The Liberation of Desire and The End of History: 
A Hermeneutic Engagement With Georges Bataille’s *Accursed Share*

Justin Elliot Lewis

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment 
of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts 
In Philosophy

Graduate School of Philosophy and Religious Studies 
Assumption University of Thailand 
Bangkok 2016
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THESIS TITLE: THE LIBERATION OF DESIRE AND THE END OF HISTORY: A HERMENEUTIC ENGAGEMENT WITH GEORGES BATAILLE’S ACCURSED SHARE.

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Abstract

This thesis represents a hermeneutic engagement with the three volumes of Georges Bataille's *Accursed Share*. It attempts to examine each volume of Bataille's trilogy philosophically, while also exploring some of his direct philosophical and scholarly influences, particularly those of his teacher, Alexandre Kojève, and to a lesser extent those of anthropologists Marcel Mauss and Claude Lévi-Strauss, and psychologist Sigmund Freud. It also persistently draws parallels to Zhuangzi's writings in *The Zhuangzi* throughout the essay so as to highlight the timeless existential and cross-cultural scope of the philosophical themes being raised, and also to give them more depth. It is also an interpretive work inasmuch as from this hermeneutic approach to Bataille, significant themes begin to emerge which themselves bring to bear on philosophical questions regarding forms of desire, the nature of civilization in relation to individual forms of desire, eroticism, specific forms of desire's capture and enslavement; the movements of the political and human animality, and finally, an exploration of the philosophical possibility for a sovereign life at the "end of history." The essay closes with a consideration of the Nomad, who perhaps can best represent the figure of the liberation of desire at the end of history.
A literary work simply does not get written without profound support and lasting influence from those who comprise the author's social milieu. This one is no exception. For even if it is true that the artist can't live without his art, it is also true that his art is unimaginably enriched by all those who come into contact with him in perhaps even the most mundane of ways, and yet thereby broaden his horizons and deepen his perspectives all the same. I would like to thank first and foremost, my wife Isolde, who lovingly tolerated my incessant and only half-coherent ramblings on most of the content of this work, and yet still found the motivation to question its parameters, ask for clarifications, and push the boundaries of this narrative, all the while demanding an overall aesthetic and literary experience from it. Without her support and love, this current work would have never been written. I would also like to extend my grateful appreciation to the faculty of Philosophy at Assumption University, for their always interesting and provocative classes, particularly Dr. Warayuth Sriwarakuel for his class on Philosophical Hermeneutics, Dr. Kajornpat Tangyin for his class on Indian Philosophy, and Dr. Wang Shang-Wen for his class on Chinese Philosophy. Finally, I would like to dedicate this work to my mother, Gayle Lewis, who taught me to question incessantly, to read voraciously, and to live wholeheartedly.
## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abstract</th>
<th>ii</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contents</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Chapter 1 - Introduction

1

### Chapter 2 - Civilizations of The Sun: The Accursed Share, vol. 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2.1 Energy Expenditure and The Gift</th>
<th>15</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.2 The Accursed Share, vol. 1: Solar Economics</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 Solar and Political Economies</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Chapter 3 - Homo Animalis: The Accursed Share, vol. 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3.1 Kojève and Desire</th>
<th>38</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.2 The Paris Lectures (1933-1939)</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 The Kojève-Bataille Debate</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 Bataille on Eroticism</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5 Eroticism as Transgression</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6 Slavery, the Master-Desire and Muddy Tails</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Chapter 4 – Of Nomads and Water: The Accursed Share, vol. 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Sovereignty &amp; The Political Exception</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Nomadism &amp; Wandering Like Water</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3 The Liberation of Desire and The End of History</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Chapter 5 – Conclusion

| Chapter 5 – Conclusion                                | 115  |

### References

| References                                            | 120  |

### Autobiography

| Autobiography                                        | 124  |
Chapter 1 – Introduction

“We the mortals touch the metals, 
the wind, the ocean shores, the stones, 
knowing they will go on, inert or burning, 
and I was discovering, naming all the these things: 
it was my destiny to love and say goodbye.”
~ Pablo Neruda

The narratives we tell ourselves and others are always quick and fleeting glimpses of a life that passes all too quickly. What could we ever really know? What are we really? Veiled passersby of a momentary existence where all our names and passions will most surely dissolve and fade into the unknowable mists of the coming of nothing more than a new instance of eternity. There is little time for finding answers because we are often just too occupied with merely living out the tiniest sliver of time allotted us. And so we are left with only arbitrary and the emptiest of names, a quick reading, and a kind of interpretation which echoes only the life that fills us but for a time. This essay is first and foremost, just such a kind of momentary interpretation. On the face of things, it represents a particular reading of the three volumes of Georges Bataille’s The Accursed Share. And it is difficult to read and interpret any of Bataille’s works in a linear manner, as he does not write them in this fashion. Like the development of his thinking as a whole, there are always many fruitful avenues of reflection and implication that diverge from the main course of his inquiry along the way, like so many small creeks and streams emanating off the wider form of the main conceptual source. Bataille effortlessly crosses disciplinary borders and boundaries in his writing, and reading him will bring the reader on a philosophical voyage across the varied topography of certain philosophical concerns that are perhaps more traditionally associated with other disciplines; such as psychology, sociology, politics, economics, religion, art theory, literature, poetry, mysticism, and more aside from these. Bataille’s forms of thinking and writing philosophy are always in motion and variegated, and he rarely approaches philosophical concerns from a traditional, normative, and overtly academic perspective. This is due in
part to influence of his teacher, Alexandre Kojève, who had claimed that at the "end of history," that is to say, the contemporary universal and homogeneous modern civilization in which we live, this traditional and normative philosophical approach to life would come to disappear, and furthermore, "What would disappear, then, is not only Philosophy or the search for discursive Wisdom, but also that Wisdom itself. For in these post-historical animals, there would no longer be any '[discursive] understanding of the World and of self.'" (Kojève, 2003, p.160)

In a similar fashion, another thinker and writer who was also acutely distrustful of the value of the normative philosophical approach which characterized the academic schools of thought in his day was the Chinese sage Zhuangzi. Both Bataille and Zhuangzi show a basic existential distrust for the traditional philosophical forms of analytic meta-narrative, and they highlight the multi-dimensional quality of a more literary and metaphorical approach to philosophical reflection on life, precisely because they hold that this approach better reflects the nature of life itself. In this essay, Zhuangzi's stories and metaphors serve the purpose of giving more depth, color, and dimension to the hermeneutic engagement with Bataille's work; and also the philosophical implications thereof. So, his anecdotes and stories punctuate this thesis at certain salient intervals, and are interspersed throughout the entirety of the work like so much spice in a dish. This is because it is this precise manner of studying Zhuangzi, by always relating him and his stories to particular existential life processes, (in this case the general hermeneutic project of immersing oneself in Bataille's *The Accursed Share*), which does not betray the spirit in which his work was written and offered to us. The stories and metaphors which color the ancient work, *The Zhuangzi*, are I believe, intended as a supplement to life. To have a chapter dedicated to the scholarly analysis and usefulness of Zhuangzi's work here in this thesis, would of course be to perhaps miss the point of his writing entirely. This doesn't mean that the present essay necessarily eschews all forms of philosophical analysis, as it doesn't; but rather, it means that Zhuangzi's work in no way constitutes a part of it. The fundamental value of Zhuangzi in this essay is
This essay crystallizes around the philosophical theme of *Desire*. Through a philosophical engagement with Bataille's works, it enacts its own correlative movement so as to explore this theme in depth. This exploration therefore, is always relative to the movement of the three volumes of *The Accursed Share*. However it is not entirely contingent on Bataille's works in a philosophical sense, and also it is unafraid to suggest certain broader conceptual implications which stem from his works throughout the essay and especially within its closing movement. Such is the nature of engaging Bataille, as he himself also ranges over the conceptual implications of his main arguments and always manages to show a profound awareness of the multi-faceted nature of his thinking. In this manner he is not unlike Zhuangzi. But while Zhuangzi expresses himself always in a literary form of “Free and Easy Wandering,” Bataille betrays his Kojèveian philosophical influences by consistently adopting the posture of the philosopher in the three volumes of *The Accursed Share*, even when it is only to point out the conceptual inadequacy of such a posture.

The present essay concludes with a consideration of certain specific existential implications which are generated out of this particular reading of Bataille's works. They revolve around the themes of culture at the end of history, politics, enslavement, eroticism, commodification, nomadism, and the liberation of desire. These themes are generated from the reflective engagement with Bataille's texts, and are then aligned with the overarching concern with a Philosophy of Desire. This is by no means offered as a definitive reading. It is instead an open-ended and creative philosophical reflection of a particular hermeneutic process; the process of engaging Bataille's three volumes of *The Accursed Share*. I have spoken here of a “hermeneutic engagement” with Bataille's *The Accursed Share*, and I want to explore this concept a little further. In the first volume of his *Time and Narrative*, Paul Ricoeur outlines his philosophical idea of “Threefold Mimesis” (Ricoeur, 1984, p. 52) Ricoeur writes, “*time becomes human to the extent that it is articulated through a narrative mode, and narrative attains its*
full meaning when it becomes a condition of temporal existence" (Ricoeur, 1984, p. 52). This means that the full poetic, philosophical, and/or literary movement of narrative corresponds in different ways to the experience of time as humanly lived. It is Ricoeur's contention that what mediates the interplay between these two fundamental existential conditions is a “Threefold Mimesis.” Roughly speaking, Mimesis1 corresponds to our preunderstandings of the order of action, the prefiguration of the practical existential field, the traditional cultural symbolic systems of immanent meaning associated with it, and the temporal field onto which any given narrative grafts it's particular configurations. So what Mimesis1 encapsulates is, the conceptual network of action, culturally symbolic mediations, and temporal features of existence that remain implicit in these symbolic mediations of action. These all confer the kinds of “sense” that we spontaneously give to the present, and are also inductors of narrative. (Ricoeur, 1984)

Mimesis2 implies the world of literary configurations. Ricoeur writes, “I take it as established that mimesis2 constitutes the pivot of this analysis. By serving as a turning point it opens up the world of the plot and institutes, as I have already suggested, the literariness of the work of literature.” (Ricoeur, 1984, p. 52) It is the world of the “as if” of fiction, here understood as anti-history, and also the realm of the productive imagination. Ricoeur doesn't emphasize intertextual analytics and circumscribe his research by textual elements in isolation. Rather, he emphasizes “emplotment” as the mediating activity that grasps together the world of preunderstanding, with the world of engaged reading. (Ricoeur, 1984) He is writing of what precedes the reality of fiction, and of what follows its creation. Furthermore, emplotment mediates between a multiplicity of individual events and incidents and binds them into a meaningful unity. It brings together agents, means, interactions, circumstances and results. Finally emplotment mediates through its temporal synthesis of heterogeneity. (Ricoeur, 1984) It resolves St. Augustine's famous “Paradox of Time” through a recourse to Poiesis, and the multiple events that are bound together in a work give a kind of unitary quality to story-telling; and as
such, they manage to combine the chronological and configurational aspects of humanly lived temporality. (Ricoeur, 1984) Emplotment therefore extracts configuration from succession and reveals itself as a story to be followed. This living dialectic of reading the ending in a story, a story in an ending, offers an alternative to linear time. So then narrative, through reading, synthesizes plot with its elements. This synthesis lies within a tradition, and a history, which in turn enriches the relation between plot and time as it is constituted by the interplay of innovation and cultural sedimentation. In this sense then, Ricoeur sees artistic innovations as resting within (or in opposition to) paradigms that constitute typologies of emplotment and this implies that variety of application gives the productive imagination a context, a history, and yet makes creative story-telling and the power of narrative possible.

Mimesis highlights the intersection of the world of a text and the world of the reader. (Ricoeur, 1984) Literature is not here imposed on life, but in fact, it is life itself that demands and warrants literary narrative. Human lives are characterized by their stories, most of which go untold. The stories that get told are those which over time, come to constitute the identity of the individual. But told stories also unfold from the existential background of the Unsaid. Their emergence stands in for the person, circumscribes his self as well as his periphery, and reveals us as beings “entangled in stories,” where narration is but a secondary process. (Ricoeur, 1984) Yet, narration is not only strictly a form-of truth-telling, but also includes imaginative colorings within its matrix, as well as overt dissimulation and secrecy. The lived past within the present may or may not be accurate to varying degrees, but it is always eminently human. In this way, to receive a text and to read it is to reactualize a narrative and the experiences to which it refers in the present. This reactualization points to a lived horizon of experience that can be shared through language. And Heidegger tells us that language itself is the house of the truth of Being. (Heidegger, 1993) Therefore, we can see by these interrelationships that for Ricoeur, narrative has an ontological status with multiple implications for Being, as the existential
ground of human existence. For Ricoeur, the reader receives a text's sense, reference, world, temporality and this fusion of horizons helps to illuminate relations of cultural sedimentation, innovation, received paradigms, and deviations from those same paradigms. (Ricoeur, 1984) In the last analysis, the function of literary refiguration does not serve to restore the author's intentions which lie behind the text, but makes explicit where in fact the text unfolds - in the present of a life-world with a history, and a future in front of itself. In this way the poetics of narrativity responds and corresponds to the aporetics of temporality on a plurality of temporal levels from death to eternity.

In light of this general outline of Ricoeur's hermeneutic movement, we can say that this specific "hermeneutic engagement" with Bataille's Accursed Share thus points toward an always idiosyncratically human and hence temporary following of a narrative kind of destiny. Ricoeur writes, "We are following therefore the destiny of a prefigured time that becomes a refigured time through the mediation of a configured time." (Ricoeur, 1984, p. 53) And so this present essay simply represents this precise kind of active engagement with Bataille's texts; and it therefore comes to refigure time and narrative through the mediation of an already configured time and narrative. In other words, the present essay is thus a kind of refiguration of the experience of engaging in Bataille's configured texts.

And finally, it is itself a configured narrative re-telling of that experience. Bataille also writes on this, "The foundation of one's thought is the thought of another...I have tried to express a mobile thought, without seeking its definitive state...A philosophy is never a house, it is a construction site...The inevitable incompletion does not in any way delay the response, which is a movement..." (Bataille, 1992, p. 9, 11, 13)

This essay is also therefore not an attempt to give some kind of final and philosophically definitive reading of Bataille's three volumes of his Accursed Share, but rather, it is simply a narrative re-telling of a hermeneutic moment in time when these particular texts, and also those other texts which I felt this engagement implied, were also entered into. In that sense it is a story. Even a fiction perhaps. But only in the sense that all literary works are also fictions, like myths, and also like the stories and
anecdotes of Zhuangzi; that is, stories and fictions with an innate purpose and an inherent and existential form of meaning attached.

The following essay proceeds in three main sections, each one mirroring a particular reading of one volume of Bataille's *Accursed Share*. Also, philosophical implications of each volume are explored but for the sake of brevity, are merely explored for symptoms of relevance, without ever seeking to portray them in some kind of terminal state. There is also a thesis, and a main argument that runs like a river with its various attendant tributaries throughout the essay, and which comes as a result of a sustained philosophical reflection on the various dimensions of Bataille's works; and finally, does not shy away from their perceived philosophical implications. The main thread of the argument runs as follows:

- **Our desire is a means to our own enslavement.**

- **Desire for transcendence is at once an affirmation of this enslavement and also results in the inevitable negation of the "given," and when the "given" is the social capture of desire, then transcendence of contemporary forms prohibition and taboo is a kind of revolutionary transgression of the historical conditions Kojève termed the "end of history."**

- **The transgressive moment is a sovereign moment, and it is akin to the movement of human dialectic with the sacred. The transcendence of civilization through the existential forms of eroticism, as well as via political and economic sovereignty is also a kind of death of the self, but one that is a necessary precursor for a sovereign existence to unfold.**

- **Sustained sovereignty as a way of life is what I term Nomadism, and it is equivalent to the Liberation of Desire, which comes as a result of the "death of the self" in its mature form. The Liberation of Desire is in many ways also akin to the "natural condition" of a kind of pre-cultural animalistic sovereignty to which we long to return.**

- **The death of the socially constructed self, and a conscious non-alignment with its Master-Desire in the contemporary world at the end of history, in favor of a more fundamental form of existential harmonization with the general cosmic movement of the Dionysian, or perhaps also of the Tao of Zhuangzi, affirms the Liberation of Desire at the End of History, and thus begins the journey of the Nomad.**

The thesis of this argument is that the will to Nomadism, whether it be of intellectual, spiritual, religious, philosophical, economic, or even of physical proportions is a form of desire's liberation from
capture, and this is particularly so in the cultural configuration of the existential conditions that are found at the "end of history."

I have argued here that this essay simply offers a kind of reading of Bataille's *Accursed Share*. One that follows Ricoeur's hermeneutic theory of "Threefold Mimesis," in that it affirms one's temporal existence through an engagement with narrative, and that also openly brings one's own existential preunderstandings to the table, and finally which combines the chronological and configurational aspects of one's existence with those of the text; thus offering an existential alternative to mere analysis, historicization, and the underlying context of the concept of linear time.

Finally, it is not my intent to try and restore the author's intentions which lie behind the text *per se*, but rather, to try to make explicit where in fact the texts unfold. In the presence of an existential life-world, with a history, and also a future in front of itself. In that sense, this essay is simply meant to be a shared moment in time, and a particular creative reading of a particular narrative configuration. And it is a reading which represents a merely human attempt to find certain names for things, and in so doing, to respond and correspond to the aporetics of temporality and narrative on a plurality of levels from life and death to eternity.
Chapter 2 - Civilizations of The Sun: The Accursed Share, vol. 1

The Sun, the hearth of affection and life,
Pours burning love on the delighted earth,
And when you lie down in the valley, you can smell
How the earth is nubile and very full-blooded;
How its huge breast, heaved up by a soul,
Is, like God, made of love, and, like woman, of flesh,
And that it contains, big with sap and with sunlight,
The vast pullulation of all embryos!
And everything grows, and everything rises!
~ Arthur Rimbaud

During the period of the ancient Egyptian Old Kingdom, immersed in the shrouded depths of a
dream time of prehistory, the ancient city of Heliopolis was a major urban center in the deserts of North
Africa. Built around 3000BC, it was held by the ancient Egyptians of the Old Kingdom to be situated
at the precise site of the originary mythical “creation mound,” and as such, the city’s full and sacred
raison d’être was in fact, to pay homage to the ancient Egyptian creator god of the sun, Atum-Ra. This
god was worshiped at regular intervals by the venerated theocracy of the Old Kingdom as the primal
and originary “Lord of Creation,” and worship was done through their elaborate and opulent cultic
ceremonies, conducted by the city’s famously enigmatic priests. The priests themselves were the
sanctified keepers of that which even then, was an ancient and prehistoric mythology. One that taught
that it was in fact precisely at the city site of Heliopolis where the primal god had risen from a formless
watery void of non-being, and through sheer force of divine will, acceded to a deified state of pure
being. (Whitaker, 2012)

This primal Egyptian god of the sun also went by many other names as the sacred mythology
evolved through the ages of the myriad Egyptian kingdoms, and these names were dependent on the
solar god’s manifold dispositions or powers, and also depended on his place in the sky. (Whitaker, 2012)
For the Egyptians of the later Kingdoms then, Ra came to be seen as the primary sun god, as the
original creator god began to merge with the Horus-Osiris mythical complex. The physical sun itself
could legitimately be referred to at the time of the Old Kingdom “the eye of Ra.” So closely linked were the ideas of these interrelated aspects of the the various “faces,” of the sun gods, that they could also sometimes be merged together as Ra-Atum or Atum-Ra. (Whitaker, 2012) The pharaohs of the Old Kingdom were also known to have ordered the adornment of the temple of Ra at Heliopolis with the characteristic and imposing Egyptian monolithic obelisks; the famous large tapering columns with a square base, jutting upward toward the sky, and graced by hieroglyphic inscriptions down each side of the column itself which linked the great deeds of reigning monarchs with the monumental petrified ray of solar power itself. A royal power of cosmic dimensions, thus captured in the majestic form of the obelisk, rising abruptly at its apex to a glittering pyramidal point. The obelisks were held to be able to reflect the first rays of the morning sky, and were thus able to serve as symbolic representations of the pharaoh, and the originary and mythical “creation mound,” where priests could ritually re-enact Atum's first primal movement from watery formlessness to nascent god-hood. (van der Plas, 2006)

"This mythical mound is itself linked to the sun and also ties to the city’s Egyptian name Iunu which means “pillar.” Thus Heliopolis was known as the “city of the pillar.” As the purported site of the advent of “being” and the beginning of all existence, it is not surprising that Heliopolis gained notoriety as a community of priests who studied philosophy and astronomy, becoming the main center in Egypt for ancient learning and theology prior to Alexandria’s rise.” (Tompsett, 2016)

Unsurprisingly, the sun was therefore seen to be among the most important natural elements in the lives of the ancient Egyptians of the Old Kingdom, and it was conceived of as carrying the status as an eminent creator god. Here is the place where cosmology and architecture were intertwined for the ancient Egyptians, as notions of time, space and the divine were virtually indistinguishable from one another in terms of actual human being-in-the-world. (Kittler & Darula, 2008, p. 407) What this means then, is that all these conceptual, symbolic and mythological arrangements came together in the determination of actual material architectural formations. So we see archaeological conclusions advanced by Egyptologists such as the following: “It is plausible, therefore, that solar geometry, at the
equinox, was chosen to establish the primary orientation of the pyramid complex. Sundials based on the equinox sun-shadow were commonly used during the 3rd century BC.” (Kittler & Darula, 2008, p. 407) Theirs need not have been a fully formed and precisely articulated philosophical complex at this time, but rather, the overall worldview did serve them well enough to provide a mythologically inspired conceptual backdrop to what we would consider more secular and material affairs such as architecture and building or monument construction.

As the Old Kingdoms gave way to the Middle period (ca. 2000BC) and the New Kingdoms (ca. 1500BC), the mythology of ancient Egypt showed an evolving tendency toward ever more complex associations with their divinities and the natural forces which they embodied. “It seems to keep pace with the tendency toward solar monotheism, which, beginning already in the Middle empire, made rapid advances in the opening dynasties of the New empire.” (Breasted, 1893, p. 20) This tendency toward solar monotheism eventually reached its peak during the reign of the pharaoh Akenaten during the period of the New Kingdom. Finally, the main point to be made here is that the evolving nature of the ancient Egyptians' close philosophical and mythological relationship with solar energy is also reflected in the enduring material accomplishments of their civilization.

As mentioned already, for the Egyptians, the sun's names and attributes varied greatly over time. As the rising sun in the east, he was at times called Khepri, the great scarab beetle, or then again, Ra-Harakhte, portrayed as a winged solar-disk and as the young sun of the early morning. As the sun climbed in the sky toward mid-day, it was then sometimes referred to as Ra, the great and virile giver of life. And finally, when the sun set in the west it was alternately known as Atum, the old man at the autumn of his life, or finally, as ancient Horus on the horizon. As a physical solar-disk the sun came to be known as Aten, who also later became the focus of religious reform around 1300BC, by the pharaoh Amenhotep IV, who was the sovereign to change his name to Akenaten, and who also ordained the worship of Aten as the central monotheistic god of the Egyptian state religion throughout the time of
For the Aztecs of Pre-Columbian Mexico by contrast, a civilization that flourished millenia later and on the other side of the globe, the *tonalpohualli* or Aztec “sun-disk” represented an elegant and complete philosophical understanding of space, time, and the divine. (Voorburg, 2016) The inner central area of the sun-disk symbolically depicted the five consecutive “worlds of the sun” as they were called, which were developed and meticulously recorded in the Aztec historical mythology. At the top of the stone is a date glyph (known as 13 reed) which represented both the beginning of the present age, or fifth sun (being the 5th and final one according to their mythology), and thereby legitimizing the divine rule of the god *Itzcoatl* (who took power in that year); and finally, the *tonalpohualli* displayed for all to see, the obvious and inherent bond between the world, the divine, and mankind.\(^1\)

\(^1\)The Aztec *tonalpohualli*, or sun stone, served the ancient Aztec people both as a regular day calendar, and also as a sacred ritual tool of divination which symbolically depicted the nature of time, space, and the divine for the Pre-Columbian Aztec people.
Illustration 2: The Aztec tonalpohualli or sacred sun disk shows the ancient god Tonatiuh at the center, with the sacrificial knife in his mouth. ("Aztec Calendar," Aztec Calendar. Retrieved on 05.08.16 from https://www.azteccalendar.com/azteccalendar.html)

The stone itself would have been originally laid flat on the ground, and was most likely also anointed at auspicious occasions with the blood from necessary ritual sacrifices to both imbue it with life force, and also to verify and support the belief of primal life energy that the stone itself symbolically embodied. When it was first discovered by the invading Spanish forces of Hernán Cortes, the stone was lying flat, and also upside down, perhaps in a vain attempt to prevent the final and total cataclysm of the Aztec empire - the fall of the fifth and final sun - as the Aztec world shortly afterward fell apart following the attack from these same Spanish conquistadors in 1521. (Voorburg, 2016)

Symbolically speaking, the center of the stone sees a representation of alternatively either the sun god Tonatiuh (the Day Sun) or Yohualtonatiuh (the Night Sun) or the primordial earth monster Tlaltecuhtli, in the latter case representing the final destruction of the world when the 5th sun would
fall to earth. Significantly, the tongue of the central “god of the ages” is also a sacrificial knife (*tecpatl*) and in sticking out as it does, it suggests of the absolute necessity for extravagant offerings of human blood and wealth, and the ritual sacrifice of life energy back to earth, the sun, and sky; so as to become the central point around which the entire mythological calendar revolves, and to stave off, for as long as possible, the inevitable final apocalypse as portended by the philosophical totality of the sun disk itself. And thus, massive displays of ritual sacrifice as acts of renewal, characterized the religious and ritualistic lives of the Aztecs.

