentale Freiheit des Menschen, die unbedingte Autonomie der vernünftigen Person bleibt in allen Dimensionen der kantischen Philosophie höchtes Prinzip; hier gibt es kein Markten und Rechnen und keinen Kompromiss… Die innere Antinomie von Freiheit und Zwang wird innerhalb der äusseren Sphäre des gesellschaftlichen Handelns nicht gelöst. Hier bleibt es dabei, dass alle Freiheit nur ein Frei-sein "unter Zwangsgesetzen," ist, und bei dem "durchgängig gleichen angebornen Recht" eines jeden, "jeden andern zu zwingen, damit er immer innerhalb der Grenzen der Einstimmung des Gebrauchs seiner Freiheit mit der meinigen bleibt." Herbert Marcuse, "Ideengeschichtlicher Teil," in E. Fromm, M. Horkheimer, H. Mayer ed., **Studien über Autorität und Familie** (Paris: Librairie Felix Alcan, 1936), pp. 170-71.

comply. For Bataille, sovereignty is a radical excess overflowing the boundaries within which symbols, meanings and goods circulate. Therefore, what is meant by sovereignty is to be an end refusing to be reduced to a means that is in the service of something or someone. This clearly explains how and why sovereignty should appear as an excess: so long as an element that appears as an end does not radically part company with other elements organized according to the principle of utility, which is what happens in the world of work and practice, it can only be a useful end. It is still useful however certainly it occupies the uppermost point within the hierarchy. Therefore, it is rendered useful the moment it enters into organization, regardless of whether it manifests itself as end or means therein. Considering this point, we can claim on good grounds that if an end is to be a sovereign end, it has to radically deny the utility and to go beyond the symbolic space within which every element is assigned a place according to their relative utility.

All these considerations make clear that to be an end is a momentary rupture that can only be achieved through an act presenting itself in the appearance of transgression. A sovereign element, falling short of transgression, has already become a useful thing. The clear meaning of this equation is that if one ceases to transgress the existing order of things, a conclusion can be drawn that one has already assumed a place within the symbolic order where one's meaning and value derive not from oneself but from one's position *relative* to other positions. Consequently, going beyond this order automatically appears to be an *act* which necessarily and immediately turns out to be a transgression the moment it crosses the boundaries laid down by this order. For subject to be an end in itself, it seems necessary that he be involved in such an act. Otherwise he can by no be means a sovereign end but a useful end: he can be a citizen, a worker, a man, but never a sovereign end for which parting company with all symbolic orders ascribing these statuses falls to the lot of subject. Hence, man has to transgress lest he may be rendered useful (end); or more properly speaking an act by which man becomes sovereign appears to the existing order as a transgression insofar as being sovereign entails going beyond this order.

Thus we come to the second point: if Bataille's sovereignty is not antithetical to Enlightenment thought, it is so only to the extent that this thought does not undergo a hypostasis that binds man's negativity recognizing in fact no limit to certain image (e.g. man as rational animal), and discards this negativity unless it perfectly fits to the image. Bataille's definition of sovereignty enables us to catch a glimpse of the fact that insofar as Enlightenment comes before us as a project, we cannot follow it to the letter without confronting a blind point: project presupposes an end for which man enlisted in it is expected to work. Having already immersed in work and thus having become already useful, man can be anything but sovereign in a project even though its end is none other than man as an end. Here what is sovereign (end) is this image of man as an end but not man himself.[243]

We must have already sensed the paradox evincing the impossibility inherent to Enlightenment. As a sovereign being, man refuses to settle within a setting too long without trespassing its boundaries. Therefore sovereignty is a movement, an agitation showing no respect for the points of stagnation. Even if these points are necessary elements for institutionalization without which civilized social life cannot exist, sovereignty does not show any respect for them, introducing agitation breaking the boundaries of the setting. It is exactly at this point that an impossibility always lurking behind comes into view: either Enlightenment would be a pure movement devastating every social order and project in which man willy-nilly surrenders his sovereignty; yet it is thereby condemned to be impractical. Or Enlightenment articulates a project organizing human material enlisted to it so that it is bound to work for a future end. Being thus practical and efficient, Enlightenment commences to lay foundation for a social setting or a social order. The moment Enlightenment gives birth to certain social setting (e.g. our liberal democratic social and institutional

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[243] For the defenders of Enlightenment ideal, there should not have been a problematical point in this matter. Man as end in itself is the ultimate and universal point on which everyone can agree whatever the differences (particularities) they have. However it may be the case, it is not too difficult to show to the ardent defenders of this Archimedean point that this universal always favors certain particular configuration of society in which certain particular interest arises as a universal and neutral standard and thus homogenizes others, dominating over them. "die allseitige freiwillige Selbstbeschränkung der individuellen Freiheit in einem allgemeinen System gegenseitiger Unter- und Überordnung ist zur peremptorischen Sicherung der auf privaten Eigentumsverhältnissen aufgebauten bürgerlichen Gesellschaft notwendig." Marcuse, **Ibid.**, p. 174. To take the note of how the humanist image of man itself turned out to be encumbering on man's autonomy, see Max Stirner, **The Ego and its Own** (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

life) protected under the shadow of law, there is only one thing left to man if he is to be an end and puts his claim on sovereignty: transgressing the very social order whose foundation has been laid by Enlightenment. This is the point at which the paradox inherent to Enlightenment strikes our attention most: in both cases, certain self-denial, though in different modalities, manifests itself as an inescapable fate, making sensible the impossibility of determining man as an end.

No doubt, Bataille's sovereignty opens what Enlightenment thought encloses, showing that negativity unburden of any meaning and employment can by no means rest content to stay within the scope drawn by the principle of individual freedom; especially when this freedom is forced on the individual and filtered through institutional channels. It may therefore be claimed on good grounds that Bataille's sovereignty seems to be return of the repressed, always prompting Enlightenment to recognize its inherent impossibility. However it may be the case, we cannot help but extend this impossibility to Bataille's own writings on sovereignty. The paradox of Enlightenment does not consist in its choosing this way (unbounded agitation of negativity unburdened of every employment rendering it useful) or that way (becoming a foundation for a social order within which this negativity is indispensably bound to be useful). It mainly consists in putting man as an end. The moment man is taken as an end, there is nothing left to do but to choose one of these ways that contradict each other and have nothing in common except the self-denial we would certainly arrive at if following them to the end. If the paradox does not stem from the particular mishaps of a particular world view but from a dilemma valid for every endeavor to put man as an end and if Bataille's sovereignty gravitates around this problematic, we can therefore legitimately ask: is it not possible to think that Bataille himself has also been afflicted with the same impossibility? Does not the same paradox as erupts at the center of Enlightenment thought haunt Bataille's own writings on sovereignty?

There are different possible ways to approach to the problematic pointed out by these questions. We can conceive of them as constellated around two main points. One of them may suggest that in front of such a paradox that always resists to yield itself to a stable solution, what Bataille offers with his sovereignty fails to find an

appropriate solution. The other may consider Bataille successful in that he parries the questions emanated from this paradox with his formulation of sovereignty. Holding on one of these options, as our common sense prompts us to do, prevents us from taking note of the third one: not viewing this paradox as if a problem to be relieved from by finding a due solution, but as a basic human condition from which we cannot escape without bringing about serious effects and consequences for our identities, for what we are. Considering Bataille's conceptualization of sovereignty around such formulations as "impossible yet there it is," "sovereignty is NOTHING," we are driven to admit that this last reading seems to outweigh the others in providing a more appropriate ground for understanding Bataille's sovereignty. By looking at how Bataille conceptualizes subject and subjectivity, we can further inquire into this point.

5.4. *BATAILLE'S COCEPTUALIZATION OF SUBJECT AND ITS CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND: CONTINUITY AND DISCONTINUITY*

It is next to impossible to grasp the subtleties and details of Bataille's conceptualization of subject and subjectivity without paying due attention to the background from which it springs. By this it is meant that what Bataille understands from subject and how he conceptualizes it is the part of a wider picture comprising highly complex philosophical views at once on existence and on subject. This point makes clear that Bataille's conceptualization of subject is so closely interwoven with that of existence that it is hardly possible to concentrate on one of them without taking the other into account.[244] If Bataille's conceptualization of subject is only meaningful in a context within which his views on existence represent the critical part, we can turn our attention to this background.

As is said in the preceding section, how to formulate the relation between existence and its parts has always occupied one of the most important realms of philosophy from the very beginning. Then we can ask in what form this relation is

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[244] Even from this preliminary remark, it is possible to infer how Bataille's views on subject run counter to those seeing isolation as one of the most critical feature of the subject.

presented in Bataille's works, to which subtleties and twists Bataille subjects this relation in his formulations and how all the answers given to these questions impact on Bataille's formulation of subject. For the sake of clarity, we can start with Heidegger's well-known dichotomy between Being (Sein) and beings (dasein) whose basic motive is to show that Being cannot be reduced to the entities presenting themselves to our senses. The same dichotomy can also be found in Bataille's views. But Bataille does not cast the dichotomy within the same terminology as Heidegger does. He gives other names to what Heidegger calls Being. We can see him calling it sometimes existence, sometimes universe or sometimes merely life. Lacking such a capitalized term as Heidegger's Being, Bataille generally refers to a particular entity when talking of being. Even in cases in which Bataille uses being (*être*) as standing for what Heidegger understands from *Sein*, he generally refuses to present it in capitalized form.

But apart from this loose usage of terminology, in which Bataille opts for different terms for expressing the same idea, it is possible to see his views on existence and the place of man in it having been formulated on the basis of a dichotomy whose poles are named *continuity* and *discontinuity*. As one of Bataille's characteristics detectable throughout his oeuvre, formulation of his thoughts in the form of dichotomy is hardly surprising. What is also wonted are the twists and slidings to which he submits this dichotomy so that it finally breaks up with a pattern leaving no scope for movement except the one already assuming a dialectical form. But before dealing with this point, it seems useful to give some explanation of the terms of this dichotomy and how they are defined.

Continuity is the term that can stand for Being in Bataille's thought. Apart from its manifestations presenting themselves in innumerable and multifarious forms, Being is a homogeneous element.[245] Bataille's considering Being as a homogenous element might give the impression that he thinks of it in static terms. As far as Bataille is concerned, nothing is more foreign to the truth than this impression. Being is homogenous not in the sense that every element is molded into the durable

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[245] "Des ondes, des vagues, des particules simples ne sont peut-être que les multiples mouvements d'un élément homogène ; elles ne possèdent que l'unité fuyante et ne brisent pas l'homogénéité de l'ensemble." Bataille, **L'Expérience Intérieure.**, note 15, p. 110.

position within it and made stabilized in the forms through which Being is apparent; but in the sense that Being is the constant flux of energy condensed and arrested in particular forms whose duration can be anything but timeless (*intemporel*). With existence being a constant flux eroding every duration that presents the appearance of having escaped from its whirls, every particular being depending on certain duration as its condition of possibility is but the momentary rupture from this influx which certainly swallows it up at the end. As part of this flux, particular being can not break up this homogeneity; it is also equally impossible for it to transcend it, a privilege allocated by theological thought only to God.

These remarks make clear why Bataille coined the term continuity for Being: beyond and behind the differences presented by the particular (discontinuous) beings, there is a continuity recognizing no limit (discontinuity) except the momentary ruptures indicated above. The fact that continuity (Being) incarnates itself in discontinuous forms should not be taken as to suggest that continuity is the sum of the discontinuous forms. There is a qualitative difference that separates discontinuity and continuity, which precludes discontinuity from entering into a dialectical relation with continuity so that continuity, being exposed to synthesis, gets articulated. Continuity is a zero-point, a total indifference into which every discontinuous element succumbs and dissolves, losing its separate identity. This point makes clear what Bataille attempts to disclose by one of his dictums: being is nowhere.[246] What is meant by this is that Being is every where: there is no real difference between *this* and *that* because they are the incarnations (manifestations) of the same continuous and homogenous Being *here* and *there*.

Seeing what belongs together (continuous and homogenous Being) only in and through particular forms distinct from each other is the product of limited

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[246] By this dictum, it is possible to notice that limiting Being within a particular form is the result of a limited perspective of limited (discontinuous) beings. "Being is nowhere" suggests that Being is so uncertain that it is possible to fix it into a form. "L'être est dans le monde si *incertain* que je peux le projeter où je le veux- hors de moi. C'est un homme maladroit, encore incapable de déjouer les intrigues de la nature, qui enferme l'être dans le moi. L'être en effet ne se trouve NULLE PART…" Georges Bataille, "Le Labyrinthe" in **Œuvres Complètes I : Premiers Écrits 1922-1940** (Paris : Gallimard, 1970), p. 435. We find this dictum « L'être en effet ne se trouve NULLE PART » slightly changed in **L'Epérience Intérieure** : « L'être n'est *nulle part. »* p. 98.

perspective of a particular being. And the existence of this perspective implies the necessity of discontinuous beings. Although existence is a constant flux and condenses in a particular point only temporarily, it is the continuity itself that makes itself apparent in integrated individuals. Thus, we come to the second pole of the dichotomy: discontinuity. Since Being is embodied by particular beings that separate from each other with a fundamental difference –fundamental so long as the violence of time is supposed to be non-existent- it is plausible to assume that there is discontinuity between particular beings. There is discontinuity between *this* pen and *this* hand holding it; between *this* one writing with *this* pen in *this* hand and *that* passerby walking in *that* street; and between *that* passerby and *that* street.[247] In *Eroticism,* Bataille illuminates what he understands by discontinuity in direct reference to organic universe:

> Each being is distinct from all others. His birth, his death, the events of his life may have an interest for others, but he alone is directly concerned in them. He is born alone. He dies alone. Between one being and another, there is a gulf, a discontinuity.
> This gulf exists, for instance, between you, listening to me, and me, speaking to you. We are attempting to communicate, but no communication between us can abolish fundamental difference. If you die, it is not my death. You and I are discontinuous beings.[248]

From this quotation, it is possible to understand that the essence of discontinuity consists in the exclusion of discontinuous being from existence. It appears as if sustained in the emptiness, not confounded with the immensity encompassing it from all sides. Though the discontinuous being is immersed into existence, it presents the appearance that it stands apart from it, excluding it from the space occupied by it.

After these general remarks as regards the poles of the dichotomy devised by Bataille to present his thought on existence, it seems to be in place to direct our attention to the question making itself felt from the beginning: what is the relation between these poles? From this basic question, we can proceed to further ones: are we

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[247] In the formation of our identities and in our becoming an *I,* the process at the end of which objects assume a distinct presence forms one of the most important stages. This point forms of both Hegel's phenomenology and psychoanalysis.

[248] Georges Bataille, **Eroticism: Death and Sensuality** (San Francisco: City Light Books, 1986), p. 12.

not presented here with another dichotomy appearing to be derived from the fundamental one whose poles are called Nothingness and Being? Or by formulating his thought in this form, does not Bataille condemn his (and also our) imagination to such a dichotomy as requires, for the solution of its inherent tension, a dialectical movement which solves the duality just to produce new ones –at least until the arbitrary will of philosopher intervenes to stop it? The counters of possible answers to these questions are already insinuated by saying of continuity as that which always eludes from a dialectical relation with discontinuity. Nonetheless, it would be a great mistake to draw a conclusion from the fact that there is no dialectical relation between continuity and discontinuity that there is no dialectic as such. There is dialectic; but its field of operation belongs to the world of discontinuous beings. Dialectic operates not beyond nor outside continuity but within it.

Here we encounter the sliding to which Bataille condemns the dichotomies he formulates: including within the dichotomy an element that appears at once as the condition of possibility and as an excess disintegrating the very dichotomy in whose constitution it plays a vital role. Looking at the dichotomy between continuity and discontinuity, we can realize that continuity is exactly that which is an excess breaking the very dichotomy that can only be drawn by its inclusion in it. Hence, it can be assumed without undue temerity that continuity is both necessary and impossible. Without continuity, there can be discontinuous beings (there can only be pure emptiness); but the same continuity never ceases to infringe upon the boundaries and limits without which discontinuous being is impossible (existence is the constant flux). To clarify this point suggesting continuity as both impossible and necessary, let us skip over other possibilities and concentrate on human beings as discontinuous beings. Though we are immersed in continuity, we can by no means achieve continuity except through the discontinuous beings surrounding us (this hand, this pen, that passerby, that street …). This amounts to say that as long as we are ourselves discontinuous beings, we cannot realize continuity as such but its incarnation in the discontinuous beings.

Inasmuch as continuity is, as Bataille constantly says, a night into which every discontinuous being should dissolve, inasmuch as it is a night within which it is not

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possible for both object and subject to maintain their separate identities and inasmuch as this night is total indifference within which every difference is to be erased, it is possible to ask what such an understanding, which gives so much weight to existence, implies for man as discontinuous being.

The initial impression is that Bataille provides us here with another anti-humanist reading that challenges the paradigm of subjectivity by calling our attention to the fact that our discontinuous existence is infinitesimal and total improbability in the face of continuity. According to this line of thought, we are thrown into an existence in whose emergence our will has taken no part whatsoever. It is a fact too significant to be passed over that in this throwing that gives birth to someone as a discontinuous being, an infinitesimal effect (difference) may lead to a completely different being from what he is now. So long as our will has no capacity to affect this process –contrarily our will is determined by this- our existence that appears to be the essence from our limited perspective is condemned to be a total improbability. Though Bataille's reading of discontinuous being as total improbability leads us to such a conceptualization in which man is deprived from every capacity endowed by the paradigm of subjectivity to make him a subject, it is by no means possible to draw a conclusion that Bataille's thought completely tallies with the anti-humanist tradition that gained critical momentum with Heidegger's "Letter on Humanism."[249] Haunted by an inherent inexactitude (being thrown) at its foundation, *ipse* or man, as heterogeneous and discontinuous being, can be seen as a merely illusion vis-à-vis existence. But this never invalidates the reality of the experience of *ipse*. This experience itself forms an equally inevitable point of view for Bataille.[250] Moreover,

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[249] Contrary to the initial impression, it should be underlined that what is at stake in anti-humanism is not a view that is against the dignity of man. Far from it, criticism leveled by anti-humanism is that humanism spoils this very dignity. This point is apparent in Heidegger's "Letter on Humanism:" "Through this determination of the essence of man the humanistic interpretations of man as *animal rationale*, as "person," as spiritual ensouled-bodily being, are not declared false and thrust aside. Rather, the sole implication is that the highest determinations of essence of man in humanism still do not realize the proper dignity of man. To that extent the thinking in *Being and Time* is against humanism. But this opposition does not mean that such thinking aligns itself against the humane and advocates the inhuman, that it promotes the inhumane and deprecates the dignity of man." Martin Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism," in **Basic Writings**, ed. David Farell Krell (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), p. 210. For a general discussion of this point, see Luc Ferry and Alain Renaut, **Heidegger and Modernity**, trans. Franklin Philip (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990).

[250] "Le fait de supposer l'existence d'un point de vue possible et même nécessaire exigeant l'inexactitude d'une telle révélation [total improbability of emergence of discontinous being]

Bataille goes so far as to assume that this night into which every discontinuous being should dissolve, would be "existence for nothing", "equivalent to absence" unless man appears within it and gives rise to dramatic consequences.[251] Relying on this last point, it is possible to consider Bataille as formulating another reading of humanism. Notwithstanding the initial impression, what is meant by these views has nothing whatsoever to do with humanist tradition if by humanism we understand a tradition which calls into being an image that binds man's status of subject to certain "ought" (imperative).

This dual character of Bataille's conceptualization of man, on the other hand, may afford ground for the inference that he is hovering midway between humanism and anti-humanism, harboring an inclination to find a meaningful synthesis between them. To show how Bataille's conceptualization of existence in the context of continuity and discontinuity in general and his views on sovereignty, mainly shaped by this context, in particular prevent our imagination from being trapped in the deadlock of humanism vs. anti-humanism, it seems necessary to look, first of all, at the points at which Bataille poses challenges to the paradigm of subjectivity.

As the first sections of this chapter make clear, the dawn of the paradigm of subjectivity broke when such concepts as sufficiency, isolation, completeness and rationality became the basic modes or features of man. Let us concentrate on sufficiency. It is evident that being a subject entails man to possess certain sufficiency without which it is impossible to maintain his autonomy. As already shown, to validate his claim to sufficiency, on which his capability to be a distinct being evidently hinges, man had to a strategy which, with accumulation and investment having been the prescribed modes of action, ensured ever more secure grounds to sustain sufficiency. As insignia of humanity, the achievements made available by accumulation and investment could easily give rise to the impression that sufficiency

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n'infirme en rien la réalité immédiate de l'expérience vécue par la présence au monde impérative du *moi* : cette expérience vécue constitue *également* un point de vue inévitable, une direction de l'être exigée par l'avidité de son propre mouvement." Georges Bataille, "Sacrifices," in **Œuvres Complètes I : Premiers Écrits 1922-1940** (Paris : Gallimard, 1970), p. 90.

[251] "La nuit universelle où tout se trouve –et aussitôt se perd- paraîtrait existence pour rien, sans portée, équivalente à l'absence d'être, si la nature humaine n'y surgissait pas pour donner sa conséquence dramatique à l'être et à la vie." Bataille, "Le Labyrinthe," note 39, p. 435.

is the basic existential condition. For Bataille, every endeavor to obtain sufficiency is nonetheless an attempt to escape from the basic insufficiency with which each limited being is marred from the very beginning. Why does Bataille see insufficiency, rather than sufficiency, as the basic existential condition? First of all, life is a tumultuous flux that recognizes no limit.[252] So, every limit posed by man as discontinuous being should be open to the infringements of life. So long as death and reproduction[253] is there to be the night into which every one sinks, it is almost absurd to view the limits of subject as being under the protection of an absolute sufficiency even if the achievements of our technological world, made possible by accumulation and investment, enables us at the end to land a spacecraft on the surface of Mars.

In addition to this existential dimension revealing the fact that our discontinuous existence is always put into question by an existence that is tumultuous and continuous, social life also affords ground to show how insufficiency rises to prominence even when man puts his claim to sufficiency with outmost vigor. Language can be seen as the basic element that proves this point. In language, it is possible to see at once sufficiency and insufficiency as the salient features of man. The impression of sufficiency arise out of the image of man who, having a language at his disposal, uses the opportunities opened up by this language and gives it the desired shapes to articulate thoughts. Contrary to such an image as depicts language as if a

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[252] "We refuse to see that life is the trap set for the balanced order, that life is nothing but instability and disequilibrium. Life is a swelling tumult continuously on the verge of explosion." Bataille, **Eroticism,** note 41, p. 59.

[253] Though reproduction denotes the birth of a new life and death the end of it, they can by no means be thought as antithetical. Only from a limited perspective of limited being can they be so considered. From a general perspective they are one and the same: "Mankind conspires to ignore the fact that death is also the youth of things. Blindfolded, we refuse to see that only death guarantees the fresh upsurging without which life would be blind." **Ibid.**, p. 59. To shed light upon this point, Bataille quotes from Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet's Sermon on Death, in which he eloquently expresses the continuity between death and reproduction: "Nature as if jealous of her gifts to us, often declares and makes plain the fact that she cannot leave us for long in possession of the little substance she lends us, which must not remain always in the same hands but must be kept eternally in circulation. She needs it for other forms, she asks for it to be returned for other works. Those continual additions to humankind, the children being born, seem to nudge us aside as they come forward, saying "Back now; it is our turn." So as we see others pass ahead of us, others will see us pass, and themselves present the same spectacle to their successors." The oneness of the phenomenon, which we sometimes call death and sometimes birth, is substantiated not only by the force of such a poetical expression but also by the biological data at hand. In the asexual reproduction, the two new coming cells is the disappearance of the originary cell from which they come to life. The same is also valid for sexual reproduction: new coming life in sexual reproduction entails the death of sperm and ovum as separate beings. For this point, see Bataille, **Ibid.**, p. 13-14.

warehouse deprived from any capacity except to yield itself to human will, it is within language itself that this will gains its definite shapes. If human will develops into definite forms only within language, it can be claimed on good grounds that it is the effect of language but not vice versa. Therefore, it is the human will that is put into usage each time it is bent upon using language to give expression to itself. It is exactly at this point that we start to catch a glimpse of a basic insufficiency now and then hidden behind the claims of sufficiency: so long as man stands in need of language as a medium to express and substantiate his claims to sufficiency, language affords proof of the contrary fact that man is an insufficient being.[254]

Despite subjectivist readings, an attentive look may not miss the fact that in the labyrinth of language every claim to sufficiency is a paradox at the end.[255] To further clarify this point, we can focus our attention on the space opened by language: communication. Again we come across the same pattern. For a subjectivist interpretation, communication ushers in the sufficient beings who exploit the communicative space to achieve their desired ends. For such a reading to substantiate its claim, the communicative space ought to be a submissive and inactive sphere into which sufficient beings make inroads after their identities are firmly established. Again the same paradox strikes our attention once again: for a man to gain an identity, to become a subject and to emerge as an *I,* it is necessary to confront other, that is to say having already been in communicative space. Therefore, communication testifies to the fact that man is an insufficient being. Bataille opposes to the subjectivist approach to communication according to which two sufficient and autonomous beings communicate with each other, keeping themselves intact throughout it. For him,

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[254] Bataille goes so far as to say that not only expressions of repugnance and contempt but also phrases of admiration and love testify to the insufficiency of being. "Même le regard qui exprime l'amour et l'admiration s'attache à moi comme un doute touchant ma réalité. Un éclat de rire ou l'expression de la répugnance accueillent chaque geste, chaque phrase ou chaque manquement où se trahit ma profonde insuffisance… " Bataille, "Le Labyrinthe" note 39, p. 434-35.

[255] It is nearly impossible to miss how these views are closely related with Bataille's formulation of sovereignty. They make plain why Bataille constantly puts sovereignty as that which can only be attained beyond language and discursive thought. "…si un homme commence à suivre une impulsion violente, le fait qu'il l'exprime signifie qu'il renonce à la suivre au moins pendant le temps de l'expression. L'expression demande que l'on substitue à la passion le signe extérieur qui la figure. Celui qui s'exprime doit donc passer de la sphère brûlante des passions à la sphère relativement froide et somnolente." "La Folie de Nietzsche," in **Œuvres Complètes I : Premiers Écrits 1922-1940** (Paris : Gallimard, 1970), p. 548.

communication does not take place from one full and intact being to another. It takes place between beings; "each lacerated and suspended, perched atop a common nothingness."[256] Thus, contrary to the subjectivist readings for which no question is entertained as to the truth of sufficiency of subject, it can be argued that otherwise is the case: at the basis of human life, there is a fundamental insufficiency as an existential condition.[257] Every appearance of sufficiency is just an attempt to curb this lack (fundamental insufficiency), from which it is by no means possible to escape in absolute terms.

From the issue of sufficiency, we can proceed to other attributes of modern subject such as isolation and autonomy. From the arguments so far given, it is highly plausible to draw a conclusion that fixing and enclosing existence within certain *ipse* is impossible. Bataille states that behind every *ipse*, there is a composite character calling our attention to the fact that numerous elements intervene in the constitution of this *ipse*. Therefore, it is again our limited perspective that presents Being (existence) having already fixed within particular *ipse* (existent). If we can in a way look askance at the *ipse*, not allowing this limited perspective to prevail upon us as a permanent truth, we immediately take cognizance of the fact that this *ipse* itself is already composed of elements that themselves present the appearance of *ipse*. Even an atom cannot be an adequate ground to fix being within certain *ipse*[258]; and thus each time we probe into existence to achieve pure *ipse*, all we get at the end is a complexity already having a composite character. In the composite character of beings and hence in the impossibility of fix existence within certain *ipse* runs for Bataille the implication that every isolated element of the universe appears as a particle that always enters into composition within ensembles transcending it. It is by no means possible to find being except in the ensembles composed of particles whose autonomy is *relatively* sustained.[259] It is therefore safe to assume that every being partakes in the

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[256] Georges Bataille, **On Nietzsche** (Minnesota : Paragon House, 1992), p.21.

[257] "A la base de la vie humaine , il existe un *principe d'insuffisance.*" Bataille, "Le Labyrinthe," note 38, p. 434.

[258] "L'être pourrait être enfermé dans l'électron si l'*ipséité* précisément ne faisait pas défaut à cet élément simple. L'atome lui-même a une complexité trop élémentaire pour être déterminé *ipséllement.*" Bataille, "Le Labyrinthe," note 39, p. 435.

ensembles which transcend itself. This last point immediately brings another feature of subject before our eyes: autonomy. Given the importance of this issue within Bataille's views on sovereignty, it gains such a prominence that the context from which it springs deserves special attention. Hence, we can direct our attention to this context and its implications for Bataille's understanding of sovereignty.

5.5. *AUTONOMY, TRANSCENDENCE AND SLIDING OR THREE EXISTENTIAL MODALITIES IN THE EMERGENCE OF SOVEREIGN BEING*

In the world of simple organisms, there is no substantial rift between the ensemble and the simple beings gathering around it. That is why we call this ensemble *body*. In the world of more complex organism, on the other hand, we can by no means name the ensemble formed by individual's *body*. It is a *society* in which individuals enter not without losing the autonomy they relatively held in the face of this society. Thus, we come across autonomy and transcendence as two basic modalities of complex organic beings. [260] If man is a complex organism, it is natural that human condition is also shaped by this duality. A human-being is a particle entered into ensemble. In order to save Bataille from the charge that he provides us with another formulation of *universal vs. particular* according to which particulars are so weaved that they appear to form universalities, it is strictly necessary to add that the ensembles, of which human-beings are part, are quite distinct from those of animal life in that they can be anything but stable and fixed. [261] Thus we come to the third

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[259] "D'une façon générale, tout élément isolable de l'univers apparaît toujours comme une particule susceptible d'entrer en composition dans un ensemble qui le transcende." Bataille, **L'Expérience Intérieure**, note 15, p. 100.

[260] Of course, the difference between autonomy and transcendence cannot be sustained too far. They are one and the same thing at the end. If every being is a part in an ensemble which transcends it and if every being is composite, it is clear that autonomy itself at the end is transcendence. The difference can only be situational but not substantial.

[261] This point is what Bataille expresses in block capital: "UN HOMME EST UNE PARTICULE INSÉRÉE DANS DES ENSEMBLES INSTABLES ET ENCHEVÊTRÉS." Bataille, **Ibid.**. It is strictly necessary to emphasize that animal societies are little less than instable and unfixed entities and they also undergo crucial fluctuations. What is meant here by underlining the difference between animal societies and human ones is that the fluctuation of the former is the product of environment. What is meant here therefore is the fact frequently brought to attention throughout this thesis that animal life does not pose a real alternative to life of which it is a part.

basic mode of human condition, a mode that particularly belongs to it, making it distinct from all organic universes. This is what Bataille calls sliding (*glissant*). The opposition between autonomy (particular) and transcendence (universal) is so uncertain that being, regardless of whether particular or universal, cannot be found except in a position that is always sliding. With equilibrium being a precarious temporary phenomenon, it is hardly too much to say that ensembles formed by man are far from being congealed into a stable position, notwithstanding the appearance they present vis-à-vis *particular* beings.

To further clarify this point, it is essential to look at why sliding becomes so existential a condition for human-beings that it cannot be discarded even in the ensembles in which man takes refuge. Such a question makes it necessary to turn our attention to the matter of sufficiency once again. As Bataille asserts, there is a basic insufficiency at the basis of human of life. As discontinuous being, we are but in the tumultuous flux of life, which scarcely respects the limits by means of which we turn out to be distinct from what surrounds us. Out of this condition, in which man's improbability and precariousness are revealed, arises another mode of existence that exclusively belongs to man: anxiety.

