

The Continuous Body: Emergence, Authority and Expiation in the Œuvre of Georges Bataille

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Abstract

The thesis re-evaluates Bataille's base materialism via four interconnected and highly original approaches to a 'debased metaphysics' of thought and being's movement. Chapter One shows how this logic has an impact on the way the morphic operates, with implications that form the instant as an autonomous, auto-generative body within a continuous process of being. This atemporality creates a continuous body where the body's continuous aspect establishes both an atemporal instant and eternal version of time. Chapter Two develops how the instantaneous aspect of the body's shape emerges from a generative principle of erotic movement, and is experienced as system, namely atheology, whereas its perpetual or continuous aspect is this system's collapse, which conditions its prior determinacy as form. As will be shown, this dynamic enables new forms of difference to occur which are not relative, the strategic importance of which are developed in Chapter Three. This shows how determinacy/collapse are incorporated into the movement of a body in relation to its parts. Embodied atheology's gestural poesis is substitution of a system's part for its determined whole, empowering the body part as an acephalic operator. This uncovers the purpose of difference's autonomy, which instead of emphasising general ontological non-meaning, achieves a new type of total metaphysical definition that is exchangeable for the inessentiality of the autonomous body part. Substitution's dynamic means the systematic body auto-invaginates and leaves definition's articulation to the autonomy of the vagina itself. The authority required to determine being has produced autonomy as an ancillary part of this determinacy. Additionally, authority required to determine being also expiates itself. Chapter Four shows how this works by bringing in acephalia as a meditative and shamanic strategy for alteration within being, excusing the obligation of material thought to behave in a materially determined way by making the link between excretion as an expiatory practice, and an eroticised way of being wholly other, either as sound, or animal alteration. The thesis sets up the continuous body as a new conception of being, a system of being, its practice, and a more radical notion of expiation as shape-shifting as ontic transfer, that, put together, locates an ensembled context for a debased metaphysical shamanic anarchism.

Key words: materialism, continuity, emergence, form, generative, movement, authority, difference, autonomy, vagina, thought, shape, dynamic, animal, determinacy, alteration.

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No betrayal of the tearing and flashes found at the summit will seem more hateful than the simulated deliriums of art. Truly one must become *the victim of one's own laws*, and if it turns out that destiny demands one's loss of self— because insanity and death have planned a magnificent feast— then love of destiny and life itself requires that one commits the crime of *authority*, that one must *expiate*.¹

Georges Bataille



Preface

The Continuous Body presents itself from within an apparent dichotomy between animal and erotic continuity, and the conscious and temporally-mediated consideration of the same – a position that Bataille considers to be not only discontinuous, but a discontinuity that is subordinate to the elsewhere values of productive purpose, that is, the assemblage and production of meaning. By concentrating on a sensual rather than an analytic materiality, and especially by directing its locus of operation at the auditory – as a situated environment in place of recognition – the thesis sets out a resolution where this position is no longer dichotomous, and, instead, there is a strange symbiosis between being's definition in the moment, and its continuous expression as energy expenditure. In Bataille's universal envisioning, this symbiosis is evidenced through presentation of a *dynamic* that, at a point of being's realisation, causes its summation of authority and power to become distributed to its marginal parts, a dynamic that the thesis proposes is an *invagination* of the notion of the total at the point of its totality. The Continuous Body is therefore offered not as a dichotomy but a perpetually dynamic system.

This system – atheology – is presented by four chapters which undertake the following tasks:

Chapter One develops a methodology for its theoretical inception from a revaluation of the pertinence of Bataille's base materialism as a constructive political substantivity... Concept, rather than being denigrated, is itself materialised, or, at the very least, is comparative in its operative power to common measures that it shares with more conventional material, like, flesh, sewing machines, genitalia, organs, mathematical questions, juridical forms and so forth. Instead of a hierarchical structure of dominion *wielded* by being...ideality, law *and* concept now place themselves as a *shape* of material, specifically: the form of a sphere. The chapter explains that material form is critical to developing a politically democratic syntax for discussing Bataille's systematicity because it is *through* form that *sacrifice* achieves its correct operative role, that is to say, that sacrifice's proper function is

to *affirm* form and, with it, definition, *as things*, before *destroying* form, and, with it, definition, in a move that is ultimately a phase change of matter— a redistribution of matter to other materially-political expressions, rather than an annihilation or negation of matter. Sacrifice moves the terms of the question of systematicity away from the Hegelian dialectical negation and into a perpetual (and non-sublating) dynamic of the *thingness* of material form's non-visual affirmation-and-destruction as perpetual alteration.

Chapter Two delineates a theory of atheology where determinacy is systematically expressed by materiality; not only that, but systematicity *replaces* the determined object of objectivity and its thingness. All phenomena and noumena ((that is) non-phenomenal extra-materiality) is accounted for in a complex arrangement of spheres and their independent movements through a grid of systematicity. The spheres themselves are *substantively miraculous*— meaning, that they consist of faith, that is to say, non-provable occurrence.

The chapter develops the motions of the spheres in three registers - the conceptual, which collapses into the tier below, which is, the geometrical aspect of form. This tier – in turn – collapses under the weight of a *political* refusal of negative eternity, a condition located at the interior of one of the spheres. It leaves behind a spectacular image of the impossible that is compenetration of the two spheres of the negative and – now– positive miracles. This second collapse is into a lower concrete tier of total aggregation, where base materialism becomes fully operative, and Bataille's "theory" starts to matter. It matters in the way that the spheres invoke difference in a manner that is no longer *being* as different *from*, but being as *intrinsically* different. This tier no longer operates according to a visual paradigm of recognising difference, which has been... left behind as a discarded image of ocularity that Bataille describes as spectacle. What now matters, is, *contagious intimacy*, a non-visual sense of making-present and, indeed, immanent making-sense, or... mattering in the aggregate tier.

Chapter Three sets itself the task of transversing the space of atheology's embodiment in a gestural move where the partial is swapped for the total as a *ritual* way of creating and defining onto-political being. Atheology emerges from the enactment of this gesture as its ritual form is traced from

its dogmatic epistemology in the work of Thomas Aquinas, through its expression as Freudian projection – where the unconscious becomes manifest in the fetish object in a way that empowers the part with total affect. The fetish leads to a pathology of the unknowable, and Hans Bellmer's morphologically-deranged principle of vaginal extraversion. Here the move through the vaginal aperture is that which takes the unseen and unknowable element of the interior of consciousness to an immanent and genital image of ontic differencing. *The vagina* as an agential event of total interiority composes Bataille's own version of the gestural poiesis of atheology, which is proposed *volcanically*, as the eruption/irruption of an exchanged context that rushes as if ecstatically through a volcanic rim rather than (or not restricted to) a vaginal aperture. The aperture (whether, volcanic or vaginal) is the apex determinant in Bataille's atheological poise – and, as such, can be described as and by a figure of trajectory, with which the chapter concludes.

Chapter Four prepares an answer to the question, how can being human not be subordinate to the authority of the object of being human, its form of consciousness? Expiation answers, *it cannot*. The evidence that expiation is occurring in Bataille means that determinable systematicity is also taking place. Expiation countermands authority's impurity with its unchannelling of attentive sensibility: hearing and being sonically-material as an alteration toward the outside of being and thought's definition. It does this by following the anti-ocular subcurrent of recognition's refusal into its sensual logical alternative: the auditory. While not ignoring the potential for auditory hallucinations as noumenally wholly other, the chapter focusses on the offer that hearing makes to listening: that is, non-conscious sensibility, which the chapter argues is a question of the expulsion of conscious being through – and from – its own form of definition, as if a form of attention were... faeces or menstrual blood, which, now, are acoustic or acousmatic unchannelling– that is, sound becoming source-less, in its sensual audition. The chapter argues that, present in Bataille, is a method of becoming altered, of becoming wholly other that is situated in Bataille's preoccupation with the tableau found in the cave at Lascaux, where, it is argued, human consciousness becomes radically and ontically altered by becoming the *quack of a duck*.

To summarize:

The continuous body as *Method*: The thesis plays into definition, resolving the apparent dichotomy between continuous expenditure and discontinuous consciousness by locating a new role for atemporal perpetuity in the liberated substantive momentary. Bataille's affirmative destruction of that-which-is-the-thing accommodates a global theory of non-essentiality and difference in a singular shape. This is the thing affirmed and destroyed as a thing, rather than ...being ...recognised.

The continuous body of *Emergence*: this describes the material creativity of the generative function, especially the non-oppositional pair, which creates shape in a way that does not rely on a binary of production and/or productivity.

The continuous body of *Authority*: *complementary* to which is transgression: both defining an outline of human being. These mark how shape manifests in making the human experience. Shape marks the human not as objective, but as systematic.

The continuous body of *Expiation*: a response to the crime of authority that the thesis accuses Bataille of committing in systematically defining being. Bataille's criminal other offers evidence of the crime's expiation by wholly othering.

Chapters suggested as image, and reminder of what the chapters will do:

In Chapter 1 an image of **Sacrifice**. This chapter Prepares a syntax for a new way of thinking materially.

In Chapter 2 **an image of miracles**. This chapter Proposes systematicity in place of objectivity.

In Chapter 3 an image of **the vagina**. This chapter Traces atheology's context by concentrating on the embodied gesture of its emergent poesis: from epistemology, through psychopathology to the empowered part of the invaginate sensual.

In Chapter 4: an image of a **duck's quack**. This chapter Develops expiation as definition moving through and beyond itself. It concentrates on Bataille's anti-ocular sensibility: auditory phenomena *and* noumena as a pathology of wholly othering, or shamanic ontological alteration.

Consequences:

Because Bataille is prepared to commit the crime of authority, he is able to realise the form of his system from within the generative process. This realisation has a major consequence: the moment of realisation, which is the sovereign form of maximum impurity within Bataille's sacred cosmogony, is an apotheosis of stipulatory political authority and power. Because Bataille's system is a shape in perpetual motion – it is ...a continuous body – its summit of ontic realisation of systematic form becomes subject to its own distributive dynamic; or, it auto-invaginates, and political authority is devolved to its component parts and matter returns – empowered – to its generativity, as intrinsic and autonomous difference. The thesis, therefore, understands an entirely new Bataillean theory that realises atheology and yet escapes phallogentric logic, and with it, the wagging of God's vestigial tail.

Introduction

In the essence of humanness, a fierce impulse seeks autonomy, the freedom to be.

Georges Bataille, "Preface," *On Nietzsche*, xxi

The Continuous Body is an ontopolitical consideration of Bataille's work. The term defines a shared problematic between the experience of form imposed on being and the action of imposition itself, particularly the idea that the power exercised in imposition is that reinforcing the political dominion of the external on being's experience, and especially when the imposition of this form causes being to be experienced as discontinuous. In this introduction I will set out in broad terms what this entails. The supporting evidence from Bataille's work is provided in the footnotes. The research defines Bataille's sovereignty as a momentary consciousness whose momentariness is a condition of its being no longer subordinate to the production of a future outcome.¹ Momentariness in being, and autonomy in political economy are a conjoined concern.² The thesis proposes to resolve the antagonism Bataille identifies between an autonomous (from hierarchical power structures) or autarkic (a self-sufficient) empowered and therefore sovereign, momentary form, and the intellectual form of self that realises it, whose realisation of the momentary is contingent on, and therefore subordinate to, a temporally external perspective.³ This antimony resolves itself to a single pairing,

¹ "If I envision the *instant* in isolation from a thought that entangles the past and future of manageable things, the instant that is closed in one sense but that, in another, much more acute sense, opens itself up while denying that which limits separate beings, the instant alone is the sovereign being." *Unfinished System of Nonknowledge*, 187

² "If need be, it is possible to reduce the complexity of reaction to a constant pursuit of autonomy (or sovereignty). But this way of looking at things results in an abstract view, where the immediate abhorrence of, and half-physical disgust for nature— that is, nature as putrefaction— are given arbitrarily as the consequence of a calculation, of a presumed politics of autonomy. As a matter of fact, nothing proves that the struggle for autonomy is not, materially, the consequence of the disgust." *The Accursed Share Vols. II and III*, 84

³ "Human life is defeated because it serves as the head and reason of the universe. Insofar as it becomes that head and reason it accepts slavery. If it isn't free, existence becomes empty or neuter, and if it is free, it is a game. The earth, as long as it only engendered cataclysms, trees, and birds was a free universe; the fascination with liberty became dulled when the earth produced a being who demanded necessity as a law over the universe. Man nevertheless remained free to no longer respond to any necessity. He is free to resemble all that is not he in the universe. He can cast aside the idea that it is he or God who prevents everything else from being absurd." *The Sacred Conspiracy – Acephale 1st Year June 24 1936*

the struggle between the continuity of being, where Bataille sees a continuous movement of the unrealisable expenditure of material and thought, and discontinuous being, where Bataille puts the experiencing subject at the moment of embodied consciousness and ipseous self-realisation.⁴

Bataille's thought is seduced by an image of the animal form as immanently conscious, continuous and sometimes immersive enfleshment of being.⁵ The human-animal makes contact with its own animality, or its animal body, during erotic action where it becomes nonconscious of self.⁶ During erotic action the human-animal is a continuous body, in nonknowledge.⁷ By being as a continuous body, the human-animal aligns itself with the universal expenditure of energy (energy expenditure without recuperative gain or recompense) and it also inhabits momentariness sovereignly.⁸ Eroticism provides Bataille with identity between the momentary and the continuous. This identity is their shared basis of ontic liberation. However, although the erotic body is continuous

⁴ "I have been insisting on a concept that at first glance may have seemed inappropriate and unnecessarily philosophical, that of continuity of being as opposed to discontinuity of being. At the point we have now reached I insist again that without this concept the broader meaning of eroticism and the unity underlying its forms would escape us." See the whole of "Introduction" in, *Eroticism*, 11-25, especially 16

⁵ "The sense of continuity that we must attribute to animals no longer impressed itself on the mind unequivocally (the positing of distinct objects was in fact its negation). But it had derived new significance from the contrast it formed to the world of things. This continuity, which for the animal could not be distinguished from anything else, which was in it and for it the only possible mode of being, offered man all the fascination of the sacred world, as against the poverty of the profane tool (of the discontinuous object)." *Theory of Religion*, 35

⁶ "Eroticism is different from animal sexuality in that for a man aroused clear images surge up with the distinctness of objects; eroticism is the sexual activity of a conscious being. None the less its essence is never accessible through our consciousness." "De Sade and the Normal Man" in, *Eroticism*, 193-194

⁷ "The animal itself does have a subjective life but this life seems to be conferred upon it like an inert object, once and for all. Human eroticism differs from animal sexuality precisely in this, that it calls inner life into play. In human consciousness eroticism is that within man which calls his being in question. Animal sexuality does make for disequilibrium and this disequilibrium is a threat to life, but the animal does not know that. Nothing resembling a question takes shape within it." "Eroticism in Inner Experience" *Eroticism*, 29; "At the moment of conjunction the animal couple is not made up of two discontinuous beings drawing close together uniting in a current of momentary continuity: there is no real union; two individuals in the grip of violence brought together by the preordained reflexes of sexual intercourse share in a state of crisis in which both are beside themselves. Both creatures are simultaneously open to continuity. But nothing persists in their imperfect awareness. The crisis over, the discontinuity of each is intact." "Sexual Plethora and Death" *Eroticism*, 103

⁸ "For, in fact, the essence of the erotic world is not just the expenditure of energy, but also negation pushed to the extreme; or, if one prefers, the expenditure of energy is itself necessarily this negation." "Limitless Eroticism" *Accursed Share Vols II and III*, 179; "In reality, sovereign values, which alone justify nonproductive expenditures, are not necessarily conscious, and if they are conscious they are seldom affirmed." "Sovereignty within the Limits of Soviet Society" in, *Accursed Share Vols II and III*, 313

and free, as soon as it perceives its momentariness in an intellectual operation, it steps outside its moment, returns to discontinuity, and experiences itself as subordinate to being: as a consequence,

[F]rom whatever point of view we consider it, whether we see it as an unvarying form of man's wilful autonomy, or rather we insist on enquiring about the energy pressures that condition our decisions and activities at every stage, nothing interests us more than forcing out the secrets of eroticism.⁹

The un-radical, indentured 'is' has a principal difficulty with its metaphysical inaccessibility: the impossibility of determining oneself in the 'here-now.'¹⁰ Impossibility is compounded by an ontological systematic formation that replicates ontic inaccessibility in a zone of exclusion between the thesis and the antithesis. Hegelian systematicity has an intellectual prophylactic effect on an excluded middle of momentariness.¹¹

The thesis will propose a new theory of Bataille's systematicity which integrates Bataille's early texts under a rubric of a generative principle. The argument will show that these works, dating between 1928 and 1933, can assemble a context for a materialist systematicity to be formed, one that assimilates Bataille's 'obscene' fiction as material expression: a portrayal— through shapes profiled by his text, and particularly through the obscene shape— of concrete forms of 'debased metaphysical' tropes. Instead of ideas, Bataille intends these debased tropes to connect intelligibly to a materialist system by way of their shape.¹² This is a spherical shape that nonetheless only expresses its

⁹ "Preface to The History of Eroticism" *Accursed Share Vols II and III*, 16-17

¹⁰ See "Critique of Dogmatic Servitude (and of Mysticism)" *Inner Experience*, 3-5

¹¹ For Bataille's critique of Hegel's systematicity, see *Inner Experience*, 43; 80-81; and especially "Hegel" 108-111. Bataille's critique concentrates on the systematic purpose of Hegel's construction, arguing that the work of the project of negation (the work of antithesis) is a profane function that ignores sacred communication. For Bataille's comparison between his 'will to autonomy' and that of Hegel, see "The Thought of Nietzsche, That of Hegel, and My Own" in, *Accursed Share Vols II & III*, 368-371

¹² "Most materialists, even though they may have wanted to do away with all spiritual entities, ended up positing an order of things whose hierarchical relations mark it as specifically idealist. They situated dead matter at the summit of a conventional hierarchy of diverse facts, without perceiving that in this way they gave in to an obsession with the *ideal* form of matter, with a form that was closer than any other to what matter *should be*. Dead matter, the pure idea, and God in fact answer a question in the same way (in other words perfectly, and as flatly as the docile student in a classroom)—a question that can only be posed by philosophers, the question of the essence of things, precisely of the *idea* by which things become intelligible." "Materialism" in, *Visions of Excess*, 15

organisational strategy in its non-ideal iterations of difference.¹³ It is a shape that articulates difference as part of its intrinsic systematic proposition.¹⁴

Systematicity emerges in a very different way to that of Hegel, because of this integration of difference, and because of Bataille's morphological and dynamic strategy, shape becomes a way that exclusion is replaced in favour of both indeterminacy and impossibility. Impossibility is systematically included rather than excluded possibility. Bataille's system therefore forms through a total shape in an authoritative way; yet rather than this authority being apocryphal to Bataille's ontopolitical ambition of unsubordinated human being, Bataille accepts it within the system as a crime.¹⁵ The geometrical order of the rules that govern systematic shape are a crime of authority committed by being in its own definition. Within the experience of the systematic continuous body determinacy is therefore experienced as guilt. Systematic and embodied determinacy are the crime of authority—they occur as form and create a systematicity of erotic aesthetic consciousness; this crime of being's form is then expiated elsewhere in and through Bataille's work:

No betrayal of the tearing and flashes found at the summit will seem more hateful than the simulated deliriums of art. Truly one must become *the victim of one's own laws*, and if it turns out that destiny demands one's loss of self—because insanity and death have planned a magnificent feast—then love of destiny and life itself requires that one commits the crime of *authority*, that one must *expiate*.¹⁶

¹³ "Coincidences" *Story of the Eye*, 71-72

¹⁴ This argument builds a systematic dynamic from Simone's gestural placing of an eyeball (sphere of scopic knowledge) in her vagina, (sphere of indeterminacy/nonknowledge): "Now I stood up and, while Simone lay on her side, I drew her thighs apart, and found myself facing something I imagine I had been waiting for in the same way that a guillotine waits for a neck to slice. I even felt as if my eyes were bulging from my head, erectile with horror; in Simone's hairy vagina, I saw the wan blue eye of Marcelle, gazing at me through tears of urine. Streaks of come in the steaming hair helped give that dreamy vision a disastrous sadness. I held the thighs open while Simone was convulsed by the urinary spasm, and the burning urine streamed out from under the eye down to the thighs below." *Story of the Eye*, 84

¹⁵ For Bataille's discussion of impurity within his image of the sacred (as opposed to the Christian image of the sacred) see "Christianity" in *Eroticism*, 121; note that the sacred world is set against the poverty of the profane discontinuous object, *Theory of Religion*, 35; For Bataille's development of the discontinuous in a profane context (i.e., that of the tool or productive instrument), see "Chapter II: Humanity and the Development of the Profane World" in *Theory of Religion*, 27-34

¹⁶ "Aucune trahison de ce qu'il a découvert d'éclats et des déchirements au sommet ne lui paraîtra plus haïssable que les délires simulés de l'art. Car s'il est vrai qu'il doit devenir *la victime de ses propres lois*, s'il est vrai que l'accomplissement de son destin demande sa perte —en conséquence si la folie ou la morte ont à ses yeux l'éclat d'une fête—l'amour même de la vie et du destin veut qu'il comette tout d'abord en lui-même le crime d'*autorité* qu'il *expiera*." Georges Bataille, *Œuvres Complètes* vol. I, 549, my translation.

Because Bataille is prepared to commit the crime of authority, he is able to realise the form of his system from within the generative process. This realisation has two major consequences. Firstly, the moment of realisation, which— it is argued— is the moment of maximum impurity with Bataille’s sacred cosmogony, is an apotheosis of political stipulatory authority and power. Because Bataille’s system is a shape in perpetual motion— it is a continuous body— its summit of ontic realisation of systematic form becomes subject to a distributive dynamic, where its political authority is devolved to its component parts. This returns matter to an empowered material basis, as intrinsic autonomous difference.

This same empowered matter is that taken up by the generative principle and propelled into being. The dynamic of the total shape of the system is at once ontic in the direction towards its realisation, and, counter-dynamically, political, in its distributive agency. Things and their forms and the movement of these absorb conceptual tropes and manoeuvres because of a new political concern against ideality’s hierarchical dominion.¹⁷ The thesis argues that Bataille’s materialism follows a strategy of *monstration*, where the way that things, and forms, and movement occurs is not symbolic, because language and its role in the formation of consciousness are also implicated in a hegemonic control of states of determinacy.¹⁸ Instead of the intellectual operation, and discourse, Bataille shows examples of physical materials in his work and allows the inference of their functional or constructive significance to agglomerate towards systematic identity.

Chapter One, *Prohibition and Form*, prepares a form of context for material systematicity to occur by showing how Bataille’s conception of limitless expenditure of energy as a universal principle becomes altered in its human mode of expression, that is the erotic, by an obligatory reference to a limit against which it is limitless. The limit is the way that the function of the generative is understood by the perceiving consciousness. The way that the generative function

¹⁷ “Intimacy is the limit of clear consciousness; clear consciousness cannot clearly and distinctly know anything concerning intimacy, except for the modifications of things that are linked to it.” *Theory of Religion*, 99

¹⁸ “No doubt I have barely enunciated the words when the familiar images of horses and of butter present themselves, but they are solicited only in order to die. In which sense poetry is sacrifice, but of the most accessible sort. For if the use or abuse of words, to which the operations of words oblige us, takes place on the ideal, unreal level of language, the same is true of the sacrifice of words which is poetry.” *Inner Experience*, 136

operates production is circular and non-oppositional, yet this leads to a production of material being that is isolable moments, consciousness, apparent discontinuity of bodies and things. Rather than dwell on rending or tearing as a contingent artefact of discontinuity's separation from the plane of the continuous, Bataille directs attention to the material itself, authorising it to describe its own essence, substance and dynamism in a way that is immanently knowable, even if this knowability is apperception of nonknowledge. Because of materialism, this knowability is an object with which the subjective experience is coterminous. Bataille posits this object in order that it might be destroyed by sacrifice; he describes this innovation on terms of difference between his theory and that of Hegel, where:

The differences between the two representations appear to me to be easily reducible. The main difference concerns the conception that makes the destruction of the subject the condition – necessarily and realisable – of its adequation to the object. Doubtless this implies from the start a state of mind radically opposed to Hegelian “satisfaction,” but here the contraries coincide (they only coincide, and the opposition in which they coincide cannot this time be overcome by any synthesis: there is an identity of the particular being and the universal, and the universal is not truly given except in the mediation of particularity...) ¹⁹

Prohibition is a way of inscribing a total value of difference without separating the different from what was once ideal and is now metaphysically debased. This inscription does not depart its material base and so prohibition becomes the object-form of the isolable and realisable. This object, the irreducible element of authority, is a prohibited object, and so is a sacred impurity and a crime, yet one whose occurrence is consubstantial with humanity's perception of its existence. The chapter concludes by making a claim that the prohibited shape of the objective material thing has a logic, its morphology, and Bataille appropriates the rules of the logic of its shape to lend them, as a non-ideal structural geomathematics, to a calibration of a materialist-theistic system, that he calls atheology.

Chapter Two, *Emergence, Morphology, Difference* develops materialism as a theory of systematic totality, which generates its own form in a sovereign, autonomous way. It emphasises the sustained role of the generative principle in securing a theory of atheological emergence in a way that identifies it as an onto-political dynamic form. It does this by showing how the momentary and

¹⁹ Bataille is writing about a lecture series delivered by Alexandre Kojève, titled: *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, from which he takes much of his ideas and aspirations for systematicity. *Theory of Religion*, 123

inaccessible and its temporal contemplation can be treated as if they themselves are two obscene/impure forms that emerge from Bataille's unknowable, and continuous, image of the unconscious. The two forms that materialise do so with a mutual substance that is itself indeterminate.²⁰ Bataille takes this substance as a noumenal element from outside determinable thought; he treats the miraculous as if it were liquid materiality, and he introjects it into a hypothesis of material form.²¹ The two forms are then dynamically fluid in respect to each other, obeying certain physically-inspired laws, such as electromagnetic properties of polarity. At the same time, the systematic dynamic experiences disaggregation between its external and ocular element, the spectacle, and its internal differencing element, the intimate compenetration of substantial difference.²²

Chapter Three, *Embodied Atheology and its Gestural Poiesis*, examines a case for Bataille's atheological system's embodied technical poiesis, that is, it imagines how its principal trope of material equivalence works in the sense of a making of a substitutional gesture of concept for material part.²³ The gesture is assimilatory, in the sense that it is not original, and Bataille has sourced it from three parties. The chapter examines the case for its derivation from the work of Aquinas (by way of Anselm of Canterbury), from Freud and from Bellmer, before turning its attention to Bataille's own

²⁰ The source of this reading is Part One "What I Understand by Sovereignty (Theoretical Introduction)" of Volume Three: Sovereignty of *The Accursed Share*. It comprises section 5 of Chapter One: Knowledge of Sovereignty and is titled "The Equivalence of the Negative Miracle (Death) and the Positive Miracle (Final Considerations on Method)" *Accursed Share Vols. II & III*, 207-211

²¹ This part of the argument conflates the substance of the miraculous, from *Accursed Share Vols. II & III*, 198, with Bataille's treatment of the dynamic of other noumenal and/or continuous substances from Stewart Kendall's translation of *Inner Experience*, 196

²² "Intimacy is the limit of clear consciousness; clear consciousness cannot clearly and distinctly know anything concerning intimacy, except for the modifications of things that are linked to it." *Theory of Religion*, 99; For Bataille's original consideration of compenetration, see *Guilty* (Kendall translation), 130

²³ The substitution of a burst of laughter or an erection for a metaphysical/cosmological systematic entirety: "What is decisive in the return of the global effect to the limited effects, then of the limited effects to the global effect, is that the vanishing global Concept cannot be envisioned independently of its effect any more than a similarly vanishing concept can have a burst of laughter or an erection as an effect." "Aphorisms for the 'System'" *Unfinished System of Nonknowledge*, 182

gesture.²⁴ The thesis makes its case by identifying the same substitutive gesture in each theorist.²⁵ The substitutive gesture builds atheology's poiesis within a different or monstrous body in a way that empowers the bodies' parts as part of atheology's constructive strategy: eventually monstrating its total ontopolitical systemic form as a continuously invaginating body. This tracks the morphology of the atheological system through the wound as the horizon of God;²⁶ through the genital sphere of immanence;²⁷ and through Bataille's fictional character Madame Edwarda.²⁸

Chapter Four, *Expiation: Acephalic Audition*, returns to the context of authority's presence in terms of its companion occurrence of expiation. Bataille associates himself with Blanchot's declaration that authority must expiate itself; this chapter makes the case that only through the latter's presence can authority emerge in its impure and devolved way, rather than in a hegemonic or stipulatory way.²⁹ It does this by making the connection evident between Bataille's excretory theory and Caillois' ridding of the body of inassimilable elements.³⁰ This is how Bataille's debased metaphysics deals with philosophy's waste elements, leaving atheology as a non-stipulatory and

²⁴ Works considered: G. Bataille notes to the manuscript of "The Little One" in, *Louis XXX: The Little One and The Tomb of Louis XXX* Translated and with commentary by Stuart Kendall (London: Equus Press, 2013); Anselm of Canterbury (1926 [..]) *Proslogium; Monologium; An Appendix In Behalf of the Fool by Gaunilo; and Cur Deus Homo*. Translated by Sidney Norton Deane, B.A. (Chicago: The Open Court Publishing Company). https://www.ccel.org/ccel/anselm/basic_works.i.html; Thomas Aquinas (1485[1265-1274]). *Summa Theologica*. Christian Classics Ethereal Library. [ccel.org](http://www.ccel.org); Sigmund Freud, "Fetishism", "Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality"; "UNSUITABLE SUBSTITUTES FOR THE SEXUAL OBJECT-FETISHISM"; "Screen Memories" in, *Freud: Complete Works*; Hans Bellmer, (2004 [1956]). *Little Anatomy of the Physical Unconscious, or The Anatomy of the Image*. Translated by Jon Graham. (Waterbury Centre, VT: Dominion Press).

²⁵ The gesture is always part for whole substitution: in Aquinas is substitutional atonement; in Freud it is projection; in Bellmer it is the exchange of the unknown for the body part.

²⁶ *Inner Experience*, 103-104

²⁷ "With genitalia, we still hold on to an undefined immanence." *Unfinished System of Nonknowledge*, 85

²⁸ *My Mother/Madame Edwarda/The Dead Man*, 150

²⁹ Autonomy proposes auditory material as an aesthetics of consciousness in lieu of a scopic control regime; this proposal traces an expiatory division of pre-consciousness, reading between a pre-psychic- and yet political- sound-bath immersivity and an acephalic, or acousmatic, sound object. These notions are abstracted and deployed as a new hermeneutical approach demonstrating evidence of expiatory consciousness in Bataille's concerns and preoccupations, from (political sonic immersivity) Jacques Attali (1984 [1977]) *Noise: The Political Economy of Music*. Translated by Brian Massumi. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press) and (pre-consciousness as a sonic immersivity); Didier Anzieu (1989 [1985]) *The Skin Ego: A Psychoanalytic Approach to the Self*, translated by Chris Turner (New Haven and London: Yale University Press), and (contingent objects as political expressions of an autonomous pre-conscious aesthetics), Pierre Schaeffer, and Guy Reibel (1998 [1967]). *Solfège de l'objet sonore et traité des objets musicaux*. Translated (into English) by Livia Bellagamba. (Paris: Coédition Ina-Publications)

³⁰ This reads Bataille's 1930 essay "The Use Value of D.A.F. de Sade" with Roger Caillois (1958 [1939]) *Man and the Sacred* to define expiation in its onto-political context.

anarchist code of onto-political practice. Within expiation as a meditative context of sovereign momentariness that is consubstantial with atheology it becomes possible to inhabit a mode of infinite alteration of form: a way opens up of ‘wholly othering’ that realises ontopolitical sovereignty in the acousmatic image of an acephalic mode.³¹ Through this, embodied mediation occurs: “this total liberation of human possibility,” a shamanic anarchist transubstantiation or transformation into other noumenal forms and unforms of being— sound objects, human cries and bursts of laughter, as well as echoes, animal cries, and through these into animal spirits and spectres— becomes optically available.³²

Research Method Note on the *Œuvre* of Georges Bataille

This briefly defines the approach to Bataille’s work in terms of the research method of the thesis. The author of the thesis regards Bataille’s work as a more or less coherent assemblage of his thought of a cosmology expressed across several different idiomatic expressions, or syntactical styles. Bataille’s reception, however, has been coloured by its promotion from the semi-unpublished by the editors of *Tel Quel*...who were no doubt thrilled by its apparent discursive modality, and whose literary focus brought Bataille to the attention of the academic world at a moment when its attention shared their preoccupation with literary style.³³ However, the author of the thesis questions the extent to which it is possible to say that Bataille’s work is *about* writing, or even language, more than it is *about* mediation and its attendant problems of elsewhere-ness. Not every painter is directing the viewers’ attention to the paint and the brushstroke, after all. But since there is no doubt that Bataille experiences technical difficulties in bringing his thought to expression, the question remains extant as to the extent that writing itself was the problem. To an extent, this thesis resolves this by re-situating the obscene fiction as works of materialist theory. The images shown to the reader in *Story of the Eye*,

³¹ “Wholly Other”: For the source of the phrase ‘das ganz Anderes’ see Chapter 2, Rudolf Otto (1958 [1917]) *The Idea of the Holy*, translated by John W. Harvey (London: Oxford University Press)

³² “This total liberation of human possibility as he [Nietzsche] defined it, of all possibilities is, of course, the only one to remain untried attempted (I repeat by way of simplification, except perhaps by me?).” Bataille, “Preface” in, *On Nietzsche* xxi

³³ Cf. Patrick French and Roland-François Lack, (eds.) (1998) *The Tel Quel Reader* (London and New York: Routledge)

Madame Edwarda, and *My Mother* are not provocations to transgressive behaviour in Bataille's readership, but are ways that material expresses Bataille's preoccupation with the unconscious, the liminal and its indeterminacy. Very important is the "Coincidences" text in *Story of the Eye*, which, the reader gets the sense, is where Bataille doubts that the projections of his unconscious are coincidences. Barthes' essay where he observes the concatenation of these forms comes closest to understanding their role outside of the so-called pornographic; Barthes' contribution is to think through the writing in a way that is dynamic and material. Perhaps equally important, as an alternative candidate for technical difficulties, and which the thesis only tentatively approaches when suggesting an embodied practice of atheology, is the role of Bataille's own body, and its health, in bringing his thought to its expression. He was ill a lot, but with what, and when, remains private. Poverty must play a role in an embodied challenge, as one senses that Bataille might have struggled to eat sufficiently well at times. To summarise, to view Bataille's body of work as being scattered or diffuse, is to start on a path of its mis-reading as being about the text. This is effectively to mis-place it.

A second front could be opened closer to the thesis' argument which says that, in fact, Bataille does not struggle with expression at all, in fact, by understanding the obscene texts as 'debased' metaphysics, he has uncovered an incredibly successful, and particularly transparent way of elucidating his materialist thought. The fact that nobody has identified this before is not really Bataille's concern, as conceptual abstraction of his thought is antithetical to it. This very much still leaves the thesis as a privileged intercessor re-writing his thought in an academic idiom ...in the end it has to be accepted that it is not the job of the thesis to be faithful to the ideas in their intercessionary translation. This front would have to include Bataille-the-writer's torment as an exposure to ontic materiality, possibly a materially immersive environment, rather than (as it might seem) a prophylactic to thought's expression.

The coherence of Bataille's textual body can be summarized as follows: the principle of its organisation, its accursed part, is inherent in the substance of his later 'systematic' texts, *Eroticism*, *Accursed Share Volumes I, II and III* which control the dynamic of his earlier 'sacred texts' from the period 1936-1939 and the time of the *Acéphale* journal and *Collège de Sociologie* lectures; these texts

can be taken together with the ‘mystical’ writing in *Summa Atheologica* trilogy, and including *Madame Edwarda* and the unpublished text available today in translation as *Unfinished System of Nonknowledge*.³⁴ Into which the yet earlier still texts, can be fitted in a modular way, such as “The Deviations of Nature”, “The Pineal Eye”, “Materialism” and “Base Materialism & Gnosticism,” and this includes his contribution to *Documents* but also the work from *La Critique sociale*, as well as the *Dossier de L’Œil Pinéal* work not yet in full English translation from *Œuvres complètes de G. Bataille*, (OC) volume II, 11-47.

In the thesis, as follows, if a citation is missing its author, it shall be assumed that this author is Georges Bataille. In the case of frequently cited works, the full title will presently be abbreviated. In the case of essays within a compendium, including passages in the *Accused Share* trilogy, their titles shall be included for the benefit of a wider contextual comprehension. In the case of citations of proximate but not direct relevance, these shall be included in the footnotes for the same reason of contextual comprehension. Italicisation within citation represents the original emphasis in every case.

³⁴ N.B., The *Summa Atheologica* trilogy comprises: *Guilty*, *Inner Experience* and *On Nietzsche*. The first two of these books have been recently re-edited and re-translated (by Stuart Kendall in both cases). Because the recent translations contain new material, the thesis treats them as separate works and refers to them both. In the case of *Inner Experience*, the default text is the older Boldt-Irons translation, unless specified. In the case of *Guilty*, it is the Kendall translation that is the default text.

Chapter One, *Prohibition and Form*

Introduction:

Bataille's 1929 denigration of conceptual authority mandates a development of base materialism into a new way of thinking non-conceptually.¹ This chapter will develop a way of working within a material idiom without recourse to a residual hierarchical authority. It will do this as a preparatory context for a subsequent development of systematic atheology in Chapter Two. The principal motive driving this development is an emphasis on movement in Bataille's cosmology. This movement takes three important routes: firstly, that unlimited expenditure must be somehow connected to the form of a limit; secondly, that eroticism, which is equated with the dynamic of unlimited expenditure, is actually a statement of the folding/unfolding of a generative principle;² and thirdly that this principle generates limit-forms, and these are expressive of a way of understanding difference in Bataille's thought that is critical in a formulation of materialism's intellectual apprehension as system.³ The chapter is divided into three sections: the first develops the idea of a

¹ See the quotation cited in footnote 12 of the Introduction, which continues: "Classical materialists did not really even substitute causation for the *must be* (the *quare* for the *quamobrem*, or, in other words, determinism for destiny, the past for the future). Their need for external authority in fact placed the *must be* of all appearance in the functional role they unconsciously assigned the idea of science. If the principle of things they defined is precisely the stable element that permitted science to constitute an apparently unshakeable position, a veritable divine eternity, this choice cannot be attributed to chance. The conformity of dead matter to the idea of science is, among most materialists, substituted for the religious relations earlier established between the divinity and his creatures, the one being the *idea* of the others." Bataille "Materialism" *Documents* 3 (June 1929): 170; *OC I*, 179-180; *Visions of Excess*, 15.

² For an account of the generative process in relation to the fold of the body that is substantially congruent with Bataille's materialism see Diana Coole (2010) "The Inertia of Matter and the Generativity of Flesh". Coole traces the evolution of Merleau-Ponty's thought in relation to the phenomenon of generative perception. Merleau-Ponty achieves a certain congruency because of an attention to eliminate external and ideal causality in understanding generative nature. Where Bataille differs is that where Merleau-Ponty's anti-anthropocentric envisioning of the body (according to Coole) eventually finds politics, Bataille's politics, we suggest, finds the body— as its equal. See: Diana Coole and Samantha Frost, (eds.) (2010) *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency, and Politics* (Durham and London: Duke University Press), 92-115. An interesting methodological difference is the ocularcentric approach deployed by Merleau-Ponty as he approaches the fold. Bataille's 'project' is avowedly anti-ocular, as has been noted by Martin Jay, who posits as a consequence, its appropriation by surrealist photography for depictions of 'internalised montage.' This suggests that methodological difference is indissociable with a political control surface of determinacy, which Bataille seeks to avoid in locating human sovereignty/ autonomy within being. See: Martin Jay (1993) *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought* (Berkeley: University of California Press), 250

³ Lectures 4, 6 and 7 from Bataille's series delivered to the *Collège Philosophique* address the struggle between the destroyed consciousness of the mystical experience and its elucidation as a realisable thing. This realisable thing was

generative material as difference, and how this condenses an ontopolitical concern over human freedom within being into a question of being's subordination to being's imposed form.⁴ The second section develops Bataille's sacrifice as an address to this problem, specifically directing focus on the morphic authority of the thing of the subordinate form.⁵ Sacrifice works to both affirm its authority in a way internal to its substance, and to destroy its authority simultaneously.⁶ Affirmative destruction is developed in five ways, these are: affirmative destruction of knowing; of instrumental consciousness; of recognition; of form and, finally, affirmative destruction of destruction. Section three argues that the internal extension of sacrifice is the idiomatic total for Bataille's materialist development, where generative emergence and morphology occur to form/affirm different destroyed shapes of

intended as his atheological system. The texts, "The Consequences of Nonknowledge" (January 12th, 1951) "Nonknowledge and Rebellion" (November 24, 1952) and "Nonknowledge, Laughter and Tears" (February 9, 1953) are gathered as together with Bataille's notes, "Aphorisms for the 'System'" in Bataille, *The Unfinished System of Nonknowledge*, edited by Stuart Kendall, translated by Michelle Kendall and Stuart Kendall. For an account of their contemporary publication, see also, Editor's Introduction, xxxvi-xxxvii.

⁴ On page 7 of *Inner Experience* Bataille states simply that inner experience is a sole authority; the problem of how to establish this without resorting to knowing (i.e., external or objective veracity or validity) is, however, the subject of the torment of the book's puzzle. See Bataille's "Preface" *Inner Experience*, xxxi-xxxii, also 85-86, where he re-considers the problem of authority.

⁵ This is intended to make explicit the link between form, as a use-value for material thought, and its sacrificial destruction. The point of form in Bataille is not its idealised destruction, but its external destruction. To assert formlessness is to assert an affirmative position, whereas to posit a form, is to anticipate vertiginous destruction of a truth bastion. The former, critically over determined position is proposed by Yves-Alain Bois and Rosalind Krauss (1997) in *Formless: A User's Guide*. (New York: Zone Books). Explicitly challenging this position is Paul Hegarty, in "As Above, So Below; Informe/Sublime/Abject" who asks, "If 'informe' demands that all become formless, then this is the move to an absolute, and where the total lack of form renders 'informe' into its opposite, it becomes the definition of (all) form. Or, if 'informe' demands that each thing takes its proper form, then the 'informe' is the process behind or within, precisely, that which it is not. 'Informe' then creates form, inevitably, as residue whilst the 'informe' becomes the residue of form (s)." Andrew Hussey, ed. (2006) *The Beast at Heaven's Gate: Georges Bataille and the Art of Transgression* (Amsterdam and New York: Editions Rodopi), 73-80, 75; see also Patrick Crowley and Paul Hegarty (2005) "Formless 3. The Interminable Detour of Form: Art and Formless" in, Patrick Crowley and Paul Hegarty, eds. *Formless: Ways In and Out of Form* (Bern: Peter Lang), 185-192. Patrick ffrench engages with sacrifice in chapter 2 of his book *After Bataille*. ffrench sees sacrifice as an intervention that "provokes an affective charge in the 'subject,' carried over to other objects and other subjects. Both subject and object are dissolved in affective continuity." ffrench is arguing for an affectivity without a subject, so is actually arguing sacrifice as an encounter which has an autonomous materiality that, rather than situated in the object destroyed, is situated in sacrifice, or is co-extensive with it— this materiality being "raw" affectivity. Patrick ffrench, (2007) *After Bataille: Sacrifice, Exposure, Community* (London: Routledge), 63-106, 53

⁶ The problem of externality arises out of the problem of determinacy in respect to knowledge. If an internally experienced phenomenon is sole value, sole authority, then the objective realisation of this can only occur so that objectivity occurs in the experiencing subject. Bataille's critique of idealism as hierarchical also presents him with the problem of whether reality occurs as an externally verifiable phenomenon. For an expanded discussion of science/determinacy especially in the context of materialist philosophy, see Jean-Louis Baudry (1995) "Bataille and Science: Introduction to Inner Experience" in Leslie Anne Boldt-Irons, ed. (1995) *On Bataille Critical Essays* (Albany: State University of New York Press), 265-281

epistemology and ontology.⁷ This concludes the preparation of a substantive context for a new theory of Bataillean systematicity in Chapter Two.