Around the central face at the four key points above and below the central deity, are the other “four suns of antiquity,” which were successively replaced by each other after the gods *Quetzalcoatl* and *Tezcatlipoca* struggled for control of the cosmos, until the final era of the fifth sun was reached. These “ancient” suns were known by the day name on which their final destruction occurred. Beginning from the top right there is the first sun *Nahui Ocelotl* (4 - Jaguar), top left is the second sun *Nahui Ehecatl* (4 - Wind), bottom left the third sun *Nahui Quiähuitl* (4 - Rain) and bottom right is the fourth sun *Nahui Atl* (4 - Water). (Voorburg, 2016)

The mythologically recorded destruction of each prior age of humanity, coupled with the always only “temporarily delayed,” but portending destruction of the Aztecs’ present age, or fifth sun, couldn’t help but give an overarching apocalyptic and fatalistic tone to the whole conception of time, space, and the divine in the Aztec world. Here then, the end of time, at what we could call the Aztec “end of history” if you will, there is nothing but the naked ineluctability of fate itself; a kind of divinely sanctioned guarantee, on which is indelibly written the name of each living man, woman, and child; as well as the names and fates of all past and future human civilizations. For the Aztecs, and perhaps for all of us, it is only through death that life can be sustained, temporarily at best, and the overarching telos of humankind lies precisely here, in all its visible obviousness, at its terminus. A glorious terminus to be sure, and one in which life’s mystery is invariably reconciled with itself, so that this
reconciliation becomes not merely a transitory act, but is finally and eminently realized. Perhaps even, a kind of *terminus* where one may come to know the gods themselves. The Aztecs were nothing if not courageous. An anonymous Náhuatl poet has been recorded as writing in the sixteenth century,

*Sacred* crazy flowers,
*flowers of bonfires,*
*our only ornament,*
*war flowers...*
*One day we must go,*
one night we will descend into the region of mystery.
*Only here we come to know ourselves;*
*only in passing are we on earth.*
*In peace and pleasure let us spend our lives;*
come, let us enjoy ourselves.
*Let not the angry do so; the earth is vast indeed.*
*If only one lived forever;*
*If only one were not to die!*
(Bierhorst et al. 2011)

**Energy Expenditure and The Gift**

With respect to the present essay, there is one important point to bear in mind in terms of these archaic civilizations and their respective cosmological relationships to the sun, and it is the recognition of the the overall expenditure of pure human and material wealth that each civilization incurred purely for the sake of their own forms of solar worship. The bare material costs in blood and treasure were staggering by any standard, and were infinitely more than what was materially gained from these ritual and architectural acts of solar worship. Simply put, here in their ritual complexes, energy was willfully spent, without any discernible or obvious material or economic profit to be gained in return from this excessive expenditure. It could always be argued here of course, given the evidence, that what was in fact gained by the ostentatious expenditures of human energy into creating these vast ancient ritual complexes and monuments of solar worship was in fact, the continuation of the entire world and the persistence of life itself. But is the material persistence of the world truly predicated on the belief
systems of ancient civilizations which declined and passed long ago? Perhaps we're able to explore another perspective which doesn't require that we actually are forced to wholeheartedly embrace all aspects of the worldviews of the ancient civilizations which are examined here simply for the purposes of illustration.

Marcel Mauss' famous sociological essay *The Gift*, outlines what he believes to be basic and fundamental principles of exchange and economy that provide "one of the bases for social life...old problems which are constantly turning up under new guises." (Mauss, 1967, p. 2) Mauss' essay focuses on the way that the exchange or even the destruction of valued objects immersed in a ritualized context serves to bind social groups, (and even serves historically sanctioned antagonistic conflict between groups), and therefore has the function of building various fundamental social relationships of either positive or negative dimensions within or between human collectivities. His classic study analyzes various economic practices of archaic societies, spread out over different areas of the globe, from Northwest Canada to Melanesia, and he finds that in all of these cultural examples, there exists a common central core set of social properties which can be understood to revolve around reciprocal exchange. (Mauss, 1967) One of the aspects of his writings that stood out most to his contemporaries as well as to later scholars, was the fact that the archaic properties of reciprocal exchange that Mauss had uncovered and was analyzing ran counter-intuitively to basic modern Western ideas (both those of the capitalists as well as of the Marxist variety), of what properly constituted the core fundamental principles of human economics and social exchange. For Mauss, these so-called "primitive" groups under analysis had economic systems that were in fact very far removed from some sort of philosophical human *a priori* and pristine "state of nature," which up until that time, was a commonly made assumption with respect to so-called "primitives" by many in the received canon of Western thinkers (ie, Hobbes, Rousseau, Locke, Hume, Montesquieu). Mauss writes:
"In the systems of the past we do not find simple exchange of goods, wealth and produce through markets established among individuals. For it is groups, not individuals, which carry on exchange, make contracts, and are bound by obligations; the persons represented in the contracts are moral persons—clans, tribes, and families; the groups, or the chiefs as intermediaries for the groups, confront and oppose each other. Further, what they exchange is not exclusively goods and wealth, real and personal property, and things of economic value. They exchange rather courtesies, entertainments, ritual military assistance, women, children, dances, and feasts; and fairs in which the market is but one element and the circulation of wealth but one part of a wide and enduring contract. Finally, although the prestations and counter-prestations take place under a voluntary guise they are in essence strictly obligatory, and their sanction is private or open warfare. We propose to call this the system of total prestations." (Mauss, 1967, p. 3, emphasis added)

For Mauss, the “system of total prestations,” is expressed to various degrees in a given society concurrently and in an interrelated fashion through morality, kinship, jurisprudence, mythology, art, religion, and politics. That is to say, the various symbolic and idealistic non-material systems of a human society are interwoven with its more material aspects into a cultural tapestry of “total prestations.” Also, reciprocal exchange under these conditions is generally obligatory, in the sense that both material and non-material “wealth” is culturally expected to be exchanged for other forms of material and non-material wealth. As we can see, this is a form of holistic economic theory that goes far beyond the typical Western notions on both the traditional political left and on the right about the nature of capital, labor, class struggle, commodity use value, and profit margins.

We have seen that in each of the cases of solar worship under consideration at the beginning of this chapter, there are no clear objective lines which distinctly separate the given solar mythology from its ritualistic practices nor its consequent raw energy expenditure. And there are also no obvious distinctions which can serve to separate the various aspects of the social matrix from the physical construction of vast religious complexes and associated architectural constructions; plus the requisite use of labor and expenditure of human and material resources needed for their total realization in the given society. Under a system of “total prestations,” the economic expenditure needed to realize all the
physical accoutrements of a culture's solar mythology is always tightly interwoven with the salient features of the mythology itself, that is to say, the conceptualization and actualization of human being-in-the-world is primarily holistic and not fragmented into discrete categories. Far from being “the opium of the masses” then, as Marx has elsewhere claimed, there in fact exists an obvious “connection between religious behaviors and economic ones.” (Bataille, 1991, p. 68) The fundamental problem of ancient Egyptian and Aztec solar worship lies at the intersection of the economic and religious spheres of life, but of course, it implies at the same time, and to varying degrees, the legal, political, aesthetic, moral, social, and historical aspects of their civilizations as well. This problem precisely concerns the proper dissipation of useful wealth over and above the socio-cultural issues and vicissitudes which surround the circumstances of its initial acquisition. In each case, what we see is that, in an attempt to establish communion with the divine, and an alliance with the gods themselves, useful wealth must therefore be disposed of - that is, spent, given away or destroyed, properly and publicly; in accordance with the other seemingly unrelated aspects of society which bring to bear on the precise nature of this propriety. Mauss states that,

“...gift exchange, functions there in a manner at once interested and obligatory. Furthermore, the obligation is expressed in myth and imagery, symbolically and collectively; it takes the form of interest in the objects exchanged; the objects are never completely separated from the men who exchange them; the communion and alliance they establish are well-nigh indissoluble. The lasting influence of the objects exchanged is a direct expression of the manner in which sub-groups within segmentary societies of an archaic type are constantly embroiled with and feel themselves in debt to each other.” (Mauss, 1967, p. 31)

Because it is expressed in myth and symbolic imagery, expenditure is also a direct expression of the manner in which groups are embroiled and feel themselves in debt to the gods and the universe as explained to them through their respective mythologies. The key point to bear in mind here is that all material wealth in human society is naturally imbued with socio-cultural significance through corresponding notions of prestige, power, and the sacred. So much so, that these so-called “super-
structural" notions actually help serve to define the precise "actual" value of the aforementioned wealth within socio-cultural groups and even serve to designate it as being wealth in the first place. Speaking of the Trobriand Islanders of the South Pacific, Mauss claims,

"these precious family articles constitute what one might call the magical legacy of the people; they are conceived as such by their owner, by the initiate he gives them to, by the ancestor who endowed the clan with them, and by the founding hero of the clan to whom the spirits gave them. In any case in all these clans they are spiritual in origin and nature. Further, they are kept in a large ornate box which itself is endowed with a powerful personality, which speaks, is in communion with the owner, contains his soul, and so on. Each of these precious objects and tokens of wealth has, as amongst the Trobrianders, its name, quality and power."

(Mauss, 1967, p. 42)

It is in this more "mythological" and symbolic sense then that both the Aztecs and the Egyptians were also essentially engaged in the cosmic discharge of a collective obligatory debt, in these cases one owed to the sun; as well as to their respective deities associated with it. It is the debt of creation and life which must be repaid. And it is therefore a debt that is at last associated with life itself, of the accession of human form and being on the earth, and of human civilization that like the creator god - the sun - emerges out of the natural formless void that is in the end, death itself and the bringer of new life, before it dissipates in life's final telos and terminus, only to begin anew. And finally, it is also death which allows itself to be stayed for a time, to be pacified or bribed if you will, and to allow for human existence to persist in the first instance, before finally returning to absorb all within its fold and to reclaim its final payment. As is stated in The Black Sun, "In sacrifice, for Bataille, one destroys things or people for two reasons—to maintain balance, in some sense, with the cosmos, or the biosphere, and to confront the reality of death." (Roche, 2006, p. 173-174)

If there is within us, running through the space we inhabit, a movement of energy that we use, but that is not reducible to its utility (which we are impelled by reason to seek), we can disregard it, but we can also adapt our activity to its completion outside us. The solution of the problem thus posed calls for an action in two contrary directions: We need on the one hand to go beyond the narrow limits within which we ordinarily remain,
and on the other hand somehow bring our going-beyond back within our limits. The problem posed is that of the expenditure of the surplus. We need to give away, lose or destroy. But the gift would be senseless (and so we would never decide to give if it did not take on the meaning of an acquisition. Hence giving must become *acquiring a power*. Gift-giving has the virtue of a surpassing of the subject who gives, but in exchange for the object given, the subject appropriates the surpassing: He regards his virtue, that which he had the capacity for, as an asset, as a power that he now possesses...[this virtue is] this possibility for man to grasp what eludes him, to combine the limitless movements of the universe with the limit that belongs to him.” (Bataille, 1991, p. 69-70, emphasis added)

**The Accursed Share, vol. 1: Solar Economics**

For Georges Bataille, it is the sun that animates life. All life on earth is in fact, the the result of the dissipating solar ray that inevitably loses itself without any further reckoning. This is not meant metaphorically, like the sun of Plato's Cave (himself also a reputed visitor to the esoteric priests of ancient Egypt); this is literally what life on earth in fact is for Bataille. Just like the Aztec “Night Sun” or *Yohualtonatiuh*, Bataille also speaks of the *Black Sun*, of the sun as the guarantor of death, or perhaps rather, of life as the natural *telos* of the ceaseless squander of energy, and the natural dissipation of solar energy without return, which is *at the same time* the death that both animates, ends, and thereby inheres in life itself. (Roche, 2006) The solar energy is always fated to dissipate. It is the dissipation of solar energy upon which life blossoms in the first instance. And so the sun emits its refuse (*le déchet*) and the consequence of this, is humanity. In this way, all life on earth, already is inherent death, and all inherent death is temporarily arrested life. This is the real nature of *Thanatos*, it is the death instinct of the cosmos. This kind of agitated flow between life and death can also be seen as simply being the underground rumblings of a general and forceful Dionysian movement of life and desire from which the Apollonian impulse of composition finds its ability to spread forth, in counterpoint, so as to fashion its various gilded versions of human history; like collections of so many different poems welling up organically from a vast libidinal fountain of inspired poetic frenzy. Here is
the place where Heidegger, Nietzsche, Freud, Kojève, and Hegel meet in Bataille's vision.

The sun itself is therefore a direct (and not metaphorical) expression of sacrifice, emulated by the Aztecs in its totality, as pure expenditure, as the creation of life through the natural oscillations of death and dissipation, also without immediate return, and as "...the priest who had the stone knife [and] buried it with a mighty thrust in the victim's breast and, after drawing it out, thrust one hand into the opening and tore out the heart, which he at once offered to the sun." (Bataille, 1991, p. 50) Life is instantly and in all its animal fury forcibly returned to its source through the performed and historical symbolics of a vast cultural ritual. The flowering of living organic flows of desire on the face of the earth, are but a momentary reflection, an arresting and temporary interlude, a construction and a composition of the Apollonian counterpoint to the Dionysian wellspring of cosmic desire. Human history and civilization are thus the same momentary concatenations of Dionysian energy, gathered into new forms of Apollonian design, but here, now on a different and more generalized scale than that of the human being. This overarching perspective also found its refined and complete philosophical expression in the symbolic structure of the Egyptian obelisk and the Aztec tonalpohualli, or sun disk.

It should be somewhat clear then, from this view, that the order found in the various compositions of organic life on the earth is the direct and eternal recurrence of an evanescent form of infinite chance. In the first instance of cosmic desire, "Order is not law but a kind of power, and this power is an aberration" of an unmitigated endless flow. (Land, 1992, p. 37) Desire and the sun are of the same kind, and the release of this pure libidinal vitality becomes funneled through various channels of biological structure on the terrestrial sphere, and they are absorbed in the same structure's consequent growth, as this underlying energy undeniably forges its incessant and ineluctable path via its natural organic pathways toward the sea. Here is where the noumenon always exposes itself temporarily as phenomenon, and the fact that they are at the same time, one and the same only in different dimensions of composition perhaps curiously exposes our current distance from Kant's
Enlightenment sociological program. The movement of thermodynamics as a basic movement of vitalistic desire sees life then as the biological means for the transformation and dissipation of solar energy, and sees order in general as a kind of organic labyrinth as desire flows incessantly toward its natural limits. As the Chinese sage Zhuangzi has also noted, “A path is made by walking on it.” (Chuang-Tzu, 2016, Book 14)

The Second Law of Thermodynamics states that entropy has a natural tendency to increase in any closed system over time, and flows in an irreversible manner, thus creating a fully naturalistic distinction between past and future, and therefore, “disorder must increase, [and] that regional increases in negentropy still imply an aggregate increase in entropy.” (Land, 1992, p. 30) This is the basic principle behind Bataille's dualistic conception of the earth's interrelated economic systems. It is in this sense then, that Bataille can be said to go much further than traditional Marxist economics in terms of theoretical sophistication by proposing dual co-existing and overlapping economic structures. One is utterly existential, the other is thoroughly societal.

For Bataille, the societal economy is known as the “Restricted Economy”. Here is where we can pinpoint a momentary arrest of the more generalized solar economic flow. The restricted economy is typically localized, tied to a specific region, focused on growth, accumulation, utilitarian concerns, expenditure and return, on calculations focused primarily on profit margins, and is based on principles of scarcity, needs, and of specifically focused desires, and finally it follows the fundamental aspects of the more general principle of individuation. The restricted economies of the earth serve to partly inhibit the natural entropy entailed in the second thermodynamic law, and they exhibit the essential properties of Apollonian compositions, and finally, they are always simultaneous with real differentiations in space through time. It is perhaps even because of the natural tendency toward entropy at all levels of composition, that life can only be temporarily composed locally in the first place, as a kind of ubiquitously dispersed historical loci of restricted economies. Solar energy therefore
comes to be composed by the purposeful designation or recombination of energy into given localized systems, characterized in this sense as the sum of a purposeful accumulation of resources, which then over time, inevitably reach their natural limitations of the systems' capacities for growth. As Bataille writes,

"Solar radiation results in a superabundance of energy on the surface of the globe. But, first, living matter receives this energy and accumulates it within the limits given by the space that is available to it...Only the impossibility of continuing growth makes way for squander. Hence the real excess does not begin until the growth of the individual or group has reached its limits." (Bataille, 1991, p. 29)

The restricted economy is therefore synonymous with localized composition of forms on multiple levels of configuration, individuation, bodies, individual social networks, societies or specific historical civilizations. The key principle here at all levels is specificity. It is the self without alterity at one level, that is, at the level of Alexandre Kojève's originary "I of Desire," and also the formal compositions of the Apollonian, through historical time and in social spaces, and then again, also a specific regionalized grouping of many selves at another level, here delimited by space into a localized bio-mass, and finally, it is a fundamental but temporary arresting of the more generalized thermodynamic movement toward entropy.

As the given spatial limits of specific growth of the bio-mass are reached, the abundance of solar energy transformed into organic processes must begin to search for an extension of space, to further expand its growth, and once the limits of even this spatial extension are reached in their turn, then the solar energy then begins to naturally accumulate into surplus or excess energy. This is the meaning of Bataille's oft-cited quotation, "the sexual act is in time, what the tiger is in space." (Bataille, 1991, p. 12) The sexual act is seen as the release of this surplus energy only after the limits of individuated biological growth and spatial extension have been reached and the given organism has thereby achieved its sexual maturity. Sexual maturity itself then is seen as the limit point of
individuated growth, extension, and energy accumulation, and the beginning of the release of the energetic surplus, as the “I of Desire” begins to recognize and seek fusion with the recognized “Other”. The tiger likewise sits at the top of its ecosystem, the apex predator, the organism that accumulates all the energy of the surrounding space that comprises its “territory,” and it is the specific zero-point of the genesis of vitalistic surplus.

At this point, immanent individuation necessarily gives way to a fundamental form of transcendent communion with the “non-I”. Energetic excess exuberantly spills outward in its intercourse with alterity. The fully grown self now begins to seek out its dissolution into the other, as the duality in the first instance undertakes its natural telos toward unity. Yin merges and dissolves with Yang into a renewed entity called Yin-Yang. This is the realm of fully adult social life, and of society or civilization, and also at the same time, it marks the general recombination of specific organisms into more unified and higher levels of composition. It is a kind of “biological Hegelianism,” as it were, in only a certain sense, in the spirit of the general movement only, minus the characteristic and excessive aspiration for final dialectical resolution and apotheosis. Movement from the self to the non-self here is spurred initially and at all times by desire, which is at the same time, the movement of solar energy pushing the organism away from the initial stages of growth and acquisition, toward inevitable expenditure and the terminal point. The organic process is carried to its end through the unification with the other as the intentional object of that self’s directed desire. This is also the existential domain where we first see the nascent emergence of Alexandre Kojève’s political “Master/Slave” dialectic, and the eventual recognition of the “Desire of the Other” as providing the basis for social life, the engine of human history, and finally culminating in history’s own terminal point as Kojève’s describes it. (Kojève, 2003)

The degree of fusion between organism and environment, isolation and communion, Freud’s Eros coming to its fruition as a primary expression of Thanatos, the inherent tension between the
somatic and the regenerative, is a relation that is produced through desire rather than being simply given, and it is a relation which serves to temporarily stabilize any given level of organic composition, before it is inevitably destabilized once more. (Land, 1992) The negation of the impulse toward individuation and energy accumulation through flows of desire thus ultimately results in the final negation of individuation completely, and is therefore, always the equivalence of a kind of death. Further, the negation of individuation is also the more generalized solar movement or flow, and is at the same time a more complete circuit of cosmic energy, and it finds its humanized expression through individuals and civilizations in their various forms of desire's realization. This movement forms the basis of Bataille's "Solar Economy."

For Bataille then, solar economics is in the first place, a particular perspective. It is an acknowledgment of a more generalized flow of solar energy that runs concurrently with, (and at the same time animates) the localized variants of the soma, or the various localized bodies of the restricted terrestrial economies. The emphasis at this level of composition is that it is not in fact a proper level of composition at all, but rather it forms the very Dionysian wellspring of life-energy from which Apollo can draw to begin his own compositional aspirations. Generalized solar flow is at the first, the annihilation of self, while self can be thought of in turn, as a temporalized and spatialized accumulation of a more generalized solar flow. The point of transition between self and solar flow, is also the point where acquisition meets expenditure, where acquisition always exceeds requirements for its own growth. This is because the solar economy exceeds all forms of restricted economy in terms of dispensing a surplus of solar energy (or wealth) throughout the earth, in absolute abundance, without any material return. Therefore, by its very nature, the solar economy always creates surplus, going beyond life's basic chemical reactions, and the pressures put on various localized ecosystems. (Bataille, 1991)

One of the unique insights of Bataille's economic work lies in the view that, "...if the excess
cannot be completely absorbed in [a given level of composition's] growth, it must necessarily be lost without profit; it must be spent, willingly or not, gloriously or catastrophically. (Bataille, 1991, p. 21) If the ineluctable expenditure of solar excess is not brought about purposefully and willingly, through vast expenditures of resources and energy, such as Aztec ritual sacrifice, or ancient Egyptian construction of religious temples, monuments and entire cities, then the incessant drive toward energy accumulation at the level of the local and restricted economies will result in its inevitable forced dissipation given enough time. This is so inasmuch as the solar economy "empties into the sea," or in other words, it already begins the journey of realizing its telos as dissipation and death even prior to it coming to create life on this planet. Localized and temporary accumulation of excess resources simply runs counter to the solar flows of desire, but more dangerously, "...an excess of energy to be expended, considered...as the effect of a movement that surpasses it, tragically illuminates a set of facts...We can express the hope of avoiding a war that already threatens. But in order to do so we must divert the surplus production." (Bataille, 1991, p. 25) Bataille is pointing out here that an increase in localized accumulation, of energy, of resources, of wealth and technology, precisely the sort of accumulation which characterizes modern social life at the end of history, also simultaneously increases the correlative need for its destined and cosmically preordained proportional dissipation; either through a kind of harmoniously conscious human will, and also preexisting cultural outlets, (and above all, through focused human desires), or else it will occur in any event; now catastrophically, through wars and destruction directly proportional to the levels of accumulated solar energy (resources, wealth, and technology) needed to be released in the first place. For Bataille, this insight then necessitates a "Copernican revolution" in economic principles, and in human ethics in general. (Bataille, 1991, p. 25)

In terms of the restricted economies then, we can see that specific soma (restricted levels of composition) are generally motivated by principles of scarcity, and by fundamental problems of distribution, which by extension, always invite the domain of the political; which is also the ground on
which Marx proceeds with his work. However, in terms of the general solar economy, these same organisms who may be on the one hand motivated by scarcity, are also in fact burdened by surplus energy and the need for resource expenditure, which in fact motivates, and we can even say forces human desire to turn its focus toward every available means of expenditure. This insight, when viewed from the perspective of the restricted and localized economies from which we are used to, may seem at first to be excessive, and to be a kind of carefully formulated apology for aristocratic pretensions even. But this reading is ultimately disingenuous as it doesn't engage with Bataille on his own terms but rather, forces his insights back into the limited inherited paradigms of reflection within which we have always historically been most comfortable. This is also a presumptuous position in its own right that it amounts to an explicit refusal to engage with Bataille's texts in good faith.

At this juncture, we too then are forced by our philosophical engagement with solar economic theory into at least a working position of acknowledging that there are dual economic levels of composition that work in tandem, and that the telos of the more general solar economy is but temporarily arrested, codified, and given particular form at the localized level; which in the end, will only serve to see out the original and more generalized telos and terminal end-point in its own particular regional fashion in any case. Given this cosmic movement, we can say that the regional codification and postponement of solar economics also gives rise to another form of Master/Slave dialectic, one that is perhaps alluded to by Mauss, but not particularly emphasized either by him, nor again in the works of Bataille's teacher, Alexandre Kojève; and it is most evident in our particular economic desires for the accumulation of localized and specific forms of available expenditure. As Mauss has already argued, these local forms of accumulation and expenditure, in their specificity, are also inherited and idealized culturally constructed realities, and the "profits" or systemic growth gained from the expenditure of solar surplus, through the fundamental expression of human desire, are the historically idealized socio-cultural products in toto which characterize these more restricted and
localized levels of composition. This is something that Bataille also did not explore in the *Accursed Share: vol. 1*, as he was more preoccupied with solar economics and with defining the “natural limits” of the restricted economy as a limit of structural composition. However, it is precisely within these natural limits that we come into contact with the basic topography of human socio-cultural values, and a more symbolic and necessarily historical pattern of exchange begins to take shape; as is the case with money in contemporary society for example. As Mauss had elsewhere noted, this provides a point of specific focus where “...the prestige of an individual [is] closely bound up with expenditure.” (Mauss, 1967, p.35) And as thinker and writer Jean Baudrillard also makes clear in his, *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, we are speaking here essentially of, “a revolution of value itself, which carries value beyond its commodity form into its radical form”. (Baudrillard, 2000, p. 6)

What Baudrillard means by this so-called “revolution of value” is that the predominant value of a given material commodity to human desire, as a socially “proper” means of surplus energy expenditure, finds its referential reality strictly within the idealized socio-cultural milieux properly speaking. And that this reality is now superimposed over, and even comes to dominate the more base material and naturalistic biological milieux, or the so-called “use-value;” where the commodity exists as a potential or actual utilitarian object only. That is to say, following Mauss, in the contemporary world, at the end of history, the commodity takes on a new holistic and more “arbitrary” social significance, and becomes a so-called “proper” (because sanctioned) focus of desire and also form of surplus expenditure thereby. Baudrillard also radicalizes this assertion even further to claim that the commodity ceases to have any “substantial reality” whatsoever outside of this idealized socio-cultural matrix, which in turn, necessarily becomes the all-encompassing “virtual” domain for the actualization of all human desires within the social matrix. (Baudrillard, 2000)

Kojève likewise notes that, this *orientation of desire toward non-natural reality* is a fundamental feature of our “human-ness” and it is what separates us from animals.
"For Self-Consciousness to exist, for philosophy to exist, there must be a \textit{transcendence} of self with respect to self as \textit{given}. And this is possible, according to Hegel, only if Desire is directed not toward \textit{given} being, but toward a \textit{non}being. To desire Being is to fill oneself with this \textit{given} Being, to enslave oneself to it. To desire non-Being is to liberate oneself from Being, to realize one's autonomy, one's Freedom. To be anthropogenetic, then, Desire must be directed toward a nonbeing – that is, toward another \textit{Desire}... Action that is destined to satisfy an animal Desire, which is directed toward a \textit{given}, existing \textit{thing}, never succeeds in realizing a \textit{human}, self-conscious I." (Kojève, 2003, p. 39-40)

So then, it is this extra form of "hyper-value" that we attach to the facets of the restricted economies (ie, commodities, the desires of others) in which we live as humans as eminently socio-cultural beings; or within the realm of the "preeminence of the sign," as Baudrillard puts it, which provide us with proper instruction on how exactly we are to freely and appropriately spend our solar inheritance. (Baudrillard, 2000, p. 8) Commodities in this way always become "haunted," by the ghostly remains of the specters of one's \textit{given} cultural history, and this kind of subsidiary \textit{esprit} of the cultural commodity means that one can seldom if ever approach the commodity in its purity, as one communes with nature for example, or even as a pure product of nature. (Derrida, 1994) For Kojève, this is "Freedom from Nature," a form of liberation from the animal self through a thoroughly humanized and historical existence; and it is also the proper beginning point of the political Master/Slave dialectic proposed as a kind of mythological prototype which serves to characterize the originary dimensions of human history, up until history's terminal "end point".