Thrown into existence as a will to autonomy and held under the sway of anxiety arisen from the uttermost improbability weighed down on this will, man, as infinitesimal particular, as unpredictable chance, and as pure improbability, finds himself having already been in a movement in which he journeys from one ensemble to another, seeking incessantly to curb insufficiency with the sufficiency offered by them. The movement to which man submits lest his autonomy should not be perished in the *immensity of existence*, within which every will to autonomy is but a chance and improbability, paradoxically gives way to the renunciation of autonomy. Hence, autonomy fraught with anxiety due to its immediacy to life is substituted by another *autonomy* which is tamed and enclosed within an ensemble intervening between this autonomy and the source of anxiety that is immediacy of life at the end. To escape from anxiety, this transition seems to be the only price there is. However it may be the case, our debt to anxiety can by no means be discharged by this gesture (or by any gesture). To pay off this debt, man has nothing at his disposal but to further submit to

the movement that carries him in an ascending slope to larger wholes, aiming at universal. Man passes from one summit to another, chasing after sufficiency. In each part of this movement, man, seized by the desire to make the world submit to his will, is in the relentless search of reducing this world to the necessity of his existence. Each time man is about to be sure to find sufficiency in this movement, an insufficiency certainly blossoms out at the center, revealing the fact that time always gives lies to every claim to sufficiency. In time, in the flow of which every sufficiency cannot help but turn out to be an illusion, Being always escape from the touch of man, from knowledge or from any other pattern that human will imposes on it.[262]

Of course, these remarks seem to be out of place so long as the following questions remain unanswered: why is not possible to uproot anxiety so that ensembles start to afford man the sufficiency for the sake of which he enters into them? Why is anxiety so existential a condition that the movement, in the course of which man seeks refuge, produces the same anxiety, mostly deeper in sense and greater in effect, rather than eliminates it? Why is the debt to anxiety not discharged whenever man is ready to pay it off?

It seems hardly too much to say at this point that one of the best and most lucid answers to these questions can be found in the part of *Sein und Zeit* where Heidegger sheds light on anxiety (*Angst*) as a distinctive way in which the human condition is disclosed. Underlining the necessity of differentiation between two kindred phenomena –anxiety and fear- Heidegger directly gives answer to the above mentioned questions: first and foremost, stress should be laid, according to him, on the fact that the source of *Angst* is not an entity within this world. Phenomenal contents through which *Angst* reveals itself are not relevant as a source of Angst for its source is totally undetermined.[263]

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[262] For Bataille, time that is not inscribed within the limits of an order and not absorbed into a system of measurement is none other than Being. To the question "what exists?" we can say it is *time*, time insofar as it is not reduced to a system of measurement and equivalence. But time, beyond the measurement, is no different from catastrophe. It is beyond any particular and any synthesis emerged out of the interaction of particulars. "Le temps n'est pas synthèse de l'être et du néant si être ou néant ne se trouvent que dans le temps et ne sont que des notions arbitrairement séparées. Il n'y a là en effet ni être ni néant isolés, il y a le temps." Bataille, "Sacrifices," note 42, p. 96.

If physical entities and their involvements hardly afford a ground for anxiety, it is reasonable to draw a conclusion that it does not issue from certain "here" and certain "there." Therefore, the place from which anxiety comes is *nowhere* (*nirgends*).[264] If anxiety is *nowhere,* but if there is anxiety nonetheless, it can be legitimately assumed that anxiety is everywhere. Here we come closest to what Bataille tries to express by the help of his maxim that Being is nowhere. Since it is nowhere yet still everywhere, it can be said of anxiety that it is always already there.[265] And since it is always already there even before a phenomenal content gives it a definite form –*this* (*here*) or *that* (*there*)- we can assume, following Heidegger, that "the world as such is that in the face of which man has anxiety."[266] This point needs a little clarification: if that at the face of which anxiety arises is not a phenomenal entity, it is therefore *nothing*. And if this anxiety does not arise from a certain place, it is also *nowhere*. Searching desperately for the source of anxiety, we can even go the length of discrediting every entity making the appearance of being this source. If there is anxiety nonetheless, it is hardly possible to view *nothing* and *nowhere* of anxiety as an absence (*Weltabwesenheit*). Considering this last point, it becomes quite safe to assume that the source of anxiety is the world as such.

Heidegger's felicitous conceptualization of anxiety enables us to glean important insights as regards the question why sliding does not cease to be the defining characteristic of human condition and why can not anxiety at the basis of sliding be put aside? If we bring Heidegger's conceptualization of anxiety as the world as such and his formulation of man's basic constitution as *being-in-the-world* together, we can readily realize this point: if man is but *being-in-the-world* at the end and if this world is the anxiety itself, it is out of logical necessity that man ought to be

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[263] "Das Wovor der Angst ist kein innerweltliches Seiendes. Daher kann es damit wesenhaft keine Bewandtnis haben…Das Wovor der Angst ist völlig unbestimmt… Nichts von dem, was innerhalb der Welt zuhanden und vorhanden ist, fungiert als das, wovor die Angst sich ängstet." Heidegger, **Sein und Zeit**, note 11, p. 186.

[264] "Daher sieht die Angst auch nicht ein bestimmtes „Hier" und „Dort", aus dem her sich das Bedrohliche nähert. Daß das Bedrohende *nirgends* ist, charakterisiert das Wovor der Angst." **Ibid.**

[265] "Das Drohende kann sich deshalb auch nicht aus einer bestimmten Richtung her innerhalb der Nähe nähern, es ist schon da." **Ibid.**.

[266] "das Wovor der Angst ist die Welt als solche." **Ibid.**, p. 187.

an anxious being. Whatever shelter in which man takes refuge to escape from anxiety, it does not matter; anxiety always accompanies him in this world, into which man finds himself having been thrown. Therefore Blanchot appropriately describes anxiety, calling our attention to this point: it is the projection of the greatest emptiness that is in fact absolute presence or absolute difference[267] into the limited emptiness emerging necessarily as total improbability within this immense emptiness.[268] It can never be seized; contrarily it is the one which seizes sooner or later. As is explained, it is always more rigorous than the one attempting to take hold of it.[269]

Not without justification, much the same can be said of the ensembles that man comes across in the course of movement (history) agitated by the lack of sufficiency and the anxiety provoked thereby. They transcend man's autonomy by making him relinquish it to themselves. In an ascending slope and with an accelerating impetus, history runs from one stage to another, ranging from family to tribe, from tribe to empire, from empire to World Empire, in all of which glows a sense and posture of sufficiency dazzling those remaining within them as if to be eternal truth but manifesting itself as a sort of historical accident to those staying outside.[270] The ensemble, even if it is to reach the point of being universal, is still an entity within this world. Seen from the limited perspective of the particular, it can present the appearance of a universal that is unmovable as being immune to the touch of time. Yet universal is still a particular from a perspective of Being. Whatever density its texture

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[267] It seems critically important to emphasize the need not to confuse this emptiness with the *ex nihilio* of theological thought. This emptiness is Being itself, not an absence but a presence so absolute that it can not be reduced to particular being. "Dans la nuit où nous sommes rives à elle nous n'avons affaire à rien. Mais ce rien n'est pas celui d'un pur néant. Il n'y a plus ceci ni cela, il n'y a pas « quelque chose ». Mais cette universelle absence est, à son tour, une présence, une présence absolument inévitable." Georges Bataille, "De L'Existentialisme au Primat de L'Économie," **Œuvres Complètes XI : Articles 1 1944-1949** (Paris : Gallimard, 1988), p. 291. Derrida calls our attention to this point : "Pushing itself toward the nonbasis of negativity and of expenditure, the experience of the continuum is also the experience of absolute difference…" Derrida, "From Restricted to General Economy," note 33, p. 263.

[268] "… elle [anxiety] est la projection d'un vide plus grand à l'occasion du vide limité dont elle donne la peur" Maurice Blanchot, **Faux Pas** (Paris : Gallimard, 1943), p. 49.

[269] "Elle non plus ne s'arrête pas; elle est toujours plus forte que ce qu'elle se laisse saisir" **Ibid.**

[270] This structure is what strikes our attention in the debate between the defenders of nation state and those of globalization. For the supporters of nation-state, it is the best possible way of organizing human affairs and thus represents the universal whereas supporters of globalization, calling our attention to the deficiencies of nation-state and declaring it outdated, claim that globalization represents the universal condition of humanity.

achieves, whatever extent its scope encompasses, it is still an entity within this world, or an existent within existence, or a being within Being, or a discontinuity within continuity; but never world as such, or existence as such, or Being as such, or continuity as such. Marred with an inability to transcend this space with which Being always escapes from falling into a synthesis with it, universal can by no means prevent a sense of anxiety always giving the lie to the creed of sufficiency from blossoming out at its center.

Although it is self-evident that universal can by no means be reduced to the interactions of the parts composing it and although a qualitative difference always marks the distance between them, the difference fades into insignificance as the universal undergoes the same fate as the particular in the desperate attempt to uproot anxiety. Being no more different in the face of anxiety, the particular and the universal scarcely afford a difference that can carry so much a weight as generally puts on it especially when the universal is conceived of as removing the defects of the particular. If the aura surrounding the universal is somehow dispersed, it comes to be seen that it is no more than a particular which is so favored in its journey to universal by the conditions that it manages to get the end. In a similar fashion, if the luster polishing particular as *arche* is somehow dimmed, it also comes to be seen that it is no less than a universal which is so crippled in its journey to universal by the conditions that it could not manage to traverse the distance necessary to become universal.

No better proof of this point is necessary than can be obtained by the realization how volatile the identities of both the particular and the universal. Sometimes, an individual, usually a worker or citizen, is the particular while his communal setting (generally that of national state) represents the universal. At another time, as if the whole foundation of this ontological configuration has been shaken thoroughly, communal identities descend to the position of the particular while the individual ascends to the crown of the universal, but only on the condition that it be stripped of the traces recalling particularity.[271] In this configuration coming before us in many forms, one is given a maximum freedom to choose his side while the slightest

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[271] To realize this point, it seems useful to recall the individual under "the veil of ignorance" in Rawl's "original position."

allowance to suspend his decision and to put this ontological configuration into question is denied to him. Granted with a freedom to choose but not to the point of choosing not to choose (one of the manifestations of the forced choice of freedom), a theoretician can not formulate his views except by acting as dialectician who, like a tennis spectator, with his head on one side then on another, desperately trying to catch the ball in motionless position, brings the thread of dialectic to a halt when the reconciliation seems most plausible to him.

It follows that Heidegger's views on anxiety and Bataille's sliding prevent the vortex of debate between liberalism and communitarianism (or between communitarianism and cosmopolitanism) from completely drawing the contemplation to its attraction. Neither *ipse* nor the ensemble could confiscate the moment of origin from which the effects and consequences issue. Their being an entity emerged out of the process where anxiety is sought to be curbed or eradicated and their ultimate failure in this process lend some countenance to the conjecture that ontological priority always belongs to anxiety. With a sign of insufficiency now and then flashing into being, quite irrespective of the strength of edifice claiming the sufficiency, it becomes possible to form the idea that *unheimlich* or not-being-in-the-world (in Heidegger's terminology) is the basic existential and ontological condition of man, suggesting that anxiety always precedes both autonomy and transcendence.[272]

5.6. *ANXIETY AND THE ESCAPE FROM SOVEREIGNTY*

Every escape, presented in the form of either autonomy or transcendence, is merely an illusion. Therefore, human existence is none other than the desperate attempt to achieve being, to become whole. This movement carries human life beyond the limits whose insufficiency in the face of life is quite proven. No sooner does this movement reach out beyond the limit than it erects a new one that is itself ripe for transgression. In this sense, the movement fervidly probing its way toward "beyond" itself turns out to be an eternal repose, an absolute within which movement is not

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[272] "Das beruhigt-vertraute In-der-Welt-sein ist ein Modus der Unheimlichkeit des Daseins, nicht umgekehrt. Das *Un-zuhause muß existenzial-ontologisch als das ursprünglichere Phänomen begriffen werden*." Heidegger, **Sein und Zeit**, note 11, p. 189.

tolerated except when it shows respect for the limits coming into being as "the beyond" congeals into a definite form. This line of reasoning bears close resemblance to the frame of which we generally avail ourselves in expounding man's entrance into civil society after state of nature and the emergence of political power. The relinquishment of autonomy to a transcendent entity, coming before us in different configurations in modern thought from Hobbes onward, forms a so worn-out theme as to prompt us to ask what Bataille may contribute to it. Had what is meant by sliding been looked upon as a temporal dimension reduced to chronological sequence without a remainder, it would have been possible to consign Bataille's view into oblivion. Even an unmotivated glance at Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* cannot fail to catch this temporal dimension which stirs man from one insufficiency to another and concludes its movement when it arrives at absolute that must remedy the insufficiencies of the stages prior to its emergence, ranging from family to civil society and corporations. It is exactly at this point that what Bataille adds to this general worn-out formula becomes apparent: the temporal dimension (time) always escaping from the duration of chronological time. For Bataille, time is much more than that whose aid is called in to fulfill the function of measurement. Not that time is operative within the absolute, rather it is that within which the absolute is operative.[273] Before further concentrating on Bataille telling of the absolute itself as being in a position that is sliding, we turn our attention to the consequence of the relinquishment of autonomy.

Bataille calls our attention to the point that the transition from limitless autonomy to limited autonomy is the entrance into the world of practice, into the world of homogeneity. What is of critical importance is to take particular note that this transition is the process which renders not only (a political) society but also an ontological world possible.[274] Without this ontological dimension which so frames the

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[273] "Le temps n'est pas synthèse de l'être et du néant si être ou néant ne se trouvent que dans le temps et ne sont que des notions arbitrairement séparées. … Existence du temps n'exige même pas la position objective du temps en tant que tel…Existence du temps projetée arbitrairement dans une région objective n'est que vision extasiée d'une catastrophe détru'sant ce qui fonde cette région." Georges Bataille, "Sacrifices," note 42, p. 96.

[274] For the relation between the political and the ontological from a related perspective, see Slavoj Žižek, **The Ticklish Subject: the Absent Centre of Political Ontology** (New York: Verso, 2000). "…subject is the contingency that grounds the very positive ontological order, that is, vanishing mediator whose self-effacing gesture transforms the pre-ontological chaotic multitude into the semblance of a positive objective order of reality. In this sense every ontology is political." p. 158.

world that it turns out to be interdependence of distinct objects and which so schemes time that it becomes a chronological sequence, action is never possible. But the world of action is that of subordination. This does not necessarily mean that man should be subordinated to a sovereign being therein. Even if he is himself sovereign, his existence is subordinated to the place assigned to him by the given ontology. He derives his meaning from this place, and his moments, as he clings to this place, become useful, useful in a sense which goes beyond the narrow limits of political economy. Within this ontological space, man is an interpellated and posited subject, even if that to which he is posited is sovereignty itself.

This ontological world being that of practice, that of meaning, that of discourse, the discrepancy between identity and function wears thin to a considerable extent: *I* may be a citizen, may be a man of learning or may be man; but each time *I* is the function, a function to which *I* is subordinated in order to be *I*. *I* being a particular function, man, assuming this title, is reduced to the horizon of activities obliged by it. In activity subordinating him to a specific result and binding his immediacy to a future time, man is suppressed as an entire being. Whoever acts substitutes a particular end for what he or she is, as a total being.[275] Thus limited to a certain position requiring of him to act in such a way that his immediacy is rendered to function, man is but a *fragmentary existence*. To the extent of refusing to go beyond the stage of action, his is a mutilated existence. It is therefore possible to assume that if man rests content with being enclosed within the limits fastening him to a particular form and function, he is deprived of what is marvelous and thus becomes part of the general.

This ontological perspective is to man what water is to fish. So long as man stays within it, it becomes the world itself, and man is thereby denied the chance to suspect its truth for truth itself is molded into it. It is then small wonder that this ontological perspective, out of which *nothing* and *nowhere* of the world as such turns out to be *something* and *somewhere*, acquires an appearance of all that is. Notwithstanding this exchange, the ontological perspective is no more than a frame imposed on "all that is" so that "all that is" becomes the reality (the reality of distinct presences). Since "all that is" can not be absorbed by ontological perspective without

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[275] Georges Bataille, **On Nietzsche**, note 49, p. 44.

remainder and since it is itself absorbed at the end by the immensity it transcends, it becomes understandable that this ontological perspective, contrary to appearances, is contingent and thus open to contingency. As constantly emphasized by Bataille, existence cannot be reduced to knowledge: though knowledge transcends existence, it is exceeded by it at the end.

This point explains why man cannot do away with the anxiety chasing after him wherever he flees. With anxiety arising, the ontological perspective can not maintain its frame on existence so steadily as it usually does and consequently starts to shudder under the weight imposed by existence. When anxiety swells up to a certain point, there come moments in which *nothing* and *nowhere* of the world come to be seen behind the *something* and *somewhere*. For Heidegger, man is thrown back, in these moments, from the world of practice, which yields itself to the will of man, into isolation. This isolation is quite distinct from the worldless one of Cartesian subject since what man encounters in it is world as such, a world not so framed as to become ready to his will.

It is at this point that we notice that the German philosopher and the French librarian, though embarking with similar premises, start to take different courses. For Bataille, there is no necessity to bring the agitation set in motion by anxiety to halt when vanity of communal life (They-self) becomes dominantly manifest. The subject's realization of the fundamental lack of stability in existence (stability that is envisaged and guarded by ontology) and the sense of vanity of *ipseity*, called into being by this realization, cause the anxiety to overflow the frame of ontology. With this, anxiety achieves such a high pitch that it abandons the ontological frame; and as soon as this happens, it also abandons itself since the ontological frame suspended by anxiety is also that to which anxiety owes its life. This is, according to Bataille, transition from anxiety to ecstasy; from the world of homogeneity, within which each element is given a value according to utility, to that of heterogeneity, within which, calculation being no more possible, each element becomes not a useful value but a value in itself.

As easily understood, these moments are those arresting our attention as sovereign moments in the list given in *La Souveraineté*: laughter, happy tears, tragedy, play, drunkenness, funeral, dance, sacred, eroticism, sacrifice…[276] Common among them is their being instants of subjectivity when "subjectivity seems unintelligible in relation to the intelligibility of customary objects and of the objective world in general." [277] They are the passage from intelligibility to unintelligibility and thus are the occasions on which ontological frame is suspended. Intelligence being thus deprived of its hold on existence, subject slides from reality where subject and object, as discontinuous beings, are knowable and penetrable into an unintelligible presence where every difference ceases to exist and where existent thereupon dissolves into existence. It is evident that existence which absorbs existent can by no means be something, a discontinuous being; but it is nothing. It is therefore by taking this point into account that we understand what Bataille attempts to express in the formula "sovereignty is NOTHING." Written in block capital as if suggesting that sovereignty cannot be reduced to the limits of discourse or discursive thought, NOTHING makes plain that sovereignty exceeds the realm of discontinuous beings and thus enters into continuity.

It is possible to conceive of this zero point, for want of a better term, as emancipation of subject. In this zone where anticipation dissolves into nothing, subject is no longer the plaything of nothing from which anxiety constantly radiates. Bursting the wall of ipseity within which he is immured, man participates into the night, as Bataille calls it, in which what is at stake is the fusion of subject and object. Such a configuration renders it expedient to emphasize that only with the emancipation of object can subject attain his emancipation. We are called upon to acknowledge the importance of this point should we recall that the technology put in use in the exploitation of nature has always been quite ripe for the application to that of man. Under the prevalence of sovereign moments, subject is therefore no more the subject of objective world (the world of homogeneity) in which subject has no relation with object except by appropriating it. It is of vital importance to take into view that

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[276] Georges Bataille, **La Souveraineté Œuvres Complètes VIII** (Paris : Gallimard, 1976), p. 277.

[277] Georges Bataille, **La Littérature et la Mal : Œuvres Complètes IX** (Paris : Gallimard, 1979), p. 311.

what is subordinated in appropriation is not only object but also human will (subject) through whose agency object is appropriated: in appropriating, will is subordinated through anticipation to a future result; and consequently its every moment, as being future-oriented, becomes useful

This last point renders intelligible why sovereignty entails on the part of subject consumption, and accordingly why Bataille defines sovereignty as consumption beyond utility. Insofar as appropriation reduces man to the service he renders to attain a future outcome, the only way to sovereignty is through consumption. Nevertheless, it is a serious mistake should "the consumption beyond utility" be so narrowly interpreted as to signify such an economical dimension as the use of wealth. In appropriating, man not only negates object but also himself. This amounts to say that not only does man produce objects but also *relations*. Therefore, it is evident that insofar as man assumes the place assigned to him by a certain worldview, insofar as he does not refuse being interpellated by it, he is never a sovereign being but a useful one even if he is not producing the goods that enter into circulation. In the ontological world, a meaning therefore always keeps pace with the consumption beyond utility, rendering it in a way useful after its achieving beyond utility, which is what happens in the rites of sacrifice and ostentatious consumption of feudal society.

It is therefore not until man goes beyond the ontological world and *something* of anticipation thereby dissolves into nothing that it is possible to deem subject sovereign. An attentive look does not miss the fact that what is at stake in this sovereignty is no less than the subjectivity of subject. Unless subject enters into NOTHING that grants him sovereignty, the distinction between subject and object pales into insignificance, as is suggested by the fact that the qualitative difference between them diminishes in proportion as man becomes useful and derives his meaning, like a tool, from something other than itself. Qua subject without sovereignty, what man can achieve at the end is the empty status of being an actor whose actions are already mediated by the symbolic space within which he is fully immersed, and whose existence, strategy being the privileged mode, gets enslaved to power.

An attentive look also does not fail to notice the paradoxical dimension in question in sovereign subjectivity: Is not the symbolic space of ontological world, which man transgresses lest he should be rendered useful, at the end that which makes subject what he is? Is not this ontological space the ultimate foundation and hence the guarantee for the existence of subject? If subject can only be a subject by attending sovereignty and if sovereignty is none other than the destruction of the ontological foundation upon which subject relies, it is possible to pose subject, paradoxical as it may sound, as the ruin of subject (*la ruine de sujet*). The condition of subjectivity is always bound to risk and destruction to which subject exposes this very condition of possibility.[278] And this is what takes place in sovereign moments. To highlight this point, we can, for the sake of brevity, focus our attention on one of them: eroticism, an experience which frequents Bataille's oeuvre as the one of the privileged moments of sovereignty. Eroticism is nothing but disequilibrium within which subject puts himself in question, gets lost as an objectively determined entity and becomes identified with the object that is also stripped of ontological frame through which it is disclosed as a distinct and separate entity.[279] As is evident, it is within such a realm of disequilibrium that no room is left to such parameters as rationality, calculation, strategy, and management that register the status of man as subject.

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[278] "… l'expérience de la subjectivité profonde a toujours une condition : qu'elle détruise celui qui la fait." Georges Bataille, "De L'Existentialisme au Primat de L'Économie," note 60, p. 287. "Tu ne pourrais devenir le miroir d'une réalité déchirante si tu ne devais *te briser…*" Georges Bataille, **L'Expérience Intérieure**, note 15, p. 113.

[279] "L'érotisme, je l'ai dit, est à mes yeux le déséquilibre dans lequel l'être se met lui-même en question, consciemment. En un sens, l'être se perd objectivement, mais alors le sujet s'identifie avec l'object qui se perd… dans l'érotisme, *je me perds.*" Georges Bataille, "L'Érotisme ou la Mise en Question de L'Être," in **Œuvres Complètes XII** (Paris : Gallimard, 1988), p. 397. The same situation is also what is at stake in art, especially when the Dionysian dimension outweighs the Apollinian one. For this, see Friedrich Nietzsche, **The Birth of Tragedy and the Case of Wagner**, Walter Kaufmann trans. (New York: Vintage Books, 1967). "The dithyramb is thus essentially different from all other choral odes. The virgins who proceed solemnly to the temple of Apollo, laurel braches in their hands, singing a processional hymn, remain what they are and retain their civic names: the dithyrambic chorus is a chorus of transformed characters whose civic past and social status have been totally forgotten." p. 64. "… being the objectification of a Dionysian state, it represents not Apollonian redemption through mere appearance but, on the contrary, the shattering of the individual and his fusion with primal being." p. 65. "… This view of things already provides us with all the elements of a profound and pessimistic view of the world, together with the *mystery doctrine of tragedy*: the fundamental knowledge of the oneness of everything, the conception of individuation as the primal cause of evil, and of art as the joyous hope that the spell of individuation may be broken in augury of a restored oneness." p. 74.

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Such a paradoxical position as is issue here (only by exposing the ontological foundation ascribing him the status of subject to danger can man become subject) renders it necessary to make a case for distinction between subject and subjectivization. It is by taking this distinction into consideration that our imagination, trapped in the deadlock of dispute between humanism and anti-humanism, manages to find a way to escape not only from the reification of metaphysical subject but also from the man's total reduction to the effect of the systems and structures. However ardently the humanist tradition depicts subject as totally closed upon itself, as perfectly self-transparent and as fully identical to itself, and however fiercely anti-humanist tradition attacks this metaphysical conceptualization by insisting that the position of subject is always already an articulation and therefore an effect, they still cling to the same ontological dimension by assigning subjectivization the central place as if the only authority capable of delivering verdict on subject's ability to subjectivity.

This point, which apparently stands in need of clarification, starts to attend elucidation with our bringing to mind Žižek's question: "the Lacanian answer to the question asked (and answered in a negative way) by such different philosophers as Althusser, Derrida and Badiou -"Can the gap, the opening, the Void which precedes the gesture of subjectivization, still be called 'subject'- is emphatic 'Yes!'"[280] What Žižek says in regard to Lacan's position in the face of subjectivization is in tune with that of Bataille. This point becomes more comprehensible if it is recalled that subjectivation belongs to what Bataille conceptualizes as homogenous society. It is natural that Bataille militates against the idea, entertained by humanist tradition, according to which man's being a subject stands squarely in his resting content with *subjectivization*. But for Bataille, so long as man does not elude the hands of *subjectivization* and so long as he remains within homogenous society, he is but a given being, a part of project, discourse, utility; and his identity is no more than a classification. What sets Bataille at variance on the other hand with anti-humanist tradition is his insistence to conceive of the realm beyond subjectivization as the true embodiment of subject. If subject comes to the scene when sovereign moments take place and if these moments are at the end the occasions where anticipation dissolves

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[280] Slavoj Žižek, **Ticklish Subject**, note 66, p. 159.

into NOTHING, it follows therefore that subject always acquires the appearance of void into which the effects of subjectivization can not penetrate; a void where "the process of signification is blocked by the void that defies representation."[281] If this void is not mistaken for absence but considered as a presence so full as to never permit any difference and hence articulation, and if subjectivization thereby encounters before it the impossibility of assimilating it into its ordinary perspective, it is quite safe to assume that subject (void) is a leftover, a surplus that always goes beyond subjectivization.

This point seems sufficient to establish the idea that Bataille, with the help of his formulation of sovereignty, finds a loophole in the deadlock of the confrontation between humanist and anti-humanist traditions. It is by virtue of this formulation that subject can be looked upon neither as an essence nor as an effect. Subject can not be an effect so long as he comes into life in NOTHING within which every difference is necessarily suspended. An effect cannot be said to take place unless it brings about a difference; so subject, insofar as he is sovereign, can by no means be reduced to the status of effect (it is always a surplus). On the other hand, subject cannot be an essence so long as he comes into life at the very moment when unity can not keep its integrity and dissolves into NOTHING. An essence cannot be said to arise unless it preserves a unity; so subject, as a sovereign being, cannot be claimed to be an essence (it is always a void).

Considering this point, it becomes quite possible to notice how Bataille's formulation of sovereignty sets him apart from two ideals generally dominating the scene when the issue is subject: "a nature which is subject to a will" and "a nature to which the will is subject.[282]" Subject that is bent on subjecting nature to his will subjects himself to this will at the same time. And to the extent that this will is steered by and filtered through a certain conception of utility, subject cannot be such an autonomous being as is supposed by humanist tradition. In a similar fashion, a nature

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[281] Saul Newman, **From Bakunin to Lacan: Anti-Authoritarianism and the Dislocation of Power** (New York: Lexington Books, 2001), p. 140.

[282] For a discussion of this point, see Luc Ferry and Alain Renaut, **French Philosophy of the Sixties: an Essay on Antihumanism**, Mary Cattani trans. (Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 1990), especially pp. 220-28.

that frames the will is still framed by ontological perspective imposed on it by this will. So, it continues to offer itself to this will while restricting it.

5.7. *SOVEREIGNTY AND COMMUNICATION*

From what is said as regards Bataille's approach to subject, it is possible to glean the impression that he, with the help of his views on sovereignty, unburdens subject of the modalities imposed upon him. We are therefore driven to admit that subject can by no means be conceived of as merely an actor that resorts to strategy, management and control in conducting his relations with his environment and with other subjects. It is also equally impossible to envisage subject as an atomistic and isolated being which enjoys a totally perfect closure. We are enabled by Bataille to form the idea that subject is a miraculous being that comes into life when moment, uncontaminated by the concerns for future, wrests the reign from the duration of chronological time and scatters its dull continuity thereupon. What is of critical importance is to take notice of the fact that Bataille never formulates new modalities with which to register the place of subject while deposing others from the throne of subjectivity. Accordingly, subject is the zero-point where every modality meets the impossibility of sustaining itself. That is why we are warranted to entertain the idea that subject is *impossible*. In such cases as when subject comes into existence, as when *impossibility* suddenly turns into possibility, what comes into view is none other than miracle which discursive thought immediately commences to mar its being a miracle by assigning it meaning, definition and form.

This miraculous character testifies to the fact that subject, as an impossibility that suddenly comes into being, can not come into view except as paradox. At this point we cannot help recalling one of Bataille's definitions of sovereignty: "impossible, yet there it is." Subject is impossible in that there should have been no place for it in this world which is so organized by discursive thought that every element has a meaning. Yet, there is subject; subject that emerges as if it is a lightening which vanishes just at the instant of its materialization. However paradoxical this subject appears, it is exceedingly difficult to submit to the idea that

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the position of subject of subjectivization is less paradoxical. Bataille never relinquishes the ideals of subjectivization while pitting against it sovereign subject. By adhering to the same ideals and by using the same terminology (sovereignty, autonomy, freedom, and communication), Bataille invites us to recognize the blind-point in the subject of subjectivization: an element that, wrapped by ideological cover, stealthily penetrates into the ideal and abuses it to create effects contrary to the ideal itself. Important to highlight is that this element passes unnoticed and thus is more tolerable so long as it presents itself as the ideal. Looking upon the position of subject as paradoxical (impossible, yet there it is), Bataille, via his formulation of sovereignty, tears the ideological cover over this element and evinces how it is itself paradoxical if seen from other perspective than that of dominant world view.

We are convinced upon this point whenever we put the modalities promulgated by subjectivization as ideals under close scrutiny. Let us take autonomy for the moment. Such a praiseworthy ideal as is autonomy deludes us into an idea that man, as long as being autonomous, enjoys freedom and independence. However, the brightness of this ideal fades away to the extent that we are prepared to view it as none other than the management, control and regulation in which man is much more effectively disciplined on account of the fact that he becomes his own master in submitting his will to discipline. Therefore, true autonomy cannot take place except when this autonomy, along with the rights and duties encoded within it, is refused. The same is also true for freedom, another ideal that shines brightly in our theoretical horizon. So long as freedom is presupposed by a conception of freedom within which certain "oughts" and "shoulds" coordinate the margins of freedom, it is no more than a submission to law. Therefore, freedom can not manifest itself except as an occasion in which subject finds himself outside the *possible*, that is, as a crime. In this light, it becomes self-evident that freedom and autonomy, otherwise than as they are in the limits and service of sovereign world-view or ideology, are not tolerated. As a result, we can hold on the assertion that autonomy and freedom, unless they are dead letter, always entail on the part of subject risk and destruction, rather than preservation and management. It is therefore only by putting himself in question that subject becomes truly autonomous and free.