Part One: Generative Discontinuity: The Limit

i. Defining non-logical difference: within the limit

The boundless refuse of activity pushes human plans— including those associated with economic operations— into the game of characterizing universal matter; matter, in fact, can only be defined as the non-logical difference that represents in relation to the economy of the universe what crime represents in relation to the law.⁸

From the above quote, taken from Bataille’s 1933 essay, “The Notion of Expenditure,” this chapter will develop a sense of universal matter that is both non-logical difference and that is authority rendered in an irreducibly material rather than conceptual way.⁹

Bataille’s universal is a material universe: it is the unceasing and prodigious expenditure of energy. Attempting to theorize this in conceptual or idealistic terms is as pointless as belief in God.¹⁰ Attempting any kind of conceptual materialism is always going to run into the same problem of modes of approach antithetical to the required outcome: that is, thought’s characterisation not of matter, but as matter.¹¹ This chapter will argue that it is possible to approach Bataille’s own work by developing a new approach to thinking, one which associates thought with materialised non-logical difference. What mandates this approach is progress toward defining materially a humanity engaged

⁷ Bataille develops a technique for internal substantive contemplation as homogeneity/heterogeneity (together heterology) in “The Psychological Structure of Fascism” first published in *La Critique social* 10 & 11 (November 1933 and March 1934); *Visions of Excess*, 137-160; Bataille applies a similar technique to the internal coherence of Soviet society, drawing from his analysis elements of mystical autonomy equivalent to Eckhart. See “Sovereignty Within Soviet Society” in *Accursed Share Vols II and III*, 309-325, 317

⁸ Bataille, “The Notion of Expenditure” ‘appeared first in *La Critique social* 7 (January 1933) See *OC I*, 302-20. Originally published in English in 1984, in *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927-1939*, ed. Allan Stoekl, tr. Allan Stoekl with Carl R. Lovitt and Donald M. Leslie, Jr. (University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, MN, 1985), 116-29.

⁹ This chapter concerns only universal matter; Bataille’s analogy of crime and law will be fully developed in Chapter Three..

¹⁰ “Materialism” *Visions of Excess*, 15

¹¹ Paul Hegarty, summarizing Bataille’s metaphysical position, anticipates the argument here, by suggesting that excess prefigures matter itself, and is only identifiable in retrospect. Hegarty (2021) *Annihilating Noise* (New York and London: Bloomsbury Academic), 24

in a total liberation of human possibility.¹² This requires a new way of situating authority and the limit in Bataille, not as a set or matrix of transgressible rules, but as interior substance and extremal geometry to an irreducible shape of experience-phenomenon that situates, houses and embodies thought within a sensorium of total human prohibition.

Metaphysics argues that in order for anything to have meaning or to be understood, there has to be a way to arrest the horizon of infinity, a way to place a limit on the perpetual, the endless, the continuous so that it might be said to offer a restricted range of possible outcomes, so that this range may be assimilated by human comprehension.¹³ This makes Bataille's cosmology inherently anti-metaphysical, because he both believes that any truth of the universe is to be uncovered in the fact of its ceaseless and limitless movement, and at the same time because he also believes that knowledge (both sentience and metaphysical epistemology) presents itself as a limit to understanding, and therefore does not offer thought as correspondent to this movement.¹⁴ Re-evaluating this prohibited action involves a re-appraisal of a materialised limit, one which can both circumscribe the situation and event of universal movement, and one which, as a limited object, traces and moves through its own inner space to provide evidence for movement's ceaselessness. If analytic re-appraisal uncovers this in Bataille, it creates a complex, but graspable, place and structure for a thinking of the impossible.

What is of paramount importance in identifying how Bataille creates this new version of a limit is recognising how he avoids engaging with the Hegelian dialectical approach.¹⁵ Although this is a

¹² In "Preface" to *On Nietzsche* Bataille describes a fierce impulse "in the essence of humanness [that] seeks autonomy, the freedom to be." He furthers that this state is, until his work, yet to be attempted. "This total liberation of human possibility as he defined it, of all possibilities is, of course, the only one to remain untried (I repeat by way of simplification, except perhaps by me?)" xxi

¹³ Chapter Three, *infra*, will examine this arrest in the context of the wound as a fetish object: the wound Bataille says, in *Inner Experience*, is the horizon of God, 103-104

¹⁴ For the former, see, for example, Bataille's writing on potlatch, which he describes in terms of a human's propriety sense of a limited thing, or gift, in conjunction with 'limitless movements of the universe'. *Accursed Share vol I*, 63-77; for the latter, where science emerges from mysticism only for delirium to return to science as play, see "The Pineal Eye" in *Visions of Excess*, especially, 81-82

¹⁵ For Bataille's own discussion on the shortcomings of the dialectic, especially in regards to developing his thought on physical matter or natural phenomena, see "The Critique of the Foundations of the Hegelian Dialectic" in *Visions of Excess* 105-115; For the servitude inherent in the dialectic approach, specifically as a prohibition against heterogeneous communication and absolute loss, cf. "Fortune" in *Inner Experience*, Boldt-Irons trans., 128-130

formal systematic way of thinking human sentience, and so, controlling the horizon of the infinite, the exchange of an all-that-there-is thesis for an all-that there-is-not antithesis creates, between it, an excluded middle. This exclusion is the limit of Hegel's system, and, as a version of limiting thought so that it is graspable, it has the advantage of exchange, and captures exchange's movement, but has the disadvantage of limiting liberty for the same constrictive reason: thought, and natural phenomena, must move either side of a dialogic either/or proposition. This raises a problem with the limit for Bataille in that he wants any cosmological modelling of thought of being to be autonomous of a control function of possibility, so that the human is to *be* autonomously or not to be at all:

Human life is defeated because it serves as the head and reason of the universe. Insofar as it becomes that head and reason it accepts slavery. If it isn't free, existence becomes empty or neuter, and if it is free, it is a game. The earth, as long as it only engendered cataclysms, trees, and birds was a free universe; the fascination with liberty became dulled when the earth produced a being who demanded necessity as a law over the universe. Man nevertheless remained free to no longer respond to any necessity. He is free to resemble all that is not he in the universe. He can cast aside the idea that it is he or God who prevents everything else from being absurd.¹⁶

The limit for Bataille must operate in a way that it does not subordinate the human to its contestable borders, it must not imprison the mind within its form, or its systematicity, in the sense that it must not control the production of knowledge, and so end free thought, but instead be a material setting or situation like a Nietzschean ocean, or the torrent of a desert.¹⁷

To think in an ontologically autonomous way, to think and to be freely, Bataille needs to configure a limit that has a different relationship with totality, with dimensionality, with discreteness and discontinuity, and with the authority that these elements of graspable limitedness bring to thought and conception of being. Reading Bataille's words on transgression as transgressive needs to be re-examined in this argument's construction. Instead of breaking rules, as transgression does, Bataille uses transgression to affirm the irreducible law that confronts the human: as the festival affirms the quotidian in its breach.¹⁸ What this means is that irreducible law becomes a portal through which

¹⁶ "The Sacred Conspiracy – Acephale 1st Year June 24 1936", in, *The Sacred Conspiracy: The Internal Papers of the Secret Society of Acéphale and Lectures to the College of Sociology*, 125

¹⁷ *Inner Experience*, 27-29

¹⁸ "I said that the initial human negation, which created the human in contrast to the animal, has to do with the being's dependence on the natural given, on the body which it did not choose, but the break constituted by the

concept (such as law) crosses into a socius of the material realm. It does this in a human context as prohibition and taboo, socially-enacted laws, yet these are contextually generated as an intrinsic element of the phenomenon of being human. Irreducible repulsion or revulsion at cadavers or faeces is the internalised element of Bataille's irreducible law. Not only does this provide a covalent use of concept and material, it also abolishes any distinction between the external and inner human body: feelings of disgust are socially manifest as taboo, and also as material law that transverses subjective and objective separation-phenomenon. The body therefore becomes both distinct and individuated but also part of a wider continuum of material reality. Where Bataille thinks is within this expanded material space; it is limited in the sense that it is *all law*. The human irreducible is a materialised legitimacy for thought's movement. Bataille has re-configured the limit's internality materially as a framework for irreducible repulsion. That which is repulsed, the 'dejecta' series, as will be discussed, are marks on the interior surface of being, designating its internal movement.¹⁹ His materialism is not anti-conceptual, or he would risk placing his mode of thought back into (conceptual) dialectic or dialogical parameters of antithesis. Instead Bataille materially extrapolates the concept of the limited itself, and he does this by changing the limit's relation with authority. He reaches towards this because of an obligation forced on him by his own mattered cosmogony, which, in this sense, progresses thought and unthought without Bataille's (external) help.

The logic, or rather non-logic, in the sense that it is a material and not a thought progression, is as follows: the universe comprises of ceaseless prodigality of energy expenditure. This ceaselessness is limitlessness in the whole universe, but is an energy transfer that is itself in search of a limit against which to *be* limitless. In other words, the limit is not irreducible law but is a (by) production of universal expenditure. The latter, in and *from* itself, produces a requirement for a limit. The limit

festival is not at all a way of renouncing independence; it is rather the culmination of a movement towards autonomy, which is, forevermore, the same thing as man himself." *Accursed Share II and III*, 90-91

¹⁹ Bataille organises this into a category he names 'dejecta'. For a full development of this category and how it works with repulsion to distinguish human from non-human animal see, "Chapter One: Sexuality and Dejecta" in "Part Three: The Natural Objects of Prohibitions" *Accursed Share Vols II and III*, 61-66 These products are then developed as being indicative of the internal movement of humanity, across its internal totality. See "That the Transition from Animal to Man Must Be Grasped in a Comprehensive View", especially, "the result that I aim for is a view of the whole – which embraces not only all of space but the different times in succession. This being so, chronology loses at least some of its importance. That which succession brought about in a certain order may be perceived, erroneously, in a different order." *Ibid.* 72-73

arrives as a precursor to an irreducible material law, except there is no sense of the precursory available because time does not generate itself until materiality arrives. When time, or times plural, arrives, so does the precursory, and this makes the point that conception of this is itself a limited form, that itself arrives retrospectively because of an irreducible human necessity to be limited as knowledge, or to be as a perceiving human.²⁰ So, the limitless universal generates a limit, which generates irreducible law, which generates irreducible material, which generates human prohibition, which generates human apperception. What this means, is that thinking, and thinking systematically with material, in this void that is everything, although it is a totality, does not arrive as a foundational totality, but arrives as an ancillary process to universal limitless movement: it arrives not as its foundation, but as its prosthetic.

ii. Determining discontinuous shape as impurity: authority

Dimensionality of space is physical law, and, in a human context, dimensionality is accompanied with a co-emergence of taboo. These are the irreducible materialities with which Roger Caillois structures the sacred: taboo is a structure, and structures the world for humanity in the same way that time and space are structured: instrumentally, by law.²¹ When humans enter the world of three/four dimensions, they also enter an image of the world structured both by and as taboo; this is a limit to material experience of the world: that humanity cannot fly or is not immortal, for example. These taboos are instrumental limits because of their irreducible relationship to human law. Caillois' emergence is of a humanity into the sacred, but into an instrumentally-determined sacred, where social enactment occupies the same instrumental hegemonic power as the human body occupies in its position in space-time. What Bataille's limit-object adds to this, is that these pan-esoteric/exoteric determinable co-ordinates also allow motion the luxury of direction (and especially, of *all* direction where previously there was directionlessness). Being comes into motion in laws of taboo as much as

²⁰ Knowledge arriving retrospectively abnegating any sense of an external, or internal, creator.

²¹ Roger Caillois, (2001 [1959/1939]) *Man and the Sacred*, trans. Meyer Barash (Urbana, IL: University of Chicago Press), 34

laws of physics, and this is verifiable by the motion of repugnance and disgust which cause being's movement as repulsion.

[The taboo] keeps one man from dying and another from reverting to the chaotic and fluid stage, formless and vague, of which he was part before divine beings or ancestral heroes arrived to bring him order, dimensions, stability and regularity. In the primordial state of license, taboos did not exist.²²

The non-human animal emerges into dimensionality in another way because its relationship with taboo is critically different. Bataille says that this is the case because taboo separates dimensionality into an emergence of discontinuity in the case of the human animal and continuity in the case of the non-human animal.²³ This is because of eroticism's relation with authority, and with consciousness, as distinct forms of taboo, Bataille here explains that: "eroticism is different from animal sexuality in that for a man aroused clear images surge up with the distinctness of objects; eroticism is the sexual activity of a conscious being."²⁴ Taboo is a primary authority therefore that marks the discontinuous body as distinct from other animal bodies. It is this distinctness, and its relation to the limit, that emerges within the sacred as impurity.

At the first moment of human sentience, the moment of discontinuity, discussed above, because of its impure authority, becomes available to systematise objectively. Objective authority, its dirtiness and its irreducible horror, is placed at the service of a logic of the impure; it is placed at the service of a logic of being. The task of systematicity and the task of consciousness are the same, they both operate in the mode of distinctiveness; therefore, the emanatory perceptions of a body can do the work of a 'produced' systematicity, but only if the body is 'free': if the body is subordinate then there is no political point to systematicity. The moment when a body realises itself in its distinctness is its self-application of the law of a space-time form; as law it is always impure. The body and its systematized coming-to-consciousness therefore always come to presence as impure, or dirty authority. What this means in terms of the possibility for systematising being is an essential

²² Caillois, *Man and the Sacred*, 24

²³ *Eroticism*, 67

²⁴ *Eroticism*, 193-194

revaluation of the problem *as* Bataille sees it in favour of *the way* he sees it. The condition of indeterminacy, or the possibility of materialised determinacy, emerges from being not via the total form of the object entering consciousness but as a new objectivity taking place: this ‘taking place’ is an operation whose making sense generates the new kind of object that Bataille describes. ‘Taking place’ is a coming to presence: not *how* a thing makes sense, but *that* it presently makes sense. It is present to the senses, and not just a regime of scopic hegemony. Generative dimensionality of the impure introjection allows the ‘sense’ under consideration to take its poiesis, its productive authority, and its internal coherence from the reversed function of the limit, where, now, everything is authority all the time and everything always makes sense. There is no requirement for separation between sentience and world, and nor is there difference between intuition and sense, perception and the understanding of knowledge. Instead, everything is the same and therefore everything must be difference. Coming to knowing through this new kind of totality differs the durational operation materially from difference as totality: now durational operation emerges as a derivative of knowing, where motion of emergence is placed at the service— not of eventual assimilation or elsewhere production— but of an augmentation in the knowing of unknowing; of mystery that increases with knowledge; and with the coming of mystery, a coextensive coming of God’s absence, as science.²⁵

iii. The limits of authority: extension

Material verifiability which supports the physics of a debased metaphysics reduces the limits of authority to the physical extension, that is a ground restricted by the concept, or the problem of time and space. The foundational grounds for passing an objective judgement are laid out as conditions, generated onto images of the object and the subject as agential concerns; but these conditions of things, time and space, can have no essential validity in themselves. A revaluation of Bataille’s materialism, in order to respect its political integrity, must respect how much it accepts the conceptual on a material basis; to what degree is it subordinate to the authority of the given extension. Previous attempts by philosophers of materialism to privilege the material suffer from the difficulty to allocate

²⁵ “Descartes” in, *Inner Experience*, 105-108

this authority correctly, placing either God in material's substance, like Spinoza, or placing action and cause outside an irreducible monad, like Leibniz.²⁶ Much western thought assumes an intentionality that works as a derivative of rationality. Because of this, authority emanates from certain logical Archimedean points that ensnare the argument in an, arguably, unintentional way.²⁷ Kant helps here by asking whether an individual (either as body or consciousness) can be free if their temporo-spatial conditions are predetermined. Kant examines the outside of thought to establish if its phenomenal expression in the individual can claim autonomy or legitimate freedom from an elsewhere or deferred didact. The individuated thing is spatially determined as such: it is a spatial limit. For Kant, this is a:

positing of space as subjective and ideal, originating from the mind's nature in accord with a stable law as a scheme, as it were, for coordinating everything sensed externally, [and] not something objective and real, nor a substance, nor an accident, nor a relation.²⁸

Mind's nature acts as an article of faith that the *a priori* notions of time-space-cause are either given naturally, or intrinsic, or both. Faith is placed in the concept of *causa sui*, meaning a self-generation without reference to anything else. This installs an indeterminate factor to the consideration of space as either an ideal, or a material substance. Space, and its correlate time, must have some *essence*, some essentiality, about them if they are not, themselves, to be *caused by* something. Essence, or being, needs to be free from external agency to have a validity that is not

²⁶ Spinoza posits that thought is an inhabited thing, and places it, and substance, as a movement of substance. Substance is determined by its attributes, and these display an "eternal and infinite essence". *Ethics Book I*, Proposition I.11 and I.14; For God as co-extensive with the substance of the universe, and immanent to it, see propositions I.17 and I.18. For Spinoza and God as immutable laws, see scholium 2; For an interesting development of Spinoza in terms of the body as potential limit, Gilles Deleuze develops attributes along the lines of affective capacity, particularly in terms of its relative internal movement of the body's molecules. See "Chapter Six: Spinoza and Us" in Gilles Deleuze (1988) *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy* trans. Robert Hurley (San Francisco: City Lights Books), 122-130; For Leibniz the point distills to an argument whether irreducibility is a sign of God's perfection. Martin Heidegger problematizes this extremely well in arguing against its contribution towards an ideal shape or form (of the monad, or irreducible thing). He says in "What is a Thing?": "Two alike things cannot be two, i.e., each is irreplaceably this one (*je dieses*) because two alike things cannot exist at all. Why not? The *being* of things is their creation by God, as understood in the Christian theological interpretation. If there ever were two alike things, then God had twice created the same, i.e., simply repeating something eternal. Such a superficially mechanical deed, however, contradicts the completeness of the absolute Creator, the *perfectio Dei*. Therefore, there can never be two alike things, by reason of the essence of being, in the sense of being created." *What is a Thing?* Trans. W.B. Barton Jr. and Vera Deutsch (South Bend, IN: Gateway Editions Ltd.), 23; For the original text, see: Leibniz (2014 [1714]) *Leibniz's Monadology: A New Translation and Guide by Lloyd Strickland* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press)

²⁷ Although in the case of Spinoza situating God as immanent to substance may have been a subtle way of announcing atheism, or pantheism. See Deleuze *Spinoza*, 110-112 for how Spinoza's pantheism may not be derived from a belief in God.

²⁸ Immanuel Kant (1902-) *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, edited by Königlich Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, trans. Andrew Janiak (Berlin: G. Reimer), V2 403.

subordinate. The problem is magnified by the implication that if essence is not natural, then its presence must be derived via God's agency. Either essence occurs spontaneously (and autonomously), or it must be mandated by God. However, to posit God as an agent in a spatiotemporal setting creates a spatiotemporal God, with the problem reoccurring over the authorship of a dimensionality *for God's occurrence*.²⁹

Kant establishes general conditionality as subordination to a single law, or scheme: one whose authority is absolute. This places the subject into a position versus the world that is antagonistic, at best. To adapt a vivid image from Quentin Meillassoux, it is as if the subject is a coin that now has its obverse pressed to its face.³⁰ This pressing is caused by the effect of an objective and total law onto the subjective sense. Law is total here because correlation between the world, and its representation, is absolute in perception; it is adequate, it does not have an excessive element. Kant models perception as being of the sense and intellect, already a 'pure knowledge,' but this relies on perceptual *experience*, and *this* relies on a sense of cause and effect that is prior to, albeit intuitive, knowledge of the law of causality. Expressed as a category of judgement, which is the action of understanding, this knowledge of the law of causality is not derived through experience— a different category of understanding that is intrinsic to the subject— but is outside experience, before it, and it also has an *a priori* judgement.³¹

²⁹ In a Christian conception God cannot be self-caused because this implies a *becoming* god, a temporal notion that in turn implies that God is a) contingent on time, and b) exists or has existed in a state other than perfection. The logic presents this god as a manifest variant on Spinoza's substance. However, if, for Spinoza everything is substance, including God, for Bataille everything that is, has nothing as its substance. A more generalized negation of Spinoza's thought in Bataille has been noted by J-P Sartre, writing in "Un Nouveau Mystique": "Replace M. Bataille's absolute nothing, then, by the absolute being of substance, and you have Spinoza's pantheism... Spinoza's pantheism is a white pantheism; M. Bataille's is a black pantheism." Quoted in Pierre Macherey (1995) *The Object of Literature*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 131

³⁰ This enhanced sense of antagonistic confrontation follows Heidegger's observation: "However 'this' is also objective inasmuch as it is something that faces us, that is 'thrown against' us. This ambiguity over the subjectivity and objectivity proves how little essence of thingness is captured in the demonstrative group." Martin Heidegger (1967) *What is a Thing?* Translated by W.B. Barton Jr. and Vera Deutsch. (South Bend, Indiana: Gateway Editions Ltd.), 26; However, Quentin Meillassoux (2008) makes the original comment regarding subject and object, being held apart, "like a coin which only knows its obverse". *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency*. Translated by Ray Brassier. (London: Bloomsbury Academic), 7

³¹ Cf. Immanuel Kant (1987[1790]) "Analytic of Teleological Judgement" in, *Critique of Judgment* trans. Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing), §64 D1

Kant's position shifts causality from an instrumental operation to a register of power. If cause has power over effect by adequate correlation, then, because of its total and absolute power, it can be said to have dominion, and effect is subordinate to cause by this mechanism.³² The grounds introduced by Kant—conditionality—have become a juridical system and also a prosecutorial advantage. Kant tells us that the conditions of perceivable things are attributes of universal law; while this doesn't necessarily contradict Bataille's position, it does give pause that Bataille's unceasing expenditure might be, somehow, legally coded.

Conditions of subject and object's juridical decidability are placed before this law, and as with Bataille's remarks cited at the beginning of this chapter, the relationship between material difference and a universal economy is one reducible to a criminal judgement. Schopenhauer, developing the relationship between cause/effect adequacy in terms of total juridical compliance, describes such 'entire conformity to law' as supporting other such mechanisms, like mathematical 'infallibility':

I have regarded time and space, in so far as they are perceived pure and empty of content, as a special class of representations existing by itself. Now this quality of those universal forms of intuition, discovered by Kant, is certainly very important, the quality, that is, that they are perceivable in themselves and independently of experience, and are knowable by their entire conformity to law, on which rests mathematics with its infallibility.³³

Schopenhauer's development of Kant is decisive at this point for reappraising Bataille's base materialism. As a materiality of substantive authority, it must have, intrinsic to its internal function, a sense of objective law. Schopenhauer shows here that a perceptual limit can entirely conform to mathematics: its totality of perceptual form is guaranteed by this, and allows a sense of finitude to emerge. This builds materialism toward an object of understanding for Bataille that is not contingent on externality of thought as its defining element. Thought's experience is internal to the form of total thought. Schopenhauer reduces time to "the simplest form" of sufficient reason, the latter being the expression of causality in experience. In this way law itself, and the content of law, materialises

³² This is a binary (in the sense of sequential) reading that Hume would recognize. Hume's criticism, which results in the refusal of correlation, is that cause *may have* any number of effects: "may I not conceive, that a hundred different events might as well follow from the cause?" David Hume (1999 [1748]) *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*. (New York: Oxford University Press), §4.10 ¶29

³³ Arthur Schopenhauer (1969 [1844]) *World as Will and Representation VI (WWR VI)* trans. by E.F.J Payne. (New York: Dover Publications), 7

causality in perception. More precisely, causality is materialised in perceptual duration, and with it, its authority. Authority swells to absolute proportions inside materiality as a consequence of this move: “matter is absolutely nothing but causality...its being is its acting.”³⁴ What Schopenhauer contributes to an understanding of Bataille’s argument is that the perception of the conditions of time and space (dimensionality) are not different from their cause: this is because the authority of dimensionality is mathematically absolute, and therefore all material experience is experience of an absolute power relation. Materiality is the experience of raw authority.

For Bataille, reason itself acts as a suppressive causal agent, consciousness’s awareness is outside itself and acting materially on the free substance of an unknowing individual.³⁵ Objective perception, that is, both perceiving what is real or true, and that perception directed at an *ipseous* (distinct notion of the individuated self) are the subjects of an intrinsic power relation that are caused by reason. Objective perception contravenes Bataille’s autonomy; Bataille counters this with flesh.³⁶

This makes materiality a total and absolute expression of the authority of causality. Its implications are that cause acts; effects are the manifestations of being acted upon. This provides authority itself with a hermetic totality, but it also introduces an agency lost by being in general and by God in particular. Moreover, this agency announces itself as discreteness, a separating out by variation, flux, eternity or entropy into an agential-condition-active-cause here, and an agential-condition-passive-effect there. And so being, and perception of being, are always occurring as subordination of the latter to the former and this reason, or its causality and its agency, is somehow perceived spatially. Both are governed by a particularity that is discreteness, as Schopenhauer observes:

What is determined by the law of causality is therefore not the succession of states in mere time, but that succession in respect of a particular space, and not only the existence of states at a particular place, but at this place at a particular time. Thus change, i.e., variation occurring

³⁴ Ibid. 8

³⁵ “Also I submit entirely to what must be called matter, since *that* exists outside of myself and the idea, and I do not admit that my reason becomes the limit of what I have said, for if I proceeded in that way matter limited by my reason would soon take on the value of a superior principle (which this *servile* reason would be only too happy to establish above itself, in order to speak like an authorized functionary).” “Base Materialism and Gnosticism” *Visions of Excess*, 50-51

³⁶ “The autonomy of a man is physical.” *Guilty*, 124

according to the causal law, always concerns a particular part of space and a particular part of time, *simultaneously* and in union. Consequently, causality unites space and time.³⁷

Reversing Schopenhauer's simultaneity offers a unity of space and time as a phenomenon only revealed in causality, which takes as its movement of emergence the total authority implied by the application of a universal sense of law. In doing this manoeuvre, what also emerges is an application of universal law to a local particularity: this place, or this body. Generative flux aggregates a sense of the universal here, where materiality is articulated as motion in, or concentrated on, the *particular* place, or the individuated form, as a juridically directed principle. Schopenhauer's development takes a conceptual totality and expresses it in a material way, but it does so only through this transference of absolute authority that is causality, onto the idea of determination, the materialisation of 'thingness' as a material absolute. The role that authority plays has been displaced into the material sphere, and law of causality starts to resemble that of individuation:

But the law of causality receives its meaning and necessity only from the fact that the essence of change does not consist in the mere variation of states or conditions in themselves. On the contrary, it consists in the fact that, at the *same place in space*, there is now *one* condition or state and then *another*, and at *one* and the same point of time there is *here* this state and *there* that state.³⁸

Individuation is an erection of difference between here-state and there-state that applies equally to perceptual time. This is experienced (in its simplest terms) as 'past' and 'future', even if these are "as empty and unreal as any dream; but present is only the boundary between the two, having neither extension nor duration."³⁹ Dematerialisation of the present places it out of the reach of the human experience. Presencing of the human is forbidden (affected by a boundary) by such a construction of causality as time-space contingent. Continuity is banished by cause, relegated into non-dimensionality: in being prohibited one loses contact with the animal as if the other side of the human consciousness.⁴⁰

³⁷ Schopenhauer *WWR VI*, 10

³⁸ Schopenhauer *WWR VI*, 9

³⁹ Schopenhauer, *WWR VI*, 7

⁴⁰ *Eroticism*, 90

Schopenhauer's development of a Kantian transcendent position on time, space and causality allows his argument to access causality within matter but only at the expense of infecting matter with a manifold authority that splits perceptual time and space, and renders, through this separation, a cut that installs a withholding of the present from experience. As difference, this present 'now' is withheld inasmuch as it has no materiality, rather than that it has no experienceable *duration*. This illustrates, on a certain level, the difficulty with a transcendental authority: it has a habit of reinfecting the site of its elimination. Schopenhauer elicits consideration of a plastic matter in motion, its substantiation carries with it an authority immanent to its materiality, and so it causes itself, but the limit is that it may only be considered in its image rather than experienced continuously.

Part Two: Sacrifice: Affirmative Destruction

i. Affirmative destruction of knowing: the form of the limit and finitude as sacrificial offering.

This section develops a destruction of knowing by affirming the finitude of the form in sacrificial offering. Building on the problem of extension, where materialism encounters an inevitable and irreducible authority as a limit its own physical manifestation, this section takes form as a central organising strategy for re-appraising Bataille's thought. Rather than understanding form as state that limits the continuous, form is a sacred prohibition that becomes a repository for all thought of materialism and difference within being and non-being. Bataille's understanding of the sacred allows an image of impurity to exist within it. This impurity, as will be shown, is authority itself. But rather than conceptual authority Bataille takes the irreducibility of materiality's extension as form as impurity.

The form of the material thing moves into central relevance in this new appraisal of materialism. Form makes knowledge available in a non-hegemonic way, its non-conceptual

immanence is, at once, the sovereign moment of human consciousness, the human body and the atheological ontopolitical system. These are all manifests of a form of impurity that is the integral part of Bataille's cosmology of the sacred. Form has singular relevance because its impurity— which is its stasis as determined and non-continuous morphic shape of authority— is sacrificeable. Because of this all relevance in political being and apperception can be affirmed and destroyed in a singular, morphic way.

Bataille's materialism, his understanding of sacred impurity and sacrifice are inextricably linked in this theoretical appraisal. By correctly accounting for authority by material morphology, prohibition extraverts itself to become a licence to identify previously forbidden actions: totality in materialism comes into play. As sacrifice moves centrally the form-as-repository means morphology acts as a token for all logical authority, that is, reason. Sacrifice destroys the ocular image of recognition of the thing as shape, it destroys the anthropocentric body, it destroys consciousness as the object of apperception, it destroys the form of systematic logic, it destroys with most emphasis, the hegemonic form of God. Sacrifice does all of this by addressing its destruction to the thing, yet it also does none of this, because sacrifice must affirm the presence of the thing in the moment of sacrifice— an affirmation that allows the thing to sovereignly exist. Materialism's central sacrifice of the thing is a way that Bataille affirms that which he destroys. This affirmation is generated from within the precinct of the sacrificial gesture as will presently be shown, because it replaces visual affirmation. Sacrifice organises the limit as a thing of organisation, where a singular locus point of affirmation-destruction connects centrally Bataille's material diffusion: momentary thing of consciousness, the recognition thing (eyeball sacrifice, the externally determinable thing). A centrally-positioned singularity is a cypher for objectivity, affirming its form as well as destroying its hegemony. Bataille's thought is realised materially and politically in the form of a momentary thing (as sovereignty), in a form of the anthropocentric body (as atheological embodiment) in a form of a nucleus of consciousness (as alteration-shamanic anarchism), in the form of a system (atheology) and, even, in the form of (a) God: sacrifice organises and affirms all of these forms by addressing the thing directly.

Sacrifice installs itself in a singular position of privilege where a paradigmatic unity arises between a logic of liberation and situated being in a sentient human-animal body. The conscious experience of embodiment is exclusionary for Bataille. Continuity, multiplicity contest the individuated form's essential freedom over discontinuity's exclusion. Patrick ffrench raises just this concern when identifying sacrifice with the single term, comparing this with Deleuze and Guattari's rejection of the "dark domain of sacrifice" in favour of their evocative description of becoming where "the sorcerer, according to this schema, is involved with a 'block of becoming' with a pack of animals, rather than a sacrificial or totemic animal."⁴¹ Although Deleuze and Guattari's offer of animal multiplicity as critique is directed less at singularity and more at Freudian reductive essentialism, (where all wolves become one wolf, becomes daddy wolf, becomes daddy, becomes archetype), the concern is that "Bataille's sorcerer, from this point of view, would still be too connected to the rite (to representation, spectacle) to the single, sacrificial animal, to identification." ffrench supposes that, "to the extent that [Bataille's] thought can be disengaged from sacrifice it might resonate with the Deleuzian affirmation of a plane of immanence on which these becomings take place..."⁴² Deleuze and Guattari certainly take strategies of resistance to plural realisations, however, here, the non-human animal retains sacrificial prestige because it, perhaps alone, occupies, in its singularity, a double entry between continuity and individuation, an entry negotiated by non-consciousness of its individuation.⁴³ It is because Bataille's thought engages with sacrifice that singularity becomes continuous in the animal. When Bataille, the sorcerer, the actor, and the causal agent, brings the animal to slaughter he does so in order to acknowledge his guilt as an agent in the registry of the animal's individuation: guilt in assigning singularity or thingness of form to this technological marvel.⁴⁴ This is precisely the point of sacrifice: its affirmation of singularity, an

⁴¹ "Dark domain of sacrifice", Deleuze and Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Translated and Foreword by Brian Massumi. (London: Continuum, 2004 [1988]), 261; Patrick ffrench (2007), *After Bataille: Sacrifice, Exposure, Community* (London: Routledge), 58; ffrench's reference to the 'becoming pack' is to Chapter Two: "1914: One or Several Wolves?" *A Thousand Plateaus*, 29-43

⁴² ffrench, *After Bataille*, 58

⁴³ *Eroticism*, 98-100

⁴⁴ *Eroticism*, 91

apology to the animal for this affirmation, an apology for making it noncontinuous by a destruction of the singular (in favour of a different atomic arrangement, continuity, intimacy or death): “The thing—only the thing—is what sacrifice means to destroy in the victim.”⁴⁵

Because of this singular focus, Bataille’s forces of attraction congregate toward an objective body of sense-making. His disparate materialities all receive the same condensing force: one which objectifies and to an extent totalises, for the express purpose of feeding total objectivity through the sacrificial machine as form. Sacrifice is a logic that addresses discontinuity on its dimensional coherence around the singular, the limited, the determined rule. Because it does this, it too has an operative power and a form; here French’s critique of identification holds true: sacrifice’s centrality to Bataille’s thought gives it a mythographic potency whose singular image has inescapable force.⁴⁶ Although the image is indissociable with the violence that informs it, its centrality gives its singularity a pause, and this pause reverses out into something infinite. Sacrifice has a momentariness that it embraces, around which thought circulates waiting to materialise before succumbing to its falling blade.

This singular momentariness is materially central to Bataille’s thought and is itself revalued as both an image of perpetual creation and destruction, the possibility of which endows sacrifice, or vice versa, as the holding open of a material realm, a realm of possible determinacy. Rather than a zero-sum game where an ‘all’ is erased, sacrifice is a singular crucible of material-in-phase-change: where what was once solid might be becoming-gas (burnt sacrifice); where what was once total-body would be becoming partial (heart sacrifice); where what would once be form would be becoming-flow (blood sacrifice). Sacrifice is an event of transitioning: Hegel’s “surrender of immediate finitude”, and an atonement for the crime of property possession.⁴⁷ It gathers material together into a limited form of immediate finitude, before affirming finitude’s material difference by returning it to a continuous, and

⁴⁵ *Theory of Religion*, 43

⁴⁶ See French, *After Bataille*, 54-56

⁴⁷ “The immediate content of sacrifice is the surrender of an immediate finitude, in the sense of my testifying that this finitude ought not to be my own possession and that I do not want to keep it for myself.” G.W.F. Hegel (1984 [1832]) *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Peter Hodgson (Berkeley: University of California Press), 384 n.

non-final material otherness. If the animal (human and non-human) body is considered in a sacrificial context its singularity stands only for its finitude, and therefore, for its function in calibrations of accounts of excess, and prodigality. The animal-human body has produced itself as limited form in response to the universal limitlessness of energy transfer.

The sacrificial thing is an object whose purpose is to exercise/excise the authority previously residing in the concept. Instead of conceptual authority, the thing now has morphological rules, which it offers to the falling blade. Conceptual, hierarchical authority is displaced to the logic of a morph, which shapes finitude and contains in a total way. Bataille's intellectual purpose for doing this is that the prior authority of the tropes/objects is retained, and, at the same time, the morphic form of the authority (its thing-ness) can be destroyed by sacrifice. By reducing a formal logic to a formal law of shape, sacrifice affirms and then destroys everything associated with the sacrificial thing in the same way; authority is affirmed and destroyed as geometry. Included in this, as will be shown presently, is knowing. The mode of knowing that can be realised as an object-to-be-sacrificed also includes the object of non-knowledge: Bataille engages with totality in order that sacrifice can destroy it, but again, sacrifice destroys totality's form, and its authority and somehow its substance survives as materially different, materially other, dematerialised or ghostly.

What is critical to understanding Bataille's purpose for the form is that its authority be immanent, that, rather than an assimilatory object of knowledge, its morphicity is analogous to the finitude of its logical proposition: instead of seeing knowledge as movement away from immediacy, as Hegel explains below, a sacrificial form of knowledge takes immediate shape.

The totality of Spirit, the Spirit of religion, is again the movement away from its immediacy towards the attainment of the *knowledge* of what it is *in itself* or immediately, the movement in which, finally, the '*shape*' in which it appears for its consciousness will be perfectly identical with its essence, and it will behold itself as it is.⁴⁸

Because Bataille takes immediacy as finitude, the sacrificial object of knowledge must be allowed to generate its own shape. Part of this allowance is a disavowal of knowledge itself, and the shape of immediate knowledge (or essence) and the shape of non-knowledge (or inessence), for

⁴⁸ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 414 ¶680

Bataille emerge as the same. Patrick ffrench identifies this emergent process as a ‘sudden paroxysm whose bodily expression is the laugh’, he states that this,

enables a momentary and paroxystic continuity to be glimpsed. This instantaneous continuity, or sudden condensation, to use the language of the dream work, is *obscene* because it disturbs the structural stability of representation, where one thing is distinct from another. It is also a shock which remains outside representation, a sudden paroxysm whose bodily expression is the laugh.⁴⁹

Building this into a theory of sacrifice-form-material concentrates on the burstness of the paroxystic move to condensation: this is the sacrificial form generating its own shape. Here what is relevant for developing the context of Bataille’s materiality is how the burst of shock enters consciousness as an immanent form of knowledge, that is, in a way that knowing does not require representative or spectacular verification. Sacrifice engenders form’s immanent authority as way of theorizing knowledge and non-knowledge without engaging the intellectual operation in oversight. What preoccupies Bataille is the unrepresentability of the unconscious, he sees it as ‘floating indefinitely.’⁵⁰ The sudden paroxysm is where sacrifice and form structure an entry of the unrepresentable of consciousness into materiality. Paroxysm differs from the epistemological form because it either does not take an outside structural authority or it has subsumed this authority within it prior to its emergence (this depends on whether or not immanence is considered as a conceptual trope exterior to the form of the object). Immanence shapes its momentary object(ivity) as immediate form: materialism’s development of this through sacrifice means that Hegel’s ‘beholding of essence’ can occur in the immediate form of the moment. The way this works for Bataille can be illustrated by understanding shock. Shock takes the logic of immanent affective event, prior to assimilatory knowledge. If shock is a burst, then it takes the form of a burst, and it emerges through this form, for Bataille in the shape of a sphere of difference. When Bataille shows us the eyeball he in fact shows the burst shape of shock, that is, an immanent authority form of subaffective transmissibility. Shock’s immanence permits transversality between continuity and form to occur– it “leaks out” although the

⁴⁹ Patrick ffrench (1999) *The Cut: Reading Bataille’s Histoire de l’œil*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 81

⁵⁰ For Bataille’s understanding of the unconsciousness as “floating indefinitely” see *Story of the Eye*, 71

form of immanence is unrepresentable.⁵¹ Shock gives pathological dimension to the movement of particular matter as a concrete object into the dimensional space of perception. However, it is precisely its unrepresentability, its divested associations between seeing and knowing, which suggests that the event of sacrifice has already destroyed the form of shock's presentable exterior. If it exists in any way it is as an interior form of obscenity, which, as ffrench suggests below, nonetheless retains *thingness* as a substance whilst no longer having a visually-determinable and knowable exterior.

Narrative requires the representation of affects, perceptions or sensations as events. What does not allow itself to be represented as an event, and thus organized as a moment in a narrative sequence, is a shock or affect which remains unrepresentable, will not allow itself to be represented, because it is immediate. This tautology suggests the difficult and unmediatizable nature of the immediate shock, the initial violence or instantaneous paroxysm, which Bataille's *continuity* produces in discontinuous reality. That is to say that the narrative of *Histoire de l'œil* hides, covers an unrepresentable unnarrative *thing*, an *obscene* vision which forces its way through at specific moments.⁵²

Form develops in a way that there is an elision between knowledge and nonknowledge over spectacle. The unrepresentable and the immediate shape emerge as a paroxysmic shape of indefinite unconsciousness.

ii. **Affirmative destruction of instrumental consciousness: the nucleus of apperception and the intercessionary consciousness**

This section builds on the destruction of knowing by taking the instrumentality of consciousness, considered as a nucleus of apperception that is irreducibly objective yet is itself a thing, which is then destroyed. The problem of the intercessionary consciousness is the problem of instrumental authority. Instrumentality is an external paradigmic power. The nucleus of apperception is the struggle over the location of the irreducible in authority. Externality can be defined here as the outside of movement. Movement of matter is not intrinsically knowable; it is only quantifiable by its extensions in time and space. Nothing of Bataille's thought is possible to express, in language, as knowledge, except, as thought, "reborn in other shapes", still accelerating, but because of

⁵¹ ffrench *The Cut*, 86

⁵² Ibid. 85-86

morphological expression, definable as being in motion.⁵³ The shape of the thing is that which stipulates its knowability. The fact that it is an object has not abolished knowing being's authority, simply transferred it onto the thing of the body (including 'reborn shapes' of a social or schematic body).⁵⁴ Thought's motion causes Bataille's thought to be reborn in other shapes, but because it is born into shapes, thought's morphicity becomes an intercessionary body: rather than graspable, its form intercedes to make it repulsive, and it accelerates away from immanent knowing.

The problem of form is the problem of the intercessionary object. Bataille's search for a materialist ontopolitical totality shares a methodological conduit with the contemporary preoccupations of science with epistemology.⁵⁵ Bataille's reading of quantum physics opens his thought to a substantive indeterminacy that places substantive knowability of the physical universe into conflict with the intercessionary body over the question of knowledge's totality. In other words, scientific objectivity stumbles at the level of the object of knowledge that is the instrument.⁵⁶ This stumble specifically becomes the field of physical science known as quantum field theory.⁵⁷

Gavin Parkinson argues that inter-war artistic thought's engagement with modern material science is under-researched.⁵⁸ He makes the claim that Bataille's 1930's introduction to G.W.F. Hegel in the 1930s, informed by Alexandre Kojève's lectures, were indirectly influenced by Kojève's prior

⁵³ *On Nietzsche*, 183

⁵⁴ Cf. Georges Bataille and Roger Caillois "Sacred Sociology and the Relationships between "Society," "Organism," and "Being" in Denis Hollier, ed. (1988). *The College of Sociology 1937-39* trans. Betsy Wing. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press), 74

⁵⁵ Instructive in this regard is Bataille's borrowing ledger from the BNF, in Paris. See borrowings 595, 596, 616, 630, 639. *OC volume XII*, 598-602. In his editor's comments Michel Foucault describes these "gifts of science" gathered up by Bataille between the end of 1934 and Spring 1935. they include works by: P.A.M. Dirac, *The Principles of Quantum Mechanics*; Paul Langevin, *The Notion of corpuscles and atoms*; E. Meyerson, *Reality and Determinism in Quantum Physics*, and Niels Bohr, *The Atomic Theory and the description of its phenomena*.