While Baudrillard radicalizes the "freedom of the commodity" to the point where its sign-value supplants any other given form of value as the predominant contemporary sanctioned human object of desire, it is not strictly essential that we must follow him to this same theoretical extreme to obtain the necessary value of the primary insight. Just as he and Mauss do, we can simply also emphasize the movement from a commodity's pure "use-value," \textit{per se}, to its more symbolic "exchange-value," as characterizing a fundamental "strategic drift of value" in the modern era; however, we should also bear
in mind that this characteristic is also not only strictly limited to the modern era, as Mauss' own research has shown. (Baudrillard, 2000) For our present purposes in the development of this essay, we can simply assert that this feature does in fact characterize much of today's socio-cultural life, just as it did throughout the past, and the differences between them are more a matter of degree than of kind.

An important point to bear in mind here is that the "hyper-value" of the contemporary objects (and subjects) of our current desires does not essentially free ourselves from primordial animal life, as Kojève would have it, but rather, what is in fact irreversibly freed instead is that toward which these desires are directed. The "strategic shift in value" of the object/commodity also reveals it at first as a kind of socially constructed and arbitrary nothingness, but also amply colored by historical and culturally constructed values, so that through its innate ability to both absorb historical value, and seduce our desires, we then invariably become its reflection ourselves. Kojève is unequivocal here, "The I created by the active satisfaction of such a Desire will have the same nature as the things toward which that Desire is directed," and so we are now in a position to make the claim that the societally directed desires of the contemporary subject, as directed toward the societally constructed "exchange-value" or fetishized commodity, serve as the direct means by which the subject itself becomes, strictly speaking, an overtly societal construction. (Kojève, 2003, p. 4)

This is but one extreme of an existential continuum however, where the contemporary subject exists only as a concatenation of social and psychic forces, and as a locus of cultural arrangements of power and economic relations; as the work of contemporary philosophers of politics and power such as Michel Foucault intimate.² It is also the furthest distance from Bataille's "Sovereign" subjectivity. For the purposes of this essay, we can state that in this manner, the contemporary subject is constantly subject to a form of existential dissipation into a fully modernized economic form of Kojève's originary

²In Adorno's Negative Dialectics, in Deleuze & Guattari's Anti-Oedipus, and in Foucault's concept of Bio-Power, for example, we see the marked tendency to deny the existential reality of the autonomous subject in favor of seeing subjectivity as a given compositional locus for pre-existing social, political and psychic forces and/or arrangements.
Master/Slave dialectic. And ultimately, it is the object of desire, here given as a commodity bound up in a “total system of prestations” which now manages to subsist in a condition of complete freedom, and exerts the ability to radically direct our desires and thereby, the necessary expenditure of the solar economy. (Derrida, 1994) What all this essentially means then is that unlike in archaic societies, where natural utilitarian “use-value,” inevitably co-existed in a kind of prehistorical harmony with the “exchange-value,” of commodities, we see today that specific “use-value,” especially when considered in terms of prestige and luxury commodities, has been radically shifted in favor of symbolic “exchange-value,” and therefore, contemporary expenditure will now always exhibit a marked tendency toward the prefigured “logic of the sign,” as Baudrillard puts it, as a form of necessary consumption and solar economic expenditure. (Baudrillard, 2000) This is the fundamental logic of the contemporary economic form of the Master/Slave dialectic inasmuch as consumption and expenditure will generally be directed by the social production of desire at the end of history.

**Solar and Political Economies**

For Bataille, the foundations of economic production are not completely enmeshed within cultural and historical architectures as they are with Marx. Production is the result in the first instance of the flow of the solar economy, and it is simply the organic way that we find ourselves always already fit into its cosmic circuit. Marx was describing the conditions of generalized Western industrial economics, which for all their generality, still remain a basic form of the restricted economy. Bataille philosophically subsumes the perspective of Marx and transcends it immediately, by developing his notion of solar economics. Further, for these same reasons, Marxist economics is generally inapplicable to non-Western, non-industrialized economies that do not exhibit dual, antagonistic class

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3 This is also claimed by Adorno in his *Negative Dialectics*: “And yet the thing itself is by no means a thought product. It is nonidentity through identity. Such nonidentity is not an “idea,” but it is an adjunct. The experiencing subject strives to disappear in it.” (2004, p. 189)
structures and which tend to characterize more archaic forms of human society. Bataille's economic formulations by contrast, are much more fluid and adaptable, more originary and fundamental to mankind as *Homo Economicus*, and this is so inasmuch as his economic perspective is that much more transcendent and holistic. This leads Bataille to much different sorts of conclusions than would a Marxist perspective on economics and civilization afford us. For Bataille, "it is not necessity, but its contrary "luxury" that presents living matter and mankind with their fundamental problems." (Bataille, 1991, p. 12) By this he is referring to total solar surplus as it relates to man the animal on the earth, and not merely to specific class relations with a given localized social fabric. As a consequence, Bataille is more interested in the "main sequence of terrestrial development, from which the convulsions of civilization are an aberration," and therefore, Bataille's perspective places the civilizations of the ancient Egyptians, the Aztecs, the hunters of the Paleolithic, and those of Modern Europe or Asia all immediately on equivalent ground, because they are all of the same order. (Land, 1992, p. 49) This gives Bataille's economics much more fundamental depth, flexibility and adaptability than do the economic formulations of Marx or Engels with respect to understanding human civilization as the elementary human gesture in relation to natural desire.

As an example, when viewed from the perspective of the solar economy, we can see that the relatively rapid urbanization that characterized the industrial age in Europe for most of the 18th and 19th centuries, was in effect an internal form of a kind of population exile, one which ultimately and effectively served to separate the majority of the population from actual genuine wealth; that is, natural resources and the solar induced bounty of the land. Urbanization as population exile therefore served to thrust the common *paysans* into an urban environment *en masse*, and also subjected them to a more easily controlled and controllable proxy economy based solely on the local variations of the fundamental principle of money paid for their forms of labor. All the while, the *real* solar resources, upon which the money economy was actually based, at least theoretically, were systematically
exploited and appropriated without opposition by the various regional political powers and growing corporate magnates of the time period.

"Marx and Polanyi among others have amply shown how the conditions for proletarianisation emerged, notably through the enclosure of the commons. In the wake of that act of the most complete, organised immiseration, people were left with only one option, the sale of their undifferentiated labour-power." (Lordon, 2014, p. 12-13)

Following the logic of Bataille's solar economics however, we see that the resultant rapid overall accumulation of industrialized wealth, resources and technology during these formative centuries of modernization in Europe also gave rise to their inevitable and complementary explosive discharge through the two world wars which followed in the twentieth century. The modernized restricted economy is the proper domain where Marx's incisive critiques of capitalism take shape, but as we can see, it is something that is conceived of and written after the fact, and by the time of Marx' writing, it is already too late; as the people themselves have been already totally alienated from any real solar wealth in the sense of access to genuine resources on the earth. Wealth transformed into mere capital can now be seen as just the base utilitarian interest in, and consequent class struggle for the accumulation of buying power, and the shifting exchange-value of "fetishized" commodities only within an artificial proxy economy; and this characterizes all modernized post-industrial restricted economies to a greater or lesser degree. This then, is the domain where commodities finally begin to achieve their complete independence and where the free commodity comes to refer only back to the society which ordains the "hyper-value" and the "exchange-value," and finally it is where the commodity comes to possess the ability to govern and orchestrate contemporary human desire directly and in fundamental terms.

For Bataille, material wealth always has cosmic ramifications. This is why, even before he begins his economic work in The Accursed Share: vol. 1, we can say that his general philosophical perspective has already begun to supersede Marx' work, simply by virtue of his originary starting point.
Influenced by Mauss economically speaking, Bataille concurs that human religious life and economic life are intimately interrelated. It is religion which provided the Aztecs with a ritualized outlet for ongoing surplus expenditure of solar energy. Likewise, it is religion which justifies the monumental construction efforts and resource expenditure of the ancient Egyptian Old Kingdom. The mere existence of religion in society points towards the implicit acknowledgement of the natural cosmic flow and solar economy that lies *in its entirety* beyond any and all specific societal constructions, but which also serves to give them the raw cosmic material to shape and form into temporary social consistencies.

Zhuangzi writes,

"Shun tried to cede the empire to Shan Ch’uan, but Shan Ch’uan said, "I stand in the midst of space and time. Winter days I dress in skins and furs, summer days, in vine-cloth and hemp. In spring I plow and plant - this gives my body the labor and exercise it needs; in fall I harvest and store away - this gives my form the leisure and sustenance it needs. When the sun comes up, I work; when the sun goes down, I rest. I wander free and easy between heaven and earth, and my mind has found all that it could wish for. What use would I have for the empire? What a pity that you don't understand me!" In the end he would not accept, but went away, entering deep into the mountains, and no one ever knew where he had gone." (Chuang-Tzu, 2016)

Beyond all specific forms of political economies, there is the general economy. And for Bataille, the circulation of this solar energy, or wealth designated as such within given particular economies can only suspend its final resolution into useless wastage. In this way, all life becomes an echo of the sun, realizing its inevitable destiny, finally through its originary *telos*: the *terminus* of dissipation and death.

"Man's disregard for the material basis of his life still causes him to err in a serious way. Humanity exploits given material resources, but by restricting them as it does to a resolution of the immediate difficulties it encounters (a resolution which it has hastily had to define as an ideal), it assigns to the forces it employs an end which they cannot have. Beyond our immediate ends, man's activity in fact, pursues the useless and infinite fulfillment of the universe. Of course, the error that results from so complete a disregard does not just concern man's claim to lucidity. It is not easy to realize one's own ends if one must, in trying to do so, carry out a movement that surpasses them. No doubt these ends and this movement may not be entirely irreconcilable; but if these two terms are
to be reconciled we must cease to ignore one of them; otherwise, our works quickly turn to catastrophe.” (Bataille, 1991, p. 21)
Chapter 3 - Homo Animalis: The Accursed Share, vol. 2

*Man is an animal with an appetite for divinity.*

~ Miguel de Unamuno

A consideration of Bataille's concept of eroticism and its necessary forms of desire marks the second volume of his *Accursed Share*. At first glance, one may well wonder why Bataille seems to shift his focus from the solar economics of desire to more existential aspects of eroticism but in fact, the concepts are intimately linked to Bataille's overall perspective on the nature of the relationship between animality and humankind. The concept that ties them together is of course, his sustained exploration of the nature of the general movement of desire. So, in that sense, the second volume is also the continuation of his critique of utility, and of utility as a form of human servitude in general. (Bataille, 1993, p. 14)

There is a story in the writings of Zhuangzi of a particular country farmer who is irrigating his vegetable garden by carrying jars of water from a well, working very hard, and yet getting very little results. A disciple of Confucius one day remarks to the farmer that there is a machine that can make this work of watering the garden go much faster with little or no extra effort to him. The gardener seems at first to be curious about the device, but after hearing of its design, he complains that such a machine would give him too many “machine worries” and “machine thoughts.” Presumably, “machine thoughts” refers to instrumental and calculative thinking about more efficient means to achieve predetermined desirable ends in life (within the specific parameters of the machine's design and function in this case), and “machine worries” are the natural material concerns arising out of an increasing dependency upon technology to resolve basic life processes. Even though the machine would perhaps ultimately save time and effort, and get more work accomplished, the gardener claims that simplicity and directness would be ruined and his mind and spirit would become too unsettled, that is, they would be caused to diverge too much from the Tao. The gardener finally judges that there would be more value lost than gained in using the machine. (Chuang-Tzu, 2016, Book 12)
To achieve this sort of determination of the value of utility, technique, efficiency, and accumulation, in relation to human life, one has to be able to achieve a manner of being in a place outside of these calculative kinds of undertakings. This requires that one be fully engaged with the world in general, as Bataille has emphasized, and not merely within the restricted and limited precepts and values of one’s own more technologically oriented society. Of course, for Bataille, the place outside of the restricted economy (which is generally characterized by placing undue emphasis on accumulation, calculation, efficiency and technique), is in the first instance, the general economy. Put in another way, it is perhaps from the more fundamental perspective of the Dionysian where we can look back to discern the nature, value and function of the Apollonian form. And this dual movement is what Bataille tries to accomplish with his treatment of eroticism in the second volume of The Accursed Share.

For Bataille, the value of the specific forms found in civilization is determined by their focus on utility (servitude), or on forms of uselessness (sovereignty). It is here, within this perspective, where Bataille is directly influenced by Kojève’s influential translation of the Master/Slave dialectic. Eroticism comes to embody a form of sovereignty because unlike sexuality, that ubiquitous locus for all forms of Freudian psychoanalysis, eroticism is essentially characterized by being a useless accoutrement to life. Sexuality by contrast, has a point and a purpose. Sexuality is therefore captured, regulated and codified by any given civilization into various preconfigured forms of expression which are deemed to be acceptable or unacceptable by the precise strictures of its regulation. In fact, even the standards and ideals of acceptability or unacceptability are in themselves determined by these selfsame codifications. But for Bataille, eroticism functions more specifically as a kind of general economy of desire, a sovereign reflection of the movement of the solar economy within the specificity of given human desires; and it is also the point where animality and humanity are as yet indiscernible, but also where they begin their divergent courses.
At this juncture a turn toward a philosophical consideration of Kojève's philosophy of desire will serve to better highlight some of the philosophical underpinnings of Bataille's work on eroticism, sovereignty, and servitude; and give us a broader perspective from which to assess Bataille's formulations on eroticism. Bataille points out that typically, as is the case with Freudian psychoanalysis, analytic thought and its object tend to form separate worlds. Analysis is always typically located in a pristine world of intellectualization, and is generally isolated from its object, and finally, it is focused on the object of study from this privileged vantage point. This is a form of Cartesian dualism, and it exists as a central facet of much of Western scientific or philosophical analysis precisely as a form of historical pre-hermeneutic understanding. (Ricoeur, 1984) However, Bataille points out that in the case of eroticism, there is no place where one could stand outside of the solar economy of Desire so as to subject it to the usual forms of rigorous rationalistic analysis. And so it is here, at the crossroads of eroticism, where animality and the human, the thought and the object, all interpenetrate; and in the case of erotic desire specifically, he concludes that in the final analysis, we are always what we are examining. This shows the direct and weighty influence of the teachings of Kojève on why Bataille chose to examine eroticism in his second volume, and also on how he chooses to address the nature of this subject.

Kojève and Desire

Kojève was born Alexandre Vladimirovitch Kojèvnikov in 1902 to an aristocratic family Russian Muscovites. He could claim the famous Bauhaus painter Wassily Kandinsky for an uncle, and by all accounts he managed to enjoy a carefree youth, quite typical of his aristocratic pedigree, but this privileged upbringing would come to an end with the onset of the Russian revolution. As a youth, he was subsequently arrested and condemned to die in 1917 but like Dostoyevsky before him, he managed to win a reprieve at the last minute due to family intervention. (Nichols, 2007) He went on to complete
his academic dissertation at the University of Heidelberg under the supervision of the great existentialist thinker, Karl Jaspers, and then moved to Paris to teach.

"It was in Paris that Kojève secured his fame. In 1933, at L'École Pratique des Hautes Études, he held a seminar on Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit that attracted a Who's Who of twentieth-century French thinkers: surrealist André Breton, philosopher Georges Bataille, phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty, sociologist Raymond Aron, psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, and experimental novelist Raymond Queneau. Bataille was so thrilled by Kojève's lectures that he experienced the abject: The seminar left him "broken, crushed, killed ten times over, suffocated and nailed down." Aron thought Kojève one of the most superior minds he had known -- "smarter than Sartre," he said." (Price, 2000)

Kojève published relatively little and his monumental influence of the subsequent development of 20th century French thought came about mostly through these Parisian lectures from 1933-1939. Bataille even felt that Kojève and not Heidegger was the foremost philosophical genius of the last century. And this was because of Kojève's insistence that philosophy was in fact above all, the concrete story of human history, and therefore always intensely relevant. Kojève was the one to realize, following Hegel, that Hegel was indeed the “last philosopher,” in the classical Western sense of the term. Kojève was also the first and foremost modern thinker who also came to agree with Hegel that history too had in fact “ended” with advent of the modern age. (Nichols 2007) It was credit to his philosophical genius that he brought modern philosophical reflection away from publishing voluminous written contributions to the historical canon, in favor of placing philosophy squarely into the middle of the tangible developments of human history, social life and civilization itself.

This overtly anthropological rendering of Hegel's penultimate work meant that Kojève was in effect, the first philosopher to become more or less speechless, so to speak, and to consciously add nothing to the development of philosophy per se, in favor of adding to the direct development of history and of European civilization; and to tell the modern world yet again, that precise revelatory proclamation which it could not bring itself to bear to face the first time, when Hegel first formulated
his statement on the ending modern human history. Kojève knew that this was an idiosyncratic and iconoclastic idea that would strike people as being perhaps “very funny,” and an idea which “no one will accept,” which “no one can stomach,” and which even Kojève himself at first thought was complete nonsense; but which he eventually came to see as being “brilliant.” (Roudinesco, 1999, p. 101)

And it was also this message that “staggered” Queneau and that also left Georges Bataille “shattered, overwhelmed, rooted to the spot” (Roudinesco, 1999, p. 99)

Following his lectures on Hegel in Paris, Kojève went on to work for the French Ministry of Economic Affairs and “...exercised a profound, mandarin influence over French policy, including a role as one of the leading architects of the EEC [European Union] and GATT [General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade].” (Yar, 2016) It is in this sense that Kojève could be seen as perhaps the first fully modern epitome of Plato's legendary "philosopher-king," at least more so than any other philosopher since Montesquieu. In his classes at L’École Pratique des Hautes Études, Kojève not only taught Hegelian philosophy in the context of world historical development, but he also contributed directly to the concrete development of European and world intellectual history itself in the contemporary post-war era through his direct and powerful influence on his prolific students. In time, he came to hold the position that influencing government policy on an international stage was a “superior game” to engaging in academic philosophical work, and has also even been reputed to have been involved in espionage either for the Russian KGB, or perhaps what is even more likely, as a double agent working the KGB for the benefit of the French. (Price, 2000) In either case, if these allegations were to be proven irrefutably true, then he would perhaps be most akin to modernity's version of the swashbuckling Alcibiades, than to its most famous theoretician of the philosopher-king strictly speaking. In any event, it is undeniable that the nature of this philosopher's megalomania, his compelling magnetism, and the sheer force of his mind served to irremediably shape the topography and concerns of 20th century intellectual and political history.
“Perhaps Kojève considered spying another aspect of the "superior game" he was playing at the ministry. Indeed, Auffret entertains just such a notion: One must consider, he says, "the hypothesis that Kojève sought to use the KGB for his own ends, and perhaps in perfect agreement with the French government." Or perhaps communism and the west didn't seem so far apart to Kojève. After all, he once declared Henry Ford to be "the only great authentic Marxist of the twentieth century." (Price, 2000)

Kojève's philosophical view of history and politics through his interpretation of Hegel is centered around the existential movement of Desire. It is Desire and its effects, in relation to mankind, which creates Time or History properly speaking. And it is human reality that is at first Historical, and not at all natural, cosmic, or timeless existence. Furthermore, it is human Desire which arises from the need for social recognition that gives History its particularly human shape and character. Breaking with Hegel, Kojève highlights this fundamental difference between cosmic timelessness, and human historical temporality.

"Now, we have seen that the presence of Time (in which the future takes primacy) in the real World is called Desire (which is directed towards another Desire), and that this desire is specifically human desire, since the Action that realises it is Man's very being. The real presence of Time in the World is therefore called Man. Time is Man, and Man is Time. Therefore the natural reality implies Time only if it implies a human reality. Now, Man essentially creates and destroys in terms of the idea that he forms of the Future. And the idea of the Future appears in the real present in the form of a desire directed towards another Desire - that is, in the form of a Desire for social Recognition. Now, Action that arises from this Desire engenders History. Hence, there is Time only where there is History...On the last page of the Phenomenology, Hegel says, time is history whereas nature is space...But in his other writings Hegel is less radical. In them, he admits the existence of a cosmic time. But in so doing, Hegel identifies cosmic time and historical time. This, I believe, was his basic error." (Kojève, 2003, p. 133 & 147)

This was by no means Kojève's only break with Hegel, but for gaining a deeper understanding of Bataille's three volumes of the Accursed Share, this is perhaps the most fundamental and important one. For Kojève, Man is History, and History is Man. And with this insight, we are now in a position to see how Kojève came to influence Bataille's formulation of the concept of the solar economy, as
being related to, yet flowing against the natural *telos* of the restricted and historical economies of mankind. It was primarily due to the fundamental influence of his teacher Kojève, in addition to Bataille's own readings of Nietzsche, that drove him to formulate the basic ideas of an "Apollonian" and formal historical organization of a more fundamental "Dionysian" and formless vitalistic life-essence. And finally, following Kojève, both human, historical organization and the movement of its more originary solar life-essence can also be considered as different forms of Desire.

In addition to Kojève's most important break with Hegel in terms of separating historical time from cosmic time, Kojève also went on to develop three other important and fundamental breaks with Hegel which we can say are integral to the quintessential Kojèvian reading of Hegel's *Phenomenology*. The first is Kojève's insistence on the absolute centrality of the Master/Slave dialectic to human history; which is intended as an explicit correction of Hegel's "basic error," that is, the conflation of natural (or cosmic) time with historical time. In effect, Kojève had hoped to work a disengagement with Hegel's natural/cosmic time in favor of Marx's emphasis on class struggle and political domination as the basis for intersubjective or human "civilized" history. The second break with Hegel lies in the superseding of Hegel's conception of death as "absolute lordship" by a more existential and perhaps we could say, Heideggerian conception of the "anticipation of death," as providing the basis for the human sense of historical time; in effect, producing a disengagement of Hegel's analysis of the "fear of death" by the spirit of Heidegger's consideration of *Dasein*. Finally, there is also Kojève's directly conscious and total affirmation of the Hegelian concept of the "end of history," only that Kojève feels it is central to understanding the modern age, and as a consequence he emphasizes and develops it much more. Here, Kojève argues that a real history of philosophy, or more aptly, a *historicization* not only of philosophy but also of civilization itself, that is to say, the intellectual ability to contextualize both in terms of human and historical time is only possible at the point when we have reached the end of human historical time. (Kojève, 2003)
The Paris Lectures (1933-1939)

Here, at the beginning of outlining Kojève's Parisian lectures with respect to Desire, we will begin, fittingly, at the end. According to the lecture notes compiled by Raymond Queneau, the final pages of Kojève's Introduction to the Reading of Hegel concludes with this key insight: "Man's definitive satisfaction, which completes History necessarily implies consciousness of individuality that has been realized (by universal recognition of particularity). And this consciousness necessarily implies consciousness of death." (Kojève, 2003, p. 258) And so, for Kojève, the grand culmination of Hegel's historical dialectic turns out to be...Nothing. That is to say, nothing other than the universal recognition of man's particularity. In any case, it is clear that there is no Hegelian Spirit here, inasmuch as there never was one. Hegelian Spirit has just simply vanished, or better yet, has been philosophically exposed in terms of what it always was: a brilliant allegory of an abstraction of human history. Rather than add his own formulations to Hegel's Phenomenology, Kojève chose instead to subtract Hegel's crowning finale of Absolute Spirit. This had the effect of not "turning Hegel on his head," as in say, Marx, but rather, of simply bringing Hegel "down to earth," and this uniquely Kojévian reading is what so electrified and energized a generation of intellectuals in 20th century France, who at the time were living the midst of invasion, war, foreign occupation, the specter of fascism, and revolution. (Nichols, 2007)

For Kojève, Desire is nothing less than the engine of human history. (Yar, 2016) It is in and by Desire, that the human being is formed as an "I," that is essentially different from and opposed to the "non-I." Thus can we speak of the "I of Desire," or as Kojève puts it, "The human I is the I of a Desire or of Desire." (Kojève, 2003, p. 4) Human self-consciousness always presupposes Desire in this sense, and this self-conscious being can only subsist as an animal life, which is its necessary but insufficient condition. (Kojève, 2003) Desire will disquiet the human being, and will move it to action. Action in turn, satisfies this fundamental desire in and through negation, which is the transformation or
destruction of the object done in the name of the originary desire. In this sense then, for Kojève, action is the equivalent of negation. The negation of the object, also within the same movement, thus creates a subject, which is none other than the being that must eat to preserve itself. (Kojève, 2003) This is the assimilation and internalization of a preexisting and already given external reality. Therefore, we can conceive of desire as a kind of absolute emptiness within the subject, “that receives positive content only by negating action that satisfies desire...” and it does this precisely by destroying, transforming, and assimilating the non-I. (Kojève, 2003, p. 4)

Whatsoever desire is directed toward will determine the nature of the I-of-desire. Kojève says, “If, then, the Desire is directed toward a “natural” non-I, the I, too, will be natural.” (Kojève, 2003, p. 4) This I, created solely by nature, will be essentially as an animal. The animal possesses a sentiment of self, but not full self-consciousness. Therefore, we can say that the nature of desire and its subsequent satisfaction creates the essential features of the self. Full self-consciousness is human desire that is directed toward what is non-natural and which, in effect, always goes beyond a given reality. This then, is fully human desire, and what is non-natural and goes beyond the given natural reality is the unreal nothingness of another human desire. (Kojève, 2003)

Humanly directed desire creates an “I” which is fundamentally different from the animal “I”. This “I” is its own product, and it is human desire in action. By this I mean to say that this form of self-conscious desire always looks to the future to transcend what it is now, it seeks to satisfy itself by willfully negating its past, and it does this so as to become. Kojève says, “In its very being this I is intentional becoming, deliberate evolution, conscious and voluntary progress, it is the act of transcending the given that is given to it, and that it itself is.” (Kojève, 2003, p. 5) This “I” is fully human, individual, and free in the sense that it has managed to transcend its animal life, and it is also of necessity, historical (in relation to itself), and finally, it reveals itself to all as a fully human form of self-consciousness.
Directed toward the desire of the other, human reality thus exposes itself as a manifold reality, that is to say, a social reality, and as a desire that exists as a *fully human* one only inasmuch as it is directed toward other human desires. This is done so as to attempt to assimilate not an object, but precisely the desire of the other. “Likewise Desire directed toward a natural object is human only to the extent that it is mediated by the Desire of another directed toward the same object.” (Kojève, 2003, p. 6) In this sense, natural objects of high “use-value,” as well as biologically useless objects, like national flags, or fetishized commodities of high symbolic cultural “exchange-value,” (such as money for example), become desirable precisely and only because they are objects of other people's desires. This is why Kojève can say, “Human history is the history of Desired desires.” (Kojève, 2003. p. 6)

Human beings come to feed on human desires just as animals will feed on natural life. This results in the Kojèvian conclusion that the human “I” is a result of the active satisfaction of its manifold and historical desires in an analogous way that that animal feeds its body by virtue of the food it manages to consume. However, the animal's desires are also subsumed by the overarching desire of its own self-preservation. That is to say, the animal will never openly risk its life for the sake of its own desires. Human desire, by contrast is defined precisely by its *willingness to risk its life* for its own satisfaction. And furthermore, it is precisely by this willingness to risk all that the full nature of human reality comes to light. This is human culture. (Kojève, 2003)

To desire another's desire also means to substitute oneself for the value desired by this desire. It is, “to desire that the value that I am or that I “represent” be the value desired by the other. “I want to “recognize” my value as his value.” (Kojève, 2003. p. 7) Human desire in a social context then is the desire to be recognized as a fully autonomous value, and the willingness to risk one's life to achieve it. Therefore to speak of the origins of self-consciousness then is to speak of a fight to the death for human recognition. Human beings will fight to the death to be recognized as the object of others' Desires. The point here is to be recognized as autonomous cultural value, almost as a fetishized commodity in
human form if you will. This “fight to the death” for pure symbolic prestige is the definition of human political being, so that, the confrontation of human desires, beyond any semblance of animal self-preservation, is the political root of the Master/Slave dialectic for Kojève.