This line of reasoning also calls for a modification in our approach to communication. If communication is reduced to the exchange of messages between isolated beings in such way as to leave them intact thereafter, what is attained with the help of communication at the end is reproduction of isolated beings. Nevertheless, if subjects preserve their isolation, what takes place between them is not a true communication but an organization of interpersonal space according to imperatives of practical rationality that obliges each one to pose himself as meaningful and rational, that is, as usable. For Bataille, on the other hand, true communication comes out when it really starts to infringe upon the boundaries isolating subjects from one another, when experience removes that which attaches subject to discourse and language, and when it throws subject into a realm of intimacy where it becomes impossible to treat the other (self, subject, object) as an opportunity. And, as is clear, this is what happens only if sovereign moments stifle the communication of discursive thought that renders subject meaningful and reproduces him in his tolerable autonomy and isolation. [283] The same ambiguous point as manifests itself in autonomy, freedom and communication is to be found haunting another fort of subjectivization where the ideal of subject as a rational actor is deemed to enjoy a great deal of security: will. Tue will comes about only when it disentangles itself from the agency. And it is not hard to comprehend that this disentanglement that suspends the agency's guidance to will is the moment when this will inexorably ceases to bring effects on world.

No wonder, therefore, that our practical rationality, which never tolerates a paradox except when treating it as something to wipe out, is alarmed by the oddity of sovereign subject. Then, it is usual for an approach supposing the necessity of wiping out the paradox to express its immediate reaction in such remarks as follows: sovereignty is NOTHING, but we are something; sovereignty is the manifestation of

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[283] Bataille insists on the necessity of making distinction between what he calls profane communication (feeble communication) and profound communication. For him, profound communication, or the only communication worthy of this name, is sovereignty itself. Sovereignty and communication are one and the same thing for Bataille. One of them cannot be without the other. "Il n'y a nulle différence entre la communication forte ainsi représenté et ce que j'appelle souveraineté. La communication suppose, *dans l'instant*, la souveraineté de ceux qui communiquent entre eux, et réciproquement, la souveraineté suppose la communication… Il faut dire en instant que la souveraineté est toujours communication, et que la communication, au sens fort, est toujours souveraine." Georges Bataille, **Littérature et le Mal**, note 70, p. 313.

pre-ontological[284] world, but *we* live in ontological world. So any rational approach to the problematic posed by sovereignty focuses our attention on the world of actuality. When the primacy of actuality begs our notice as the privileged site to afford a ground for the explanation of sovereignty, we cannot proceed any further but by concentrating on what happens to that which arises from the pre-ontological dimension when it abruptly manifests itself in the ontological world or what happens to it when it passes from the world of potentiality to that of actuality and becomes part of it. Since it is not in place to conclude this chapter without taking this point into consideration, we can turn our attention to it.

To give answer to such a question as what happens to the pre-ontological element after it materializes itself in ontological dimension, we can proceed in two lines. To elucidate the first lines, it should be recalled that the basic characteristic of sovereign moments is their momentary appearance, in which case it vanishes no sooner than it flashes into being. In this moment where the ontological frame is suspended, sovereignty emerges as a void that frustrates chronological sequences in its attempt to bind the present moment to the future. However it may be the case that this void suspends the ontology and makes the chronological sequence stand still, it is quite natural that being a momentary rupture vanishing no sooner than its manifestation, it is deprived of the chance for organization, and, becoming thus weak, cannot resist the ontological frame squeezing it. As is generally the case, life goes on, present continues to flow into the heart of future; and with ontological perspective being thus restored and continuity of chronological time being thus mended, sovereign moment acquires the strange appearance of short-circuit. With the effect of rational explanations imparted on it, this accidental occurrence gets totally homogenized.

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[284] Contrary to the initial impression, the prefix the pre- in "pre-ontological" here does not signify a moment to which we can return. So, what we have called here "the pre-ontological" has nothing to do with the authentic originary point that precedes ontology. It is also not a "beyond" in which it is possible to find another ground for our communal and individual life. The moment we reach this "beyond," the moment we find a ground there is also that when the pre-ontological has already turned into the ontological. After ontology puts its frame on that which precedes ontology, it is impossible for us to return to it. This is what we have discussed a great deal in the context of the dialectic between taboo and transgression (Chapter II). For the sake of brevity, it seems enough to point out that pre- in "the pre-ontological" does not refer here to past. Its temporal modality is *future-anterior*. So, NOTHING, far from being an authentic originary moment to which it is possible to return, is the sudden abruption that suspends the continuation of chronology. It is a void which intervenes between the present and the future.

But what if sovereign moment is too strong to be easily homogenized, what if it does not so submit to the assimilation of ontological perspective as to offer no resistance, what if, in short, it persists to exist and survives beyond a moment of pure rupture? In this way we come to the second line; but again we come across two possibilities. As for the first possibility, we are entitled to draw a conclusion that the more forcibly sovereign moment resists homogenization, the more opportunity it can obtain at the end to challenge this homogenization. To the extent that this tension increases, sovereign element appears as violence, and sovereign being as a criminal. After the turning point when it becomes apparent that homogenous society cannot send it back to its pre-ontological dimension or cannot assimilate it, sovereign moment overthrows the existing homogeneity and imposes on it its own ontology and meaning. It is quite evident that this moment is none other than that of transition from sovereignty that is *impossible* to political sovereignty. While the sojourn of NOTHING in the world of things changes into a permanent residence, sovereign element automatically turns, if expressed in Walter Benjamin's terms, into lawmaking violence and then into law preserving violence. Consequently, as soon as a meaning (homogenous element) comes to spoil the miracle and uses it to furnish the ground on which authority and power rise, *impossible* acquires a definite form that defines the limits of possible whose beyond is now called *impossible.* This transformation adduces to the fact that such a heterogonous element as miracle[285] undergoes a homogenization insofar as it builds its dominion and becomes sovereign therein.

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[285] It is when politics has been reduced to the management and distribution that the link between miracle and sovereignty was cut. But the link was so certain that it is possible to call the first sovereigns of humanity "the public magician" without difficulty. For the notion of the public magician, see James Frazer, **The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion** (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1963), pp. 69-72. The link between miracle and sovereignty is not something which can solely be found in primitive society. It forms one of the important points of political theology. As is pointed out, it is in modern times when the politics came to be seen as none other than the management and distribution of public assets that miracle was expelled from the abode of sovereignty. For a general discussion of this point, see Carl Schmitt, **Politische Theologie: Vier Kapitel zur Lehre von der Souveränität** (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1996). "Der Ausnahmezustand hat für die Jurisprudenz eine analoge Bedeutung wie das Wunder für die Theologie. Erst in dem Bewusstsein solcher analogen Stellung lässt sich die Entwicklung erkennen, welche die staatsphilosophischen Ideen in den letzen Jahrhunderten genommen haben. Denn die Idee des modernen Rechtsstaates setz sich mit dem Deismus durch, mit einer Theologie und Metaphysik, die das Wunder aus der Welt verweist und die im Begriff des Wunders enthaltene, durch einem unmittelbaren Eingriff eine Ausnahme statuierende Durchbrechung der Naturgesetze ebenso ablehnt wie den unmittelbaren Eingriff des Souveräns in die geltende Rechtsordnung. Der Rationalismus der Aufklärung verwarf den Ausnahmefall in jeder Form." p. 43.

Then, it follows that sovereignty, as a presence, always requires a symbolic, if not actual, death.

In addition to this symbolic death, it is hardly difficult not to catch the second possibility which it is impossible to shut from view: What if sovereign element is not so successful in formulating an ontological perspective and a legal code by means of which he no longer appears as a criminal transgressing the law? What if sovereign element refuses to attach itself to a homogenization that finally restores its place in symbolic space of communal life? What if consumption beyond utility is carried to the end while consumption is denied any chance to create the conditions necessary for survival? The ambiguity in question in homogenous sovereign is not to be found in this case; so what befalls this heterogeneous sovereign is total destruction, that is, not a symbolic, but an actual death. Therefore, sovereign act, if sustained to the end, is always suicidal.[286] Nowhere is this more apparent than in Don Giovanni's constant saying "no!" to the voice that invites him to the homogenization. By refusing to choose the symbolic death, by insisting on sovereignty, he suffers the absolute death. In the light of these two prospects, it seems hardly rash to conjecture that sovereignty as a presence always looms into view in an ambiguous position, a position that is always between two deaths. Therefore, it is on the basis of the comparison which we endeavor to make in the subsequent chapter between Don Giovanni and the Count of Figaro that we start to make out what the second death of sovereign expresses.

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[286] For this point, see Žižek's discussion of Lacan's thesis on suicide as the only successful act within the context of the film "Germany, Year Zero." Here, what is at stake is Edmund's refusal to come to terms with the homogenization. According to Žižek, this is the "suicidal" and "impossible act of freedom beyond the scope of a performative." Slavoj Žižek, **Enjoy Your Symptom! Jacques Lacan in Hollywood and Out** (New York: Routledge, 2001), pp. 33-37.

CHAPTER 6

THE SECOND DEATH OF SOVEREIGN

So far, I have tried to give a conceptual account of what Bataille meant by sovereignty, focusing on its salient aspects and dealing with its basic traits. In the course of this account, I have repeatedly argued that Bataille's definition of sovereignty, highly abstract as it may appear at first sight, has definite and decisive political connotations. It must be admitted, however, that the account so far given gives rise to a sense of uncertainty which makes this connotation uncertain. Of course, one way to stand against such a sense is to expose it to another sense of uncertainty and to invite the advocate of these uncertainties to question once more if the easiest way itself – a pre-supposed distinction between ontology and the political-is also baffling. Instead of plunging into the murky region of the relationship between the political and the ontological, we could rather hold on to this uncertainty and proceed in this direction. Therefore, the guiding motive in this chapter is to bring this indirect connotation under close scrutiny, and note the political implications arising from it.

At this point, it is useful to underline that of the former chapters of this thesis, that which is distinctively political is the last, titled *Subject, Subjectivity and Sovereignty*. If we recall that *subject* and *subjectivity* form the crux of political philosophy and political theory, as well as that of general philosophical considerations, we find it not surprising that the last chapter evinces a precise political character, despite the abstract philosophical considerations which appear to blur what is, in fact, concrete and practical. Although these considerations may be abstract and impractical –impractical in the sense of being foreign to *action*- this chapter more expressly sets forth its political implications the closer it comes to the

end. To substantiate this point, a passing glance will reveal such names and issues as the last chapter presents toward the end: Walter Benjamin, Carl Schmitt, legality and violence. Therefore, it seems safe to say that the point at which the last chapter stops marks a good place to set forth for the present chapter.

The questions raised at the end of the last chapter attempt to turn our attention to the issue of what befalls the sovereign moment which, when it comes into being, is as elusive as a mirage. What makes this point worthy of consideration is, as we have tried to prove, the discrepancy between this moment and the conditions within which this moment comes into being. The basis of this discrepancy lies in the coming together of two completely unalienable ontological modalities which, unless exposed to external violence such as oppression, repression and assimilation, insist on remaining mutually exclusive. Just like the listener who, encountering such a tension in music, beings to expect, even unconsciously, for a solution which will establish the harmony once more, we have reasons to hope for an ontological solution for such a position. It is exactly at this point that a strange phenomenon starts to catch our attention: whenever a solution occurs, we see the sovereign moment devoured by Death. Quite irrespective of the possible routes which this moment takes in a completely hostile surrounding –whether it be the return to the pre-ontological dimension or creating a new ontological matrix- Death never fails to catch it. Even if the final destination of the sovereign moment rests quite unaffected by the possible routes to be taken at this moment, whenever it flashes into being in the ontological world, its choice of a direction makes a difference to the kind of Death falling upon it. It is against the background of such distinction that we come to sense what is hinted at by the idea of the Second Death of the Sovereign. What we also sense, with the help of this background, is the close link between sovereignty and death. So, before proceeding further in the direction of the Second Death of the Sovereign, it is appropriate to concentrate on this link as a preliminary step.

6.1. *SOVEREIGNTY AND DEATH*

In establishing the link between sovereignty and death, we find a great deal of help in philosophical considerations that are not content with the contractual accounts adhered to by liberal political theory. For a contractual explanation of sovereignty to successfully diminish the gap between the signified (the actual conditions of political authority) and the signifying (the representation of this authority as sovereignty), it should keep death and violence out of sight during the vital moments in the construction of sovereignty. Opposing such representation, in which power relations are impregnated with common sense and common interest but not with death and violence, some thinkers are apt to fathom out what is lurking beneath: not only in the preservation of sovereignty but also in the very act founding this sovereignty, we stand witness to the way in which death and violence play a pivotal role. Among those who think in this way, the first to strike our attention is Hegel. He balked at the idea that sovereignty is no more than the embodiment of particular interests and concluded that for the state to differ from a market, it should demand a sacrifice of particular interests from its subjects. Therefore, for Hegel, it is only through the subjects' willingness to sacrifice his life that the brute physical force can evolve into true sovereignty. Alongside Hegel, we can add others. Accordingly, we can enlist Foucault in this group in that he, while not submitting to such an idea as ethical totality, could detect what the constitutional representations deleted. Reversing Clausewittz's well-known formula, he referred to politics as the continuation of war in different guises. He urged us not to too readily suppose that the hand writing the law was different from the hand holding the sword. Similarly, we read in Derrida's Pharmakon that violence and death haunts the very sites where law and sovereignty hold sway. Not only in holding ascendancy but also in sustaining this ascendancy, sovereignty owes much to the act of violence provided that this act occurs in a controlled context.

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A brief examination of those who argue for the entanglement of death and sovereignty include such names as Schmitt, Benjamin, Arendt, Agamben…and others. However, they base their arguments on varied premises and whatever different conclusions they reach, the real matter on which they converge is that death is found to be fluttering wherever a sovereign will manages to form itself as sovereignty. Of course, the modern formation of sovereignty succeeds in curtailing the appearance of death and in expelling it beyond the walls of the city as an international anarchy. Yet this success never dismisses the prospect that death haunts the very territory over which sovereignty claims to prevail. Not respecting the representation presented by the constitutional conceptualization, death always traverses the barriers built by the dichotomies dividing the space into compartments. Thus, not only outside but also inside, not only anarchical conditions but also hierarchical ones, and not only the realm of war but also the realm of law are the very sites where we see death and violence can arise. From the above-mentioned names, evidence can be drawn for the fact that in the three crucial moments of sovereignty –formation, representation and preservation- the place of death has a definite place.

However well-established the link between sovereignty and death in this depiction, we can observe something missing if we pay heed to the fact that the relationship in question is one-dimensional. Here, death and violence appear to be radiating from the sovereign will and take the shape of that which is inflicted upon those bowing before this will. In such a setting, we feel forced to consider revolt or revolution as a way of getting this relationship out of the one-dimensional mold. Naturally, violent resistance to authority lies before us as another aspect of the bond between death and sovereignty. Yet what this twist accomplishes at the end is no more than molding the one-dimensional relationship into one which is two-dimensional. Even if it is beyond doubt that this second dimension is important in shedding light upon the true nature of authority, it does not account for the presence of another substantial dimension. In the two-dimensional configuration, the difference between dimensions consists only of the shift in the positions of subject and object: the subject of violence (sovereign will) turns into its object of it (revolt). It is, therefore, a mistake to dismiss the significance of this second dimension. This is

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all the more so, the more firmly it admonishes us of the danger inherent in taking legality, legitimacy and enforcement for granted.

Considering this point, but refusing to be content with it, we have reasons to ask what if this model, consisting of subject and object, does not exhaust all the possibilities in sovereignty; what if there is an extra-extent which fails to fit into the frame of the subject-object relationship; and what if there is a twilight zone where even the sovereign subject, though transfigured by symbols and titles, is no more than the object in the web of relations.

It is exactly at this point that Bataille's understanding of sovereignty comes to provide help for us. We should first of all remember Bataille's basic definitions of sovereignty: consumption beyond utility, impossible yet there it is, NOTHING, prevalence of present over future, transgression, break and so on. In all these parameters which Bataille uses to state his understanding of sovereignty, what we stand witness to is the split between sovereignty and the world. Since chronological sequence, possible, THING, concern for a future are the basic parameters of the world, it stands to reason that the modalities of world and sovereignty are incompatible and that sovereignty has no *place* in this world. Apart from the impossibility of topographically registering sovereignty (the sovereign moment), there is also a chronological impossibility. The sovereign moment is the present time loosed from other moments preceding or following it. At this point, we may legitimately ask how such a displacement in chronological sequence takes place. The legitimacy in this question stems from the fact that for a moment to exist as a moment, it should be enlisted as such in the chronological sequence and located between the two moments preceding and following it. It is, therefore, quite safe to assume that the present always, one way or another, implies past and future. To give this assumption a definite form, we can say that a moment can only be a present moment if it is signified as such by past and future moments.

Considering this point, we can ask how it is possible that someone can accord a privilege of sovereignty to a point in a chronological sequence. We can also ask how Bataille can conceive the sovereign moment as something rupturing the flow of

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time. We can further this enquiry by questioning if Bataille does not yield a contradictory conclusion in conceptualizing the present moment as a completely alien thing, radically severed from the future. All these questions appear plausible in the light of the fact that the present moment always implies future and past, owing its own existence to being signified by them. But this plausibility tends to diminish when we stop viewing chronology as given and start to take it as ontologically constituted. The moment we do this, we catch a glimpse of what creates chronology out of Time: *practical* rationality. This forces us to recognize chronology not as all-encompassing, enwrapping all existence, but as a closed universe whose jurisprudence is limited as well as conditioned. All in all, chronology, being a closed universe, does not exhaust all the possibilities of Time, and should be underpinned by the practical rationality which gives birth to Past, Present and Future. So, every time this rationality fails to operate, we find the proof of the likelihood (even the certainty) of the moments loosened from the signification of chronology.

This sheds light on why Bataille attributes a sovereign character to such moments as death, happy tears, laughter and eroticism. We can pin the sovereign character inherent in these moments down to their being occasions which frustrate the faculty of rationality so that it fails to operate and organize relations. If a certain occasion thwarts rationality in one fell swoop, and if this thwarted rationality is what begets chronology, the natural conclusion will be that this occasion takes the appearance of a radical break. Being so antithetical to duration on which rationality depends, the sovereign moment marks a discontinuity in the continuity of chronology. But what makes this point worthy of our attention is its transgressive character: to the extent that we, as ontological beings, live in a world in which the work of rationality is guarantee of this world's being as it is, we do not err in arguing that subject can sense the sovereign moment as nothing but as transgression.

Deliberating over these points, we realize that it is not too much to look upon these moments as violating the subject's integrity. The proof of such a claim can easily be afforded from the fact that the subject, in the sense we understand it, cannot exist except on an ontological ground founded by rationality. This last point urges us to look into what will happen to this subject after being exposed to the sovereign

moment. When plumbing the conditions in which we are likely to find the subject cracked by sovereignty, we are forced to think about the moment's fate. So, we can direct our focus to the prospect which falls to the lot of this deontological occurrence in the ontological world.

6.2. *PHENOMELOGICAL THRESHOLD*

With regard to sovereignty, we have already gained an idea that it is not only alien to the ontological world but also that it ought to be so. Bataille's formulation of society as consisting of two components, homogenous and heterogeneous, helps us explain away the alien character attained by sovereignty. Since a great deal of space has already been assigned to this issue, we can skip the details and focus on its basic aspects. Therefore, we can start by fathoming out the trait that gives the homogeneity its distinctive color. In the light of what has been said on homogeneity, we can say that this basic trait, is no other than utility. Quite irregardless of the particularity aroused from of time and space, every identity and relation therein appears to be enveloped in or even impregnated with a discourse of utility. This discourse's presence presupposes a system whose operation moves on only if it differentiates these relations and identities according to their capacities to be useful. And *value* is the name we unwittingly give to the effects emanating from this system. We are, therefore, driven to admit that in this world of utility, everything is registered within the relations in whose network recognition does not take place, unless the value stamps this thing with differentiation.

At this point, we feel impelled to underline that the value in question can by no means be restricted to the economical. Just like production (also reproduction), this value has a span surmounting the limits of economy. In proportion as our minds are accustomed to consider reality as compartmentalized in distinct zones having but trivial ties among them, it is in place to clearly state that *value,* (and also production) is symbolic as well as material. And this explains our insistence in previous chapters to not take Bataille's definition "consumption beyond utility is the sovereignty" as merely material. Here, utility as a concept covers a symbolic dimension as well. This

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is why the consumption that Bataille talks of as beyond utility easily expands into an existential and social condition rather than remaining merely an aristocratic mode of organizing social and economical matters. Thus, it is safe to say that only a superficial reading restricts Bataille's terms and concepts to the economic and material meanings.

To this we can add another dimension demanding much the same attention. In the homogenous world, the discourse of utility and value so pervade and so permeate the ontological being that language does not permit the difference between substance and value to be observed. Our ordinary life, therefore, condemns us to consider that which is, in fact, value as a substance. Because of this situation, it is natural that the speaking being, caught in the web of signification, usually fails to take the cognition of what is really in question when a name is stamped on a thing. But when we come to conceive of language as a great homogenizing machine, we can catch a glimpse of the fact that it consigns a certain value to the substance whenever it assigns a name to this substance. Even in most innocent moments in which a subject calls [gives a name to] something or someone, this subject unwittingly gives license to language to label the thing with a value. The way in which a discourse of utility always lurks behind language operating to homogenize, I do not pursue further; but it is almost impossible to omit that to be located with the signification process amounts to be immersed in a web of relations in whose scope every element is pinned down to a dependence. (That is to say that the only way to attain meaning passes through differentiation). From this consideration, we can come to a conclusion that in the ontological world, brought about by rationality and homogenized by language, something cannot be detected, discerned and distinguished unless it is already in a mode of dependence.

Having mentioned dependence as the basic ontological modality, we open ourselves to objections such as those centered on the question "how is it possible that we can still see in such a world structures that are hierarchical?" The legitimacy of these objections lies in the fact that the top of the hierarchical structure cannot be considered to be radically breaking from the positions occupying the lower level in the hierarchy. To be more clear and concrete, we can turn our attention to a King's

position and ask, with regard to him, how he can be thought to be sovereign while he remains dependent on his subjects or how his sovereignty is said to be true if he is dependant. These considerations, casting a shadow on a sovereign's sovereignty, may possibly proliferate as our ontological perspective persists in investigating the foundation of positions that are hierarchical and hegemonic. The important point here is to realize the insurmountable gap between being sovereign and being hierarchically dominant. We may impute the difference between them to the feature found in all structures: however loosely organized, a structure can be discerned as based on a web which enjoins every element to float within the margins and to be drawn by interdependence. Configured in this way, any component of structure can float as loosely as possible but not flout the extent of interdependence. To the extent that we can talk of a structure, that is to say, to the extent that a web of interdependence makes the components gravitate around its orbit, this pattern applies to all units which happen to be placed in the structure. Since this interdependence is the fundamental form patterning every component of the structure, a superior position, say that of a King, can by no means claim to be immune to dependency: however highly it holds ascendancy, it cannot help but fall to dependency.

This phenomenological position of the sovereign inclines us to the view that despite the representations, what is presented as sovereign is not sovereignty as such -the true sovereignty in the sense of being unfettered from the bounds of dependency- but a symbolic gesture or posture imposed as sovereignty. This assertion ceases to appear as an exaggeration when we note what is really at issue here: the sovereign owes its sovereign position to being signified as such; and what is more, in this process, it is signified by others occupying the lower positions. What comes to pass in this signification is the assignment of a place prescribing the subject to a set of predetermined patterns of behavior. However, what usually passes unnoticed in these patterns is that the one holding the prescribed position starts to fulfill a function no sooner than signification ascribes this one to a place in the web of interdependency. For this reason, for a totally autonomous agent, signification means to be caught in a cobweb in which all autonomy is marred: insofar as something fulfills a function, that is insofar as something is in the service, this thing can be anything but fully autonomous. If we turn, at this point, to our example of the

King, we notice that the King's independence is uncertain. Hardly content with the concealment enacted by commonsense fostering, and also fostered by courtly practices –rituals, ceremonies and symbols- we feel disposed to spot the deficiency inherent in the King's independence (sovereignty): the King is none other than something signified as King; and his being signified as such rests on his compliance to the duties as well as rights imposed by this signification.

Upon this plight of King we shall shed light, but for the time being let's skip its details that dramatize the ontologically peculiar, if not awkward, character of sovereignty. Currently what matters most for us is to take note of the threshold at which sovereignty ought to be found each time it comes into being. The *world* we live in is the one in which things can exist only if they have already been homogenized by a duration and identity. If nothing in this world can afford to be present unless it is homogenized, and if nothing is more foreign to sovereignty than duration and identity, (let's remember the discussions we have made so far) then we have reason to suppose that there is no such thing as sovereignty in this world. Nonetheless, there *is* sovereignty. This threshold, this nature of sovereignty, hardly finds a brighter illustration than that of Bataille: *impossible yet there it is.* Of an event that has no duration or of a thing that has no identity, we can easily say that it has no place in this world (*impossible*); but despite this, it takes place (*there it is*).

This point needs some explanation; to the accounts already attempted in the preceding chapters, we can add that to attain the truth of this threshold, it is important to get a distinct notion of the relationship between the possible and the impossible. In an effort like this, it is difficult for us not to glean the impression that the relationship put under scrutiny here is not static, but dynamic. The boundary between the possible and our existence and the umbilical chord between our Identity and ontology cause us to look upon the margins of the possible as if being given once and for all. Even if such a conviction may impute an eternal endurance on the limits delineating the possible from the impossible, a passing glance at social history suffices to establish that the opposite is closer to the truth. A historical consciousness affords us the proof of how volatile is the limit separating the possible from the impossible; and how

evanescent, if not ephemeral, are the margins of the possible if put into the perspective of the large span of human history.

It is, therefore, essential not to yield completely to the legal thought that limits the variants in the possible to the least possible degree and to the ontological perspective that presents the impossible as turbulence. It is exactly at this point that we come to map out the implications of such a maxim as *impossible yet there it is*. The only way for a sovereign being to come into being in this world, in which every element cannot exist except by being homogenized by a discourse of the possible, is to pass through *transgression*. Corresponding to the fact that the world is the world of the *possible*, and also corresponding to the fact that attaining a ground in the impossible paves the only way to sovereignty, is the necessity that sovereign act is no more different than infringement. Insofar as the *infringement* in an act fades away, this act, acquiring a duration and identity, has already been homogenized, and so is not a sovereign act.

It is therefore small wonder that the sovereign moment, call it by what name we will, has to appear as a miracle: it has no place in this world (otherwise it is signified, functional, homogenized), but it somehow takes (a) place. If miracle is saved from the value-laden burden it has to shoulder, the boundary between miracle and transgression becomes apparent. Only if something makes the practical rationality, motivated by utility, tumble and incapacitate the language from finding the right words for signification, can there be talk of a miracle. Something short of silencing language for articulating everything in a discourse, and of interrupting the rationality registering everything in a matrix, namely something short of transgressing the ontological foundation of the world can be anything but miracle: what is in hand in such a case is the realization of an anticipation. It is only when this anticipation, whose modality (duration, future, useful) stands against sovereignty, dissolves into NOTHING that the miracle comes to light and differs from a mere accomplishment.

Now that the identity between transgression and miracle (sovereignty) comes into view, we can discern the implications in this identity: if sovereignty disintegrates

the ontological foundation of the world, and if the world outlasts this, it is plausible to be curious about the prospect of this incident. We can ask, accordingly, what happens to that which has no real place (*Un-Raum*) in this world; what happens to the impossible after it blossoms at the very place of the possible; where the event which scatters the temporal sequence is to be found after the split in this sequence is rejoined. All in all, we can ask in what state we can find this completely negative element after the *world* is restored, after its parameters (duration, identity, perspective) is reestablished. In all interrogations like this, a will to know is at work. But in all the considerations chasing after the *future* of this radical break (negation of future), we can give only one reply: we can not catch it. Stating it clearly, we can say that we cannot find it *as such*. The only way to come to terms with it is set out by rationality –it is the only faculty we have at our disposal to question, to make investigations and to attempt explanations. Given the contradiction between different modalities of rationality and sovereignty (even between modality and *non*-modality), what we have at hand, at the end, is not the sovereignty (pure negativity) but something listed in a store of useful things. That this thing is called, *subject* or sovereign, or concealed behind epithets, does not affect the result: it is still useful.

This impossibility of our coming to terms with sovereignty lays before us a point worthy of attention: it is but a hair's breadth that divides the appearance of sovereignty from its disappearance. It is not fortuitous, therefore, that Foucault employs the metaphor of flash of lightening to mark out the unattainable nature of sovereignty: it vanishes as swiftly as it rises to prominence. Not so much as a Heideggerian phenomenology is required to make out the identity between death and this disappearance. (not-being-in-the-world), w can easily realize that sovereignty trembls on the verge of death whenever it comes into being. At this point, it is legitimate to ask what falls to the lot of the subject undergoing this experience. If this experience leads to death, it is sure, we say, to sweep the subject clinging to it to the same destination. Nonetheless, a case for distinction is easily felt: although all miracles vanish, different conditions cause different imprints after their disappearance. Most miracles die away without leaving any trace and we can consider them as phenomena of no serious social significance. Some of them deviate from the general in that they, even after vanishing, radiate effects which ripple across

social space. Yet, sometimes there comes into being an unusual phenomenon in the which miracle releases such a great pressure as places on the existing social structure a weight more than it can bear. Such cases display that miracle itself turns out to be a foundation, outstripping the social conditions of the possible.

In such events, we cannot seize the sovereign moment except in a situation modified after having stroke on our phenomenological horizon; and this we can take as none other than to mean that we never have the moment *as such*. It seems safe to say that given this radical break, sovereignty and death go hand in hand in the homogenous world whenever sovereignty frequents there. That sovereignty and death are concomitant portends a prospect disclosing that the subject undergone by sovereignty too confronts different possibilities opened up by death; or to state more directly, this subject all chances upon *a death* but a death whose manifestation varies according as sovereignty falls into various social situations. What remains to be seen is how these different possibilities or these different deaths form the ontological foundation of political sovereignty. It is therefore appropriate to directly deal with the deaths of the sovereign.

6.3. *DEATHS OF SOVEREIGN*

In the last section, we may be engulfed by a feeling that our views may cause less insight than confusion, plunging the reader into obscurity. Of course, the source of obscurity is associated rather with the lack of aptitude on the part of the writer than with the intricate character of the theme at hand. Obscure as it appears, our deliberation manages to establish the relation between death and sovereignty, and to show accordingly that whenever sovereignty springs forth in the world of distinct objects, death is always there to follow it like a shadow. Against such a background as drawn by the correlation between death and sovereignty, we certainly set the question of the situation inhabited by the sovereign figures. Enlivened by this question, we easily detect the discrepancy between the physical presence of these figures and the paradoxical position of sovereignty premised on NOTHING: for he (the sovereign) occupies a place in phenomenal world, he is but something; yet

sovereignty has no such a presence, and it is thus NOTHING. (noumenal in the Kantian sense). How this incompatibility can find a clarification is what strikes our attention as the most urgent problem, and thus to this we can now turn our attention.