⁵⁶ Here the association is made between Bataille's non-knowledge, which is unknowable phenomena, and Bohr's principle of indeterminacy, phenomena that cannot be measured because there is nothing definite to know, rather than Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle, which is that ambiguity cannot be absolutely eliminated. For more on the distinction between the two principles, see Karen Barad (2007) *Meeting the Universe Halfway Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (Durham and London: Duke University Press), 295-302; For how different theoretical regimes can apply, especially associations between Bohr and Bataille's general economy. See Arkady Plotnitsky (1994) *Complementarity: Anti-Epistemology after Bohr and Derrida* (Durham and London: Duke University Press)

⁵⁷ For an historical review, see Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 106-115

⁵⁸ Gavin Parkinson (2008) *Surrealism, Art and Modern Science: Relativity, Quantum mechanics, Epistemology* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press), 1

familiarity with the philosophy of quantum mechanics.⁵⁹ In particular, Kojève's interpretation of Hegel profiles the problem of the intercessionary body, where the observational instrument (even at the level, in quantum theory, of human attention) of scientific method alters the data by its deployment.⁶⁰ This is a re-statement of the problem of the discontinuous consciousness (already discussed in section 1): where continuity of being is disturbed by the intercession of its conscious perception, and the experience of consciousness is being not situated in the general and continuous but in the individuated and discontinuous.⁶¹ The intercessionary body of quantum theory describes the difficulty of accommodating the unknowable into a schematic of material movement. If Bataille seeks for materialism a way of knowing that abstracts discontinuous images of movement without defining them statically, this can now be re-stated as an intercessionary problem, a scientific, and therefore autonomous mode of understanding where the attention of consciousness is that which alters the physical phenomenon. The intercessionary body becomes an instrument of irreducible authority, the irreducible element of which lies at the centre of the object of knowledge, like the nucleus of an atom.

Here it would be useful to briefly recap generative matter's overall movement. As a vector of trajectory, matter flows from a subaffective state towards human perception in ever more concentrated forms that are derivatives of generative eroticism. This coming-to-form is attraction to form's morphological authority. Attracted matter crosses or passes through an irreducible nucleus, a physical manifestation of the minimum authority that constitutes the threshold of self-actualisation in the intercessionary body: its perceptive attention. At this point— the liminal unconscious/conscious

⁵⁹ For a full exposition of this see Parkinson (2008) Chapter 3, "Astrophysics and Mysticism: Georges Bataille and Arthur Eddington", in, Parkinson, (2008) *Surrealism, Art and Modern Science*, 122-130; Kojève's lectures ran between 1933-1939, and are collected in Alexandre Kojève (1980 [1947]) *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel: Lectures on The Phenomenology of Spirit*, ed. Allan Bloom, trans. James H. Nichols, Jr. (New York: Cornell University Press); Arkady Plotnitsky states that Bataille "directly invoked" quantum mechanics, and made "important direct references" in a number of his works. Plotnitsky (1994) *Complementarity*, 17

⁶⁰ Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, 172

⁶¹ Parkinson states that the dissemination of Hegel in France (and to Bataille) is "strongly influenced" by Kojève's (only recently published) background in physics, and philosophy of quantum theory in particular. Parkinson (2008), 124. As it pertains to discontinuity here, it is worth noting that Kojève's (rejected) doctoral thesis in 1931 translates (from German) as "On the Problem of a Discontinuous World". See Parkinson (2008), 123; it is certainly the case that Bataille's position that humans are distinguished from other animals by their consciousness of self originates from this source. See James H. Nicholls, Jr. (2007) *Alexandre Kojève: Wisdom at the End of History* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield), 23

“breaking point”– knowledge of substance is an object and is total.⁶² After passing through the nucleus, however, repulsed/repulsive matter (including knowledge-matter) continues its movement away from the nucleus in a centrifugal and dissipative manner. It does not need to alter course or change direction; movement can be continuous. Repulsion is derived from images of putrescence associated with the death drive, as will be discussed in Chapter Three.

Matter is attracted toward the nucleus and enters it as a ‘middle term’ between attraction and repulsion.⁶³ The nucleus corresponds to Bataille’s definition of a middle term for this “unity of morphological and dynamic phenomena,” but the nucleus is an intercessionary body by whose irreducible authority the flow of generative matter alters from attraction to repulsion, despite not changing its essence.⁶⁴ The knowledge thing and the unrepresentable thing of shock and the intercessionary body congregate at the point of the nucleus in a material punctum of irreducible authority.⁶⁵ Authority’s irreducibility at this nuclear point, is morphological, and this, Bataille addresses later by sacrifice.

iii. **Affirmative destruction of recognition; visual veracity and its limit**

Sacrificial affirmation is a substitutive mechanism for recognition: sacrifice as affirmation in place of recognition makes the case that the form that is to be destroyed is to a large extent spectacle of the form, that is, its external visual component, that sacrifice addresses and, by doing this, affirms it in a non-visual way. If the function of the nucleus is superimposed with that of sacrifice, the forcing through of the thing that is shock creates an internal morphology for the immediate or instantaneous

⁶² For Bataille’s description of the ‘breaking point of the conscious’ as a location, see *Story of the Eye*, 71-72; For emergence as total, see “Attraction and Repulsion II: Social Structure” in *The College of Sociology: 1933-39*, 119

⁶³ “Human interattraction is not immediate, it is mediated, in the precise sense of the word; that is, the relations between two men are profoundly changed as a result of their both being situated within the orbit of the central nucleus. The basically terrifying content of the nucleus around which each one’s existence is revolving intervenes in their relationship as an inevitable middle term.” “Attraction and Repulsion I: Tropisms, Sexuality, Laughter and Tears” *College of Sociology*, 107

⁶⁴ *College of Sociology* 120

⁶⁵ “Being is absent from the human but projected onto the social no more to be found on the atom than in the unknowable electron from which it takes its structure.” *Ibid.* 120

flexion point of being, and/or consciousness. Unrepresentable obscenity in ffrench's exposition is what Bataille perhaps seeks from materialism all along: an intellectually realisable morphic staging for being's continuous interior that is not contingent on a visual paradigm of knowledge. This is provided by an interior shape of obscenity, and not by its subjective social construction.

The shock of obscenity is an immanent shock of non-knowledge, one that arrives both as the external contours of a middle term (circulation around a nucleus) and in the destruction of the exterior's visual paradigm. Obscenity is matter's nuclear encounter with continuity. When ffrench says, "The moment of the sacrifice, the moment at which discontinuity passes into continuity... is essentially not seen," this brings the unknowableness of the nucleus as an immediate phenomenon to conscious experience in an anti-ocular way: the nucleus cannot be stably split and observed by an instrument.⁶⁶ That means the moment of sacrifice turns to feeling and sensing substance rather than visually determining the spectacle of the object. In violent sacrifice shock is a form— a sensible thing— of logical reification that is internal to sacrifice's obscene structural presence.

It becomes possible to view the overlay of nucleus with the event of sacrifice as a muscular contraction of an organ where the tense becomes the expanded. Muscular contraction and release are a pathological rendering of a materially-generated body.⁶⁷ Sacrifice is integral to developing a comprehensive understanding of Bataille's work because of how it addresses the external form of material itself, and how it relates to sensing as knowledge. If Bataille is regarded as a philosopher of the formless, then sacrifice has no theoretical role to offer, its emblematicism is performed as a surplus spectacle to Bataille's general cosmogony. However, sacrifice at all times and in all social contexts addresses objective form. Here the object of the scientific perspective, the knowledge object, or, the conscious and *ipseous* human self, presents itself as a knowable parameter in counterpart to

⁶⁶ ffrench, *The Cut*, 118

⁶⁷ For more detail of the subaffective flow in relation to the bodies it generates see Thomas Nail, *Theory of the Image* who describes the conditions that generate the event as ones that: "occurred just beneath the level of sensation in the bodies they compose. Yet, it is precisely the advent of the intersection and connection that makes possible stable and the higher orders of images and affects. At the level of the event, not only are there no sensible objects or things but also there are not even any affects or qualities (texture, colours, or sounds) of objects. Before qualities, affects, and images, there are first flows of matter that must already be capable of intersecting with one another. This is not a chronological sequence but rather a logical one. Flows and folds always coexist, but since folds are made flows, there is a logical or material primacy to the flows." Nail (2019) *Theory of the Image* (New York: Oxford University Press), 35

sacrifice. Bataille invokes scientific objectivity as a formal logic for movement's intimate understanding, he describes this latter as a 'clear consciousness':

Only in a world where the thing has reduced everything, where what was once opposed to it reveals the poverty of equivocal positions – and inevitable shifts – can intimacy affirm itself without any more compromises than the thing (...). the fulfilment of *self-consciousness* in the free outburst of the intimate order.

[T]he condition for achieving clear self-consciousness is science, which is the attainment of a clear consciousness of the real order (i.e., of the world of objects). Science is closely tied to the autonomy of things. And it is in itself nothing but the autonomy of the consciousness of things.⁶⁸

Science survives in the nucleus of the material shape, as its irreducible authority; sacrifice overlays with the nucleus, and so moves centrally to Bataille's materialism as an organising principle, where, by aligning authority as impurity in political, sacred, and scientific mode it aligns to material susceptible to a single yet intrinsic systematic authority, rather than a disparate set of extrinsic instrumental orders. The instrumental mode of logic is summarized as immanent and impure, but present as a thing, and affirmed as a thing (a whole thing) by sacrifice. Sacrifice is now placed into a context of addressing form itself as a discontinuity, as in addressing the form of the intercessionary instrument. Sacrifice negotiates material knowledge as objective discontinuity on behalf of the universal continuous. Sacrifice overlayed with the nucleus this way permits itself as a middle term addressing the discontinuous on the very level of its failure to be continuously situated. Sacrifice's action against form is therefore an action against form's authority as a hegemonic dimensional total, a thing, or an object of (non)knowledge. The Hegel-derived conception of being as shape is addressed on grounds that shape's visible verifiability, its knowability, is morphic. Whilst not disagreeing with Hegel, and in fact affirming the preconditions for coming to presence as shape that attraction creates, sacrifice affirms attraction-to-shape as a causal authority so that it may be destroyed. As with Hegel, this makes sense most compellingly in the visual register, where externality and validity are control paradigms, and are indissociable with objective form.⁶⁹ To overlay the instrumentality of the nucleus

⁶⁸ *Theory of Religion*, 94-95

⁶⁹ Of interest here is Bohr's comment to Planck: "You have spoken about such an eye; but it is not a question of what an eye can see; it is a question of what you mean by knowing." David Favrholt, (ed.) (1999) *Niels Bohr: Collected Works Volume 10: Complementarity Beyond Physics (1928-1962)*, (Amsterdam: Elsevier Science B.V.), 33

with sacrifice is to overlay the coming to knowing as a concrete form of authority with an encounter with a destruction of the visually verifiable aspect of this form: its exterior determinability. The ritual of sacrifice happens as the exterior conception of the nucleus, and the event of sacrifice as the nucleus' internal substance. The result is to shift the locus of relative knowability to the within of the event of consciousness.⁷⁰ The spectacle of external contemplation is detached from the act of situated contemplation, Bataille recalls this in materialist-universal terms:

[E]ven if human existence is really in the process of now discovering the universe that sustains it, this existence must acknowledge the universe as a spectacle external to it or else deny itself. How, indeed, can it claim to identify with the rapture of the heavens, acknowledging itself as spectacle viewing itself, when the fact of looking presupposes that the viewing subject has somehow escaped from the rapturous movement of the universe.⁷¹

Bataille's project for base materialism connects with his notion of sacrifice at the point of discontinuous form. This shape, when considered externally, has material definition to its thingness which it shares with systematicity, and with ipseity's attentive consciousness and embodiment. The law which makes it distinct, which makes it isolable or perceivable as different, fully formed and systematic and not indifferent or entropic is perceived as morphically finite, whereas its internal dimensions are absolute and inadmissible. Sacrifice opens out this distinction to a new contemplative aesthetics, moving the expression of totality from a register of dominion exercised in form and shape, to one of a total sovereignty, which is totality's onto-political expression as free continuity and momentariness:

Nowhere do we find a *totality* that is an end in itself, that is meaningful as such, that doesn't need to justify itself by pleading its usefulness for some other thing. We escape this empty and sterile movement, this sum of objects and abstract functions that is the world of the intellect, only by entering a very different world where objects are on the same plane as the subject, where they form, together with the subject, a sovereign totality which is not divided by any abstraction and is commensurate with the entire universe.⁷²

⁷⁰ By doing this Bataille breaks with a parameter of visual control, criticised by Kojève, which is sought by the "scientist which is "aimed at those who seek an "aperçu" of an object secured by a distant, simple-or-undivided Whole (Ganze) which has an overview of itself." *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, 171-72

⁷¹ Bataille, and, trans. Annette Michelson. (1986 [1938]). "Celestial Bodies" *October* 102, Spring 1986), 75-78, 76

⁷² *Accursed Share Vols II & III*, 112

Sacrifice in Bataille is motivated by, and yet affirms, the impurity of authority's form; because authority is expressed in the material, its agglomeration is coterminous with the physical form of its thingness. Form of substance and authoritative finitude are the same thing. Sacrifice destroys thingness; sacrifice destroys authority. This object is our human perceptual veracity; we, as finite individual consciousnesses, as *ipseous* reason, are victim of it. This is because to be materially individuated is to be commodified and therefore owned by a perceptible exterior envisaging. "Being a thing means being somebody's thing; and in that object, an animal or a man may be things, but they are things belonging to some man."⁷³ Bataille takes affirmation as an entirely new way of achieving the recognition that was contingent on a visual or ocular external paradigmatic structure that he associates with epistemological knowledge. How this works in sacrifice rests on a close reading of the ritual in terms of its power relations. Rather than observe the totalised verification of victim as object, the dominion of the sacrificer and the absolute act of ritual murder, Bataille's sacrificer enters the ritual in a way that he/she exchanges consciousness with the victim. In this way, a facet of being's movement emerges once again as the shape of a complementary dynamic that forms the totality of the ritual: ceaseless movement becomes ceaseless exchange, resulting in a fusion between subjective and objective positions at the interior of the event. Material affirmation initiated by the acceptance of the thing's object-form by the sacrificial compact is directed towards the interior of the compact. The calibration of the objective world as perceptual distance is transversed. Moreover, the dominion of external form— object-ivity— is transubstantiated by the violence of sacrifice and inverted into its interior as sovereign-continuous contemplation: "the external violence of the sacrifice reveals the internal violence of the creature, seen as loss of blood and ejaculations."⁷⁴

iv. **Affirmative destruction of form: internal extension of substance**

Affirmative destruction of form persists with a post-spectacular internal extension of the substance of a destroyed form. This builds on the idea of sacrifice's anti-ocular destruction by

⁷³ *Eroticism*, 160

⁷⁴ *Eroticism*, 91

positing a post-sacrificial self-intimate destroyed substance which continues to function as a dimensional expression with no exterior component. Sacrifice ends form by destroying it, but affirmation means the extension of the destroyed object persists as substance. In this way the volume of the thing acquires its own cohesion as an autonomous materiality, not subject to the ligatures of perceivable form. The evidence for Bataille's construction of this is located in his description of what might be termed sacrificial exchange, or substitution. Bataille initially regards the executioner-priest as an object that meets the victim who is a subject. At the same time, the victim is obliged (by the affirmatory device of the sacrificial compact) to know itself as a discontinuous object. In *Inner Experience*, as will be presently be shown, Bataille treats this relationship in terms of its spatial inter-relational aspect. Three distinct agents meet each other, their encounter can be viewed as the external dimensions of objectivity, or the object-form. Bataille's universal 'I', which he is equating with a continuous consciousness, is humiliated into servility as an object form, the *ipse*. However, the *ipse*, with its commodified status, may now circulate promiscuously, in a way that Bataille equates with a "proud master". Yet, in itself, the *ipse* knows nothing of itself and the (also objective) world in which it circulates. Bataille's tripartite formulation sets up the dimensions of an encounter where agency becomes a surface or enclosure for his 'middle term': he is re-inscribing the atomic 'compound' discussed previously, in the form of the nucleus. Their entanglement is derived from humiliation, but also from knowledge, and also from authority, because, as Bataille puts it, the entanglement that sets out this middle term is "casting middle terms into darkness" where the *ipse* engages in renunciation of itself.⁷⁵ It is the object that announces that it does not know itself: but it now has the autarkic authority to make this proclamation on its own behalf. The exchange of the I from a continuous universal sense to a commodified circulatory and unknowable sense, rather than having some foundational meaning, is better understood as a circumnavigation of the external contours of this middle term that Bataille introduces. Giving this term a theoretical dimensionality is evidence of the meeting of materialism and sacrifice. Circumnavigation inscribes a theatrical and voluminous dimensionality onto theoretical

⁷⁵ *Inner Experience*, 115

dimensionality. Sacrificial ritual takes this dimensionality as its external contours, and becomes an analytical assimilable materiality.

Sacrifice/the middle term/the nucleus sets itself out as a general platform or manifesto for the destruction of a dimensionality that can be visually determined by extension. The external theatrical dimensions of sacrifice are where the verifiable agents of sacrificer and victim enter theory. Initially they recognise each other, and this spectacular determination acts as an affirmation of an external form of ritual, where the internal substance of ritual is the contingency of the individuated thing. (That which, discontinuous, is impure/pure, that which is to be sacrificed, and or returned to the continuous of sanctity). Recognition acts as knowledge, which is resolved to the visually verifiable totality offered by determinacy of form. This passes from the form of thing (recognition) to the form of ritual (affirmation). Visual recognition confirms extension, then affirmation uses this extension to effect an exchange of subject and object. As this exchange occurs and re-occurs, its oscillation fuses subject and object, and this process of fusion is generated by the passing of any notion of form between objective recognition and ritual affirmation. Because of this, the static proposition of the discontinuous, which applies equally to the subjective consciousness and its objective perception as the *ipse*, is jeopardised: “The destruction of the subject as an individual is in fact implied in the destruction of the object as such...”⁷⁶ The object destroyed is, in a devolved sense, preserved as a (unknowable and nonvisual) ritual form.

v. Affirmative destruction of destruction: generativity of non-being

Affirmative destruction of destruction suggests this latter materiality can be developed as a candidate of a new type of substance that emerges from sacrifice, with immanent authority, as a paroxystic form of shock. This way of emergence within a pre-cognitive environment suggests shock’s immanence and substantive shape makes it an object of knowledge of non-being, or/and an object of non-knowledge.

⁷⁶ *Theory of Religion*, 104

In material terms Bataille populates the external tegument of this term with the figures of the sacrificer and the victim, the 'I' and the *ipse*, but he reinforces the notion of extension with an internal dimensionality that is the blade-wielding arm of the executioner. The difference in subject/object consciousness exchanges along an internal vector defined by the reach of this extended arm. The limb is the internal tension of sacrifice: "The one who sacrifices is himself affected by the blow which he strikes— he succumbs and loses himself with his victim."⁷⁷ With the intimacy of executioner and victim, it is no longer possible to 'be' as a subject in a world that is distinct (an 'object' world) because the object that is the world has exchanged places with the 'I' that is the subject.⁷⁸ At the same time, the system that is distinct from the being which it describes also exchanges place, or rather, fuses, so that all being is absolutely systematic, whilst it is simultaneously sensible and destroys itself as exoterically perceivable. The dimensional here is a substantive creation as a vehicle for thought, a way of thinking materially, or thinking within base materialism. But now thinking occurs not as perceptual extension, which is form, but as inhabited sensate dimensionality, mattering. Considered externally, as spectacle, the subject and object appear to perpetually exchange to the point of exhaustion, giving an impression of an inversion of surface tension that occurs only in the space of the ritual, where dimensional space occurred previously. Internally, they fuse; there is no further possible externality to Bataille's cosmic systematicity. Fusion is Bataille's term for an immersive internal substantiality, where this interior aspect of being exists as "an identity of the object and the subject (the known object, the subject that knows)."⁷⁹

The materiality of mattering's esoteric onticity is fluid and corporeal. The sacrificial arm is an organ that holds apart and holds together being's interior. This posits the arm-that-holds-the blade as the internal coherence of the affirmed and destroyed object; this is the vehicle Bataille deploys for thinking materially about sovereign being. The arm separating the executioner from the victim is the connective tissue of their exchange. Equal to its beatific violence is the spirit of orgy: this, the arm

⁷⁷ *Inner Experience*, 153

⁷⁸ "Intimacy of Executioners and Victims" *The Accursed Share Volume I*, 51-52

⁷⁹ *Guilty*, 20-21

that embraces the lover(s), is the cohesive vector dynamic that stops interiority from simply falling away from interiority.⁸⁰ Bataille states,

If the being that I embrace has taken on the meaning of the totality, in that fusion which takes the place of the subject and the object, of the lover and the beloved, I experience the horror without whose possibility I cannot experience the movement of the totality.⁸¹

This politicises fusion as an intra-material sensorium rather than an ocular or instrumental external authority, because it is without authority, or anarchist.⁸² There is a ‘totality’ of movement and movement’s shape, a unity of dynamic and morphological phenomena that is a-synthetic, in that it is internally immanent in a realm of sense. Agency, the external conception of the action of beings, is subsumed within itself, by itself.⁸³

⁸⁰ See *Accursed Share Vols. II & III*, 129 “Unlimited Fusion, the orgy” and, “In the orgy, fusion let loose abolished shame.” *Eroticism*, 134; For an explicit connection between an exchange of bodies during the sex act and sacrifice, see, “From Religious Sacrifice to Eroticism” in, *Eroticism*, 89-93

⁸¹ *Accursed Share Vols. II & III*, 118

⁸² “In us laughter is always ready which makes us stream forth into a renewed fusion, breaking us again at the mercy of errors committed in wanting to break our selves, but without authority this time.” *Inner Experience*, 11

⁸³ This develops back/forward towards a contemporary image of physical science established by quantum entanglement and Barad’s theory of intra-action and transmateriality. See, Adam Kleinman, “Intra-Actions: Interview with Karen Barad” *Mousse Magazine* 34 (2012), 76- 81. For a reading expanding terms described here beyond collapsing ipseity (which here we argue is both collapsed by sacrificial destruction and affirmed as not collapsed perpetually), in terms of an “ongoing reconfiguring of spacetime-mattering in an iterative reworking of past, present, future integral to the play of the indeterminacy of being-time.” see Karen Barad, “Transmaterialities” in *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* (Durham: Duke University Press) especially 411. This seems to provide a political copola that bridges the problem of subject-object relational instrumentalism indicated by Bohr, and theories that don’t accept this as an intellectual proposition, and which concentrate on autonomous material enactment, such as Agential Realist ontology also propounded by Karen Barad. Barad’s position can be summarized in her own words, as, “According to my agential realist ontology, or rather ethico-onto-epistemology (an entanglement of what is usually taken to be the separate considerations of ethics, ontology, and epistemology), “individuals” do not preexist as such but rather materialize in intra-action. That is, intra-action goes to the question of the making of differences, of “individuals,” rather than assuming their independent or prior existence. “Individuals” do not not exist, but are not individually determinate. Rather, “individuals” only exist within phenomena (particular materialized/materializing relations) in their ongoing iteratively intra-active reconfiguring.” “Intra-Actions: Interview with Karen Barad”, 77

Part Three: Movement and Value: Towards a Rule of Form

i. Duality as generative dynamic.

This section returns to the generative process in the context of its movement of substance within a material being whose affirmed/destroyed extension-form was described in the previous section. The argument develops Bataille's duality as critical to generative process. Duality, or dualism, leads the argument epistemologically from a Hegelian consideration of materialism, and negation's role in systematic formation, through to Bataille's active and autonomous negation, which becomes a substance of autonomous negativity, whose movement signals substance's interior generative process.

When the word (materialism) is used, it is time to designate the direct interpretation, *excluding all idealism*, of raw phenomena, and not a system founded on the fragmentary elements of ideological analysis, elaborated under the sign of religious relations.⁸⁴

Bataille's version of materialism excludes ideality from a political perspective rather than an excision of the concept of concept. From the outset, his ideas propose 'raw phenomena' as an autarkic prospect, one where meaning and its animation are politically situated in the material rather than ideologically on an interpretative outside that would be a causal agent. Thought must be liberated from hierarchical ideals in which the vestigial power of God's authority resides. Instead, the material form is re-animated as an equal partner in thinking about existence. It enjoys a prominence where, now, all thinking of existence can be done with, through and in this new material, its matter, its form and the form of its mattering:

If one thinks of a particular object, it is easy to distinguish matter from form, and an analogous distinction can be made with regard to organic beings, with form taking on the value of the unity of being and of its individual existence.⁸⁵

Bataille empowers materiality's own substance to make him an offer of existence. This empowerment means Bataille places faith in the form of matter to suggest a total metaphysical system

⁸⁴ "Materialism" *Visions of Excess*, 15-16

⁸⁵ *Visions*, 45

in the physical realm: moreover, that this system can *know* intrinsically, and can communicate being from the within of material. As will be developed in subsequent chapters, communication of this knowledge occurs through understanding being's shape and its movements in its emerging patterns across social, sexual and psychological structures. The shape of movement is understood by sensing its non-logical difference. Visually-determined recognition is abnegated in terms of a practice of thinking and sensing, and this means, that shape and its *thingness* can be encountered in a singular manner, through its material encounter, only at a point of extreme jeopardy where the singularity of the thing is its risk of perceptual determination: determinacy's sacrificial point. The intrinsic relation of form to matter cannot itself be perceptually determined, except through sacrificial destruction of the form of the thing of perceptual knowledge.

At the same time as this counter-perceptual general form, Bataille sees in it, and emerging simultaneously to it, a second, systematic form. Bataille writes that the development of dialectical materialism "has escaped systematic abstraction" but that its starting point is "absolute idealism in its Hegelian form" and that "materialism...is above all the obstinate negation of idealism, of the very basis of *all* philosophy."⁸⁶ He extends this as part of a re-worked Gnostic dualism: altering the emphasis on negativity, from dialectic and synthetic components of a system of knowledge, to a dark, creative, evil and base material.⁸⁷ Although Bataille himself contests that "the Hegelian doctrine is above all an extraordinary and very perfect system of reduction, it is evident that it is only in a reduced and emasculated state that one finds there the *base elements* that are essential in Gnosticism."⁸⁸ He regards Hegelian reduction as being to ideals, which carry the legacy of God's stipulatory power in the structure of their hierarchical application, whereas Bataille's own reduction is to material phenomena, the raw things that are discussed in the previous section. For Bataille the negation that Hegel opposes to idealism, materialism, is therefore *ideologically* contaminated as a "ground." That is, a conceptual ground that supports the conceptual systematisation of metaphysics.

⁸⁶ Ibid. 45 (Bataille's italics.)

⁸⁷ See Pierre Macherey, *The Object of Literature*, 125-130 who suggests this motivation of reading Gnostic dualism as a rejection of contra-dialectical unity, although not its subsumption within materialism.

⁸⁸ "Base Materialism and Gnosticism" *Visions*, 46fn

By contrast, Bataille sees in the dualist construct offered by Gnosticism something that allows him negativity that does not ground itself in negativity, thereby recuperating itself as a positive. Bataille's negativity has autonomous groundlessness as a political principle.

Tony Corn has criticised Bataille's negativity for its stasis, arguing that Bataille does not need to escape Hegel's system, and moreover, that his negativity does not work, is *unemployed* and "far from marking a liberation vis-à-vis Hegel, is presented, rather, as the exact determination of what this experience should be."⁸⁹ But, rather than static, what Bataille seeks, or how he wants to put negativity to use, is as a material *without an exterior reference*. Material has internal motion as already discussed, Bataille sees this as the generative principle of being's substance, but it also has political autonomy in a way that Hegel's negation does not because it does not require the external confirmation and validation that a ground offers. Substance's interior motion exhibits difference from itself. It can penetrate and enter itself in folds or loops that are brief events. Bataille describes a version of this as "impalement", saying, "As soon as Proust's teacup is taken for what it is— God's fall (the fall of transcendence) into the ridiculous (into immediacy and immanence)— that teacup becomes impalement."⁹⁰

What Bataille shows through this analogy is the equivalence of movement's substance: God's fall is substance; the ridiculous is substance and a teacup is substance. As God's fall emerges it does so through the materially ridiculous, and the teacup of Proust becomes a fold where being's substance has entered itself. Negativity is the material that encompasses all these analogues, and, in fact, they do not differ materially: this is an image of substantive being penetrating itself. Understanding these things, as equivalence, is a mode of knowing, but the movement of impalement is an emanation of a fold of being's movement that iterates as an inhabited body, the body of a moving substance.⁹¹ The body is a dimensional space that is only generated as a material construct by impalement or penetration, which is anterior to it: substantive being has not separated from itself.

⁸⁹ " Tony Corn, "Unemployed Negativity (Derrida, Bataille, Hegel)" Boldt-Irons, *On Bataille: Critical Essays*, 84

⁹⁰ *On Nietzsche*, 64

⁹¹ Here Bataille's expression of movement in being owes a debt to Lucretius (60BC) *De Rerum Natura (On the Nature of Things)*. For a detailed exposition of the philosophical origins of the motion of being and thought see Thomas Nail (2018), *Lucretius I: An Ontology of Motion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press)

If the human is a movement *interior* to being and is not subject to exterior cause then this does not seem to be the case for human perception. Consciousness asks Bataille the irreducible question: why can ‘I’ not be continuous, or, more exactly, why am I subordinate to the authority that obliges ‘me’– the ‘I’ that I am– to discontinuity? The human is in an absolute relation to the dominion exercised by discontinuity, so the very authority which insists on empirical discontinuity is the one that keeps the human alive.⁹² To be dead is to re-join continuity, but only in an absolute sense. So, the sentient human is subordinate to this irreducibility. What opens out in base materialism is not a grand scheme of complexity and heterogeneous difference, but actually a pre-syntactic basis for addressing this absolute relation through its ‘communication’– an equivalent basis for exchange of material and its knowing– that leverages the irreducible presence of difference into a mode of political autonomy.

Bataille addresses binary negation in this context; not that an ipseous ‘self’ is separate from a continuous ‘truth,’ but that human perception is in constant flux with an intrinsic motion of being. The duality of this flux is essentially predicated on the between of knowledge and non-knowledge (where the former is determined position and the latter a continuity that Bataille associates with death and eternity). Rather than dialectical synthesis and recuperation Bataille portrays this duality as itself eternal, and therefore unoblittable, using the language of the Gnostics who, like he will latterly, develop a cosmogony where nonknowledge emerges systematically (as mysticism). Bataille argues that, “the spirit farthest removed from the virility necessary for joining violence and consciousness is the spirit of ‘synthesis.’”⁹³ Bataille moves from Hegel by proposing the *same* systematic tension as dialogical opposition, but instead of developmental movement, that is, synthesis, he suggests Gnosticism’s dualism as a non-developmental oscillation between two poles.⁹⁴ The flux in Bataille’s

⁹² Which, in other words, means that the human must also attain the authority of her own animation, implicating her in mastery. Bataille describes this animation as “dramatization”, and associates it with the nature of irreducibility (“an uncontested element of value...if there is a value in us): “One can say only this: that dramatization necessarily has a key, in the form of an uncontested (decisive) element, of value without which there would be no drama, only indifference. Thus, from the moment when the drama reaches us, or at least if it is felt to be touching mankind generally in us, we attain authority, which causes the drama. (Similarly, if there is an authority, a value in us, there is drama, for if it is so, it must be taken seriously, totally.” *Inner Experience* (Kendall translation) 17-18

⁹³ *Theory of Religion*, 109

⁹⁴ For an excellent summary of the development of systematicity up to this point, see Johnny Golding, ‘The Courage to Matter’ in, Johnny Golding, Martin Reinhart and Mattia Paganelli (2020) *Data Loam: Sometimes Hard, Usually Soft. The Future of Knowledge Systems*, Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 450-486

negativity moves away from itself in a way which is through itself: its sense of internal direction, rather than measurable in terms of conventionally visible Euclidean geometry, is a possible cartography of interior difference, or a monstrous dualism between two poles that are not antipodean, but are nested one within each other's extension. Because being is in movement, its movement oscillates between these poles, but it does so internally. The image that is inevitably generated is that of a sphere, such as the Earth. But it is the interior of the sphere that preoccupies Bataille's external consideration. Oscillation of the generative principle arrives at a substantive form of being which cannot be ideal, but, abstracting from Spinoza, can be infinite.⁹⁵

Being oscillates between these poles of self-difference; Bataille's principle of systematic movement can be abstracted from this in an applied way: as forms of difference.⁹⁶ Polar antipodes do, however, start to coalesce around unknowability and systematic definition: in substantive thought this is a difference between an inhabited non-knowledge and a recognised and determined position. The poles resolve themselves around thinking through externality, in terms of its contingency on (and emergence from) an interiority of being which is autonomous from it. Being's interior is prior to, and independent from, its exterior, which only emerges from it as definition. Bataille discusses this in terms of duality in a review of Simone Pétrement's "Dualism in the history of philosophy and religions":

This clear position of an *external* dualism (where of both principles one is outside the world) in front of the *interior* (where both principles, good and evil, are each in the world) allows Simone

⁹⁵ In the sense that Spinoza understands the whole of substance to be circular (a form not existing in nature), but one whose interior dimensions are capable of hosting mathematical, and, specifically, Euclidean geometrical development. Spinoza *Ethics II*, Scholium to Proposition 8. Spinoza reaches the idea of mathematical rationale inherent in substance through this relationship, which will be further developed in a Bataillean context in the next section. Developing the circle further towards a poly-dimensional form, towards body rather than a sphere, Spinoza describes an essence of God to be found in the human body (Proposition 22 EV), see David R. Lachterman, "The Physics of Spinoza's ETHICS." *The Southwestern Journal of Philosophy* 8, no. 3 (1977): 71-111. Accessed August 2, 2021. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43155186>. Especially the section concerning Descartes, 90-92

⁹⁶ In the sense that erotic action is generated by polarity, see: "Sadomasochism is not a form of assault. It is a consensual activity the involves polarized roles and intense sensations." Pat Califia, (1981) "Feminism and Sadomasochism" in, Heresies Collective (1981) *Heresies: A Feminist Publication on Art & Politics* Vol. 3 No. 4, #12: Sex Issue. 30-34, 31. Califia's exposition of polarity and the visibility of lesbian sadomasochist acts as a materialised example of the political problem of objective definition under discussion: where the erotic is not static, and the need for political visibility and identity therefore contradicts the erotic flow of those seeking ways of being recognised. The next chapter will trace the theoretical into its embodied dimension, and although this is not a thesis about the political expression of lesbian sadomasochistic identity, and is about Georges Bataille, the central concern with continuity and eroticism as a response to the death of a patriarchal god makes this, and especially embodied atheology, a shared concern.

Pétrement to reduce to the second the first. If one “starts by positing the dualism of good and evil, it is impossible to understand why this dualism is always linked to that of transcendence, of hope and matter, of thought and ignorance. On the contrary, if we begin with the notion of transcendence, it is easy to deduce from it the dualism of opposites, and the principles of good and evil. The transcendent means the *distinct*, the *separate*. There are then two orders, and soon two substances in us, for we are bound to these two orders, and the more distinct they are, the more their correspondence within each of us must be distinct. There are two principles at the interior of the world of sense, for we are in the world of sense [...]”⁹⁷

Pétrement supplies Bataille with a way of thinking materialism with an internal duality that precedes transcendent thought. The external reductivity of ethical principles, such as good and evil, are subsumed to an interior of being as poles of substance’s oscillatory motion. Bataille might describe this as ‘debased metaphysical’ materialism inasmuch as the principles of metaphysics are not negated or discarded, but instead are registered as an internal sense of substance’s correlation. This starts to develop dualism in the sense of a non-oppositional pair, where the pair’s duality is a mark of movement and oscillation rather than negation and development. The correlation between good and evil is a fluctuating value internal to being’s substance.⁹⁸ Good and evil are simply internal polarities which describe the oscillation between them, as arbitrary as negative and positive are in explaining movement’s internal difference. Oscillation is perpetual, total, substantive and generative. The effect of this installation is an accessible moral equivalence of principles: whether between good and evil or positive and negative, they are never really separate, and they are opposites but not opposed: they are simply different. All authority lies within this correlative motion, as irreducible totality. There is an independence of material and concept from hierarchy, and intra-substantial motion creates and donates a sense of autarchic empowerment to an ontic substantive motion that moves through itself as difference without separation. Dualism, Bataille says,

has become the clear notion of two principles, of the same nature although opposed, acting upon one and the other at the interior of a same whole, that the opposition is the closest to being overcome, because the opposites are correlative and cannot be thought of one without the other.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ *OC XI*, 200-201 my translation. The original extensive quote from Simone Pétrement is a citation from Bataille, writing in *La Critique sociale*, reviewing Pétrement (1946) *Le Dualisme dans l’histoire de la philosophie et des religions*, (Paris: Gallimard), 105-106 (*OC XI*, 198)

⁹⁸ “Base Material and Gnosticism” *Visions*, 45

⁹⁹ *OC XI*, 201 my translation.

Where dialectical opposition recognises terms via that which is not, thus asking negation to rely on an external perspective in its process of verification, dualism's movement between its polarity is, Bataille says, internal, and its dynamic—trembling, or, perhaps, rapid oscillation—in contrast, abnegates structural stipulation in favour of

rupture, absence of relations, incomprehensible ways, [which] being in essence a shaking, does not leave the possibility of a restful spirit: the doctrine or process of a sudden awakening or decline.

However, transcendent dualism contingent on its conceptual expression is a:

dualism derived (dualism inside the world of principles) which facilitates a proliferation of gross myths and superstitions, or, on another plane, calls for a reduction in the unity of monism.¹⁰⁰

Evil is oscillation, not as a degraded or lapsed state, but one that "does not have to answer before god."¹⁰¹ Bataille's materialism is a creative, evil matter, but it is autonomous rather than hierarchical. Bataille equates it with Gnostic tradition because its baseness "is a question of not submitting oneself, and with oneself one's reason, to whatever is more elevated, to whatever can give a borrowed authority to the being that I am, and to the reason that arms this being."¹⁰² Gnostic negativity is Bataille's political technology that develops a different kind of ontic knowing from the blank rejection of "I have refused to submit, therefore I am."¹⁰³ Bataille is quite careful in segregating the intellectual lineage of Gnosticism from the Greek model (the "Hellenistic spirit") regarding the latter as an "illegitimate" and "nauseating" principle.¹⁰⁴ Gnosticism, by contrast, heralds an "active" principle of matter, and moreover one that has an "eternal autonomous existence as darkness."¹⁰⁵ This darkness indicates towards a way of knowing that is not visually verifiable; knowing without

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ "Base Materialism and Gnosticism" *Visions*, 49

¹⁰² *Visions*, 50

¹⁰³ *Accursed Share Vols II and III*, 252

¹⁰⁴ *Visions*, 47

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. 47

externality, knowledge cannot be verified in its former way; instead it must be sensed differently, intuited, smelled, tasted, and heard. Bataille defines this darkness as "not simply the absence of light, but the monstrous *archontes* revealed by this absence." Within the vicissitudes of dimensional-nesting itself, these archontes reveal their presence in light's absence presumably in the same way God does, by speaking out and by moving their voices across the dark space. That matter, or base materialism, is generated by this Gnostic dualism allows Bataille to separate matter from reason and offer it as a replacement logic: "I do not admit that my reason becomes the limit of what I have said, for if I proceeded in that way matter limited by my reason would take on the value of a superior principle."¹⁰⁶ Idealism is "senile" and "dead matter, the pure idea, and God in fact answer a question the same way."¹⁰⁷¹⁰⁸

What the shaking within the image of Gnostic materialism illustrates is dualism in the sense of a rubbing together or fricative engagement between substance in and of itself: a sense of intuitive touching.¹⁰⁹ This friction, an 'active principle' rather than a *lack of lubrication* suggests friction in the manner of *frottage*: more than one material presence comes into communication with another presence via a contact generative of mutual erotic charge. Struggle in the physical sense rather than the intellectual or social sense is part of this generative abrasion; struggle and abrasion are integral to

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. 50-51

¹⁰⁷ "Materialism" *Visions of Excess*, 15

¹⁰⁸ This does not present itself as a problem when one is considering ecstatic states. Within these states the experience and the communication of this experience is immediate and obvious and then, durationally speaking, it is over. The association between the concrete state and its experience is immanent. But while this immanence might be integral to the experience— whilst not being superior to it— other concrete forms, whilst equally immanent, rely on this immanence for their validity. This material occupies essence but is validated by its own immanence. This sets out a similar tripartite political relationship that Gilles Deleuze remarks on regarding the platonic dialectical form in "The Simulacrum and Ancient Philosophy" inasmuch as the essence of the form is derived from that which is external to it, in this case, immanence. Gilles Deleuze, "The Simulacrum and Ancient Philosophy" in Deleuze (2004) *The Logic of Sense* trans. Mark Lester with Charles Stivale (London: Continuum Books), 291-320

¹⁰⁹ Totality here aligns itself with infinite continuity, but also infinite alterity. Karen Barad has observed that "All touching entails an infinite alterity, so that touching the other is touching all others, including the "self," and touching the "self" entails touching the stranger within. Even the smallest bits of matter are an unfathomable multitude. Each "individual" always already includes all possible intra-actions with "itself" through all possible virtual others, including those (and itself) that are noncontemporaneous with itself." Karen Barad (2015), "TransMaterialities: Trans*/Matter/Realities and Queer Political Imaginings" in *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* GLQ 1 June 2015; 21 (2-3): 387-422, 401

the movement of being within itself, as its political correlate. Frottage makes physics, politics and the erotic, a single point of contact at a molecular level for mattering (the movement of being) to occur.¹¹⁰

ii. **Totality is a problem and an opportunity**

This section develops the idea of dual sets of indexical values that are interior to substance which, because of the ways that they interact, create a possibility for a form of radical differencing. The development takes as its starting point Bataille's terms heterogeneity and homogeneity from "The Psychological Structures of Fascism," and argues that, because these two terms are interactive and not correlative, they must have independent indexical values.¹¹¹ This means that the interior value of substantive being's dimensional extension can be ascertained by these values, but only in terms of its internal dimensions of difference. Building on Bataille's methodological association of totalitarian/total structures, in the same essay, an authority formed this way produces a framework for a radically different materialism/materiality where substance can be both increasingly similar and increasingly different simultaneously, leading (im)possibility to insinuate itself into extension's morphic expression.