The Kojèvian version of the dialectic of Master and Slave has been profoundly influential throughout the 20th century, and can be seen as the germinating seed of the fundamental formulations of such philosophers as Agamben's concept of “Bare Life” and also Foucault's notion of “Bio-Politics,” which are just two of the more famous examples. For Kojève it is a mythical and allegorical condition, not unlike Freud's Oedipus myth, which in this case, describes the most fundamental political aspect of the human condition. Though the dialectic must always be a “fight to the death,” it is also true that both adversaries must survive, otherwise recognition, the entire point of the dialectic, becomes impossible. The combatant who falters, precisely by favoring self-preservation over recognition and pure prestige, in other words, the one who first becomes “animal,” is the one who becomes the “slave.” While the one who retains their humanity throughout the mythical combat thus becomes the “master.”

The slave then is he who “…must give up his desire and satisfy the desire of the other: he must “recognize” the other without being “recognized” by him.” (Kojève, 2003, p. 8) This dialectic in its Kojèvian form, establishes the originary conditions of human society. In the act of the originary power play, the herd animal dissolves into Master/Slave relations. This is the result of Power without Death.

“If man is nothing but his becoming, if his human existence in space is his existence in time or as time, if the revealed human reality is nothing but universal human history, that history must be the history of the interaction between Mastery and Slavery: the historical “dialectic” is the “dialectic” of Master and Slave.” (Kojève, 2003, p. 9)

The “end of history” then represents the final overcoming of this dialectic as the characteristic form of fundamental relationship in human society. With the advent of human rights, and the abolition of slavery, in a generalized sense, the full theoretical recognition of people's fundamental humanity marks the end of the political under the originary Master/Slave relationship. And this development
ushers in the full characteristics of the modern contemporary age in which we live today. Kojève also goes on to demonstrate that at the end of history then, the true “victor” in this originary encounter, is the slave. This is because the master’s negativity was always abstract, and was always dependent upon the labor of the slave for its full potential to be realized. The slave by contrast, does not fear the master per se, but rather lives in fear of his own death. That is how he came to be the slave in the first place. The master is apparently free, but his freedom is always dependent upon the slave. The slave is apparently un-free, but has freely negated his own freedom and bides his time working. In addition to the free relinquishment of his humanity, the slave has the ability to concretely transform history in a material sense through the efforts of his labor. It is through work that the desire for human recognition always remains repressed in the slave, but through the labor of the slave, the world itself is entirely transformed. The whole of given natural reality now essentially exists “for-man,” precisely because of this labor. Here is the point where history has reached its end. The slave is now equal to the master because the slave is master of the world that the master must live in. At the end of history, the slave comes to know that he never feared the master as an object of his desire, but he only feared his own death. And this is a fear that the slave has transformed into human history. The originary political relationship of power and domination is now superseded by the economic relationship of the triumph of the commodity, of the natural world “for-man,” and by those who have come to completely commodify the natural world through their labor. Here, the subject is no longer opposed to the object. (Kojève 2003, p. 159) The political Master/Slave dialectic is overcome through bare economic life. And finally, the overarching concern with economic life, with things as existential necessities, is the domain of the animal.

At history’s end, a defining characteristic is that nothing fundamentally new can happen in a political sense. Modern civilization becomes an increasingly universal and homogeneous one. There exists no place left to expand on the earth. There are no viable economic and political alternatives to
the present configuration. Therefore, Kojève will even come to say that philosophy itself is over and that there is nothing fundamentally new to think since “Man himself no longer changes essentially...[and] in these post-historical animals, there would no longer be any “[discursive] understanding of the World and of self.” (Kojève, 2003, p. 160) The element of humanity which caused the Slave to fear, that is to say, his animal or naturally given nature, has now been completely emancipated and justified. The efforts of the slave has led to the mastery of nature, not by consuming it, but by transforming it into a human reality. And each slave recognizes in every other slave these exact same autonomous and transformative economic powers as essentially equally valuable and legitimate. At the end of history, there is nothing left to fight for. Humanity becomes the economic animal par excellence while, following Kojève's “analysis” of Japan, civilization itself becomes entirely “formalized,” and it is finally “empty of all human content' in the historical sense,” meaning that post-historical humanity will embody the essentially animal enactments of pure cultural form, like the ritualized mating dances of birds for example, but here it is as an empty form; and post-historical man will oppose himself to, “himself and to others taken as 'content' of any sort.” (Kojève, 2003, p. 162)

Following Mauss and Baudrillard's analyses mentioned earlier, we are now in a position where we can say that post-historical life is essentially an economic animal life primarily concerned with the empty forms of pure prestige. This is a life in the contemporary era which follows “the logic of the sign” within a “total system of prestations” that always extends beyond basic material forms of value. Here, the desire for the desire of the other will find its object in the fetishized commodity and this has become the primary locus for human recognition. I take this to mean a final political reality where the ubiquitous slave remains animal, contented with his apparent economic “victory and liberation,” while the master himself simply vacates the matrix, and comes to disappear completely. In his absence the master is content to dominate the economic animal's biological life strictly via proxy, through a kind of fascist vacuousness of “empty,” but constantly evolving crystallizations of contemporary structural and
cultural formalizations; which themselves are in no way random, but are in all ways increasingly
devoid of any human content. This is the secularized "Absolute Spirit" of the modern state. And this is
why Kojève concludes his famous footnote with a commentary on post-historical life which claims that
it, "...will finally not lead to a rebarbarization of the Japanese but to a "Japanization" of the Westerners
(including the Russians)." (Kojève, 2003, p. 162)

With respect to the present essay, I am arguing that the post-historical dialectic of Mastery and
Slavery has evolved into an economic dialectic, which now directs the desire for recognition through
the "hyper-value" of the commodity, and willfully creates and maintains the nature of the working
citizen as such; and also, that this relationship is further maintained by the overarching cultural and
structural formations which are designed precisely as cybernetic systems for the purpose of governing
the bare animal biological life of the slave. One can conclude from this that "universal and
homogeneous" culture is the post-historical Master, and the desire for others' desires, in the form of the
fetishized commodity, his regent. 4

The Kojève-Bataille Debate

Bataille, for the most part, agreed with Kojève's philosophical insights as gleaned from his
anthropological interpretation of Hegel's *Phenomenology*. In particular, it was Kojève's insistence on
the "end of history" as a viable concept in understanding the nature of modernity that moved Bataille to
engage with his existentialist teacher in his own writings. Yet for all this, Bataille also felt that the end
of history was not any kind of definitive end-point properly speaking, and it could very well come to
pass in the future that civilization finds itself lapsing into a neo-feudal "dark age" where the whole
existential power dialectic of Mastery and Slavery between human beings could easily be taken up

4 This concept also calls to mind Foucault's explanation of the role of "discipline," in his *History of Sexuality, vol. 1*, and
how discipline becomes inscribed on raw biological life. This being an answer as to how power functions in a given
society that exists with the absence of an obvious figure of the overlord.
For Bataille, the end of history pronouncement, while it may well be the case, is of little consequence to the individual modern life that seeks its own personal meaning and value in the contemporary world. That is to say, by treating humanity as an eminently historical phenomenon, Kojève left himself open to the criticism of ignoring the individual and the value of the life that each person is condemned to live out. In short, Bataille is concerned with the consequences of the end of history for each and every human being. As Giorgio Agamben has elsewhere noted, "The disagreement between Bataille and Kojève concerns just that "resto" that survives the death of man, who has become animal again at the end of history." (Agamben, 2004, p. 6) For Bataille, it is not enough that humanity sees itself become animal, and also sees its humanity immolated by the burning desire for a purely economic life. Nor is the empty cultural fascism of hyper-ritualized social "forms without content," which manages in the end to transcend the originary dialectical movement of history, enough to guarantee a satisfying intellectual circumscription of the life that he finds himself living. Instead, he decides that his currently lived existential predicament, his "unemployed negativity" or, action with no historical use, is the final lot of the post-historical man who finds himself at the end of history, but who must act anyway. (Bataille, 1997, p. 296) So then, in an effort to escape the dire existential consequences of Kojève's particular historical reading of Hegel, Bataille attends to Nietzsche, and to the overcoming of man himself, as a kind of response to Kojève. That is to say, Bataille essentially turns inward, and explores the inner experience of humanity so as to determine the new limits of the possible in the context of a civilization suddenly made utterly devoid of inherent meaning. As he puts it, "I imagine that my life—or, better yet, its aborting, the open wound that is my life—constitutes all by itself the refutation of Hegel's closed system." (Bataille, 1997, p. 296)

Bataille's reading of Nietzsche leads him to reject the "happy conclusion" of the apotheosis of the state in the form of Hegelian Absolute Spirit. The inner experience of profound negativity, or more aptly, of "unemployed negativity," leads Bataille to work his way through this more philosophically
abstract but existentially immanent form of negativity as a lived form of post-historical nihilism. So we can say, that where others feared to tread, Bataille simply rushed headlong into the abyss.

However, as his is an unproductive negativity, specifically based on consumption rather than accumulation, then it is above all a sovereign form of negativity precisely because of this. For Bataille, individual sovereignty, that is, a form of existential freedom from history, an eminently human existence that subsists beyond the historical, would be precisely a harmonization with the solar movement of Desire. That is to say, following Kojève, that fully human freedom is a desire for non-being, which is directed toward another desire, the desire of the solar economy. This is a means without end, like laughter, like tears, like death. The sovereign moment lies in the affirmation of life, and hence of death, but not in a symbolic fight to the death for the purpose of cultural prestige, but rather, in a simple play to the kind of existential death that silently but ineluctably awaits all humanity; and finally this proof of life's radical purposelessness is the profound purposelessness of its own death.

Zhuangzi also writes a story of a tree,

"It is so large that ten thousand chariots might be sheltered under it and its shade would cover them all. A master carpenter walks by without stopping, remarking that the tree is quite useless as it has too many small, twisted, crooked branches: "This, indeed is a tree good for nothing, and it is thus that it has attained to such a size." Later that night the tree speaks to the master carpenter in a dream: "Suppose that I had possessed useful properties – should I have become of the great size that I am... All men know the advantage of being useful but no one knows the advantage of being useless." (Hochsmann, 2003, p. 65-66)

The corresponding purposelessness of art can be seen as an essentially meaningless form of unemployed negativity and hence, by virtue of this fact, as a complementary activity. For Bataille, art and religion both suggest that this form of existential "unemployed negativity" can indeed be objectified. However, this particular form of objectification only has a social meaning only in and through the recognition by the desires of others; that is to say, through the commodification and social appropriation of the artwork and the artist. So, the only way beyond the social purpose of post-
historical life, as humanly lived, is then to not seek recognition by others, to not seek out their desires in relation to oneself, to not desire what others desire, and rather to engage in a more private and existential meaninglessness which corresponds to the universal movement that always and everywhere by this fact, naturally and unequivocally transcends social, cultural, and historical formations.

Zhuangzi writes again,

"I have heard that the ruler of Wei is very young. He acts in an independent manner, thinks little of how he rules his state, and fails to see his faults. It is nothing to him to lead his people into peril, and his dead are reckoned by swampfuls like so much grass. His people have nowhere to turn. I have heard you say, Master, 'Leave the state that is well ordered and go to the state in chaos! At the doctor's gate are many sick men.' I want to use these words as my standard, in hopes that I can restore his state to health. "Ah," said Confucius, "you will probably go and get yourself executed, that's all. The Way doesn't want things mixed in with it. When it becomes a mixture, it becomes many ways; with many ways, there is a lot of bustle; and where there is a lot of bustle, there is trouble - trouble that has no remedy! The Perfect Man of ancient times made sure that he had it in himself before he tried to give it to others. When you're not even sure what you've got in yourself, how do you have time to bother about what some tyrant is doing?" (Chuang-Tzu, 1968, Book 4)

Agamben concludes his book, The Open, by claiming that mankind, in seeking to expand its horizons by subsuming all that lies beyond the current frontiers of our knowledge and experiences, also acts exactly as Kojève's characterization of the 'slave,' in that it remakes the world 'for-man;' and as such, merely imitates the primal animal gesture. And thus at the moment of our highest forms of achievement, humanity is also equally exposed in its most base and elementary form. And further, in this fashion, humanity merely comes to reaffirm its animality with every great movement of civilization. (Agamben, 2004) What Bataille, Agamben, and Zhuangzi all have in common here is that they point a way forward, beyond what can be characterized at times as excessively vacuous, overly utilitarian, and animalistic cultural forms of civilization. It is always a way that must lie existentially outside of history. The destiny of the humanity of man within the cultural matrix gives way only to animality (Kojève, Agamben) and enslavement (Kojève, Zhuangzi, Bataille). The "place" that subsists
outside of historically articulated being is for Agamben, "...the central emptiness, the hiatus that with man - separates man and animal." (Agamben, 2004, p. 92) And here also lies the "unemployed negativity" that Bataille equated with the possibility of sovereignty, with death, and with the movement of the sun. Here lies the gateway to the manifold existential possibilities for post-historical man. Bataille writes, "...perhaps there is nothing at the summit of existence except what can be neglected - in effect, no one could 'recognize' a height that is as dark as night." (Bataille, 1997, p. 296)

Zhuangzi also writes about Wu-Suo (無所) or literally "no-place," as being the place of "exteriority" where for example, the farmer can assess the existential value of the proposed farming machine for his life. Wu-Suo is where the individual can experience the dissolution of both rationalistic and culturally constructed parameters and boundaries and it is the beginning point of elevating non-calculative, and non-technical thinking to a position of primary existential value. For Zhuangzi, Wu-Suo is therefore the necessary starting point for "proper" human thinking, proper here simply meaning a form of being which is fundamentally harmonious with our place in the natural fabric; and therefore it provides an equally fundamental basis for the justification of transcending basic utilitarian and historically self-interested interpretations of reality, and engagements with reality. It allows us a fundamental existential space from which to assess our true and "uncluttered" human natures; individual natures that essentially subsist within a larger natural order, as opposed to history and the human order in which they subsist only derivatively. And it also provides a position from which to evaluate the most harmonious way to proceed in meeting our respective futures.

“If people were to sleep in a marsh, they would develop a deathly lumbago – but is this so of a fish? If they were to set up a home in a tree, they would shudder with anxiety, fear and dread – but is this so of apes and monkeys? Of the three, which knows the right place to live? People eat livestock; deer eat grass. Centipedes relish juicy maggots; while owls and crows delight in rat flesh. Of these four, which knows the right taste? Apes take apes for their mates; deer mix with deer; fish prefer the company of fish...Of which knows the world’s true beauty?” (Coutinho,
This is less an argument for some sort of basic relativistic approach to life than it is a philosophical acknowledgement that each kind of organism has its own particular boundaries and limitations which circumscribe their existential "appropriateness," and senses of harmony, taste, and beauty as ascribed in terms of their own particular natures, needs and desires. In short, each organism has a kind of "place" within the existential fabric. But does each organism possess the full capacity to evaluate that place? Wu-Suo is precisely that "no-place" from where an elevated form of evaluation can be made. And it is this "no-place" which can serve to ground our understanding of the qualities of our own particular place and time, and give new meanings to the way in which we choose to engage the world in ways that seem most appropriate to our natures. The key here is to understand what is appropriate to our natures. Zhuangzi writes that it is from the point of "no-place," where we can finally come to understand what is unmeasurable, unassailable, and unmitigated in our own nature. And this is where all of our true possibilities begin to flow forth.

Hui Tzu said to Chuang Tzu, "I have a big tree of the kind men call shu. Its trunk is too gnarled and bumpy to apply a measuring line to, its branches too bent and twisty to match up to a compass or square. You could stand it by the road and no carpenter would look at it twice. Your words, too, are big and useless, and so everyone alike spurns them!" Chuang Tzu said, "Maybe you've never seen a wildcat or a weasel. It crouches down and hides, watching for something to come along. It leaps and races east and west, not hesitating to go high or low-until it falls into the trap and dies in the net. Then again there's the yak, big as a cloud covering the sky. It certainly knows how to be big, though it doesn't know how to catch rats. Now You have this big tree and you're distressed because it's useless. Why don't you plant it in Not-Even-Anything Village, or the field of Broad-and-Boundless, relax and do nothing by its side, or lie down for a free and easy sleep under it? Axes will never shorten its life, nothing can ever harm it. If there's no use for it, how can it come to grief or pain?" (Chuang-Tzu, 2016, Book 1)

Bataille seeks to transcend Kojève's post-historical condition which faces humanity at the end of history in a strikingly similar fashion. He does this by looking beyond what Kojève would characterize
as the empty kind of “snobbery” characteristic of vacuous and destitute post-historical cultural formations, beyond the unthinkingly habitual and localized rituals which have come to be social forms “devoid of human content,” in the contemporary world; and which also serve to regulate bare life only so as to affirm the primacy of particular collective histories. That is to say, for Bataille, human civilization is essentially the “Noble Lie,” and the guile of the Apollonian at the expense of the individual life and its relationship to its Dionysian source. Instead, not unlike Zhuangzi, he seeks to go beyond the efficient concerns for utility and social prestige which characterize the various restricted economies and which, “...have led me to assume the hypothesis of an irrevocable insignificance, seriously though cheerfully.” (Bataille, 1997, p. 297) It is this affirmed existential insignificance which in turn, leads Bataille to seek a way of aligning oneself, and one's desires, with the cosmic and Dionysian movement of desire which he describes in his work on the solar economy. For as Kojève explicitly taught, one's nature is derived from that to which one's desires are directed. This realization leads Bataille to focus primarily on the cosmic dimensions of desire's flow, and therefore to “…satisfy that portion of existence that is freed from doing.” (Bataille, 1997, p. 298) And this is the way forward for the post-historical man at the end of history in Bataille's view. Just as there is no Hegelian “Absolute Spirit,” (because there never was one), and so too does the sovereign Master simply vanish at history's end point, then both these conditions prove the originary historical struggle to be fundamentally meaningless in existential terms. Bataille holds, and the quote of Neruda's poem supports, the view that in a humanly lived life, there are only lived moments of laughter, tears, names, intoxication, love, eroticism, and death. This perspective marks Bataille as a materialist of the most radical kind.

The desire for others' desires, and the history this engenders can ultimately be simply walked away from. For Bataille, Nietzschean nihilism saves us from the profound pointlessness of History, and thus prepares for us the pathway to transcend what we were as merely historical and cultural beings,
and it finally opens up a Dionysian way to a kind of “no-place” of reconfigured value on a higher order. In his second volume of the *Accursed Share*, Bataille gives us an example of how humanity has always and effortlessly moved beyond these circumscribed frontiers of history and culture, through moments of transcendent flow, by organizing an exploration of the fundamental existential topography of eroticism. And it is this treatment of eroticism to which we now turn.

**Bataille on Eroticism**

Bataille's philosophical treatment of eroticism breaks sharply with Freudian sexual psychoanalysis which was extremely fashionable at this time in Europe. For Bataille, eroticism is not at all amenable to the psychoanalytic view advanced by Freud that individual sexual neuroses can serve as a kind of direct sociological metaphor for the nature of the characteristics of various archaic and modern civilizations. Nevertheless, Freud's works on the nature of civilization do bring themselves to bear on Bataille's treatment of eroticism precisely inasmuch as both scholars find themselves dealing with similar themes of kinship relations, and the role of taboo, sacrifice, and ritual in society. Bataille of course, bases his treatment of these subjects on the general perspective he formulated and advanced in *The Accursed Share Vol. 1*, with respect to the solar economy of desire. Also, his prolonged consideration of the classic anthropological work by Marcel Mauss leads him away from positing something akin to a “mass psyche” derived from sexually inspired neurotic guilt as Freud does; a guilt which essentially comes from a repressed wish fantasy of killing “the father” and devouring him, and which even Freud admits, is not in any way conclusive with respect to human social life. (Freud, 2012, p. 75)

Where Bataille does align his thinking with Freud is precisely with the latter's insight that

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5 Freud proposes this sexual psychoanalytic perspective of society in *Civilization and its Discontents*, and he also formulates the idea of a “mass psyche” in archaic societies centered around neurotic guilt in his work, *Totem and Taboo*. 
humanity, guided by its avoidance of suffering, came to develop technologies so as to be, “...going over to the attack against nature and subjecting her to the human will.” (Freud, 1962, p. 24) That humans have always attempted through their social organization to satisfy their basic desire to negate nature and also by extension to, “control our instinctual life,” is precisely the place where Bataille begins his treatment of eroticism, not by overtly examining the relevant writings of Freud however, but by turning to the anthropological work of Claude Lévi-Strauss. (Freud, 1962, p. 26) But he doesn't disengage with Freud before tacitly affirming the psychologist's view that society in general does perhaps value utility and pleasure above all else; and although the primary functions of general social organization are to better regulate social relationships, so as to serve the principal interest of elevating the community over the individual. Freud goes on to conclude therefore that “a piece of unconquerable nature may lie behind...” these structures of social organization, and therefore individuals still seek ways and means to transcend civilization itself.” (Freud, 1962, p. 41-42) And this is the insight that Bataille affirms as the precise perspective which guides his own exploration of eroticism. Whether Bataille was guided by Freud's work in this respect, or whether both scholars managed to achieve similar insights independently, is open to interpretation.

As mentioned, Bataille begins his treatment of eroticism by considering Lévi-Strauss' work on kinship and the incest taboo. From this vantage point, and from the economic anthropology of Mauss, as well as his own economic perspectives, he comes to view the archaic system of marriage as a distributive system of commodity exchange, and therefore, sees the taboo on incest as primarily serving to facilitate the free exchange of marriageable partners. In Bataille's view then, marriage comes to be a form of distributed wealth which also connotes a kind of sacred value, in that it is always culturally rule bound in a manner similar to ritual and religion; and it serves to effect an overall balanced distribution of marriageable partners, as well as serving to solidify political alliances. (Bataille, 1993) The regulatory vicissitudes of the restricted economy therefore control sexuality precisely as a calculated
form of economic utility and wealth distribution. However, due to the inherent tension that exists between the restricted and general economies at all times and places, humanity can also never be conceived of as a unity. This is because humanity itself also comes to mirror this fundamental existential tension. Therefore various incongruous aspects of humanity, although they are obviously incompatible intellectually speaking, will often be evident both within a single individual and in any given civilization in general. (Bataille, 1993, p. 21) To illustrate his point, Bataille points out that reflective thought gives us the illusory impression that man is a kind of transcendent unity, and it also generally supports the culturally approved and “appropriate” version of man. So then for example, this pre-hermeneutic principle allows a thinker like Kant to draw up what were, for his time, culturally appropriate, legalistic rules and regulations for developing sanctioned systems of philosophical, scientific, and religious or moral forms of thinking. Reflective thought always views the “dark” and extra-cultural aspects of man, precisely that “piece of unconquerable nature,” which lies behind all cultural formations and seeks to transcend it, in the way that medicine tends to view diseases. (Bataille, 1993) Therefore, the taboo and consequent transgression of various given societal marriage rules, formulated as utilitarian and economic forms of wealth distribution, represents precisely that frontier which identifies the excess, where “bare life” always comes to overflow even the best made barriers and borders erected by civilization. For Bataille, this transgressive excess, which is nothing but life itself, lies beyond a conceivable humanity. It is the “Not-Even-Anything Village” alluded to by Zhuangzi where Apollonian borders are dissolved by Dionysian desire.