On the path to the solution, we may make, I think, important progress if we focus on the divergence between brute physical force and sovereignty. It is hardly surprising to see that such a focus may bring out an important train of questions: in what sense does the enforcement of sovereignty differ from an infliction of physical force? Even if violence is always the vital element of sovereignty, how can it conceal this while the ordinary social life runs its course under its shadow? Or how can it justify this violence so that it is no more taken as violence, a violence which is usually conceived as a component to be completely wiped out from the social relations? With the divergence between force and sovereignty being thus taken into account, we can easily find the answer: legitimacy. It is only when the sovereign has its name tinged with a sort of air of legitimacy that the blaze of glory starts to arise on the power at his disposal. But this matter of legitimacy is more likely to enliven our curiosity than to mitigate it. This raises such questions as to the source of legitimacy: where is the foundation on which this legitimacy is baded? What is the legitimate source on which sovereign depends? Behind these questions stirred by sociological and legal concerns come the ones that are in more distinct ontological hues: which one of the two (the source of legitimacy or sovereignty) is prior? Is it legitimacy that founds the sovereignty? Or is it the sovereign will which has established this legitimacy. The details likely to issue these questions, I find appropriate to disregard because of space concerns. Nonetheless, there is one point whose omission is not so easy: however superficially conducted, these questions broach the idea that there is an arbitrary dimension in the very foundation, if not in the preservation, of sovereignty. Nothing can illustrate this point more successfully than the fact that it is not blindfolded justice but the balance of forces in a violence already outburst which determines the emergence and the form of sovereignty.

Here the predicament is that of a phenomenon owing its appearance to the very thing from which it ought to posit itself as a distinct and separate entity. In the modern formulations of sovereignty, this predicament finds its utmost expression. It

is not so easy for modern mind to continue to confer legitimacy on sovereignty when it realize that in the origin of sovereignty lies less the communicative skills than the contingent configuration of power relations. Hence, the predicament springs from two inherent features of sovereignty which, being mutually-exclusive, tend to demolish consistency unless they undergo a sort of mediation. We are therefore prepared to say that insofar as (political) sovereignty comes to the fore without having been tainted by an inconsistency, what is at hand is not the sovereignty that has already been mediated. For sovereignty and mediation are mutually negating, this situation means that sovereignty does not actually exist. We have already dealt with this issue, drawing the inference that from an ontological perspective, sovereignty is rather absence than presence. So we do not need to spend time on this point; yet one thing striking our attention is that whenever sovereignty attains a presence, it is to be found not in a *sovereign* form, but in a *mediated* one. From this it seems reasonably safe to conclude that sovereignty is not visible except in a guise tailored to meet certain theological, political and economical needs.

This conclusion spurs us to realize that the presence of sovereignty depends on representation, or sovereignty as presence is but a representation. This representation is what enables the gap between the signifier and the signified to blossom out, and is also what bestows on the signified the capacity to facilitate the organization of social, political and legal relations. Naturally, a question as to the basic function of this representation arises. In bringing about such a gap, the main function of representation is to breathe into sovereignty a presence just like a Creator breathing life into flesh and bones. This analogy is insightful in suggesting that in the same fashion as the breath of Creator, which, according to the theological thought, makes the animate being more than the mere sum of certain amount of blood, bone and flesh, the representation of sovereignty conceals the base materials at its foundation which, had it not been for such a cover, would have certainly imperiled the paradigm of sovereignty.[287] If we rely on Derrida's concept of metaphysics of

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[287] To this point, Bataille calls our attention in La Structure Psychologique du Fascisme : Si l'on envisage maintenant la souveraineté sous sa forme tendancielle, telle qu'elle a été historiquement véépar les subjets responsables de sa valeur attractive, indépendamment toutefois d'une réalité particulère, sa nature apparaît, humainement, la plus noble –élevée jusqu'à la majesté- pure au milieu même de l'orgie, hors de l'atteinte des inrimités humaines... (dans ce sens la consitution de la nature royale au-dessus d'une réalité inavouable rappelle les fictions justificatrices de vie éternelle). Georges

presence, we may be led on to a better understanding of what this representation accomplishes. The vital point in ascribing a presence to sovereignty is none other than to spare it from the infirmities inflicted on a being by the *physical* world. These infirmities can be taken as the unavoidable price for occupying a position in this physical world, or a price to be paid for being *physical* being: physical presence is relational (not original) and it is differential (not essential).

For the sake of brevity and also of clarity, let's turn to our early example, namely to the King. The King, as a physical being, lives in a physical world. So, we would not err in arguing that because of this physical condition, the King is always someone and something. But it should not be passed unnoticed that the King is always more than this someone and something. Otherwise he would have been none the more different from other things caught in the web of interdependence. Insofar as he does not radically break with these things, his sovereignty is naught; and this leap is what representation accomplishes. Only with the help of such a representation, only with the help of such a mental makeup can *this* ordinary man, whose physical presence is always deluged with the deficiencies (hunger, thirst, illness, age and death), be transfigured: the royal representation having poured out its lights over this fragile being, he immediately turns out to be the King who is no longer within the touch of time or other physical conditions. It is therefore small wonder that King has always two bodies: one is his physical body, living under the yoke of nature and fraying in the course of time; the other is his *sublime body* submitting neither to time nor to death nor to any other physical deficiencies. This theme has been so exhausted that the final outcome may be considered trite if we directly deal with it.[288] Even if we can avoid presenting the details of the fact of King's having two bodies, there is one thing that we should bear in mind: the stake at the royal rituals, which sometimes strike those outside their symbolic space as nonsensical, is the guarantee to keep open the gap between these two bodies. This explains the utmost care to be taken at the royal funeral ceremonies. They are, at the end, , the time when the death strikes

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Bataille, "La Structure Psychologique du Fascisme " **Oeuvres Completes I Premiers Écrits 1922-1940** (Paris : Gallimard, 1970).

[288] For a detailed account of this point in the context of Mediaeval European theology, see Ernst H. Kantorowicz, **The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology** (New Jersey: Princeton University Pres, 1957).

down the King, when the glow of sublime no longer excludes from sight the timeworn being, hence the time when the possibility of presenting King as a sublime being evaporates along with the deceased's soul. In this light, we can suppose death of sovereign to be such an occasion as requires from court an extra effort to prop up the sublime body; and this the royal funeral ceremonies fulfills through rituals, masks, effigies and mummies, making efforts to show that, as a sublime being, the sovereign is eternal and immortal.

Apart from this extraordinary event –the death of sovereign- it is possible to discern in the courtly spectacles and symbols (specter, crown, cloak…) this tendency to the sublime as the main underlying motive. It is not therefore wrong to suppose that here the courtly practices continue turning around the desire to hold the gap between King's two bodies in its widest possible range. It is exactly at this point that we come to perceive the paradoxical position of sovereignty: sovereignty attains a physical presence by no means other than by making a detour through a metaphysical territory. As we try to make it clear above, sovereignty is NOTHING; thus it has to have no physical presence. Having showed that gaining such a presence is none other than death, we already marked the necessity that every time sovereignty comes into the light, it undergoes a kind of death. So, what the royal spectacles and discourse of sovereignty strive to dismiss from the sight is this impossibility of attaining a physical presence. It is therefore hardly too much to say that whenever we come across a sovereign being, we have at hand a metaphysical representation. This being assumed, we can safely conclude that sovereign as a physical presence is but a metaphysical being.

With the implications of this paradox, I am not concerned at this point. But without taking into account what Westphalia and the rise of modernity indicates in this context, it is almost impossible to bring this issue to a close. Westphalia or other historical milestones of modern world betoken serious blows to the above mentioned paradigm of sovereignty. To clarify this, let's focus on the spectacle through which the royalty, with the sovereign at its peak, remains immaculate in the midst of the impure world. Only if it is underpinned by consumption beyond utility can this spectacle be realized. Namely, it is only through ostentatious and conspicuous

consumption that the royal representations filter out the filthy matter and make the sovereign transfigured so that he or she remains untouched by the concerns and imperatives of earthly existence falling to the lot of ordinary man.[289] In this process, the critical part of success depends on the spectacle's ability to prevail upon the multitude to believe that sovereign is a supreme being distinguished from all others by an insuperable gap. Hence this is what the function of consumption beyond utility brings about. Without such consumption drastically deviated from that of ordinary man, the spectacle can do anything but afford the proof of such a gap.

If only because the Protestant worldview reached an official recognition and appeared no longer as heretical (a deviation from the norm) after 1648, we can catch sight of the inherent incompatibility between Westphalia and the paradigm of sovereignty expressed by "consumption beyond utility." Prompted by the hostility to useless consumption, the Protestant worldview discloses what so radically sets Westphalia and sovereignty at variance. Seen from this angle, Westphalia denotes none other than the death of sovereign and sovereignty. If being successfully established, this inverse link between Westphalia and sovereignty means the rescue from the fallacy to which the Westphalia paradigm condemns our political imagination. We can easily grasp this fallacy to be what we already call metaphysics of presence. What makes us fatalistic about this fallacy is the absolutely metaphysical nature of today's sovereignty: *sovereignty without sovereign*. Then, we can askis this twist, the insistence on seeing the modernity as the death of sovereignty, enough to challenge the metaphysics of presence in modern sovereignty? Of course, it is enough in that it shows us that the center of power is empty as Zizek persistently argues for. But is *this* revelation enough? Or does such a

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[289] This concern is general attitude which cannot be restricted with the sovereign. It is place to find the traces of it in all circles of aristocratic class. "In all but the lowest stages of culture the normally constituted man is comforted and upheld in his self-respect by 'decent surroundings' and by exemption from menial offices..'… From the days of the Greek philosophers to the present, a degree of leisure and of exemption from contact with such industrial processes as serve the immediate everyday purposes of human life has even recognized by thoughtful men as a prerequisite to a worthy or beautiful, or even a blameless, human life. In itself and in its consequences the life of leisure is beautiful and ennobling in all civilized men's eyes… Conspicuous abstention from labor therefore becomes the conventional mark of superior pecuniary achievement and the conventional index of reputability… The ancient tradition of the predatory culture is that productive effort is to be shunned as being unworthy of able-bodied man, and this tradition is reinforced rather than set aside in the passage from the predatory to the quasi-peaceable manner of life." Thorstein Veblen, **The Theory of the Leisure Class. An Economic Study of Insitutions** (New York: Mentor Book, 1953), pp. 42-43.

twist dissolve all metaphysics of presence to be found in all types of sovereignty quite irregardless of spatial and temporal conditions? Or does it dissolve one type (modern sovereignty) only making concession to another (e.g. feudal sovereignty or suzerainty)? Let me express myself clearly: does not saying that Westphalia signifies and symbolizes the death of sovereignty automatically amount to claim that before Westphalia there *was* sovereign? All the considerations so far given would be vain if this *was* is taken less problematic than *is*. Irrespective of any spatial and temporal conditions, sovereign, so long as it is sovereign in the genuine sense of the word, cannot attain a physical presence. This indicates nothing different from the fact that even before Westphalia, sovereign and sovereignty is already dead. This last point urges us to admit that it is little early to deal with Westphalia as the death of sovereignty. So, before proceeding in this direction, we would do better to consider other aspects of this issue, pointing out that sovereign was already *dead* even before Westphalia.

6.4. *FIRST DEATH OF SOVEREIGN: THE SYMBOLICAL DEATH*

Now that we have noted the multi-dimensional relationship between death and sovereignty, I find it appropriate to stop beating about the abstract theoretical bushes and to deal directly with the deaths indicated by the dimensions of this relationship. Naturally, such a conclusion as that even before Westphalia (before its official death), sovereignty is already dead appears to place on us the burden of proof. This burden entails to ask how and why sovereign before Westphalia was dead and to inquire in what senses it is possible to talk of this death. It should also be underlined that such a burden is too heavy to bear if no more than the abstract and hypothetical arguments, e.g. social contract or Hegelian Phenomenology, lend a hand to the operation. This means that we stand in need of concrete data such as Anthropology or Ethnology yields and delivers. If otherwise, we can plausibly think that our theoretical considerations can scarcely furnish our thesis (Modernity as the Second Death of Sovereign) with the proof showing that this thesis is not only theoretical but also historical. Accordingly, even if we embark on this section with abstract arguments, we shall direct our attention to the concrete data addressing to

the real events and historical episodes. But let's start with the death which we think is symbolical.

To understand what is meant by the sovereign's symbolical death, two figures of Mozart's operas, whom we were introduced at the close of the last chapter, looks like a good place to start. Even a superficial glance would suffice to show that *Don Giovanni* and Count of *Figaro* represent the two extreme poles within the range of which to locate the sovereign's symbolical or real death or the mixture of them. So, the dissimilarities between these two enable us to map out two sorts of death undergone by any sovereign. As the historical data make clear, the ratio between these two strikes us as negative. Accordingly, the more *success* one shows in the way of symbolical death, the more secure are the grounds which she or he attain to slip away from the real (physical) death. But it would be totally wrong if we take this pattern as absolute. The balance is so fragile that even the slight touch of a contingent matter can upset it. Hence, however successfully a sovereign assumes the symbolical mandate imposed upon him, namely however firmly he gains a footing in the land of symbolic death, the unforeseeable future may bring out a result -defeat, drought or plague- such as causes sovereign to be struck by real death. In these and similar cases, what we stand witness to is a sudden death that comes into the light in the uncontrollable flux of history, rendering the guarantee of the symbolical death null and void. But to these, we can add another pack of cases in which the real (physical) death is written as the integral part of the symbolical death. The historical and anthropological evidences abound which shows that the symbolical mandate assumed to be sovereign also calls for, as a sanction, a physical death at the final moment of this mandate.[290] Given the complexity of social life at the face of which any attempt at casting it down to a strictly determined pattern becomes frustrated, we cannot talk of the relationship between symbolical and physical deaths except on loose and general terms. Yet, even if we cannot detect a strict pattern, the

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[290] The following passage illustrates this point: "Önder, toplumun onu kuşattığı tabular ve dolayısıyla toplumun denetimi altında ezilir. Toplum onun dünyevi bir güce el atmasını engellemek için her türlü önlemi alır. Bir yandan, maddi açıdan, sıradan insanın kaldıramayacağı kadar ağır yükleri yükler, hayatını bir işkenceye dönüştüren somut görevlerle onu bunaltır… Kendi kendine düzenlenen birçok basit toplum, önderini yaşayan bir ölüyü dönüştürmekle yetinmez, onu belli bir süre sonra gerçekten öldürerek, dizginlerin kimin elinde olduğunu gösterir." Cemal Bali Akal, **İktidarın Üç Yüzü** (Ankara: Dost Kitabevi Yayınları, 2005), p. 22-23

polarization around them helps us to have a sense amid the infinitely manifold appearances that social phenomenon assumes in the course of history. How this sense explains the institution of sovereignty, we shall focus on later; but for the moment, it is necessary to render the details of what we understand by the symbolical death.

It is, therefore, high time to return to our two sovereign figures representing two different modalities in the operation of sovereignty: *Don Giovanni* and *Count*. In view of space limitation making detailed explanation difficult, let's firstly state what should have come after a considerable elaboration: when these two figures are put side by side, the immediate thing striking our attention is that the Count, sovereign as his position appears, is a *castrated* one. The castration in question here is not necessarily directly connected with the physical castration. What is referred by this is, therefore, less a physical condition than symbolical one around which the great bulk of psychoanalytical views turns.[291] In this sense, castration indicates a condition in which subject surrenders his desires in order to gain a social position. Seeing the issue in such a broader perspective, we are prepared to say that castration marks a standard with which a subject has to come up with insofar as the purpose is to attain a legitimate social position. We have therefore reason to look upon the (symbolical) castration as an occasion on which the social *success* (recognition) of the subject depends. In order to avoid confusion, we stand in need of a clarification: even though man is a social being, there is a remnant that the social cannot swallow up. If man is rational being acting in such a way as to obey the requirements of the social, he has also an inalienable part flaring up as totally *irrational* so that it makes evident that between the subject's will and the social requirement does not always lie a reconciliation but also a contradiction.

When expanding on this duality, we immediately feel the necessity of avoiding what the common sense usually prods us to do: considering this irrational as

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[291] For the elaboration of this point, we can cite Gérard Mendel's **La Révolte Contre le Père** as an important starting point. Castration cannot be reduced to an physical act. It has also phantasmatique dimension which urges Mendel to think that rathen than the myth of Oedipus, the mythe of Prometheus is a good place to conceptualize the castration: "… nous procéderons à une analyse du Mythe de Prométhée, lequel nous paraît, mieux que la légende d'Œdipe, rendre compte du désir du fantasmatique du fils visant à chârter le père pour s'emparer de sa puisance." **La Révolte Contre Le Père : Une Introduction à la Sociopsychanalyse** (Paris : Petite Bibliothèe Payot, 1972), p. 119.

something to cope with so that the rational organization of society should smother it or at least expel it to the margins where it has no chance of affecting the general course of social life. Of course, it is by no means possible to ignore the clash between these two sections; but this clash should not be thought of as one occasioned by the coming together of two mutually-exclusive elements. And this is exactly the point where commonsense generally misleads us. It seems hardly rash to conjecture that despite the tension or even violence, the pattern of the relationship between rationality and irrationality is far from being that of two opposite forces confronting one another within an enclosed space. Contrary to the initial impression, this relationship appears rather as the moment of arbitrary and blurred distinction than as the one of radical separation. This recommends us to take the complexity in the relationship into consideration. This complexity largely stems from the fact that these two apparently distinct and contradictory moments of social life are not mutually-exclusive but mutually-constitutive. This point is observed more clearly if we take particular note of the fact that the division line is the outcome of contingent historical and social conditions; and consequently it is always subject to alterations in the course of time despite the contrary perception that it is given once and for all. What we should highlight to bring this mutually-constitutive character to light is the fact that without the one, the other is impossible. To duly understand what a kind of complexity is at work in the relationship, we would better grow conscious of the fact that the contradictory modalities inherent in rationality and irrationality by no means entails a kind of reverse ratio between them. Thus it is simply mistaken to suppose that the more the rationality to the hand the lesser the irrationality one has at the end. On the contrary, rationality after a certain point itself turns out to be irrational (or its irrational character cannot hide itself after this point). Namely, there come some moments when it becomes difficult to conceal the arbitrary elements in drawing the line dividing rationality from irrationality.[292]

These last points lend some countenance to the conjecture that man is not only a rational being longing for a harmonious social life or that he is not only a social being submitting to the imperatives of rationality. He is also an irrational being

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[292] Though what is stated here seems a little abstract and arbitrary, pondering a little on the *nuclear deterrence* convinces us about the irrationality inherent in rationality.

thwarting the harmonious communal life to fully exhaust all the possibilities belonging to man.[293] Considering rationality and irrationality in this way, we come to realize how the difference between our two sovereign figures, viz. Don Giovanni and Count, originates: they represent the two different parts of the dichotomy between rationality and irrationality. To the extent that Count undergoes a castration, he attains a more secure footing in the symbolical world of society which organizes the ranks, statuses, positions and relations within its limits. We, therefore, do not err in considering the Count's *sovereign* position as the outcome of his submitting to the requirements of this symbolical world. These requirements, with whatever content they be furnished, pin the social being down to a legitimate space. It is nonetheless significant to emphasize that the legitimacy of this place is at hand only insofar as subject complies with the castration enjoined by the social codes. It is exactly at this point that we come to make out that with which it is possible to mark such a difference as separates Count and Don Giovanni. Since Don Giovanni does not undergo a castration, and since he never relinquishes his desires, he cannot attain such a space making him part of society. He has no definite space; right from the beginning, he cannot come to terms with society except by intruding an already defined legitimate space (physically abusing Donna Anna, killing Comrade in a duel, seducing the villager girl, and beating her prospective husband) and except by running in front of the (social) forces bent on taking the vengeance of such encroachments. Only at the moment when he stops moving and when the hand of the social holds him does he fail to escape real death.

Suppose this granted, we are brought to see that Don Giovanni is, at any rate, *exterior* to community: being in a movement or being a movement, he circulates within the community; but this by no means makes him legitimate and definite part of this community. In a sense, it is an alien object that continues circulating within the perimeters of the symbolical space. But it is not correct to conceive him as an accidental entity having happened to land in a foreign territory. There is more than this: he holds a crucial place in the *constitution* of this

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[293] The phrase *unsociable sociality* coined by Kant successfully gives expression to this point. Zizek's comparison on this ground between Kant and Heidegger is highly suggestive. For this, see: Slavoj Žižek, **The Ticklish Subject: the Absent Centre of Political Ontology** (New York: Verso, 2000), p. 59-66.

community. His position within society being an absolute movement recognizing no barrier before which to stop, a movement intruding every space encapsulating others as distinct subjects, he appears to be *pure Negativity*. It is, however, manifest that such a Negativity -so pure as to loom large on the horizon of symbolical space no less than as a criminal- is exactly that on which the *positive* character of society rests. Without such a figure interrupting the dull flow of daily routine, society can by no means afford to be a harmonious entity as we usually conceive it. Without him, society can only be an abstract entity consisting of coming together of the individuals on the basis no more than the pursuit of private and particular interest. Is not Don Giovanni therefore the figure that affords society a ground to pursue something beyond the particular interests? Is he not the point in which the particular interests are welded together so that the pursuit becomes common and general rather than selfish and particular? Is the circulation of this foreign element not that which sets the circulation in motion? All in all, is he not the center around which the social beings circles, and which, had it not been for such a center, tend to dissipate? Any effort to respond to these questions gives testimony to the constitutive character obtained by Don Giovanni: without the violence opened up by his movement, society can be barely more than an association set up by individuals coming together for the sole purpose of pursuing particular interests and satisfactions.

After these introductory notes, let us try to register the basic features of that which is, in fact, impossible to register. He is an absolute movement and pure Negativity; therefore he has no identity.[294] He is always external to society; therefore he is not assimilated and he is *heterogeneous*. He has a *surplus* character making him unfitting at once to the chronological sequence and to the succession of causes and effects. These two having been the domains which give rise to a matrix of meaning, and this matrix having drawn, at the end, the line between the possible and the impossible, the voice of social is accustomed to speak of this surplus as a

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[294] Mladen Dolar aptly registers the basic ontological features of Don Giovanni. "As sensuality, Don Giovanni is the pure principle of non-identity- only language is able to grasp identity, giving it continuance at the price of losing the momentary and the sensual, and from then on one can speak about spirit and morals. As a demonic force of sensuality, Don Giovanni is inherently not identical with himself; his only identity is eternal transformation, in purely negative determination- his only loyalty is the ceaseless repetition of disloyalty. "If Music be the Food of Love," **Opera's Second Death** Slavoj Žižek and Mladen Dolar (New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 53.

transgression. And all these urge us to recognize the fact that he has no *positive* function within the society and he is *useless*.

If he has no place in society; therefore he is *impossible*. But he somehow happens to be in this society; which is to say that even if he is impossible, yet there he *is*. It is in the light of this ambivalent character that we come to make out how perfectly Don Giovanni embodies Bataille's definition of sovereignty: he consumes without paying due attention to the utility; he does not calculate the future outcomes of his acts. Having no notion of future, he cannot anticipate, therefore he does not fear death. Having no anticipation, he is pure *enjoyment.* Whatever he does, he cannot help transgressing the law. Consequently, it is not too much to say that few things can better account for the ontological position of Don Giovanni than this: *impossible yet there it is.*

Everything that is ambivalent in Don Giovanni appears to be firmly settled in the Count. He cannot be conceived as a pure movement; for he has a definite and legitimate place. He is a recognized figure, and he has an identity. His Negativity cannot be thought to be pure insofar as his acts do not always break the rules. Since he occupies a position defined and settled by the symbolical space of community, and since he assumes an identity determined and imposed by the community, his movement and his actions can do anything but infringe the margins of the symbolical space. As indicated, these margins are exactly that which draws the line between the possible and impossible and which separates the permissible from the impermissible. Thus it is hardly surprising to see that having conformed to his legitimate place, the Count never occupies such an ambivalent position as Don Giovanni does. He, therefore, is a legal figure and acts by complying with the requirements of the possible. Seen from this perspective, his Negativity is a permissible one producing the positive effects. Drawing on Arendt, we can say that he cuts a tree (Negativity) but only in order to create a table (Positivity) out of it.

What gives further testimony to our thoughts on the Count is his position in the bureaucratic machine. Not only does he occupy a legitimate place in symbolical space of society, but he also holds a post within the state organization: ambassador.

Far from being a foreign element whose circulation does not raise effects except in the guise of transgression, he is even the *guarantor* of the law. Nowhere does the contrast between Don Giovanni and Count appear more drastically: whereas the pursuit of *pure* enjoyment stirs Don Giovanni, Count's enjoyment requires him to obey the law. Does not the contrast strike here our attention more than the one which only concerns a comparative reading in history of opera? The political color of the matter is easily recognized if we heed the prohibitions and censor which *Figaro* had to come across. After this, another question immediately comes before us: Do not Count and Don Giovanni represent two different historical modes of sovereignty: the feudal, which, on the basis of privileges and rights rooted in the legal and divine codes regulating the social relations, permits sovereign to indulge into a consumption without utility (enjoyment); and the modern, which, with the considerable erosion in the privileges of ruling classes, enjoins sovereign to rule on the rational basis (service). That is why Don Giovanni's enjoyment is independent from the legal conditions and does not take such a thing as accountability into consideration whereas the Count's enjoyment is a restricted one and is premised on his compliance to this restriction.

Here, we again come to the topic already pointed out: castration. Only insofar as the Negativity is filtered through a process can it produce positive results, attain a legitimate place, and have a definite identity. It is in this sense that we can talk of Count's sovereignty as a *castrated one*.[295] Due to this castration, he becomes a sovereign: thenceforth he is a Father, and his Fatherhood is beyond doubt quite irrespective of how untrustworthy a father he might be. Considering this connection between the castration and the Fatherhood, we catch sight of the fact that Don Giovanni is always more than the feudal lord or his surplus character is so that he

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[295] In the intersection psychoanalysis and anthropology, the term of castration plays important role to shed light on the development of sovereignty. The Luba Epic, which accounts the kingship in central Africa, can be given as an example of this. As de Heusch shows, there are two sovereign figures in this account: Nkongolo and Mbidi Kiluwe. The oppositions between them are striking and lays before us the psychoanalytical dimension of sovereignty. According to epic, Nkongolo is characterized by "primitive royalty, incest, sterility, death, natural openings, softness" whereas Mbidi Kiluwe come to the fore with such attributes as "refined royalty, hyperexogamy, procreation, life, pointed, fabricated objects, hardness." How open these attributes are to the psychoanalytic interpretation, it is quite evident. Luc De Heusch, **The Drunken King or The Origin of the State**, Roy Willis trans. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), pp. 21-26. For a general and detailed account of the development of political authority from psychoanalytical perspective, see Eugène Enriquez, **Sürüden Devlete. Toplumsal Bağ üzerine Psikanalitk Deneme**, Nilgün Tutal trans. (İstanbul: Ayrıntı, 2004).

cannot be tolerated even within the feudal structure. Even if the feudal order licenses an utmost enjoyment to sovereign classes, even if it is a social mechanism churning out privileges and prerogatives for them, it by no means affords to be such an order as permits no room for reciprocity and recognition. Viewing the feudal lord from modern perspective, we can describe the him irrational figure abusing the persons who are required by the feudal order to remain at his disposal. But this is the half of truth: his excessive character does not make him a millimeter different from a figure who is asked to fulfill certain tasks. Of course, the feudal order has usually loosely had an eye on the fulfillment of tasks, which it was demanded of the feudal lord, in forcing him to respect the rights of ordinary men. But this was not the case when it comes to feudal classes. This explains why in such regions as Japan or Western Europe where the despotic tendencies were kept in check, relations among feudal classes and their members had remained the one which we conceive as being among the equals.

However much he looks like a feudal lord, Don Giovanni differs in one significant respect: his sovereignty is too much even for the feudal world order. He is a pure movement insisting on nothing but refusing to have a definite place. But the reciprocity enables the sovereign to attain a place albeit flexibly delineated. And that is why his acts never fall short of infringing the margins of feudal order. Taking note of this fact, we understand what is really in question here. He *is* a Negativity that has not been mediated by any social, political or legal structure; so it is safe to assume that he is a being that is in its *immediacy*. In Hegelian terms, we can say that by not negating his Negativity and by thus remaining in its immediacy, he never gained a firm footing in the ontological ground necessary to become *Selbstbewusstsein.* Thus, it is hardly too much to conclude that his acts accomplish nothing but the blasphemy of the *Allgemeine.*

From these last remarks, the inference is drawn that we have in our hand a kind of typology consisting of three different forms operating in three different modalities. The first is the feudal lord acting in a world in which the suzerainty is the fundamental way of organization and authority. Though reciprocity and recognition was not wanting in such a system which has mainly moved around the fief-vassal

relationship, the ability to engage in consumption beyond utility was the benchmark for sovereignty. The extravagant consumption for which the rationality is really at pain to find a justification was the gist of authority deciding on one's entitlement to sovereignty. It is, therefore, natural that the justification of one's position as sovereign depends on the *performance* of this kind of consumption. What such a performance requires is, we can say, ostentatious consumption, excessive violence and efforts to demonstrate the exteriority of sovereign. It is quite obvious that all these, at any rate, blur the distinction between the public and private realms which modern world tends to divide in the form of enjoyment and service. Highly important at this point is to take note of the fact that so long as consumption beyond utility forms the foundation of a social organization, it is still useful, therefore serves a purpose, however radical and exterior it may stand to the generality. In our typology, the Count is the second one. The dissimilarity between the Count and Feudal lord reveals that the Count represents the sovereign into which the feudal lord has turned with the rise of modernity. His acts are so tamed down as to leave behind all that is excessive and extravagant in the feudal lord. The public position putting on him the fetters of accountability compels his chase after enjoyment to be pursued only in the sneaky ways which are given no toleration outside the private realms. In a sense, the Count perfectly embodies the enlightened sovereign; and all his acts are in accord with Kantian principle which, with our slight adjustment, reads as this: "Enjoy as much as you can, but obey when it comes to the post!" What can we say of our third sovereign, viz. Don Giovanni? Since the net of reciprocity and recognition cannot catch him in his movement, he can be described as completely free from the symbolic death and his consumption is absolutely useless. We may ask what falls to the lot of this figure always fleeing from symbolical death. For the sake of brevity, we may say that what befalls this elusive figure is nothing more different from the real or physical death. Before dealing with this real death, it seems in place to give a little further attention to the implications of this symbol death.

6.5. *TWO FORMS OF HETEROGENEITY: IMPERATIVE SOVEREIGNTY VS. BASE SOVEREIGNTY*

Looking at the course of previous section, even a superficial glance suffices to detect three issues arousing our curiosity. First of all, we should concern about the charges challenging our arguments by questioning whether or not it is arbitrary to view the process of recognition and socialization as a kind of death. Second, we may come across a critique considering our arguments suspicious due to their theoretical and presumptive nature. This kind of critique may insist that, in default of references to concrete social and historical data, our arguments have no more than a speculative character. Accordingly, what we presented seems less than an account of the social reality than an endeavor to twist it according to the tenets of a theoretical imagination. And the third issue asks if our arguments, especially our case for distinction between sovereign instances or figures, have any sociological and scientific relevance. Or asked more critically, do we have any other foundation in building our arguments than Mozart's two operas? This third issue seems to be a good place to start.

In chapter 2 where we focused on Bataille's sociological and philosophical concepts, we already noted that Bataille conceives society as consisting of two main components: *homogeneity* and *heterogeneity*. Since the discursive thought is a formation developed exclusively within the domain of homogeneity and since scientific knowledge comes to life only out of the discursive thought, we have seen reason to suppose that knowledge (science) and heterogeneity are incompatible. This incompatibility intimates the necessity of starting with homogeneity if we are to embark on the scientific analysis of heterogeneity. We may therefore say, in this context, that the knowledge of heterogeneity lies in homogeneity. This makes it necessary for us to reiterate the basic attributes of what Bataille means by homogeneity. Since details have already been mentioned, we can pass over them and concentrate on just a few basic themes giving homogeneity its distinctive shape. First of all, homogeneity is the world of production. We can take this as meaning that the dawn of homogeneity did not break until *human will* introduced *tool* into the nature.