The nucleus/sacrifice overlay, discussed in the previous section, develops towards an object of knowledge whose sacrificial destruction displaces perception toward an essential interior sensing, whilst preserving in the image of its destruction an external morphological shape of being humanly conscious. Bataille addresses the essential problematicity of the object in his essay on totalitarianism, "The Psychological Structures of Fascism." Here again, Bataille uses a material concern, the realm of the political, to advance post-conceptual theory. In this way, totalitarian stands for totality, and this is associated with the moment of realisation, objective form, or clearly-defined consciousness, as a

¹¹⁰ Cf. Keguro Macharia (2019) *Frottage: Frictions of Intimacy across the Black Diaspora* (New York: New York University Press)

¹¹¹ "The Psychological Structure of Fascism" from, *La Critique sociale* 10 (November 1933): 159-65, and 11 (March 1934): 205-11. *Visions of Excess*, 137-160

moment of closure. Because of closure's static morphicity, its shape and its total objective power are displaced in the sacrificial action to a consideration of substance's internal or intimate condition. This applies equally to socio-political action as to the psychological states it illuminates. Moreover, the internal conditions of this displacement are perpetual, so that it seems to both happen, and not happen: form is ravaged by destruction, yet there is always form to ravage:

But if that meaning is now given, if, in particular, the behaviour of sacrifice, the least clear but the most divine and the most common, ceases to be closed to us, the whole of human experience is restored to us.¹¹²

The energy of sacrifice is directed from the surface of objective form towards the form's interior essence, toward a version of consciousness that is situated, sensible being, "it was only with the complete scission of the intimate and the real, and in the world of the autonomous thing, that science slowly escaped from the hybrid formulations of consciousness."¹¹³ What this displacement entails is a transfer of power between the objectivity of the object, toward an expression of inner experience's absolute authority; put another way, the subjective experience gains objectivity through, or as a consequence of, sacrifice. If sacrifice is the destructive force as applied to the knowledge object, its counterdynamic is the condition of generation within the intrinsic situation of being that produces the object in the first place. This generative force produces a shape of consciousness, as an external parameter or as a total and recognisable fact. The condition of being, which is indeterminable flow, therefore somehow becomes objectively realisable. Sacrifice and generative being are extremal points of each other's counterdynamic. This section develops a theoretical process that explains how Bataille imagines this counterdynamic to happen, a formulation that he describes, in *Attraction and Repulsion: II*, as "combat ideology."¹¹⁴

¹¹² *Theory of Religion*, 110

¹¹³ *Theory of Religion*, 96

¹¹⁴ Bataille compares his attempts to that of Hegel writing in *A Phenomenology of Mind* (1806) to "turn expressly in the direction that the essential can be discovered" by way of reconciling the material of the unconscious with a systematic method as an application of Freud and Mauss' work. Bataille, "Attraction and Repulsion II" *College of Sociology*, 116-117

Combat ideology's process can be summarized as a game of shape, or a radical sculpturing of form, one where form springs from a substantial "within" of material itself. Bataille relies on two intellectual tools here: a posited trans-material totality regarding method that he borrows from Marcel Mauss' 1925 sociological theoretical work *The Gift*, exemplified in the two "Attraction and Repulsion" lectures delivered in 1938 at the College of Sociology, and a development of material generativity as difference that he sources by reverse engineering a political-psychological analysis of social superstructure he derives from a notion of a possible total social form, in "The Psychological Structures of Fascism."¹¹⁵ Both texts use the totality of a social logic to leverage human subjectivity into its objective consideration.¹¹⁶ In developing this as 'combat ideology' Bataille reverses the analytical dynamic of sacrifice, where object form is destroyed in favour of an inhabited authoritative sensing, and develops a generative and fluid subjective unconscious projected onto a knowable surface of an object.¹¹⁷ Bataille's combat ideology consequently realises its systematic form from the flux of generation as a 'total object' which is, in fact, trans-total, that is, it has realisable impossible dimensionality, and, at the same time, its realisation as an object of knowledge is impossibly contingent. In the process of this realisation combat ideology establishes emergent modality as a form of precedent: emergence as a *form* of political action.

The dynamic of generation develops in the context of a morphological shape that is conceivably total and whose absolute generative event of flux is one of material self-difference: "The absolute is the greatest expenditure of energy made by man."¹¹⁸ What Bataille means here is that the generative process is absolutely total, it has a returning dynamic which forms this totality, yet it is a

¹¹⁵ The College of Sociology was, according to Denis Hollier, "started with a schema that was the same as Mauss" *The College of Sociology, 1937-1939* Foreword, xxiv. It was co-founded by Bataille with Michel Leiris and Roger Caillois, who together with Anatole Lewitzky, another founder, all studied under Mauss at the time.

¹¹⁶ An analytic, or "basic position" that Bataille prefaces by saying "However, the simple presentation of the structure of fascism had to be preceded by a description of the social structure as a whole." "The Psychological Structure of Fascism" *Visions*, 137

¹¹⁷ "The passion of the self, love burning within it, seeks an object. The self is only liberated outside of itself. I can know that I have created the object of my passion, that it does not exist on its own accord: it is no less there. My disillusionment changes it no doubt: it is not God-I have created it-but for the same reason it is not Nothingness." *Inner Experience*, 73

¹¹⁸ Bataille, "Absolute" in *Encyclopaedia Acephalia*, 31

process and its production has infinite extension. This presents two shapes: the ontological total which is a morphological dynamic, and the epistemological shape, which has a total morphic indeterminacy. Difference generation nonetheless remains within the parameters of a conceivable shape, where shape is not constructed and controlled by an external source, and nor is conception.

This difficult construction is supported by reference to Bataille's sociological method he abstracts from Marcel Mauss' *The Gift*.¹¹⁹ This seminal work to Bataille's oeuvre is usually discussed in terms of its contribution of the term 'potlatch' to Bataille's theory of General Economy; here the focus is redirected to Mauss' exposition of the "total social fact."¹²⁰ Mauss deploys an analytic derived from ethnological observation that can be summarized in brief as the total movement of all objects and obligations within a social form. The form in question is usually an encounter between tribes or clans, or their members. Mauss, however posits that this encounter is, to redeploy Bataille's term, a restricted encounter, where all movements can be ascribed to a totalised conception of honour.¹²¹ Mauss declares that this is a systematic set of movements that describe a human evolutionary stage that is pre-individual, and prior to juridical notions of discrete ownership of property.¹²² From this it is possible to claim that although Mauss posits a total social event, which does not have exterior obligations or circulations, it is not possible to determine the shape of this event: its morphological dimension may involve invisible or magical elements; it may involve agents or parties that are dead or yet unborn. The point here is not that the shape is determinable, but that it is

¹¹⁹ Marcel Mauss (1990 [1925]) *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*, trans. W.D. Halls, foreword by Mary Douglas (London: Routledge)

¹²⁰ For Mauss' "total social phenomenon" see *The Gift*, 3; for "total legal and economic services" see *The Gift*, 8; for an exposition of total obligation in excess of juridical phenomenon see *The Gift*, 49. For a definition of the total social fact, Mauss gives, "All these phenomena are at the same time juridical, economic, religious, and even aesthetic and morphological, etc. They are juridical because they concern private and public law, and a morality that is organized and diffused throughout society; they are strictly obligatory or merely an occasion for praise or blame; they are political and domestic at the same time, relating to social classes as well as clans and families. They are religious in the strict sense, concerning magic, animism, and a diffused religious mentality. They are economic. The idea of value, utility, self-interest, luxury, wealth, the acquisition and accumulation of goods –all these on one hand – and on the other, that of consumption, even that of deliberate spending for its own sake, purely sumptuary: all of these phenomena are present everywhere...." *The Gift*, 101

¹²¹ The role of honour in the development of a notion of adequation as entirety will be developed in Chapter Three through the contribution to Bataille's thought of Anselm of Canterbury and Thomas Aquinas.

¹²² Mauss describes his findings as "having general sociological value" "since they allow us to understand a stage in social evolution" "institutions of this type have really provided the transition towards our own forms of law and economy." "We believe, in fact, that we are in a position to show that our own systems of law and economies have emerged from institutions similar to those we describe." *The Gift*, 60-61

total. Moreover, its totality is externally unknowable, and in this it shares its poiesis of unknowable totality with the embrace of sexual ecstasy, where also, Bataille says:

We can keep this much in mind: that in the embrace the object of desire is always the totality of being, just as it is the object of religion or art, the totality in which we lose ourselves insofar as we take ourselves for a strictly separate entity (for the pure abstraction that the isolated individual is, or thinks he is). 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.¹²³

What Mauss says about order in his inclusionary process, is that it is "more than a juridical phenomenon: it is one that we propose to call 'total'. It is religious, mythological, and Shamanist..."¹²⁴ He develops this point in the context of a tribal elder who is not different to the tribe in which the elder is situated. Nor is the tribe or the elder different from the spirits of the ancestors in whose honour dances are performed. In this way, the singular body of the elder is the same as the restricted social body comprising (living) tribal membership as well as the unlimited body of tribal ancestry. Circulation of objects, obligations and services are always interior to the dimension of the total phenomenon. This can even reduce an image of phenomenal being to its most concrete form, when Mauss describes the former's totality in terms of a box:

All things are always, and in every tribe, spiritual in origin and of a spiritual nature. Moreover, they are contained in a box, rather in a large emblazoned case that is itself endowed with a powerful personality, that can talk, that clings to its owner, that holds his soul, et cetera. The houses, the beams, and the decorated walls are also beings. Everything speaks – the roof, the fire, the carvings, the paintings – for the magical house is built, not only by the chief or his people, or the people of the opposing phratry, but also by one's gods and ancestors.¹²⁵

This formulation allows method a dimensionally plausible range of conjecture, which underscores Bataille's aspiration for base materialism: its objective contemplation. Bataille says, about this kind of exchange: "being reduced to thinghood by the operation, all that [the human] can do is to undertake the *contrary operation, a reduction of the reduction.*"¹²⁶ Here the designation 'base,' in

¹²³ "The Object of Desire Is the Universe, or the Totality of Being" *Accursed Share Vols II & II*, 116

¹²⁴ *The Gift*, 49

¹²⁵ *The Gift*, 56

¹²⁶ *Theory of Religion*, 99

'Base Materialism' can be transposed onto, or from, Mauss' 'total.'¹²⁷ The invocation of totality unifies diverse spheres, such as myth, socius, pathology, and the concrete, as a basis for conjecture across all spheres. The basis is reductive to totality, as an object and a method of knowing. The debased total is therefore a limit that makes conjecture possible. It restrains a dissipatory logic that would diffuse meaning, in favour of a concentrated hermeneutics, informed by a totalised comparative basis.

Mauss contributes a heterogeneous relation of scale between human psychology and the social total. If the elder and the honour are not different, because they are exchangeable, then value is different from scale: then value is relevant in securing a scalar difference. Scale, or material difference, is not essential if value is congruent: psychology, religion, economy, circulate (as) objects that are comparative, and are generally spiritual, because their value is the same. Value transposes the human figure onto the world within a totalised conjecture of general spirituality. Moreover, the contemplation of the box is not a perspective of its external surface, or of its contents, but a sensing carried out from within the box itself, licenced as a contemplative endeavour by the internal parameters of its objectivity.

The power of circulation is total, as an honour or debt it does not dissipate, it is contained as if in this box. That is not to say that it does not consume, because the consumption of the circulatory dynamic is itself ceaseless (and this is the point of Mauss' theory– that this ceaseless circulation of objects as 'gifts' is a datum of information that indicates universal truth of consumption on the human level.) Bataille's development of this is that universal consumption or expenditure can happen in a total way within the human individual just as within the human social. Its totality is both restricted and is general in the sense that it can be systematised and yet is indeterminate in its perpetuity of consumption and/or expenditure. Exchange verifies that indeterminacy can be a total surface. Where

¹²⁷ Although Bataille published "Materialism" and "Base Materialism and Gnosticism" in *DOCUMENTS*, second year, 1 (1930), the evidence his materialism persisting can be found in later texts, such as "Equivalence and Distinction" (written circa 1949) where he states: "If I am to proceed with my exposition, I must clear up a difficulty. From a materialist standpoint, if subjective truth is disregarded, the material or tangible advantages are brought to the fore at the expense of the others. Thus, the material advantages of sovereignty constitute its substance, and it is to benefit from them that sovereignty is desired." *Accursed Share Vols II & III*, 329-361, 354

Bataille takes these is in developing images of internality or internalised surfaces of knowledge as proxies for a non-positive affirmation of circulation's– and movement's– indeterminacy; he does this in order to assimilate the unconscious, or the irrational, as materials into theoretical aggregation: as forms whose value is congruous between movement and objective stasis.¹²⁸

Within the total process circulation turns from subaffective oceans of unknowability to some kind of directly sensed tracing out of an event of the consciousness of the total. Bataille seeks to explain these two fluid states by developing terms regarding the relative power structure intrinsic to their determinability. For the subaffective, or thalassic, of unconsciousness, Bataille identifies its independence and terms this heterogeneous; for the latter state of conscious structure, dependent on external definition, he uses the term homogeneous.¹²⁹ These are on one hand a term for an essential political subjectivity, which corresponds to heterogeneity, as an authority derived from within intrinsic experience, and on the other, for a totality that corresponds to a superstructure of objective, or rather, totalitarian, 'fascist' authority, which is homogeneity. Thomas Nail, in his study of movement, observes an order in the projection of material onto a sensible or perceptible surface that entails the image of the human body. In much the same method Bataille shares with Mauss, it becomes possible to perceive the subaffective or heterogeneous via the apperception of an image of totality; this image is not discrete from the flows from which is emanates. For Bataille's essay this is the totalitarian, for Mauss the total fact, for Nail this image is the body. He explains,

This may sound both obvious and paradoxical at once, but the insensibility of the flows of matter are the condition of the image itself for the human body. This is the case both because there is an insensible matter that produces the sensorium of images and because there is continual flow of matter through the sensorium, much of which remains insensible to the sensorium itself – unfolded into images by the senses.¹³⁰

¹²⁸ Bataille states this goal explicitly, see "Attraction and Repulsion II" in, *College of Sociology*, 117

¹²⁹ The term 'thalassic' is used here, and throughout, to invoke a sense of the oceanic depth and motion of the unconscious, but the term also links specifically to the work of Hungarian psychoanalyst Sándor Ferenczi, *Thalassa: A Theory of Genitality*, which associates the emission of bursts of noise, such as stuttering to a 'seminal emission' as well as understanding the genital in terms of a cosmological significance. Ferenczi (2018 [1924]) *Thalassa: A Theory of Genitality* (Abingdon-on-Thames: Routledge), 9

¹³⁰ Nail, *Theory of the Image*, 38

The assemblage of “nervous and neuronal matter” must first “flow through and intersect with the body and brain. [...] The subject, object, and their images occur only as retroactive products of the more primary material process.” And, moreover, “it is only after the flows of matter have produced confluences (events) that a durable image of them becomes possible.”¹³¹

By comparing the theoretical methods of Nail to Mauss it becomes possible to posit that a durable image of the event of confluence is precisely the same projection of the unconscious subjective onto a totally realisable object-form that is Bataille’s counterdynamic response to affirmative destruction of sacrifice. Bataille creates with a totalising methodology an advance form of the continual flow of matter by anticipating its internal exchange with a total-image. The value that coheres this is the generative principle itself, and this value is an isolable inflexion point.

iii. Movement of Authority: different forms of value

This chapter closes by drawing together the problems of the form of the limit, of authority, and of the motion of the intimate substance into a different way of encountering authority that alters Bataille’s ontopolitical system to its materialised expression of difference. However, the way this happens is so radical that it destabilises hegemonic notions of being– and especially being embodied– in favour of a material expression of being other. By doing this it conforms to the requirements– “of secondary importance”– set out by Bataille in “The Psychological Structure of Fascism” where he states:

It is necessary to posit the limits of science’s inherent tendencies and to constitute a knowledge of the non-explainable difference, which supposes the immediate access of the intellect to a body of material prior to any intellectual reduction.¹³²

Bataille’s access to a body of psychological material provides him with a methodology for thinking ontologically which does not have recourse to abstraction.¹³³ This access provides his

¹³¹ Ibid. 37-38

¹³² *Visions*, 141

¹³³ Cf. Footnote 1. “As a piece of information, it can nevertheless be insisted upon that the following descriptions refer to *actual experiences* and that the psychological method used excludes any recourse to abstraction.” *Visions*, 160

ontology with a total substance whose static determinacy and intimate motion Bataille parses down through an examination of two conditions of its being, both linked to the way authority and ontic substance work together. By linking this back to the way that authority is associated with extension in an irrevocable way, it becomes possible to develop a new way that the intrinsic movement of substance in being both differs from this stipulative dimensionality, yet is equally irreducible in its ontic presence. Moreover, by separating the two types of authority, Bataille juxtaposes them in a fricative way, which, as will be shown, creates a complex geometry as a form of onto-political thought from material circumstances. This shape, and its dynamism, occurs within materialism's substance and announces the alteration of Bataille's thought's expression from a debased metaphysics of motion to a new way of understanding difference, a way that is poised at the limit of the non-explainable, yet which accesses the psychological in a way that does not reduce it to intellectual assimilation. This represents a critical change in approaching Bataille's thought: whereas universal expenditure is a metaphysics of motion, the development of total substance, as will presently be shown, allows thought to express itself as a radical understanding of being as a politics of material differencing. Prior to this, thinking thought's movement has been elusive because of the problem caused by conceptual externality in general and recognition in particular: Bataille's vision of motion was of surrogate images disappearing into the landscape as viewed from a speeding train.¹³⁴ The development to be made presently, by directing focus on the forms of authority that Bataille materially delineates, incorporates the inassimilable elements that escape systematic objectivity into a theory of total substance as difference. Bataille's materialism arrives at a point where he can think difference without thinking of one object in relation to another, in other words without thinking discontinuity. Difference instead comes as a complex form— which, as will be shown, is actually a dynamic and persistently-altering metaphysical extension of being's political interior.

¹³⁴ Bataille describes his own process— his thinking and its workings—as “infinite turbulence” that, “like a landscape glimpsed from a speeding train—what could be seen was always simply their dissolution into movement. I'd see them reborn in other shapes, accelerating at catastrophic speeds.” *On Nietzsche*, 182-83

Bataille divides the material world into two realities: the reality of homogeneous elements and the reality of heterogeneous elements; these realities are not of the same order. Bataille describes these as:

Homogeneous reality presents itself with the abstract and neutral aspect of strictly defined and identified objects (basically, it is the specific reality of solid objects). *Heterogeneous* reality is that of a force or shock. It presents itself as a charge, as a value, passing from one object to another in a more or less abstract fashion, almost as if the change were taking place not in the world of objects but only in the judgements of the subject.¹³⁵

This aligns homogeneous reality with the problem of extension, discussed previously, specifically, that being's material expression is an authority whose problem is centred on its physical state of determinacy. In other words, the problem with determinacy in being is its objectivity, and its failure to account for the inassimilable elements of reality, the heterogeneous elements that Bataille describes as a charge, force or shock. However, Bataille's analysis also develops the latter, in terms of its ontological difference from the former. This development builds an image of inassimilable elements from undifferentiated and various (the "unspecified"), toward a focus on the general 'effervescence', or 'force' that accompanies them. Inevitably, this implies the elements' motion, and this motion, or affective charge, has an authority that is different from the static authority present in the extension of objective or homogeneous reality. Bataille describes this heterogeneous force as an 'imperative' which is a specific way of describing an authority that is intrinsic to its power to move, and which Bataille states is not contingent on any external consideration, and so avoids the authoritarian problem that has been introduced by extension (and which is maintained in homogeneous reality). Bataille says about this reality: "in no case may heterogeneity receive its law from without."¹³⁶ This intrinsic authority is a way of being that is autonomous, 'being for itself' and not governed by externality. Bataille states that the imperative has a 'moral' dimension, by which he means 'purity': he develops this as follows,

The pure *having to be*, the moral imperative, requires *being for itself*, namely, the specific mode of *heterogeneous* existence. But this existence precisely escapes the principle of having to be

¹³⁵ *Visions*, 143

¹³⁶ *Visions*, 147

and can in no case be subordinated to it: it immediately accedes to *being* (in other words it produces itself as the value *being or not being* and never as a value that has to be.)¹³⁷

Unfortunately, this escape from stipulatory ‘having to be’, the hegemonic form of the ontological, is short lived, because the charge, force or shock, as discussed previously in considering the paroxystic event of the unconscious, associates itself with the body by way of the burst. The burst is an encounter with the ‘specific reality of the solid object,’ – the logical form of homogeneity, and is defined as a solid object by its muscular contraction, and/or its auditory form, as much as by Bataille’s preference for spherical form. Nonetheless the burst does not negate the effervescence of shock, but rather there is some form of structure that acts as an interface in an encounter of homogeneous and heterogenous realities; this interface is, Bataille tells us, a geometric reach into the attentive consciousness. Using the military as an example, "Standing at attention can be analogically considered as a tropic movement (a kind of negative geotropism) elevating not only the chief but all who follow his orders to the (geometrically) regular form of imperative sovereignty."¹³⁸

Reading through the concrete forms of Bataille’s analogies, it becomes possible to wonder at what precisely are the implications of a geometrically regular form to imperative sovereignty. What Bataille seems to be reaching for is a surging basis for emergence (negative geotropism) of a geometry of shock of human embodied attention as an encounter with consciousness as an imperative form. The attention of the parading soldier is the militarisation of the attention of the human consciousness. He adds, "Honor and duty, symbolically expressed by the geometry of the parades, are the tendential forms that situate military existence above homogeneous existence as imperative and as a pure reason for being."¹³⁹

Rather than a recursive abstract, a getting back to conceptual duties, tendentiality here progresses the paroxystic impulse towards what Bataille calls ‘unification’: here ‘military experience’ is Bataille’s development of the problem of extension and ‘having to be’ as form. The military

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid. 151

¹³⁹ Ibid.

analogy serves to provide Bataille for double cover with honour and duty accompanying militarisation's 'craven crimes', but unification is the crime of the encounter between homogeneity and heterogeneity that results in the crime of authority where being is reduced to a unit or form of a human being. Military existence is thus criminal impoverishment at the same time as it is post-abstraction duty and honour. Bataille explains this:

While impoverished existence is necessarily produced as a multitude and homogeneous society as a reduction to the common denominator, the imperative agency – the foundation of oppression – necessarily develops along the lines of a reduction to a unit in the form of a human being excluding the very possibility of a peer, in other words, as a radical form of exclusion requiring avidity.¹⁴⁰

The encounter between the two authority forms in Bataille's analysis shows the emergence of the form of shock and its coming-to-morphicity as the sphere of Bataille's *Story of the Eye*. The way this encounter happens as a reduction to the unit of the body recalls the emergence that Nail identifies as a post-participle of the folding and unfolding that best describes a generative principle. The encounter between the two realities is how bodies are generated, how bodies are a unity of the impoverishment and glory of military existence, which is a crime that authority commits by hegemonic supplicancy. The problem of the body is the problem of science's failure, and that is now expressed, Bataille suggests, by the material body as a problem of being excluded. The unit of human form is a radical form of exclusion; this is a foundation of oppression.

Yet congruent with Bataille's advance of the problem of extension into its corporeal expression via subconscious emergence is a tiny part of this theory which destabilises its whole problematicity. At the heart of the encounter between homogeneity and heterogeneity is the fact that these realities are different from themselves, even unity is subordination of one by the other and so, effectively, sameness and difference are agentially separate. The implication of their agential segregation destabilises the problem of ontopolitical extension by altering the notion of difference itself.

Difference is typically expressed as a single index of value. The greater the difference of a proposition the greater, borrowing Bataille's terms, the exclusion between the possibility of a peer relation. By reducing being to a unit in a form of a human being exclusion implies an irreparable

¹⁴⁰ *Visions*, 148

discontinuity between peers. If the value of difference drops, then— again, typically— sameness occurs and the peer relation increases correspondingly. Bataille’s material theory of homogeneous and heterogenous reality contains an element that eradicates this congruity. Bataille states: “The mode of *heterogeneity explicitly undergoes a thorough alteration, completing the realization of intense homogeneity* without a decrease of the fundamental heterogeneity.”¹⁴¹

What this means is that the radical form of exclusion that is the human body can find itself subject to intense homogeneity without decreasing its heterogeneity. This means that whilst the body takes shape, this shape may respond to diffuse or inassimilable elements; in other words, the radical form of exclusion that is a body may also be other bodies, or might include other modes of being. Heterogeneity sponsors this radical othering, as shown, by authorizing it within an autonomous, or interiorised, law not ‘received from without.’ Moreover, the materiality of this proposition, as a part of Bataille’s analysis, can also be understood as its whole point. Bataille says that, “In heterogeneous reality, the symbols charged with affective value thus have the same importance as the fundamental elements, and the part can have the same value as the whole.”¹⁴² This means that the body, and its parts, are exchangeable or interchangeable, by way of an identity in value: precisely the identity argued for by base materialism as communicative democracy or economic fluidity. The corporeal has a total substance, because its internal and rejected elements, such as, “the waste products of the human body and certain analogous matter (trash, vermin etc); the parts of the body; persons, words, or acts having a suggestive erotic value; the various unconscious processes such as dreams or neuroses; the numerous elements or social forms that homogeneous society is powerless to assimilate,” can be exchanged for an intensified geometrical expression of embodiment, and this— as a unit of reduction— can be radically exchanged with other units of reduction, or other inassimilable forms in-and-of being.¹⁴³

¹⁴¹ *Visions*, 151 (Bataille’s emphasis)

¹⁴² *Visions*, 143

¹⁴³ *Visions*, 142

The body therefore acts as a conduit for exchange, or rather, is fluid within the sacrificial conduit, as a material fulcrum of being's difference, which appears as motion. The body has fluidity because of this radicality; it is an imagined form as contrary operation to thinghood, because as discussed, in the previous part of this chapter, it answers Bataille's call for a 'reduction of the reduction,' and Bataille's body both forms and formulates its own combat ideology.¹⁴⁴

The way that Bataille structures this, on the edge of science, as stated, is by the radicalisation of dimensionality caused by the breakup of a single index of difference. If homogeneity can be realised intensely and heterogeneity does not fundamentally decrease then there are two fluctuating values that do not correlate: to each, its index. Because of this it is possible to return to the geometrical interface with a radically different position on its relationship with a notion of its possible extension, that is, its internal and external dimensionality. If something material can be determined as having greater similarity to itself at the same time as greater dissimilitude then put another way, if something becomes more different from itself and more the same as itself then, in total, it expands: its internal dimensions increase, its surface area increases and it becomes morphologically larger, and this is both impossible, and, occurs materially in Bataille's radical envisaging.

Difference here must, then, have two distinct sets of values: 1) material can be more or less dissimilar to itself; 2) material can be more or less similar to itself. Because these are not reciprocal, they must have internal values. Both are brought in as separate calibratory functions: Bataille's object is not more homogeneous and correspondingly less heterogeneous. There is a difference in their correlation; this difference is expressed as two value spectra, the enumeration of which will be discussed in a later chapter. Bataille's materialism has an extraordinary flux where it demonstrates presence (augmentation of both indices simultaneously); and absence (attrition of both indices simultaneously). This has implication for the link between substantive conditions and a total determinable shape: substantive difference must be enacted on the volume, and this affects shape: it becomes complex. Complexity is marked as possible and impossible dimensionality, and since this

¹⁴⁴ *Theory of Religion*, 99

includes dimensions of possible occurrence, also in contingency. This complexity is a dynamic and persistently altering metaphysical shape of being's politically autonomous interior.

Where this leads analysis, is that when the generation of substance of being flows, (which has been already discussed in terms of struggle, friction and eroticism,) the folds of these flows emerge in definitive object-bodies in a non-idealised way. This indexical approach to difference shows how this happens. For example, one index may introject itself into the other whilst absorbing its adjacent index, cancelling itself whilst altering its form to realise itself as the other, creating bodies of unimaginable dimensional difference, including a differencing of dimensionality itself. In turn, this creates modes of differencing where contingency (that is, in this context, the possibility for definitive individuation) authorizes itself to not exist. Bataille describes:

This mode of intermediary formation that characterizes the state penetrates imperative existence through reaction; but, in the course of this introjection, the proper form of homogeneity becomes - this time for real - existence for itself by denying itself: it becomes absorbed by heterogeneity and destroys itself as strictly homogeneous from the fact that, having become the negation of the principle of utility, it refuses all subordination.¹⁴⁵

The formation of state as the state of formation illustrates the relation of material and its form of being. The irreducible element of authority, its defined form, is a sacred impurity and a crime, yet one whose occurrence is consubstantial with humanity's perception of its own existence. The prohibited shape of the objective material thing has a logic, albeit a criminal shape, and this is its morphology. Bataille, as the next chapter will show, appropriates the rules of the logic of its shape and lends them, as a non-ideal structural geomathematics, to a calibration of a materialist-theistic system, that he calls atheology.

¹⁴⁵ *Visions*, 147

Chapter Two, *Emergence, Morphology, Difference: The Systematic Moment*

Introduction

This chapter pursues a version of materialism developed in the previous chapter to show its motion: how “matter as an *active* principle” operates as a generative principle within substance that creates forms, which shape emergent points of difference.¹ The chapter will demonstrate how the materially active alters within the materially generative by the process of emergent definition. This definition is a new form of determinability whose shape comes to presence as a systematic methodology within, and as, the non-cognitive embodiment of combat ideology. This shape enables an atemporal instant and eternal version of time. As such this enables the formation of a sovereign moment, where momentariness is Bataille’s autonomous political stance and whose morphic logic, as defined by sections two and three, is of a perpetual dynamic system. Momentariness’s morphicity is where Bataille adopts a contemplative stance. The contemplative stance then, is non-cognitive, and what emerges as definition is a felt or sensed logic, yet one that has its systematic rules in non-occurring shape. The form requires the rules of geometry for its fabrication and these rules are the sacred authority that identifies its construction (in both the senses of the form of the object and its emergent poiesis) as sacred impurity. The chapter proposes atheology as governed and determined by rules of its own generative shape. It develops the argument in three stages: the first part considers matter and how generative matter is determined or marked as a political form. The second shows the way Bataille makes indeterminacy itself a substance that forms shapes that are independently dynamic of the rules of shape, and how this dynamism is atheology’s systematic component. Part three analyses the implications of this independence, by suggesting that external spectacle of material existence is a different operative dynamic to its internal cohesion, or difference-making.

¹ “Base materialism and Gnosticism” *Visions of Excess*, 47

Part One: Deviance and Morphology: Auto-generative Determinacy

i. Determinacy and mattering politically

This section considers matter's activity in terms of its internal generative capacity and how this relates to a possibility for determinacy that is intrinsic to a generative principle, establishing its authority as autonomous. This builds on Chapter One to suggest a materiality that is autogenerative, and, in turn, this implies that it has no requirement for external validity. Here the idea of theoretical production does away with the outright determinacy of a product of theory in favour of a generative process that nonetheless establishes a making of sense— a working of sense that does not participate in the logic of the tool— but instead generates its own momentary form in a sovereign, autonomous way.² As will be argued, the momentary is a mattering, where sense makes itself and this is a coming to a sovereign reality as a political process of substantive and embedded liberty rather than an intellectual operation whose action produces a deep and exclusionary cut between thesis and antithesis.³

The analytic structure of this part of the chapter takes diverse elements, situated throughout Bataille's work, to develop three points: first, the importance of the generative, which includes Bataille's wider theory of technical emergence; second, the link between the generative with the notion of 'atheology'; and finally, the way in which this Bataillean materialist notion of atheology informs – indeed re-invents—the ontological system Bataille will name as political economy.⁴ These

² This intent stays within the history of materialism. The move away from concept (or "idealism") was inaugurated by Feuerbach. Feuerbach, initially— like Bataille— a young theologian, had studied under Hegel in Berlin. His innovation would be to transform his teacher's notion of religion, and culture, into a more overtly humanistic, even anthropological trope. He denounced the form of Hegel's "idealist" thinking, as an oppressive logic. John G. Wright, "Feuerbach: Philosopher of Materialism," in *International Socialist Review*, Vol.17 No.4, Fall 1956, 123-126, 136-137. Transcribed by Daniel Gaido.

³ Cf. Marx's criticism of materialism: "The chief defect of all hitherto existing materialism— that of Feuerbach included— is that the thing, reality, sensuousness, is conceived only in the form of the *object or of* contemplation, but not as *sensuous human activity, practice*, not subjectively. Hence in contradistinction to materialism, the *active* side was developed abstractly by idealism—which of course, does not know real, sensuous activity as such. Feuerbach wants sensuous objects, really distinct from the thought objects, but he does not conceive human activity itself as *objective* activity. Hence, in "*The Essence of Christianity*," he regards the theoretical attitude as the only genuinely human attitude, while practice is conceived and fixed only in its dirty-judaical manifestation. Hence he does not grasp the significance of "revolutionary", of "practical-critical", activity." Karl Marx, *Theses on Feuerbach* Marx/Engels Internet Archive ¶1

⁴ See "object of knowledge" in *The Labyrinth*, *Visions of Excess*, 172; 'erotic object' in *Eroticism*, 130; atheology's move between the political and metaphysical see, "Aphorisms for the "System" in, *Unfinished System of*

three elements set out the problem of thought that, for Bataille, will crystallise around the objective form, though, as shown *infra*, this ‘objective form’ can only exist in its sense as a realised perceptual state. ‘Possibility of determinacy’ is often linked to autonomous authority— science that comes with an external instrumentality on one hand, and, on the other, the seemingly antithetical insistence by Bataille that inner experience is the sole value and sole authority.⁵ As will be seen, what complicates this stand-off between objective and subjective phenomena is that Bataille wants a human ontopolitical liberty that he terms autonomy or sovereignty, and this state of freedom conflicts with that of the sole, and therefore objective, authority he feels in the subjective inner experience.⁶

To address this problem, Bataille's work takes two paths simultaneously. The first is simply to describe the veracity of the "is" of the onto-political as a contradiction.⁷ The second is to attempt a new way of making sense of the momentary operation which achieves liberty from this first position by resolving through what is best described as a systematic meditation on the momentary, and non-knowledge, (which are not necessarily distinct states). This meditation— a science of the death of God— meaning, a new way of dealing with the problem of authority, is atheology.⁸ This part of the chapter depicts the genesis of this way of thinking in terms of how Bataille's sense-making has its own form of logical structure which pre-empts the intellectual operation. In other words, a logic that

Nonknowledge, 153-182, especially 161-163; and sovereignty in, “The Schema of Sovereignty” in, *The Accursed Share vols II and III*, 213-223.

⁵ Bataille makes his claim regarding inner experience as sole value and authority in *Inner Experience*, 7; for a discussion of science’s autonomy in regard to Bataille’s work see Jean-Louis Baudry “Bataille and Science: Introduction to Inner Experience” in, Leslie Ann Boldt-Irons, (ed.) (1995) *On Bataille: Critical Essays* (Albany: State University of New York Press), 265-281, especially 273-274.

⁶ “II. Experience, sole authority, sole value: It is no less necessary to oppose "experience" to the progress of science than to pull it out of a dogmatic slumber. The aim of "experience" is "experience" itself and not a certain knowledge acquired-without going through it-after the fact. One often studies "experience" with the help of written documents, without noticing that, without having reached "experience" oneself, one speaks of it in an empty fashion. "Experience" can no doubt become an object of science, like one psychological given among others, but this object's interest is clearly different from that of "experience" itself. Science apprehends objects in order to distinguish them one from the other and in order to grasp the constant relationships among them. "Experience" flees from knowledge of this order: it distinguishes itself as clearly as possible from discursive thought, which cannot [ENDS].” *Inner Experience*, 177-78

⁷ See, for example where he writes, “I believe that truth has only one face: that of a violent contradiction.” Bataille, “Note on the Deadman” in, Paul Buck, ed. (1984) *Violent Silence: Celebrating Georges Bataille*, trans. Paul Buck (London: The Georges Bataille Event), 25-28, 26

⁸“Define atheology: the science of the death or destruction of God (the science of the thing being destroyed inasmuch as it is a thing).” *Unfinished System of Nonknowledge*, 166

does not yet enter the prison of thought but contracts a viral sense of the immanent from the difference Bataille actually locates in the tension and movement between being's motion and the determinate position of perception.

As will be discussed, a shift in emphasis occurs from a 'determined thing of knowledge' to a 'contemplation of difference' as momentary continuity, and then to the problem of the mode of production, and therewith, as will be argued, the problem of political economy. Bataille's materialism is an onto-political economy that, as we will see, not only incorporates the concept of its own genesis within its material basis, but it does this as an example of (its) autonomous being. Destruction starts to make sense as definition, as destruction is one of a self-generated authority of one's own form of being:

The pain-rapture cannot be apprehended as a thing in this regard: it is a thing insofar as we apprehend it, but a sovereign thing, or rather this is *the* sovereign thing, this is the divine or sacred thing, this is the thing in which a destruction of the thing takes place. It is sovereign in that it is not subordinated to any rules. Consequently it is excluded from the will to apprehend it if one is oneself subordinate to rules. It is at first a lost will, the object of which is in itself a destruction of the object. But one is unable to want this object in order to destroy it. The destruction of the object is offered as grace. As in poetry.⁹

Rather than recognise power and offer a dialogic alternative, this generative materialism manifests its own power. What becomes even more wild and troubling, is that the very question of political economy is nothing less itself than an 'ontic' that in its generative emergence disrupts the very foundations of teleological metaphysics. The 'unfolding' of being rubs up against or (more traditionally) is in conflict with the ground of purpose. If material being or theory of materialism is distinct by way of its product and is purposely pursuing this product as a goal (telos) then this goal is a power relation that is oppressive of the individual momentary phenomenon of being, and the phenomenon is no longer autonomous.

The impact of the Bataille's move becomes clearer: it is left to the 'instant' to form a sole authority for a logic of generative materialism. Bataille describes this form as an 'erotic object' – an object that "implies the abolition of the limits of all objects."¹⁰ The way the erotic object emerges as a

⁹ *Unfinished System of Nonknowledge*, 160

¹⁰ *Eroticism*, 130

form is critical to understanding Bataille's entire project because the mode of emergence that it displays establishes precedent (in the sense of a juridical form, discussed in detail in Chapter 3) for the emergence of Bataille's systematicity. What this means for systematic atheology is not that it is an unfinished system of nonknowledge in Bataille's work as the title of a collection of his unpublished work implies, nor a system with an oppositional basis, as Joseph Libertson has claimed, nor that it is both a doubling and a rejection of Hegelian dialectics as Derrida has suggested, but that it emerges from within itself as an entirety with a perpetual operation.¹¹ What the erotic object also reveals about the system of perpetual operation is that its entirety is instantaneous. This means that the perpetual operation (which, like any system must have rules and limits) produces an entire instant, or the systematic ontological operation produces a condition of an experience of being without rules and limits, a continuous being, and this is expressed in the entirety of the form of the system itself.

Atheological systematicity is an instantaneous operation of the perpetual. Because of this the entire form of its operation can be accommodated in the instant: not just dwelling in the instant but generating its dimensions autonomously by its qualities, attributes or conditions of instantaneous operation. This is how being makes sense by mattering, and how, by contemplating its structural dynamics, the human encounters the impossible and experiences liberty within being. What is salient about the value in this form or mode of thought is its absence of reason. This makes each instant as much a mode of unthought as an object of nonknowledge. This matters to Bataille because of the insidious relationship between thinking, thinking durationally, thinking systematically and systematic understanding of being as a product of the attention devoted to the instant.

In the following extract, written in 1952, Bataille describes this problem in terms of objective knowing, but he also indicates towards a solution that involves a division of intellect between notions of attentive consciousness and contemplation. He asks:

In fact, how can we count on attention to grasp in ourselves a present outside of which nothing divine, sovereign or uncalculated is offered to us? Attention that takes the present for its object would necessarily entice us: toward this end, attention should first reduce the present to a future. Because attention is an *effort* with a result in view, it has the form of *work*, and it is

¹¹ Cf. Bataille, *The Unfinished System of Nonknowledge*; Joseph Libertson (1974) "Bataille and Communication: Savoir, Non-Savoir, Glissement, Rire," *Substance* Autumn, 1974, Vol. 4, No. 10, (Johns Hopkins University Press), 47-65. Jacques Derrida (1978 [1967]) "A Hegelianism Without Reserve" in, *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (London and New York: Routledge), 317-350

simply nothing more than a moment of work. We can work without attention, but the most inattentive work was first a consequence of attention brought to bear on a difficult operation. It is the effort applied to the discernment of a given aspect of an object. But if we want to discern this aspect, it is in order to change this object. We might not want to change anything in the *reality* of the object thus proposed to our attention, but at least we are then changing (at least losing) the consciousness we have of it: we are changing the insufficiently known object into one that is better known. In this way, attention paid to the instant cannot *in truth* have the instant itself as its object, because the assigned object is the instant in an operation before we make it better known, and consciousness, an end in itself, cannot *in truth* be consciousness insofar as it is an operation with an intended result, or as such it ceases to count as soon as it is acquired—unless we will one day have the opportunity to make the result known to others. This amounts to saying that in principle attentive consciousness is never contemplation in the strict sense: it engages in the unlimited development (endless servitude) of discourse. In this way, attention, if it envisions the instant, changes it, in fact, from what unconsciously escaped us, into what escapes us consciously, despite the attention we bring to it.¹²

What Bataille develops here is an association between a technology of perceptual acquisition of an objective form of knowledge, which is subservient to discursive thought, or intellectual assimilation, and this new term ‘contemplation’ that is capable of devoting itself to a consciousness of, as Bataille says, that which unconsciously escapes us. What this association forges, in an instantaneous emergence, is a materialised form of atemporal contemplation. That which escapes us is that which escapes thought, but not that which escapes affect. Affect happens in the present that is unthought, only sensed.

The distinction between the effort of attention and contemplation is a realignment of thought with the mode of unthought: contemplation here is the relaxed muscle of the eye, or the mindless submission to the dominion of orgasm, or the turbulence of violence. It is a subtle insinuation into the material realm of a different approach to durational substantivity of thought. Bataille explains it elsewhere in terms of a Hegelian systematicity, taking from Hegel a version of knowledge that, in scientific terms, he says is always contingent on an “*unfolding in time*,” a contingency that associates discursive knowledge with duration.¹³ Hegel comes to knowledge: thought’s approach is part of a developmental, and therefore durational process. Duration is, however, the privileged material of productive dominion: “it is *servile* to consider duration first, to employ the *present time* for the sake of

¹² Stuart Kendall describes this text, “The Sovereign” as “A letter Bataille wrote to Jean Bruno...published in *Botteghe oscure* 9 (1952):23-38, constitutes an introduction to the problem of atheology and to *La Somme athéologique* as a whole.” Kendall notes, however, that it was not included in the 1954 re-edition of *Inner Experience*, and appears only in *OC XII*, 195-208. *Unfinished System of Nonknowledge*, 289-90

¹³ *Accursed Share vols II and III*, 202

the *future*.”¹⁴ Durational material is material subordinated to a tendential utility; sovereign thought emerges from a totality from which it does not differ. This can only happen because the everything of totality is encapsulated somehow in the form of sovereign thought: this happens because sovereign momentariness and the infinity of everything share an atemporal substance that shapes, through immanent growth, the instant of sovereign thought. Bataille explains this:

Useful activity is the condition of thought (a durable thing, capable of changes), therefore sovereign thought must come out of the movement of growth and of the will, on the part of the subject-object, to be everything.¹⁵

For autonomous thought or being to be the total case the phenomenon must either have the momentary as its goal and therefore not be distinct from it— and this is ecstasy— or have no goal and no purpose at all. Nothingness and the momentary of ecstasy combine in Bataille's thought as a sacred counter to the conflict that thought-and-action has with purpose and subordination to a future productive outcome. Rather than opposing the sacred to a political economy, however, their presence as individual expressive phenomena *politicises* the sacred, making the sovereign moment a political economy of the instant, and *forming* a momentary with political implications.