Psychoanalysis for example, attempts to conceive of the whole, and to define scientifically that which lies beyond clear consciousness. (Bataille 1993) But in doing so, it takes up the prototypical philosophical position in assuming that scientific and reasoned thinking occupies a pristine location from which to engage in the reflective project in the first place, “...as if sexuality, which played a part in its formation, thereafter no longer modified it.” (Bataille, 1993, p. 22-23) Clearly, Bataille's point
here is that eroticism and thought always interpenetrate and inform one another. He is sensitive to the fact that generally speaking, civilization in its various guises, proceeds under the assumption that man is in no way a part of nature, and that therefore what comes naturally to man must always be regulated, controlled and effaced. In this way, reasoned analysis is limited precisely as a “restricted economy” of general human consciousness. It is in essence, simply another form of utility and calculation doing service to its master. But eroticism, by its very nature, lies outside and beyond this very form of usefully reasoned analysis, and then therefore outside of, “…this world of useful and isolated things, in which laborious activity is the rule, in which it is implied that each one of us should keep his place in a mechanical order.” (Bataille, 1993, p. 24) For Bataille, the totality of lived human experience exceeds on all sides the reduced and reductionistic worlds of cultural prohibition and also the kind of rational thought which serves it.

The human being, as an integral ensemble of various distinctions and oppositions which interpenetrate and inform rational analysis, and only this particular totality, accurately reflects the phenomenon of eroticism; and eroticism itself can be best approached as a reflection of the universe in the human being, or more precisely as a movement of Desire of Dionysian proportions, and not simply as an isolated object to be subjected to the strictures of rational analysis as if it subsisted merely as some kind of isolated exteriority. It is this viewpoint which Bataille goes on to explore in depth over the course of the second book of his Accursed Share. For him, sexuality is an impulse of animal proportions, while eroticism is always an eminently human trait. Mankind has managed to distinguish himself from his animal nature through his labor, his behavior regarding death, and the erotic nature of his sexual activity. (Bataille, 1993) So then, it is not the Oedipus complex but rather, the incest taboo which serves as a primary component of humanity's definitive character as a socialized being. (Bataille, 1993) Therefore, the object of our erotic fires may well be undefinable because it is always tempered by cultural forces at play in any and all social situations, but by the same token, the furnaces of desire
in which our eroticism is forged are for Bataille, of universal quality. So then, cultural taboo may subject eroticism to arbitrary limits, but desire consistently impels the self toward the imaginary dream of the erotic object. This is a primary form of transcendence.

In *The Elementary Forms of Kinship*, Lévi-Strauss also notes that the incest taboo marks the initial movement from nature to culture, and from animal to man. Bataille acknowledges that although the Oedipus myth of Freudian analysis may well in fact account for certain aspects of present civilization, this mythological allegory flounders when it is confronted with the ethnographic realities of sexuality as an economic and distributive system of exchange. Eroticism then is for most societies around the world, primarily a problem of wealth, to be dealt with by social rules. (Bataille, 1993) It is essentially akin to the solar flow as it comes to be recomposed on the local level by the more restricted and restrictive Apollonian formations. As explored in Mauss' *The Gift*, the human erotic impulse sees itself dispersed within civilization as a "total social fact," *always implying economic stipulations*, but also and at the same time, religious, magical, utilitarian, juridical, moral, aesthetic, and political formations as well. And yet, for all this, eroticism in its radiant fullness still manages to escape these variegated sociological attempts to capture and bind it, and as such, it is never fully isolable.

Sexually speaking, we can always attempt to rationally view eroticism and to analyze it, though it is always still within us, precisely as a *gross expenditure* of excess energy. Within the structure of civilized life, we can become aware of a generalized twofold movement: the primal allure and impulse of desire being then dissipated into the giving away of one's kin, in the name of fertility and labor. In this sense, the Apollonian forms given to cosmic desire are precisely *the negation of our primal animal freedom*. "Man and animality are set against one another in a laceration that exposes the whole of divided being," writes Bataille. (Bataille, 1993, p. 52) And so it is that in history and through history,

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6 In this work, Lévi-Strauss attempts to outline the fundamental principles of the ubiquity of the incest taboo as well as follow Mauss' idea of the exchange principle so as to explain marriage as a distributive form of wealth exchange.
we can come to discern the elementary structures of human being, as well as the transitions from one state to another, but not in terms of formal and abstract structures or transitions, but rather in a complete and dramatic movement through time that marks our passage from animality to prohibition, then to labor and social stratification. Hermann Hesse also wrote of the fundamentally dualistic nature of the civilized European and the animal in in his novel, *Steppenwolf*. He writes,

“There was once a man, Harry, called the Steppenwolf. He went on two legs, wore clothes and was a human being, but nevertheless he was in reality a wolf of the Steppes. He had learned a good deal of all that people of a good intelligence can, and was a fairly clever fellow. What he had not learned, however, was this: to find contentment in himself and his own life. The cause of this apparently was that at the bottom of his heart he knew all the time (or thought he knew) that he was in reality not a man, but a wolf of the Steppes. Clever men might argue the point whether he truly was a wolf, whether, that is, he had been changed, before birth perhaps, from a wolf into a human being, or had been given the soul of a wolf, though born as a human being; or whether, on the other hand, this belief that he was a wolf was no more than a fancy or a disease of his. It might, for example, be possible that in his childhood he was a little wild and disobedient and disorderly, and that those who brought him up had declared a war of extinction against the beast in him; and precisely this had given him the idea and the belief that he was in fact actually a beast with only a thin covering of the human. On this point one could speak at length and entertainingly, and indeed write a book about it.” (Hesse, 2002, p. 22)

Man comes to negate his natural animal condition through the creation of tools, through labor, and through his cultural attitudes. It is through these fortifications if you will, that he manages to hold the animal within at bay. Humanity also refuses its animal desires outright, however even the fact of this refusal means precisely that *they are always already there*, “...insofar as there is man, on the one hand there is labor, and on the other, a negation, through prohibitions of man's animal nature.” (Bataille, 1993, p. 53) Thus it is that man's necessarily dramatic transition from his animal genesis is a profoundly ongoing and negative one. Hegel also writes of labor and death, but not of the role of human culture. And therefore he never achieves Bataille's level of awareness with respect to a fully cultural humanity; and the fact that to the degree that man considers himself to be civilized, is also the
degree to which he embodies the negation of the natural principle of his animality. For Bataille, this animality is the originary condition, the formal manifestation of solar energy, and it exists “in the world like water in water.” (Bataille, 1992, p. 19)

The fundamental form of eroticism, this excess of exuberant human luxury could not be at all possible as such without the prohibition that marks the boundaries between civilized life and animal carnality. How can there exist something in excess without the boundaries that mark out the frontiers of propriety and thus the genesis point of that transgressive excess in the first place? Bataille writes, “...there would be no eroticism if there were not also a respect for forbidden values.” (Bataille, 1993, p. 57) There could only be animal desire, a certain movement of tyrannical blindness whose sole raison d'être is capture. It is civilization itself which opens up the possibility for human transgression and criminality, yet humanity is not always forced to explore such extreme possibilities, and the eroticism of desire as well as its object still persists within us irrespective of our preferred modes of expression. “In the immediacy of the animal impulse, the object of desire is already given...the possession of the object is not separate from the vehement desire, which cannot be contained.” (Bataille, 1993, p. 83)

Desire, when considered as a form of sanctioned relationship, always reckons on its outcome, on its satisfaction, and as such is an economic form of calculation. But calculative desire inevitably meets its social prohibition and the excess of the transgression brings us face to face with the uncharted waters of the nascent animality which we had attempted to overturn by proposing forms of civilization in the first instance. This narrative expresses Bataille’s “mobile thought, without seeking its definitive state,” and therefore it is not simply a series of static concepts. (Bataille, 1992, p. 11) It is a mobile thought which sees a generative and historically dramatic movement from desire to prohibition, and from gift-giving to reversal, and then from transgression to excess, and moves inexorably toward raw desire unleashed. Here, the animal is always kept in darkness, that is to say, in its proper place, while man fashions the world in his own image, but this image is always but an ideal. The space reserved for
unquenchable animal desire lies precisely within the same space that civilized man has reserved for evil.

(Bataille, 1993)

One can see this kind of existential dramatic form play out quite clearly in the myth of Eden. Adam and Eve, naked, shameless, pristine, and naturally at one with God, follow their inner desire to eat from the tree of knowledge, and thus do they come to possess the ability to know and name that which is good, and that which is evil. For this transgression, for this desire for knowledge, for the transgressive act of the naming of human value and hence, the creation of civilization itself, they are cast out, banished, and separated from God. Originary transgressive desire thus leads directly to ... humanity. But it is a humanity which for all its efforts, can never fully lose its animal origins, even for a brief moment. *Inter faeces et urinam nascimur* wrote St. Augustine.

If human cultural life is achieved through the negation of nature as the "given," then the consequences of this negation are simply none other than all of man's historical possibilities. The historical triumph of Apollonian form over the Dionysian source within the unfolding of history itself lies in the fact that desire always compels us towards transcendence of the present moment as Kojève had taught. (Kojève, 2003) This transcendence however is nothing other than, "a revolt, a refusal of the offered condition, [and] is evinced in man's attitude at the very beginning," writes Bataille. (1993, p. 77) Kojève also wrote that it is desire which impels man to action, and the desire, not of nature, of the given condition which is a form of enslavement, but of the desires of the other which serve to create history as the basis of our fundamental condition. (Kojève, 2003) It is in this sense that human life, as historical life, comes to embody the, "...endlessly resumed quest for the totality of the possible.” (Bataille, 1993, p. 77) It is also in this sense, as the negation of the given, that human civilization attempts to immobilize and to preserve movements of profound revolution, movements which manage to take on new shapes and horizons through the passage of history. This dialectical movement in Bataille's *Accursed Share* can be viewed as such:
Negation of Nature
(Revolution) => Prohibition & Taboo
(The Cultural Given) => Rejection of the “Given”
(Transgression)

In this movement, which sees no resolution, the arbitrary “nature” of civilization is acknowledged. Human life within the boundaries laid out by society is affirmed as a kind of Apollonian composition which also serves to separate us from its Dionysian source, and the dialectic of Mastery and Slavery form the necessary historical relationship which sets up the possibility for transgression at the same moment that it acknowledges our unceasing human desire for transcendence, which as the quote by Miguel de Unamuno which opens this chapter implies, lies at the core of our human essence.

Eroticism as Transgression

The act of transgression then, affirms for us that human history and civilization are always the arbitrary constructs of the Apollonian impulse of capture. Desire progresses unsatisfied through the compositions of history impelling new forms of revolution which burst forth as a “revolt against the given,” only here, the given is civilization itself rather than the revolution against nature in which it finds its epigenesis. Thus, at the end of history, the contemporary obsolescence of the historical Master/Slave dialectic in its initial political condition means that desire still persists in its originary form despite its various historical configurations having been exhausted, and is now transformed into economic terms with the advent of modernity. The dawn of economic mastery and slavery may mark the end of history in one sense, but Bataille’s work explores the notion that the Dionysian wellspring of desire always demands other newer, and as yet unimagined cultural and existential configurations.

The attempt to transcend the arbitrary prohibitions and constraints characteristic of all human civilization is also the primal attempt to go back to the originary given condition where the animal
subsists like water in water. This amounts to the desire to "return to Eden," through a revolt against the precise conditions that led to humanity's expulsion in the first place. Bataille points out that this desire and the revolutionary movement it engenders can never find its fulfillment and succeed as a return to originary nature. (Bataille, 1993) Desire itself, as the immanence of the solar flow, simply impels humanity forward toward the totality of the possible, and this impetus provides civilization with its possibilities for historical change, and also for religious transcendence, as well as for revolutionary movements in the realm of the political. The movement from originary nature to human cultural life, and then to a transgressive "no-place" where man seeks out his possibilities for a future history, for a meaningful life, or for an anticipated return to originary nature, must be seen as a single movement, and as a whole. It echoes the motion of the tides, and the ebb and flow of a single unitary and heaving movement. As Bataille and Kojève have both asserted, the object of desire cannot be held separately from the vehement desire which attempts to consume it and thereby comes to transform its own nature.

Within the matrix of civilized life, desire, utility, labor and the corresponding dialectic of economic mastery and slavery all serve to provide its foundations; and here, the flow of desire inevitably meets its prohibition, just as the course of the river comes to be shaped by the topography of its banks of which it is always a potential threat to overflow. The excess of desire inherent in the transgressive movement inevitably brings us face to face with our own animality (Kojève's end of history), but this is not a raw and natural animality, but rather, it is precisely a transgressive animality, born of revolution, and it also provides a territory where the extreme potential for violence, transcendence, and death could perhaps be realized. Religion itself, as a compositional form of the sustained transgressive impulse, also enacts the attempt of "the return to origins," alternately through sanctioned sacrifice, rituals, festivals, and mystical forms of raw energy expenditure offered up as the harmonization of the human spirit with the cosmic flow of solar energy. For the Aztecs as well as for the ancient Egyptians, there is little differentiation between those realms that we today have come to
see only in terms of their distinctiveness: the intertwined realms of cosmology, mythology, the sacred, architecture, social relations, time, space, the festival, ritual, and death.

Following Bataille then, we can see that eroticism comes to be known as the inexorable and fundamental movement toward the death of the self, or put in another way, toward the death of the self as a form of capture. In this way erotic desire echoes and embodies the ebullience of the solar ray. 

Eroticism is the singular movement toward communion through the negation of individuation as the primary existential form. The communion with the Other, set upon as the object of erotic desire, sees the satisfaction of this desire and its subsequent fullness in terms of the creation of new life which itself underscores the individual's ineluctable movement toward obsolescence and death, just as the river finally empties itself into the sea. Death provides the telos of desire, whether solar or erotic, inasmuch as it is the movement of death itself which gives rise to new forms of life. For Bataille then, erotic desire is always a luxury, an excess or surplus that results in a form of expenditure that succeeds the fullness of the organism's capacities for growth, and that not only moves history, but also materially helps to create historical life. We can say that erotic desire is how the human being itself becomes an historical artifact, a story, a specter, earth and dust.

The movement of desire which at first led humanity to reject the natural given, and then again to reject the historical given through the same impulse, seeks its final transcendence and achieves its full realization in forms of death. Perhaps this understanding is the origin of the Solon's famous reply to King Croesus of Lydia, “Count no man happy until the end is known.” Bataille goes on to point out that the revolutionary transgression of social mores and prohibitions is not generally a chaotic one inasmuch as it is always only a partial and necessarily incomplete return to the Dionysian source of civilization's historical forms. (Bataille, 1993) In terms of religious rituals and festivals, mankind's transgressive impulses actually come to be socially sanctioned, and they subsist in this social sphere as a kind of slow controlled burning where they function primarily as an approved cultural outlet for the
general movement of desire: the desire for complete existential transcendence of civilization's negation of nature. (Bataille, 1993) Here, in the festival, the sacrifice, and the ritual, we have prime examples of unrestrained consumption, of excess and deliberate acts of violation within the socially prescribed limits of the religious enactment. Socially circumscribed transgression serves humanity as a temporary form of "revolution," and as an existential form of "liminality" that dedicates itself to forms of cultural transcendence which can also reveal a deep intimacy with the sacred. (Bataille, 1992) This form of the sanctioned revolutionary impulse is therefore the socially constructed Apollonian outlet purposefully designed for our deepest Dionysian uprisings. The ritual and the festival always in this way, come to negate originary animality, even in the act of affirming its more humanistic dimensions. "There is nothing more contrary to animality than laughter," writes Bataille, and the desire for cultural transcendence leads us toward a consideration of the sovereign moment of which laughter is perhaps the most obvious example. (Bataille, 1993, p. 90)

The desire and impulse of revolt against the cultural given, the transgressive moment, is sovereign in that it seeks to displace Apollo with Dionysus, the restricted economy with the general solar flow of desire, and to re-establish the intimacy lost at that other and more primal moment, when mankind rejects his animality at the birth of human civilization. Sovereignty is therefore also a form of liminality. Like Zhuangzi's "Wu-Suo" or no-place; it is where we seek to return to nature where we can be "like water in water," and so we enact the sacrifice, the ritual, the festival, and the sacred mythology of the religious forms themselves in various cultural forms motivated by a desired "return to Eden."

The yearning for transcendence, which is also the movement of death is an overt acknowledgement of the abject failure of our denial of animality through mankind's fashioning of civilized life. This failure to fully and completely "civilize" humanity, which was explored in Hesse's novel, is always there with us in our raw moments of excess, moments of birth, sex, death, and transgression, that is to say, in all of our most sovereign moments. In the same way, the existence of prehistoric funeral rites dating as far
back as the time of the Neanderthals shows an eminently human response to death. In these rites, we prepare our dead for their journey to the other world, to a place which perhaps will receive them as returning souls; and this is most unlike animals who have no need for anything resembling funerary rites as there is nowhere for them to “return” to. And so, if civilization does tend to present itself to us as the “Noble Lie,” even to the extent that we still today and perhaps more than ever, unquestioningly accept the reality of mankind's separation into their “gold, silver, and bronze natures,” into labor and capital, into the bosses and the “happily dominated,” who dutifully take on their employers' desires as if they were their own, then all this still points toward the failed negation of nature, and of humanity's denial of its own animality, and finally by extension, to the unquenchable desire for transcendence.  

By overcoming social prohibition, desire can therefore authenticate itself in the form of eroticism, and for Bataille, eroticism itself is the overcoming of individuation through the principle of desire's realization in communion, as well as the irrefutable pull of the grave. (Bataille, 1993) The fulfillment of erotic desire therefore means the death of the self, but this is precisely what we long for. The existential search for the realization of desire's object and its fulfillment, “…to such a full desire for emptiness, there is no end but the definitive emptiness of death.” (Bataille, 1993, p. 101) This death gives eroticism a presence and a power that calls our lives into question. We will unquestioningly use our strength, our resources, and spend the excesses of both, and will even risk our lives for the desire for the other. And so, this is also a desire that possesses the power to enslave us, “If however we are blessed with enough courage and luck, the object we desire most is in principle the one most likely to endanger or destroy us.” writes Bataille. (Bataille, 1993, p.104) It was Kojève after all, who remarked that risking our lives for our desires is one of the definitive hallmarks of human being. (Kojève, 2003) Through erotic desire, we move to the edge of our own destruction and our ruin, we risk all perhaps

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Frédéric Lordon investigates the seemingly bizarre fact of the unquestioning adoption of the desire of the employer as if it were that of the employee in his work, Willing Slaves of Capital (2014).
only to pull back at the last so as to experience its intoxication, and this is how erotic desire is emulated by the archaic Dionysian festivals, ancient sacrifices, and the potlatch ceremonies of the indigenous tribes. Bataille writes, “Without this daring we cannot oppose the riches of religion and art to the poverty of animal life.” (Bataille, 1993, p. 110)

The intellect is capable of speaking about passion, and even of what surpasses it but not without abstracting from the passionate life. The object of sensual desire is in the first instance, another desire. We can speak of being consumed by Desire and we can lose ourselves in it, like the sun, without any further reckoning. But desire must be first awakened in the object, a desire at least equivalent to our own, and desire must be recognized as such, not merely as an inert object without desires of its own (which would be akin to prostitution). (Bataille, 1993) The object may first appear as “other,” but then, through the communion of eroticism, both lovers become unified as each fills the emptiness that is the others' desire. Here, the union of desire is internal on both sides of the divide, and it is at the point of desire fulfilled that both lovers can finally lose themselves as well as the abstraction that they are strictly separate entities. Bataille writes,

“In a word the object of desire is the universe, in the form of she who in the embrace is its mirror, where we ourselves are reflected. At the most intense moment of fusion, the pure blaze of light, like a sudden flash, illuminates the immense field of possibility, on which these lovers are subtilized, annihilated, submissive in their excitement to a rarefaction which they desired.” (Bataille, 1993, p. 116)

The fusion of human lives through eroticism is an objective reality for Bataille and at the same time, a kind of purely objective reality which exists for the subject who perceives it and transforms it through their desire, “...it is the animality that I can grasp in the totality which the embrace constitutes.” (Bataille, 1993, p. 118) The animality of the object of my desire does not bring my being toward an originary state of nature as much as it moves both lovers toward the sovereignty of intimacy. In this way, I can say that my lover is the death toward which I thirst, and through this I become, with my
beloved, a renewed sovereign totality which can come to beget new life. The sovereign erotic totality is also that which organically transcends the frontiers of human cultural life so as to provide intimacy with the more sacred experience of transcendence. And in this way, eroticism performs a very similar existential function for man as does religion.

Cultural prohibition, as the negation of nature, is what exists in such a way so as to circumscribe our lives and thereby separate us from this totality, "...it inserts in us the abstractions of a human order – where, like so many artful fairies, work, science, and bureaucracy change us into abstract entities." (Bataille, 1993, p. 119) And so it is through eroticism and its attendant desires that we are returned, not to the pure Edenic nature of our Dionysian longings, but to an existential and lived totality that we access precisely by losing ourselves. This is the anticipation of death and of our predestined and final return to nature. Eroticism is in this way, a kind of burnt offering, a sacrifice of the self, made sacred in the fires of our desire. So it is always a matter of going beyond limits. Civilization exists here primarily as its restraint. Yet, the nature in which we immerse ourselves is not an idealized nature, the one that we have historically romanticized as anthropomorphic animal gods, and tales of a coming divinely sanctioned apocalypse, but rather, eroticism immerses us in the intimacy of a more immanent cosmic flow of life's cycle of death, annihilation, and rebirth. It represents a naturally human overflow or excess which always threatens to negate civilization at every turn, and so it is eroticism which civilization struggles to circumscribe by attempting to subordinate it to considerations of economic utility.

This tension between naturalistic excess and its societal circumscription is also particularly highlighted in the domain of labor where, “No one can envisage the elimination of useful work, but man could not be reduced to it, without being eliminated himself.” (Bataille, 1993, p. 135) The archaic world always managed to incorporate the more naturalistic aspects of life with its forms of labor as an integral part of its civilizations partially through the construction of sacred monuments, and enactments
of sacrificial rites, ceremonies, and festivals all of which served as the expenditure of the excess of solar energy. With the advent of modernity, and of Kojève's version of the end of history, labor, science, and technology now come to do the work of the slave, and each attempts in its own way to drive mankind seemingly to the furthest point away from the animal who exists, if they have any legitimately recognized existence at all, only “for-man,” and as a “Standing Reserve” as Heidegger phrases it. (Heidegger, 1977) But, as mentioned earlier, Agamben has pointed out that far from elevating us to some kind of new contemporary posthumanist technotopia, this is an attitude which merely repeats the original animal gesture in its basest and most elementary form. (Liakos, 2013) Likewise, Bataille sees in eroticism a movement of pure negation, an abolishment of the historical human order, and an explosion of the animal excess that never could be fully constrained in the first instance, “The animal is perhaps a man asleep, man an animal that rouses itself from the sleep of nature.” (Bataille, 1993, p. 138)

**Slavery, the Master-Desire and Muddy Tails**

Freud's *Totem and Taboo* perhaps best represents his, “...efforts to apply viewpoints and results of psychoanalysis to unexplained problems of social psychology.” (Freud, 2012, p. 14) In the work, Freud goes on to reduce the various cultural manifestations of taboo to localized interpretations of Kant's “Categorical Imperative,” and finally, he comes to examine the ways in which civilization has regulated social relationships based on the inner logic of these cultural mores. (Freud, 2012) One can see clearly that this approach has very little to do with Bataille's investigation of eroticism, which he is careful to define as something “other” or more, than the cultural constraint of animalistic sexuality. Further, Bataille is not simply interested in explaining the psychoanalytic foundations through which particular social constellations come to be fashioned, as the restricted economy itself struggles and strives to find its mature form *vis à vis* eroticism. Bataille's perspective on the relations between the Apollonian and Dionysian aspects of human existence predisposes him to the attitude of the
Philosopher as opposed to that of the psychoanalyst. Whereas Freud saw civilization as possessing essentially the same blueprint as does individual psychology, neuroses and all, and so attempted to argue that civilization is little more than the individual "writ large," so to speak, Bataille's approach is more philosophically sophisticated, runs deeper into a reflection on life's cosmic implications, and portrays civilization as a primary restraining force which purposefully works against these irreducible cosmic tendencies in its attempt to irremediably circumscribe them. (Freud, 1962)

Implicit in Bataille's conception of sovereignty, as the harmonization of the individual with the telos of the general movement of cosmic flow, is the underlying assumption that one of the results of the specific compositional forms taken by given restricted economies is a condition of a kind of existential slavery - through the seduction and circumscription of desire, through labor, and through the abstraction of human beings as "things" subsisting within the social matrix. Like the "hyper-valued" commodities of Mauss' research, cultural humanity comes to be invested with shifting notions of status, prestige, allegiances, and their own dynamic forms of exchange-value. In other words, the possibilities for being a culturally vested human are at the same time the possibilities for being a thing within a given cultural matrix. It is through the desire for the desires of the other, that humanity is always something culture bound, and is thereby also consistently subject to binding forms of the social construction of identity. Therefore, the contemporary "slave" at the end of history, is not so much completely animal, as Kojève might argue, but perhaps more aptly, a fiction. (Kojève, 2003) One that conveys the general abstraction of humans as being useful goods and resources (ie, marriageable partners, employable assets, etc.) and as such, of humans as always being subject to conditions and forms of ownership and transaction. The key point to mention at this juncture is that just as the commodity itself is now freed to morphologically shape the contemporary cultural topography of shifting and evolving exchange-value, the culture-bound desires and hence identities of the humans who live at the end of history finally consign both the being and the desire to an equally commodified
status. Or put another way, at the end of history, a culture-bound humanity exchanges existential places with its commodities.