With this introduction, the discrepancy between man and nature attained an insurmountable character. At this point, it is not difficult to note that *tool* and the *human will* relying on it immediately imprinted the world in an irreversible manner. Thenceforth, the world came to reveal itself as *something* that is in the *service*. Thus we see the emergence of the basic criteria according to which homogeneity acts: *utility*. Homogeneity's coming to terms with something can only be accomplished on the basis of utility. This amounts to saying that within the periphery of homogeneity, human will acts on the world in such way as to treat, distinguish, categorize and classify it.

In this configuration, we should take the particular note of the fact that, given the common denominator (utility) by or to which everything is reduced, elements in homogeneity is *interrelated*. On the basis of a common measure, everything is interchangeable. Thus homogenized, they have a value that varies according to how well they serve [the utility]. Nonetheless, this value, as easily seen, can by no means be a value *in itself,* but a value only for something else. This lends some countenance to our conclusion that within homogeneity, sovereignty is impossible. Of course, this is only the first part of the matter; there is a second one which shows in an eminent way that homogeneity cannot exhaust all the possibilities of the social: there comes into existence some occasions and things at the face of which common denominator cannot operate and comes across the impossibility of articulating, reducing and therefore treating. This inability suggests that there are some things that cannot be rendered homogeneous. Taking note of these, we are driven to admit that there is also a heterogeneous world (heterogeneity).

In a sense, it is not too much to say that heterogeneity is the negation of homogeneity. Important to highlight at this point is the fact that since the heterogeneous element disturbs and disappoints every attempt at reduction, it has no value which is conceived as value *for*. It has a value *in itself;* but this means none other than that it is useless. This position of heterogeneous element leads us to think that only within the realm of heterogeneity can something be sovereign. Bataille, when turning his attention to this realm, draws on French sacred sociology which, under such preeminent figures as Durkheim and Mause, investigates the relationship

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between the sacred, religion and community. This group of sociologists urges us to recognize the fact that given the utter difficulty to define the sacred elements according to a common point, we should assent to the proposal that to label them as heterogeneous [to the ordinary things] is the only way to define them. Additionally, French sacred sociology brings to our attention an interesting fact that heterogeneous or sacred elements tend to come under the two different groups: *pure* and *impure.* Rational thought is predisposed to be highly irritated by the coming together of two antithetical elements and hardly tolerates such a situation except treating it as a contradiction to be solved. Hence, in an age in which rational thought holds a monopolistic position, we are quite prepared to lean against such an idea as advocates us to take impure elements as sacred. Anthropological and ethnological data at our disposal affords proof of this fact by providing the examples in which impure elements such as menstrual blood ranks with, if not surpasses, the pure elements in being capable of occasioning sacred awe. To this we can offer as witness the fact that even in medieval Europe, the etymological root of sacred (*sacer*) has had two different meaning in circulation.

This approach considerably helps Bataille in his perceiving the necessity of a case for distinction in sovereign elements. Bataille holds on such a distinction, observing that some sovereign elements differ from others. The reason for this lies in their different social positions which determine the volume of wealth and extent of political power at their disposal. While some sovereign elements with their opulence and prestige prevail over the rest of society, others occupy the lowest position in the social ladder. These two totally different classes would not have shared any common ground had it not been for such a way of existence as is embodied by "consumption beyond utility." Though an insurmountable chasm separates these classes from one another, it is still possible to find a common point between them: consumption beyond utility. Seen from the perspective of homogeneity, they are *useless* classes due to their insistence on remaining outside the world of work and production. Moreover, their preference for useless consumption affects their attitude so that it is possible to detect among them similar perceptions and behaviors. And this becomes specifically apparent when they are compared with homogenous classes. No matter what a great difference is to be found between the leisure class and lumpen-

proletariat, the similarities are striking: the concern about prestige, the dislike for work, the inclination to violence and the contempt for calculation. In all these similarities, the difference within the heterogeneous elements stems from the high level of refinement with which leisure classes are able to donate their indulgence into a life beyond utility.

Searching for the source of this refinement, we come to realize from where the duality within the sovereign classes originates. It is possible to point out that the moment of distinction within the sovereign classes appears to be rooted in their relationship with homogeneity. The decisive moment is when homogeneity grows apart from heterogeneity; and this takes place only with the exclusion of violence and useless elements from the realm which homogeneity thenceforth takes over. But such a homogenizing gesture can by no means be looked upon as eternal; therefore it is small wonder to see that it wears away under the pressure of time. To clarify this, let us recall the basic modes to which a subject should accord his behaviors in order not to be excluded from the homogenous world: utility, calculation, rationality, success. It is therefore hardly surprising to see that under the influence of these modes, the actors of homogeneity are *interest-oriented*. What makes this situation complicated is the fact that in default of an Archimedean point in which these interests would be folded into a harmonious configuration, dissociation and distress permeate the fabrics of homogeneity. This point stresses that there are some elements circulating within homogeneity which we can view as heterogeneous [not completely homogenized].

It is exactly at this point that we start to perceive the precarious condition of homogeneity. In cases in which the means of adaptation [homogenous procedures] cannot circumscribe the dissociation and distress, it is likely that the antagonism remaining latent can erupt into a social effervescence. The basic ontological modality of homogeneity divulges its inaptitude in coping with these tendencies: since its constitutive moment lies in the exclusion of violence (heterogeneous elements), homogeneity cannot preserve itself when more than adaptation is needed for accomplishment of this task. And this explains why, when and in what conditions homogeneity cannot help but cooperate with certain aspects of heterogeneity, which, had it not been for such contradiction, would have undergone the same exclusion as

the rest of the heterogeneous world has done. This cooperation immediately gives rise to a duality within heterogeneous elements. On the one hand, we see a kind of sovereignty which guaranties order, which embodies law, and which controls and oppresses other heterogeneous elements. That's why Bataille calls this form of sovereignty *imperative sovereignty*. On the other hand, we see a kind of sovereignty which is expelled from homogenous world and which is tolerated only in the margins of social life. And this Bataille names this *base sovereignty.*

With this duality, Bataille conceives society as consisting of three parts: homogeneity, imperative sovereignty and base sovereignty. Homogeneity is the world of work, and its basic factor is the reduction to common measure; so the mode of existence here is *being-for.* Against this stand heterogeneous elements which group together under two different forms. Imperative sovereignty includes the elevated forms whose superiority to other classes mainly consists in a combination of physical force and mystical representations. And this combination enables the imperative forms to fill their proper realms with an air of fascination and astonishment that can culminate in a feeling of awe; and this yields a physical and spiritual organization which in turn oppresses and excludes the *base* forms. Considering this attitude, we are prepared to say that the imperative forms of sovereignty operate in the same mode as homogeneity does: *exclusion.* However, the difference immediately strikes our attention: whereas homogeneity attempts at reducing everything to a common denominator and excludes those unfitting to the scheme, imperative forms render everything useful *to* it and excludes *all others* from its proper domain without founding a rational ground. That to which imperative forms refers in excluding others is not a rational argument but an irrational one proclaiming their distinctive qualities. As for the base forms of sovereignty, we can quite safely assume that they are the imperative forms minus the physical power and the mystical or metaphysical representations. To clarify what we mean by this, it suffices to look behind the brilliance of ennobling representations: there we are sure to find a group of men and women who can by no means be considered less defiling than base forms as their readiness to intrigue, their inclination to violence, and their obsession with the prestige (for its own) readily demonstrate. This explains why imperative forms always stand in need of glory. This becomes clearer if we take into

account the fact that royalty stands in the midst of what Bataille describes as the *orgie de sang*. It is only with the help of glory that the royal representations can converge this into a dazzling image of royalty. Without such a glory, the divine and celestial image of imperative forms (King, chief of the army itself) drifts to a scene of which Wilfred Owen's poem, *Dulce Et Decorum Est*, provides a much more precise presentation than the public exhibits of political sovereignty do.[296]

In this way, we come to an issue which we have occasionally cited throughout this thesis. This is none other than the precarious situation to which imperative sovereign is always condemned. A sovereign figure has to prove worthy and essential in order to occupy a sovereign position; and sovereign cannot afford this proof unless he appears within the hale of glory. It follows from this that in order to obtain and preserve sovereignty in its imperative form, a sovereign has to be *successful*. Being fettered to the need for success illuminates the paradox of sovereignty: for sovereign, the only way to remaining sovereign passes through losing it. To appreciate this paradox, it is useful to take heed to the contrast Bataille considers to exist between sovereignty and success.[297] Success means how well an actor is embedded in the system, how well it accords its behaviors to the rules of the game, and all in all how well it is accustomed to speak in the voice that is already part of the great homogenizing machine, viz. of language and discursive thought. All these testify that success and the true sovereignty (whose definitions are given in chapter 2) are incompatible. The sovereignty defined by Bataille with such conceptualizations as *"impossible yet there it is" "consumption beyond utility," "miracle"* cannot come into being except as by appearing as a failure. And this explains that is why we exerted such a great energy to establish the link between death and sovereignty in the opening sections of this chapter.

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[296] Highly suggestive is the contrast between the soldiers parading before the public after the glory and the soldiers marching through the battlefield as exhausted by war. In this sense, Wilfred Owen's realism is the end of the metaphysics: *Bent double, like old beggars under sacks,/ Knock-kneed, coughing like hags, we cursed through sludge/.../ Man marched asleep. Many had lost their boots,/ but limped on, blood-shod. All went lame, all blind:/ Drunk with fatigue; deaf even to the hoots/ Of gas-shells dropping softly behind…*

[297] For the relationship between failure and sovereignty or power and sovereignty, see Jean Wahl, "Le Pouvoir et le Non-Pouvoir," **Critique** (vol: 195-196, 1963), p. 778.

We have already concluded that a sovereign has to be useless. Without uselessness, he cannot avoid being functional, which means none other than that he is in the service of something, no matter how this thing can be elevated.[298] This remark prods us to think that the price of success is the loss of absolute autonomy. Given the close connection between the success and the political sovereignty, we can hold on to the supposition that political sovereignty can be at hand only at the expense of true sovereignty. Political sovereignty, at any rate, presupposes strategy, adaptation, calculation and even accumulation; and these are the procedures and patterns out of which the absolute autonomy (negativity without employment) would turn out to be a tamed and useful actor.

At this point, it is critical to highlight that there exists a great difference between the usefulness implicated by the holder of political sovereignty (king, monarch, chief…) and the usefulness brought about by the homogeneity. Nonetheless, this difference does not discredit the fact that the sovereign one is still useful. One is obliged to loosen one's ontological conditions if going beyond the frame of utility is the ultimate aim. To the extent that sovereignty is NOTHING and it has NOWHERE, consumption beyond utility ends in nowhere but in death.[299] In this context, it is therefore appropriate to suppose that a consumption beyond utility (impossible yet there it is), heterogeneous as it may appear, has already been made the part of the world in which everything has to be functional. From this, it seems fairly safe to conclude that the imperative sovereignty is somehow useful. So, we come across a strange phenomenon: a sovereign form indulges in the consumption beyond utility, but this ensures rather than damages the homogeneity. In the emergence of this phenomenon, it is possible to observe the symbiosis that comes about between homogeneity and imperative forms as the main underlying factor. It is quite understandable that, pondering this point, we feel disposed to ask the question: how this symbiosis ever come about? Or in what senses and under what conditions is sovereign useful and functional?

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[298] For the details, see the Chapter II and the Chapter IV.

[299] A detailed account on NOTHING and NOWHERE has been presented in Chapter II.

What these questions bring to our attention is the theme to which we have referred to at the beginning of this section: the sociological and historical dimensions of our arguments. Throughout this thesis, it is maintained that Bataille's understanding of sovereignty and our arguments relying on it are not only a philosophical and theoretical edifice taking its main impetus from the philosopher's imagination. To bear this out, the question is to be asked as to the historical and sociological conditions of our understanding of sovereignty. In our probing these conditions, anthropology and ethnology offers a great help. So, it is high time to direct our attention to this issue. First of all, it should be mentioned that because of the stupendous historical and geographical extent of the matter, a detailed account satisfactorily listing the particular episodes and events does not appear to be quite attainable. For the fruit of such a cyclopean undertaking, Frazer's magnum opus, *Golden Bough,* offers itself as an occasion of great achievement.

Whether we look at the historical development of the institution of sovereignty through the lens of Frazer or other anthropologists, there appears a certainty which we can claim to have been established: the more primitive the forms in which we observe the institution of sovereignty, the more magical color with which it becomes tinged. This statement makes us ask: what does this magical character suggests about the institution of sovereignty? To fully appreciate this question, it is necessary to get a distinct notion of magic. At bottom, magic is a way of affecting the world or the forces thought to be capable of shaping the course of events in this world. Whether this way is searched as a private pursuit or within a public setting, it does not matter for our definition. One way or another, magical thought deems the world to be full of the animate things and the forces which can be moved or made to act according to the will of magician if the due procedure or method is found. What happens most to interest us about the magical thought is that in the primitive world, it is the main technique and manner to deal with the environment. In a world where rational or even religious thought is not in bud and in a world where neither rational nor theological views but only cosmogenealogical accounts were there to guide man who goes to great pains to explain the origin, the course and the prospect of events, magic attains an insuperable supremacy. To this we can add another trait of primitive mind: in the primitive world, there is scarcely a

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clear distinction between the natural and social phenomenon. This suggests that the quality of one's relations with the surrounding cosmic powers has a definite say on one's social well-being.

All these indicate one point: insofar as the sovereign comes before us in the guise of a magician, it is not at all difficult to infer what kind of functions he is enjoined to fulfill and thus how he emerges as useful despite his being *heterogeneous* to the world of work. First of all, he is the one who organizes and conducts the cosmic affairs on which the general well-being depends. This is due to his ability to stand in between the profane and the sacred world. We, therefore, see the first function of sovereign: being an agent through which the homogenous society (the profane world) communicates with the sacred world. This communication protects the community from the misfortunes and disasters which are sure to break out unless a way of satisfying the sacred world is found. As someone capable of carrying out such satisfactory communication, the sovereign holds a sovereign position. Without him, without his due conduct making the invisible forces of nature content, devilish and demonic spirits engulf the entire tribe, ruining all that work has achieved. The poor performance in communicating with the sacred is signified not only by a misfortune visiting the communal life in the form of natural devastation, but even in the manifestation of social unrest, the primitive thought understands this performance as the responsible one. And this favors the idea that in addition to his assurance of the cosmic stability, he also acts as a sacred presence, propping up social cohesion. Moreover, the sacred presence also plays a crucial role in channeling the destructive heterogeneous elements to the targets tarrying outside the core of society: the strangers (other social organizations) and the miserable social classes (the base forms of heterogeneity).

This last point enables us to get a notion of how his capacity of being a functionary is entangled with his being functional: he is the master of time and he is the lord of fertility. Despite the great alterations imparted by the immense geographical and historical extent, it is possible to detect contours of the general structure: the sovereign functions as a channel to the sacred world, orders rituals and the celebrations given in the name of great deities on whose content the social well-

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being depends. The sovereign also fixes the rules for such rituals and the sacrifices, and thus determines the rates of offerings on the basis of one's social position or rank. To these sacerdotal functions, it is possible to add military ones if conditions deprive the priestly class of their monopoly on sovereignty and urge them to share it with a military class.[300]

After considering the functionally magical character of sovereign, what remains to be seen is the historical and anthropological proof of the point. As indicated, this point is so extensive in both geographical and historical terms; thus we can call it the universal phenomenon of the primitive world. Within the context of this chapter concerning mainly with the transformation which the institution of sovereignty has undergone with the rise of modernity, there appears a need of narrowing the scope of our focus. Even if we confine ourselves to concern with the institution of sovereignty that had dominated the political scene of Western Europe during mediaeval times, we feel called upon to look at the historical roots of the institution. Should such an undertaking omit the evolution and development of political institutions in Indo-European societies, we cannot work out the real extent and nature in the development of institution of sovereignty. It is exactly at this point that Benveniste's etymological inquiries provide precious support. In the second volume of his *Les Vocabulaire des Institutions Indo-Européennes*, he tries to trace the historical journey of the concepts playing a pivotal role in the formation of the

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[300] This character of sovereignty survives in some forms even after the sovereign no longer appears as a public magician but as a divine figure. "Au sommet de l'organisation sociale le roi porte le titre de wa-na-ka, *anax*... L'anax est responsable de la vie religieuse ; il en ordonne avec précision le clendrier, veille à l'observance du rituel, à la célébration des fêtes en l'honneur des divers dieux, fixe les sacrifices, les oblations végétales, le taux des offrandes exigibles de chacun suivant son rang. On peut penser que si la puissance royale s'exerce ainsi dans toute les domaines, c'est que le souverain, comme tel, se trouve spécialement en rapport avec le monde religieux, associé à une classe sacerdotale qui apparaît nombreuse et puissante... on notera qu'en Grèce le souvenir s'est perpètuè jusque dans le cadre de la Cité d'une fonction religieuse de la royauté, et que le souvenir a survécu, sous une forme mythique du Roi Divin, magicien, maître du temps, dispensateur de la fertilité." Jean-Pierre Vernant, **La Origines de la Pensée Grecque** (Paris : Presses Universitaires de France, 1962), p. 23-24. Alos see Hutton Webster, **Taboo : A Sociological Study** (New York: Octagon Books, 1973). "Magicians and priests are thus subject to essentially the same taboos as those which invest chiefs and kings. They are all more or less sacred beings. Hence there may be no clear differentiatiation between the royal and the sacerdotal offices: the chief or king sometimes has magical or priestly functions, and the magician or priest sometimes assumes political authority. King-priests and priest-kings are still found in primitive society, while the Pharaohs of ancient Egypt, the Inca rulers of Peru, and the Mikados of Japan illustrate the survival into historic times and among relatively civilized peoples of the combination in a single man of civil ruler and vicar of God on earth."p. 274-75.

political landscape of these societies. It is therefore small wonder that he pays a considerable attention to the etymological evolution of sovereignty. He points out that the oldest expressions referring to sovereignty revolve around the Latin *Rex.* It is possible, according to Benveniste, to find the traces of the same phenomenon in other corners of Indo-European world. He cites Irish *Ri,* Gallic *–Rix,* and Sanskrit *Raj-(an)* as the equivalents of Latin *Rex.* Pondering on the common point among these societies, Benveniste notices that they remained at the two extremities of Indo-European world, whereby they remained immune to the great upheavals undergone by others: Slavic, Germanic, Greek and other Italic communities. Since each of these historical turbulences denotes a cornerstone in the evolution of sovereignty, *Rex* and *Raj* can be looked upon as the purest possible form that the historical data record for the designation of sovereignty. Since the existence of a sacerdotal class in these societies owed their reason for existence to performing and preserving the rituals in right forms, it ensured the long duration of these designations. Even in other societies, Benveniste manages to catch sight of the phonetic traces of *Rex* and *Raj* as is indicated by Greek *orego*, Gothic *raihts,*(also German *recht*) and also Latin *Rectus* and *Regio*.

These etymological and phonetic occasions urges us to ask: what do the etymological examinations of these terms signify? Basically, all the terms which we have reason to think as derived from the same root as *Rex,* is somehow related with *droit*, or as Benveniste points out, with "*droit à la maniere de cette ligne qu'one trace.*"[301] *Droit* immediately reveals that it has a double function one of which consists in referring to a material condition (straight). In addition to this material dimension, *Droit* also refers to a *moral* situation such as is suggested by being upright. From this it is not difficult to fathom out the operation imposed on *Rex* as his function. It is none other than drawing the frontiers *en lignes droites.* What is so significant in this materially simple task (drawing a line on the ground) as to cause it to be loaded on the shoulders of sovereign? Considering the primitive thought, we

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[301] "On interprétera pareillement l'adjectif *rectus* comme « droit à la mniere de cette ligne qu'on trace ». Notion matérielle et aussi morale : la « droite » représent la norme ; *regula,* c'est « l'instrument à tracer la droite » qui fixe la *règle.* Ce qui est *droit* est opposé dans l'ordre moral àce qui est *tordu, courbé* ; or comme *droit* équivaut à *juste, bonnête,* son contraire *tordu, courbé*, sera identifié avec *perfide, menteur.*", Émile Benveniste, **Le Vocabulaire des Institutions Indo-Européennes :Tomme II Pouvoir, Droit, Religion** (Paris : Les Editions de Minuit, 1969), p. 14.

immediately utter the answer: it is everything on which the fortune of a community hangs. The stake in delineating such a line is no less than consecrating a certain part of the world which thenceforth turns out to be a window opening onto the sacred. If the demarcation is not *right*, nothing can prevent the glowering forces from perching on the community. Striking at this point is the fact that what we come across here is the seminal sign of what sovereign or sovereignty incessantly does: bringing about a division in the form of *inside* and *outside.* But this form differs from the one separating the *geographically external* from the *geographically internal.* In this time, the strange (and thus the stranger) is not the member of other political and social organization, but the *other world*, with which to get in touch relying solely on worldly means marks a fatal failure.

How this different inside/outside configuration leads to the *international* (or to the inter-communal relations) operating on a different modality from our modern one, I cannot pursue because of space limitations. But its far-reaching effect we readily observe when recalling Durkheim's approach to primitive religion, according which drawing the right boundaries for the ritual sites, and determining the proper rules for their conduct is the kernel from which all we owe to the legal and scientific thought spring.[302] At this point, what matters most is to note that Benveniste's etymological examination succeeds in establishing the sacred and magical nature of sovereignty in its incipient form. Apart from *Rex* and *Raj,* in other terms appertaining to the sovereignty such as *Raz, Kratos, Wanaks, Kudos…*, it is possible to glean the same impression.[303]

Now that the magical nature of sovereignty is laid before our eyes, we can focus on what this incipient form implies for our conceptualizations. Or more

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[302] We dwell on this phenomenon within the context of ritual formalism: "the belief was that the rite produced the desired result automatically, provided it was correctly performed. It is this, by the way, that explains the primary importance that nearly all cults give to the physical aspect of ceremonies. This religious formalism (probably the earliest form of legal formalism) arises from the fact that, having in and of themselves the source of their efficacy, the formulas to be pronounced and the movements to be executed would lose efficacy if they were not exactly the same as those that had already proved successful." Emile Durkheim, **The Elementary Forms of Religious Life** Karen E. Fields trans. (New York: The Free Pres, 1995), p. 33.

[303] For a detailed examination of this concepts, see the first part of Benveniste *Vocabulaire* where he traces the etymological aspects of basic political concepts.

directly, we can ask what this magical nature signifies for the symbolical death of sovereign. First of all, it is possible to state that each magical performance is the test to which the sovereign's entitlement to sovereignty is put. His position as sovereign is contingent upon the results of test. That is why we can safely assume that his social and political position is not as independent as his heterogeneous nature is likely to suggest at a superficial glance. He is the one standing on the threshold between this world and the *other*, between the profane and the sacred worlds. Unless he grows apart from the ordinary, and unless he unchains the rules regulating the common, he can by no means gain a firm footing on this threshold. At any rate, he is a *heterogeneous* being. But it is when we spot this heterogeneity as a magical function that we come to make out the plight and the paradox of sovereign: his *heterogeneity* is a *homogenized* one. Sovereign as he may be, he is a being nailed down to a position where his tenure rests on his craft and success. And to prolong his tenure, he has only one way: observing the rules, and chasing as much after the methods and techniques proving his craftsmanship as after the enjoyment. Hence, the difference between this magical sovereign and Don Giovanni. Even if the magician-King indulges in an enjoyment likely to entrance Don Giovanni, he is a homogenized being insofar as the world of utility depends on his Negativity. Nowhere does this appear more remarkable than the taboos with which the prospect of not only his social position but also of his very life is tied. Although the taboos regulating ordinary lives have no jurisdiction on him, much more severe limitations cast their shadows on his presence.[304] Enwrapped by such a cover of taboos, he trades his sovereignty (pure Negativity) for a sovereignty submitting his will to the imperatives varying from place to place and from time to time. So, amidst this fabulous and nebulous world where the exotic and eccentric images dash into our gaze, we see a sovereign being who, quite exhausted after the sleepless nights, pityingly tries to pierce the darkness with his weary eyes.[305]

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[304] In his study on taboo, Webster lays this point before our eyes: "That ideas of the sacredness of rulers have served as a prop of despotism needs no labored argumentation… the respect that was universally paid to chiefs formed "the stable basis of their government….Yet ideas of this sort, when carried to their logical conclusion, provide a natural check upon tyranny. The almighty divine king is hedged about with so many taboos that he loses all freedom of action and ends, not infrequently, by becoming a helpless puppet who reigns but does not rule, while the real power lies in the hands of his mayor of the palace or with some priestly coterie." **Ibid.,** note 301, p. 270.

[305] This figure is taken from Frazer's **Golden Bough**.

6.6. *THE REAL (PHYSICAL) DEATH OF SOVEREIGN*

Bataille's approach to sovereignty leads us to think that the social life proceeds under two incompatible modalities. As he determines, one is the economical modality and the other is non-economical. Or if we cite them in the terminology cast by Bataille, one of these modalities can be called "*narrow economy*" and the other "*general economy.*" The former refers to the situation in which rationality, as the faculty of organization, holds sway over everything. It is no exaggeration to say that in this narrow confine, the rationality turns out to be a sort of worship dedicated to the calculation. If we take this metaphor proper, then we have reason to accept the phenomenon of equivalence as its prophet. In such a world as is under the yoke of computation, it is scarcely surprising to see the prescribed mode of action consisting in the dictum: conserve as much as you can, but keep the useless consumption in the lowest possible level. As this reverse ratio presents, somebody remains in esteem with such a God and prophet to the extent of his success in decreasing the consumption that does not serve accumulation. In contradistinction to this world, where the zero acts as a supreme judge deciding according to the laws of utility, stands quite a different one. In this world called by Bataille *general economy*, zero no longer comes out as a public agent which operates as the foundation of articulation, distinction and calculation. Now zero turns out to be a blind point taking away from the rationality its ground for calculation and organization.

It goes without saying that this zone of general economy is the negation of narrow economy. Every modality appertaining to the narrow economy is discarded here so that organization, control and arrangement are no longer possible. It is therefore hardly too much to say that general economy makes rationality dumb and thus signifies a moment when the distinct beings succumb into a zone of indistinction. In this zone, neither calculation nor utility; neither chronology nor articulation is any longer at work. Important to highlight at this point is that insofar as distinction and articulation, as ontological conditions of human beings, belong to the narrow economy, we can *look* only from the window of narrow economy. For the sake of clarity, it is possible to say that we cannot *look* at the *general economy* or at

anywhere except through a *perspective* imparted to us by narrow economy. Seen through such a perspective, what *General Economy* presents is none other than fragmentation, dismemberment, dissolution, disarticulation, and dislocation. From this, it is not difficult to infer the cardinal difference from which all the contradictory modalities between these worlds sprout. This cardinal difference, this pivot of divergence is said to be rooted in the dichotomy between death and survival. Accordingly, in narrow economy, survival is the fundamental existential criteria with which everything should be coded if it is not to be excluded. This explains why preservation represents therein the most important principle. Here, the conditions shaping the perceptions, practices and postures may vary from one place to another, from one span of time to another; nevertheless the rule urging itself on the actors as a license to enter into this world is to keep identity, integrity and distinction as much intact as possible. It is, therefore, natural to see survival as being unwritten constitutional code. Furthermore, this raises the presumption that only in acting according to imperatives of rationality and only in making utility the prime guide can one steer oneself towards the prescribed ends assuring one's place and survival within the system.

Torn between these worlds, man is bound to fall into a precarious position. Even if this duality absolutely defines human nature, namely even if these worlds are the foundations on which what we call human life cannot help but dwell, there always comes a tendency to dismiss one of these from the sight. We find this scarcely surprising inasmuch as we observe that this or any other sight cannot come into existence unless dismembering continuity is framed. Relying on Heidegger, we can formulate this as follows: we cannot attend to Being insofar as we do not recover from the yoke of beings. It is, therefore, natural that narrow and limited perspective of man manages to turn this general economy of Being (*continuity* in Bataille's terminology) into narrow economy of distinct objects. What makes this point worthy of address lies in the fact that this passage from the general to narrow economy signifies an important turning point in the constitution of man. As natural as air though it appears, *being man*, after all, is an identity implying certain regularity and integrity. The meaning of this is very clear: *man* comes into being only if the fragmentary and dismembering being is *re*-membered and framed as a distinct being.

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It is when we fathom this that we start to realize the precarious in the human condition: so long as *perspective* takes place, it *takes* the place of all. Subsequently, a sense of normal ensues, referring to those fitting to this perspective as state of affairs. The usual and natural result of this is that a perspective prevails over existence and thus comes to stand for it. This explains why the contact with the *general economy* (or Being), elusive and evasive as it may be, results in a traumatic experience. This contact always runs the risk of ruining all that is achieved under the banner of being man. The ontological modalities playing a part in the constitution of man are found at a loss when the barriers behind which the closed universe of narrow economy enjoys a sense of security cannot stand against the pressure trying to efface every distinction and articulation. If the barriers are momentarily scattered, then the fragmentation and dissolution are temporary. Nonetheless when this becomes absolute, namely when the restoration of closed universe is unattainable, the experience eliminates the being. The name of this phenomenon is clear: death.

That the stake in the relationship between these inalienable parts of human being is a matter of life (survival) and death lays open the question of why ordering and organizing this relationship attains an utmost importance. The hegemony of closed universe, notwithstanding its temporary nature, tricks man into assuming that the disintegration or the collapse of this universe is exceptional. However much certainly one clings to this assumption, time does nothing but gives lie to this creed. Taking all these points into account, we have seen the reason why the borderline between these worlds turns out to be the cradle of sacred. Neither space limitations nor the ability of the author afford a ground to dwell on the details of the phenomenon we call sacred. But the thing that immediately calls our attention is the fact that whenever we see a sovereign transcend the immanence of ordinary beings, he is found to be holding a place within this borderline. Whether this position is attained through mastering the magical craft or through performing the sacred rites or through holding a monopoly over the totemic symbols or through representing the divine being in the fatal and futile world, it does not matter so much as the fact that the sovereign always stands between these worlds. This also explains why an aura of sacred always enwraps the sovereign being.

Considering this ambivalent position, it is possible for us to attain an idea about sovereignty and the sovereign. This sacred nature, this borderline character makes us quite understand that a different economy of being or a different existential modality is at work when it comes to a sovereign or sovereignty. This is so to the extent that the sovereign transcends the narrow economy and thus the modality of survival. The sovereign is a *transcendental* figure if only because he has been singled out from the rest of the community. In wanting of such a qualitative difference, it would be really difficult to understand why he can exert power and control over society. His transcendental nature sets him loose from the rules compelling and constraining ordinary lives. Especially in cases in which his power spreads over a vast domain, he is always foreign to the population, external to the territory and heterogeneous to the general. Even in cases where his career has just taken its first steps and set off a control and command whose scope scarcely covers several villages, he is, after all, a strange phenomenon with whom ordinary men cannot get in touch except by observing certain procedures and rules.

To duly understand the sovereign's ambivalent nature, we should take a close look at his position vis-à-vis the general economy. The transcendental character testifying to his having gone beyond the economy of survival and utility might conduce us to assume that he has gained a firm footing in the realm of general economy. This assumption is misleading, but an attentive look easily apprehends that the mythical and metaphysical representations playing a decisive role not only in the constitution but also in the maintenance of sovereignty successfully conceal this predicament of sovereign: however great power he possesses and however close he comes to the general economy, he is tainted with an inability to come to terms with the general economy. He can approach to this realm (*unspace*) as close as possible but he can by no means take a part in it. We grow conscious of this point to the extent we realize that the general economy (Being) is the realm where every integrity and regularity is condemned to dissolution. Equally important in elucidating this point is to realize that being a sovereign, despite its transcendental character, is at the end an identity which, like every identity, cannot be sustained unless there is a pattern preserving the regularity and integrity.