The problem of autonomy's failure nonetheless re-states itself in the nihilism of the momentary— as a questioning of the necessity to write any of this down as materialism, why write anything at all, why paint or act or create anything that speaks of the momentary to another person or another time and another space. This is a problem of instrumentality, where human endeavour makes a tool of human thought and action.¹⁶ This useful endeavour for Bataille is profane because of its political subordination to outcome, rather than its quotidian use-value. Rather than having an answer, Bataille has a double space with the individual of the thought. The experience of the being phenomenon is one that is both interior to the phenomenon itself— in Bataille's terms, it is inner experience, and is objectively exterior to the world and existence as well. Whereas Bataille's cosmogony accepts, in his words, a 'unity of morphological and dynamic phenomena,' his

¹⁴ Ibid. 198

¹⁵ *Unfinished System of Nonknowledge*, 168

¹⁶ Regarding non-instrumental creativity, see the development of surrealist and Pentecostal invocation and automatic writing explored in performances by Ron Athey (2011-2018), in, *Gifts of the Spirit: Prophecy, Automatism and Discernment*

cosmogony's politicisation within the momentary sacred only accepts an internality without an exterior.¹⁷ This double space is a problem of the infinite to which atheology as meditation directs itself.

ii. Bataille's generative emergence

This section examines the ways that Bataille's thought extracts a form of the momentary from an economy of continuous expenditure. It develops how the making-distinct from the ongoing process involves a differencing and an authority of what decides what is and is not, that cannot be external to the process itself. Any process of extraction of the momentary form is complicated by the relationship between form and movement itself. The coming to form cannot be a static 'reduction to a unit', as discussed in the previous chapter, without excluding both form and expenditure itself, which become not-form. The process of coming to form, and with it, a definition of emergent coherence is, for this reason, itself continuous. The emergent approach produces Bataille's radical object as an ipseity that is not opposed to the movement by which it is produced. Emergence produces a form of continuous body. Developed in his 1957 work, *Eroticism*, Bataille's most coherent example of this is the erotic object, a continuous body where, as he states, eroticism

is a fusion, which shifts interest away from and beyond the person and his limits, [yet] is nevertheless expressed by an object. We are faced with the paradox of an object which implies the abolition of the limits of all objects, of an erotic object.¹⁸

The erotic object acts as a fulcrum of a theory of the continuous body where all limits, and by extension, all laws, are abolished; yet the reality of this gateway into continuity via the flows of erotic movement is that the shape of a portal can be achieved and even individuated. By tracing the contours of its process of individuation it becomes possible to determine the rules of its formation and also becomes possible to start to determine a systematicity to its embodiment that is a non-instrumental, yet still a form of, sacred logic. This way of thinking— in practice— is a way of noticing, perceiving and remarking difference that does not involve its recognition. A non-oppositional difference emerges

¹⁷ "Attraction and Repulsion II" *College of Sociology* 1937-39, 120

¹⁸ *Eroticism*, 130

in and from the erotic object of the momentary human ontic experience. The critical function of any threshold of its perception is that determinacy and difference happen in ways that are, because their non-instrumentality is located in the sacred, themselves autonomously generated.

Being's universality is as much continuous expenditure as the thalassic movements inherent in this expenditure. Bataille depicts a poetic image of something of the continuity of the primaeval in his early essay "The Pineal Eye," where streaming denotes an erotically-conjoined generative and decomposing energy:

In order to renew this tender pact between belly and nature, a rotting forest offers its deceptive latrines, swarming with animals, colored or venomous insects, worms, and little birds. Solar light decomposes in the high branches. An Englishwoman, transfigured by a halo of blond hair, abandons her splendid body to the lubricity and the imagination (driven to the point of ecstasy by the stunning odor of decay) of a number of nude men.

Her humid lips open to kisses like a sweet swamp, like a noiseless flowing river, and her eyes, drowned in pleasure, are as immensely lost as her mouth. Above the entwined human beasts who embrace and handle her, she raises her marvelous head, so heavy with dazzlement, and her eyes open on a scene of madness.¹⁹

A universal subaffective sense of a thalassic continuity begins in a poetic image of death or, as above, death as poetically generative. What this image illustrates is precisely the extent to which Bataille's continuity develops out of its universal materiality. Because Bataille is an essential materialist, the antecedents of being— chaos, entropy— are already in place as material unity, which is continuous and infinite. Developing this toward a theory of a generative principle is that, here, the theory does not require a distinction to be recorded between an abstract entropy and an onto-generic event of substance: Bataille's generative is already substantial; moreover, it is thalassic, in the sense that its substance is wavy, has waves, is oceanic.²⁰ Death occupies a version of substance that is pre-cognitive, or in an anthropocentric reading, pre-ontic. Death and the generative process is already in motion, already erotic, prior to the generation of being by its movement, as its currents turn furious. If there were an affective sensorium available, in the realm of a madness before consciousness, before

¹⁹ "The Pineal Eye" *Visions of Excess*, 85

²⁰ For more on Bataille's waves of the pre-ontic, see *Eroticism*, 15. See also *Inner Experience*, 129-130, 93, 67, and 50-51 for waves' continuous expression of being. For a contrary position on the event of generativity, see Deleuze "The Fold," where Deleuze describes the distinction between abstraction and the event of form in terms of a necessary "screen."

the existence of thought, perhaps nonbeing and being might look like, or feel like on the skin, an aerosol or mist-like swirl of matter as atoms whirl around in a furious Brownian motion. If one were to look— if one could look— all one sees is change, yet the mist is in contact with a skin, one smells and breathes it, it is total sensory immersion. Yet it is pre-sensible, and this image of death as endemic continuity also describes a mist of difference that comprises of latrines, swarming animals, venomous and coloured insects, worms, little birds, solar light, halos, English women, blond hair, splendid bodies, imaginations of nude men, lips, kisses, swamps, rivers, eyes, mouths, human beasts, marvellous heads, open eyes, because the mist is total dynamism: its substance will— eventually— move the experiencing subject.²¹ There is not an intercessionary instrument here, so this infinite and indefinite material motion is imaginatively speculative. If one conceives it, then it does not take place, because the mist accelerates, in an “absurd rush”, up until the point where it can be realised as a self.²² Human instrumental reason is not only counterproductive, it is impossible: subjective reality does not realise here because the ‘mist’ cannot be realised, without realising its own outside. Yet right in the final clause of this last sentence the absolute is a prohibition that is quite definite. This, prohibition-in-and-of-itself, because only prohibition, as an immanent substantiveness, can situate itself in relation to laws of extension. The application of law prohibits things, but this leaves nothing to prohibit prohibition. For prohibition there are no laws outside itself, it is totally autonomous. In incorporating prohibition into a theory of substance, it forms the object of the erotic with this autonomous sense, and the erotic object consists of the substance that is prohibition and thus implies the abolition (or rather, the non-existence) of all laws, including that which governs or limits the object’s form. This defines for Bataille the realisable thing of the continuous body of the erotic object.

Nonetheless, definition there is. Rather than a paradox, as Bataille calls it, this is the impure authority that slips, transgressively, into the image of infinite motion, as its wave, or as its fold.

²¹ This point of the list being made around ‘generative’ as emergence is to develop Bataille’s move towards its principle, which is that the unity of material movement of emergence is located in its non-ideal object-form. The list is therefore not a definitive list, and, in some cases, he simply denotes the generative as car, sewing machine, clock, but is an open principle – and its point has to do material’s order of antagonism with its own shape, and, as a consequence of this antagonism, how the generative emergence ‘starts’.

²² *Inner Experience*, 53

Because of this, or not, it doesn't yet matter, swirls stream into each other, split flows at certain junctures, concentrate or cluster or coagulate; or, these movements fold, and penetrate each other and as this happens, so does happening itself. Again, from *Eroticism*, Bataille introduces a notion of this realisable moment as a mark within the flow: as a barrier within a forward surge of generative being, Bataille thus concludes:

The forward surge of life may require the barriers temporarily, for without them no complex organisation would be possible, no organisation effective. But life is movement and nothing within that movement is proof against it.²³

Bataille states that proof of the movement of existence, that is evidence of its motion, is contained within it, by a momentary barrier. This barrier is the static movement from which movement can be determined, but its stasis as a barrier object does not mean that movement does not occur. Thought is not idealised, and therefore does not negate life's movement by being outside it. Description of the forward surge of life is a generative surge whose ontogenesis is marked, in Bataille's view by certain temporary barriers. The mark of a temporal barrier is the genesis of complex organisation: the wave or the fold, that signals the instigation of complex thought.

Bataille's generative emergence develops from fold, just discussed, as an aspect of a continuous body that realises only in retrospect it is a product of a generative process that is non-binary: this coheres emergence as both a form and motion of the generative. The generative process shares a certain percussive rhythm with Leibniz's articulation of the fold, and the way the fold does not solidify its generative product into discrete forms, with the inevitable binary distinction between process and product, or movement and form, but instead engages its generation in divisions in continuity that do not separate continuity from itself. This process is a folding/unfolding generative force, that Gilles Deleuze has described, in *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, in non-oppositional terms.²⁴ To examine this percussive rhythm the chapter compares the way Deleuze and Diana Coole

²³ *Eroticism*, 101

²⁴ Gilles Deleuze (1993) *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque* trans. Tom Conley (London: Athlone Press)

have presented similar ideas in the substantive and phenomenological philosophies of Leibniz and Merleau-Ponty respectively.²⁵

The process of folding/unfolding is one of inauguration where each fold iterates itself percussively from a realm of the subaffective as some kind of concatenation of perilous emergences with increasing determinacy or specificity in perceptual terms. Substance is propelled towards form by this forward surge crossing the barriers into a perceptual world in a way that its appearance as form seems mechanistic, a product of the pulsation of tension-release that appears as a series of objects that reference their prior iteration in a chain of emergences. Deleuze considers this in Leibniz's philosophy as an external determination. He further criticises this position saying that,

No doubt for Leibniz, internal individuation will only be explained at the level of souls: organic interiority is only derivative, and has but one container of coherence or cohesion (not of inherence or of 'inhesion').²⁶

The criticism of Leibniz's position that Deleuze develops on page 8 centres on the external action required to objectivise emergence. This sets parameters of influence for a debate that asks whether or not there is a binary relation between fluid being and solid forms, and, if not, by which authority is form determined as such. Leibniz will answer with the term "preformation" which indicates that from the continuity of the fold there also emerges a telic purpose to generative action, which pre-assigns future form to emergent pulses of tension-release. For Bataille's project for autonomy within being, telos is profanity: its tendentiality subordinates all movement to an unswerving temporal destiny expressed in morphological terms. This is proof *against* movement, because the generative only has the form at the end of its channel. Moreover, coherence in Leibniz's reckoning is an external manifestation of the form of this authority. Deleuze observes, "It is an interiority of space, and not yet of motion; also, an internalisation of the outside that could not occur all alone if no true interiorities did not exist *elsewhere*."²⁷

²⁵ Diana Coole, (2010) "The Inertia of Matter and the Generativity of Flesh" in Diana Coole and Samantha Frost, eds. (2010). *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency, and Politics*. (Durham and London: Duke University Press), 92-115

²⁶ Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, 8

²⁷ Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, 9

Deleuze's critique of Leibniz aligns to the political problems for Bataille: how to resolve the antagonism between autonomy of form and the authority to assign form when there is a pre-existing struggle between exterior and interior dynamics over the authority to designate the objective. It is worth remembering that Leibniz's work, occurring in the 17th Century, situates itself unreflexively within epistemology. Diane Coole's development of the thought of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, a near contemporary to Bataille, approaches the same aspect of the relation between flow and form from a contextual analytic more critical of any given perspective that pre-determines the course and outcome of thought. Coole focusses on the relation in language between noun and verb in the sense that these prohibit non-oppositional thinking by obliging a process of separation. Coole says that this,

identifies an enduring tension between accounts of nature's auto-productive genesis and those of its mechanical repetition. Merleau-Ponty addresses this tension by invoking a distinction between *natura naturans* and *natura naturata* that he traces to the twelfth-century Andalusian-Arab philosopher, Averröes. The first term may be literally translated as "nature naturing," that is, as producing itself, while the second may be translated as "nature natured," that is, created forms. The former is thus a verb, intrinsically and internally dynamic; the second, a noun, suggesting greater inertia and heteronomy. Much depends on their relationship, in particular whether the producing and the produced are aspects of a single process that is immanently generative of its own forms or assemblages [...] or whether these are distinct terms whose linkage is more or less contingent: for example, as cause and effect, maker and machine, force and form, subject and object.²⁸

Coole's point applies particularly vividly to Bataille, who cites inner experience as 'sole value and authority', of an ecstatic being, where, in Bataille's native French, 'to experience' does not exist as a verb. Bataille is forced by language to articulate a barrier or a prohibition, an object of ecstasy; he is obliged to reduce a continuous phenomenon to a determined product in the form of a noun:

l'expérience intérieure. Because of this Bataille's aporia is also one of enduring tension: something of the gerund remains in the noun, but the reverse is also the case. Their relationship is akin to that between barrier and 'forward surge': both are aspects of a single process. Bataille, in a lecture delivered in 1938 at the *College de Sociologie* describes "a unity of morphological and dynamic phenomena."²⁹ This unity arrives only for the lived experience. In other words, it happens only as a subjective phenomenon. Bataille senses internally and fluidly, that is, experiencing, yet needs to make

²⁸ Coole (2010) "The Inertia of Matter and the Generativity of Flesh," 97

²⁹ "Attraction and Repulsion II" *College of Sociology 1937-39*, 120

sense of experiencing's total mattering in a way that does not seek an exclusionary recourse an objective form of this unity's occurrence. The problem therefore is the exclusionary nature of the objective form. In the lecture, Bataille finds assistance from psychoanalytic technique. He explains that,

Under these circumstances our lived experiences may be considered to a certain extent to be fabricated. And it will be easy for me to show that such tampering and fabrication were necessary to become conscious of the essentially repugnant character of sacred things.³⁰

What Bataille takes here, from the *essentially* repugnant, is an ontic alignment of the repugnant with the repulsive, away from the sacred thing. This alignment records the generative process, with the sacred thing, therefore, as its generative principle. The generative force of essence, forces the material out and away, and in doing so creates an order. The fabrication of this production could mean two things: that it is mendacious because it is expressed in a language oppositional to the immanence of the chaotic nature of things, a view Bataille endorses in *Guilty*; or, that Bataille is proposing that the sole authority of inner experience can be expressed through a fabrication of a form, that the essential generative dynamic can create a logic of shape using the authority that is the property of the inner experience dynamic.³¹

Keeping in mind Deleuze's critique of Leibniz— that it can only express a substantive interiority to being through interiority's "invagination of the outside" (i.e., an internalisation of externally-situated interiority)— Bataille's fabrication of a 'unity of morphological and dynamic phenomena', construes itself as the 'shape' of movement, or, now recalling Coole's definition of separate terms, a heterogeneous image of the temporarily inert moment that is internally dynamic.³² Objectivity, that is, Bataille's barrier or his erotic object, shifts from an external perspective to the substantive generative force; moreover, the *fabrication* of the objective no longer relies on an ideality where essence and

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ For Bataille's dismissal of language's capacity to describe the essence of things, see "Two Fragments" in *Guilty*, 119. For a contemporary development of fabrication of validity see David Burrows and Simon O'Sullivan (2019) *Fictioning: The Myth-Functions of Contemporary Art and Philosophy* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press) especially 'Section 1: Mythopoesis to Performance Fictioning.'

³² Baudry describes this as an objectivity "beyond science" ...a new kind of objectivity where the instrumental impurity becomes the subject of the phenomenon experienced. See Baudry "Bataille and Science" in Boldt-Irons, *On Bataille: Critical Essays*, 273

validity might oppose the making, or fabrication of different forms of the real. The dynamism of change, via fabrication produces different realities. What fabrication permits Bataille is a unified form of difference, a form that differs and does not differ *from*.

The ‘unity of morphological and dynamic phenomena’ is a non-exclusionary shape of a continuous body, through which it becomes possible to contemplate being within its material plane, by contemplating physical unity: the morphicity of a self-referencing dynamic. This fabrication of an order of shape stands in for an authority of external coherence, but is, in fact, a tegumented surface of inherent and impure authority, generated by, and as an essential dynamism.

iii. Non-oppositional pairing, duality and oscillation: geometry of the mark

Generative emergence mandates a closer scrutiny to Bataille’s contribution to the non-oppositional pair. This is a term Deleuze identifies with the folding/unfolding dynamic of the generative principle.³³ Deleuze proposes examples of this pair as tension/release and contraction/dilation. These examples help identify Bataille’s compression/explosion as an example of a non-oppositional pair, and, as a consequence, establish their role in supporting the claim for a generative principle in operation within Bataille’s work.

In an overall epistemological depiction of generative ontology, Bataille differs from Deleuze’s image of Leibniz’s fold over the pair’s material expression. Deleuze has described ontological pliancy in terms of origami, but Bataille concentrates on the function of the generative move rather than its appearance. This function is a role he reserves, in “The Labyrinth,” for the three “objects of knowledge...an organ, a mathematical question, a juridical form”.³⁴ Identifying this trio as generative functions is a new way of introjecting dynamism into a Bataillean materialist epistemology. At first sight, Bataille’s definition seems static whilst generative potency is a dynamic phenomenon. But this is precisely the point Bataille is invoking when he describes morphological and dynamic unity: the

³³ Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, 8

³⁴ Bataille’s three “objects of knowledge...an organ, a mathematical question, a juridical form” cf., “The Labyrinth” *Visions of Excess* 172

object is already dynamic; it is a continuous body, because its generates its own form. Its autonomy is a political-authority form of the sovereign momentary. This autonomy plays out as a counterstrategy to recognition, which is discarded in its obligation to dialectical materialism on the grounds of its visual determinacy (which will be discussed later, at the end of this chapter) and its contingent master/slave hierarchical structure, developed from Kojévian interpretation of the Hegelian master/slave dialectic.³⁵ Recognition, for Bataille, fails because it preserves and does not destroy.³⁶ Recognition is an event of exteriority; to recognise is to reduce form to its exterior expression.³⁷

Any return to the poetic image of death and continuity, or the unrealisable and unknowable instant, is to return to its central unrepresentability, or ocular impenetrability. Jean-Luc Nancy refers to this as the “impenetrable heart of the between” where the between lies in that zone which is not past or future time, nor here or there.³⁸ But just as impenetrability offers a prohibition of the first degree, (a cannot enter rather than a should not enter), which inaugurates systematicity by the laws of its structural taboo, so here does impenetrability shield knowledge and definition from determinacy. Bataille’s Aztec heart sacrifice is the overlaying of death’s continuous image to the momentary between of Nancy’s heart.³⁹ Bataille states that,

It does not suffice to recognize-this only puts the mind into play; it is also necessary that the recognition take place in the heart (intimate, half blind movements . . .). This is no longer philosophy, but sacrifice (communication). Strange coincidence between the naive philosophy of sacrifice (in ancient India) and the pleading philosophy of nonknowledge: sacrifice, the movement of the heart, transposed into knowledge (there is an inversion from the origin to the present moment-the old path leading from the heart to the intelligence, the present one in the opposite direction).⁴⁰

The generative function of the heart-organ is compression/release, or beating. What Deleuze’s folding/unfolding explains about Bataille’s function is that knowing and beating are a dynamic

³⁵ See Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel: Lectures on the Phenomenology of Spirit*, 21-24

³⁶ *Inner Experience*, 141

³⁷ For more on Bataille’s renunciation of recognition see, Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, 335-339

³⁸ Jean-Luc Nancy and Richard Livingston (1991) “The Unsacrificeable” in, *Yale French Studies*, 1991, No. 79, Literature and the Ethical Question 20-38, 37

³⁹ “Sacrifices and Wars of the Aztecs” in *Accursed Share Volume I*, 45-62

⁴⁰ *Inner Experience*, 51

product of knowledge and nonknowledge which are, like the function that creates them, the movement of the heart, not oppositional. Instead, like the pathways that lead between intelligence and the heart in Bataille's words above, they are simply a strange coincidence. Bataille's organ, the 'object of knowledge' oscillates this coincidence, its beating creates a dynamic flow of information that is liberated from future obligation to the recognition binary. The beating organ fabricates its own autonomous form, a between of knowledge that is anterior to the intellectual operation, and this is permitted in the sanctity of the momentariness in which this all occurs (because there is no future obligation or debt to pay to recognition), by being inextricably linked with the heart's sacrifice (that is, expiation for the form that information or (non)knowledge has generated for itself).

Nancy's image of the impenetrable heart of the between offers itself to the unsacrificeable instant, its irreducibility to penetrative gaze is a prophylactic against instrumental purview and control. Bataille's political image of being inhabits the sacrificial instant, there is no outside of this instant from which to view the hardened heart. Intimacy is sacrifice because it finds itself a form of sense. Sensing is unknowing, is non-knowing, or knowing non-cognitively, in the absence of the intellectual operation. Bataille's erotic object is consequently sovereign:

Consciousness of the moment is not truly such, is not sovereign, except in *unknowing*. Only by cancelling, or at least neutralizing, every operation of knowledge within ourselves are we in the moment, without fleeing it.⁴¹

Having profiled the non-oppositional pair this section returns to look at the role of oscillation in Bataille, considered as a non-binary motion. Oscillation's motion is recorded by the fluctuating record of the between of taboo and transgression that is recorded in human material existence by incest. Transgression is identical to law for Bataille, it is a different kind of law. Rather than an oppositional pair, these two legal terms are generative outlines of humanity's inner experience that are projected onto a social canvas, where their authority is that which inscribes or describes the human. Bataille sees their relation as an 'expected complement' of each other, where,

Organised transgression together with the taboo make social life what it is. The frequency -and the regularity - of transgressions do not affect the intangible stability of the prohibition since

⁴¹ *Accursed Share vols II and III*, 203

they are its expected complement -just as the diastolic movement completes a systolic one, or just as explosion follows upon compression.⁴²

On the death of the monarch all social convention of prurience is replaced by frenzy, and people conduct themselves in orgies of sex and violence, and the same contingent relation to the taboo is the property of the festival.⁴³ Taboo and its transgression are both universally human, yet relative in their quotidian observation: licentiousness is strictly not permitted, unless a monarch dies, or a party or a celebration is announced. A non-oppositional pairing between taboo and transgression is a simultaneous mark-making of flux, where the vagaries of one and the waves of the other move toward and away from each other creating a channel of the human experience as a zone whose undulating boundaries are nonetheless recorded. Objectivity, or the ubiquity of taboo, is continuously contingent. The objective and subjective are in flux, and not only are they in flux, their flux determines that previously unknowable, impenetrable in-between, in a way that the in-between can have its indeterminacy and unknowability determined by the marks, or laws, of taboo and transgression.

The unexpected association between explosion/compression and transgression/prohibition provides support for a new, organic treatment, where the marks or values that make human social life what it is describe the contours of human experience of being. Generative flux, or oscillation in mark-making of the human contour means that there are (at least) two legally-determined and simultaneous states of being. Because these are *proscribed*, they are also *inscribed*, as outline of an absolute and intrinsic shape of deviance. A general being that differs only in and for itself, and, in oscillation, shows these deviations simultaneously by the outline shape of these marks, or limits. Although they are probably generated by the juridical form of knowledge rather than the organ of the heart, as Bataille implies in the passage cited above, in their materiality is a determinacy that leaves a mark as a way of knowing. They *engrave or chisel* simultaneous difference on the social body.⁴⁴ What their

⁴² *Eroticism*, 65

⁴³ See "The Festival, or the Transgression of Prohibitions" in *Accursed Share vols. II and III*, 89-94

⁴⁴ These words chosen to translate Bataille's '*buriner*' with its inevitable and deliberate homophone 'uriner'. In terms of marking the contour of the body, this second term will be discussed in the next chapter in the context of the figure of the 'wise girl pissing on herself.' For further discussion on these terms in the context of Bataille's punning, see Patrick ffrench (1999) *The Cut: Reading Bataille's Histoire de l'œil* (New York: Oxford University Press/British Academy), 99

simultaneity means in this context is not (yet) impossible states, but an oscillatory flux that is indicative of states— and shapes— of relative possibility: simultaneous ‘mark making’ – as a zone of objective definition that interferes with itself. Bataille’s intention here is to locate an objectivity that is non-transcendent, whose authority is generated from the human experience and describes its states in ways that articulate the forms of their essential moments. These states are not restricted to the formalism of pairs, but are moments extracted from social and psychological aspects of being as forms from the wider oscillation of erotic and ontic generative probability. Bataille creates a morphology of deviance for this extracted moment that marks continuity in a certain sovereign way as distinct from the unceasing limitless of energy motion and expenditure; in the process of this mark-making, Bataille marks an entire cosmogony. Prohibition is a barrier that marks a complex organisation— from a forward surge— of systematic thought.

The flux of prohibition is a morphological expression of taboo/transgression oscillation. Bernhard Seigert assigns monstrosity to oscillation itself, associating unimaginable horror with functional undecidability.⁴⁵ What is monstrous about an oscillatory space between taboo and transgression is not that it is culturally produced, and has a use and a value, but that it is defined as indeterminate. Because it is a sort of halfway point between a produced outcome and non-production it is neither profane, nor is it sacred. It is the impurity within the sacred realm that has, and is, because of definition, authority. Its monstrosity is both because it is an artefact of authority and because it has an indeterminate, or differing, form.

Where oscillation’s monstrosity applies to Bataille is the relative marks of being’s dimensional determinacy. If the erotic object has its extremal dimensions as a form of its shape marked by prohibition, and then has another form marked by transgression, this non-oppositional pair marks a double morphology with both sets of dimensions manifesting as real. The double does not quite work as an image of nested morphology, where one dimensional reality is embedded in or inhabits another,

⁴⁵ Bernhard Siegert (2003) *Passage des Digitalen. Zeichen-praktiken der neuzeitlichen Wissenschaften 1500-1900*. (Berlin: Brinkmann & Bose), 313; cited by Nina Samuel (2012) “The Visibility of Islands: On Imagination, Seduction, and Materiality” in, Nina Samuel, (ed.) (2012) *The Islands of Benoît Mandelbrot: Fractals, Chaos and the Materiality of Thinking*. (New York: Bard Graduate Centre: Decorative Arts, Design History, Material Culture), 25-26

but acts as a thickened surface of a morphological 'between' that oscillation calibrates: "The instability of forms, perceived in the rule of incest, will provide a means of grasping an object so mobile that it seems ungraspable."⁴⁶ For Bataille, the oscillation between prohibition in itself, or transgression in itself, is never more distinctly fabricated than by the incest taboo. With his thoughts on the assimilation made available by the marks made by this taboo, Bataille makes an explicit link between a universal prohibition and its non-absolute dimension. Incest taboo is ubiquitous, but is different everywhere, a point he makes in discussing incest's relational obscenity:

We cannot say: "this" is obscene. Obscenity is a relation. There is no "obscenity" in the way there is "fire" or "blood," but only in the way there is, for example, "indecent behavior." This is obscene if some person sees it and says it is; it is not exactly an object, but rather a relation between an object and the mind of a person. In this sense, one can define situations such that given aspects of them are, or at least appear to be, obscene. Moreover, these situations are unstable; they always include ill-defined elements, or if they have some stability, this involves a degree of arbitrariness.⁴⁷

Rather than showing obscenity in a transgressive, and therefore moral, sense Bataille presents it as a contravention of indeterminacy and of NOTHING. He says that in the human experience incest always happens but whether it is observed, or observed in the breach, it always happens as a law.⁴⁸ This fundamental aspect of human experience is a barrier, or a limit to humanity that marks the internal aspect of the surface of its inner expression. But not only does this mark-making define humanity (and this is incest's riddle) it does so in a way that is internal to humanity— it is not how humanity can be recognised, instead it is the extent by which humanity takes place for itself, how it defines itself, for itself, the implications of which Bataille describes in universal terms:

[T]he, "aim of solving the riddle of incest is a particularly ambitious one", its "veiled (..) formula may well imply the final ambition that links with knowledge the desire to reveal man to himself and thus to take over the potentialities of the whole universe."⁴⁹

⁴⁶ *Accursed Share Vols II and III*, 29

⁴⁷ *Accursed Share Vols II and III*, 54

⁴⁸ See "The Variability of Incest Rules and the Generally Variable Character of the Objects of Sexual Prohibition" and "Man's Essence Is Found in the Prohibition of Incest, and in the Gift of Women, Which Is the Prohibition's Consequence", in, *Accursed Share Vols II and III*, 54-58

⁴⁹ *Eroticism*, 198-99

The humanness at the heart of humanity is a function that generates the contours of its human dimension and these then are not marked in Euclidean terms and nor are they marked in language and culture but instead are marked, as law, by the obscenity of incest. The point with the incest taboo is that its dimensionality is not opposed to continuity in a static way but is itself in a generative oscillation of its forms (forms which, moreover can be nested within each other). The truth of the obscenity of incest therefore is not that it has a moral dimension but that it is a determinate surface of the human dimension at all. The possibility of a defining authority of the human for the human, even if its determined surface is in a monstrous flux of possibility, is obscenity's veracity. Bataille describes this embodiment of a monster in terms of perceptibility:

On a practical level this impression of incongruity is elementary and constant: it is possible to state that it manifests itself to a certain degree in the presence of any given human individual. But it is barely perceptible. That is why it is preferable to refer to monsters in order to determine it.⁵⁰

The form of this recording is not restricted to the social body, but can also be directed at the prohibited space of the indeterminate or unknowable. In fact, taboo-structure authority can form a shape of the unknowable, which then emerges from continuous movement in the same way as taboo and transgression emerge from the human, as a non-different form of authority. Bataille's intellectual pre-occupation with incest uses its mark-making to show a determined shape of humanity's essential indeterminacy. Or, in other words, he uses incest (and necrophilia) to show a determined shape of humanity's essential generative principle of movement. This shape of flux is a shape of movement captured in a momentary form: an inflexion point, as a momentary form of humanity's 'temporal this,' an inflexion point that that realises the horror of repugnant animality "as the very point where the totality of being takes form."⁵¹

⁵⁰ "The Deviations of Nature" *Visions of Excess*, 55

⁵¹ *Accursed Share Vols II and III*, 118

Part Two: Differing the Miracle: Dynamism and Morphology as Systematicity

i. Convergence of the momentary and the systematic on a morphology of generative function

Bataille's system is an objective, or object-like, description of the sovereign moment, and the mark of its form, made by taboo, is that which places authority at the service of the politically-liberated moment of sovereignty. The outline of the system, whose form and dynamic substance will be described by the next two sections, equates to the mark of the inflexion point as just discussed, and is materially immanent to the event of its unfolding. The momentary form and the systematic form converge on this shape, which, as will be shown, is a sphere of difference. An entire systematic form is released by the mark of the generative shape, and this shape, rather than being recursive to conceptual or geometric abstraction, has a morphology that is a fabricated projection of a surface and substance of difference. The morphology of a sphere is a shape that Bataille suspects emerges, obscenely, at the point of definition of consciousness.⁵² The rules that govern shape's formation are therefore themselves obscene, corresponding to the way materialism develops its form from prohibition's auto-generative poiesis of difference. However, here, obscenity of rules allows perceptual determinacy of the sovereign moment to occur within a morphological systematic expression of the instant. Sovereignty, or onto-political autonomy, is a product of this impure authority that allows being to systematically happen. Rather than regard the sphere, or contemplate its objectivity, Bataille generates its spherical form of the instant, in the instant, and in-dwells in its instantaneous systematicity, which takes the place of objectivity in becoming a totality that is coextensive with the sovereign authority of the inner experience.

The form of the sphere is systematic function as non-conceptual immanence, but to reach this aggregate position from which freedom can be synonymous with its instantaneous contemplation,

⁵² "This time, I ventured to explain such extraordinary relations by assuming a profound region of my mind, where certain images coincide, the elementary ones, the *completely obscene* ones, i.e., the most scandalous, precisely those on which the conscious floats indefinitely, unable to endure them without an explosion or aberration. // However, upon locating this breaking point of the conscious or, if you will, the favourite place of sexual deviation, certain quite different personal memories were quickly associated with some harrowing images that had emerged during an obscene composition." *Story of the Eye*, 71-72

Bataille first describes the machinic dynamism of the system, and its collapse, from a conceptual upper tier, into an intermediary level of mathematical abstraction, and finally into a register appropriate for its aggregation to occur. This last register is the system's material base. Its operational freedom comes with inevitable laws of structure, and with laws of collapse, and these laws are immanent to the structure of the system and its internal dynamic, or its substance of movement.

With the sphere Bataille marks a shape of the infinite, and this allows both a shape of being to take place and a place of thinking to take shape. This makes Bataille's systematicity very distinct from Hegel's developmental synthesis, because a mark and the infinite, taken together, is not the same as a thesis and its antithesis. The shape of the sphere is the critically deviant inflexion point where mark and the infinite merge. This happens because the logic of the morph itself has continuity, in its erotic rotation, which is the generative, and, which is how, as Bataille suggests here with, 'describes around a mobile centre,' the generative makes its mark:

If the origin of things is not like the ground of the planet that seems to be the base, but like the circular movement that the planet describes around a mobile center, then a car, a clock, or a sewing machine could equally be accepted as the generative principle.

The two primary motions are rotation and sexual movement, whose combination is expressed by the locomotive's wheels and pistons.⁵³

The generative principle is central in a way that centrality itself is no longer contingent on its grounding in being and thought, because the ground— which is the surface of the earth— is nothing more than a projective artefact, a shape, or a non-standard reification, of this principle's material generative function. Material differences— those between car, clock and sewing machine— generate the perspective of a material world and are not subordinate to it. The sphere (of the earth, as an example) is therefore the shape of difference, a mark of emergence of the eternal erotic expenditure that is being's essential and irreducible surface *and* substance. The centre of systematic totality is captured by the fungible relation between the surface mark and the thing of substance— the reified principle— which generates material and form, and the law that captures this relation, in outline: a law of

⁵³ "The Solar Anus" *Visions of Excess*, 5; see also: "A window, a tree, a cabinet door are nothing if they cannot bear witness to movement and to heartrending destruction." Bataille (1939), "The Culpable" in, *Polysexuality* Semiotext(e) Journal #10 (1993 (1981)) translated by Tom Gora and edited by François Peraldi, 136-144, 142

emergence, that therefore has a mobile material centre at the heart of its non-total reified difference. The mark of its substantive entirety is a mandatory precursor to total systematic function's collapse, because this entirety or totality is how its rules form the sovereign moment's authority. What follows is a summary of Bataille's systematic structure that will be developed presently:

Bataille's thought (termed atheology in its systematic consideration) is organised by the substance of his later 'systematic' texts which control the dynamic of his earlier 'mystical texts' and into which the, yet earlier still, texts, such as "The Deviations of Nature", "The Pineal Eye", and "Base Materialism" can be fitted in a modular way.

The system's organisational *substance* is the miracle, a basic element that works as an expression of relative determinacy. The 'spaces' through which this substance moves are the dynamic tissue of nonknowledge. The substance of the miracle forms two spheres, which will ultimately be the sphere of the negative miracle (sovereign momentary thought of death) and the sphere of the positive miracle (mode of eternal contemplation of the unrealizability of the sovereign moment).

The system's organisational *structure* consists of three tiers: concept; mathematical/geometric abstraction and concrete base. (The term concrete being used to avoid confusion with the term base materialism).

Each tier contains two principal elements: sphere of the negative miracle and sphere of the positive miracle and their relationship is expressed as a dynamic between these two elemental forms.

The tiers of the structure collapse into the one 'below' it. This collapse is politically motivated: it is hierarchical collapse.

At the conceptual level, the form of movement is the Hegelian Concept of Time. The property of the relationship between form and Conceptual time is antinomic, and form and movement are controlled by the stipulatory aspect of this antimony by being static because of their attachment to each other as thesis and antithesis.

The emergence of the spheres precipitates conceptual whole-tier collapse. As each tier collapses into the next its contents and their dynamic relations alter in subtle ways.

On the collapse of the conceptual tier into the geometric tier, the conceptual becomes morphic and the antimony between contradictive positions becomes a mobile repulsive dynamic between their

respective spherical morphological forms by way of a mutual negative charge that applies to the forms' substance. Simultaneous to the collapse of concept into geometry, conceptual time as movement alters to movement as modal abstract thought, and propositional stipulatory antimony alters to become a simpler problem of negative repulsion.

Then this tier falls into the tier of the concrete base. As it does this an attractive dynamism is generated by one of the spheres changing its polarity, because of a drag coefficient of political refusal, internal to the substance of the form of movement, that is causing geometric-tier collapse, by pulling its immanent substance towards the concrete. This change of polarity means that the dynamic of the spheres alters and they become attracted to each other. As the geometric tier collapses it *monstrates* a spectacle of two spheres compenetrating each other. This is a spectacle of an impossible dynamic of the conjunction between two spheres but also of the reconciliation in contemplation between form of the momentary and form of movement's duration. This impossible image is the system's surplus production.

In this final base tier, the collapsing of the higher tiers forms a domain of refusal within the substance of one of the spheres, this domain of refusal is a form of matter of an atemporal dynamic contemplation.

As both 'higher' tiers collapse into the concrete tier, the compenetrative dynamic, just described, separates from its visual element and instead is an infra-material intimate dynamic. This means that the internal aspects of spherical morphicity conjoin.

They achieve this by way of each having a set of individuated elements, more 'domains', which connect their morhic monstrosity of difference, in one sphere, with refused aspects of negative eternity, in the other, to make mattering happen.

One of these domains is termed 'atheology' meaning that the entire system— called atheology— contains its entire form as one of its component parts; this is a residual element of the impossible dynamic as it collapses in the base tier: but it is also the organising motif of the atheological gesture.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ This aspect will be the subject of Chapter Three.

The entirety of the system is the way the momentary atemporally considers itself in its dynamic sovereign context. This is the sole authority of inner experience.

ii. Coming to form cannot be anything other than indeterminate: sovereignty

Bataille's material's coming-to-form applies a shape to substantive indeterminacy. The indeterminate substance is called the miraculous; this is a term that Bataille chooses for its element of sovereignty. Prior to developing an analysis of how the generative principle moves into more refined areas of mark-making as systematicity, this section will detail the problem of determinacy in the mark itself. The shape of the determined mark must determine one thing: sovereignty. Emergence generates sovereignty as a thing, in this regard, whilst also degenerating it, because sovereignty cannot be realised by a mark of emergence's eternity; indeterminacy allows sovereignty to emerge.

Bataille addresses this problem in a material way by using 'the miracle' as a substance that is itself indeterminable in terms of its knowability.⁵⁵ A miracle is an event of the noumenal, where determinacy of its occurrence is not objectively knowable, and so is a counterpart to the phenomenon of knowledge, Bataille sees this as unknowability, as an "*unreasoned impulse (that) gave a sovereign value to the miraculous.*"⁵⁶ Recalling the compression-release form developed in the first part of this chapter, Bataille applies the same pulse form (the impulse) to the miracle in order to use the pulse's unthought-ness as an undecidability that breaks free of telic metaphysics: instead of emergence as a restricted pathway along a single route to occurrence (emergence as predestined/knowledge for creation of occurrence), Bataille deploys the miracle as a substantive tissue of relative occurrence that occurs along two pathways. These pathways are the emergence of two separate spheres, where the first sphere is a form representing that which takes place, and the second sphere is a form representing

⁵⁵ Bataille locates a noumenal element to being and thought, in the beyond of the useful thing. The miracle is part of a set of 'basic elements' that Bataille lists in "Knowledge of Sovereignty." These are: consumption beyond utility (this corresponds to the universal movement of energy); the divine (this is perhaps better understood as the irreducible component of the total human social, and is discussed in Chapter One); the sacred (being as a realm of non-production that is, here, a political instant liberated by non-productive sacrifice); and the miraculous. These 'basic elements' share aspects of surplus-to-function, or are in excess to material phenomena, and so share something of the continuous in their substance. As noumena, therefore, they have a "Life *beyond utility* (which) is the domain of sovereignty." *Accursed Share Volumes II and III*, 198-200

⁵⁶ *Accursed Share vols II and III*, 209

the eternal and unrealisable, that which does not take place, or that which takes place in different and plural ways. Instead of being thesis and antithesis these spheres have shapes that are independent of each other, and each is sovereign because of this. Moreover, each has sovereign, or independent dynamics, and so the taking place and not taking place is itself an expression of ontological freedom, because the dual propositions are independent of each other, and can be repellent, or, as we will see presently, can be attractive to each other. This relative determinacy within Bataille's systematic dynamics make the system itself sovereign because of the mobility of the substance of its central proposition.

When the miraculous substance submits to morphological structure, it binds the generative process to inevitable laws of a geometric shape of the momentary, and creates an applied abstract determinacy to substantive nonknowledge (or, non-science). This is sovereign reconciliation, and is a primal move of consubstantiation between the noumenal outside and an internal stipulated by a geometric boundary. In Bataille's development notes for his lecture on "The Structure of Democracies" precisely this happens.⁵⁷ Bataille declares that, "Morphology introduces continuum into the hiatus." Morphology therefore introduces form to continuity, movement, perpetuity, expenditure and noumena; this form is the hiatus, the pulse, the orgasm, or the sovereign moment. This sphere contains the continuum, in a way that Bataille implies, is immanent: "where the contents must be considered as simple availability—limitless." The general economy of the limitless has other disparate materialities, and these—currents within continuity—are also inserted into the sphere. Bataille writes, "laughter, drunkenness, sacrifice and poetry, eroticism itself, subsist autonomously, in a reserve, *inserted* into a sphere, *like children in a house*."⁵⁸ These, noumenal, as well as autonomous, elements are included in a relative, rather than ideal, form of a sphere.

The disparate elements of the autonomous reserve are important to consider because their insertion into the sphere constitutes its miraculous substance. What this means is a consubstantial association between autonomy and relative determinacy that makes the spheres emerge with a new

⁵⁷ "The Structure of Democracies" in, *The College of Sociology (1937-39)*, 198

⁵⁸ *Inner Experience* trans. Kendall, 196

kind of immanence that Bataille calls ‘genital’. Genital immanence is a way of describing a form whose substance has immanence rather than its appearance, or its visible surface. With the genital Bataille intends to engineer a political inversion of the laws of spherical form to ‘show’ how difference can cohere the immanent substance as sovereign momentary. He describes this, in somewhat feverish prose, in a passage from “Method of Meditation,” in terms of his own, in-dwelling, experience, recalling that the sphere emerges at consciousness’s inflexion point of occurrence:

I do not see: I am in a tissue of consciousness, reduced to itself, to its servitude, the freedom (the sovereignty and the primary nonsubordination) of what is).

This world of objects that transcend me (in the emptiness within me) encloses me in its sphere of transcendence, encloses me in some way in my exteriority, weaving a network of *exteriority* within me. In this way, my own actions annihilate me, opening a void within me, a void *to which I am subordinated*. Nevertheless, I survive this alteration by binding ties of immanence (returning me to indefinite immanence, which admits superiority nowhere):

1. *Erotically*. I see a woman, I draw her out, strip her from the sphere of objects linked to activity—*obscæna* are immanence itself, we are generally absorbed, integrated in the sphere of objects, but with genitalia we still hold on to an undefined immanence...⁵⁹

The sphere is genitally immanent, which means that its motile substance, discussed previously as a mobile centre, is a flux of relative determinacy that Bataille experiences here, and which contributes to its sovereign immanence in a momentary context, rather than a telic one. The genital sphere has immanence that, as well as being non-conceptual, is both generatively and de-generatively determinate, and this is how Bataille uses the term ‘undefined’. The sphere of transcendence, rather than an ideal geometry, has unstable surface where, because it is immanent and momentary, Bataille experiences its indeterminacy and oscillatory flux as dissonance between inner and external phenomena. This conflict is a re-staging of the flux between two extremal limits of a generated essence of the human that are marked by taboo and transgression, discussed in the previous section: as with their non-oppositional pairing, the dissonance is a product of the determinacy of the mark in its obscenity. Bataille’s dissonance is the sound of the impurity of its authority in its making.