Frédéric Lordon writes that contemporary forms of neo-liberal capitalist servitude stem from the overt manipulation of mankind's passionate life, which here is synonymous with its social life; inasmuch as he asks what in fact social mores manage to encode, if not human passions. (Lordon, 2014)

The general movement of modern employment produces a lifetime's worth of servitude directed primarily toward socially designated spaces and behaviors. This goes beyond Marxist theories of antagonistic binary class structures, theories of wage labor, and attendant exchange-value. What is at work here are specifically designed societal instruments of alignment, enlistment, acceptance and rejection, surveillance, systems of reward and punishment, domination, and even liberation. (Foucault, 1996) For Lordon, and what makes his work so interesting and relevant to this essay, is that all of these aforementioned societal crystallizations of social relationship are operative within the constellation of human desire. (Lordon, 2014) The functions of bare human life thus always enter into the social game with at least some basic kind of awareness of these structures of enslavement to which we can then respond with pleasure and ambition, or perhaps again, with despondency and resignation. (Lordon, 2014) It is through appropriating the desires of the other so as to become one's own desires, in the case of employment, the desires of the manager as a representative of the desire of the capitalist organization, that we become fully enculturated as being productive and useful resources (employees and organizational assets) into the conditions of contemporary employment. (Lordon, 2014) People marked as assets or wealth, as objects to be possessed, are in fact objects of desire first and foremost. They become items of value within a cultural "system of total prestations," which places precise forms of value on things that align with its consciously directed overall system of values, or Master-Desire, in this case, that of the neo-liberal capitalist organization. (Lordon, 2014) Of course, this form of possession or co-alignment of individual desires with the Master-Desire is also a kind of fiction. And
Bataille too warns us that totalized possession and conservation are simply illusions. (Bataille, 1991) However, we can see that these are in fact merely cultural embellishments of desire. Yet the organizational asset (or employee) is always relied upon to take up the capitalist organization's Master-Desire as if it were their own, and this movement epitomizes civilization's general production of suitable desires by imposing themselves upon the bare life of individuals, always with the willing complicity of the individuals themselves. (Agamben, 1998, Lordon, 2014) And in the case of the neoliberal capitalist organization, the Master-Desire is of course, profitability.

In perhaps an overly simplistic sense, all this can be thought of as a kind of permissible (because permitted) hijacking of desire, but it is simplistic only because of the other possible alternatives which exist for one's desire outside of the social matrix. This is a key theme of Bataille's work and is also a primary theme of the Taoist sage Zhuangzi.

"Once, when Chuang Tzu was fishing in the P'u River, the king of Ch'u sent two officials to go and announce to him: "I would like to trouble you with the administration of my realm." Chuang Tzu held on to the fishing pole and, without turning his head, said, "I have heard that there is a sacred tortoise in Ch'u that has been dead for three thousand years. The king keeps it wrapped in cloth and boxed, and stores it in the ancestral temple. Now would this tortoise rather be dead and have its bones left behind and honored? Or would it rather be alive and dragging its tail in the mud?" "It would rather be alive and dragging its tail in the mud," said the two officials. Chuang Tzu said, "Go away! I'll drag my tail in the mud!" (Chuang-Tzu, 2016, Book 17)

To "drag our tails through the mud" is precisely the sovereign attitude which accompanies the denial of the servitude inherent in dedicating one's desire to the historical formations of the restricted economy - but what exactly does this mean? Like Zhuangzi, Lordon also argues that "the local," that which is localized and existentially nearest to us, may not lie entirely outside of the material production of life, but all the same, it does have the ability to offer up viable and fulfilling alternatives to the alignment of our desire with the Master-Desire which tends to characterize the working lives of the "happily dominated." (Lordon, 2014)
Eroticism, like politics, labor, and the commodity all have the power to enslave us through our desires. In other words, wherever there is a human desire, there also exists the possibility of a form of the Master/Slave dialectic. We enter into this dialectic precisely when we direct our desire toward the "given," or in this case, the desires of the other; when we come to desire the prestige and the exchange-value of the fetishized commodity, or when we desire to become this form of commodity. When we adopt the Master-Desire of the capitalist organization characterizing the end of history as if it were our own desire, or when the desire for our beloved only perceives this living other as a thing or object, an asset, or commodity, then we have become enmeshed in a dialectic of Mastery and Slavery that engages us through our own desire. Desire for the shifting exchange-value of things, the reduction of the other as a thing-for-us, or the acquiescence of the self as a thing-for-others sets up a theater of relations predicated on desire in which we willingly bind ourselves to the interplay and outcome of the drama.

Advertising is perhaps the most open, obvious and most revealing form of overt desire production in contemporary society. Its entire raison d'être persists so as to implant desires for things, forms of prestige, and the exchange-value of commodities, and it thereby comes to shape both our present values as well as the future trajectory of our own enculturated desires. In fact, we can say that most often it is precisely the exchange-value of the commodity or service that we seek to possess, and this is most evident in the case of prestige luxury goods which typically far outweigh the practical use value of the goods and services themselves. If the desire for things, deemed valuable because they are portrayed to us as being desirable by others, and the reduction of the other as having intrinsic worth to us only as objects of our desires enter us directly into the contemporary dialectic of Mastery and Slavery, then advertising performs the function of gatekeeper in this dialectic by consciously and constantly directing our desire toward the cultural "given" and away from anything else. And through it, our desires are directed to its attendant and ever-changing palette of "appropriate" commodities,
services, and people which themselves are always utterly free to designate and re-designate for us the various shifting topography of temporarily desirable cultural exchange-value in general. Moreover, this is of course why we would subordinate our desires to the desires of our employers and adopt the Master-Desire of profitability which characterizes the neo-liberal capitalist organization as if it were our own: for the ability to reproduce our material existence in the first instance, but also to enter into the theater of relations characterized by the contemporary commodified form of the Master/Slave dialectic, and this of course, is the place where the desires of our civilization become our own. This is the function performed by advertising which is, the normalization and commodification of forms of desire. But how is this function actually performed within the contemporary social matrix?

On the face of it, advertising is little more than a modern ubiquitous form of art and creativity, and in this way is quite analogous to the prehistoric cave paintings that marked the dawn and the nascence of Homo Sapiens. With the emergence of Andy Warhol and pop art, what was once discussed and thought of as “modern art” finally merged with, and then became the contemporary fashion and entertainment industries, all of which are predicated on forms of advertising. This is not simply another changing of the avant-garde in the history of art, it actually marks a massive general cultural shift in the contemporary world. The consequences of modern art becoming more or less indistinguishable from advertising can be seen in the nature of contemporary art itself. Like contemporary art, advertising aims primarily for the creation of a certain atmosphere and impact. Its ubiquitousness all but negates our freedom to ignore it. It marks the subsuming of a general attitude of “art for art’s sake” into that of “art for product sales' sake,” to the extent that today's artists must also become skilled salesmen, and the two practices have all but become fused in the contemporary world. Advertising art works hand in hand with the most cutting edge of technology in globalized communications and often provides the driving force behind new technological developments. The goal of advertising is always communication and affect, as it attempts to state something so that the
recipient responds. What is being said, is precisely the configuration and mapping of the contemporary terrain of modern desires.

Advertising has the ever-increasing ability to shape cultural perceptions and desires in this direct and obvious way, and as such, possesses the correlative ability to enact contemporary paradigm shifts. This is also the realm that sees the genesis of the multi-faceted and shifting exchange-value of the free commodity at the end of history. In other words, advertising has the ability to make brands rise to the level of consciousness so as to become a part of the daily topography of our lives and as such, is forever creating new spaces for us to desire the desire of the other in contemporary society.

Commodity name recognition thus becomes an integral part of our "naturalized" modern cultural environment. Of course, the Master-Desire is always directed toward forms of profitability and here it is sustained through manufactured passions; and one central result within civilization at the end of history is a non-autonomous art put into the service of capitalism.

This is the way art comes to create, and re-create the social landscape of the contemporary social matrix. At the end of history, we can all become a part of the community of the brand, and to associate social identities with commodities or if you will, to associate the desire to be and become with the desire to own. At the end of history, art in the form of advertising exists like air and water, its features delimit the natural morphology of the landscape in which we live out our lives. Here, we have the essential movement of commodities as a part of one's landscape and social identity; and identity as a total social construct, and finally advertising as a total creative and normalizing force. All of which is predicated on our desires.

The restricted economy always reveals itself as the temporary appropriation and capture of desire. It can be no other way. First at the level of the solar economy as Bataille pointed out in the *Accursed Share, Vol. 1*, and thereafter at the level of the enslaved individual, who experiences his condition as a function of his desires, as it always expresses the tendency to accumulate all resources as
"things" for its own ends. For Bataille these collective efforts at accumulation and growth are ultimately also only kinds of fictions, "...desire demands the greatest possible loss, as it is the movement that prefigures death itself." (Bataille, 1991, p. 141) So then for one to be enslaved, one must always willingly come to harmonize one's desires and hence one's identity with those of the restricted economy. One must first appropriate the desires of the other as one's own desires, and finally, one must also become a passive response to desire, so as to exist for the desires of others. This is the primary nature and social function of advertising, of money, and of labor in the contemporary social matrix.

Bataille wrote that desire always seeks two objectified forms, or is subject to a dual movement. One is mobile and alive while the other is passive and inert. The first is a desiring life, the second, an object whose existence is for one's own desires. (Bataille, 1993) This is the opposition or tension between the static and the fluid, and, "It is the opposition between the beauty of Apollo and the orgy of Dionysus." (Bataille, 1993, p. 144) As desire moves organically between these polarities, what draws it forth is not some form of pure animal lust, but an overlaid constructed image signifying the essence of the object as defined by civilization itself. Therefore, it is civilization in its contemporary form which in fact embodies the genesis of the Master-Desire as it is precisely here where Baudrillard's "logic of the sign" finds its raison d'être and also its primary nature as forms of the "given." And yet despite our general subordination to means as we subsist within this cultural matrix, we also inevitably seeks desire's transcendent explosive release, and a form of a general liberation of our desires either within the realm of the sacred and its practices and rituals, or else in the existential possibilities for life that lie outside of the "given" Apollonian forms. Erotic love is not at all a societal nor an historical formation, and it never was one. It always requires of the individual resources in excess of necessity, growth and utility, and as a primary form of consumption, it is everywhere a direct consequence of excess. Its inherent fluidity always manages to escape the normative attempts at capture by the Master-Desire and
as such, it is a direct form of sovereignty.

"What is individual is never manifest in history." wrote Bataille, and eroticism can come to shape the inner experience and identity of the individual life as a kind of elision of the Master-Desire. (Bataille, 1993, p. 158) The sovereign individual with liberated desires lives outside, and indeed must live outside of the spaces and narratives of history's recounting. Just like the general and restricted economies, civilization and its attendant desire for the desires of the other, moves in opposition and tension to existential forms of sovereign liberated desire. As Freud succinctly put it, "The liberty of the individual is no gift of civilization." (Freud, 1962, p. 42) And Bataille clearly points out the antagonistic character of individual love over and against the social matrix which threatens to subsume it. (Bataille, 1993) Was not the plot of Shakespeare's Romeo & Juliet predicated on this very antagonism? Juliet's lines in the famous balcony scene epitomize this existential tension,

"O Romeo, Romeo,
wherefore art thou Romeo?
Deny thy father and refuse thy name,
Or if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love,
And I'll no longer be a Capulet."
(Shakespeare, 2016, 2.1.74-78)

History and human society have their own trajectory, and the recounting of history is the narrative of the movement of the the Master-Desire; which first and foremost, exists so as to further its own ends. For the purposes of this essay, I have argued, following Bataille, that the trajectory of individual sovereign desire, illuminated here in the form of eroticism, consistently finds its antipode in civilization's general manufacture, movement and reflection of desire.

"From this episodic entry of individual love into history there clearly emerges the incompatibility of meanings of a historical event on the one hand, and on the other, of the lovers' absorption in the universe engendered by their embrace." (Bataille, 1993, p. 146)

Throughout the Accursed Share, we have been reminded that Desire always has a fluid cosmic
dimension as well a related dimension which is characterized by history's incessant attempts to fix and
conserve this fluidity. And just as Kojève held Hegel's basic error to be the conflation of these two
dimensions in terms of time, here we are forced to conclude in a similar way, that the degree of
harmonization with the cosmic elements of desire through how one chooses to live one's life and forge
one's identity, necessarily removes oneself from the forms of Master/Slave dialectic present at the end
of history to very much the same degree.
Chapter 4 – Of Nomads and Water: The Accursed Share, vol. 3

It is easy in the world to live after the world's opinion; it is easy in solitude to live after our own; but the great man is he who in the midst of the crowd keeps with perfect sweetness the independence of solitude.

~ Ralph Waldo Emerson

Bataille's third book of the *Accursed Share* is directly concerned with the philosophical issue of sovereignty. Of course, his approach to the matter is predicated on the metaphysics and economic perspectives outlined in his first volume, as well as the kind of philosophical treatment that eroticism receives in his second work. Sovereignty for Bataille, is the result of particular forms of desire as they come to manifest themselves through time. In the first instance, directed desire creates the nature of the self. Sovereignty therefore is a kind of becoming that is first predicated on a ceasing to *be*, and in the second movement, of a kind of becoming that reflects the directedness of desire. To partake in the movement of the cosmic is always akin to an existential form of death, a death of the self, or of the self as thing, and also a death of the past. Of course, within this rubric, it is also the death of one's culturally constructed identity as it was never really one's own to begin with. Sovereignty signifies the death of utility and calculation as comprising the ultimate ends to which our desires are directed. And by the same token, this form of sovereignty therefore signifies the rebirth of lived possibility. (Bataille, 1993)

Bataille's form of sovereignty is linked to desire and time, and he echoes Kojève's philosophical criticism of Hegel, and like Kojève, he also distinguishes between cosmic time and human time. This is due to the oppositional nature and inherent existential tension between the cosmic and the historical domains. Within the social matrix, the nature and trajectory of the future, as anticipation for calculated results, also inevitably comes to subordinate the present moment. For Bataille, sovereignty therefore is the *independence* of the present moment, the temporal reality where calculation cannot exist.
Enslavement by desire and the social construction of identity gain their strength through the calculation of the anticipated result, in the waiting for desire's future form of fulfillment. Sovereignty therefore, is a form of *unknowing.* (Bataille, 1993, p. 208) In the movement of laughter, tears, poetry, ecstasy, mysticism, eroticism, and the immediate immanence of the present experience, the object of thought simply vanishes as one becomes entirely consumed by the *present* moment. Beyond the restricted economy, the *telos* of our desires always manifests itself as a kind of death or nothingness. Even when we will otherwise. So then, it is the anticipation of the future result and the haunting memories of the past which weighs on the present in such a way as to rob it of its sovereign character. (Bataille, 1993)

Because of this form of holding the present hostage, desire thus can “give rise to unjustified hopes,” to romantic phantasms and distorted visions, to the hallucinatory and the grotesque, and to naïve versions of possible utopias, and always to forms of calculation based on future returns, but desire that simply dissolves into fundamental forms of inner experience where individuation gives way to intimacy, into laughter, tears, eroticism and the mysticism of its final *telos*; is the full abyss of sovereign desire. (Bataille, 1993, p. 210)

The “reign of the moment” also emulates the sacred in that it is always removed from the world of practice, but like man's animality, it is nonetheless also always *there*; and so it is inevitably, “...valorized as something that frees itself from the subordination characterizing the world.” (Bataille, 2009, p. 214) For Bataille then, sovereignty is *nothing* in the world of things. (Bataille, 1993) The modern world of things is a world where mankind represents the coming into consciousness of the experience of profound forms of alienation. (Dostoyevsky, 2008) This experience of alienation can serve to characterize humanity at the end of history in the sense that here, one's cultural identity is forged always in terms of things. In terms of things-for-oneself, and the exchange value they engender, and in terms of being a thing-for-others. Sovereignty is an undoing of the human as *thing,* and non-
alienation is the sovereign moment of this form of death. Bataille argues that just as the ancient Egyptians held, over the profane world lies a sacred world, and like the Aztecs, over a profane time lies a sacred time. (Bataille, 2013) These forms of the sacred are not the “natural given” for us, but in fact, always materialize as the negation of the natural given – the negation of the world of work, utility, calculation, and commodities. In a like manner, in the case of eroticism, “Lovers, in any case, tend to negate a social order that contests more often than it grants their right to live...in both individual love and impersonal eroticism, a man is immediately in the universe.” (Bataille, 1993, p. 159-160) Here, both love and the sacred are a part of the general economy, as forms of transcendent desire. Archaic societies incorporated the sacred into the profane world so that their distinctiveness was lost as a matter of course. By contrast, civilization at the end of history simply lacks any sustained recognition of the sacred as there is nothing acknowledgeable that lies beyond the parameters of the universal and homogeneous concerns of profitability, utility, commodification and calculation. In this context, the unification of the individual's desires with this Master-Desire is of a complete and total nature because desires that lie on the outside of it, are simply held to be transgressions. The particular forms of the contemporary dialectic of Mastery and Slavery thus reveal ourselves as the animalistic slaves and the end of history itself as the cultural regency of the master. 8

Bataille writes, “...man becomes the equivalent of a tool, which produces; he is like the thing the tool is, being itself a product...he who serves – who works – has the value of that which will be later, not of that which is.” (Bataille, 1993, p. 218) So for him, sovereignty, as the negation of our subordination to the past and future, is in the first instance, a kind of simple disengagement with the social matrix. To this end, it is a reaffirmation of our humanity, not in our originary animal nature, but as a part of the movement of the universe. In this sense, it is always a basic and fundamental form of

8This is the political meaning of Kojève's famous footnote on p. 159-162 of his Introduction To The Reading of Hegel.
transgression, "...to live sovereignly is to escape, if not death, at least the anguish of death...The sovereign man lives and dies like an animal. But he is a man nevertheless." (Bataille, 1993, p. 219) In the second instance, the sovereign thus comes to oppose forms of play to forms of work, as a prime demarcation of human life, and therefore also comes to affirm not necessarily one's own death, as much as death of the desires of the other as the existential field upon which one's own desires and correlative identity come to be designed. It is in these senses then that the desires of the sovereign are essentially his own, and the liberation of desire is always the liberation that death brings, not to oneself, though that will surely come in any case, but to the generative and historical possibilities of the Apollonian composition of the social matrix. Through its being as the telos of cosmic forms of desire, death liberates man from all but itself.

All existential forms can be thought of as fundamental forms of existential desire, and thus all these forms are not more than the multi-faceted faces of death. In the final analysis, it is only these variegated aspects one's own death that one must ultimately face without any recourse, and this knowledge, without anguish, also marks the sovereign movement. This brings us to a different dimension than an emphasis on human works and cultural achievements, "It is basically a general subordination of human beings to works that satisfy the demands of a group." (Bataille, 1993, p. 220) The strictures set by civilization and its corresponding Master-Desire define only the limits without which it could not exist. The transgression of these limits in the revolutionary movement of transcendence leads us toward the variegated possibilities for a human life.

"The limits give passion the contracted movement that it did not have in animality. This properly human movement has forms regulated, relatively, by conventions that are often strange; it has a greater, perhaps less lasting, explosive intensity, but above all it leads to the refinements of pleasure and cruelty that civilization and prohibition alone made possible by contravention." (Bataille, 1993, p. 221)
In truth, desire's general trajectory makes the negation of civilization and prohibition all but inevitable. Transgression as the sovereign moment alone, "justifies a conditional and temporary submission to necessity." (Bataille, 1993, p. 221) And yet, beyond the necessity to sustain the material reproduction of life, lies another necessary possibility, that is, to live. Herein lies the unavoidable element of existential risk, where one might perhaps come to risk all, not for the desires of the other in this case, but for the liberation of one's own desires. This kind of sovereignty is a negation of the instinct of the slave inasmuch as it amounts to the, "refusal to accept the limits that the fear of death would have us respect in order to ensure, in a general way, the laboriously peaceful life of individuals." (Bataille, 1993, p. 221) The denial of the sentiments that death controls so as to harmonize with death's wider movement, the "control of one's deep tremors," is also to engage in the existential trajectory of desire's liberation; and although the end of history is characterized by particular forms of Mastery and Slavery, the altogether more generalized cosmic movement of life, death, and rebirth which subsumes it sees the equally existential dimensions of a fundamental kind of Eros and Thanatos open up definitive pathways to desire's liberation. (Bataille, 1993, p. 222)

The sovereign thus has little time for the cultural circumscription of his identity because, "...he is the transgression of all such limits." (Bataille, 1993, p. 222) Therefore, the only available response to the seriousness and paradigmatic emphasis on usefulness and profitability within civilization is the profound and endless play at its margins, due firstly to the intimate understanding of the reality of death on the horizon, and hence the conclusion that death is always the true fate of what comes to be deemed as socially useful. And finally the correlative understanding of the true existential value of what therefore is not considered useful; or put in another way, of where and how the existential river tends to always overflow civilization's banks and ramparts. Of the value of this kind of fundamental existential "uselessness," Zhuangzi also writes,
When Confucius visited Ch'u, Chieh Yu, the madman of Ch'u, wandered by his gate crying, "Phoenix, phoenix, how his virtue failed! The future you cannot wait for; the past you cannot pursue. When the world has the Way, the sage succeeds; when the world is without the Way, the sage survives. In times like the present, we do well to escape penalty. Good fortune is light as a feather, but nobody knows how to hold it up. Misfortune is heavy as the earth, but nobody knows how to stay out of its way. Leave off, leave off - this teaching men virtue! Dangerous, dangerous - to mark off the ground and run! Fool, fool - don't spoil my walking! I walk a crooked way - don't step on my feet. The mountain trees do themselves harm; the grease in the torch burns itself up. The cinnamon can be eaten and so it gets cut down; the lacquer tree can be used and so it gets hacked apart. All men know the use of the useful, but nobody knows the use of the useless!" (Chuang-Tzu, 2016, Book 4)

The pyramids of Egypt also show the nature and material dimensions of humanity's immensely calculated response to our collective horror of death, and this is of course, perhaps the most fundamental rationale behind our world of necessity. When this world of necessity, the social matrix is placed, "at the foot of the pyramid, the world of practice has disappeared; its limit is no longer perceptible." (Bataille, 1993, p. 224) The transcendent sacred, like sovereignty, is always already there, at the margins, and this blunt fact gives the Apollonian composition of our collective lives its fascinatingly arbitrary nature, which are nonetheless no less real for their exhibiting this characteristic arbitrariness. Bataille's concept of sovereignty in time highlights the primacy of the moment, and also the value of transgression as an affirmation of cosmic forms of desire to the sovereign life. In what follows, I will examine a particular kind of sovereignty and a manner of living sovereignly with a liberated form of desire in more depth.

**Sovereignty & The Political Exception**

Political philosopher Carl Schmitt criticizes contemporary juridical thinking due to the way modern legal norms and "oughts" are portrayed as little more than abstractions from the concretely
lived orders from which they emerge. (Schmitt, 2006). He sees modern liberalism as a form of evading the political and this results in two primary problems. First, it tends to deny the inherent dangerousness of humans and also, it tends to forget that law is an eminently concrete phenomenon which is rooted in the political order. It makes no difference to Schmitt if in fact this evasion of the political which characterizes contemporary liberalism is itself a form of political strategy. For Schmitt, all law is nonetheless essentially "situated law." (Schmitt, 2006) This means that the contemporary liberal separation of judicial order from political orientation at the end of history inevitably distorts this characteristic situatedness and thus results in a fundamental form of nihilism. (Schmitt, 2006)

The concept of "Orientation" always involves the political appropriation of land and territory as a necessary prerequisite for any form of government. The concept of "Order" refers to the subsequent legalistic administration of the appropriated land or territory. Political sovereignty is therefore the ability to enact forms of decision making based on the order of orientation. (Schmitt, 2006) Here, political sovereignty is predicated on a fundamental relationship to space. The sovereign decision on the nature of the order of orientation, or by the same token, the nature of the exception to this order, is always a legal decision for Schmitt, that is to say, it belongs to law even if its specific form of validity is not found in a prior given legal norm. The contemporary European form of order comes out of Christendom and the spatial appropriation of the New World, and it finally emerged into its modern form directly from the intertwined worlds of the "Emperor and the Pope." (Schmitt, 2006) The modern form of the European order now transforms what was considered to be the "just cause" of the Medieval period (ie, the crusades), into the formation of conceptually similar decisions on the precise nature and definition of the "just enemy" in the contemporary era. The decision on the nature of this enemy and on whether to wage war belongs to sovereign states, and as such are always politically sovereign decisions. (Schmitt, 2006) A key point to be made here is that there is always an intimate relationship
between violence and revolution at one pole, and the establishment and maintenance of political and hence collective order at the other pole along the political continuum. It is the not the ideal significance of law in terms of perceived value which concerns Schmitt, but rather its more material and fundamental nature. Order, law and political sovereignty are always predicated on spatial orientation. So today, at the end of history, Schmitt calls for a proper legal status quo which always and everywhere, that is to say globally, must anchor itself in a concretely globalized spatial order. (Schmitt, 2006)

To see humanity as an abstract political category and the globe itself as a material and spatial political unity means that contemporary forms of warfare will inevitably come to be reduced to police actions as activities of “normalization” and integration, and hence, to a globalized form of civil war. Here, the enemies of the political sovereign are defined as particular forms of humanity itself, those that are reduced to the status of “outlaws,” and this inevitably comes to be defined as the “enemy” of all normalized hence homogenized humanity. This totalizing form of the “modern crusade” is global in spatial orientation and directed primarily at the abstract and non-integrated political categories that contemporary human beings (and not the globe nor its material resources) have become. These abstractions always serve the sovereign power in the trajectory of its own telos towards ever more increasing forms of the growth of the means of production, universal cosmopolitan law, and globalized political unity, even at the expense of particular state forms of sovereignty which are relativized as mere anachronistic abstractions themselves. (Schmitt, 2006)

Following Schmitt, political sovereignty in its simplest form, is the ability to make decisions based on the order that defines the administration of space through time. The sovereign prerogative not only decides on the temporally persistent order of orientation, but also makes decisions on the exception to the order of orientation. (Schmitt, 2006, p. 98, 207, 209) Sovereign decision on the order
of orientation thus inversely decides on and defines the limit and the frontiers of the social order. This also serves to define both the parameters of the global village as well as Zhuangzi’s “Not-Even-Anything-Village, or the field of Broad-and-Boundless.” It is always a “question of borders.” (Agamben, 2005, p. 1) Agamben also follows this line of reasoning to investigate the contemporary nature and philosophical topography of the “state of exception” at the end of history. He sees that politically speaking, exceptional measures during periods of political crisis could always be called on by the sovereign, and in his work, State of Exception, he makes the point that these have now actually become the norm for contemporary governance. (Agamben, 2005)

"...modern totalitarianism can be defined as the establishment, by means of the state of exception, of a legal civil war that allows for the physical elimination of not only political adversaries, but of entire categories of citizens who for some reason cannot be integrated into the political system." (Agamben, 2005, p. 2)

For this reason, Agamben sees that a permanent “state of emergency” has become an essential practice of modern governance. All this is relevant to the present essay precisely because the state of exception exists at the frontier or at the limit of the social order, wherein Bataille has already identified the sovereign attitude. Furthermore, it also marks the shifting political frontiers or borders between more totalitarian forms of governance and those liberal democratic forms which also in turn correspond to sovereign definitions of the citizenry as being either “inside” or “outside” of their respective contemporary orders. Agamben writes, "...the state of exception appears as a threshold of indeterminacy between democracy and absolutism.” (Agamben, 2005, p.3) Most importantly for the nature of human life at the end of history however, decisions pertaining to the state of exception also mark the extension of military authority into the civil sphere. For Agamben, a normative and persistent suspension of constitutional rights pushes regulated humanity back into a kind of state of nature (Kojève on Animality), where rights can not exist. (Agamben, 2005, p. 6) And finally, quoting Walter
Benjamin, and also echoing Schmitt, Agamben argues that the, “state of exception...has become the rule.” (Agamben, 2005, p.6)

Bataille noted the essential historical and revolutionary break from feudal society as being a cornerstone for modern life and he argues that it was always a similar movement toward modernization, and took a similar form, whether the revolution was conceived of as being a communist or a democratic one. Feudalism was of course, characterized by the historical dialectic of political Mastery and Slavery, as expounded by Kojève, and all modern forms of revolution were intended so as to subvert this archaic form of governance and to pave the way for contemporary bourgeois society. (Bataille, 1993) There has never been a revolution enacted so as to subvert bourgeois dominance in the social sphere, but rather, all modern forms of revolution have been to depose the archaic forms of feudal sovereignty and the corresponding feudal social order which attended it. He goes on to note that the deposition of feudalism was at the same time a complete deposition of an archaic form of fundamental sovereignty per se. On this he writes, “..in the feudal world there was a preference for sovereign use, for an unproductive use, of wealth. The preference of the bourgeois world was reserved, quite on the contrary, for accumulation.” (Bataille, 1993, p. 280) For Bataille, genuine sovereignty, as unemployed negativity, can never be the goal of history. It exists in fundamental tension with the Master-Desire of civilization. That political goal whether communist or democratic, is on the contrary, the formation of a classless society. “Apparently, the point toward which we are converging, drawn by a gravity analogous to that of flowing water, is undifferentiated humanity.” (Bataille, 1993, p. 281) This is also analogous to Kojève's universal and homogeneous civilization at the end of history.