These considerations lend us crucial clues as to the ontological condition of sovereign. First of all, he rises above the immanency of the homogenous world where everything is rendered interdependent and interchangeable. This movement gives rise to transcendence and makes the sovereign a transcendental figure. Yet this same movement is also the one whose momentum causes the sovereign to tremble on the verge of immanence of Being. To fully appreciate this, it would be to the point to give ear to Bataille's dictum: *Being is time*. But this *time* has nothing whatsoever to do with the homogenizing time which is tamed and made useful by chronology so that *succession* and *relation* come into life. This *time* wears away every stability and devours every transcendence. Further, it is of utmost importance to note that *succession* and *relation* being the antithetical to sovereignty, the immanence of Being is where the true sovereignty (impossible) is to be found. With all our due diffidence, we can venture to reformulate Bataille's formula: *Being is Time, and Time is sovereign*. This point gives us two insights into the identity of sovereign. Firstly, with the help of transcendence, he is rescued from the troublesome undertaking of earning a livelihood which pins one down to daily labor. From this an inference is taken that sovereign consumes what he does not produce. Furthermore, in order to prove himself worthy of transcendence, he is called upon to fill the minds and hearts of his subjects with the feeling that his existence is immune to the laws wielding power over the ordinary beings. These two last points being considered together, sovereign being can be said to be the one who consumes what others produce without paying due attention to the laws of utility.

Thus we come to the second issue pointed out by the transcendental nature of sovereign. Even if transcendence saves him from the daily burdens which fall to the lot of others, his social position, nonetheless, enjoins on him certain responsibilities. Consequent upon this, it is possible to say that he has to bear another kind of burden. To this point, we have already referred in the previous section, where our main concern was what we call the symbolic death of the sovereign. It is, therefore, suitable to limit ourselves to emphasize the basic points of what we put forward in the previous section: to the extent that the primitive thought supplies the sovereign with such a central place as radiates the effects capable of giving direction to the courses of natural forces, and, in a word, to the extent that he can bend the natural

events to his will, it is not improbable that his life is under the strict scrutiny of public concern. Notwithstanding the variations stamped by time and space, there is a well-established fact: the life of sovereign is organized down to the minutest detail, and he is forbidden to do things from which ordinary man does not take the least precaution to refrain from, such as looking at sea, turning his head to a certain direction or eating his food with his own hand.[306] It is therefore small wonder that despite his roles regulating the spiritual and sometimes the civil affairs of the community, he looks like a plaything in the hand of primitive social mechanism.[307]

No sooner do we reflect on the implications of this symbolic death than we catch sight of what we call the real (physical) death of sovereign. In rudimentary form, sovereigns appear much closer to a public functionary than to a despot. We can assume without undue temerity that being such a functionary in the service of public good, they were held with a much more severe accountability than our modern

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[306] For the detailed explanation of these points, see Sir James George Frazer, **The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion** (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1963). "At a certain stage of early society the king or priest is often thought to be endowed with supernatural powers or to be an incarnation of a deity, and consistently with this belief the course of nature is supposed to be more or less under his control, and he is held responsible for bad weather, failure of the crops, and similar calamities… His person is considered, if we may express it so, as the dynamical centre of the universe, from which lines of force radiate to all quarters of the heaven; so that any motion of his –the turning of his head, the lifting of his hand- instantaneously affects and may seriously disturb some part of nature. He is the point of support on which hangs the balance of the world, and the slightest irregularity on his pat may overthrow the delicate equipoise. The greatest care must, therefore, be taken both by and of him; and his whole life, down to the minutest details, must be so regulated no act of his, voluntary or involuntary, may disarrange or upset the established order of nature." pp. 194-95.

[307] One can raise the object that the emergence of the court structure symbolizing that sovereign is almighty indicates sovereign could escape from the fate of the public magician. Of course, the stage had been changed but the essence remained. For this see, Franz Oppenheimer, **Devlet**, trans. Alaeddin Şenel and Yavuz Sabuncu (Ankara: Phoenix, 2005). "Genel bir kural olarak, *despotism* açıkça en aşırı örneklerinde bile, monarşik mutlakçılığın bulunmadığı söylenebilir. Yönetici, içinde yaptıklarından dolayı cezalandırılabileceği korkusu bulunmadığı için, uyruk sınıfa karşı ateş püskürebilir ama, çevresindeki feudal beyler tarafından hiç azımsanmayacak derecede denetlenir… Despotizmi mutlakçılık ile bir tutmamaya dikkat edilmesini yeniden önemle belirtmek zorundayız. Batı Avrupa feudal devletlerinde bile, egemenin uyrukları üzerinde, yaşam ve ölüm konusunda, herhangi bir yasaya bağlı olmadan karar verme gücü vardır. Buna karşın, böyle bir yönetici kendine bağlı "şefler"e karşı güçlü değildir. Üst sınıfların ayrıcalıklarına karışmadığı sürece, acımasızlığını dizginlemesi gerekmez; hatta arada sırada büyük beylerden birin harcayabilirö ama kendine bağlı şeflerin ekonomik ayrıcalıklarına dokunan yöneticinin vay haline!" pp. 145-46. In Wittfogel's **Oriental Despotism**, for which the main concern was the limitless authority and cruelty of oriental despots, we can sense the implications in the same directions. From a technical perspective, Wittfogel observes that the law of diminished administrative returns is the main obstacle in the exertion of limitless power. To this, it is is possible to add cultural (symbolical) dimensions: "Such patterns [the prevailing cultural patterns] always shape the manner in which the ruler (and his subjects) act; and occasionally they mitigate or prolong governmental procedures at particular stages." Karl A. Wittfogel, **Oriental Despotism: A Comparative Study of Total Power** (London: Yale University Press, 1957), p. 108.

democratic world could imagine. The functions required of them are no less than the matters of life and death for the community. It follows from this that in cases in which they fail to bring about the desired outcome, the toleration of community dwindles immediately, and tides of hatred engulf the sense of reverence and worship which hitherto enwrap the sovereign.

To clarify this, let's turn our attention to the African tribes where there is no such thing as political authority, namely where the clock of social progress has not yet struck the hour when a kingly presence would rise to prevail over community. From the upper Nile to the West Africa (including Wambugwe, Landu, Fan, Latuka, Bonjors…) it is possible to come across a figure who possesses a certain spiritual and mystic command over the community.[308] The most striking aspect of these people is that they are, as we already stated, public functionaries. And the most basic thing demanded from these supernatural beings is to bring *rain,* in other words, life. There is no doubt that in such places, rain turns out be the most precious element, whose coming on time would be the foremost factor in the prospect of community in question. If this competence as public sorcerer accounts for the source of their command, it also ushers in their predicament. If the inability of primitive mind prevents a clear distinction to be drawn between the will of sovereign and that of nature, then a natural happening is comprehended as the direct product of the will of the sovereign. After all, there is only one interpretation left to the primitive man in such cases in which the desired event does not take place: it is the will of sovereign that stands against its emergence. It is natural in such cases that the community tries to bend his will to reconsider his obstinacy and to unleash the forces, as is customary. It is exactly at this point that we see our modern democratic accountability and that of the primitive man begin to grow apart. If all the measures are taken in the way of enforcement, there is only one policy tool left to the community to preserve its well-being: killing this malicious and stubborn being and thus steering clear of the obstacle on the road to the communal well-being.[309] Moreover, the stakes with which

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[308] Frazer, **Ibid.**, note 306, pp. 99-103.

[309] This account clear shows the fate of sovereign: "…when the end of March draws on, each householder betakes himself to the King of the Rain and offers him a cow that he may make the blessed waters of heaven to drip on the brown and withered pastures. If no shower falls the people

the sovereign presence is invested being so serious, the community sometimes grows over-anxious and thus too impatient to wait until the moment when incredibly successful sorcerer fails to accomplish his assignment. No matter how successful the public magician is in conducting cosmic affairs, sometimes a terrestrial or celestial sign such as shift of a star in the heaven or sometimes a bodily sign such as the white hair or the diminishing sexual appetite would be enough to lead the primitive man to the conviction that it is high time to put this sovereign to death in order to transfer the sacred presence immured in this poor physical condition into another abode much more suited to its functioning. [310]

From the ongoing arguments, the impression is not unlikely that dying a natural death was a rare phenomenon for these early sovereigns. A firm confirmation of this can be drawn from the anthropological data which register how regularly and relentlessly the primitive social structure subjects the sovereigns to the ordeals which much more usually end in death than in the maintenance of office. If our aim is to arrive at a general principle, we are prepared to come to a conclusion that this vulnerable situation [of sovereign] prevents the sovereignty from developing into institutional forms. There is scarcely anything which is more expected than the fact that in such conditions in which sovereigns suffer from the regular death, the institutional dimension is wanting except the minimal signs such as the customs deciding on the transference of this supernatural presence. From this, it is hardly difficult to infer that in order that sovereignty should attain an institutional

assemble and demand that the king shall give them rain; and if the sky still continues cloudless, they rip up his belly, in which he is believed to keep storms." Fazer, **Ibid.,** note 306, p. 125.

[310] This is exactly the point to which Weber's *charisma* could be applied. The source of sovereignty is the charisma of sovereign. And without this charisma, sovereign would be open to death. But it is the results of magical enterprise which Weber thinks produces charisma. "Ihm, dem Kaiser selbst, gin des aber natürlich, getreu dem charismatischen Prinzip der Herrschaft, ganz ebenso. Von dieser eingelebten politischen Realität ging ja diese ganze Konstruktion aus. Auch er mußte sich durch seine charismatischen Qualitäten als vom Himmel zum Herrscher befuren bewähre… Charisma was überall eine außerahlltägliche Kraft (maga, orenda), deren Vorhandensein sich in Zaubermacht und Heldentum offenbarte… Die charismatische Qualität was aber (ursprünglich) verliebar: der Held oder Magier konnte von seimem Geist oder Gott verlassen werden. Nur solange sie sich bewährte: durch immer neue Wunder und immer neue Heldentaten, mindestens aber: dadurch, daß der Magier oder Held nich sich selbst und seine Gefolgschaft offenkundigen Mißerfolgen aussetzte, erschien ihr Besitz gewährleistet… Vollends ein Monarch, welcher den alten festen sozialen Ordnungen, einem Teil des Kosmos, der als unpersönliche Norm und Harmonie über allem Göttlichen stand, zuwinderhandelte: - der z.B. etwa das absolute göttliche Naturrecht der Ahnenpietät alteriert hätte-, würde damit gezeigt haben, daß er von seinem Charisma verlassen und unter dämonische Gewalt greaten war. Man durfte ihn töten, der er war ein Privatmann." Max Weber, **Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie** (Tübingen : Verlag von J.C.B Mohr, 1947), pp. 310, 312-13.

dimension; this death regularly befalling the sovereign should be banned or at least suspended. Then we are justified to ask: how does it come about that the sovereign finds a way to escape from the arbitrary death, and that sovereignty gains the institutional and complex forms it has assumed throughout the history. The answer seems to lie in the process during which superstition gradually evolves into religion and so during which theological thought ascends to take the place of magical world view.[311] Thenceforth, the sovereign ceases to be a renowned wizard who always hazards his life in affecting the unpredictable and uncontrollable future (or nature), and he thus turns into an incarnate god. One can hardly deny that, when compared with the wizard, the incarnate god is much further out of the clutches of society.

It is, therefore, natural that as the religious world view had entrenched itself behind the institutional settings, the sovereign's life did not so easily fall into the common hands as that of public magician. This suspension of physical death paves the way to the royal personages in manifold types; hence the way at the end of which we come to the presence of monarch. Yet this supreme position of monarch should not delude us into assuming that our general principle referred above is no longer valid. It is still intact. Maybe, the splendor of courtly elegance dazzles our eyes, so we cannot easily detect this principle still staged around the sovereign presence. Nonetheless, if we have a chance to get behind this dazzling façade, we are sure to see a sovereign being who should prove himself worthy of throne by conforming to the courtly rules and who should strive to save not only his throne but also his life by resorting to the imperatives of intrigue, cunningness and wisdom. Hence the fragile being that is always between two deaths.

6.7. *SOVEREIGN BETWEEN TWO DEATHS OR THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF SOVEREIGNTY*

Over the last three sections, our concern in the background was to probe for an understanding that would prompt us not to proceed too hastily in drawing conclusions on Bataille's definition of sovereignty. It would be right to directly argue

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[311] For a detailed analysis of this point, see the small treatise written by Frazer: **The Influence of Supersition on the Growth of Government** (Kessinger Publishing's Rare Reprints, no date).

that such a definition as "consumption beyond utility" spurs us to recognize the advent of modernity as something tolling the death knell of sovereignty. Accurate and insightful as this conclusion appears, proceeding in this direction without deliberating upon all the hints dropped by Bataille's understanding, nonetheless, runs the risk of ignoring its further implications. The idea that modernity betokens the death of the sovereign, to be sure, saves us from the metaphysical reading of sovereignty with which modern legal and political thought teem. Yet if taken at face value, it may bring us to the brink of another type of metaphysics. It would be quite amiss to assume that the pre-modern sovereign figures, who seem to stand squarely with Bataille's paradigm, were non-metaphysical beings. If we ignore this and thus reify the pre-modern sovereigns, we not only overlook the historical data on feudality, but also miss the gist of Bataille's views. This urges us to proceed by seeing Bataille's claims within a wider context. When such an attempt is made, we gain a foothold on a conceptual ground, making it felt that the theme of death of sovereign is just as equally valid for the pre-modern sovereigns as for the sovereign forms after the advent of modernity. Consumption beyond utility, therefore, represents not the death of a particular sovereign but that of all sovereigns.

The conceptual ground drawn by the above mentioned concern affords us two notions: the *symbolic death of sovereign* and the *real (physical) death of sovereign.* By the symbolic death, we strive to call attention to the impossibility of true sovereignty. Seen from a hierarchical perspective, the sovereign, to be sure, stands at the uppermost of the symbolic space. Yet this transcendental position by no means suggests that he one way or another finds a way to go beyond this space. He is sovereign not above this symbolic space but above the other beings who, like him, happened to have been enclosed within this space. However *perverted* a character this transcendence stamps over him, his sovereignty is a symbolic one playing the decisive role in the reproduction of the symbolic space. From this it is hardly a great step to come to a conclusion that the *sovereign* is a useful being, though this usefulness hinges on a useless consumption. This paradoxical situation points to the fact that sovereign being, by being crowned as sovereign by the community, steps in a zone where the laws of utility organizing the ordinary affairs of ordinary lives are suspended. Yet this only gives rise to the emergence of another sort of utility, so

stripped of the material and crude dimensions of ordinary utility that it appears as its antithesis. Considering this point, we admit that when one assumes the title of sovereignty and holds the royal scepter, this one turns out to be an instrument whose functioning is already encoded by its symbolic position. The anthropological and etymological data set forth during the last three sections suffice to substantiate this as historical fact.

This line of reasoning causes us to ask what warrants calling this symbolic situation death. Upon pondering on such a point, we take notice of a further death lying in ambush: the *real death* which is to strike the sovereign's life. Since enough has already been said as regards the physical death of sovereign in the last section, I feel justified in skipping the details and directly addressing the question: "On what ground we call this symbolic act death?" If being sovereign is tantamount to having been made open to the touch of death, we have seen reason to look upon one's becoming sovereign as the beginning of the journey ending in death. The only way that the sovereign could find to escape from such a tragic end is to be *successful*. In this sense, sovereignty turns out to be a performance (a representation but not immediacy); for sovereign has to be successful in submitting to the requirements of the symbolic mandates. This position of sovereign having been taken into account, another issue of great significance rises to prominence: *succession.*

To appreciate the importance of succession, we can recall the relation between the real death of sovereign and institutional dimension of sovereignty. As long as the sovereign is forced to endure lethal ordeals, and as long as his life is tied to the whimsical will of cosmic forces, namely so long as he is a scapegoat in the hands of a community which will surely grow impatient to take his life upon his first failure, we need more than a plausible optimism to expect that sovereignty could evolve into an institutional setting. For sovereignty to acquire such a setting, the sovereign should exploit a loophole in the symbolic space systematically condemning the sovereigns to death.[312] Whether the mechanism suspending the real

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[312] It is important highlight at this point that for René Girard, the suspension in the sacrificial mechanism is what leads to the institution of sovereignty. "The original victim is endowed with superhuman, terrifying prestige because it is seen as the source of all disorder and order. Subsequent

(physical) death of sovereign was God-man or the surrogate victim or both at once, we do not need to dwell on too much. Important to highlight is that the suspension of the arbitrary death provides a space for sovereignty to institutionalize. A set of relations and practices solidifies into an institutional setting only insofar as a certain level of regularity and continuity saturate them. Once institutionalized, the relations and practices attain an increasingly complex form. In cases where the social space is parceled, arranged and organized by the complex forms, the ability to control and direct the processes starts to slip from the hands of individuals. Gradually but securely, the social space, if proceeding in this direction, tends to appear as a mechanism which operates on the basis of its own laws, enjoying autonomy and independence from the individual wills.

It is exactly at this point that we catch a glimpse of succession. That the solution to the continuity in time cannot be found unless the conditions of succession are settled goes without saying. An attentive look will not miss the link between being successful and the succession. When the sovereign has been relieved from the burden of arbitrary death, sovereignty turns out to be a social and symbolic space from which the codes, laws, imperatives, requirements, privileges, rights and even enjoyment would ensue. In such a context, one can enjoy as much as prescribed by

victims inherit some of this prestige. One must look to this prestige for the source of all political and religious sovereignty.

What must happen if the ritual is to give rise to a political institution, to the power of monarchy, rather than to ordinary forms of sacrifice, those that can be strictly defined as such? It is necessary and sufficient for the victim to take advantage of the lapse of time before the sacrifice and to transform veneration into real power. One might therefore expect that the interval between the selection of the victim and the sacrifice will be gradually prolonged. This extension will permit, in turn, the future victim to consolidate progressively more power over the community. At some point this power and the submission of the community would become sufficiently effective and extensive as to make an actual sacrifice of the monarch impossible if not unthinkable." **Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World** (Standford:Standford University Press, 1987), p. 53. Therefore for the societies in which the cunning reason of victim could not find a way to escape from sacrifice, it is reasonable to see victim transformed into a kind of deity, but not to a sovereign. For detailed explanation which shows that this mechanism is universal, see Jensen, Adolf Ellegard. **Die Getötete Gottheit: Weltbild einer frühen Kultur** (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1966). Huizinga deals with this theme in his book trying to prove that the play element is what generates the culture. If Huzinga is right, therefore we have reason to suppose that not only in the emergence of the institution of sovereignty but also in the development of human culture, the decisive role is played by the sacrifice of the sovereign: "He [Frobenius] deems the starting-point of all social order and social institutions. Through this ritual play, savage society acquires its rude forms of government. The king is the sun, his kingship the image of the sun's course. All his life the king play "sun" and in the end he suffers the fate of the sun: he must be killed in ritual forms by his own people." J. Huizinga, **Homo Ludens. A Study of the Play-Element in Culture** (London: Rougledge, 1998), p.16.

the code or law; one can have rights as much as one assumes the duties; and one can possess privileges as much as one submits to the imperatives and requirements. This explains very clearly what is at stake in sovereign's being successful: to the extent that he is immured within the symbolic space of sovereignty, he is saved from real death. Nevertheless, it is hardly possible to disregard another point lurking behind this escape: the symbolic realm always hovering above the sovereign would immediately cause it to collapse in case of insufficiency or failure. Accordingly, as soon as one accepts the position of sovereign, one must submit one's will to the requirements of sovereignty.

Our final remarks clearly expound why this symbolic act through which one is entitled to sovereignty can be quite easily called death. To the extent that one has to be successful in order to appropriate the sovereign position, we cannot observe in him a *genuine* will but the one wrought after a certain pattern. Without submission, namely without being successful in such a way as to be prescribed by the paradigm of sovereignty, one cannot be sovereign. [313] It is, therefore, not too much to say that the price of sovereignty is the loss of *will* which is not appropriated by a social code and which, for this reason, takes the appearance of transgression when it looms. If with such an unmediated will the true sovereign comes into life, and if this unmediated will, the true sovereignty in its immediacy, comes to its end in order that metaphysical and political representations of sovereignty could blossom, we have, therefore, reason to look upon this symbolic act as the death of sovereign.

This conveys some notion of what is the relationship between succession and the symbolic death. If the sovereign remains to be an unmediated will and transgresses every code, there can hardly come into existence a system of succession. For the sake of clarity, let us remember Don Giovanni. As has been demonstrated, Don Giovanni *is* perfect Negativity; he is pure enjoyment. His actions can by no means encoded by a symbolic system. Set loose not only from any particular law but also from the Law itself, he can do anything but fall short of transgressing the limits of the legal, permissible and possible. Before such a pure negativity, there is no

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[313] What further supports our thesis is revealed by an etymological inquiry of the word "success." Among the manifold meaning of the latin word "*cedere*," what strikes our attention is "to comply with" or "to yield to" or "to obey."

alternative but to head toward death. Only in the case in which the death of Don Giovanni are suspended can it become possible to get out of him a sovereign who stand squarely with the symbolic space of sovereignty. By and large, Don Giovanni should undergo a process through which he is so tamed that his excessive enjoyment gives way to the acceptable one. Moreover, the surplus energy obtained when the excessive enjoyment turns into an acceptable one lays the foundation upon which such institutional forms of sovereignty as royalty, kingship, and monarchy could raise. On that account, we are driven to admit that the regularity in manner and the continuity in time cannot be in hand unless Don Giovanni as Don Giovanni, viz. the sovereign in its immediacy, is put to death. It is hardly difficult to make out that if what befalls Don Giovanni is not the real but the symbolic death, what remains of him is the sovereign whose place is encoded. Hence, it is plausible to think of him as homogenized. He, to be sure, transgresses the existing order in indulging in useless consumption; but this does not alter the basic condition: his transgression is already licensed; that is to say it is already socialized, symbolized, repressed and assimilated.

If we want to bring the issue of succession and its inklings for the institutionalization of sovereignty to prominence, we can refer to figures of Slave and Master in Hegel's *Phenomenology* and also to the figures of Father and Son in Freud's *Oedipus Complex*. Both slave and son should go through a process after which the slave takes the place of master and the son that of father. In both cases, what is laid before us is that a kind of pure Negativity, *Negativity without employment*, is confiscated by a code; and owing to this, son and slave become the social agents whose basic ontological modality is accord with utility.[314] Prompted by utility, their actions, so long as orbiting the code, reproduce the practices as placed within the matrix of possible. Suggestive as this point appears for our arguments, it should not lead us to reify the position of father and master. Such reification runs the risk of missing the essential issue: how master and father are already embedded

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[314] "Der Kampf zwischen Vater und Sohn läuft in die Überwindung des Ödipuskomplexes aus: auf den Todeswunsch folgt die Selbstbestrafung oder die Kastrationherausfoderung durch den Vater; die Negation der Negation sichert schließlich dem Sohn eine ebenbürtige Vaterrolle. Die Negation der Negation ist Entselbung und Erhebung über die selbsticshe Einzelheit seines natürlichen Willens, wie Hegel bezüglich des Knechtes sagt. Die Versöhnung mit dem Vater besteht in der Aufhebung des Sohns aus der niedrig Heterogenen in jene der imperialen Heterogenisität." p. 249. Rudolphe Gasché, **System und Metaphorik in der Philosophie von Georges Bataille** (Bern: Peter Lang, 1978)."

within the matrix, how their will is pruned with their being taken within this matrix, and finally how their will thus turns out to be a mediated one. The moment that master stops carrying the combat to its ultimate end, and the moment that father grand a chance to the son to become a father, we can say that both master and father turns into a homogenized heterogeneity. It is only when their heterogeneity is homogenized and their excessive enjoyment/violence is taken within the orbit of a code (law) that there can come into existence such a thing as succession without which neither the institutional nor the social life in the sense we understand could emerge. To clarify this point, merely a passing mention of Abraham and Isaac would be enough. Only when Abraham suspends the sacrifice of Isaac to death can the genealogical link be established between generations. Taking this point into consideration, we are quite prepared to say that both father and son, despite all the hierarchical dissimilarity between them, are, so to speak, castrated.[315]

6.8. *THE SECOND DEATH OF SOVEREIGN*

From the ongoing arguments, it is possible to form the idea of sovereign's second death. To be sovereign is to stay between two deaths. The first death occurs when one assumes the symbolic mandate of sovereignty whereby one's heterogeneity is homogenized and castrated (the symbolic death). The second death is the real (physical) death which descends upon every animate being as an inescapable fate. We can easily detect the difference between these deaths: it is possible to endlessly undergo the first death whereas there is a strict numerical limitation on the second one: one can be overcome by the physical death only once. In this sense, each symbolic death can be taken as a rebirth. Like Phoenix, a new life is breathed into the one who lives through the symbolic death. Yet in the real death, the encounter is by no means repeatable. It is on the basis of such a contrast that we can comprehend that to which the notion of second death gives expression. In Ancient Egypt where man's imagination had not yet compartmentalized the other

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[315] "Der Bereich der Wissenschaft, der Produktion um der Produktion und Akkumulation willen, der Bereich der Arbeit also, ist der Homogeneität. Doch nicht nur der Knecht, die dirigeants-esclaves, die Herren ebenfalls verfallen diesem Bereich… Es geht die Herrschaft nur auf den Knecht über, womit sich nichts geändert hat: der neue Herr bleibt ein knechtischer Herr, so wie der Herr vordem in der Abhängigkeit vom Knechte stand." **Ibid.**, p. 253-54.

world into two realms (the one for the blessed and the other for the damned), second death comes before us as the device to settle the account of divine justice. The Egyptian imagination had contrived the second death as the price (punishment) to be paid for the earthly sins. In one of the Egyptian stone drawings surviving the teeth of time, we see that the heart of a dead person is placed in a scale by which to decide whether goodness outstrips the sins in the earthly life of the diseased. In this judgment, Gods are present but have no bearing on the result other than the pleading for the dead. In the cases in which goodness outweighs sins, the dead person is transformed into an eternal form, turning into an illuminated soul. Nonetheless, in cases in which the result of balance favors sin, the dead cannot step into the eternal life. This is the moment of second death. Depriving him of the eternal life, the judgment after the first death gives rise to the second death. In a sense, the second death denotes the complete disappearance and as a result, it signifies not the disappearance of a particular opportunity, or a particular presence or a particular form, but the disappearance of all opportunities, all presences, and all forms. [316]

It would not be wrong to say that today this concept finds an apt usage in Žižek's works.[317] In order not to distract our attention, we can confine ourselves to state that in Žižek's usage, the importance of this concept lies in its aptitude in enabling us to discern the span of time between the occurrence of a death and its registration within a symbolic space. Accordingly, so long as no registration takes place, the first death is no more than one's entrance into a zone of indistinction. As this point suggests, we can hold on the assertion that in this zone, neither presence nor the absence can be found in absolute terms. Pondering on this point, we seem

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[316] "Das Totengerich ist die äußerste Spiritualisierung und Ethisierung der mythischen Idee einer Rechtfertigung des Toten gegen den Tod… Die Schuld des Toten is es, die seiner Umwandlung in die Ewigkeitsgestalts des Verklärten Geistes entgegensteht… Er muß seine Unschuld beweisen. Jetzt kommt es darauf an, ob er entsprechend der Gerechtigkeit gelebt und sich schon während seines Erdenaseins den Normen des Jenseits assimilirt hat. Aber hir stehen ihm die Götter bei. Anubis sorgt dafür, daß de Waage im Lot bleibt, Thot registiert ein günstiges Ergebnis, und Horus selbs plädiert für de Toten. Gegen die Böse allerdings sind die Götter machtlos. Der Tote könnte dann nicht gerechtfertigt in die Seinsform eines Verklärten Geistes überführt werden, sondern müßte aus der Welt verschwinden. Dast is der zweite Tod." p. 24-25-26. Jan Assmann, **Der Tod als Thema der Kulturtheorie: Todesbilder und Toten riten im Altem Ägypten** (Frankfurth: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2000).

[317] For a illustration of this concept, see "You Only Die Twice" in Slovaj Žižek, **Sublime Object of Ideology** (New York: Verso, 1989).

justified in inferring two main lines of reasoning offered by Žižek's usage. Firstly, when the touch of first death causes one to enter into the zone between two deaths, one immediately becomes a living dead. He is no longer a living being just like others. Casting it in Bataille's terminology, we can say that the first death robs one of his homogenous character. Until the second death comes, this living dead, however, remains among the others. In a sense, the second death does no more than announce that living dead is already dead. Hence, it is not wrong to claim that the second death is the moment of absolute eradication. Secondly, we come across in Žižek's usage the point to which we have already alluded: The first death is repeatable, it is not absolute. Here Žižek cites computer games. Where the hero is routinely struck by death; yet each time he manages to survive, continuing to act as if no interruption has taken place. Accordingly, until the end of game, the hero can die more than one death; but after each, he is restored to life. But this is so only until the end of the game. The death with which the phrase "game over" is seen on the screen and with which the last chance is spent differs from the preceding ones in that it is not only a death of a particular life but the death of life itself. Henceforth, it is no longer possible for hero to return to among the living ones.

We have already dropped some hints about the implications such a conceptualization has for our reading of sovereignty. Embedded in a sovereign place or entitled to sovereignty, one immediately turns into a heterogeneous being. He no longer looks like others whose life is passing under the shadow of ordinary. As our glimpse into the primitive world brought to notice, the sovereign is tabooed as a result of which he becomes untouchable, exactly as the dead are. Here the process describing the sovereign's situation is at one with Lacan's explanation of the emergence of castration and phallus: the only way for someone to become sovereign is to lose the real sovereignty. Equally suggestive is also the sovereign's relation with the real death. When the sovereign submits his will to this symbolic space of sovereignty and when he, via this gesture, turns out to be a sovereign, he also delivers his life to the hands always impatient to implement the imperatives ordering the death of sovereign. Even in instances in which a natural death attends the sovereign being, the symbolic space takes over the control, organizing a royal funeral

ceremony whose fundamental concern is to give expression to the sensation that the death of sovereign is altogether an unnatural phenomenon.

The idea of the sovereign's second death on which we have so far concentrated sets forward the connotations and suggestions for individual sovereigns. In such a setting, each sovereign can be said to have undergone this process; and each second death, therefore, signifies the death of certain individual who was made sovereign by the first death. An attentive look does not miss another second death lurking behind all these individual cases. Throughout history the sovereigns have come and the sovereigns have gone. Yet these alterations have never brought more than the change of names. Hence, history is replete with uncountable sovereigns who were drowned in its flow. Each sovereign can be said to have given place to another while vanishing from sight. This bears out the fact that the place of sovereignty was never vacant. The history of royalty as an institution bristles with the instances in which the kings are deposed, dethroned or even murdered. Regarding the stupendous sum of dead sovereigns filling up the tribune of history, we can venture to suppose that the paradigm of sovereignty remained intact despite the death of individual sovereigns. In other words, so long as the place of sovereignty is occupied by another sovereign, we have reason to regard the paradigm of sovereign as unaffected by the death of anyone particular.