Determinacy, and the difference between internal and external, are, here, geometricized – marked by the laws of form– in the immanent moment, as available genital difference. This is

⁵⁹ “Method of Meditation” in, *Unfinished System of nonknowledge*, 85

sovereignty as relative chance for occurrence: the obviation of tendential occurrence as an (onto)political statement. What Bataille's invocation of the immanent genital explores is the bringing to bear of the systematic as a dynamic that occurs at the same time as a substantive immanence of miraculous flux. Bataille's systematic totality is generated by the sovereignty that indeterminacy allows to emerge as shape. Bataille's political economy of sovereignty, as a consequence, is both immanent, systematic and dynamic at its interstice with the dimensions of the sphere, and— as well— at its substance; there is a new precision to materialised immanence to the miraculous form of the moment, one where Bataille can feel freedom:

Precisely in the miracle, we are thrust from our anticipation of the future into the presence of the moment, of the moment illuminated by a miraculous light, the light of sovereignty delivered from its servitude.⁶⁰

iii. Continuous sphericism as a temporal phenomenon

This section addresses the extension of the shape in its temporal context, arguing that as a sphere it has a temporally continuous logic, an infinite that it expresses in the immanence of its geometric genital availability. Building on the convergence of the momentary and the systematic just discussed, the spherical form becomes the locus of this convergence, where the momentary is its genital immanence and systematicity is its infinity. As will be discussed presently, the genital sphere therefore offers a stipulated shape of presence bound by the laws of an energy movement that is no longer contingent on both time and space, but is— substantially— time alone.

As ceaseless expenditure of energy is universal for Bataille because it expends in its movements across the infinite time and space of the universe, when it is expressed in its global or terrestrial context, there is a subtle but critical difference, and this is that expenditure in infinite space/time becomes an infinite closed circuit: circular motion of energy remains perpetual whilst its form closes into the shape of a sphere that it envelopes.⁶¹ Bataille describes its motion as 'industrial',

⁶⁰ *Accursed Share Vols II & III*, 207

⁶¹ "Solar energy is the source of life's exuberant development. The origin and essence of our wealth are given in the radiation of the sun, which dispenses energy— wealth— without any return." *Accursed Share vol. I*, 28 and, "A movement is produced on the surface of the globe that results from the circulation of energy at this point in the universe." *Accursed Share vol. I*, 20-21

saying, “An immense industrial network (...) expresses a circuit of cosmic energy on which it depends, which it cannot limit, and whose laws it cannot ignore without consequences.”⁶² As this generative structure occurs, its shape shares the same properties as the erotic object: laws that define its geometry also define the no-law of infinite expenditure and movement. Moreover, these laws that do define its geometry are those that define a form of systematic entirety, because, as discussed, the sphere’s geometry refers to its substantive sovereign indeterminacy. The morphological entirety, because it is infinite in time but not in space, emerges as a substantive shape from within a Hegelian conceptual level, without really making itself distinct from the conceptual, because of its curious structural relation with the temporal. Its temporality therefore is a form of movement but is also the form of the circuit of its shape. The perpetual emerges as a concept, from Concept, articulated as a movement of energy, and, as its global form becomes increasingly discernible, this energy describes time, and it describes perpetual time in the shape of a globe, or a sphere.

iv. The dynamic behaviour of shape(s) in two of the three epistemological registers

The way the spheres move describes Bataille’s system at three distinct epistemological levels: conceptual, geometrical and concrete. This section, and the next, develops a complex dynamic structure of Bataille’s form of a systematic ‘this’. Bataille’s system comprises of an entirety of thought’s movement, together with its movement’s internal dynamics. Systematicity is therefore a term for the rules that govern the dynamic movements of thought’s morphological expression. This develops the argument that the entirety of the system replaces objectivity with systematicity. This latter totality is placed at the service of inner experience. To make the link with base materialism explicit, Bataille’s inner experience coheres by this systematicity, as its ‘sole authority’, to make differencing happen. What the word ‘inner’ denotes is not the sense of the experiencing subject, but the dynamic authority integral to systematic shape. This section, in iv a) and iv b) builds a comprehensive description of how the structure functions in the conceptual and the geometric tiers

⁶² *Accursed Share Vol. I*, 26

respectively, while the following section 3 describes an aggregated systematic and structural functioning dynamic of the last, concrete tier.

a) Upper tier of Bataille's system: Concept

Bataille is antipathetic to concept because its hierarchical or transcendent operation is outside the moment, it is abstract thought, so that sovereignty cannot occur within a conceptual framework. As chapter 1 discussed Bataille's systematic endeavour is to enable thought to operate in a freely aggregate base materialism, in order that sovereign momentariness can occur. This description of Bataille's system follows the process developed in Chapter 1 of material thingness and sacrifice, by making the same argument apply to systematic form's affirmation and its destruction.

Where Hegel identifies Concept with Time, Bataille's eternal/perpetual aspect of movement emerges as the circuitous shape of a sphere at the 'upper' level of concept within a systematic grid.⁶³ Hegel's operating propositions, as Alexandre Kojève points out, either puts the human outside the concept as its negation, as a free being, or, if the human is inside movement of being, puts the human discontinuous to movement, and this "*determines Man's whole temporal existence, in which, therefore, there is no freedom.*"⁶⁴ For Bataille, the human is inside the movement of being, yet is conceptually discontinuous to it because it is the conceptual hierarchy that acts as a prophylactic to joining continuity. Time is continuously eternal and momentary, but it is the unfolding of thought which functions as a prophylactic by being temporally tendential and not momentary. Bataille, therefore, refuses thought's conceptual unfolding. For Bataille's human to be free, she must enter a sovereign momentariness where its sovereign value is precisely the element of temporal continuity which is non-conceptual because it is unthought, or, possibly, non-conceptually immanent. The genital sphere forms a possibility for the latter occurrence.

⁶³ Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, 130

⁶⁴ Kojève, "If the Concept is *eternal*, it is because there is something in Man that places him outside of Time: it is *freedom*..." *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, 129

The generative structure that emerges at the level of concept makes two things happen: its emergence subsumes autonomous elements excessive to it, as discussed, and its emergence from temporality affects the conceptual tier itself. Noumena are artefacts of excessive and useless movement that can also be expressed as elements of perpetual or eternal movement of time.⁶⁵ These insert themselves into the sphere, as its substance; they become the fabric of its immanence. As this happens the conceptual level itself alters to become shape. Because the emergence of shape causes a distortion to occur between the tier of concept, and the element of the perpetual which is the temporal, the conceptual framework of this tier becomes compromised by its own temporal morphology: its conceptual structure is weakened by emergent structure. Structural emergence occurs as mathematical abstraction, this means that concept must also become geometrical and non-ideal.⁶⁶

However, as a sphere emerges in the conceptual tier, it does so in a double way, by manifesting the two propositions of instantaneous liberty and conceptual temporal movement (and exclusion from the momentary) in the emergence of two spheres. Where the first sphere is sovereign momentariness, and human freedom, the second sphere is concept and eternal time. The problem of sovereignty, for Bataille, as we shall see, concentrates on Conceptual time, and how this time affects a modality of perceptual consciousness. Because a movement of temporal continuity and thought is also the movement of concept— at least, according to Hegel— and, because the entire tier is conceptual, this means that the free human is in the tier and is subordinate to the lordship of time, or, and this is the same thing, is subordinate to the lordship of concept. With the emergence of the sphere comes an emergence of a substantive human onticity, (spherical in-dwelling), as concept mutates to abstract geometry and miraculous substance.

Bataille's sphericism takes on Hegel at the inflexion point of systematicity's dynamic. Where Hegel laments, of time, and its conceptuality, that "it cannot cope with that sheer unrest of life and its absolute distinction," this is contradiction's 'inability to cope' with thought's movement, and of the

⁶⁵ Bataille also describes them as the "waste products of intellectual appropriation" for more on this see item 6 "The Use Value of D.A.F. de Sade" in *Visions of Excess*, 96

⁶⁶ This steers closely to the Hegelian conception where he sees mathematical expression offering an objective stasis to movement's cognition, albeit by rendering it 'lifeless'. See Hegel, "Preface: On Scientific Cognition" *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 27

momentary, when operating at the conceptual level: because these positions are both contradictory and non-synthetic.⁶⁷ Bataille's inner experience, or sovereign momentariness, under the Hegelian regime, in the intellectual operation of concept, is a casualty of the exclusionary cut of contradiction, because its intellectual operation cannot access the momentary. However, because of its non-ideal 'weight,' the emerging morphicity of the conceptual dialectic arrangement causes the entire hierarchical 'upper' tier of a system of thought to collapse into the 'floor' below (if we stick to Bataille's own analogy of a house). The floor below is the geometric tier itself, so the more the determinacy of the form of the sphere emerges, the greater the acceleration of the collapse. The collapse does not crush either tier of concept or tier of geometry, but fuses them, and their respective functional differences are also con-fused.

b) Intermediate tier of Bataille's system: mathematical abstraction or, geometry

The residual thesis/antithesis of the conceptual tier, which subordinates the human to the time of concept, is now firmly expressed by two separate spheres: a first sphere, where the human moment is free, as per Kojève's interpretation, and a second sphere, where movement and thought dwell in their infinite conceptual temporality. The substance of Bataille's second sphere therefore corresponds with Hegel's problematisation of temporal continuity, which he summarizes as "*bad or negative infinity*."⁶⁸ Bataille more or less takes this term as it is, and compares and contrasts it, through the shared substance of the miracle, with a possibility of defined momentariness. In an unattributed but almost direct reproduction of Hegel's phraseology, Bataille calls the substance of this second sphere, 'negative eternity.'⁶⁹ In the emergence/collapse, the substance of the form of the spheres mutates to reflect this, and concept/time/ceaselessness/eternal-movement/expenditure exhibits morphological characteristics characteristic of the second tier— such as the sphere taking an electrical charge, as if it

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Cf. G.W.F. Hegel, (2010 [1817]) *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Basic Outline: Part I Science of Logic*, trans. and ed. Klaus Brinkman and Daniel O. Dahlstrom (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), §94

⁶⁹ *Unfinished System of Nonknowledge*, 181

were a proton or neutron.⁷⁰ The substance of the spheres is, still, mutually miraculous, and is also mutually negative. Their sovereign dynamicity, as discussed, means that their mutual negativity acts on the spheres freely, as a repellent force: their freedom from dialogic stipulation is their relative states of substantial disassociation.

The substance of the second sphere supplies Bataille with a negativity that retains its negative charge because it is conditionally unrealisable.⁷¹ It cannot negate the first sphere, because the second sphere cannot ascribe a statehood to the first, or affirm its momentary determinacy. The difference between the spheres is registered by their antinomic repulsion, rather than their contradiction. But now the immanent substance (of the miracle of the genital sphere, as discussed), that mutualises the charge for each sphere, also collapses into the tier below, led by substance's political refusal of the temporal prophylactic, in the second sphere. However, rather than collapse being a straight forward fusion between the two tiers, it is the internal and immanent substance of the second sphere which collapses, its immanent substance acting as a political catalyst against its formal authority—its shape—of negative eternity. Collapse of substance into the tier below nonetheless leaves the form of the sphere in the geometric tier as spectacle of surface representation of a form of the movement of negative eternity. The consequence of this internal collapse, as refusal, is that the electric charge on the second sphere refuses, or negates, its previous polarity and becomes a negative of its substance, a double-negative, or a positive polarity. The external, visually imaginable, forms of the spheres in the collapsing geometric tier remains there and they start to move together— but only as a visual element—because they are now attracted by their newly opposing polarities. Meanwhile, the non-visual internal substances of the spheres that collapse into the concrete tier below also move toward each other, in a dynamic that only concerns the intimacy of dynamicity's different interior substance and not its visual or spectacular element.

⁷⁰ See here Hegel's presentation of electric charge as being a sign of auto-generative difference: "the positive is *in its own self* the difference from itself; and similarly with the negative." *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 93

⁷¹ See Tony Corn, "Unemployed Negativity" in, *On Bataille: Critical Essays*, 79-92; Also, regarding negativity, duration and autonomy see: Christopher M. Gemarchek (2003) *The Sunday of the Negative: Reading Bataille Reading Hegel* (Albany: State University of New York Press), 52-60

The next, final, section of the chapter will develop the rest of the Bataille's system by examining the attraction dynamic, as an internal genital mattering, in both its external expression as spectacle, and its internal coherence, as intimacy, as it collapses towards and into the concrete tier.

Part Three: Difference: Its Internal Systematic Dynamic

i. First Dynamic of compenetration: Spectacle of the impossible coming true in the reign of the moment

This part of the chapter presently develops an alternative dynamic from the spectacle of compenetration where instead of two forms moving into each other, a fusion of their thingness, or their indefinite substance occurs. This latter dynamic is a counterpart to the spectacle of compenetration that Bataille names as 'intimate compenetration.' Overall, the analysis sets out to uncover the relation between the spectacle of the form and its inner reality: how meaning and nonmeaning assembles itself away from the recognizable knowable as a complex of differencing. This lies at the heart of discovering Bataille's intentions for differencing to occur as mattering, because, as will be shown, the spectacle of the geometry of the sphere does not occur as an ideal form, but instead takes its shape from some mechanics of internal aggregation, where domains or iterations of difference find intimacy with each other and which, only by their sensual and intimate making process, create a logic of the morph in an elided mode of the spectacle.⁷² This makes a completely new form, where instead of being in the world as being separate from the world, it is the role of difference and its intimate auto-compenetration which creates a world around it. This effectively imagines a theory of the precursory interior of immanence, or the forerunner for the emergence of the

⁷² "The awareness of eroticism, unlike that of external objects, belongs to a darker side; it leads to a silent awakening." *Eroticism*, 161

burst of shock, discussed previously in terms of its spherical representation of the liminal point of unconsciousness's floating and definition, where intimate compenetration is the bifurcation of the waves of the floating unconscious (via dualist flux) and how they come to form the obscene shapes of their spectacle onto, and as, a surrounding world.

As will presently be developed, by a detailed analysis of the internal dynamics of this space, what compenetration *monstrates*, it shows as impossible in one field and shows as nonrecursive difference in another field, but it always shows the dynamic of difference as auto-generative poiesis rather than a binary penetration between different propositions. Compenetration's monstration therefore is a mark-making that records difference's internal dynamic. Bataille's compenetration engineers two different ways of showing two totalities of his thought in its two modes of its mark-making. The first, is spectacle, that is, compenetration's envisioning environment for an impossible dynamic. The collapse of the geometric tier into the concrete leaves this environment behind, as an empty spectacle. In this way, Bataille deprivileges compenetration's spectacle, as a way of deprivileging the specular phenomenon in general, dismissing the role of recognition in the Kojève/Hegelian dialectic, and, by implication, what happens in the substantive aggregate tier at the base, a systematic way of accounting for noumenal difference, is afforded greater prestige.⁷³ The distribution of the argument will follow this deprivileging and prestige, and greater attention will be paid to intimate compenetration, the aggregate operation of the dynamic at the concrete tier.

As developed, the residual spectacle of form and the internal dimensions of momentariness each have spherical form, these spheres compenetrate each other in an immanent dynamic. This is Bataille's image of the impossible. For the impossible to come true in the 'reign of the moment' the attraction of spheres of the negative and positive miracle must take place, and the two spheres have to come together to form an outline of a continuous dynamic shape of compenetration. Although the

⁷³ "What I am attempting presupposes that revealing the unconscious is possible, and by definition, the unconscious is placed beyond the reach of phenomenological description." "Attraction and Repulsion II" *College of Sociology*, 115

dynamic is called compenetration the shape of its outline is called the genital, because the latter is a form that internalises its dynamic relation, as flux, to its substance: this will be further developed in Chapter Three's focus on the vaginal formation. Attraction of the first and second spheres of the miracle occurs when the polarity of the second sphere alters from negative to positive, and, consequently, repulsion turns to its opposite. The spheres come together, attracted by the negative/positive charges of their miraculous substances. This attraction ends in the spheres' mutual subsummation into each other's form; this is compenetration. The first movement is a 'spectacle' of compenetration. This representational dynamic involves an envisioning environment which sees the negative sphere penetrating and indwelling the positive sphere, while at the same time, in the reign of the moment, the positive sphere penetrates the negative sphere and in-dwells there, recalling an 'image' of perichoresis.⁷⁴ The image of simultaneous penetration and in-dwelling is contradictory and impossible to visually imagine, and this— impossibility— is Bataille's representative production. Compenetration is the impossible coming true in the 'reign of the moment', and, because the genital outline has immanence, compenetration or the impossible substantial fusion of the miraculous but irreconcilable substances occurs in an immanent visual dynamic: and, so, the substance of continuity indwells the substance of momentariness, and vice versa. What the legacy dynamic of the geometric tier prior to its collapse monstates is the spectacle or visually marked dynamic of an impossibly conjoining morphological attraction, where two bodies that cannot fit inside each other, do fit inside each other, and, because the substance of both spheres is the indeterminacy of the miracle, this is also a visual invocation of a simultaneous expression of imagined occurrence and non-occurrence. Compenetration's spectacle is a representation, in occurrence, of physical impossibility and also the

⁷⁴ From *Accursed Share Volume III*, written sometime in the mid 1950s,— Bataille speaks only of the 'morphology' of the miracle— its application to compenetrative (specular) dynamics is perhaps inspired by the motif of the Dali 1954 work "Young Virgin Auto-sodomised by the horns of her chastity" where the notion of the virgin as an intact form being penetrated by her intactness seems to be a good pictorial rendering of a possible dynamic of the impossible reconciliation between form and a form of movement. Of interest is a precedent set to this inspiration on the study Bataille wrote of Dali's earlier work "The Lugubrious Game" and which he published in Documents with the same title. In this he describes a single outburst of laughter (which, in 1952 would become one of the refused domains of negative eternity) that "can penetrate and excite a crowd, consequently that an outburst of screaming constitutes an equally obstinate form of miscarriage, susceptible to the reverberations of a *non serviam* opposed by brute humanity to the idea." "The 'Lugubrious Game'" in, *Visions of Excess*, 24-29, 24

physically undecidable of probable occurrence. Nonetheless it is also representation, and so monstration here is insubstantial and fabricated by the generative dynamic.

Therefore, Bataille presents the ‘coming true’ part of the ‘reign of the moment,’ only in the context of its external veracity. In the following passage, from “Two Fragments on Laughter” in, *Guilty*, 1942, Bataille structures a more generalised dynamic that takes its basis from erotic struggle, that is, its source lies closer to the substance of generative principle than its spectacle. This is a difficult passage and abstracting Bataille’s intention is not simple; he introduces the compenetrative dynamic, in which he does not directly reference morphology—specifically, what penetrates what—except in the double context of bursts of laughter and of ‘beings.’⁷⁵ However, as will be developed presently, the burst of laughter is a form of mark-making that supports the entire systematic aggregation within its fabricated form. Bataille describes the attraction as a formula, split two ways:

Spectacle and compenetration are two rudimentary forms. Their relationship is given in the formula: *contagion* (the intimate compenetration of two beings) is *contagious* (susceptible of indefinite reverberation).⁷⁶

What Bataille means by two rudimentary forms is that there is an irreducible component to each: for spectacle this is the visuality that authorises occurrence, in the realm of the ‘true.’ In generative terms spectacle is the mandate of the event of the fold: its external veracity as occurrence. The doubling effect of the second rudimentary form means that spectacle, or mandated occurrence, is an external veracity that is not attached to the second rudimentary form, and that, therefore, the second form—compenetration—does not have the same mandate for necessary occurrence. This aligns the second rudimentary form to the form of miraculous substance, discussed in the previous section: its occurrence is indefinitely contingent, or, even, unnecessary. What Bataille then says in respect to this alignment is that compenetration at the intimate level of substance is exponential, that is, its

⁷⁵ “Two Fragments on Laughter” in, *Guilty* (Kendall trans.), 130

⁷⁶ Botting and Wilson’s translation as ‘reverberation’ preferred here over Kendall’s ‘repercussion’. Fred Botting and Scott Wilson, eds. (1997) *The Bataille Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing), 62

contagion registers the dynamic between the substance of the perceivable thing and the substance of the indefinite, or the noumenal.

When Bataille invokes the impossible coming true, he advocates for its dynamic possibility. Rather than the stasis of unsublatable positions of impossible thought, what Bataille's advocacy indicates at this point is, in fact, systematicity's dynamic contribution to its internal functional determinacy. By showing the spectacle in all its perpetual monstrosity the dynamic contributes immanent difference to being's momentary substance. Its contribution is the realisability of the noumenal.

This reveals itself most vividly in Bataille's *Story of the Eye*. In the following passage, it is the movement between the sphere of the bull's testicle and the sphere of Simone's cunt that is pertinent. Simone's cunt's sphericity can be inferred at the point of the thrusting of the bull's ball into it. Because the globe of the severed testicle penetrates the cunt-space, the space itself is spherical, and, in compenetration, two spheres spatially intra-penetrate each other, and Simone's cunt is thrust into the bull's ball. This is a spectacle of the attraction occurring for the compenetrative dynamic, whereas, the eye spurting from the head is an example of the prior dynamic of repulsion of the spheres:

Thus, two globes of equal size and consistency had suddenly been propelled in opposite directions at once. One, the white ball of the bull, had been thrust into the "pink and dark" cunt that Simone had bared in the crowd; the other, a human eye, had spurting from Granero's head with the same force as a bundle of innards from a belly.⁷⁷

Later, after Sir Edmund snips the obstinate ligaments of recognition's dialectical attachment, the spheres move together:

Sir Edmond was always poker-faced except when he turned purple. Nor did he bat an eyelash now; but the blood did shoot to his face. He removed a pair of fine scissors from his wallet, knelt down, then nimbly inserted the fingers of his left hand into the socket and drew out the eye, while his right hand snipped the obstinate ligaments. Next, he presented the small whitish eyeball in a hand reddened with blood.

Simone gazed at the absurdity and finally took it in her hand, completely distraught; yet she had no qualms, and instantly amused herself by fondling the depth of her thighs and inserting this apparently fluid object.⁷⁸

⁷⁷ *Story of the Eye*, 65

⁷⁸ *Story of the Eye*, 82-83

Here again, the spheres compenstrate, in a spectacle that is referenced by the gaze of the enucleated eyeball, “I even felt as if my eyes were bulging from my head, erectile with horror; in Simone's hairy vagina, I saw the wan blue eye of Marcelle, gazing at me through tears of urine.”⁷⁹

What Bataille monstrates is a spectacle of the compenetration of the negative and positive miracles. In short, Bataille shows his readers the movement of his system of thought by the compenetration of the spheres. In a discussion of the structural influences of his book, Bataille recalls the moment of association of the bull's balls with a “cycle” of objects, “eggs and eyes” and where these “elementary images” coincide is a completely obscene point where the “consciousness floats indefinitely” at its “breaking point.”⁸⁰ This is, more precisely, the impossible coming true in the reign of the moment as consciousness' inflexion point, but it also reveals the locus point of Bataille's interest, where the floating point and its encounter with definition somehow happens in the material world as an obscene sphere, moreover a sphere whose iterative difference (eyeball, vagina, bull testicle), as will be shown next, is as integral to understanding his thought as its compenetrative invagination.

ii. Second dynamic of compenetration: intimacy, contagion and differing

Beyond spectacle a substantive compenetration occurs as an active mattering or difference-making. In the aggregation of the collapsed tiers compenetration is an operation of differencing. If spectacle is the outline of a dynamic form, intimacy is its substantive materiality: compenetration is not a fusion between two objects (nor between subject and object) but a fusion of occurrence and non-occurrence, or a way of monstrating occurrence's autogenerative sense of definition and non-definition as an infra-material immanent active-ness. Whereas spectacle is its representation, intimacy is the internal and detached movement of representation's substance that is active in the concrete and aggregate register. Because of this, the operation of monstration functions in a very different way to spectacle. Difference's autogenerative poiesis is not perceptible. The second dynamic of

⁷⁹ *Story of the Eye*, 84

⁸⁰ *Story of the Eye*, 92

compenetration will show how the figure of the monstrous works through iteration to create the sphere. Developing this from the text (discussed below) “The Deviations of Nature” abstracts from Bataille’s idea that the ideal form of the pebble is a sphere that does not take materially place. The taking place of something that does not take place is an extension of Bataille’s thought into probability rather than impossibility. By reading “Deviations of Nature” alongside *Story of the Eye* it is possible to show that the theory of pebbles compares to the variety of sphere-like objects (just discussed). The ‘ideal’ form that appears in consciousness at the unconsciousness’ inflexion point with its own determinacy is a sphere in exactly the same sense: it does not appear as an ideal form, but is implied by the multiple iteration of difference, freakishness, or monstrosity, or the pebbles’ misshapes. But rather than repeat the point about a non-occurring ideal, the sphere of consciousness makes a statement about difference. Its shape offers thought a possibility that difference has a non-occurring essential morphic logic. This morphic logic, is obscenity itself. However, it actually does occur in its various iterations, as monstrosity not ideality. Somewhere between the morphic logic of a sphere of differencing and its various iterations is a truth of unconsciousness, revealed and concealed by the difference between the sphere’s non-appearance and the movement of its iterative patterns of differencing. This truth of unconsciousness is intimacy, and the second dynamic of compenetration transverses the space just delineated in a way that Bataille describes as ‘contagious.’

Contagion, whose internality is signalled by the term ‘intimate’ has a mathematical— precisely, an exponential— element: where contagion is, itself, contagious. This viral exponentiality increases the possibility of internally-defined elements’ indefinite creation, leading differencing and its marks towards a possibility for a generation of vast ontic internal architectures: an infinite interior materiality to being, whose dimensions exceed being’s recognisable form.

If the spectacle of compenetration composes the idea of two worlds (these being alternate terms for ‘spheres’) with its own dynamic impossibility, then intimate compenetration is the dynamic where one world falls into another. This falling is movement of being from one sphere to another, falling through the internality of substance. The two worlds, or spheres are, respectively, a momentary form and a temporal mode of its contemplation, as developed from the sphere of the negative and positive

miracle. What dies in the fall is a determined possibility of an actor, a discontinuous figure who passes instead into a typology of her own imagining. But, crucially, the actor's contemplated being (her self-consciousness) must prefigure the outline of her new figuration, as this pre-figural, or state of preformation, is the state that dies. Determinacy dies with it, then falls (alters) into a dynamic that is not of otherness, not of the binary switch between discontinuous object and continuous dynamic of flow, and not into a unity of morphological order and ontic dynamics, but into a generalised existence and its expression in the 'beyond' of beings, that is: a set of iterations of noumenal (non)forms.

The dynamic of falling as compenetration, or the dying of the actor of consciousness, seems to anticipate and also record the collapse of the tiers into the aggregate operation. Systematicity falls into its own internal dynamics of differencing. Systematicity's consciousness of its agency, like the actor, dies in this collapse (it loses a sense of the mark of its external dynamism, or its comparative basis). Nonetheless, both system's agential consciousness and the actor's self-consciousness die on their own terms, sovereignly. Bataille, in the following passage, suggests that this fall is the way that intimate compenetration, as modal differencing, moves away from its binary conception.

Most often the compenetration (the contagion) opposes two worlds, and limits itself to the passage, to the fall of being from one to the other. The most significant fall is death.

This movement is related to the intermediary outline, wherein the compenetration again puts two beings in play; one, the contemplated being (the *actor*) can die. It's the death of one of the terms that gives communication its human character. Henceforth it no longer unifies one being and another but one being and the beyond of beings.⁸¹

The chapter will presently develop the structural mechanism for this fall into a non-binary differencing of the beyond of beings. Internal difference is cohering evidence of systematic entirety, on the basis of a viral compenetrative assemblage comprising of the between of two spheres' substances. What this will show is that systematic coherence is a way of defining ontopolitical sovereignty without compromising an indeterminate generative function. This argument will be made in three phases: firstly, by examining a set of conditions for coherence that are shared between the spheres; these are the substances' internal domains. Next, an examination of the way contagion works

⁸¹ *Guilty*, 130

in regard to the subsumed function of the geometric level, which is how each sphere forms the domains into sets, and communion with the noumenal ('the beyond of beings') occurs. Thirdly, a new affordance of prestige to the burst of laughter, which, because of the aggregate operation, has a concrete form that comprises the systematic total, as well as being one of the domains in the sphere of the positive miracle. Laughter's candidature for Bataille's systemic entirety— as the form of the sphere of difference— concludes by showing its purpose as a material atemporality through which systematicity perceives a dynamic image of its momentariness. It cites as evidence for its systematic entirety not the system's external verification by the argument proposed in the thesis, but, instead, does this by identifying within the system, which is called atheology, a 'smaller' entire systematic atheology. This, as the following chapter will show, is the nested dimensionality which imagines Bataille's vision of impossibility in its systematic form.

iii. a) First analytic for differencing in the spheres' miraculous substance: domains

Mattering or difference-making happens materially; it does this in three ways— the first, here, is the internal individual modality to substance: domains of difference. The first analytic establishes that there are conditions for differencing that are shared between the spheres. Bataille calls these domains. In the negative sphere Bataille describes these domains as complex, and that:

A morphology describing complex domains could only come after a posing of fundamental problems. It might be a final result, which would come at the end. I prefer to examine what is essential, without lingering over the question of method.⁸²

The complex domains in the negative sphere therefore describe a set of internal conditions within the sphere that is antipathetic or antipodean to method; method which is substance of the positive miracle, a sphere of continuous modal time, or method of thinking. In this second sphere therefore, the domains are to do with method. Bataille sets out these in his lecture notes on nonknowledge titled "Plans and notes for "Atheology,"" a structure of his thought that includes, under a subheading "The effects of the unknown", the "enumeration of domains."⁸³ These domains address

⁸² *Accursed Share vols II and III*, 201

⁸³ *Unfinished System of Nonknowledge*, 155

themselves to “the effect of an experience of the limit of knowledge”.⁸⁴ Bataille qualifies this when he adds a footnote to this where he states:

At any rate, in the limits of consciousness. In fact, it is certain that my research from the very beginning was spontaneously brought to bear on the entirety of the domains envisioned later, without having understood that the unity was given within the effects in question.⁸⁵

Domains formulate a shape of thought where an internal aspect of each sphere is marked by their individuated presence. In the negative sphere these are ‘complex’ – they exhibit auto-generative difference, they are internally ‘representative’ of self-differencing. In the positive sphere, the domains are the effects of an experience at the limits of knowledge and/or consciousness, and these domains are therefore marks. These latter domains’ markings are striations in the material of continuous unfolding of knowing in eternal movement. However, they are no longer conceptual, because their operation is aggregated in the concrete tier, and so they are also no longer temporal. Instead, the domains of method mark the internal collapse of the negative eternal of the second sphere, which becomes, as a consequence, non-conceptual atemporal operative substance. The presence of the enumerated domains of the positive miracle are the cause of the change in its overall electrical charge: from a substance of negative eternity, previously discussed, its overall charge changes to positive, and it becomes the sphere of the positive miracle and repulsion turns to attraction as a physical consequence of this electrical charge alteration. The domains achieve this change by refusing aspects of the negative eternal; they negate negative eternity and consequently alter the global polarity of the substance of eternity from negative to positive, and this refusal happens when the geometric and conceptual merged tiers collapse again into the concrete ‘lower’ tier.

Here it is necessary to develop a more refined comparison between the qualities of the respective ensembles of domains in order to build a model of their difference and how their reconciliation occurs. The complex domains of the negative miracle, introduced in *The Accused Share Volume III* written in the mid-1950s, are morphological, yet their morphological differences can be

⁸⁴ Ibid. 159

⁸⁵ Ibid. 288, footnote to “Aphorisms for the “System””

observed in “The Deviations of Nature”, written in 1930, as the irregular shapes of pebbles.⁸⁶

Bataille’s earlier essay addresses the classification of monsters by biologists, a form of cataloguing known as a teratology. At this juncture of his thought, Bataille sees teratology as a “dialectic of forms”, or put another way, sees the possibility for a dialectical development of systematisation lying within an account of difference.⁸⁷ He makes the claim that,

[O]n a practical level this impression of incongruity is elementary and constant: it is possible to state that it manifests itself to a certain degree in the presence of any given human individual (...) the common character of personal incongruity and the monster can be expressed with precision.⁸⁸

What Bataille sees in incongruity and its iteration is a way of establishing a ‘common measure’ of difference. Thus,

If one photographs a large number of similarly sized pebbles, it is impossible to obtain anything other than a sphere: in other words, a geometric figure. It is enough to note that a common measure necessarily approaches the regularity of geometric figures.⁸⁹

Bataille says, “monsters thus would be the dialectical opposites of geometric regularity, in the same manner as individuated form, but in an irreducible way.” What the later text develops, however, is a way that the monster can show non-representable difference. Monstration occurs in the form of a monster, but not a particular monster, but a particular fabrication of immanent difference. The argument now turns from an application of the logic of the complex domains to a teratology of the monster: in other words, what happens when the substance of one sphere falls into/is attracted by the within of the second sphere, is that its auto-poiesis is catalogued. In both later and early texts the morphological is its organising principle. Following this logic, in the earlier text Bataille dialectically opposes the regularity of the sphere to the freakishness of individuation. This opposition does not stand up to scrutiny. If the reiteration of deviant morphology produces a sphere as common measure,

⁸⁶ “The Deviations of Nature” in, *Visions of Excess*, 53-57; “refused aspects (of) negative eternity” from “Aphorisms for the ‘System’” in, *Unfinished System of Nonknowledge*, discussed as a footnote to the Introduction of Chapter One of this thesis.

⁸⁷ “The Deviations of Nature” *Visions of Excess*, 55

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

its geometry does not belong to the categorical ideal, but to a concrete material— i.e., ‘common’— register: so Bataille is already showing his reader the collapsing tiers of an aggregate geometrical-material base for thought. Moreover the ‘measure’ is not geometrical but is itself a sphere of difference: a measure that does not exist in itself but is actually a morphology of a common set: in other words, an expansion of extension. Bataille’s sphere, which is, anyway, in the concrete register because it has fallen there, becomes now an applied teratology— a catalogue— of complex domains that are internal to its own fabricated shape: its internal enumeration of domains as a set occupies a greater extension than its restricted extension as an object. This is an aggregate example of the values of substance’s heterogeneous and homogeneous indexicality, discussed at the end of Chapter One, and in turn, anticipates a number set modality of alteration that Chapter Four will develop. Contagious contagion has occurred. In a teratology these complex domains are monsters, and they are the monsters of oscillatory flux that generates their monstrosity as individuated states of relative definition, as was discussed in section 1 of this chapter. The case can be made for a pre-systematic emergence of difference as a teratology towards a general mattering by returning to Bataille’s “The Pineal Eye” from 1930.⁹⁰ Bataille enumerates a list— or, perhaps, a set— of 10 items, the last 8 of which can reasonably be determined as monstrous. Although concern for space mandates that their description does not happen in detail, their categorical titles alone are sufficient to justify their inclusion in a teratology:

- The Pineal Eye
- The Two Axes of Terrestrial Life
- The Position of the Human Body and Eyes on the Surface of the Terrestrial Globe
- The Vertigo-Tree
- The Sun
- The Jesuve
- The Sacrifice of the Gibbon
- The Bronze Eye

⁹⁰ *Visions of Excess*, 79-90

Teratology acts as a catalogue within a form of the sphere of the negative miracle, a sphere that expresses individuality and difference as a set, a set whose epigenesis arises from its monstrous substantive and mobile pan-anthropologic and mythological situation.⁹¹ Pre-emptive catalogue totality establishes itself as an alternative to substantive dimensionality. With a designation of the monsters as a catalogue the image of entirety becomes internal to the dimensions of the sphere of the negative miracle. At the same time the opposite impossibility occurs, and the catalogue of differences, although entire, is greater than the sum of difference that is its morphic expression. This difficult conception, itself monstrous, is a return of the image of impossibility that the spectacle of the spheres' compenetration introduced, and an example of which Bataille describes in the eyeball of Marcelle gazing from Simone's vagina, as discussed.

The domains in the sphere of the positive miracle are also individuations: here their individuation is a process, which negates the substance of an atemporal eternal to form the refused aspects of negative eternity. Because Conceptual time has not survived its fall into the concrete tier, negative eternity cannot be conceptual and therefore neither can it be temporal; eternity is present in an atemporal, or in a post-, or derogated-, conceptual way. Because Bataille tells us the positive miracle is the final consideration of method, these domains are syncopations and are themselves logical forms, partial methods or ways of thinking in momentariness. Bataille describes this atemporality, below, as an absence of concept, making the explicit link with the Hegelian association between time and concept:

In other words, if we envision the formula: the absence of a concept (or the disappearance of the concept) is the absence of time (negative eternity) like a corollary of the Hegelian formula (the concept is time), I can refuse various aspects of it:

–Sacrifice
–the death of God
–laughter⁹²

⁹¹ For a detailed consideration of mythological and systematic emergence in Bataille see, especially, Chapter 4 "Hegel against the Immutable Hegel" in, Rodolphe Gasché (2012) *Georges Bataille: Phenomenology and Phantasmology*, translated by Roland Végö, (Stanford: Stanford University Press), 238-276

⁹² *Unfinished System of Nonknowledge*, 181-82; set out as per original.

Bataille achieves, with this small number of domains, a role for unwilled thought that situates contemplative aesthetics in a form of atemporality, as method. Situated contemplation is instantaneous and eternal, it is substantively continuous as a negative eternity. However, it can be perceived by, and from within, the domains of the refused-aspects of negative eternity. These refused-aspects create a porosity in eternal durational substantivity, and are domains from, and through which, sentience can perceive an eternal continuity of material being. They carry an antipodean charge to the domains of the monster because they bring the contemplative aesthetic into a substantive methodological analytic form. Because the refused aspect is, like shock or syncope, a total object, its finality—the final consideration of method—is systematic determinacy in the contemplation of being. The entire dynamic produces a contemplative modality of instantaneous differing of thought.

b) Second analytic for differencing: sets

The second analytic for differencing shows how these individuated domains come together as ensembles or sets, thereby establishing difference in a non-ideal way. Sets are established by the way that contagion works in regard to the subsumed geomathematical level, which functions in this tier as enumeration of domains or their assemblage. If the teratology is a catalogue, it is only by placing the emphasis on enumeration of its individual entries that the catalogue begins to make sense as a number set (and only this reading is sufficient to explain the necessity of Bataille's enumeration strategy in the proposed teratology of "The Pineal Eye," discussed above). In the second sphere of the positive miracle, domains can also be enumerated, indeed, "these domains must be enumerated from now on," but their enumeration here seems to escape their inclusion into a set.⁹³ Or, always a distinct possibility with Bataille, perhaps the set is open. Chapter Four will develop the idea of the enumerated set as a surface for ontic transfer in the context of enumeration as Sadean intensity.

⁹³ *Unfinished System of Nonknowledge*, 160. Bataille names the domains in different parts of his work, but, their number and the forms that are included differ somewhat.

What the (pair of) set(s) indicate(s) towards, is a way that compenetrations work virally through contagion. The number value in a catalogue of monsters (the teratology of complex forms) is limited, and total; the number value in the enumerated domains is various. When intimate compenetrations occur the sets unify, and their mathematical structure (the rule that compiles the sets) also unifies, and so compenetrations of their mutual substance offers a total set of variance. This establishes the role of the morphological in a domain theory of differencing: The law of geometry, as discussed above, collapsed into the tier of the concrete, applies its sense of dissonance to the set, as a unity.⁹⁴ By abstracting from Hegel's connection between the law and deviance, where he says, "the differences present in law as such themselves return again *into the inner world as a simple unity*. This unity is the inner *necessity* of the law," it becomes necessary to conclude that the unified set of domains is an inner necessity of the law; that is, that occurrence of forms of difference is an intrinsic element of this law.⁹⁵ Therefore, variance itself takes issue with Allan Stoekl's claim that it is "the hideous formlessness of the freak, in Bataille, [that] challenges the order world of reason," because, far from contesting the world of reason, the freak emphasises that variance itself is its order.⁹⁶ But more than this, the freak takes issue with any contemplation of a system that is driven by the central notion of a thesis. In the concrete register of Bataille's collapsed atheology, a question asks itself in a different way: 'If I cannot point to the thesis because it is moving within its context, and I cannot point to the movement because the movement is vast and monstrous, then is the reason that I cannot point because the monster is me?'⁹⁷ As the question iterates itself, it is only through the different forms of its

⁹⁴ "Given a relatively isolated system, perceived as an isolated system, an arisen circumstance that makes me perceive it as linked to another ensemble (definable or not)." *Guilty*, 128

⁹⁵ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 92

⁹⁶ Allan Stoekl, coining the phrase 'monstrous dualism' suggests that it is a strategy Bataille deploys to oppose the Kantian sublime. Stoekl (2009) "The two sublimes, fourth time round" in, Stephen Ross (ed.) *Modernism and Theory: A Critical Debate* (London: Routledge), 62. But when the monstrous dualism is situated in the difference where that part of the Kantian sublime imagination differs from the 'natural sublime' this dualism works slightly better as an active principle of monstrous difference operating from within this space. Reading it this way means that Stoekl's canonical interpretation of Bataille's monster in terms of its formlessness, "the hideous formlessness of the freak, in Bataille, challenges the order world of reason," can be seen as incorrect. The monster of dimensional existence arrives as form and Bataille's real intentions can be followed in his words, and where "each individual form escapes this common measure and is, to a certain degree, a monster," this can now be critically re-stated as: the form of the monster that I inhabit affirms the ordered world of non-reason.

⁹⁷ Note, in this context, Bataille's conjecture on the absence of time as End of History/Last man: "But if this throng were to be absent, if the possible were dead, if I were...the last one? Would I have to renounce leaving myself, would I remain enclosed in this self as in the depth of a tomb? Would I from today onward have to moan at the idea

iteration that a centrality emerges, as if it were a sphere introverted in relation to multiple different pebbles, and it provides an answer to Bataille's (rhetorical?) question of "mak(ing) a rule out of derangement."⁹⁸ The question, now reformatted as, "am I the monster?" is apposite to the acquisition of a certain mode of enumeration; multiple reiteration changes the question to a statement: 'I am the monster', because the unity of the set becomes a morphology of an impossibly defined sphere. And this sphere is the overall shape of an atheological system, where, monstrosity is determined by a "pass from a system that is external to himself to a system that is personal." This is "analogous to laughter (erotic trances, sacrificial anguish, poetic evocation...").⁹⁹ And this is significant because it establishes everything about Bataille's political logic: that autonomy is achieved through a generative logic of difference that announces itself through a statement that declares: I am free because I am the freak. A mutating central query is not the same as a mutating essential validity however. Centrality is composed of a mattering that is therefore both concealed and revealed by difference. The freak is difference, but freak after freak after freak begin to compose a central shape that is coherence and mattering rather than theory and contestation. What intimate compenetration is 'showing' is a solution that proposes itself as entirety, and this ensemble of compenetrative difference functions as "unlimited sum of limited objects" and starts to work as a solution to the problem of "the passage from the knowledge of limited object to the entirety of what is" that Bataille identifies as the "problem with philosophy."¹⁰⁰

The refused domains vary in number—variance itself varies— but space allows a brief consideration of the function of the trio cited in the passage above. They are:

- –Sacrifice:

of not being, of not being able to hope to be the last one; from today onward a monster, to weep for the misfortune which overcomes me?" *Inner Experience*, 61

⁹⁸ *Unfinished System of Nonknowledge*, 162

⁹⁹ *Guilty*, 128

¹⁰⁰ *Unfinished System of Nonknowledge*, 165

The first refused aspect, contemplates the affirmative destruction of the object (and of the object of consciousness in particular). Sacrifice as one of the refused domains now functions, while, as Chapter One discusses, still addressing itself to form, by addressing itself to the form of the moment. What is different in the address this time is that, because of Conceptual collapse, the sphere of the positive miracle has as its substance a non-conceptual negative eternity, a continuous atemporal. The sacrificial form of a refused-domain addresses a form of the momentary that has no relation to the concept of time. Sacrifice here addresses the form of the atemporal moment.