Sovereignty, insofar as it is synonymous with the sacred as a revolutionary form of transcendence of the “given,” is very far from these twin tendencies toward universalization and homogenization. A forging of self-identity through forms of labor, servility, and the desire for others'
desires are foreign to it. Just as Zhuangzi preferred to “drag his tail through the mud,” and to have his farmer “avoid machine thoughts and machine worries,” so as to preserve his equanimity even at the expense of utility, so too does the sovereign individual attempt to impose an archaic but persistent form of sovereign order on his own space of orientation. “Sovereignty is man’s primordial condition, his basic condition...” writes Bataille, and even contemporary forms of labor, slavery, and politics can only impose a temporary violation to it. (Bataille, 1993, p. 284) He continues,

“We are passing from the primacy of sovereign works, tied to agricultural predominance and the feudal order, to the primacy of accumulation. The basic determination, in the superstructure of a society, involves the use of excess resources for the production of the means of production. It is not so much a question of whether these means of production are, individually, the property of the bourgeois or, collectively, that of the workers: what matters primarily is the growth of the means of production...” (Bataille, 1993, p. 291)

The Master-Desire of the contemporary social matrix at the end of history primarily serves its own interests. It has been argued up to now that the primary interests of the Master-Desire are those that coalesce around the concept of profitability in the economic sphere, and the formation of a classless society in the political sphere. We are now in a position to refine this concept and point out here that the primary interest of the Master-Desire at the end of history is in fact, the growth of the means of production. And this growth should be universalized and constitute the desires of a homogeneous humanity. This is the mature form of the contemporary Master-Desire that drives labor in Lordon’s Willing Slaves of Capital, and also the root of the modern economic form of the Master/Slave dialectic which has risen to primacy in the era of Kojève’s “end of history.” For Agamben, the homogenization of the people into a generic class of citizenry as consumers supported by labor constitutes the “bare life” that the political sovereign comes to regulate. Yet it is crucial to note that the sovereign power itself always stands at the same time both inside and outside this judicial ordering of
life. (Agamben, 1998, p. 15) What this means is that although the Master has already declared himself as 'the exception,' and has all but removed himself from the contemporary form of the dialectic of Mastery and Slavery characterizing the end of history, the Master also defines the limits, as well as the exceptions to them, which means that both inside and outside are consistently subsumed by the persistent rule of the Master in any case. (Agamben, 1998) The paradox then is the fact that at the end of history, the Master and his legal governance exist only through what can be called a relation of exception. That is to say, "the extreme form of relation by which something is included solely through its exclusion." (Agamben, 1998, p. 15) This is a political dimension that is overlaid onto the modern industrial economic paradigm in which we live. The economic dialectic of Mastery and Slavery at the end of history relies on labor, resources and capital investment as providing the raw materials for the regulation of the means of production which in turn, transforms those classed as "citizenry" into essential resources as consumers. Here, the desire for others' desires is also transformed into the consumption of wealth, and yet a fundamental consequence of this transformation is the inevitable alignment of one's individual desires with contemporary civilization's Master-Desire, and in this sense, it is served by the production of increasingly homogeneous desires through certain specific social compositions such as advertising. Politically speaking, the state of exception, as the norm of exclusion for contemporary governance at the end of history, allows the political sovereign power to sidestep more traditional forms of governance, such as the democratic separation of powers for example, ostensibly so as to "protect democracy," in never-ending times of crisis. But "...a protected democracy is no democracy at all, and...the paradigm of constitutional dictatorship functions instead as a transitional phase that leads inevitably to the establishment of a totalitarian regime." (Agamben, 2005, p. 22) This would perhaps also come to be in a state of perpetual crisis, as well as in a state of perpetual war, but the result is the same: the emergency becomes the rule, and the very distinction between peace and war (and between foreign and civil war) becomes impossible." (Agamben, 2005, p.
For the purposes of the present essay, we can see that this makes the contemporary political order persist at the end of history with only the vaguest of discernible boundaries and circumscribed political parameters as the order of orientation, in part because they are so dynamic and flowing, and although they may become increasingly universal in nature, they are also at the same time quite porous. Although only the sovereign can legally exist in an ongoing and permanent fashion outside of these parameters, what we also find in this contemporary form of Zhuangzi's "Wu-Suo" or no-place, *along with the sovereign*, are also specific abstract political categories which define those who fall under this rubric as being potential or actual outlaws and enemies. These are the forms of non-homogenized and non-integrated citizenry for whom the state of exception is designed to both identify, to use, and/or to integrate. They are the criminals, the gangsters (who also have their own order), the terrorists, the refugees (who are subject to immediate re-integration or else dispersion), the children (who are subject to education), rogue states, homeless transients, those living on state benefits, mercenaries, the unemployed, the handicapped, and the artists. What all these brief and limited examples embody, each in their own way, "at its center is the state of exception – but this is essentially an empty space, in which human action, with no relation to law stands before a norm with no relation to life." (Agamben, 2005, p. 86)

A permanent and controlled state of exception therefore serves to allow the end of history's homogeneous civilization to identify and define the non-integrated "other," as an abstract political category. And the sovereign act of the Master identifying the enemy in turn engenders an always justified response of incorporation, incarceration, or obliteration. This is what thinkers like Schmitt and Agamben mean when they claim future war to be civil war, and future military activity to be police activity. (Schmitt, 2006, Agamben, 1998) The exception always marks the boundary between inside
and outside, and circumscribes the boundary that separates the two with an intense passion. This is also the passion of the impulse of primal existential revolutionary desire. The first to transcend nature, which is the domain of the civilization of the political sovereign. The second movement however is to seek transcendence of civilization as the “given.” The sovereign at the end of history comes to establish the exception as a direct corollary of establishing the order of orientation and thus subsists as both inside and outside simultaneously. It thereby offers to save the republic by repealing liberty for a time, but then this becomes the rule for governance, and the homogeneous and universalized form of man at the end of history is thus engaged on the one hand with the Master-Desire and the economic dialectic of slavery through labor and the commodification of desire, and on the other hand, he also faces a political will that continually distinguishes between the shifting definitions of what constitutes the political category of the citizenry of the inside (immigration), and also the “outlaws” inhabiting the outside of the sovereign order of orientation. So long as we align our own desires with the Master-Desire, and permit the interiorization of our identities and lives by the contemporary political matrix, we have no chance to live in a sovereign manner because within it, we are but as things. (Agamben, 1998, p.16)

“A thing is alienated, it always exists in relation to something else, but if it is connected with all that is possible, it is no longer determinate, nor alienated; it is not anymore a thing than would be what I imagine in front of me, which I could not name, and which being neither a table nor a stream, could be a stream, a table – or whatever one wanted...” (Bataille, 1993, p. 302)

To not exist solely in relation to civilization doesn't necessarily mean one does not have a life within its parameters nor value social relations with others. It means that one is always more than this, and specifically, embodies its surpassing. It also means that one's sovereignty, if one is to direct their desires in this way rather than toward the desires of others, which has been argued here is the route to
self-enslavement, is a desire for non-being, for transcendence of the given, and a form of revolution in this limited sense. It is a form of sovereignty contingent upon how one becomes in relation to the existential transcendence and surpassing of the limits of civilization; and to the realm of the sacred which lies “at the foot of the pyramid” so to speak. It is not a calculated reckoning on future outcome as it isn't a form of accumulation. Rather, it is simply a desire to be and to become within a different, more generalized and more fundamental kind of sovereign state, that is, Zhuangzi's “Not-Even-Anything-Village, or the field of Broad-and-Boundless.” This is not therefore a movement to transform civilization, but to exist in a certain manner simultaneously within it and beyond it, and therein to transform the self's possibilities in a sovereign manner. Sovereignty for the individual always lies beyond the strictly political order of orientation, and subsists within the space of exception, and this is so both for the political sovereign, as well as for those who aspire to sovereignty, as human life itself is in fact also the exception.

“Chuang-Tzu's wife died. When Hui Tzu went to convey his condolences, he found Chuang-Tzu sitting with his legs sprawled out, pounding on a tub and singing. “You lived with her, she brought up your children and grew old,” said Hui Tzu. “It should be enough simply not to weep at her death. But pounding on a tub and singing – this is going too far, isn’t it? Chuang-Tzu said, “You’re wrong. When she first died, do you think I didn’t grieve like anyone else? But I looked back to her beginning and the time before she was born. Not only the time before she was born, but the time before she had a body. Not only the time before she had a body, but the time before she had a spirit. In the midst of the jumble of wonder and mystery a change took place and she had a spirit. Another change and she was born. Now there's been another change and she's dead. It's just like the progression of the four seasons, spring, summer, fall, winter. “Now she's going to lie down peacefully in a vast room. If I were to follow after her bawling and sobbing, it would show that I don't understand anything about fate. So I stopped.” (Chuang-Tzu, 2016, Book 18)
Nomadism & Wandering like Water

To liberate one's desire at the end of history is to not be a thing within the matrix of the homogeneous and universal contemporary civilization. It is to know the intrinsic value of uselessness, the cosmic or Dionysian dimensions of desire's trajectory, and also to rediscover one's own animality and hence, one's own humanity in the spaces that lie outside of the political order of orientation. It is also to surpass the economic forms of desire that go beyond socially supplemented forms of exchange-value which are situated in one's shifting desires for the equally shifting desires of the other. The desire to become and be the individual desire of the other is the desire for non-individuation, a fundamental form of non-being, and this form of eroticism leads to self transcendence. (Kojève, 2003, Bataille, 1993) The desire to have and to possess the desires of the other is a fiction, and leads to self enslavement. In the non-alignment with the contemporary Master-Desire of civilization, in the negation of its given-ness, another liberated form of desire now makes a kind of pilgrim's journey to the realms of its longing for the sacred. But this need not be the usual religious pilgrim's voyage for the sake of devotion and mystical epiphany, though it could very well be. This is because the religious pilgrim also follows the journey of the existential nomad who precisely emulates the sovereign by also making the state of exception the norm for the order of orientation for his own nomadic life. But what does this mean?

Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari emphasize concepts of becoming, lines of flight, deterritorialization and smooth space in their wide-ranging but incisive philosophical treatment of nomadism as a philosophical and political concept. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1983, 1987) Like Bataille, they also theorize on two simultaneous levels of existence. The first is "Arborescent," which refers to a hierarchical or vertical order placing primacy on centers of organization, alignment, and
subjectification. The second is “Rhizomatic,” and this refers to horizontally oriented interrelations, ununified and unorganized multiplicities, and to interconnections with other multiplicities in an equally ununified way. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) The former categorization can also be referred to as Molar in their work, which suggests certain stratified types of organization centered around typologies such as social classes, sexes, or nations. The latter can be referred to as Molecular and it suggests a contrasting and barely organized, organic social formlessness; or an unorganized multiplicity such as general affective social affinities or certain shifting subcultures. These concepts can be also conceived of as referring to types of Macro/Micro sociality in a more general sense. (Patton, 2000, p. 43)

For Deleuze and Guattari, rhizomatic and micropolitical assemblages (the molecular) are the existential ground upon which arborescent and molar types of organizational principles are founded; “...because for them the function of mutation, metamorphosis, and the creation of the new is ontologically primary...Deleuze and Guattari treat rhizomatic, molecular and micropolitical assemblages as prior to the abstract machine of overcoding.” (Patton, 2000, p. 45) The rhizomatic then is never determined nor defined by its internal unity but rather by its movement, that is, its “horizontal line of flight,” or the natural movement of “determinatorialization” by which this form of life experiences metamorphosis. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) Perhaps influenced by Bataille's perspective on the solar economy in volume one of the Accursed Share, Deleuze and Guattari describe “Absolute Deterritorialization” or molecular humanity's deepest form of transcendence of Molar circumscription as being, “The deeper movement for conjugating matter and function—absolute deterritorialization, identical to the earth itself—appears only in the form of respective territorialities, negative or relative deterritorializations, and complementary reterritorializations. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 143) For them, molecular and molar forms of organization are in constant movement and perpetual dialectic in relation to each other. All deterritorialization is always relative to complementary reterritorialization.
This emphasizes the priority of difference over identity in their work, as all forms of difference embody relative concepts. Simply put, for Deleuze and Guattari, there is no “Not-Even-Anything-Village.”

However, in this essay, the concept of nomadism simply refers to a certain kind of movement. It follows the trail of Bataille's work in The Accursed Share more than it does that of Deleuze and Guattari inasmuch as here, nomadism represents the bringing of, “an action in two contrary directions: We need on the one hand to go beyond the narrow limits within which we ordinarily remain, and on the other hand somehow bring our going-beyond back within our limits.” (Bataille, 1991, p. 69) Therefore, for Deleuze and Guattari, nomadism is referred to as the “War-Machine,” but here, nomadism is simply a certain kind of movement. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) In managing to appropriate his surpassing, and to enact the taken-potential for movement inside and outside of the order of orientation and the state of exception as does the political sovereign, the existential nomad embodies a kind of movement beyond his desire's consistent capture. This is the form of existential movement which turns the striated space of cultural capture and codification into the smooth and undifferentiated space of the nomad's life-world as a cosmic phenomenon, and which has the capacity to remain a kind of smooth space even after his re-integration due to his appropriation of this surpassing. By replacing his desires for the possession of others' desires with the appropriation of this nomadic form of movement, the existential nomad thus begins the kind of movement which sets in motion the liberation of his desires. This is his “wandering like water.”

“...the subject appropriates the surpassing: He regards his virtue, that which he had the capacity for, as an asset, as a power that he now possesses...[this virtue is] this possibility for man to grasp what eludes him, to combine the limitless movements of the universe with the limit that belongs to him.” (Bataille, 1991, p. 69-70, emphasis added)

In their work, Deleuze and Guattari emphasize a possibility for deterritorializing social encoding and term this kind of movement “Becoming-Minor.” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 106) For
them, it is among other things, a movement of a given form of social identity that is other than the dominant identity. In a similar manner, the existential nomad subjects civilization's Master-Desire to a process of non-applicability and deterritorialization precisely through its surpassing. Zhuangzi's farmer also in a similar way, managed to both perceive and assess the value of the machine to his life from the perspective of Wu-Suo, and this form of deviation from and non-alignment with the Master-Desire of utility embodies a movement of sovereignty precisely because it is simply the taken-potential for a kind of existential flow or movement of having the capacity to live simultaneously both inside and outside of the given field of the Master-Desire. It is in this sense that the nomad can also be conceived of as a kind of mythological trickster. Through his "wandering like water," this form of nomadic movement emulates the solar ray. And it is this Promethean consciousness allows him to both steal the fire of the gods, and also to bring it back to earth.

The trickster as a liminal figure is also a sovereign figure inasmuch as he always works simultaneously within the cultural matrix and also outside it. This capacity for movement is his form of convention which disrupts historically inherited forms of convention and yet, it is also necessary so that conventions in general come to be seen as such, and not become confused with reality. For the Ojibwa tribal people of Ontario, Canada, "Crow creates the world, brings light and fire and fresh water. He creates human beings and teaches them the principles of culture." (Cruikshank & Sidney, 1998, p. 140) And yet at the same time, he also shrewdly marries Fish-Mother so that he can, "eat without doing any work." (Cruikshank & Sidney, 1998, p. 140) In terms of liminality, anthropologist Victor Turner points out that it is a relative and intermediate phase between ritualized separation and re-integration into a given social group at another status. (Turner, 1995) Therefore, following Turner, nomadic "wandering like water" is not a state of being where one can live indefinitely, but rather, it is a terrain of social transcendence which is open to travel but for a time, provided one does so with
liberated desires and then finally becomes reintegrated with this more matured form of liberation intact.

Paul Ricoeur points out that we find ourselves always already embedded in various social narratives and stories which encapsulate a realm of “pre-hermeneutic” understandings. (Ricoeur, 1984) The nomad possesses the capacity to discern the preexistent and historical narrative of the Master-Desire, and also to express the taken-potential of flowing both within and outside its frontiers. When this sovereign desire for a kind of “wandering like water” supplants the desire for the possession of others' desires, and when the need to engage in forms of labor offered on the terms of the Master-Desire is acknowledged as merely a form of temporal necessity and not of identity, then the nomad comes to negate his self-commodification by forging new forms of identity through the conscious directedness of his own desires, and here we are speaking of a sovereign form of nomadism.

Nomadism is therefore a concept that is perhaps inspired by and borrowed from Deleuze and Guattari's writings but is not specifically beholden to their work. It affirms a kind of movement, whether it be physical, philosophical or spiritual and which projects one beyond the capacities of normalization, commodification, and integration into a liminal state of being neither here nor there, neither this nor that, and as such it takes the sovereign state of exception as it's epigenesis. In this way, the existential nomad always emulates the sovereign, and like the trickster of the myths, his movement embodies the abstract political categories of the sovereign and the non-homogeneous simultaneously, just as the political sovereign does. Michel de Certeau writes that the everyday social dialectic in the modern world can be thought of as being comprised of differing Strategies and Tactics. Strategies are the (Molar) ways in which people of a given civilization come to be socially encoded. Tactics by contrast, are more opportunistic and defensive maneuvers (Molecular) which can momentarily find shifting physical and psychological areas outside the system of social encoding, which can then be used in certain limited ways to resist or subvert "the system" ostensibly for one's benefit or interests. (de
Certeau, 1997) The philosophical concept of the nomad through his “wandering like water,” adopts nomadic life primarily as a sovereign *Strategy*, and yet also at other times as a *Tactic*, and thus emulates the sovereign by subsuming both. Zhuangzi writes,

“...whether you point to a little stalk or a great pillar, a leper or the beautiful Hsi-shih, things ribald and shady or things grotesque and strange, the Way makes them all into one. Their dividedness is their completeness; their completeness is their impairment. No thing is ever complete or impaired, but all are made into one again. Only the man of far reaching vision knows how to make them into one. So he has no use [for categories] but relegates all to the constant...The torch of chaos and doubt – this is what the sage steers by. So he does not use things but relegates all to the constant. This is what it means to use clarity.”

(Chuang-Tzu, 2016, Book 2)

Nomadism is more than simply certain given moments of transgression in time as Bataille maintains, it is also the ability to flow inside and outside the spaces of the social matrix circumscribed by the Master-Desire as would a sovereign who claims the order of orientation and also at the same time, the state of exception. It is to perhaps engage in labor at one point, and to use the Master-Desire thereby, only to disengage at another like Crow in the Ojibwa myth, and then seek the reproduction of material necessity through other means and by other more prescient opportunities, and through other fields of social relationships. To not desire the desires of others, but rather to desire the sort of movement that nomadism entails, is to adopt a co-linearity of desire with the solar flow that can serve to sustain the Dionysian fullness of one's possibilities at the end of history. The ability to appropriate this kind of surpassing, the self-transcendent surpassing of which eroticism is an example, and then to bring of it back within our own limits as a capacity or a power, as an example of a liberated form of desire; is even perhaps the “natural condition” to which we long to return upon the negation of the “given.”

To adopt nomadism as a liberated form of desire then is to *become* the liminal state of exception,
like the trickster, and yet also to return and take the sovereign responsibility for the decisions which will impact oneself, one's relationships, and one's life. The nomad therefore follows Zhuangzi's advice in worrying about the character and the nature of their own life before worrying about what the tyrant is doing. How can one transform civilization for the better if one can not even transform one's own self in the first instance? And here, at the end of history, the contemporary nomad inevitably becomes a kind of animal, outlaw, criminal, refugee, or artist and all potential categories of outsider, as the nomad is aligned primarily with that which is constant, and the sovereign movement of nomadism itself, not the Master-Desire of his civilization. It must be pointed out then, that he also assumes the existential risk of reflecting the solar ray rather than the Master-Desire. The risk lies in the nomad's relationship with the more sedentary form of civilization of which he is always organically at cross-purposes, and is characterized by tension, antagonism, and opportunism. The Great Wall of China was built after all, precisely to fend off their northern nomadic neighbors. Zhuangzi wrote about the crown prince of Wei,

"Be careful, be on your guard...these two courses involve certain dangers. Though you follow along, you don't want to be pulled into his doings, and though you harmonize, you don't want to be drawn out too far. If in your actions you follow along to the extent of being pulled in with him, then you will be overthrown, destroyed, wiped out, and brought to your knees. If in your mind you harmonize to the extent of being drawn out, then you will be talked about, named, blamed, and condemned...the tiger trainer...gauges the state of the tiger's appetite and thoroughly understands its fierce disposition. (Chuang-Tzu, 2016, Book 4)

Non-Utility may in fact characterize aspects of the life of the artist, and be the necessary gateway to a sovereign form of nomadism, but it is not sufficient. The ability to choose whether one prefers machine thoughts and machine worries like Zhuangzi's farmer is crucial. One must also at times come to engage the fluid dynamics of late capitalism, just as one must also judge from a place of "Wu-Suo" when it is in one's best interest to disengage; as it is always the sovereign form of life who
claims the state of exception and the liberated form of desire outside of the social matrix. This is not at all the same as simply engineering relative schemes of political resistance *vis-à-vis* civilization's forms of capture. The sovereign life of “wandering like water” is less involved in resistance and political tactics *as a means to sovereignty* than it is in seeking out active and transformative measures in one's own life and in one's own relationships, and far from seeking recognition in and through the desires of others, this form of sovereignty is predicated on a fundamental alignment with the Dionysian impulse. To wander and return again to the social matrix having appropriated one's nomadic surpassing as a power or capacity, is also to re-integrate oneself into the social matrix *at a different status* as Turner has pointed out. The nomad thus “plays” with the boundaries of civilization, just as Zhuangzi “played” with the views of his rivals and interlocutors, and as Bataille cites “play,” as the activity of the sovereign. Whether it be through art, religion, philosophy, business, travel, eroticism, or any manner of of active engagement with the world, there exists a possibility for one's desires to enslave oneself, or conversely, to liberate oneself in a sovereign manner. By “wandering like water,” the nomad comes to see the social matrix as a necessary and inescapable tool to be used in relation to nature, not as absolute conventions which define the nature of the real, and that of course is the wisdom of the trickster, and it also reverses the general conditions of labor, political orders of orientation, advertising and the commodification of desire. The river's banks and borders are always cut from the river's own movement. Nomadism, whether it be philosophical, spiritual, existential, or physical, always aligns itself with the solar movement of the general economy. And this is also what Bataille refers to as sovereignty, “...this possibility for man to grasp what eludes him, to combine the limitless movements of the universe with the limit that belongs to him.” (Bataille, 1991, p. 70) Zhuangzi also writes,

“The region of Ching-shih in Sung is fine for growing catalpas, cypresses and mulberries. But those that are more than one or two arm-lengths around are cut down...So they never get to live out the years Heaven gave them, but are cut down in mid-journey by axes. This is the danger of
being usable... There's crippled Shu... When the authorities call out the troops, he stands in the crowd waving good-by; when they get up a big work party, they pass him over because he's a chronic invalid. And when they are doling out grain to the ailing, he gets three big measures and ten bundles of firewood. With a crippled body, he's still able to look after himself and finish out the years Heaven gave him.” (Chuang-Tzu, 2016, Book 4)

In relation to Deleuze and Guattari's notion of directionality, “wandering like water” subsists at the level of the horizontal rhizome, with the ability to transverse categories, concepts, definitions, institutions, social norms, and even nations and states. Perhaps paradoxically, this also gives the existential nomad also a kind of verticality or molar quality inasmuch as it is the ability to flow as both within and without civilization's desire production and seduction that marks the liberated desires of the nomad as a sovereign and transformative life choice that can persist through space over time. In other words, it allows the nomad to decide his order of orientation. At the end of history, the universal and homogeneous civilization perhaps displays increasingly ubiquitous and efficient forms of capture, however, the nomad's horizons are never defined by it. Zhuangzi also writes,

"When Hui Tzu was prime minister of Liang, Chuang Tzu set off to visit him. Someone said to Hui Tzu, "Chuang Tzu is coming because he wants to replace you as prime minister!" With this Hui Tzu was filled with alarm and searched all over the state for three days and three nights trying to find Chuang Tzu. Chuang Tzu then came to see him and said, "In the south there is a bird called the Yuan-ch'u - I wonder if you've ever heard of it? The Yuan-ch'u rises up from the South Sea and flies to the North Sea, and it will rest on nothing but the Wu-t'ung tree, eat nothing but the fruit of the Lien, and drink only from springs of sweet water. Once there was an owl who had gotten hold of a half-rotten old rat, and as the Yuan-ch'u passed by, it raised its head, looked up at the Yuan-ch'u, and said, 'Shoo!' Now that you have this Liang state of yours, are you trying to shoo me?" (Chuang-Tzu, 2016, Book 17)

It is in this Taoist sense then that the nomad values and desires the natural capacity to traverse and survey all that nature may place before him, including both civilization and also the organic flow of
civilization's entropy at the same moment. Not giving over to the desire for others' desires means that one is freed to cultivate a personally crafted relationship with the vicissitudes of one's life, and also with the horizon of one's death. So the desire for "wandering like water" is at the same time perhaps a desire for the harmonization with the general movement of the Tao, through the cultivation of one's own personal Te, or inner nature.\(^9\) This means that the ability to live sovereignly in the contemporary world lies less in the traditional definition of the physical movement of the body itself, or to live as some kind of inherently free and transcendental subject, but rather, it lies in the quality and type of relationships that one manages to create and establish with all that which lies around one. (Patton, 2000, p. 53) This is the same situation that obtains with one's quality of relationship to civilization itself, as it is the sovereign nomad with liberated desires who decides on the order of orientation and the state of exception in relation to civilization. In this sense then, there is little difference between the sovereignty of the nomad, and the political sovereignty of the civilization that the nomad passes through and perhaps returns to. The difference is fundamentally a matter of degree, and not of kind.