However this may be the case, it came to pass that in certain part of the world and in certain period of history, the paradigm itself started wear out. In the thirteenth century of Western Europe, the impression seems to have been given by the social, economic and political symptoms that a new process was in the wings. Dim and indefinite as this process was at its beginning, it nevertheless renders all the more visible its impetus when it comes to the seventeenth and eighteenth century: abandoning the consumption beyond utility. The consumption beyond utility being the ontological foundation of sovereignty, we are forced to conclude that this process is the second death of sovereignty. To express this in another way, the death of sovereigns was no longer leaving the paradigm of sovereignty as intact as before this process had come to life. It is anything but a simple task to render the details of the making of the modern world. Furthermore, the space limitation makes such an

endeavor impossible within our context. We can, however, glean the impression that two great phenomena of immense historical impact have paved the way for the modern world. These are the emergence of the administrative state apparatus and the capitalist economic system, for both of which the symptoms were firmly established as early as the thirteenth century.[318] The discussion as to the relation between these phenomena has intermittently raged, yet it goes without saying that both are marked by a strong tendency from arbitrary, useless and prestigious to rational, useful and efficient. By and large, we come to comprehend what Bataille conveys when announcing that the modernity is the historical process in the course of which consumption beyond utility, and hence the paradigm of sovereignty has been discarded.

Since the sovereignty as paradigm got the fatal blow in this part of the world and in this period of history, we should search for its causes in the political, social and economic transformations that stamp late medieval Europe its distinctive trait. The general historical condition being briefly taken into account, it is quite safe to assume that the feudalism in currency in medieval Europe takes precedence over other factors. The European feudalism differed from others in that no despotic figure or formation could halt the disintegrating momentum inherent in feudalism.[319] The result was, of course, the ever-increasing fragmentation of political landscape. Upon the whole, this led to a situation in which even the minutest organizational units started to enjoy a certain amount of autonomy. In default of a despotic figure who could write his will as divine law, and given the institutional complexity whose crisscrossing structure thwarts a settled decision, there emerged a disposition to resort to the legal argumentation which, along with dueling and other violent means, took on the appearance of a legitimate way to defend the right and to determine the truth.[320] To this, we can add the rise of autonomous urban space in which the

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[318] For the details of the medieval roots of modern state structure, see Joseph Strayer, **On the Medieval Origins of the Modern State,** (New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1970).

[319] In this regard, to Europe, we can add Japan.

[320] "The development of progressively greater autonomy on the part of fief holders generated increasing numbers of jurisdictional rivalries and boundary disputes, which were difficult to settle by appeals to the increasingly nominal rights of higher lords and suzerains. Under these conditions, parties confronted with what they saw as violations of their rights considered it legitimate to undertake

bourgeois, disturbed by the arbitrary feudal order and aligned with the king to curb the feudal class, managed to maintain a safe haven from the feudal law. Decisive in all these was the weakening of the vigor of feudal class possessing the privilege of consumption beyond utility. It is, therefore, not too much too claim that as the beginning of modernity was drawing on, a tendency has been distinctly felt, at the end of which the consumption beyond utility was taken under the monopoly of Kings. The details such as the dissolution of fief-vassal relationship, the rise of Ständestaat and the setting of absolute monarchy, we can easily gloss over as well-known historical facts. When it comes to the second death of sovereignty, one thing, nonetheless, immediately strikes our attention: the arousal of a great concern over the sovereign's body as has been made manifest by the liturgical, theological and legal debates of the age.

As our arguments run in this chapter, some confirmation of the fact has already been drawn that the sovereign's body is always the source of social preoccupation. Quite regardless of the temporal and spatial variations, this can be claimed to be valid for all sovereigns. History and geography, to be sure, bring impacts, setting the methods and procedures of this preoccupation at variance. Yet this by no means suffices to dismiss the fact that the sovereign's body lies within the hands of society, whether these hand be of the court bureaucracy, of the sacerdotal class, or of the subjects themselves. In this, there is hardly anything that causes us surprise. Our deliberations in the preceding sections already give substance to the close link between the sovereign's physical body and cosmological affairs. The more primitive the human thought, the more drastic aspects this point takes. Lacking the institutional structure with which to tolerate the loss of sovereign, primitive thought equates the death of the sovereign with the ruin of the universe. Of this, there is scarcely a more striking illustration than the incident which, as Callois accounts, took place in Oceania. What happens in this incident is that upon the king's death, every prohibition is suspended and, as a result, every act once banned is permitted. With this, the public space immediately changes into a scene of chaos in which individuals

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themselves the forcible redress of those violations in forms varying from tightly regulated judicial duels (between the principals or their champions) to savage, prolonged "private war." p. 30. Gianfanco Poggi, **The Development of the Modern State: A Sociological Introduction,** (Standford University, 1978).

can usurp what belongs to the others, burn house chosen at will, and kill anyone with whom social life is shared.[321]. This lasts for no shorter period of time until the end of putrefaction when the decaying body of sovereign transforms into a skeleton. The white bones belonging to this poor being laid open to the devouring forces of nature under the public eye ushers in the coming of new sovereign with whom the order is restored.

This situation gives expression to the fact that the absence of sovereignty independent of sovereign's physical body would be ruinous for the reason that the very thing imposing the sanctions ceases to be present with the death of each sovereign. Furthermore, this explains why developing a mechanism to manage the interregnum is so important for the social accumulation. In such a situation laid before our eyes in Oceania, social accumulation would be brought to zero with the death of sovereign. It is in the experience of the medieval western Europe that these three different aspects of the same the phenomenon (death of sovereign, interregnum and succession) took a strange twist so that at length, the death of a sovereign result in not only a sovereign's second death but also in sovereignty's second death.

The first symptoms of this can be traced back to as early as the seventh and eighth century. As Bloch details, the German ruling class had never ceased to hold their sacred character in the eyes of the masses.[322] Yet, with the advent of Christianity, the German chefs were removed from the position of cosmic masters

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[321] "When the life of society and nature is symbolized by the sacred person of a king, the hour of his death determines the critical moment that unleashes ritual license. This assumes a character corresponding strictly to the catastrophe that has occurred. The sacrilege is against social order… It is considered just as necessary as was obedience to the deceased monarch. In the Hawaiian Islands, the populace upon learning of the king's death commits every act ordinarily regarded as criminal. It burns, pillages, and kills, and the woman are required to prostitute themselves publicly. On the Guinea Costs, reports Bosman, as soon as the people learn of the king's death, each robs his neighbor, who, in turn, robs another and these robberies continue until a successor is proclaimed. In the Fiji Islands, the facts are even clearer. The death of the chief is a signal for pillage, the subject tribes invade the capital and commit all types of brigandage and depredation. To avoid these acts, the king's demise was often kept secret, and when the tribes came to ask if the chief was dead, in the hope of devastating and sacking the community, they were told that his body was already decomposed. They then withdrew, disappointed but docile, for they had arrived too late." pp. 115-116. Roger Caillois, **Man and the Sacred** trans. Meyer Barash (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001).

[322] For the details, see Marc Bloch, **Les Rois Thaumaturges: Étude sur le Caractè Surnaturel Attribué à la Puissance Royale Particulièrement en France et en Angleterre** (Paris : Armand Colin, 1961), pp. 59-67.

even though the military power at their disposal considerably increased. Thus crippled, the remains of their mystic power left them merely the capability to heal certain illnesses; and this mediocre role, as is clear, was far from being comparable to that of public magician. Nevertheless, thanks to the struggle of power among themselves and their relatively weakened mystical and mythical position, the issue of legitimacy came into their focus. They had never showed any sign of hesitancy to deviate from the standard route: whatever the circumstances were appropriate, they never showed any hesitancy in following the standard route, taking measures that would eventually enable them to transform into a sacred kingship. The one nearest to hand was the unction. Unction having been the Hebrew tradition with which something is consigned from the profane into the sacred, kings' partaking in this had important political bearings. The second measure taken in this direction was the coronation. It is needless to stress that so long as it was Pope's hand which put the crown on Charlemagne's head, and so long as political representation was legitimized by unction deeply rooted in biblical tradition, no sign of antagonism between papacy and kings becomes dramatically visible. What held good for kings also held good for papacy for the very fact that what takes place stood squarely within the theological tradition.

However this may be the case, it is not at all difficult to take note of the dangerous implications in those measures: in the Biblical reference made to substantiate the position of Kings (Genesis IV), the priest and the king appeared mingled in one person. In the age of Norman Anonymous when the image of King as Vicar of Christ on earth held a strong currency, we have reason to suppose that a rift had already opened up at the center of Christian onto-theology. In Christ-centered kingship ensuing from this pattern, king who was anointed in time has two natures just like Christ who had been anointed in eternity. One is his mortal nature which is under the yoke of time. The other is immortal and possesses sempiternity. The seminal signs of that whose clearest formulation would be found in the hands of Tudor lawyers as *King's Two Bodies* points out that there already emerged an institutional setting enjoying relative autonomy from sovereign's physical body.

When it comes to the thirteenth century, these changes can be said to take decisive turning point. As Christ-centered Kingship gave its place to law-centered Kingship, legal language started to take precedence over the liturgical. The privilege of being Christ's vicar having been left to the ecclesiastic circles, king now rose to prominence as the vicar of God himself.[323] The usage of Roman law, emergence of fiscus and royal demesne independent of sovereign's will and then the crown's gaining autonomous existence from the head on which it was placed, all these were testifying to the fact that the royalty had evolved into an independent institutional setting. Since the corporational character of royalty was firmly established, and since the legal maxim *dignitas* (corporations) *non morritur* was strongly held, it is quite safe to assume that the physical body of sovereign appears more and more as accidental. In an age when a new conceptualization of time introduced the notion of eternity of earthly time, and when the center of gravity shifted from personal (*vicaris chris*) to corporational factors and finally when corporations (dignity, justice, crown...) transcend time, the sovereign's physical body, too fragile to resist time, has come to possess an uncomfortable place within this mechanism, which had become ready to operate in an autonomous way.

This point gets its full illustration at royal funeral ceremonies. It is beyond any doubt that, for royal funeral symbolism to flourish in its full vigor, the issue of succession and interregnum should have been previously settled, and this took place in 1270.[324] Relieved from the consequences of political interregnum, human

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[323] "As usual, many strands of political, religious, and intellectual life concurred to bring about the general shift and to dissolve the image of Christ-centered kingship…. Henceforth the decratlists, theologians, and scholastic philosophers concentrated on interpreting this title in that exclusively papal sense in which, by and large, it is used today. Vice versa, the civilians, relying upon the vocabulary of Roman Law and some Roman authors such as Seneca and Vegetius, began to style the emperor almost without exception *dues in terries, dues terrenus dues in terries, dues terrenus* or *dues praesens*... These shifts in late medieval nomenclature, often hardly perceptible and yet very telling, were only the surface symptoms of evolutions in far deeper strata of Western religious sentiments….Within the political sphere there resulted the replacement of the more christcratic-liturgical concept of kingship by a more theocratic-juristical idea of government… To put it in another fashion: as opposed to the earlier liturgical kingship, the late-medieval kingship by divine right was modeled after the Father in Heaven rather than after the Son on the Altar, and focused in a philosophy of the Law rather than in the –still antique- physiology of the two-nature Mediator." pp. 90-93. Ernst H. Kantorowicz, **The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology** (New Jersey: Princeton University Pres, 1957).

[324] "Before the late 13th century, a funeral ceremony in which a deceased French king-in-effigy was entertained with sovereign honors is hardly conceivable. To be able to indulge in such an

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imagination is allowed to surpass itself in filling the ceremonial interregnum (between the death of the old king and the official coronation of the new one) with symbolism and mystical representations. In the funeral of Francis II, we see that this symbolism reached its summit. Two aspects are called to our attention in this ceremony. First is the role of effigy. Here, the practice differed in one crucial respect from the Roman tradition from which it appeared to derive. While the Septimus-in-effigy or Pertinax-in-effigy serves the purpose of commemoration and deification of the deceased emperor, Francis-in-effigy symbolizes the immortality of dignity and crown.[325] We seem to be justified in inferring this when the fact is taken into account that there was no sign of mourning around the effigy for which royal spectacle spent significant energy in bringing out divine luster. Mourning fell to the lot of the coffin within which the corpse of sovereign was lying. In this ceremony, the great effort was made to keep from the public sight both the coffin and new king who had not yet attended coronation. The second point was the role of parliament. The heads of Parliament of Paris was not wearing mourning clothes, but instead attended the funeral ceremony in red robes. This symbolic act was in line with the constitutional and institutional advances with which the organizational apparatus transcends the physical presence of sovereign. The idea suggested by this act is apparent: interregnum by no means entails inter-judicium. The King may have died but Justice lived on, as it would forever.

Read together, these two points lent weight to the view that there were strange things going on within the paradigm of sovereignty: on the one side, the real sovereigns, one lying within the coffin and the other living and holding office, were dismissed from the public sight, on the other the effigy, this lifeless object was met at the gates of Paris with joy and accompanied by heads Parliament paying homage to

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extravaganza, the situation at the death of the king had to be such that his successor was tacitly recognized at once, before being crowned and without having to hurry the day of the coronation. This happened for the first time in 1270, when Philip III was in Tunis with his father, Louis IX, when the latter died." p. 183. Ralph E. Giesey, **The Royal Funeral Ceremony in Renaissance France** (Genève: Librairie E. Droz, 1960).

[325] For a detailed comparison of French tradition with the Roman one, which revolves around these three sovereign figures, see Giesey, **Ibid.**, pp. 145-159.

this effigy as if there were no dead sovereign anywhere at all.[326] If we conceive *sovereignty without sovereign* as the modern administrative and political form, it is in place to look upon this ceremonial setting as its seminal sight. As history ran its course toward the absolutist monarchy, this effigy and the renaissance symbolism enwrapping it have transformed into an unnecessary burden for the new king who, during the ceremonial interregnum, was not licensed to loom as a king on the political and social horizon of the country. As Gaisey reports, this effigy was no longer used after 1643. The new king came to be deemed to be sovereign as soon as the old king gave his last breath.[327] Without undue temerity, we can, therefore, assume this change to herald the rise of new political metaphysics whose clearest expression was "L'Etat…c'est la moi" in France and "the King never dies" in England.

The contour of the age being taken into account, we can note that this anthropocentric metaphysics was quite out of line with the age. In this regard, two points seems worthy of our attention. One is, as we have tried to set forth, that the consolidation of the gigantic bureaucratic machine in whose ever-increasing complexity the sovereign will turns out to be merely symbolic. The other, as Heidegger reveals, is the dissolution of *aletheia*, conveying the modern notion that there can be no threshold beyond which human intelligence cannot penetrate. As our discussions in Chapter V showed, the light of the human mind endeavored, with the advent of modernity, to penetrate into the dimmest zones of *aletheia*.[328] Under the

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[326] Kantorowicz calls our attention to the political implications of this point: "Actually, the importance of the king's effigy in the funeral rites of the sixteenth century soon matched or even eclipsed that of the dead body itself. Noticeable as early as 1498, at the funeral of Charles VIII, and fully developed in 1547, at the rites held for Francis I, the display of the effigy was connected successively with the new political ideas of that age, indicating, for example, that the royal Dignity never died and that in the image the dead king's jurisdiction continued until the day he was buried. Under the impact of those ideas, the ceremonial connected with the effigy began to be filled with new contents and to affect fundamentally the funerary mood itself: a new triumphal element came into the ceremony which was absent in earlier times." Kantorowicz, **Ibid.**, note 321, p. 423.

[327] "It would seem that any ritual act denoting the succession was foreclosed when the transmission of royal authority was thought to be achieved perfectly in the instant between the last exhaled breath of the dying king and the next inhaled breath of his successor. The *lit de justice* performed by the new king a few days after his predecessor's dath served to demonstrate ceremonially the swiftness of the transference of power that had occurred, and it also suggested the device for the emblematic portrayal of the new theory. The occasion was 1643, the year of the death of Louis XIII, when, for the first time in two centuries, the funeral effigy ritual was not employed." Giesey, **Ibid.**, note 322, p. 191.

impact of these momentums, such a *physically* overburdened metaphysics as *L'Etat…C'est la moi* was to become too heavy for the ontological foundation to bear. This is the age when the dawn of industrialization broke, and when rationality, productivity and efficiency gained ascendancy over social life as if they were its new masters. Naturally, this portended the bad times ahead for the sovereign being who was whimsical, capricious and irrational, and who indulged into excessive, useless and also conspicuous consumption, and last but not least who, lacking the medieval mysticism and renaissance symbolism, had nothing at his disposal to buffer the reactions against his arbitrary character except such an unbecoming metaphysics as *L'Etat…C'est la moi.* The rest is a well-known story at the end of which sovereignty, as employed in the sense of consumption beyond utility, fell apart.

If the historical and geographical details are not permitted to prevent us from perceiving the overall picture, we, following Bataille, are forced to conclude that from modernity on, *Zeitgeist* has so proceeded as to dispense with consumption beyond utility. In whatever guise it does not matter, wherever modernity alights, we see that the abandonment of consumption beyond utility ensues. As a result, the power-holders, transformed by this process, have turned out to be the public agents who *serve* but do not *enjoy*, and who *rule* but do not *reign.* The social consequence is also easily observed: even the minutest parts of social life are brought under the intervention of disciplinary techniques as the trinity of public utility, public management and public health tower above society. To this process, different names can be given: *end of consumption beyond utility* (Bataille), *governmentality* (Foucault), *end of history* (Kojeve). Yet, using the different names cannot hide the result: under the yoke of practical rationality, it is increasingly difficult to treat the social in any way other than as a means.

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[328] Let us remember Schmitt's reference to the link between miracle and sovereignty. Even until the beginning of modernity, Kings performed public shows, bringing about miracles. These were mainly the healing of the disease of King's Evil. Touch of King's hand was believed to cure this disease. That the beginning of what Heidegger calls the end of aletheia and end of magical public performance of kings coincide forms the crucial point to focus on. Bloch's remarks in this sense are highly suggestive: "En vérité, l'idée du miracle royal était apparentée à toute une conception de l'univers. Or, il n'est pas douteux que cette conception n'ait pue à perdu du terrain depuis la Renaissance et surtout au XVIII. siècle. Comment ? ce n'est pas ici le lieu de le rechercher. Il suffisait de rapoler –ce quie est évident- que la décadence du miracle royal est étroitement liée à cet effort des esprits, au moins dans l'élite, pour éliminer de l'ordre du monde le surnaturel et l'arbitraire, en même temps que pour concevoir les instiutions politiques sous un aspect uniquement rationnel." Bloch, **Ibid.**, note 320, p. 385.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

Malheur à qui jusqu'au bout voudrait ordonner
le movement qui l'excède avec l'esprit borné
du méchanicien qui change une roue.
Georges Bataille, La Part Maudite.

The critical theories of International Relations have always put the basic premises of the mainstream international relations theory into question. Even a superficial glance would be enough to show that the main impetus in this attempt is played by problematic points in the conceptualization of sovereignty in the discipline of International Relations. In their criticism, they draw our attention to the fact that the formulation of sovereignty in currency in IR discourse conceals important elements. Looking at these elements, we come to understand that the formulation of sovereignty results in a situation in which the general concerns of high politics represses the human concerns. This culminates in the legal discourse. In it, it is hardly possible to hear the voice of human concerns. Generally speaking, even those who argue for the current formulation of sovereignty would accept that this is a problem. Yet this acceptance is surely followed by an excuse: in this world, no body can ignore the realities of power. It is exactly at this point that we see critical international theories concentrate their attack: Do not these realities of high politics represent a particular interest?

Asking such a question, they attempt to bring to the surface what is repressed by the official discourse: gender, class, ethnicity etc. Therefore, it is quite understandable that they have to deal with the metaphysics. The concealment of human elements cannot be at hand unless the metaphysical representation covers the real sovereignty. Motivated by the concerns of critical international theory, I also feel

the necessity of addressing this metaphysical representation. This compels me to undertake an ontological inquiry into the sovereignty.

This ontological inquiry shows us that sovereignty is the ultimate theme whose implications cast their shadows on everywhere the human element manifests itself. To fully appreciate this, it seems essential to leave aside the accounts concealing the ultimate in question in sovereignty. In this regard, we can set out our conclusions by asking "what is *this* ultimate in sovereignty?" Lending an ear to Schmitt's formula enables us to steer clear of the difficulties we encounter in answering this question: "sovereign is the one who decides the state of exception." If we do not allow the legal thought to tame our language, we can reformulate this as follows: sovereign is the one who transgresses. With this formulation, we hit on the ontologically precarious position of sovereignty: the *foundation* of sovereignty owes its coming into being to transgression. In other words, without this transgression, no foundation for sovereignty can be laid. Yet, as the foundation is firmly laid, and as the flames of transgression turns into the glow of the law, we bear witness that the boundless agitation ebbs away into an essence. With this, there emerges a realm of rule, regularity and routine where sovereignty now appears as a barrier before the agitation. It is, therefore, safe to assume that at length, sovereignty turns out to be a machine or body in whose operation the severe, fierce and violent factors fade from sight. Even if this is what the overall picture presents, there are still remnants that do not stand squarely with the general counters of the picture. These remnants testifies to the fact that however homogenized and however rational an appearance it assumes, sovereignty has a dark side that only the watchful mind, not lulled to the sleep by the mystical, mythical and official representations, recognizes… Geometry may prevail over human movement, and grammar may keep a tight rein over the language; sovereignty, nonetheless, still stands in need of irrational and violent factors. Yet, so long as geometry regulates and so long as grammar controls, an official language manages to articulate this irrational and violent dimension as something accidental to the essence. And thus, given the gap between an untouchable essence and the accidental occurrences unable to affect the essence, we find ourselves confronted with the *metaphysical* in sovereignty.

In this context, we should take particular note of two points. First is the strong underground connection between sovereignty and violence. We map out this when we realize that not only in the foundation but also in the maintenance of sovereignty, violence always looms into view. Second is the ability of the paradigm of sovereignty to efface the traces of violence from the surface of social. With this, the violence or the irrational inherent in sovereignty tends to fades into a glorious image through which any resort to violence passes unnoticed under the mantle of sublime. Yet, even if we could get the distinct notion of what is irrational and what is metaphysical in sovereignty, it goes without saying that we are far away from answering our opening question: what is the *ultimate* in question in sovereignty? Or expressed clearly, why is sovereignty is the ultimate that is in question? Of course, Schmitt's formula drops important hints for us to find the answer. If the sovereign is the one who decides the state of exception, we have reason to conceive the sovereign as above or beyond the rule. At this point, we can ask what a rule is. The rule is none other than an indicator dictating what possibilities an actor should be after and in which ways these possibilities are to be pursued. An attentive look may not miss the essential point in question here: *the logic of exclusion*. It is only at the expense of other possibilities, namely it is only by depicting other possibilities as hazardous, contingent and uncertain that the rule brought about an effect through which a possibility shift from the potentiality to the actuality. From this, it is hardly difficult to infer that in the emergence of rule, what matters is nothing less than tracing and determining a realm of *possible* and a realm of *impossible*. As a figure deciding the state of exception, sovereign who normally comes to the fore as a keeper of the *possible* gives substance to the idea that the closure of possible is scarcely a perfect one.

Pondering on this, it is not difficult for us to catch the sight of two possible routes and prospects of deciding the state of exception. In the first case, a will may resort, with a view of coping with other possibilities knocking at the doors of actuality, to the means which are not prescribed by the rule. This momentary break with the rule does nothing but ensure the rule's efficiency in the end. In the second case, one will topples the other, which has formerly decided on the actuality of a possibility, and which has consigned other possibilities to the realm of *impossibility*.

It is clear that in this second case, the state of exception, in the long run, manages to articulate itself as a rule. In both cases, we are prepared to say that the critical factor for sovereignty comes out as the interplay between the rule and exception. What this means is quite apparent: it is exactly to this interplay that we need to direct our attention, if our purpose is to grow conscious of the ultimate in sovereignty. Casting reflection on the interplay between the rule and the exception, we feel disposed to ask where, when and under which conditions this interplay originated. Of course, the answer warrants such an anthropological inquiry as requires us to digress from our subject. Yet, even the least preoccupation with this question discovers the primordial character of this interplay, disclosing that the dawn of humanity broke with it. Unless the estrangement raised from our bureaucratized and computerized world confounds us, we can trace this interplay back to the places where the seminal sights of the form are first glimpsed: the duality originated in the moment when what we now call *taboo* rose into prominence; and this moment marks the beginning of such a critical period where humanity was starting to part company with the animal world, and thus where the distinctive traits of humanity can be said to be afoot.

Placing the duality of rule/exception at the threshold of humanity, we afford the proof of the ultimate character of sovereignty. If sovereignty is the capability to suspend the rule and to break the law, and if this movement is that which, as the anthropological data demonstrates, gives rise to human form of life, it is not too much to say that sovereignty is the ultimate theme for us. The decisive part in omitting this ultimate character is played, to be sure, by the fragmentary vision of division of labor which requires a certain level of blindness for the sake of efficiency. Then, we are not completely wrong in supposing that we should avoid treating sovereignty as a strictly, restrictively, and exclusively legal or political matter. Ushering in the rise of humanity and preceding the legal and the political, sovereignty, in a sense, is an *existential* matter. Proceeding further in this direction lays before us another dimension disclosing the fundamental character of sovereignty. To see it, let us remember the first taboos under whose shadows humanity was marked off into a distinctive zone: the ban on killing and the restrictions imposed on the sexual behaviors. For the sake of brevity, we can focus on the interdict on killing which, according to anthropology, precedes of the taboos

on sexuality. Thus, the first form with which the interplay between rule and exception comes before us is the ban on killing. From this fact, it is an easy step to the conviction that sovereign, as someone capable of suspending this ban, decides who stay alive and who can be put to death.

These two points seems enough to substantiate the existential nature of sovereignty: it is a primordial phenomenon which can be found at the threshold where the footsteps of humanity are heard. In addition to this, sovereignty, stripped of the reification of official discourses, appears as something laying claims to the lives. Even if the existential character of sovereignty is laid bare, the metaphysical representations enwrapping it incapacitate us from attaining insights into this character. This urges us to recognize the problem of the study of sovereignty. The existential character of sovereignty also gives expression to the fact that this study cannot be thought of within the circles of epistemology; it is an ontological matter. It is when the need for the proper way of studying sovereignty makes itself so poignantly felt that Bataille's views come within our sight. As intellectual attempts, they can be criticized on all grounds except that they fail to address the existential character of sovereignty. In all his views on sovereignty, a sense, as we endeavor to emphasize throughout this thesis, prevails upon us, proving that without addressing the cosmological, ontological and anthropological dimensions our study of sovereignty runs the risk of missing the point. Let us take look at the Bataille's definitions of sovereignty: *life beyond utility is the realm of sovereignty, consumption beyond utility is sovereignty, sovereignty is NOTHING, the sovereignty is a miraculous moment when anticipation dissolves into* nothing). In all these definitions, we cannot help noting an undertaking probing the existential character of sovereignty.

Of course, that such an ontological overtone at work in Bataille's definitions may give rise to the suspicion that remaining within the highly general frame of the ontological terms such as Being, Existence, Man, we may risk missing the sociological and economical aspects of sovereignty. But this objection may be parried by observing that Bataille himself approaches Heidegger and existentialist philosophers with certain reservation. Accordingly, he states that coming to terms

with *Being* or *Existence* cannot take place in a professor's study table and that one's encounter with *Being* is not a mediation but an experience. For Bataille, it is exactly this experience in which the sovereignty takes root. Furthermore, Bataille, as a Marxist, calls for us to look behind the curtain where this *experience* starts to radiate economical and political effects. He even goes so far as to emphasize the necessity of reflecting on the political economy of favorite existentialist concept: Angst. Realizing this point, we can safely assume that the ontological vein in Bataille's thought does not operate at the expense of concrete social and economic analysis. So, his ontological formulations guiding his understanding of sovereignty can be stamped with blame because of its poetical character; but this by no means entails the kind of criticism leveled by Adorno against Heidegger. The reason for this, we may say, lies in his immense anthropological readings, whose traces can be observed even in his texts of highly poetical character. As much as it may abound with mystical and political tones, Bataille's oeuvre, taken in its entirety, never leans against science, and is always concerned with the findings of anthropology, political economy and psychoanalysis. And as Habermas, who does not miss the metaphysical elements in Bataille's formulations, brings to our attention, this is the difference between Bataille from Heidegger.

Prompted by such an approach and caught up in the curiosity about its insight into our reading of sovereignty, this thesis comes to certain conclusions. At first, after an ontological glance at sovereignty is taken, we become acquainted with the idea that it does not hover over a vacuum, but that it is firmly embedded into a social space, consisting of material and symbolic dimensions. Immured in such a space, sovereign or sovereignty is the product of *relations*. And this relational dimension forces us to see that the sovereign, owing to its utmost hierarchical position, may transcend other actors or other beings present in this system, but cannot transcend the system itself. So long as it is what the relations bring about, and so long as it is titled as sovereign only in proportion to the compliance with the relations, we have reason to suppose that sovereign is not a sovereign in the true sense of the word. Its position is *articulated*, it *is* not sovereign, but it is *posited* as such. This ontological impossibility suggests that true sovereignty comes only when one leaps beyond the symbolic space of the social. The constitution and maintenance of identity being

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accomplished only within this realm, we can conclude that by only risking the identity, namely only by risking what constitutes itself as distinct object and subject can one be sovereign. That such an experience entails death is so apparent that it requires no further comment. Whether this death is *a reversible* or *irreversible one* and what these two options points to we have so often explained throughout this thesis that they need no repetition. Nonetheless, this ontological sketch suffices to make us realize the ambivalent character of the sovereignty. He is a *transcendental being* even if this transcendence is caught up within a system. Furthermore, it is clear that this transcendental character cannot be attained unless the sovereign transgresses certain rules. So, it is not wrong to say that the sovereign is the one who transgresses the existing order. Yet, as we already note, the sovereign transcends certain norms or rules, but does not transgress the symbolic space which acts as a mechanism churning out norms and rules as the glue of the social. Thus we come to another conclusion constantly underlined in this thesis: the sovereign transgresses but his is a *licensed transgression*.

A closer look at our last remark may afford us the idea that the social reality consists of two parts. The first is the world of immanence and interdependence where everything is reduced to a value by a common denominator which we can call utility. The second reality reveals itself when this first reality is transgressed and this is what the transcendental character of sovereign accomplishes. Considering this last point, we can reason out the ambivalent nature of sovereign; he is entrapped at a threshold: he is beyond and above the ordinary roles and rules; but this position is set in motion by the very mechanism which also gives birth to the roles and rules transgressed by the sovereign. And this explains why sovereign, even if being beyond and above the law, acts as the guarantee of it. We would not err if we call this threshold the realm of sacred where, the ordinary rules and laws being kept at bay, the distance between life and death turns out to be merely a hair's breadth. It is even possible to say that this sacred character of sovereign has been held in currency until the seventeenth and the eighteenth century in Western Europe. For the sake of brevity, let us skim over how and why this supernatural character of sovereignty has paled into insignificance. For the moment, the overwhelming importance for us is to bring together the apparently dispersed concepts such as tool, taboo, transgression, utility and sacred

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within a coherent conceptualization. This done, we hardly blink at the idea that sovereignty, in the end, is a social way to instituting and sustaining harmonious relations with the cosmos. To give substance to such a strange claim, it will be enough to look at the historical evolution of sovereignty, in the course of which we can easily single out three basic modalities: the rain-makers, the constructors of irrigation channels and the controllers of governmentality.

In the last chapter of the thesis, an attempt has been made to look at the historical background of the ontological sketch which we have postulated with the help of Bataille's formulation of sovereignty. If sovereignty is a way of establishing the harmonious social and natural relations, then we get a feeling for the importance of distinguishing the basic historical modalities with which the social or natural harmony is attained and sustained. The anthropological data testify to the existence of three main forms for human mind to act upon the social and natural material. Omitting the alterations and combinations that the historical processes piles upon the forms, we can see that they are, basically, magic, religion and science. It is, therefore, small wonder to find out that corresponding to these three forms is the paradigm of sovereignty which also reflects this three-part pattern.

