

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.