Nomadic movement also subverts civilization's panoptic power to facilitate and enable the self-regulation of one's own life in relation to the strictures of the Master-Desire. (Foucault, 1996) Nomadism is the flowing movement that is neither here nor there, neither this nor that thing, and because of the liberation of desires inherent in this form of movement, any self-regulation will be done on grounds that differ immensely from those that result from panopticism, imposed discipline from without, or of consistent co-linearity of one's desires with civilization's Master-Desire. This is because nomadism is not merely reactive resistance to certain given historical Apollonian compositions but an active and Dionysian form of creative power based primarily on the co-linearity of one's desires with the transcendent negation of the "given". (Deleuze & Guattari, 1983, p. 42) Unemployed negativity at

\(^9\)While Tao is the cosmic Way that cannot be named, Te is one's own natural place within it.
the end of history suddenly becomes employable again for the sovereign nomad, but never for the sake of history nor recognition, rather, it is simply for the sake of his primordial sovereignty, and for the innate quality of the overall narrative of his life. As Zhuangzi wrote, "...the Perfect Man has no self; the Holy Man has no merit; the Sage has no fame." (Chuang-Tzu, 2016, p. Book 1) Nomadism is an active form of power and is inherently transformative in the same fashion that the artist is inherently able to make new compositions in his chosen craft. By affirming one's own human nature (Te) within the widest of possible contexts (Tao), and by pursuing one's own activities from this, and engaging in social relationships of one's own choosing, the compositions that nomadism affords are thoroughly existential. (Patton, 2000, p. 62). By emulating the fundamental properties of the political sovereign through "wandering like water," the liberation of the desires of the nomad enacts a strikingly similar movement to Bataille's eroticism which results in communion through non-being and death of the self, and this organically comes to replace Apollo as the direct compositional mediator of Dionysian cosmic desire, thus achieving the form of intimacy pointed to by the myths, the rituals, the mystics, and the sages.

Nomadism is therefore, a form of the liberation of desire at the end of history; it is always active and affirmative, and its affirmative nature comes from the primacy placed on one's harmonization with the cosmic, and the elementary life processes of creation and destruction, at the expense of those derivative processes which seek to harness the former for its own ends. This harmonization, for Bataille, is sovereignty. It is, "...to combine the limitless movements of the universe with the limit that belongs to him." (Bataille, 1991, p. 70) The transcendence of the organization, commodification, and encoding of desire by way of a more fluid nomadic movement, which in turn reflects a more fundamental and liberated form of desire, is so precisely because the negation of civilization, or the rejection of the given, necessarily leads one toward a transgressive state, or a state of exception. The
yearning for transcendence, which defines the sacred as such, shows liberated forms of desire to be a transcendent kind of liminality, and the consequent re-integration of the nomad at a new status, with the the appropriation of his surpassing, affirms the sovereign and transformative essence of the nomadic mode of being. This is how the sovereign nomad comes to possess the capacity to determine his order of orientation.

In Plato's cave, the nascent philosopher must also first reject the given, that is, the shadows on the cave walls mistakenly taken by all to be reality; and he must then begin his own personal nomadic journey out of the cave and up into the solar light before he can begin to first recognize the sun and the outside world as the more tangible form of reality and possibility for living. Of course, the danger and great risk lies upon his return to the cave, when his knowledge of what lies outside, and his ability to recognize it as a genuine way of living, renders his his new relationship to his peers and social group still in the cave a possibility for his own destruction. Plato writes, “Men would say of him that up he went and down he came without his eyes; and that it was better not even to think of ascending; and if any one tried to loose another and lead him up to the light, let them only catch the offender, and they would put him to death.” (Plato, 2008, p. 232)

Like Zhuangzi, Plato and Bataille, the existential nomad may well come to possess the ability to reflect the solar ray in his life's journey, and also dwell in harmony with the Dionysian impulses of cosmic desire, but he must do this when re-integrated within the boundaries of civilization(s) all the same. Though Crow has the capacity to create the world, bring light and fire and fresh water, create human beings and teach them the principles of culture, he still seeks merely to eat without working himself. Bataille understood this and took an extreme philosophical and literary interest in the “shadows on the cave walls” in his later works. His preoccupation with fiction, literature, art, comedy and the grotesque all speak to his understanding that though one may well be able to reject the cultural
given through a transgressive and philosophically nomadic life, that same life takes place already enmeshed in pre-hermeneutic narratives, stories, and social relationships. (Ricoeur, 1984) Though we may know of the sun, we also still must return live amongst humanity and the shadows of the cave all the same.

As mentioned earlier, Deleuze and Guattari emphasize the qualities of resistance inherent in nomadism, terming nomadism "the War-Machine." (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 351) But this view of culture-bound political resistance is a limited one. The nomad becomes so by rejection of the given but more importantly, by his desires' own transcendence, and hence the transcendence of his former identity. Resistance is perhaps only a very preliminary starting point on the journey toward sovereignty. There is also a nomadic life to be fashioned and lived afterward, one that necessarily takes place "in the cave" and within the parameters of Schmitt's Nomos of the Earth so to speak, even if the nomad is able to be physically nomadic and move from civilization to civilization due to the globalized nature of existential conditions of the end of history. Although the nomad must subsist within a given social order, his own position is not necessarily antagonistic with respect to civilization, but rather, at first transgressive and thereafter, always sovereignty Strategic. (de Certeau, 1997) After all, if one manages to live with liberated desires, then the vagaries of civilization don't tend to present themselves as those of a despot. Furthermore, though the nomadic life is based around existential transcendence in a similar fashion to the manner that the sacred transcends profane life, the desire for harmonization with what is constant over the desire for others' desires is merely a way to live one's life with liberated desires, and really nothing more. It will not necessarily transform the world, because liberated desires hold no obvious benefit for civilization and in fact most likely do nothing to further its ends. But of course, its transformative power may also come to extend outward beyond the life of just one person to touch those of many, as history attests to many such examples of this.
I have argued here that the liberated form of desire that comes from transgressive nomadism appropriates the power to transform one's own life. It embodies the moving beyond of inherited categories, names, language, value, knowledge of what is good and useful for us, and what is evil and of no use. It is simply just this movement, and this beyond-ness, and an echo of the solar flow from which it comes and whose essence it borrows for only a short time.

"One of Robber Chih's followers once asked Chih, "Does the thief too have a Way?" Chih replied, "How could he get anywhere if he didn't have a Way? Making shrewd guesses as to how much booty is stashed away in the room is sageliness; being the first one in is bravery; being the last one out is righteousness; knowing whether the job can be pulled off or not is wisdom; dividing up the loot fairly is benevolence. No one in the world ever succeeded in becoming a great thief if he didn't have all five!" From this we can see that the good man must acquire the Way of the sage before he can distinguish himself, and Robber Chih must acquire the Way of the sage before he can practice his profession. But good men in the world are few and bad men many, so in fact the sage brings little benefit to the world, but much harm. Thus it is said, "When the lips are gone, the teeth are cold; when the wine of Lu is thin, Han-tan is besieged." And when the sage is born, the great thief appears. Cudgel and cane the sages and let the thieves and bandits go their way; then the world will at last be well ordered!...He who steals a belt buckle pays with his life; he who steals a state gets to be a feudal lord—and we all know that benevolence and righteousness are to be found at the gates of the feudal lords...Destroy- and cut to pieces the curve and plumb line, throw away the compass and square, shackle the fingers of Artisan Ch'ui, and for the first time the people of the world will possess real skill. Thus it is said, "Great skill is like clumsiness." Put a stop to the ways of Tseng and Shih, gag the mouths of Yang and Mo, wipe out and reject benevolence and righteousness, and for the first time the Virtue of the world will reach the state of Mysterious Leveling."" (Chuang-Tzu, 2016, Book 9)
The Liberation of Desire and the End of History

For Deleuze and Guattari, the possibility for fascism and enslavement is also explicable in terms of desire. Desire is always enmeshed within contemporary molecular political assemblages which come to shape the way one comes to see the world and to interact with it. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 215) “At one point in Anti-Oedipus, they suggest that the question of desire's involvement in its own involuntary servitude is 'the fundamental problem of political philosophy'.” (Patton, 2000, p. 69) The territorialization of desire within the social matrix takes on a fascistic nature inasmuch as it is a strategic manipulation of the co-linearity of one's own desire with the trajectory of civilization's Master-Desire, and of desire's own commodification within the same matrix. The deterritorialization of desire through “wandering like water” evinces the possibilities for creative desire to decode and recode, escape and transgress, navigate, cross boundaries limits and borders, to plot one's course, to “shackle the fingers of Artisan Ch'ui,” and to make one's own way. The movement of the nomad, his “line of flight,” his transformation of striated space into smooth space is already the nascent state of deterritorialization. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) Following Kojève and Bataille, we can see that desire is always an active constituting force. It is positive and productive, revolutionary by nature, and needs to be directed at that which will then come to shape one's own nature. If one's subjectivity is a result of the connections and intensities established by desire, then just as in advertising, creativity itself becomes key to how one “uses” desire, rather than to be used through it.

“Like desire, art in its pure form exists in a state of permanent exile, a nomadic state which resists the territorialisation of particular styles, genres or modes of capture. Both art and desire...have an affinity with those states that carry the potential for change or metamorphosis... Activities or forms of engagement with the world and with other bodies, which are inseparable from action upon the action of others, are the means by which we can begin to bring about increase in our own desire.” (Patton, 2000, p. 73 & 76)
Desire is a form of organic becoming. It embodies the establishment and maintenance of communion and self-transcendence, of fields of relations with others, and also the possibilities inherent in “Becoming-Other” than what one currently is. (Kojève, 2003, Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) The creativity of liberated desire seeks out the frontiers of present being as well as its historical conditions and impels us to surpass them. We surpass present being by embarking on lines of flight, or through the wandering movement of the nomad. The quality of our movement into the realm of possibility thus depends on our creativity, and on our courage to endure the inherently associated risks, and finally on our intelligence to overcome them. Human beings are generally molecular and not molar entities, but nomadism impacts both dimensions and here, becoming is truly an open field where liberated desires are the starting point for forging one's path both within and also beyond the contemporary social matrix. The subject, as an often incongruous multiplicity of divided and even opposed elements, can be or become animal, other, minority, majoritarian, slave, nomad, and many other aspects of self-hood at the same time. (Bataille, 1993) Social subjectivity is the coalescence of a series of connections intensities, narratives, stories and relationships. Sovereign subjectivity by contrast embodies a transgressive movement, and does not need to embody a unitary subject. Movements of sovereignty put together through space and over time can of course come together to form a coherent narrative, or a way of life. But this is done in spite of a divided and incongruous subjectivity, and it is always a task that must be taken up again and again, there at the margins of the social matrix, at the “the foot of the pyramid,” and at the frontiers of our lives. This is why the liberation of desire becomes both the necessary and the sufficient precondition for the undertaking of a sovereign life at the end of history.

The liberation of desire is a critical form of transcendent freedom made requisite due in the first instance, to mankind's negation of nature at the dawn of civilization.

“In contrast to the traditional concepts of negative and positive freedom, critical freedom thus concerns those moments in a life after which one is
no longer the same person. It is the freedom to transgress the limits of what one is presently capable of being or doing, rather than just the freedom to be or do those things. In the course of a life, individuals make choices which may significantly affect the range, nature or course of their future actions: the decision to become a parent, to embark upon one particular career or course of study, or to leave one's country of birth and live in another culture, are all cases of significant action upon one's future actions. To the extent that these events may have the effect of opening up certain paths and closing off others, and to the extent that the individual's capacities to affect and be affected will change as a result, they are possible occasions of 'becoming' in Deleuze and Guattari's sense of the term. They are limits beyond which an individual's desires, preferences or goals may be irrevocably changed. It is no objection to point out that all moments in a life carry this potential, since for Deleuze and Guattari the possibility of becoming-other is indeed present at every moment. It is realised in those moments when a qualitatively different kind of transition is involved." (Patton, 2000, p. 85)

The universal and homogeneous form of the social matrix at the end of history implies a functioning technocracy and bureaucracy which function as apparatuses of regulation, categorization, and territorialization through our own desires. These functions go beyond the traditional or feudal form of the nation-state which existed primarily for the administrative order of orientation, and corresponding necessary military expenditure. (Schmitt, 2006) Together with contemporary economic commodification of desire, they also function to reterritorialize deterritorialized flows. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) This is the state of exception as it exists in physical space: martial law, the refugee camp, the prison, the rogue state, the criminal gang, and the terrorist group. (Agamben 1998) Therefore, the sovereign life must supplant the functions of the state by declaring the state of exception for itself. This declaration allows for the occurrence of nomadism in the first instance, and for it to be an actualized potential for a kind of existential revolutionary movement, of thinking, being, living, and desiring, without it actually being revolutionary. It does this by replacing the fetishized commodification of desire for one's own movement, the requirement of trading labor for capital with one's own preferred means of securing the reproduction of material life, the social attempts to
circumscribe one's eroticism with one's own transcendent expression of the erotic life. This kind of exertion of the will, this transgressive irruption and overflow of the excesses of desire enable nomadism to become the gateway to a sovereign life, as it is by its very nature a fundamental transcendence of molecular forms of social capture and encoding. “Sovereignty only reigns over what it is capable of interiorizing, of appropriating locally.” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 360) Capture and the administration of space is the raison d’être of state sovereignty. (Schmitt, 2006) The two world wars likewise played a crucial role in the globalized spatial extension of the universal and homogeneous civilization characterizing the end of history. (Kojève, 2003, p. 160) In relation to this form of “capture,” the nomad interiorizes and projects his own shifting and dynamic life-space, the movement which in time and over space comes to define his own forms of nomadism; and thereby moves freely across borders; he subsists locally, but creatively redefines what properly constitutes the local in terms of his reconfigured identity as the nomad, and by the topography of his general movement. In this sense, the nomad is the echo of the sun, and as such, comes to be a life-artist.

The story of Robber Chih perhaps best shows that the crucial issue is perhaps not so much what one does with one's life, as how one does it. Harmonization with that which is constant is the crux of both Zhuangzi and Bataille's particular philosophical perspectives, which though separated by millenia, geography, and cultures, also manage to coalesce on this fundamental point. While the essential function of civilization is capture, the essential function of the nomad is movement. As has been argued, this isn't some form of resistance so much as it nicely illustrates the cross-purposes of both, and the transcendent and revolutionary nature of desire as the “negation of the given.” (Bataille, 1993) The desires of the state form, the “given” as the form of the Master-Desire, the growth of the means of production, is transcended by the nomad in just the same way as Shun relinquishes the kingdom to live in the mountains, or as the turtle prefers to drags its tail through the mud, or again as
the Yuan-Ch'u looks down at the owl. Nomadism as the liberation of desire can always and at any time be a combination of physical, intellectual or spiritually transgressive movement. The nomad simply “wanders like water,” and thereby emulates the sovereign and also the emulates multi-national flows of capital itself; as it is primarily capital which serves to form the rationale of the Master-Desire as it comes to be regulated by the state. The nomad thus replaces Apollo as the composer of forms gaining sustenance from the general Dionysian movement as an existential flow, like water, over and through borders; as borders are always fictions, and like the flickering shadows on the wall of Plato's cave.

“It is the nature of water that if it is not mixed with other things, it will be clear, and if nothing stirs it, it will be level. But if it is dammed and hemmed in and not allowed to flow, then, too, it will cease to be clear. As such, it is a symbol of Heavenly Virtue. So it is said, To be pure, clean, and mixed with nothing; still, unified, and unchanging; limpid and inactive; moving with the workings of Heaven - this is the way to care for the spirit.” (Chuang-Tzu, 2016, Book 15)

Movement and possibility beyond the given in this sense bestow a kind of existential stillness and clarity inasmuch as a liberated desire does not respond to the shifting cultural dynamics of restricted flows. The inherited and shared boundaries and prohibitions that mark social life can perhaps never completely fulfill humanity's primal desire for transcendence. However, the primal and revolutionary nomadic movement as a life-world enables the kind of deep creativity that can fashion a human life as a work of one's own artistry. This shows the will to harmony with the great Taoist, Dionysian, and solar processes that move and shape heaven and earth. The liberation of desire at the end of history thus sees the nomad emulate the solar ray in this way, and thereby come to chart his own inevitable course toward the sea.
"The point is, art is something subversive. It's something that should not be free. Art and liberty, like the fire of Prometheus, are things one must steal, to be used against the established order. Once art becomes official and open to everyone, then it becomes the new academicism...If art is ever given the keys to the city, it will be because it's been so watered down, rendered impotent, that it's not worth fighting for...And why did Plato say poets should be chased out of the republic? Precisely because every poet and every artist is an anti-social being. He's not that way because he wants to be; he can't be any other way. Of course the state has the right to chase him away-- from its point of view-- and if he is really an artist it is in his nature not to want to be admitted, because if he is admitted it can only mean he is doing something which is understood, approved, and therefore old hat-- worthless. Anything new, anything worth doing, can't be recognized. People just don't have that much vision. So this business about defending and freeing culture is absurd. One can defend culture in a broad, general sense, if you mean by that heritage of the past, but the right to free expression is something one seizes, not something one is given...There is absolute opposition between the creator and the state. So there's only one tactic for the state-- kill the seers. If the idea of society is to dominate the idea of the individual, the individual must perish. Furthermore, there wouldn't be such a thing as a seer if there weren't a state trying to suppress him. It's only at that moment, under that pressure, that he becomes one. People reach the status of artist only after crossing the maximum number of barriers. So the arts should be discouraged, not encouraged." ~ Pablo Picasso

The concept of the nomad is not specifically derived from Deleuze and Guattari's "Treatise on Nomadology – The War Machine" in their work, A Thousand Plateaus. But the general concept is inspired by their philosophical developments, and they also share key elements in common. It is developed in this essay as an extension of Bataille's concern for the philosophical problem of Sovereignty in the final volume of his Accursed Share. References to Zhuangzi's Taoist philosophical anecdotes which infuse the text also serve to illustrate that Bataille was working on timeless philosophical problems that extend beyond those considered typical to the Western tradition. This is not to unfairly denigrate the Western tradition of philosophy, but it is to point out that some issues which characterize existential philosophy are timeless in nature and necessarily transcend human
cultures and historical periods, and that they must be taken up again and again by each succeeding generation of thinkers and writers. Like Deleuze and Guattari, both Bataille and Zhuangzi see the ultimate "...purpose and value of philosophy as external to the discipline of philosophy." (Patton, 2000, p. 109) In this essay, I have read the kinds of treatment that Bataille gives to the interrelated philosophical problems of economics, eroticism, and sovereignty, and some of their implications in the *Accursed Share* in a certain way. And this particular hermeneutic project was done so as to highlight the multi-faceted nature for lived possibilities and for new relationships to life, to others, to civilization and even to the earth. These possibilities are all philosophical extensions of Bataille's work. But this is only one reading, and of course there can be many others.

The quote by Picasso was included here as he illustrates the existential necessity for the avoidance of social capture through autonomous nomadic movements over frontiers, barriers and boundaries; through a kind of "wandering like water" as has been argued for in this essay. Here, desire is the essential element in the form of the desire for the nomadic life; the life of the free-speaking artist in Picasso's case, which must always come to supplant the more primitive desire for recognition and the desire for the others' desires, that is, the co-alignment with contemporary civilization's Master-Desire. Nomadism turns the striated and encoded social spaces of its wanderings into the smooth and decoded space of the earth itself. (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. xiii) This is a kind of stolen space, and as such it is a "crooked path" to walk as Zhuangzi has put the matter. The essay has perhaps unfairly painted one's socially constructed identity as the source of desire's enslavement that must be overcome. As I have argued however, the danger in fact lies with our own desires, and the degree to which they are or are not satisfied with the social construction of our lives. Kojève taught that in the first instance, enslavement is always the product of our desires, and how they are directed. (Kojève, 2003) The will to "wandering like water," whether it be of intellectual, spiritual, religious, philosophical, economic, or
physical proportions is a form of desire's liberation, and that is the thesis of this essay. The earth is in this way a kind of holistic general economy of the nomad's “homeland,” and like Zhuangzi pointed out, and also like Bataille's vision of the sun, the nomad prioritizes the paths that one makes by walking on them, rather than the points at which the pathways converge and end. “In striated space, one closes off a surface and "allocates" it according to determinate intervals, assigned breaks; in the smooth, one "distributes" oneself in an open space, according to frequencies and in the course of one's crossings (logos and nomos).” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 481). In this way, the nomad comes to use the “homeland” for the support for his existence, in much the same way that the pastoralist tribes would use the earth, their flock, and also their inherent mobility for their own strategic advantage.

“O THOU who preferrest the dull life of the town to wide, free solitude,
dost thou despise nomadic tents because they are light, not heavy like houses of stone and lime?
If only thou knewest the desert's secret!
But ignorance is the cause of all evil.
If thou couldst but awake in the dawning Sahara and set forth on this carpet of pearls,
where flowers of all colors shower delight and perfume on our way.
We breath an air that lengthens life,
because it ne'er blew on the garbage of towns!
If at dawn, after the night's dew,
 thou wouldst from a high point look into the distance,
 thou wouldst see on the measureless horizon fallow beasts grazing on scented meadows.
At a moment like this all care would leave thee and rest would enter thy restless heart.”

(Amir Abd al-Qadir, 1976)
The nomad as the liminal state of exception personified thus turns all striated space into smooth space by virtue of his wandering, and he thereby enacts his own sovereign movement of *reterritorialization*. The function of civilization is capture, and of gaining support for the Master-Desire. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 448) The commodification of desire through social structures such as advertising, and the selling of one's labor are two of the most ubiquitous and effective modes of desire's capture. Nomadic movement by contrast, tends to follow the organic laws of general thermodynamic energy flow. It is to emulate the solar energy directly by sovereignly claiming all terrestrial space as being ultimately unmarked "smooth space." In this sense, Bataille's works, *The Zhuangzi*, and this present essay are all forms of ethical philosophy.

The claiming of the "state of exception," is the beginning point of the nomadic journey. After all, the nomad is, "...of another species, another nature, another origin than the state apparatus." (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 352) The kind of sovereignty inherent in this form of existence always entails risk for the nomad as it is first and foremost a sovereignly creative line of flight. "It is a vital concern of every state not only to vanquish nomadism but to control migrations and, more generally, to establish a zone of rights over an entire 'exterior'..." (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 385) This risk is there precisely because the nomad is existentially made free to "wander like water," embody the solar flow and also reflect the nature of the eroticism of Bataille's *Accursed Share*; both within and outside of of the frontiers marked by civilization. It is his capacity for movement that marks the nomad as such. And in an organic way, the nomad even comes to behave in a way that is completely synchronous with the movement of capital itself. The nomad functions within the parameters of a social and historical life, but at the same time, the nomad is always a product of the earth, and in its *natural state*, the nomadic life is completely external and barely related to the political and economic forms of the social matrix characterizing the end of history. This particular aspect of "Becoming-Animal" as a way of
living within but also transcending the political is due to the nature and directedness of the nomad’s desires. (Goh, 2009, p. 38) But this is also the reason that the social matrix came to exist in the first place.

As mentioned earlier, the relationship between the two forms of life outlined here, those of the general and the restricted economies, is perhaps best embodied in the form of the Great Wall of China. It involves the competition between forms of capture, movement, and the administration of space, of the logos and the nomos, and of the competing forms of sovereignty related to the order of orientation. (Schmitt, 2006). By the sovereign reorientation and liberation of one’s desires, one puts oneself in direct competition with the social matrix at the end of history. Zhuangzi also wrote that one must get things right with oneself before one is concerned with what the tyrant is doing. And it is in this sense that liberated desire then must finally become one’s own narrative, be always sensitive to modes of existential capture, and come to subsist alongside the eminently Dionysian source of creativity for the canvas that is one’s life.
References


Autobiography

The author is a native of France who has been living abroad for much of his life. He has worked as a professional musician in the USA and China and has traveled throughout Europe, North America and Asia extensively. He lives with his wife in the south of France where he devotes his time to reading, writing poetry, fiction and non-fiction, as well as painting and puttering around with his latest music software.