In the lands in which magic laid claims to organize human affairs and relations, we see a strange individual whom Frazer aptly calls *public magician*, and who exerts supernatural powers over nature to stir up the benign forces and lulling the malign ones. This is the first sovereign figure which always keeps bobbing up in anthropological and etymological readings. He comes to the sight as rain-maker in Africa or, as the etymological roots of the word "lord" suggests, as the protector of the bread in northern Europe. Or as the oldest Indo-European words regarding sovereignty "*Rex*" "*Raj*" express clearly, it is related with the ability to draw a straight line; a capability without which an adequate place cannot be marked for the rite and thus without which the rite cannot yield the desired outcome. Not to unnecessarily multiply the instances, let us direct our attention to the basic characteristics of the craft of magic. In every act, the magician is put to the test so that the results of his endeavors acts as a judgment on his craftsmanship. Given that in the craft of public magician, the stake is no less than the well-being and survival of

community, it is clear that members of the tribe would grow impatient and rage at the public magician in the cases in which he fails to produce desired outcomes. Considering this, we come to a conclusion that in such a social setting as requires the death of sovereign on this highly contingent basis, sovereignty is hardly able to develop into an institutionalized structure. And this explains why we call this first period *sovereign without sovereignty.*

The second period came along in the great outbreak in which the magic was forced to give way to religious forms. With religion, an idea comes to prevail that the forces of nature are not something which human will can bend to his wishes. As these forces made their appearances in the form of the divine, sacred and other worldly beings, and as the sorcery withdrew before worship, the public magician became, in the scene of history, the earthly representation of the divine being. Wrapped with such a halo of sacredness, the sovereign finds a way to escape from the hands of the social, which so outrageously attacks at the public magician in the case of failure. Thus we catch a glimpse of what this change implies for us in considering the paradigm of sovereignty. To the extent that the sovereign escapes from the social, which arbitrarily or regularly puts the sovereign to death, the relations gravitating around sovereign quickly evolve into the institutional forms. Within such a setting, the issue of succession comes into the focus. The succession, which intimates that it is no longer easy to kill the sovereign and that the sovereign manages to transfer his possession to successors, made provision for accumulation to achieve a previously unthinkable degree. From the tribal communities in which the increasing monopoly over the totemic symbols is set in motion to the empires in which the despotic figures represent the center of universe, the processes strikes us as the emergence of landed property and accumulation. The natural outcome is that sovereignty, the consumption beyond utility, emerges as the asset of the tiny section of humanity. Naturally, increasing accumulation favors the sophistication of enjoyment which thenceforth reached unprecedented levels. With the aid of such an increase in accumulation, sovereigns were enabled to act within much more concrete and much more complex institutional settings, which, in turn, further guarantee their sovereign position, affording them immense capacity to reign over the subjects. And

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this explains why we choose to call this form "*sovereignty with a sovereign*" or "*sovereign with sovereignty.*"

When we cast reflections on these historical forms, some conclusions start to strike our attention. First is the metaphysical character of sovereign, which is eminently manifest in the mythical and theological conceptualizations of sovereignty. With this, there comes into view another conclusion which dwells on the body of the sovereign and its position. In the two forms, there is a sovereign being who always makes his appearance at the center of the representation. But with such a metaphysical representation as is so heavily burdened by the theological and mythical configurations, the *body,* the physical presence, of sovereign naturally causes some problems. This body wears under the effect of time which is found somewhat uncomfortable by metaphysics. This gives the answer to the question of why sovereign figures rise to prominence as being endowed with a second body and why the cosmological or theological thought strenuously endeavor to give substance to this second body. And thus we come to another conclusion which we seek to underline throughout this thesis: this body of sovereign is always under the intervention that aims at the continuation of the political configuration propped up by a metaphysical representation. As this thesis tries to demonstrate, sovereignty in such a setting turns out to be a technique requiring a great effort on the part of sovereign, no matter how magnificent he is in the end. These bodily interventions and metaphysical representation, which attempt to prove that crown and scepter are beyond time, find their culmination in the death of the sovereign. In this sense, the royal funeral ceremonies and the treatment of the body of the deceased sovereign abounds with the insights and implications illuminating the metaphysical nature of sovereignty.

It goes without saying that such an awkward physical presence (the body of sovereign) is so contingent an element that it always forms the critical point in sovereignty. As the relations solidified into the institutionalized practices, and as the processes attained an immensely complex form, there is hardly anything more normal than the effacement of the human factor in the functioning of social mechanisms. It stands to reason therefore that when the institution of sovereignty is

furnished with such a complex and sophisticated form as to operate independently from the will of sovereign (or from that of any individual), the paradigm of sovereignty would be disposed to discharge this physical presence. The seminal signs for such a development came to clearly into view when it comes to thirteenth-century Western Europe. From this century onward, the paradigm of sovereignty had undergone the important transformations under the effect of which the institutional setting outweighed the sovereign being. Thus, with the outbreak of the French revolution, when the French revolution broke out, what took place is not an ordinary royal affair of replacing one sovereign with the other. It was the abolishment of the sovereign with his second body. It is therefore, not too much to say that it was the complete effacement of the physical from the paradigm of sovereignty. As agriculture was dethroned by industry and as science ran ahead of theological thought in conducting social and natural affairs, we bear witness to the development of another form of sovereignty: "*sovereignty without a sovereign.*"

With this change, which I prefer to designate "the second death of sovereign," the paradigm of sovereignty can be conceived of as having cast aside this irrational physical presence which always stands in need of mystical and theological thought for legitimacy. This might spur us to a conclusion that sovereignty is no longer metaphysical. Unfortunately, the reverse is closer the truth. With the disappearance of this physical presence at the center of metaphysical representation, there remains nothing to put the metaphysical representation into question. It is on this basis that we can consider sovereignty as all the more metaphysical. Of course, there is no doubt that this paradigm shift (sovereignty without a sovereign) has brought along with itself important achievements for humanity. But this by no means hinders us from discerning darker side lurking behind. Finally, I assert the implications of this darker side as the final conclusion of my thesis. To deal with this conclusion, a reference to international normative theory seems in place. At this point, I feel it necessary to point out that even thought the debates taking place within international normative theory are not detailed within this thesis, they act as an invisible hand guiding the arguments throughout this thesis. Considered as a whole, Bataille's ontological views on sovereignty, as this thesis tries to show, offer important insights when our normative imagination becomes befuddled by certain deadlocks. By calling

our attention to other ontological possibilities, Bataille enables our imagination to escape from the vortex of the man/citizen dichotomy. What matters in both options is homogenization, the closure set in motion with each certain array of possibilities. Thus, *man*, who appears as all the more inclusive, cannot articulate anything without excluding others. To appreciate this, let us look again Schmitt's formulation of sovereignty: the sovereign is the one who decides the state of exception. It is in our inability to answer the question "who decides the state of exception" that contains all the implications which should have important bearings on our normative concerns. We live in an age in which Schmitt's formulation can remain meaningful only if it is changed into "sovereign is that *which* decides state of exception." So, we can conclude that the human factor being effaced from the center of sovereignty, an atmosphere of indecision always hangs over the sovereignty, as a result of which individuals are deprived of the opportunity of seeing they are exposed is exposed to sovereignty.

Undoubtedly, what merits attention in this regard is the fact that while the human factor is more and more strangled under the weight of the complex social and technological relations and also under the weight of the gigantic bureaucratic machines, our official discourse is deluged with a jargon revolving around such concepts such as subjectivity, humanity, autonomy. In this age of "*sovereignty without a sovereign,*" human beings themselves are placed at the altar of metaphysics. Whether this being is called man or citizen, it does not really matter. What matter is the fact that this over-efficient and over-rational edifice needs a metaphysical representation which robs it of every trace of mystical and mythical thought and thus which proves itself rational. It is, therefore, small wonder to see that there comes into existence an official discourse which always depicts humanity itself as sovereign. What worries us is the consequence taking place in all political metaphysics: occupying the metaphysically central position, man comes to have a second body beyond temporal and spatial conditions. If what lurks behind this image lures our attention, we realize that under the shadow of this metaphysical body, the physical body becomes the target of disciplinary practices and techniques, and when the circumstances necessitates, it can be put into death. We formulate this situation as follows: since neither the hand of death nor of any accident can touch man, he or she

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can be exposed to technological and bureaucratic interventions. It is on this trajectory, which ranges from Arendt through Foucault to Agamben, and which we endeavored to probe with Bataille's views on sovereignty, that I think the normative international theory should concentrate.

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APPENDICES

1. TÜRKÇE ÖZET

Uluslararası İlişkiler'deki eleştirel gelenek modern devletler sisteminin merkez kavramı olarak düşünülen egemenliğin metafiziksel niteliği üzerine sürekli olarak vurgu yapmaktadır. Eleştirel gelenek içindeki bu çok çeşitli farklılıklara rağmen bir konuda ortak bir fikir birliğine varıldığı rahatlıkla öne sürülebilir. Bu ortak noktanın hakim uluslararası ilişkiler söylemindeki egemenlik kavramının ele alınış biçimi olduğu söylenebilir. Eleştirel gelenek içerisindeki feminist, Eleştirel Teori ve post-yapısalcılık gibi temel kuram ve yaklaşımlar mevcut egemenlik okumalarındaki problemli noktalara dikkat çekmek için çeşitli okuma biçimleri ortaya koymuşlardır. Bunlardan biri de mevcut egemenlik kavramsallaştırmaları içinde insani boyutların göz ardı edildiğidir. Bu türden görüşlere göre, yüksek politikanın (high politics) güç gerçekleri veya hayatta kalma (survival) gibi ortaya koyduğu argümanlar en nihayetinde egemenlik incelemelerinde cinsiyet, sınıf ve etnisite gibi öğelerin yer edinememesine yol açmaktadır. Eleştirel kuramların ortaya koymaya çalıştığı şey böyle bir yaklaşımın ve bunun sonucunda ortaya çıkan bir gözden kaybolma halinin bizatihi egemenliğin kurucu öğesi olduğudur. Kısacası, eleştirel kuramlara göre ancak ve ancak etnisite, sınıf gibi egemenlik paradigması ile uyuşması mümkün olmayan insani faktörlerin ortadan kaldırılması ile egemenlik modern devletler sisteminin yöneticisi ve düzenleyici bir ilkesi haline gelebilmiştir.

Bütün bu noktalar ortaya koymaktadır egemenliğin metafiziksel nitelikleri eleştirel bir dünya siyaseti okumasının kaçınılmaz bir şekilde merkezinde yer alması gerekmektedir. Bu tür bir kaygı ile yola çıkan bu çalışmanın da merkezine egemenliğin metafiziksel niteliğini alması son derece doğaldır. Böylelikle, bu

çalışmanın çıkış noktası egemenliğin temsilleri ile gerçek (temsillerin ötesi) egemenlik arasındaki farklılık olmuştur. Bu noktada şunun da altını çizmekte yarar vardır: egemenlik en nihayetinde bir temsildir ve temsillerin ötesinde bir egemenlik aramanın bizatihi kendisi metafiziksel bir yaklaşımdır. Burada temsil ötesi diye kastedilen şey egemenlik paradigmasının kendi söyleyemediği alanlara ulaşmaktır. İşte tam da bu noktaya ulaştığımız anda, egemenlik bir anda rasyonel görünüşlerinden uzaklaşmakta ve şiddetle eş değer bir hal almaya başlamaktadır. Bu da göstermektedir ki, temsillerin etkisinden uzaklaştıkça egemenlik rasyonelitenin kurulduğu ve korunduğu alan olmaktan uzaklaşmakta ve bizatihi irrasyonel bir alan haline gelmektedir.

Bu çalışmanın ana fikirlerinden birisi, böylelikle temsili (söylemin ortaya koyduğu) egemenlik ile gerçek egemenlik arasındaki farklılık ve hatta uyuşmazlık üzerine odaklanmanın egemenliğin eleştirel bir okuması için ne kadar önemli olduğunu ortaya koymaktır. Yukarıda da belirtildiği gibi, bu nokta zaten Uluslararası İlişkilere eleştirel yaklaşımlar tarafında net bir şekilde ortaya konulmuştur. Bu çalışmanın özgün katkısı, eleştirel yaklaşımlarda gözden kaçan bir noktanın egemenliğin eleştirel okumalarının yapılırken hesaba katılmasının zorunluluğuna dikkat çekmesinde yatmaktadır. Bu nokta kısaca egemenin vücududur.

Kolaylıkla kabul edilebileceği gibi, bir metafiziksel temsili en rahat şekilde problemli haline getirmenin yolu bu söylem içerisinde bir şekilde *sublime* olarak sunulan varlıkların fiziksel boyutları üzerine odaklanmaktır. Söz konusu metafiziksel temsil egemenliğe ait olduğu noktada, bu temsili sorunsalaştırmanın en kolay şekli egemenin fiziksel varlığı üzerine odaklanmak olacaktır. Bu noktadan hareketle, eldeki çalışma bu noktaya dikkat çekmeye çalışmış ve egemenlik kadar egemenin üzerinde düşünmeye çalışmıştır.

Egemen ile egemenlik arasındaki farklılığa odaklanan bir yaklaşım tabii ki hakim Uluslararası ilişkiler söyleminin problemli noktalarını net bir şekilde ortaya koyacaktır. Bundan daha da önemlisi, egemen ile egemenlik arasındaki farklılığa odaklanan bir çaba eleştirel uluslar arası ilişkiler söylemindeki açıklarında ortaya konulmasına hizmet edecektir. Bu noktadan bakıldığından, çalışmanın hareket

noktalarından biri de şu sorudur: eleştirel uluslar arası ilişkiler söylemleri, ki sürekli bir şekilde hakim egemenlik kavramsallaştırmasının metafiziksel niteliklerinden dem vurmaktadırlar, bu en kolay yolu yani egemenlik ile egemen arasındaki farkı neden eleştirilerinin temel noktası haline getirmemişlerdir?

Tabii ki, bu şekilde kendini ortaya koyan bir "neden" sorusunun "nasıl" sorusu ile takip edilmesi gerekecektir. Bu da demek oluyor ki, eldeki çalışma egemenlik ile egemen arasındaki alana odaklanmanın neden önemli olduğu vurguladığı kadar bunun nasıl yapılacağını da ortaya koyması gerekiyor. Bu noktaya dikkat çektikten sonra, vurgulanması gereken şudur: mevcut uluslararası ilişkiler söyleminin ortaya koyduğu tarihsel yaklaşım böyle bir okumayı daha baştan baltalamaktadır. İşin ilginç yanı, bu tarihsel yaklaşım eleştirel kuram tarafından da sorgulanmadan kabul edilmektedir. Gayet açıktır ki, bu tarz bir okuma stratejisi tam da hakim egemenlik söyleminin işine yaramakta ve onun kendisini sorunsuz bir şekilde yeniden üretmesine hizmet etmektedir.

Her iki yaklaşımda (hakim realist uluslar arası ilişkiler söylemi ve bunun karşısında yer alan eleştirel söylem) egemenliği modernite ile ortaya çıkan bir paradigma olarak ortaya koymaktadırlar. Bunlara göre, egemenlik modern devletler sisteminin kurucu ilkesi olarak 16. yy.'dan itibaren devletler arası ilişkileri düzenleyen temel öğe olarak ortaya çıkmıştır. Diğer bir şekilde ifade edersek, modern egemenlik paradigması, modern egemen devletlerin ve onların ilişki içine girdiği modern devletler sisteminin ortaya çıkması ile oluşmuştur. Bu da demek oluyor ki, gerek egemenlik gerekse de modern devletler sistemi modern dönemde ortaya çıkmıştır.

Bu tarz bir okumanın eleştirel okumalara daha başından ciddi bir şekilde ket vuracağını anlamak için modernite sürecinin gelişim sürecine bakmak yerinde olacaktır. Modernliği egemen figürlerin tarih sahnesinden silindiği bir dönem olarak almak mümkündür. Bir bakıma modernite keyfi tüketimin taşıyıcısı olarak tarih boyunca karşımıza çıkan egemen figürlerin tarih sahnesinden silinmesi sürecinden pek de faklı değildir. Çok değişik coğrafi bölgelere ve çok farklı zamansal dilimlere de denk gelse, modernite'nin gelişmesi her koşulda egemenin siyasal ve sosyal

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pozisyonunu ciddi bir şekilde sıkıntıya sokmaktan geri kalmamıştır. O kadar ki, modernite ile birlikte egemenler ya tarih sahnesinden silinmek zorunda kalmışlardır ya da toplumdaki konumları tekrardan tanımlanmıştır. Bu tanımlanma sonucunda da özellikle feodal dönemde net bir şekilde gözüken, keyfiyet, irrasyonelite ve hesap bilmezlik gibi egemenin doğal kabul edilen varoluş ve hareket kipleri modernite ile gözden kaybolmuş veya sembolik hareketler düzeyine indirgenmiştir.

Bütün bu noktalarda bizim için asıl üzerinde durulması gereken şudur: egemenlik modernite ile başlayan bir oluşum olarak ele alınacaksa da, modern dönemde egemen aramak pek de mümkün olmayacaktır. Ancak yukarda da belirttiğimiz gibi asıl kritik öneme sahip olan mevzu egemen ile egemenlik arasındaki o tanımı pek de mutlak şekilde yapılamayan alana konsantre olmaktır. Uluslararası ilişkilerde geçerli olan ve aralarındaki tüm farklara rağmen hem devlet merkezli hem de eleştirel kuramlar tarafından sorunsuz bir şekilde paylaşılan böyle bir tarihsel anlatı ontolojik bir yaklaşımı daha baştan imkansız hale getirmektedir.

Egemenlik paradigmasını ontolojik bir okumaya tabii tuttuğumuzda karşımızda şöyle garip bir durum ortaya çıkacaktır: ya elimizde egemenlik olacak ama egemen olmayacak veyahut elimizde bir bulunuş olarak egemen olacak ama egemenlik olmayacak. Yukarıdaki açıklamalar ışığında net olarak anladığımız ise şudur: bu iki unsur bir araya getirilmedikten sonra, yani egemen ile egemenlik arasındaki o tanımsız bölgeden hareket etmeye başlanmadıkça ontolojik bir egemenlik okuması daha baştan ciddi bazı sıkıntılardan muzdarip olacaktır. Dahası, ontolojik bir perspektif ile analiz edilemeyen bir egemenlik okuması da eleştirel niteliğinden bazı önemli unsurları kaybetmek durumda kalacaktır.

İşte bütün bunlar, bu çalışmanın merkezine egemen ile egemenlik arasındaki alanı inceleme isteğini temel almasına yol açmıştır. Bu noktada karşımıza bir sıkıntılı nokta daha çıkmaya başlamıştır. Ontolojik yaklaşım varlıkların varoluş koşulları açıklamak için girdiği uğraşılarda genellik düzeyi oldukça yüksek kavramsallaştırmalara başvurabilmektedir. Bunun ise, açıktır ki, oluşumların veya varlıkların toplumsal, ekonomik ve siyasal koşullarını ve hatta koşullanmışlarını ıskalamayı beraberinde getirmektedir. Bunu noktayı aydınlatmak için Heidegger'ın

Varlık (Being) üzerine odaklanan okumalarına bakmak yerinde olacaktır. Genel kabul olarak, söylenen şu söz bu noktayı gayet güzel bir şekilde ortaya koymaktadır: "Marx'da sınıf vardır ama ölüm yoktur, Heidegger de ise ölüm vardır ama sınıf yoktur." Ölüm ve varlık gibi toplumsal koşullanmışlıkların tavsamaya başladığı alanlarda egemenliğin sosyal, siyasal ve ekonomik içeriklerinden arındırılma tehlikesi ile karşı karşıya gelinmektedir. Bu noktada nasıl ki egemenliğin metafizik okumaları egemenlik pahasına sınıf, cinsiyet ve etnisite gibi sosyal içerikleri ıskalıyorsa, aynı şekilde ontolojik okumaları da farklı noktalardan hareket de etse bu tarz bir sonuca neden olma ihtimalleri mevcuttur.

Açıktır ki, bu tehlikeyi bertaraf etmenin en net yolu tarihsel analize yer vermek olacaktır. Tarihsel bir perspektiften egemenlik kurumuna yaklaşılınca, ilk gözümüze çarpan egemenlik kurumunun modernite ile sınırlandırılamayacak bir tarihsel derinliğe sahip olduğudur. Bu tarihsel derinlik göstermektedir ki egemenlik kurumunun etrafında şekillenen ilişkiler hakim realist uluslararası ilişkiler söyleminde sunulduğunun aksine çok büyük bir çeşitlilik arz ettiğidir. Bu tarz bir çeşitlilik tabiidir ki tek boyutlu bir okuma içerisinde değerlendirilemez. Bu da demektir ki egemenlik güç gerçekleri karşısında uygulamaya konan bir prensip olmaktan çok uzaktadır.

Böyle tarihsel bir bakış açısı bu çalışmanın bir diğer önemli dayanağını da gözler önüne sermektedir. Şöyle ki, egemenlik kurumun tarihsel incelemesi yapılırken bu kurumu sadece feodal dönemlerin bir eseri olarak görmek yanılgısına düşmemek gerekir. Modern dönem ile feodal dönemin birbirlerine olan zamansal yakınlığı moderniteyi merkez alan egemenlik çalışmalarında feodal bir kurum olarak egemenliğin ele alınmasına bir şekilde el vermektedir. Ne yazık ki aynı şeyi feodal dönemi önceleyen ilkel topluluklar için söylemek pek olanaklı olmayacaktır. Kısacası, feodal dönem bir şekilde egemenliğin tarihsel incelemesinde kendine yer bulabilmekteyken, ilkel kabilesel organizasyonlar egemenlik kurumun incelenmesinde ihmal edilebilmektedir.

Egemenlik kurumun ilkel kabilesel dönemlerde aldığı görüntüler ve neden olduğu ilişkiler bütününü anlamak egemenlik kurumunun tarihsel arka planını

aydınlatmak için yaşamsal öneme sahiptirler. Ancak böyle bir uğraşı içine girildiğinde karşımıza bir zorunluluk ortaya çıkmaktadır. O da şudur: antropolojik bir okumaya başvurmaksızın egemenlik kurumunun ilkel toplumsal örgütlenme düzeyinde aldığı şekilleri algılamak mümkün olmaktan uzaktır. Karmaşık toplumsal ilişkilerin ortaya çıkmadığı bu toplamsal yapılanmada, egemenlik kurumu pek tabiidir ki en yalın hali ile karşımıza çıkacaktır. Ve işte bu yalınlık, egemenliğin ne ifade ettiğini anlamak açısından son derece büyük bir öneme sahiptir. Bütün bunlar egemenlik kavramının ontolojik incelemesinde antropolojik verilerin önemine işaret etmektedir.

Yukarıda da belirtildiği üzere antropolojik veriler egemenlik kurumun temelinde yatan ilişkilerin hayret verici çeşitliliğini gözler önüne serecektir. Bu da en nihayetinde egemenliğin tekil okumalarından bizi kurtaracaktır. Bu noktada akla gelebilecek sorulardan bir tanesi bu tekil okumalardan neden kaçınılması gerektiğidir. Daha da açıkçası bu tekil okumaların getirdiği zarar nedir? Bu tekil okumalar öncelikle egemenlik paradigmasının mevcut verili konumlanışını evrensel bir gerçeklik olarak sunmaktadırlar. Bu nokta da yerine getirdikleri en büyük işlevin belirli ve spesifik bir çıkarı evrensel ve genel geçer sunmak olduğu söylenebilir. Demek oluyor ki egemenlik kurumunun içerdiği farklıklar ve çeşitlilikler hesaba katılmadığı sürece, karşılaşılacak tehlike belirli bir toplumsal grubun çıkarlarına göre formüle edilmiş siyasal iktidarın evrensel bir şekilde tüm insanların veya tüm vatandaşların çıkarını yansıttığı şeklinde bir inanca kapılmak olacaktır. Bu noktada antropolojik veriler egemenlik paradigmasının batılı Avrupa merkezli modern kurgusunun gerçeğin tamamını ifade etmekten uzak olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır.

Bu noktalar ortaya konduktan sonra, bu çalışmanın ilerleyebilmesi için egemenlik kavramını yeni bir ontolojik zemine taşıyacak bir düşünsel bir yaklaşımın bulunmasıydı. İşte tam da bu noktada Georges Bataille'ın egemenlik kuramının neden bu çalışmanın merkezinde bir yer verildiğini anlamaya başlarız. Her şeyden önce Bataille'ın egemenlik kavramı siyasal ve legal bir okumanın sonucu olarak şekillenmemiştir. Bataille'ın ortaya koyduğu tanımların işaret ettiği gerçeklik hep aynı noktaya işaret etmektedir: egemenliğin varoluşsal boyutu vardır. Demek oluyor ki, Bataille'ın egemenlik kavramının katkısı egemenliği sadece siyasal ve hukuki bir

kavram olarak ele almaktan öte, onu ontolojik bir incelemeyi hakeden varoluşsal bir tema olarak ele almasıdır.

Bataille'ın egemenlik tanımları bu noktayı net bir şekilde ortaya koymaktadır. Kısaca bu tanımlara bakalım: "faydanın ötesindeki tüketim egemenliktir," "egemenlik HİÇLİKTİR," "egemenlik kaygının HİÇLİKTE eridiği andır." Bu tanımlamaların anladığımız anlamda siyasal egemenlik ile ilgisi yoktur. Ancak egemenlik bu şekilde tanımlandığı anda ontolojik bir boyut kazanmaktadır. Bu yüzdende Bataille'ın egemenlik kavramsallaştırmaları bizim için büyük bir önem kazanmaktadır.

Bu doğrultuda Bataille'ın egemenlik kuramını çalışmanın merkezine oturtunca karşımıza bir başka nokta çıkmaktadır: Bataille'ın egemenlik kavramı, geniş bir entelektüel çaba ve çalışmanın bir ürünüdür. Ve bu geniş arka plan göz önüne alınmadığı sürece Bataille'ın bu kavram ile ne ifade ettiği tam olarak anlaşılamamaktadır. Bu da demektir ki, Bataille'ın egemenlik kuramını Bataille'ın genel felsefi çabasından bağımsız olarak düşünmek sağlıklı bir yaklaşım olarak gözükmemektedir. Madem ki egemenlik Bataille'ın felsefesinin bir ürünü, en sağlıklı yaklaşım bu felsefenin egemenlik gibi bir kavramsallaştırmayı nasıl ürettiğine odaklanmak olacaktır.

Tezin "Temel Kavramların Tanımlanması" adlı bölümü bu amaç doğrultusunda şekillenmiştir desek yanlış bir şey ifade etmiş olmayız. Bu bölümünde doğal olarak Bataille'ın felsefesinde kendini sürekli gösteren ikilikler üzerinde durulmuştur. Bu ikiliklerin ön plana alınmasının nedeni egemenlik kavramının şekillenmesinin son derece önemli rol oynamasıdır. Bu ikilikler karşımıza "*homogeneity* ve heterogeneity" "tabu ve ihlal" ve "birikim ve harcama" şeklinde çıkmaktadır. Çalışma boyunca vurgulandığı gibi bu ikilikler egemenliğin ortaya çıkmasında kilit öneme sahiptirler.

Bu noktadan sonra, çalışma Bataille'ın egemenlik kavramının kendisi üzerine odaklanmıştır. Bu kavramın içerdiği ontolojik açılımlar incelenmiş, daha sonra da bu ontolojik kavramın siyasal ve tarihi koşullarına bakılmıştır. Bu noktada üzerinde

ısrarla durulan Bataille'ın tanımladığı şekliyle karşımıza çıkan egemenlik kavramının nasıl bir tarihsel ve antropolojik zenginlik arz ettiği olmuştur. Bu noktadan sonra, çalışma kapsamında üzerinde özellikle durulan diğer bir nokta ise özne ve öznellik kavramları olmuştur. Ontolojik bir okuma birbiriyle alakasızmış gibi gözüken egemenlik ve öznellik gibi iki kavramın aslında nasıl iç içe geçmiş durumda olduğunu büyük bir netlikle ortaya koyacaktır. Öznellik de tıpkı egemenlik gibi modern dönem ile birlikte söylem olarak karşımıza çıkmaya başlamıştır. Yine aynı şekilde bu iki kavramda bir temsili bulunuş durumuna tekabül etmektedir. Nasıl ki egemenlik temsili olarak metafiziksel bir kurgu olarak ayakta kalabiliyorsa, aynı şey özne ve öznellik içinde geçerlidir. Özne olmanın koşulları ile öznellik paradigmasının dayattığı bir bulunuş durumu olan özne arasındaki fark tam da gerçek egemenlik ile temsili egemenlik arasındaki farka denk düşmektedir. Egemenliğin bu şekilde özne ve öznellik bağlamına oturtulması ise bize modern dönemde karşımızda egemen olarak sunulmakta olan birey veya insanın nasıl da metafiziksel kurgular olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır.

Çalışmanın bundan sonra incelediği konu ise modern dönemde egemen figürlerin ne olduğudur. Başlangıçta da belirtildiği üzere modernite faydasız tüketim esasına göre hareket eden egemen figürlerin tarih sahnesinden silinmeye başladığı bir dönemi ifade etmektedir. Bu noktada çalışmanın odaklandığı nokta bu dönemde egemen figürlerin başına ne geldiği olmaya başlamıştır.

İşte tam da bu noktada çalışma "egemenin ikinci ölümü" kavramını üretmiştir. Daha doğru bir şekilde ifade edecek olursak, egemen figürlerin tarih sahnesinden silinmesini ikinci ölüm kavramıyla ifade etme ihtiyacı duyulmuştur. Bu noktada temel olarak çalışmayı yönlendiren kaygı mevcut egemenlik paradigmasının söylemlerini eleştirirken, aynı metafiziksel okumalara saplanmama çabası olarak kendini göstermiştir. Bu doğrultuda çalışmanın üreteceği modernite egemenin ölümüdür şeklinde bir tezin içerebileceği yanlışa işaret etmekte fayda vardır. Bu önerme bir yönüyle egemenin ölümüne işaret ederken egemenlik modernite ile ortadan kalkan bir şey olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır. Bu birinci okuma şeklidir. İkinci okuma ise bu önermedeki bir ön kabulü net olarak ortaya koyar: demek ki moderniteden önce bir egemen vardı. İşte ikinci ölüm kavramsallaştırması bu

noktada devreye girmektedir. Modernite egemenin ikinci ölümünü ortaya koymaktadır. Bunun açık anlamı ise egemen modernlikten çok daha önce zaten ölüydü. Çalışma bu noktalar üzerinde çeşitli ontolojik ve fenomenolojik incelemeler yaptıktan sonra sona ermektedir.

Bu noktalar etrafında şekillenen tezin sonuçlarına bakacak olursak şöyle bir durum ile karşılaşırız:

- Egemenlik ontolojik bir sorunsaldır.
- Bu ontolojik sorunsal net bir şekilde tanımlanmadan egemenliğin metafiziksel unsurlarından dilimizi kurtaramayız.
- Bu tarz bir ontolojik çalışma ele aldığı konu egemenlik olduğu için geniş sosyal, siyasal ve tarihi arka planından koparılarak ele alınamaz.
- Antropolojik veriler ışığında egemenlik kurumu ele alınmalıdır.
- Georges Bataille'ın egemenlik okumaları ve kavramsallaştırmaları yukarıdaki durumlara cevap verebilecek niteliktedir.
- Egemen ile egemenlik arasındaki muğlak ve tanımlanması sıkıntılı olabilen alan üzerine odaklanmak gereklidir.
- Egemenin fiziksel konumu üzerine yoğunlaşarak egemenlik söylemini problemli hale getirmek mümkündür.
- Egemenliğin bulunuş durumlarını eleştirirken metafizik tuzaklardan kaçınmak esas olmalıdır.
- Bu noktada "egemenin ikinci ölümü" argümanı bütün bu noktalara cevap verebilmek için üretilmiş tezin literatüre özgün katkısı olarak karşımıza çıkan bir kavramdır.

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