- –the death of God

The death of God, the second refused-aspect, is a methodological reckoning of this death, or a ‘science of the death or destruction of God’: this accords with Bataille’s description of atheology, and what this means, is that atheology’s entire systematic contemplation of the momentary, is embedded in the architecture of its systematic entirety. The total is embedded as a detail of, or part of, the total. There is a nested dimensionality. Because Bataille has this impossible mechanism of the total as part, or detail of the total, he has destabilised the idea of the total. The total is now non-total, or, given that the ‘nested dimensionality’ is, by necessity, perpetual, because if being a total as a part then exchange between total and part occurs at all times. The destabilised total has now become trans-total. Bataille’s morphic development of difference leads to this protocol as a principle that takes the generative to the politically radical. The following chapter builds on this protocol and shows how Bataille has developed it epistemologically, through Aquinas and Freud, and how and why he applies it, atheology’s operative principle, as atheological gesture, within an embodied context.

- –laughter

The set approach develops a better notion of atheology’s method by a comparative analysis of how this works alongside with laughter, the third refused aspect.

c). Third analytic for differing: laughter

The third analytic for mattering shows how Bataille organises systematicity through the material presentation of one of these domains: the burst of laughter. Laughter as a refused-aspect conducts the mode for a third phase of an analytic of differing; it is sense's conduit. Refused-aspect domains are modes of contemplation, as discussed, but they are also a totalised mode of engagement that addresses its aesthetic to "communication with an indefinite reality...the impossible."¹⁰¹ Laughter gives a form to Bataille's contemplation, but as he states below, it is laughter's morphology and not its subject that preoccupies him. Laughter's form is that of an ontopolitical systematic entirety, or, put in another form, the generative principle of the universe. Bataille explains,

When I laugh there is something incomparable in the object of my laughter. Philosophy cannot have any other object. Besides, in my mind, I made the object of this laughter a substitute for God; here I saw nothing less than a principle of the universe.¹⁰²

In a modal contemplative approach to being, this term—principle—would typically warn of a return to the paradox Bataille introduced over the erotic object and, here especially, the refused-aspect; in other words, the paradox of an objective vehicle for consideration of the limitless or the eternal. In laughter, Bataille's approach is different. Communication between a contemplative domain and an impossible reality self-determines within the refused-aspect of the contemplative domain, and this is how a burst of laughter works: its interior substance is the autonomous moment when difference happens. This preserves its sovereignty as internal cohesion. Bataille says,

Autonomy (...), inaccessible in a finished state, completes itself as we renounce ourselves to that state (without which it is not *conceivable*), which is to say in the abolition of someone who wills it for himself. It cannot therefore be a *state*, but a *moment*.¹⁰³

A rule of intra-material difference is generated by the intimate compenetration of the sets, and the burst-form of laughter's modality functions as much for the sacrificial form as for the entirety of

¹⁰¹ *Guilty*, 127

¹⁰² *Unfinished System of Nonknowledge*, 160; In the same text, "Aphorisms for the "System", Bataille sets out an organisational structure for atheology (155) one section of which "the effects of the unknown" "enumerates domains", while *being included* in atheology, this list *does not include* sacrifice. The enumeration extends, on page 160, the list of refused aspects from laughter, to tears, sexual excitation, poetic emotion, the sentiment of the sacred, and ecstasy.

¹⁰³ *Guilty*, 127

an atheological system (in other words, the burst can be an organising principle for the other two domains of refused-aspects, including the totality of the system, discussed *supra*). This is a compenetrative differing that, in turn, creates the entirety of Bataille's system in its outline of dynamism, with the inherent mobility of laughter as its denatured dynamic.¹⁰⁴ Bataille's systematic purpose is revealed by this: its material atemporality is an outline through which systematicity perceives a dynamic image of its momentariness.

Sovereign contemplation is situated within these individuations: sacrifice, the death of God, laughter. Bataille constructs, within the precincts of these finalities, a way of thought that is instant and continuous, yet sovereign and atemporal in its modality. The internal structural conditions for making sense occur within these precincts:

- Sacrifice addresses the atemporal momentary,
- Atheology, which is both an individuated aspect and the entirety of Bataille's cosmogony (where a dimensional logic nests within itself) addresses the systematic epigenesis of emergence.
- (a burst of) Laughter is the substance and form of material determinacy. And so, Bataille concludes that,

The passage of the laughter from two people to several people (or one person) introduces into the interior of the realm of laughter the difference that generally separates the realm of eroticism and that of sacrifice.¹⁰⁵

What happens in the interior of the realm of laughter is, in effect, the entirety of the non-specular element of Bataille's systematic dynamics. It monstrates in different ways how difference operates to define systematic entirety within a flexion point of consciousness without compromising

¹⁰⁴ See also "Attraction and Repulsion II" where Bataille describes his methodology in terms of generative action and laughter: "...the profound alterations that take place in the relating movements played out between individuals who belong to a limited mass, which is, itself, individualized—specifically the movements that drive a given society. I represented these alterations as the effect of a central action: as if the nucleus of a structure that is clear-cut and distinct from the individuals adhering to it had the power to really denature the activity that is formed on its periphery. I attempted thus to describe how natural laughter is denatured. Natural laughter would be no more than a very contagious vital exuberance. This simple exuberance would be formed with depressing images, with images of failure or death, comparable to just so many emissions from a sort of central nucleus in which social energy would be charged and concentrated." *College of Sociology*, 113

¹⁰⁵ *Guilty*, 129

consciousness' autonomy. This 'clear consciousness' identifies from the indeterminate process of the generative principle a form of ontopolitical sovereignty that is atemporally realisable, as substantive difference.

Chapter Three, *Embodied Atheology and its Gestural Poiesis*

Therefore we must not take the identity of soul and body as a mere *connection*, but in a deeper way, i.e. we must regard the body and its members as the existence of the systematic articulation of the Concept itself.¹

What is decisive in the return of the global effect to the limited effects, then of the limited effects to the global effect, is that the vanishing global Concept cannot be envisioned independently of its effect any more than a similarly vanishing concept can have a burst of laughter or an erection as an effect. Not that the global effect can be the *meaning* of the absence of the Concept.²

Introduction

This chapter is comprised of three parts. These develop atheology progressively from its epistemology to its embodiment. The parts do this by identifying the consistent presence of a gesture of substitution, which, the chapter argues, is the material manifestation of the nested dimensional exchange dynamic introduced at the end of the previous chapter. As atheology becomes embodied, this gesture contributes to its poiesis as embodiment with increasing (patho-)logical saliency. Where the last chapter developed a materialist realisation of Bataille's theory of atheology, it was, ultimately, theoretical. Bataille's fear, as the quote above shows, is that systematic non-meaning is re-established as a global (conceptual) non-meaning; Bataille's purpose, which this chapter uncovers, is to take non-meaning to thought's political margins, by establishing both the essential difference of meaning in the peripheral part, and then, to de-essentialise this part, before substituting it for a total systematic form. This chapter builds on the findings of the previous one, where the organising operation of the theory of atheology, specifically the conclusion that its motion obeys a being that is nested dimensionally in itself and is therefore dynamically immanent to its own substance, and develops this conclusion in a way that takes theory from its epistemological expression to an embodiment that will, as the chapter's conclusion nears, show how the theoretical substitutional poiesis produces a political product—

¹ G.W.F. Hegel (1975 [1835]) *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, trans. T.M. Knox (New York: Oxford University Press), 119

² *Unfinished System of Nonknowledge*, 182

autonomy— that is, after Bataille’s sacred prerequisite, an ancillary rather than tendential product of the immanent nested dimensional dynamic. In turn this political product licenses a libertarian approach to ontic definition, which the last part of the chapter describes under the rubric radical invagination. This will show how atheology defines a Bataillean sense of being, simultaneously as body theory; and, after Bellmer, as context, through which being invaginates itself in an enhanced sense of the real; and as figuration of thought, where thought’s pathological development is defined by vaginal pissing and squirting. The first part of the chapter *Staining the body: establishing essential difference* develops a different kind of materiality which applies more precisely to the embodied experience, *Staining the body* will show how guilt evolves as materiality into a theoretical structure that implicates the body in its emergence. It takes Bataille’s way of defining guilt, in comparison to Aquinas’ dogmatic position on the same, and shows how each builds towards a defining gesture of substitution. This gesture, the chapter contends, is the embodied image of nested dimensionality that concluded the previous chapter. By following the dynamic of this gesture into the psychological realm of Freudian fetish theory, in part two, *Synecdochical gesture: compromised essence, particularity*, it emerges as more distinctly political in the sense of its transfer of power, and it becomes possible to trace an atheological ontogenesis from theory into embodied practice via the psychological unrepresentable and yet erotically defined. The fetish object, both an inessential part and a total definition of affective erotic stasis becomes itself immanently dynamic through the process of its part/total substitution and, as will be discussed, this immanent dynamic is Bataille’s way of monstrating an invaginated ontic dynamic. Part three, *Radical invagination: squirting as embodied atheology*, returns to the context of vaginal monstration, that is, the role of the vagina as an aperture of showing nonknowledge developed by Bellmer. This part of the chapter associates Bellmer’s theory with Bataille’s genital sphere, developed in Chapter Two, before moving on to more figural portrayals of atheology’s embodiment in a return focus on the vaginal aperture itself, as well as Bataille’s marginal figure of the wise curious girl and her mode of definition of embodied thought by urinating on her embodied condition, thus defining it.

Part One: Staining the Body: Establishing Essential Difference

i. Guilt as a condition of essential difference that inaugurates systematic emergence

Bataille's treatment of guilt gives his thought the conditions for an emergent system to arise. This section considers how guilt is a required condition for difference; once guilt is established as essential difference, its materiality emerges as systematic. Bataille's systematic formulation takes guilt as its pre-substantive materiality, prior even to the emergence of a shape of being that is determined and governed by prohibition, as discussed in Chapter One. Guilt can therefore be equated to active matter, in that it combines general erotic movement with a generative sensual substance at an elemental level.³ Guilt is a materiality that escapes scientific purview and inaugurates generative movement that is closer to mystical behaviours.⁴ Its generativity lends itself to a creation of a zone of interference in a double movement of its non-oppositional pair, Bataille says, "guilt is associated with this double movement. Human existence *is* this double movement."⁵ Action and questioning are the double movement of guilt, whose pairing motivates (action) of the generative principle toward the later context of its total knowability (its question). The pair generates substantive information in a way that is distinct from 'nature', that is to say distinct from a substantive yet motionless endemic continuum: thus, "Guilt arises in a zone of interference - on the way to an attempted accord with nature (human existence is guilty, it asks forgiveness)."⁶ Guilt's action/question doubling therefore produces a zone of interference, from which it emerges, like a stream whose source and substance is frenzy and turbulence. The zone has limits which are marks that are different from each other: these are, respectively, a limit of the total and a limit of the immanent object. The zone of interference is the product of the actioning/questioning pair and corresponds to movement for movement's sake, i.e., the

³ *Eroticism*, 238

⁴ *Eroticism*, 162 and 240

⁵ "Fragment on Guilt" in, *Guilty* Boone translation, 136

⁶ *Ibid.*

product of the generative principle. Bataille describes this, as follows, making clear movement is a liberation struggle (a distraction from servitude) directed against God:

Guilt, in fact, distracts us from this servitude that is the fact of being, comforts the burden of motionless being, and engages humanity in movement for movement's sake, which is never anything but an offensive movement against God.⁷

Guilt's movement is a condition of being, which inaugurates the body of Bataille's theoretician.⁸ Theoretical emergence of the atheological form occurs through the action in this turbulent zone, whose limits are parameters set by the double function of action and questioning as both the problem of totality and the problem of its knowing. The limits of the zone are the limits of generative action/interrogation, but they are already a widened set of criteria from the generative principle itself. Atheology occurs within the precincts of this widened set of criteria. Atheology sets out its limit-parameters as a response to how the question of a total of human existence, when expressed as its theory, can only be totalised by the limit at the zone's other extreme, that is the mark of the object. As will presently be discussed, the first limit, theoretical systematic totality, is only totalised by the second, the object, that is, the stain, or in the context of embodiment, the wound. These limits to the zone of interference unite the zone, which is the realm of metaphysical debasement, but only through their participation in its restriction, as boundary, something Bataille describes below as 'laceration':

[G]uilt is a wound lacerating the integrity of every guilty being.
In this way God (wounded by human guilt) and human beings (wounded by their own guilt with respect to God) find, if painfully, a unity that seems to be their purpose.⁹

This remarks on three principal directions to Bataille's atheology that all link to its irreducible authority. Bataille makes a grouped association between guilt, impurity, uncleanness:

Christianity could not get rid of impurity altogether, it could not wipe out uncleanness entirely. But it defined the boundaries of the sacred world after its own fashion. In this fresh definition

⁷ *Unfinished System of Nonknowledge*, 41

⁸ "Would I be ... this tenacious theoretician, if nothing of the *guilty* attitude subsisted in me?" *Unfinished System of Nonknowledge*, 273

⁹ *On Nietzsche*, 18

impurity, uncleanness and guilt were driven outside the pale. Impure sacredness was thenceforward the business of the profane world.¹⁰

Bataille's atheology follows the line of the archaic sacred, by understanding impure sacredness, in contrary to Christianity, as the business of the sacred world.¹¹ Guilt's generative aspects sets impurity and uncleanness as the limits to the zone of interference, like a river sets its banks. However, rather than their conventional interpretation, and their apparent similarity, impurity is derived from an authority to form a determined thing in existence, and this thing is the summary or total logic of atheology. The boundary of the zone of interference is set on one bank as impurity that stipulates there will be a channel for the flow of guilt within being. By contrast, uncleanness is the other bank, a mark, stain, wound, patination of the thing in-and-of-itself, the immanent stain of the thing. The bank is its form. Rather than simply grouped or opposed to each other, guilt, impurity and uncleanness form a trinitarian structure for atheology, where guilt as the generative principle flows as totalised logic only with the structural support of the unclean stain, and the impure principle of stipulation at one and the other limit of the zone of interference.

Through the channel the river flows, set a course by atheological parameters; and the generation of guilt manifests sacristy in motion as a mystical modality, as a theological concern, yet within a total creation of both a structural summation, and the form of a mark. The trinity structures Bataille's decisive position on atheology, where its extremal limits are marked by the impurity of its systematic totality (its totalising authority) on one hand, and the uncleanness of a form of a stain on the other. Between these positions, in the zone of interference is the turbulence of its flow, which is the result of a bodily gesture exchanging one of its sides for the other: as we shall see, the impure authority of systematic entirety is achieved only by substituting the space of its incompleteness for the uncleanness of an embodied wound.

Because of the substitutive gesture, atheological entirety and its sacred impurity only happen in an unclean, macular or embodied way. This defines atheology as a post-conceptual theory, yet, rather

¹⁰ *Eroticism*, 121

¹¹ This will be discussed further in Chapter 4, in the context of expiation.

than being original to 20th century materialist thought, Bataille finds a post-conceptual antecedent in the dogmatic position of Thomas Aquinas, a homage he pays by naming his writings on atheology as the *Summa Atheologica*, rather evidently recalling Aquinas' *Summa Theologica*.¹² What follows is an argument developing Aquinas' logic position towards summation, or, the first limit to the zone of interference. Following this is an examination of Aquinas' contribution towards the second limit of the zone of interference, the macular body, the thing that is stained/wounded, before a study of the abstract gesture of substitutional atonement, and what the comparison of the two 'banks' implies for atheology as gestural personification, or as will be argued, ritual pathology.¹³

When Bataille exchanges global concept for the particular concern he secularizes concept.¹⁴ As this section will detail, he does this by the simple mechanism of pathologizing the term 'guilty', a term which applies equally to conceptual sin, and to secular crime. Although as a strategy this does not stray far from penal substitution theory, as will be presently shown, an identity between the term guilt in the context of theology and in the context of law allows a comparative understanding of logical intentionality to become more evident. Thomas Aquinas, in *Summa Theologica*, takes the body of Christ to complete his theology. Aquinas, does this by substitutional atonement, where he substitutes the theomorphic body of Christ for the elementary sin of human existence. Aquinas sets this out as problem of the finite versus the infinite in *Summa Theologica*, III XP Q13 art 1 ob. 1, where 'satisfaction' is the idea of making whole, repaying debt, compensating for sin as moral deficit. Aquinas says that 'as no action of man can be infinite, it seems that he cannot make satisfaction to God.' Aquinas separates the gesture of satisfaction between equivalence, which respects the idea of the total, and the making sufficient satisfaction, which is the only possible recourse of the non-infinite human.¹⁵

¹² Thomas Aquinas (1485[1265-1274]). *Summa Theologica*. Christian Classics Ethereal Library. ccel.org

¹³ Cf. "The definition of "person" *Summa Theologica* I Q29 art. 1 ob. 4 and ad 4

¹⁴ See the chapter's introductory quote *Unfinished System*, 182

¹⁵ *Summa Theologica* III XP Q13 art 1 ad 3

For Bataille, the guilty human serves the same dogmatic purpose as the theomorphic body of Christ, that is, a part empowered to complete a theological systematic total. However, Bataille's development occurs in the secular idiom, in the legal sense of guilt, and law's social internality (in the sense that it is established by the people whom it governs), rather than be constructed by God. Bataille's guilty body gesticulates involuntarily, it is unthought and unreflective, even within its self.¹⁶ The zone of interference is, then, an embodiment of unthought or spontaneous movement and this movement is described by the unwilled body in law. It is subject to the law but its conduct is *actus reus*: it is movement as constituent of a crime, because it is guilty; the penal code defines this as a "bodily movement whether voluntary or involuntary," of a criminal act.¹⁷ At the same time, it is a body without *mens rea*, or criminal intentionality, because it is unthought. For Bataille the criminal other is oneself, because all experience of being is experience of difference in-and-of-itself, so is experience of *being* guilty.¹⁸ The poiesis of this move creates an articulated form that, because it is unthinking, is free from the vestiges of hierarchical reason. The law is not a concept nor an ideal, it is a social construct. This re-thinks the governance question of atheology: the law is not above the guilty body, is not vestigial deistic external power; the guilty body is material being as law.¹⁹

This starts to address the central problem of atheology which is the question of how systematic sovereignty can take place in a determined manner, without an external agent, or an external defining point. Either are a betrayal of its purpose, which must refute concept, reason and God, together, as externalities. 'Being as' empowers the involuntary gesture to make the exchange of the part-body for the total concept occur on equitable terms. Guiltiness develops parameters of the zone of interference by which bodily gesture enables global terms to be expressed through the limited effect by

¹⁶ Note here the secular idiom is a materiality of Bataille's syntactic form that does not refer to the profane realm, but operates within his cosmological sacred.

¹⁷ Markus D Dubber (2002) *Criminal Law: Model Penal Code*, §1.13(2)

¹⁸ For a full discussion on the role of the criminal as 'other' see "The Legal Status of the Irrational" Carolyn J. Dean (1992) *The Self and its Pleasures: Bataille, Lacan and the History of the Decentered Subject* (London: Cornell University Press), 17-57

¹⁹ On the negotiated space between an abstract, particularly sovereign body and a physical one, cf. Ernst H. Kantorowicz (1981[1957]) *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press)

substitution of one side of the zone for the other. The unwilling and unintentional body performs this gesture, within its own environs, by which it negotiates the space of its interiority by way of exchanging the furthest amplitudes of its restriction through which its guilt courses: systematic definition and the mark of its conditional being. This way of being guilty is by channelling, which opposes the flood-plains of the endemic or entropic of being, opposing the nature of its ubiquity.²⁰

The river of guilt knows its course by establishing its *actus reus* channel. The emergence of an unwilling body codes a non-instrumentalised systematisation of nonknowledge, by replicating and communicating its intimate nonconscious state in touching both banks at once. The impossibility of this task is embodied or reified by the *mens rea* body, but its legal cohesion— the authority of the law— is retained by that which is channelled, in other words, the impurity of the legislative essential is the river's internal pathology.²¹ This retained guilt is neither subject to a judgement, nor willed by the guilty subject, because this would entail a subject's appropriation by language and intentionality; it is an autarkic guilt of Bataille's ontic 'is', which does not have laws applied to it, but is *itself* the crime of law's presence.²² Its subjective totality is reflective or expressive of the crime of authority as a discontinuous mark, a cleft in a ground, or a pathological crime or wound against nature that is expressed by its physical body. Bataille's pathological formation develops legal codes from the paroxysms and spasms of the somatic form. They are unthought laws because the movement of the body is involuntary: the involuntary orgasm in *Madame Edwarda*, the involuntary defecation in *The Use Value of DAF de Sade*; and,

The vicissitudes of organs, the profusion of stomachs, larynxes, and brains traversing innumerable animal species and individuals, carries the imagination along in an ebb and flow it does not willingly follow, due to a hatred of the still painfully perceptible frenzy of the bloody palpitations of the body.²³

²⁰ "Human beings are guilty. They are guilty to the extent that they oppose nature." "Fragment on Guilt" *Guilty*, 123

²¹ See the internalisation of the legal essential noted by Hegel and covered in the footnote to Section 3 the last chapter.

²² In other words: the 'crime of authority'. See citation on frontispiece, or Georges Bataille, *Œuvres Complètes* v. I, 549.

²³ "The Big Toe" *Visions of Excess*, 22

The ‘other’ body, the guilty one, conforms specifically to Bataille’s third object of knowledge, after the mathematical question and the organ: the juridical form.²⁴ The unthought body is a juridical form; this is how atheology is negotiated, by its gestures, atheology is ‘known’.

ii. Systematic summation: embodiment and its substitution for conceptual sufficiency

Building on point i. above, guilt as the essential aspect of difference for pre-condition for an emergent system, this section will articulate how Aquinas’ expiatory theology substitutes embodiment for conceptual sufficiency, arguing that systematic summation in Bataille is achieved by the same gesture. Summation, or totality, is both a statement of critical context and a principle of operation in Aquinas’ work; in Bataille’s secular and non-recursive idiom, summation is auto-poietic: the embodied system self-totalises. Aquinas uses substitutional atonement as a gesture of adequation—meaning that which is missing in a relation between God’s intactness and humanity is made total by the figure of the human. For Aquinas, substitution is a strategy pursued by God; for Bataille substitution is performed by the guilty body of the criminal ‘other’.

A history of substitutional atonement begins with Anselm Of Canterbury positing that God must be honoured AS IF he were an individual— his honour must be intact, or undamaged, in a mediaeval concept of honour.²⁵ However, because He is infinite the human effort is insufficient to address the magnitude of this (infinite) task.²⁶ The debt of honour is to be paid therefore in the currency of penance. Penance is due to God: it makes for God’s satisfaction, which at this point has a morphology only suggested by a notion of the total. As with the Kantian association between cause and effect, discussed in detail in Chapter One, Aquinas associates adequation with sufficiency.

²⁴ See previous chapter, and *Visions*, 172

²⁵ There is therefore a direct correspondence with the idea of honour and its personification and the total already discussed in connection with Bataille’s development of Mauss’ work, see page 66. Anselm of Canterbury (1926 [..]) *Proslogium; Monologium; An Appendix In Behalf of the Fool by Gaunilo; and Cur Deus Homo*. Translated by Sidney Norton Deane, B.A. (Chicago: The Open Court Publishing Company). https://www.ccel.org/ccel/anselm/basic_works.i.html

²⁶ For a discussion on Anselm’s difficulties positing God as if human see Ryne Beppard, “Rethinking Anselm’s Atonement Theory: ‘Unmaking’ The Indebted Man” *Religious Theory: E-Supplement to the Journal for Cultural and Religious Theory* 3rd January 2017

Totality, or completion, is achieved, for Aquinas, by filling in with the adequating part, to render this part to God. However, to *not* offer penance, to not render to God his due, is to sin.²⁷ Being ‘due’ instrumentalises God’s intactness as debt. Debt carries its authority as obligation, but penance illustrates that expiation is anterior to moral and legal contravention: it prefigures authority. This establishes an important precedent for a theory of emergence, authority and expiation because it explicitly makes a link between a quasi-morphological notion of the total, and the expiatory gesture that is necessary to redeem any insufficiency. From Anselm, it is sufficiency, or satisfaction, that provides a sense of the totality that pairs with expiation. Anselm’s introduction of the notion of debt changes penance from atonement for honour’s insufficiency to making penance as atonement for sin, something quite different. Anselm has upped the stakes from a legalistic derivation of debt, to a general condition of insufficiency that is preceded by its own mythic image: the original sin that causes Adam and Eve to be expelled, or, separated from, the Garden of Eden. Non-satisfaction now has a spatial dimension that corresponds not only to the act of atonement, but to separation-lapse, and, because of this, the morphology of the total itself has an internal separation, a sense of expulsion within the total obligation that is irrevocably associated with sin, and embodiment. Adam and Eve’s Original Sin becomes mortal sin when applied to the human particular. The atonement for mortal sin proceeds in conjunction with atonement for a crime. By the time this notion is developed in Aquinas, sin and the crime become more distinct from each other, and atonement loses some of its meaning of apology, or making whole, and takes on aspects of penalty.

Anselm posits intactness or wholeness as the property of an infinite God; this God is a satisfied entity, but one whose satisfaction must be respected. This makes completion the taboo whose contravention mandates the requirement for atonement that is penance. To violate the taboo of completion is to be *guilty* regardless of whether it is moral, criminal, financial or theological sufficiency that is in deficit. Penance is the counterweight to guilt. But it is also the *work*, the work of closure, of filling and balancing out that is undertaken by ‘satisfaction’ in substitutionary atonement, which guides Aquinas in his directions on Original Sin. Satisfaction is precisely the ontological

²⁷ Anselm *Cur Deus Homo* Book 1, chapter XI “Therefore to sin is nothing else than not to render to God his due. (..) This is the sole and complete debt of honor which we owe to God.”

substance that fills and balances the difference between God's hopes for humanity's behaviour, and humanity's actual behaviour. The difference, in its emblematic telling, is the contravention of instruction, defiance of authority, and the eating of fruit from the tree of the garden of Eden: crime; original sin; punishment: expulsion. Difference is lapse, and lapse is separation and banishment. The satisfaction required by God is a repair to absolute intactness as atonement for this contravention; it is the substance that repairs or replaces the separation that banishment evidences. It is a return to a totality that may not have a pre-original determination, as this total form of God depends on human subjective conjecture as to God's form. Discontinuity, in the sense of the creation of the human, forms the logical and substantive space for atonement to occur.

Satisfaction, (the production of penance), is measurable in certain ways and, (in Aquinas), this measure is determined as equivalence; that is, an amount of penance equivalent to the space of separation, which will make good or balance out, will *settle the debt*, or make sufficient, should God accept this.²⁸ In other words, satisfaction is achieved by contributing towards the closure of the fully calibrated space. Yet its contribution is restricted by the fact that the contributor has limited resources on which to draw. This last, limited, contribution is that of the human agent: its best efforts condemn it to a perpetual existence of experiential penal deficit. God decides to substitute this deficit with a man/God, one who can make good the debt with a contribution more appropriate to the currency required: the form of a human being.

Where this develops for Bataille is the emerging association between completion and prohibition, and it is here, through this prior link that prohibition, that is, authority, makes its connection to expiation. What this leaves emergence is that, for the guilty to be generative, it has to somehow complete, for only then can it locate the prohibition that generates its guilty motion. Rather than an anthropocentric image of completion, Bataille replaces its complete ideality with complete systematicity. However, as will be shown, the complete system is— after Aquinas— a post-conceptual system contingent on its completion by the human body, the parts of a human body, and the marks of a human body. Aquinas explores this position as follows:

²⁸ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, III XP Q14 art 2 ad 1

[B]ecause in every composite there must be potentiality and actuality; but this does not apply to God; for either one of the parts actuates another, or at least all the parts are potential to the whole (...) because nothing composite can be predicated of any single one of its parts. And this is evident in a whole made up of dissimilar parts; for no part of a man is a man, nor any of the parts of the foot, a foot. But in wholes made up of similar parts, although something which is predicated of the whole may be predicated of a part (as a part of the air is air, and a part of water, water), nevertheless certain things are predicable of the whole which cannot be predicated of any of the parts; for instance, if the whole volume of water is two cubits, no part of it can be two cubits. Thus in every composite there is something which is not it itself.

[However],

since God is absolute form, or rather absolute being, He can be in no way composite.²⁹

If Bataille accepts that atheology is the science of the death of God, then its systematicity takes an absolute form, at least in theory. Its scientific logic is presented in its objectivity, as a form of an object. But, to develop this line of argument means that all things that are not God are either apocryphal, that is, outside the form of God, or they are inside, which means that the form of God, although absolute, is composite. Bataille develops this line of logic in a way that atheological systematicity subsumes a totality in being, as well as subsuming the absolute, as a waste product of thought (as discussed in the introjection of the sphere of being with the ‘basic elements’ of the noumenal in the previous chapter). Bataille’s theory of atheology is whole, but its totality is contained within it, so it is a composite total. The logic then returns to Aquinas’ passage which then states that, if this whole is composed of similar parts, then the part may be exchanged for the whole. This sets a precedent for substitution to occur, and rather than being establishing itself as composite and absolute, instead being comes down to an argument about difference. If a body is composed of different parts, then it cannot exchange its foot for its total embodiment, if the foot and the body are the same then one can be substituted for another. This develops the argument for difference from a theological one to a democratic one. Difference and equivalence get established only within a composed sense of total being as body politic.

A counterfactual is an agreement or demand that considers another possibility to have equal validity to an initial reality. Anselm asks us to consider God, who is not human but is divine, *as if* He

²⁹ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I Q3 art 7, ad 1

were human; a consideration of God being and acting in and of the material world to which He does not belong, because He is external to it. But it also requires human action to consider a theological, and therefore conceptual, element in its approach to God. Anselm has elements of classical ideality that, for Aquinas, require revision: Aquinas understands the moral weight of realm of the concept as being not only more significant, but more grievous: there is a greater pathological dimension to conceptual crime.

Though original sin has less of the nature of sin than actual sin has, yet it is a more grievous evil, because it is an infection of human nature itself, so that, unlike actual sin, it could not be expiated by the satisfaction of a mere man.³⁰

Here it is possible to abstract from Aquinas' theological summation to illustrate in Bataille's atheological version a modality of achieving completion. Aquinas' substitutional atonement is a gesture of exchange, where Aquinas' doctrinal position is that God offers a God-human to fill the deficit of anthropological guilt in return for this guilt. There is no surplus to this transaction; the gesture of adequation is precisely that the size of the debt is equal to the size of the guilty body. The burden of the debt is assumed by the figure of the god-human, and the gestural exchange is the method of doctrinal completion: it integrates humanity into a theological compact with God, via a gesture of ritual substitution. Where the similarities occur between Aquinas and a formulation of a doctrinal position for Bataille is where the *movement* of Bataille's thought coincides with the *gesture* of Aquinas' substitution. The similarities between each locate themselves not in the figure of Christ, or rather, not specifically in the body of Christ, but in the mimicry of closure that the substitutional gesture achieves by making a guilty body.

iii. Substitutional gesture

The substitutional gesture is that which unifies the chapter: here, having established the totality of the systematic summation, it opens a 'route' to the part through part-for-whole exchange, and

³⁰ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, III XP Q13 art 1

therewith how this ‘part’ acts as a vehicle to establish a kind of autonomy that opens up non-mastery as logical approach for acephalic sovereign being.

Allan Stoekl has made a strong argument for ritual substitution as a non-visual replacement for recognition, and suggests that Bataille “may be re-orientating the way we conceive of religious experience.”³¹ He suggests that the ritual gestures point towards a sacrificial context.³² If Bataille’s gesture is a ritualised indicator of a sacrificial context, it opens substitution of a body up for a summation, or a substitution of a body for a guilty element in order that form— i.e., the precursor for the sacrificial context, as argued in Chapter One— be non-visually recognised as systematically complete. Ritual substitution becomes vital for the production of totality, or total form whose intactness is generated from its interior principle of guilt and not from an external agent. Now it becomes possible to read Aquinas’ gesture of substitution from Bataille’s involuntary body, or in other words, to read Aquinas *atheologically* towards a non-conceptual, or pathological summation.

Aquinas distinguishes the response required for a general level of sin with that of particular sin; for the former “it is impossible to repay them measure for measure”, and deems that “sufficient satisfaction” (which is within the human repertoire) replaces “equivalent satisfaction” (which is to repair the impossible deficit).³³ What Aquinas is suggesting is that there is a mortal, non-ideal shape of sin that can perform adequation to God. Aquinas contributes a radically different humanism to dogmatic consideration, guiding theory in the direction of a human fallibility that starts to look like Bataille’s freakish, or monstrous particularity. If humans all failed in the same way, by being infected by Original Sin, then, logically, this is an intrinsic element of God’s plan; to fail this plan, to be insufficient, must, therefore, be to have a particular insufficiency, one that differs from other humans’— also heterogeneous— insufficiencies. And this particular insufficiency must also have a different, non-generic, morphic aspect if it is to be a part that completes and satisfies God. This part,

³¹ Allan Stoekl, “Recognition in Madame Edwarda” in, Carolyn Bailey Gill, ed. (1995) *Bataille: Writing the Sacred* (London and New York: Routledge), 78

³² *Ibid.*, 80

³³ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* XP Q13 art 1

and its particularity, must therefore have a non-idealised form, and this form must be somehow created by the marks on its body, contouring and connoting its strangeness.

Aquinas' consideration shows how sufficiency, that is, logical totality, works with forms of difference. It does this by gesturally substituting the particular part for a more senior systematic component: if the wound is a part of a body that marks its difference, the gesture substitutes the wound for the body of difference; the gesture substitutes the body of difference and/or the wound for faith (or, as the next section discusses, the connective tissue of non-knowledge); the gesture substitutes the body of difference/the wound/faith for the total systematicity of theology. The same gesture is made until, finally, each and every part can be exchanged for systematic totality. The gesture remains constant, only its magnanimity alters.

When Aquinas aggregates general insufficiency and particular insufficiency, this aggregation applies as equally to the body as to the logos of God: Christ is posited by God, in the general sense, as a restitution of wholeness through his attribute of applied infiniteness. In the particular sense, Logos, which is the word of God, and so, infinite, itself becomes a body, finitely mortal in its potential for atonement.³⁴ However, depending on interpretation (and here Aquinas is quoting St. Augustine), Christ's atonement is either restricted to make satisfaction for the sins of souls antecedent to the Paschal; or, his soul was such that, "“from the fulness (sic) of its blessedness there pours over even into the lower nature” (i.e., the body).”³⁵

³⁴ The body that asks “Why?” as Christ does whilst dying on the cross. Bataille makes the link between Christ's words ‘*lamma sabachtani*’ and an *experience*, that “opens a bit more every time the horizon of God (the wound).” *Inner Experience*, 103-104

³⁵ Aquinas is quoting Augustine (Ep. Ad Dios. Cxviii) here. *Summa Theologica*, III Q14 article 1. Depending on interpretation: Calvin followed the logic that Christ's sacrifice on the cross was a penalty for humanity's *extant* sins and therefore this sacrifice was in exchange for a restricted number (or dimension) of sins. Aquinas' position is that the sacrifice is in exchange for an unlimited, yet material, quantity of sins. The inference being made here is that different interpretations correspond to notions of Bataille's restricted (Calvin) and General (Aquinas) Economic models. These terms in Bataille broadly correspond to limited or delimited (or autonomous) sets of relational functions, with the former associated with recuperation of capital investment and the latter associated with unlimited expenditure and waste. There is an ambivalence between Bataille's purpose for these terms that is nowhere more evident than between these two major theologies. Bataille, in choosing guilt as a material for the human condition has effectively incorporated both restricted and general guilt together under a libidinal rubric. By choosing ambivalence to the Calvin/Aquinas limited/delimited quantification of guilt, Bataille poises guilt as an economic function, and in doing so imagines, for the first time, the endopsychic libidinal as an economic set of entanglements, and, moreover, a set that has a potentially limited number of these entanglements, at which juncture ego forms in a certain way, and, equally, a set of unlimited entanglements, or none, in which case the ego forms in a different way, or not at all. In either scenario the moment of ego formation draws libidinal economy into the body of the human psyche as *shape*.

If insufficiency in respect to God's honour has materialised general guilt into categorical guilt of sin and crime, both levels of guilt are substituted by the introjection of the body of the human Christ into the space of atonement. This replicates the collapse of the epistemological tiers, and the compenetrative dynamic, as discussed in Chapter two. As an already-defined unsatisfied aggregate, the debt-defined space of atonement is penetrated and/or inhabited by the atoned body. Substitution places a human body that has infinite resonance into a position that *determines* insufficiency in a complete substitution (at the general level) that *redresses* insufficiency. The action of redress is identical to the form or shape of that which it addresses, it has morphologic resonance, or inherence. Moreover, this determination-by-form is the impurity that is precursory to the sacrificial moment. Christ is placed in the space of insufficiency because He is both infinite (as an expression of God) and finite (in that he is manifestly in the form of a mortal body). The body completes a total: an infinite system in Christ. Atonement is this completion of a (totalised) relationship of God and humanity at a general, yet post-conceptual level, replacing original sin. But the body itself is also expressed in the mortal particular of guilt, only as an adequation. This leaves a separation between God's intactness and the quantity of penance offered. Christ's sacrifice, in penal substitution atonement theory, has been posited in exchange for the sins of the human. There is no longer a direct inference of satisfaction, or completion (or indeed justice).

iv. Staining, a 'spilling over' of a mark of systematicity

The particular body that emerges in response to systematicity's ritual substitution is a body comprised of— and quantified by— the excess of blessedness that spills over into its lower nature.³⁶ Aquinas's theological summation describes corporeality as:

A stain is properly ascribed to corporeal things, when a comely body loses its comeliness through contact with another body, e.g., a garment, gold or silver, or the like. Accordingly, a stain is ascribed to spiritual things in like manner.³⁷

³⁶ The etymology of blessing from Old English word for blood indicates to be marked (consecrated) with blood, which aligns with contemporary French 'blessure' meaning wound.

³⁷ *Summa Theologica*, I Q86 Art. 1

The body's dimensions are determined by the stains that mark it by contact with other bodies. This staining seems to relate to a hierarchical substitutive exchange, as some negotiating basis: the 'spiritual thing' is stained, as is a corporeal thing. The gesture of poiesis in ritual substitution is enacted by staining or bloodletting; in the case of the wound, it emerges autarkically by demonstrating and determining itself through self-marking, by staining itself, by cutting itself, within the negotiated context of the zone of interference. Therefore, the *image of Christ* responds to any particular (individual) condition of separation from divine intactness with a communication of its *maculation* as "ills sustained in bodily goods or even in the body itself."³⁸ Logos becomes flesh, but in the sense of a different or degenerate flesh.³⁹ Christ's body must, to fulfil logic, be flawed, or 'infirm'.⁴⁰ What is established across the zone is that interference is a lateral move of oscillation between generative and degenerative difference of substance and form, enacted in the substitutional gesture of the involuntary body.

Infirmity and staining emerge as artefacts of difference, and difference completes the system's pathology. Rather than exhibit the impurity of authority on a general (and therefore conceptual) level, these macular occurrences determine the particular body's form with their dirty differentiation. The particular body is determined by its macular authority; it establishes itself with an essential, authoritative form of autogenerative-difference. It is also prototypical monstrosity, and aligns Aquinas with the systematic conditions laid out in Chapter Two, by working out its total form only through a macular (monstrous) understanding. Through the gesture of the unwilled within the othered body, Bataille offers an analytic mode as a new exposition of the part/total relationship, as a proxy for the momentary/continuous relationship, and the theoretical dynamic of nested dimensionality. Through Aquinas' adequation, part becomes a point of access to the systematic body, as the moment becomes a point of access for the eternal. The wound in the body becomes its adequating part; the unwilled of the *mens rea* becomes its gestural poiesis, as adequation makes systematic entirety happen. Through

³⁸ *Summa Theologica*, I QQ

³⁹ John 1:14

⁴⁰ *Summa Theologica*, IIIXP Q14 Art.1 ad 4

the embodied gesture, Bataille conflates movement with the conditions for gestural exchange, and forges an atheological body where the stain, or the wound, rather than being symbolic or emblematic of metaphysical themes, such as human suffering and sin, becomes empowered as a mark of difference, an empowerment that carries within its maculation a sense of the totality with which it is fungible. Whether operating at the level of Christ's wound, or a criminal other, corporeal particularity substitutes adequation for summation: it summarises atheology. Bataille's own efforts towards (conceptual) atheological summation meander, are incomplete, or appear to fail because he considers them a general or categorical level.⁴¹ Instead, Bataille invokes the wound of Christ because it is empowered as a particular, and yet infinite object. God is not countered, dismissed or negated by atheology, but is particularised by this: "Why would we try to eradicate an obsession that is so deeply marked with blood? We must make use of it."⁴²

Part Two: Synecdochical Gesture: Compromised Essence, Particularity

i. Gestural endowment: synecdoche

This section continues to develop the argument for gestural poiesis as a means to introduce endemic complexity of non-meaning throughout Bataille's system: it considers inessentiality and its empowerment, opening out a political context for the gesture within the psychological unknowable. Where the previous section examined how Bataille borrows gestural tropes of substitution from Aquinas' theological doctrine in order to mark his version of systematicity with an essential difference, this section returns to the same gesture of substitution in the context of Freud in order to show how the gesture's repetition now marks Bataille's system of essential difference with inessentiality. Here, and throughout, essentiality refers to being's essence, and yet inessentiality refers to both being's non-criticality, and to its possible non-occurrence. This latter ambiguity raises the

⁴¹ "Plans and notes for "Atheology" *Unfinished System of Nonknowledge*, 155-161

⁴² Bataille (2017 [1937]) "The Crucified Christ" in, *The Sacred Conspiracy: The Internal Papers of the Secret Society of Acéphale and Lectures to the College of Sociology* trans. Natasha Lehrer, John Harman, Meyer Barash (London: Atlas Press), 229

problem of totality and applies it in a particular way that, for Bataille, develops the fetish away from Freud. Because Freud's gesture is synecdochic, it produces knowledge and power in a certain way that causes systematic totality to fold into itself, or auto-invaginate. The section examines how the wound fetish associates itself in a particular way with this auto-invagination, and in much the same way as the relation of the eyeball-genital sphere relate to the geometric sphere to emphasise variance and difference, the wound relates to the sexual (and commodity) fetish to conceal affective power whilst distributing it autonomously.

Bataille's substitutive gesture concerns itself with meaning, specifically, how to address meaning's essence in a way that its absence does not become the conceptual ground of non-meaning and a motive for systematicity's occurrence and coherence. For this, Bataille turns from Aquinas to Freud, and, where in the former Bataille appropriates the gesture of substitutional atonement as a way of marking the entirety of a system with a mark of difference, with the stain, thereby making the entire system representative of essential difference, in the latter Bataille appropriates the very same gesture in order to substitute the essential, but unknowable, continuity, with the inessential, but expressive, part, thus making his prior development of system's meaning of essential difference itself inessential at the level of its total realisation.

The appropriation of Freud's gesture substitutes a reified total, and therefore assimilable, form of immanent nonknowledge, for the continuous and unknowable infinite of consciousness. Gestural poiesis complicates atheology by embodying its construction, and this complication forges the politicisation of the role of the part. Freudian substitution occurs to reconcile a difference between the unconscious, where general meaning is withheld, or screened off, from perceptive consciousness, and perceptive consciousness, where meaning is immanentised by its presentational extension.⁴³

Reconciliation is offered only by a detail of that which is repressed, or unknown. The detail comes to

⁴³ The screen both conceals and is a surface for projected meaning for Freud. Cf. (1899) "Screen Memories" *Complete Works*, 487-503, and also the 'screen-associations' described in (1901) "The Psychopathology of Everyday Life" which link the concerns of the first part of this chapter with those of the next chapter: "Strangely enough my next thought was not a maxim but the following sentence: "God created man in His own image" and the same idea in reverse: "Man created God in his." Thereupon the memory of what I was looking for immediately appeared. On that occasion my friend had said to me in Andrassy Street: "Nothing human is foreign to me", whereupon I had answered, in allusion to the discoveries of psycho-analysis: "You ought to have gone further and admitted that nothing animal is foreign to you." 1101-1347, 1116

consciousness in a representative way; it represents the complete meaning of that which is screened off.⁴⁴ This is a metonymic exchange, meaning that one part (the particular) is representative of the whole of the meaning— and this is evidenced by the discovery of the meaning associated with this detail (by the psychoanalytic process) at which point neurosis ceases because the whole meaning transfers into consciousness. By establishing, in representation, a common value between the detail and the whole, Freud, in a move Naomi Schor criticises as anchoring his thought in the 19th century, valorises totality by claiming it for the value of the detail.⁴⁵ However, as will presently be discussed, the process of valorisation is linked to the gesture of substitution, where the capture of the whole of the reference and the capture of the whole of the meaning are undone by the underlying assumption of unconscious knowability. The gesture is paramount in establishing and endowing value, as illustrated by the following passage from “Screen Memories”, where Freud says:

[T]he essential elements of experience are represented in memory by the inessential elements of the same experience. It is a case of displacement on to something associated by continuity; or, looking at the process as a whole, a case of repression accompanied by the substitution of something in the neighbourhood (whether in space or time).⁴⁶

Freud’s invocation of association and displacement suggests that there is a consistent value in the gesture of substitution. This allows the inessential artefact, the thing in the neighbourhood, to be exchanged for unconscious continuity. What this congruency means is that Freud makes a claim for gesture of substitution as a whole process; that is, one that exchanges the continuity of the human unconscious for a representative extension of itself that manifests in space/time without loss. Because any substitution implies an equal but different value between the item and that which is substituted for it, the detail of continuity’s manifestation as extension therefore shares the whole of the value of the continuous, even though it does not share the entirety of the continuous’ essence. The gesture of

⁴⁴ Cf. Freud, “Fetishism” “One would expect that the organs or objects chosen as substitutes for the absent female phallus would be such as appear as symbols of the penis in other connections as well.” *Complete Works*, 4537; Also “Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality” “UNSUITABLE SUBSTITUTES FOR THE SEXUAL OBJECT-FETISHISM” *Complete Works*, 1480-81

⁴⁵ Naomi Schor (2007) *Reading in Detail: Aesthetics and the Feminine*, (London: Routledge), 85

⁴⁶ Freud, “Screen Memories” *Complete Works*, 491

substitution endows the part or detail with equal value as it does the infinite or continuous thing, to which it relates only partially.

This refines the extension that Bataille observes as an emergent sphere, where the flexion point of consciousness, i.e., that which is neither unconscious nor conscious and is therefore liminal between the floating infinite and static form, projects or bursts out obscenely into a space-time manifestation of a series or circuit of non-ideal spheres: eyeball, bull's testicle, genital, and so forth. Bataille's obscene displacement can be appropriated into substitutive gesture because the value between the time/space extension of the thing in the neighbourhood (the sphere) and unconscious continuity is congruent. The sphere is a substitute for the flexion point of consciousness, and gestural substitution, in Bataille's appropriation, is that achieved by the obscenity of the produced thing. As such, the thing produced presents 'as,' and does not represent 'by': Bataille's unconscious/conscious liminality is substituted by its manifest, the sphere of difference as its extension in space/time, and the sphere therefore does not represent the unconscious threshold, but can be understood *as* it. The difference between the two states of (re)presentation makes Freud's displacement a question of empowered exchange, where, because the value endowed on two propositions is congruent, their substitution is not just metonymic, but is synecdochical. In synecdochical exchange within the body, a part, the eyeball for example, does not stand-in metonymically for vision, but for a value of body totality (which includes the eyeball). Embodied synecdochic exchange therefore corresponds to the same relation described in the last chapter between 'atheology' as the refused domain of the sphere of the negative miracle, which is a part of the systematic entirety of 'atheology'. The relationship is synecdochic in the same way that the eyeball is the body, or the genital is being, because the eyeball then contains the body in which it is contained, and if the genital is being then, as total being, it contains the genital. The idea of totality is destabilised, although not destroyed, by this deliberate dimensional nesting. Gestural synecdoche uses value in a total way, so that the unknowable infinite can be exchanged for the partial which manifests its total value. This value is its total meaning. Total value is captured by essence: the verb to be. In synecdoche the part *is* the whole; in synecdoche the part and the whole *is* the same but, as extensions, (time/space dimensional expression) they have been exchanged, or substituted as one, for the other. Synecdoche has taken a unitary value of the 'is' and

has gesturally reproduced it. The gesture is a scissiparous division of essence, that is, of the *is*.⁴⁷ Freud's alteration of essence to the inessential, from the passage above, from the total yet unknowable continuous to its total manifestation, is a scissiparous reproduction of value. Only morphological expression alters and it relies on scissiparity of value to maintain a congruous position of identity in time/space extension.

When Bataille writes that "there is an identity of the particular being and the universal, and the universal is not truly given except in the mediation of particularity," he is describing the function of synecdoche.⁴⁸ Synecdoche establishes the total power of the particular. The Freudian appropriation substitutes the part's totality with infinite continuity rather than systematic entirety of the Aquinian appropriation. This empowers the part and means that the inessential gains total power.

ii. Fetish knowledge

Building on synecdoche's gestural empowerment, this section shows how totality endows the part as fetish: through an affectivity that circumvents— or obviates— knowledge, the fetish emphasises an immanent form of nonknowledge. The synecdochical gesture shared by Freud and Bataille operates in the register of knowing as well as meaning. Freud, as discussed, privileges totality in his operation: the detail that stands in for the whole of the unconscious will reveal its totality to knowing only through the patient's successful psychoanalysis. The inessential detail of the object is the possibility of unconscious knowability in the context of time and space. Put another way, Freud's process takes the consistency in value and through psychoanalysis, reveals to knowledge, by extension, the total of the unknown of unconsciousness. Making a next logical step suggests that eroticism's infinite continuity can be substituted into knowledge in the same way, and that through this process the fetish object can be understood as an inessential determination of the erotic continuous movement. But this logical step is a stumble because if the fetish object is inessential then

⁴⁷ See Bataille's discussion in *Eroticism* of scissiparous division in the context of inner experience. Bataille develops an argument for scissiparity as continuous reproduction, generated by autonomous cellular division. *Eroticism*, 94-95

⁴⁸ *Theory of Religion*, 120

it must be denuded of its affective power, whereas the reverse would seem to be the case: it is hyper-essential. The fetish seems bewitching in a total, or even, excessive, way.

This problem arises at the moment of commodification, and is a political problem. At the point of its full empowerment, the part-detail reaches the status of fetish object. An inevitable endowment of erotic energy into an entirely representative form is also sexual commodification of that form. It is fully realised and yet, as an empowered and therefore autonomous form, it does not know its sexual commodification except externally, as spectacle.⁴⁹ The fetish is a form of sexual commodification, but, as commodity, its hyper-essentiality is a hypostatisation of its own nonknowledge that extends into reification.⁵⁰ The conjunction of the erotic and its commodification of knowledge complicates the assumption of an available total from which to extrapolate the essential and inessential value. Karl Marx states that the ‘enigmatic’ and ‘mystical character’ of the commodity form is produced by its disassociation from use-value, and that this character of the commodity is produced as ‘social hieroglyph’ representing the intangible values of products of labour.⁵¹ The disassociation of the commodity from its use-value, which for Bataille is mandatory in the sense that his obscene objects are stained with the authority of sacred impurity and strictly not with the sweat of the instrumental, means, if Marx is correct, that there is a disassociation between its immanent communicability and its form, and that, “the products of the human brain appear as autonomous figures endowed with a life of their own, which enter into relations both with each other and with the human race.” The realm of the

⁴⁹ This leads to spectacular knowing and intimate knowing, which in turn implies no overall essentiality or total availability to knowledge, but in light Bataille’s critique of ocularity, spectacle implies a fallacious or narrow thought. For an example of ‘spectacle thinking’ in the context of the sexual commodity, see Judith Butler who understands the commodified female body only as a female fetish external to herself, and because she is forced to think/know in the spectacle, designates this under the rubric of the phallus. Judith Butler (1993), *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of ‘Sex’* (New York & London: Routledge), 57-91

⁵⁰ See here Pat Califia’s remarks on fetishist objectifying: “Recently I have heard feminists use the term “fetishistic” as an epithet and a synonym for “objectifying.” Sadomasochists are often accused of substituting things for people, of loving the leather or rubber or spike heels more than the person who is wearing them. Objectification originally referred to the use of images of stereotypically feminine women to sell products like automobiles and cigarettes. It also referred to the sexual harassment of women and the notion that we should be available to provide men with sexual gratification without receiving pleasure in return and without the right to refuse to engage in sex. A concept that was originally used to attack the marketing campaigns of international corporations and the sexual repression of women is now being used to attack a sexual minority.” “Feminism and Sadomasochism” *Heresies Collective* (1981) *Heresies: A Feminist Publication on Art & Politics* Vol. 3 No. 4, #12: Sex Issue. 30-34, 33

⁵¹ Karl Marx (1976 [1867]) *Capital- A Critique of Political Economy Volume 1* trans. Ben Fowkes (London: Penguin Books), 164-67.

indecipherable returns the fetish to nonknowledge as a politically empowered autonomous commodity.

The inessentiality of the fetish object conceals information about affective power in its reified extension. In other words, the fetish object is a real-world version of Bataille's non-ideal (and non-occurring) sphere, discussed in Chapter Two, where the laws of its geometry internalise the sense of their essentiality. However, with concealment comes the autonomy that Marx describes and it becomes possible to say that a fetish object conceals its affective erotic power in its commodification of hypostatised and reified non-knowledge. The autonomous condition that this engenders is respectful of Bataille's dissociative dynamic of the spheres. The argument concludes that synecdochic substitution's psychological manifest in the fetish object resonates with atheology's dynamic of the spheres, where attraction and repulsion both resonate within the fetish object as autonomous forms.

iii. Particular power

Following the development of the fetish as an empowered object of nonknowledge, this section examines the implication of a system for difference emerging from a political immanence that has total power residing in its particular or affective material elements. Bataille develops the wound from Aquinas's theology both as an expression of difference that marks the body and also in a synecdochical context as an object that is empowered to substitute itself for the entirety of the body, as well as the infinite of the system. Bataille describes it as "the horizon of god," meaning that the central proposition of its form can be substituted for the margins of the infinite.⁵² This has direct application to the problem of sexual commodification and nonknowledge in the substitutional gesture. The wound is a fetish object, yet according to Naomi Schor, "wounds are not generally fetishized by men."⁵³ This raises problems for placing it in a combined context of a Freud/Bataille synecdochic gesture, because Freud does not acknowledge the existence of female fetishism.⁵⁴ Bataille's advocacy

⁵² *Inner Experience*, 103-104

⁵³ Naomi Schor "Female Fetishism: The Case of George Sand" in, Susan Rubin Suleiman (ed.) (1986) *The Female Body in Western Culture: Contemporary Perspectives*. (Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard University Press), 366

⁵⁴ Cf. Sigmund Freud, "Fetishism": "I am prepared to expect the same solution in all cases of fetishism." Which is... "as a substitute for the penis (..) not any chance penis, but for a particular and quite special penis that had been

of the part's empowerment in systematicity precludes female exclusion, because, where Bataille suggests that the particular expression has, in the retention of affective power, retained an authority over the general condition, this means that any fetish object, in its particularity, must have general application, and must therefore, in dispute with Freud, be equally available to everyone.⁵⁵

The wound fetish is an erection of difference between the fetish object of Freud and that of Bataille, and this is a structure of presence. Bataille's wound is that which encompasses the total detail and the fetish object: it is the negotiating power between the inessential and the essential. When he states that,

This BEING is thus NOTHINGNESS. We cannot be surprised to encounter in our midst this will to NOTHINGNESS. It has opened up inside us like a wound and not one of us can consider it alien to his person. We can have the strength to live with pride with this open wound, but first we must recognise it as a wound.⁵⁶

Bataille draws a distinction between the inessential— that being is nothingness— and the affective power of the fetish, a power, moreover, that is proper to 'our' substance, because it is affective below a level of recognition. The wound initiates a negotiation between counterparts of ocular recognition and substantive affect: one feels that one sees a horizon marked as what it is not, which is being there. This recalls a schism in presence that itself recalls the elision between the spectacle of compenetration and its intimate differencing, discussed in Chapter Two. Whereas Bataille's fetish object is very evident: an eyeball, vagina, or, after recognition, a wound, Freud's is missing entirely. Not only does Freud's patient fear lacking a phallus: as a fetishist, and therefore, supposedly as a male, and as a derivative of an essentialist narrative that is evidently incongruent,

extremely important in early childhood but had later been lost. To put it more plainly: the fetish is a substitute for the woman's (the mother's) penis that the little boy once believed in and (...) does not want to give up." *Complete Works*, 4535

⁵⁵ For a discussion on the political marginality of the female fetishist in respect to Freud: Naomi Schor asks the question "Now what of the little girl, she who is, in Freudian terms, always already castrated, thus impervious to all threats of castration? How does she respond to the evidence of sexual difference, which entails or presupposes her inferiority?" "Female Fetishism: The Case of George Sand" *The Female Body in Western Culture* 367; For a more definitive study of the field away from Freud, see the excellent Lorrain Gamman and Merja Makinen (1995) *Female Fetishism* (New York: New York University Press)

⁵⁶ *The Sacred Conspiracy*, 370

there is no vagina present either.⁵⁷ It is all very neutral, for a supposedly affective response.⁵⁸

Bataille's fetishization of a genital sphere can be supposed by its immanent affectivity, which is genitally generic, or perhaps democratic, whereas Freud's genital is binary: it is either lost, in the case of the phallus, to castration, or is unknown, or at least, unseen, in the case of the vagina. Whether a comparison is able to draw speculation on whether Bataille's vagina is obscenely emergent and Freud's vagina is pre-emergent is less pertinent than to return focus on the autonomy of the non-useful commodity observed by Marx.⁵⁹ Because Freud has lost sight of the vagina, he has lost the particular power of the narrative thread of its emergence.

Elana Gomel has observed that in "Female Sexuality" Freud attempts a female development path that corresponds to its masculine, (and mythic) equivalent in the Oedipus complex. The attempt splits into "narrative fission" to such an extent that "the integrity of Freud's model gives way as he acknowledges the infinite variability of the individual narrative of development."⁶⁰ Applying Gomel's observation to a comparative rendering of Freud and Bataille's vaginas implies very precisely that Freud's fetish loses its immanent power to gesture towards the erotic unknowable, and, rather than lose its form, its loss is the loss of his system's coherence. By contrast, Bataille's vagina retains its autonomous authority, because, partially, its immanence is itself elastic, it has a flux in its determinacy, as a fetish it has all the qualities of a genital sphere as previously discussed in Chapter Two. Nonetheless, the *event* of Bataille's vagina, because it is generated obscenely, has a material extension, where the obscenity of authority extends the fetish vagina to a full bodily expression. In other words, the synecdochic gesture is the extension in time/space that now repeats itself and swaps

⁵⁷ Although this is not always the case. Cf. *Mr. Angel*, directed by Dan Hunt (2013)

⁵⁸ Amber Jamilla Musser argues that flesh is generated by the wound, which precedes it. She makes the case that neutrality towards flesh in any theory is to use neutrality as a re-inscription of prior hegemonic power arrangements. The same applies with the objectification of the body: unless it is recognized as an object then neutrality and its affective conceptual hegemony takes over again. Musser says neutrality must be replaced by a question: "how to think about flesh outside of identity while retaining its purchase on theorizing difference." Amber Jamilla Musser (2014) *Sensational Flesh: Race, Power and Masochism* (New York and London: New York University Press), 20

⁵⁹ Patricia MacCormack argues from Deleuzian standpoint that it is the process of emergence, or becoming that is critical here. She makes the point that, "female morphology as movement" takes primacy because "women, after Deleuze, are not 'things' but continuity." Patricia MacCormack (2013) "Becoming Vulva, Flesh, Fold, Infinity" in, Blud Zero Collective (March 2013) *The Vagina as Autonomous Zone #1*, no page numbers.

⁶⁰ Elana Gomel, "The Body of Parts: Dickens and the Poetics of Synecdoche." *The Journal of Narrative Technique* 26, no. 1(1996): 48-74, 62

part for whole body.⁶¹ Bataille's obscenity generates his vagina and embodies it along the extension of authority's obscenity, and this ultimately, as embodied systematicity, culminates in Bataille's system realising itself, either as body, or integrated material embodiment, in a time/space that is the apotheosis of authority's impurity. Because Bataille's vagina is body as system, its power as a sexual commodified fetish body destabilises its form at the moment of its commodified realisation, and it sexually decentralises itself– it takes itself to market, to borrow Marx's phraseology– and, at the maximum point of its integral impurity and authority's determinacy, it falls, and folds in on itself in a process of auto-invagination.⁶²

iv. Distributive invagination

This section summarizes the synecdochical gesture's development of part-for-whole substitutive empowerment as a distributive politicisation of the inessential that reveals a perpetually invaginating dynamic to the morphology of atheology. Here the difference between essence and inessence has been parsed between centrality and marginality in terms of a political power relation. Borrowing again from Marx's discussion of commodity fetishism, and freely adapting Freud, the argument makes a case that Freud's system collapses because it has central inessentiality, whereas Bataille's fetish objects– the wound, eyeball and vagina– offer, after Marx, by their autonomous forms, an empowered and totalised image of margin. Bataille's systematicity coheres gesturally with Freud, but differs around the politics of vaginal presence. In appropriating the synecdochical gesture Bataille appropriates a different mode of falling, one that corresponds to the intimate compenetrative dynamic discussed in Chapter Two, and creates, via synecdoche, an image of a perpetual invaginating dynamic for his system: where marginal total generativity occurs around a collapsing central proposition.⁶³

⁶¹ See also Patrick ffrench's slightly different interpretation, as, "unification of the sexes", where, at stake is that "God is brought to justice, condemned and put to death" Patrick ffrench, *After Bataille*, 170

⁶² For a discussion of realisation, or identification, as a necessary complement to political liberation, see Sue Golding (1982) "Knowledge is Power: A Few Thoughts about Lesbian Sex and Community Standards" in, *Fireweed*, Issue 13, Toronto: 1982, 82-100.

⁶³ This is the precise opposite of the case made by Denis Hollier, who draws an inference between the tomb and the vagina in Bataille's work. "We might conceive as a matrix or emblem for Bataille's reflections on eroticism a

Freud and Bataille's systematicity collapses in different ways. For Naomi Schor, commenting on the process of the generalised gesture of synecdoche in Freud's work, this is because synecdoche is decadent, and leads inevitably to "a disintegration of the textual whole, [and] the increasing autonomy of the parts."⁶⁴ Elena Gomel, analysing the same move, interprets synecdoche as a technique used to describe women's bodies as a strategy for drawing attention to what is obscured, "the unnameable and unrepresentable female genitals," which, in the distribution of autonomy, empowers these genitals to self-present and speak up for themselves.⁶⁵ An identical dynamic to Freud's has different consequences for Bataille. At a point or moment of central inessentiality in being's generative flow; a point of its zero velocity, a mark in its flow where it can be said to be static or determined, is the point where the dynamic folds its matter into its central inessentiality. The totality of the material realisable is returned or re-distributed to margins or the autonomous parts of the unrealisable of the erotic generative, or, put another way, to a figure of the erotic unconscious. But, following Schor and Gomel, matter's redistribution carries with it the power of the total, which is not divided into being's component parts, but stays politically intact, a point Bataille makes when he says that the 'universal is not truly given except in the mediation of particularity,' as discussed in the first section of this part.

somehow inverted "plastic pun": it would equate the female sex organs and the tomb in which bodies bereft of life are laid." Hollier "Bataille's Tomb" *October*, Vol. 33 (Summer, 1985), 73-102., 76

⁶⁴ Naomi Schor, *Reading in Detail: Aesthetics and the Feminine*, 43

⁶⁵ Cf. Gomel "The Body of Parts", 51. The inference being drawn is that a notion of power concentrated in a particular part has historical cultural associations with vaginal engastromythi (the speaking from a different part of the body, especially the belly or the body's lower parts- as distinct from, and previous to, ventriloquy, projection of voice as "wind" speaking – cf. the Delphic Oracle in Pythia (*delphus* Greek for hollow, or womb), and that this tradition of vaginal speaking out has a relationship to validity that is alternative to a grounds, that is, prophecy. "This association between oracular prophecy and the female genitals clung on stubbornly." Stephen Connor (2000) *Dumbstruck: A Cultural History of Ventriloquism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 70. See also, in Connor, the discussion of Denis Diderot's *Les Bijoux indiscrets* [1748] concerning vaginal vocality, the "jewels" of the title. In it, one character (Mirzoza) introduces a scheme, which, in responding to Sultan Mangogul (another character, each discussing the rationale behind the talking jewels) "[plays back] his own fixated monstrosity, which reduces a person to a single expressive body part. However, her own scheme seems to allow for a much more fluid sense of the plurality of the body, which can be incomplete without being fragmented." (207) Aside from the parallels of metaphysical development emerging from a genuinely genital source, questions of reductive monstrosity and agency arise in a way that Michel Foucault's approach to the same work, in *History of Sexuality* do not quite approach. Foucault's aim is to "transcribe into history" the talking of the sex, bringing it to presence in discourse. Whilst admirable from an enlightenment perspective what Foucault loses is the already empowered vagina, which, whatever metaphysics it may speak of, and none, already has an authentic voice: monstrous in its reductivity to an object, perhaps, nevertheless one which does not require an affirmation in language reflective of and grounded in patriarchal law. As Connor puts it "Given speech, the jewel appears, not so much like a subordinate part of the body, but as a being in itself, with its own division between soul and body." (Connor, *Dumbstruck*, 202, Michel Foucault (1979) *A History of Sexuality, An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (London: Allen Lane), 72

The realisable totality of being, the point of zero velocity, disintegrates in a way that empowers the part, making it autonomous, and, if this part is the unknowable, or unrepresentable of the unconscious, or the genital, then nonknowledge, in the form of an immanent genital sphere, assumes total power. Rather than drawing attention to, or revealing, the culturally unrepresented, the fetish-vagina, which is this part, draws total political power from the systematic whole, while re-stating its relation to the inessential object of the sphere, to which it is both systematically and differently related. This relation describes invagination of the total as an anti-ocular dynamic, as will be presently discussed.⁶⁶

From this psychological and circuitous dynamic between realisable being and genital empowerment it becomes necessary to relate its circuitous flow back to the body. In the development of an embodied atheology it is worth recalling that there is always an embodied version of atheology in the form of the animal body, which has a continuous consciousness. Because the animal body has a continuous consciousness— it is ‘in the world like water in water’— the human animal body is simply a question of access to a continuity of the floating unconscious, which is transparent to animal continuity when the human is acephalic in its erotic intensity, but opaque to it when the human animal is working and producing, especially, and, also, when thinking in a developmental sense.⁶⁷ Gestural poiesis realises, transverses, and owns, and thereby creates the transversal of this opacity in an immanent way, and this is the synecdochic gestural circuit just described. This chapter develops this gesture towards an embodied context— from Aquinian dogma, through Freudian psychoanalysis and into the genital itself— so that it becomes evidently more primal and instinctive: unthought rather than developmentally transversal and circuitous. It does this in order to make the link explicit between unthought, and the immanence in the genital sphere, developed in Chapter Two. This leads the gesture, because it is instinctive or unthought, to autonomy, and its partiality also participates in the part-for-whole exchange of its own poiesis, which becomes the total of the system.

⁶⁶ In terms of the ubiquity of vaginal hiddenness in cultural and critical discourse cf. Emma L.E. Rees (2013) *The Vagina: A Literary and Cultural History* (London: Bloomsbury) The author emphasises vaginal hiddenness by titling every single chapter “Revealing...”

⁶⁷ *Theory of Religion*, see 19-23 for Bataille’s full position on this.

The image of an entirety that auto-invaginates is illustrated in specular proximity to the body in the following passage, written by Maurice Blanchot and published in *Thomas the Obscure*, which Bataille cites at length in *Inner Experience*:

Soon the night seemed to him gloomier and more terrible than any night, as if it had in fact issued from a wound of thought that had ceased to think, of thought taken ironically as object by something other than thought. It was night itself. Images that constituted its darkness inundated him. He saw nothing, and, far from being distressed, he made this absence of vision the culmination of his sight. Useless for seeing, his eye took on extraordinary proportions, developed beyond measure and, stretched out on the horizon, let the night penetrate its center in order to receive the day from it. And so, through this void, it was sight and the object of sight that mingled together. Not only did this eye that saw nothing apprehend something, it apprehended the cause of its vision. It saw as object that which prevented it from seeing. Its own glance entered into it as an image, just when this glance seemed the death of all image.⁶⁸

On Bataille's behalf, Blanchot invokes a drawing-in of the envisioning environment where night is a trope of anti-ocularly that penetrates the eyeball by pushing through its centre and empowering the eyeball's margins ('developed beyond measure and stretched out to the horizon') as the centre auto-invaginates ('its own glance entered into [the eye] as an image'). The ending of the image serves to reveal Bataille's method: thought, 'issued from a wound of thought that had ceased to think, of thought taken ironically as object by something other than thought.' Immanent thought is to be taken as an object ironically, because it is not developmental, it has the same relationship with knowledge as it does with nonknowledge. In this it is an object that is partially acephalic, an image that will be further developed in the next chapter. The part of the object that is acephalic is its fetishness' power, because of its immanence: here, affectivity is linked to the infinite erotic continuity of the unknowable unconscious; the ironic part is that it is an object, so its manifestation is real. Rather than a play on contradiction this develops Blanchot's eyeball into a wound fetish: explicitly where woundedness is a revelation of the horizon of God, or, an infinite erotic continuity or the unknowable unconsciousness with total affective power.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ Maurice Blanchot from *Thomas the Obscure*, passage cited by Bataille (2014) *Inner Experience*, Kendall trans., 103

⁶⁹ Derrida has remarked on a separate instance of invagination in Blanchot's work; as with this thesis, Derrida says that this pre-requires definition of the thing, which he calls 'objection': "The objection makes an appeal to the law and calls to mind the fact that the subversion of La Folie du jour needs the law in order to take place." Cf. Jacques Derrida (1980) "The Law of Genre" *Critical Inquiry* Autumn 1980 Vol. 7, No. 1, On Narrative (Autumn, 1980), 55-81, 72

The image that the end of image displays is a way of ‘collapsing’ that does not start or end but is itself continuously distributive of power as a correlate to the generative process. Invagination is the principal application of the “destruction of the structure of closed being”, an announcement of access to thought’s interior, involving an “exuberance of life [...] not alien to death.”⁷⁰ Access’ annunciation– and the moment of an aperture– is the near-final threshold-pulse where nonknowledge and objective form reverse themselves into each other, but it is also a summoning, a calling to, and a calling in to, an invocation for being to enter itself.

The impure systematic authority and obscene shape of the sphere that auto-invaginates is synecdochic to the fetish of the wound as vagina/eye, or the vaginal-eye, or the ocular-vagina, and a modal understanding of this is a coming to the perpetual moment by moving through the sphere of vision and knowledge as if through the commodity fetish moving through itself, unseeing and unknowing, but empowered, autonomous and marginal. This recalls the ‘impossible’ dynamic of spherical compenetration as spectacle, but also its substantive and atheological intimacy, noted in the nested dimension as the concluding part of the previous chapter. Because of an empowerment or revaluation of the part Bataille appropriates from Freud, the extension of unconscious continuity to obscene manifestation of the part, as an empowered relation to a body and, by extension, again in a gestural chain to a total logical system has, instead of structure where centrality should be, an apotheosis of inessentiality. There is collapse but because the parts are empowered at the margins, the periphery of the system remains total, and only the centre folds. The system falls into itself: but rather than collapse in the borrowed image of the floors of a house flattening, it auto-invaginates. The process of auto-invagination is integral to its systematic dynamics, because auto-invagination is a counterdynamic to the obscene generative process of extension: the ‘movement out’ of matter to a determined or static form of inessential being.⁷¹ While the generative process links via gestural poiesis

⁷⁰ *Eroticism*, 11

⁷¹ Note here Joan Nestle’s comparison of definition as power (borrowing/ subverting heteronormative dress codes to visibly define lesbianism) as “a symbol of erotic autonomy” Joan Nestle, “Butch-Fem Relationships: Sexual courage in the 1950’s” *Heresies Collective* (1981) *Heresies: A Feminist Publication on Art & Politics* Vol. 3 No. 4, #12: Sex Issue. 21-24, 22. Also applicable in this context is the dynamic of exchange between states of definition which Nestle terms: “feeling kiki.”

to an image of systematic determinacy, the centre of the determined systematic image, its core, becomes operationally counter-dynamic, and, as central inessence empowers the margins, the detail and the dissipate pull core substance back towards the cellular and the continuous, from when the cycle regenerates.

Auto-invagination means the realisable moment of total systematic inessence folds itself as substance back towards the infinite erotic continuity. As it does this the friction of its auto-invagination— its surface against surface frottage— acts like a fricative generator of erotic event, so that its central folding is a counter-friction to the surface of its generative emergence. The whole system acts like an auto-erotic continuous body where its internal erotic friction provides a sustainable source of generative potency: obscenity and part-emergence extend to inessential yet total systematicity, before auto-invaginating and returning to the flexion point of the unconscious, from whence it will generate anew.

What this continuous body ensures however, is that there is a perpetual point of definition at point of the apotheosis of inessential ontic determinacy, and then, as invagination occurs, and so as a consequence of this, there is a distribution of total power to the part which enables an autonomous or sovereign moment to occur as totalised marginality, and, synecdochally, the part's inessence is substituted as systematic entirety.⁷² This move gives autonomy to the part, or the moment, as a sovereign cell within a systematic understanding. Systematic auto-invagination is a necessary correlation to being's obscene emergence in order that ontic momentariness can auto-extract or figure itself (out) from continuous expenditure, and is how sovereignty works within Bataille's system. Therefore, the argument concludes that Bataille's atheology is not ontopolitical and contradictory because being is mandatory and being-free is ideal but because (ontic) determinacy and (political)

⁷² For more on structural inessentiality see Lee Braver (2012) *Groundless Grounds: A Study of Wittgenstein and Heidegger* (Cambridge, MA.: MIT Press). The term "groundless grounds" is Braver's reconciliation of non-transcendent metaphysical systems. Note that Bataille does not structure the inessential apart from the qualities that are materially of the object: its conditions. For Bataille inessence is itself inessential; its expression therefore irrupts into any particular example. For example when Bataille's attention is on laughter (note that Bataille's laughter most frequently comes in 'bursts'), it is 'tantamount to finding, in the given that is laughter, the central given, the primary given, and perhaps even the given behind philosophy,' (*Unfinished System of Nonknowledge*, 138). This centrality and primacy is not the given that is first apparent, but an irruption of givenness into a particular object, here, a burst of laughter, which is situated within an atropic pattern of lateral, decentralised, sexual communication.

autonomy produce each other by necessity from the same circuitous dynamic of the system's function. Invagination at a systematic level and sovereignty are part and feature of the same inessential circuit of difference.

Part Three: Radical Invagination: Squirting as Embodied Atheology

i. Genital extraversion: Hans Bellmer's vaginal formulation

The progression of atheology from dogma to an invaginating dynamic for being and thought turns now to the embodied context of the genital part, and develops this through the work of Hans Bellmer, where the gestural poiesis of Aquinas and Freud is found once again. Genital body logic demonstrates ways of showing thought's movements in a radically new contextual assemblage.⁷³ This develops the immanent genital vagina through a passage of movement through its own vaginal aperture, which becomes the point of determinacy for setting being and thought's context, by compressing a reality of movement so that contexts squirt between bodily interior and exterior, and between states of intimate unconscious nonknowledge and knowability. Arguing that this is a more radical gestural poiesis because it is more fluid, this empowers the aperture, as will be discussed in the following section, as an agential fulcrum of immanence itself, and the instinctive or unthought finds its embodied expression in the aperture's agential role in the substitutive dynamic.

Hans Bellmer's vaginal formulation provides atheology with a hybrid genital theory of the acephalic poise described in the wound fetish in the previous chapter section.⁷⁴ Whether something is knowable or determinable faces challenges over whether it is envisionable, and this rests on whether it

⁷³ For a wider contextual assessment of a female-body corporeal movement see Elizabeth Grosz (1994) *Volatile Bodies: Towards A Corporeal Feminism* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press), especially chapter 7 'Intensities and flows' 160-183. Grosz also remarks on the problem of 'neutrality' regarding female objectivity, taken up by race and masochism in Musser's later text discussed in previous footnote. (163).

⁷⁴ It is also worth reflecting on the extent of the contribution made by Unica Zürn to the theory, which can be discerned in her work in Unica Zürn (2020 [1958]) *The House of Illnesses*, (London: Atlas Press) and the evident challenges presented in documenting or laying claim to this contribution by her health. Cf. Unica Zürn (2020) *The Man of Jasmine, and Other Texts* trans. Malcolm Green (London: Atlas Press)

can be seen. Submission to a “scopic regime,” to borrow Christian Metz’s phrase, is to submit to a predetermined context.⁷⁵ Hans Bellmer develops what he calls the ‘vaginal formulation’ as a possible response to this, where, rather than submission, monstration or making evident, vaginal formulation is an action of insubordination to just such a regime, under its own terms. As will be developed in the following sections of this chapter, what Bellmer offers Bataille’s atheology is not a gestural poesis of nonknowledge, which, more or less, the theory has already appropriated from Freud, but a method of retrieving the context of the infinite erotic unconscious that not only embodies it as the materially accessible, but monstrates the continuous context of the subconscious, both through the evidence of the scopic, and through the authority of the determining aperture of the agential vaginal slit.

Gestural poesis here is the making evident of extraversion; extraversion retrieves the infinite unknowability of being’s inessential difference from its occluded position as the bodily interior, that is, the body’s sense of its own invagination.⁷⁶ Radical invagination’s radicalism is to radicalise context rather than radicalise interiority. The scopically unavailable, the vaginal interior, becomes conspicuous via the vagina’s own gestural impact, a poesis of extraversion, of making the invaginated known by making the inside flow out.⁷⁷ Although Bellmer applies vaginal formulation to describe his own work, this section develops this in a Bataillean context, and proposes that non-knowledge’s presence in Bataille’s work, rather than strictly established by the part-for-whole exchange, can be developed through a gestural vagina. It becomes possible to create a sense of contextual liberty via vaginal agency, where the hidden interior part of the vagina substitutes itself for the systematic total.⁷⁸ This happens by, as will be shown, the interior squirting itself, or in Bellmer’s application of vaginal formulation to his own work, by extraverting the vaginal interior as multiple

⁷⁵ Christian Metz (1982 [1975]) *The Imaginary Signifier: Psychoanalysis and the Cinema*, trans. Annwyl Williams (Bloomington: Indiana University Press), 61

⁷⁶ See in this context Marx’s unknowable and autonomous commodity form discussed in the previous section, pages 152-153

⁷⁷ For the scopic (un)availability of the vaginal interior see Annie Sprinkle (1988-) *A Public Cervix Announcement* <https://anniesprinkle.org/a-public-cervix-announcement/>

⁷⁸ For the vagina as determining, articulating or recording agent, see. Carolee Schneeman’s works, *Vulva’s Morphia* (1992-97), and *Interior Scroll* (1977) images and a description of which can be found in Carolee Schneeman (2002) *Imaging Her Erotics: Essays, Interviews, Projects* (Cambridge, MA.: MIT Press), 298-307 and 151-161 respectively.

and embodied contextual arrangements of corporeality, undermining both the idea of an embodied ideal, and intimate material truth, with the same gesture. This radicalises the vagina's pathological agency, allowing it to re-principle its generative function from arbiter channel of reproductive subordination to the arbiter of all contextual ontopolitical phenomena.

Hans Bellmer worked as a collaborating artist with Georges Bataille, illustrating his books *Story of the Eye* (1947 edition), and *Madame Edwarda* (1956).⁷⁹ Bellmer's illustrations for Bataille show substitution of body parts with other parts, and of parts and whole bodies. There is great transparency between the gestural poesis that Bellmer's art illustrates and an embodied theory of Bataille's atheology.⁸⁰ However Bellmer also wrote theory, and it is an aspect of this, 'vaginal formulation' that draws itself into Bataille's gestural and embodied context. Bellmer introduces his theory in a short book, *Little Anatomy of the Physical Unconscious*.⁸¹ Vaginal formulation is a theoretical term which he uses to describe his work; it applies just as accurately here to describe a summary application of Bataille's atheology. Vaginal formulation shows how a non-oppositional realisation is determined, as it produces apparent forms of difference that occur away from singular interconnected antagonisms associated with binary logical propositions, and instead shows how the entangled relation between being, and its folds, makes sense without a logical basis, or any basis at all, by showing hiddenness. Bellmer's theory is particularly salient because it does not show that which is hidden, but hiddenness itself. Vaginal formulation *shows*, it *monstrates*, and what it shows is the unknowable interior pathology of being in a way that emphasises the unknowability of the erotic generative and yet obscene principle in a way that has no foundation or essence except for its,

⁷⁹ Peter Webb and Robert Short (1985) *Hans Bellmer* (London: Quartet Books), 189

⁸⁰ The ideas of Bataille and Bellmer chimed "to a high degree": "Both shared the desire to break through surface appearances in order to reach towards an inner truth, even if this required a mode of expression verging on the hallucinatory and the mad. Both shared a sense of the erotic as a force reaching far beyond libertinage and lubricity towards a locus of the sacred in which Eros and Thanatos are seated side by side." Webb and Short, *Hans Bellmer*, 192

⁸¹ Hans Bellmer, (2004 [1956]) *Little Anatomy of the Physical Unconscious, or The Anatomy of the Image*. Translated by Jon Graham. (Waterbury Center, VT.: Dominion Press). On publication, Bellmer gave Bataille a copy of his book with the inscription "A Georges Bataille avec les hommages..." Cf. Sue Taylor (2002) *Anatomy of Anxiety* (Cambridge, MA.: MIT Press), 258 fn10.

extraverted, perverted plastic pathological expression, where hiddenness is difference's gestural auto-poiesis.⁸²

Vaginal formulation is based around a principle of extraversion, where essential metaphysical validity is expressed by an "object identical to itself [that] remains devoid of reality."⁸³ For Bellmer this means that each objective reality has a different component part or parts to it; if it is real, it is non-identical to itself: extraversion is a gestural differencing demonstrating an inessential yet valid non-unity. By replicating a part-total substitutive logic the formulation is able to validate an intra-material reality.⁸⁴ Bellmer describes extraversion as a process where aspects of a thing that are unknown, or are hidden, are shown in a way that makes their occultation conspicuous. Thus, extraversion can make an object both hidden and conspicuous in the same gestural register, recalling Bataille's registers of spectacular and intimate compenetration. This showing is based around an (in)essential reality, where objects are valid only through the coherence of their internal difference(s). Bellmer describes this, below, as inter-anatomical:

[N]ever did a more inconceivable gesture germinate in inter-anatomical obscurity. (E)xtraversion no doubt also determines the limits of an absolute exhibitionism that's impossible to uproot, which could summarize everything belonging to man's curious desire to see and scandalously reveal the interior—an interior that will always remain hidden and simply sensed behind the successive layers of the human construct and its last unknowns.⁸⁵

Validity is the internal coherence of a register of difference. Bellmer draws on the same tropes of auto-invagination, which the previous section associated with systematicity, to reverse anti-

⁸² For the revealing of the vagina as occult religious praxis, see Starr Goode (2016?). *Sheela Na Gig: The Dark Goddess of Sacred Power* (Rochester, Vermont: Inner Traditions Press), The book describes the culture of the Sheela Na Gig, an image in stone of a female holding open her vagina that is found throughout Western Europe, usually associated with church buildings. The oldest example in the U.K. is found on a church gateway in Binstead, Isle of Wight. Curiously, or perhaps by incredible coincidence, this church lies only one mile adjacent to Quarr Abbey, where in 1920 Georges Bataille stayed, lost his Catholic faith, and where he describes the "sudden rapture" of imagining himself cloistered, "withdrawn from agitation". (*Inner Experience* Kendall trans, 63; *OC V*, 72): "Within the walls, the sky a spectral gray, dusk, the damp uncertainty of the space at that precise time: divinity then had a mad, deaf presence, illuminating to the point of intoxication."

⁸³ *Little Anatomy of the Physical Unconscious*, 31

⁸⁴ Jeremy Biles makes the astute observation that this is a complete inversion of the law of identity. Cf. Jeremy Biles (2007) *Ecce Monstrum: Georges Bataille and the Sacrifice of Form* (New York: Fordham University Press), 149fn

⁸⁵ *Little Anatomy of the Physical Unconscious*. 30-31

ocularity into ‘scandalous’ revelation.⁸⁶ Bellmer’s formulation makes the burst form of shock that emerges from the unknowable of the unconscious as an obscene sphere of difference into a monstration of difference’s embodied complexity. Extraversion’s gesture, its formulation, applies conspicuity as a way of coming to knowledge directly to the context of Bataille’s genital sphere, discussed in Chapter two, where the immanence of its surface nonetheless represents a determinacy-flux.⁸⁷ Vaginal formulation alters the proposition of invagination, where previously a political redistribution of power to the inessential fetish, now the vaginal agent expels images of unknowability into conspicuity: producing an embodied surface image of possibility-flux.⁸⁸ The unknowable or indeterminable validity of the vaginal interior is preserved in the gestural flow of extraversion, which also monstrates in a hallucinatory form:

The hallucinations in question—cenesthetic, interoceptive hallucinations—can be summed up as follows: the image of the body suffers the strange constraint of a movement from the inside to the outside as an ‘extraversion,’ in the sense that the interior physical body tends to replace the exterior.⁸⁹

When vaginal hiddenness or unknowableness passes through the vaginal aperture, Bellmer tells us, its materiality experiences a strange constraint to its movement; this constriction of movement results in monstration-as-hallucination, but it is evident that hallucination has already shifted the context of subordination to the scopic in two or more ways. Firstly, that extraversion is substitution of the sense that the vaginal hidden, as an empowered part, for the total image of knowledge, occurs via conspicuity: but conspicuity is not veracity, hallucination is not veracity, and hiddenness of being,

⁸⁶ See, for example “Illustration No.1 for *Story of the Eye* by Georges Bataille” Engraving, 1947 Webb & Short, Hans Bellmer, 194

⁸⁷ “A person who enjoys demonstrations with initially obscure objectives will be tempted to attribute the following meaning to anatomical multiplication: the depiction of the mobile woman in space with the exclusion of the temporal factor. In other words, to resist the classic notion of time and space, leading to “the instantaneous,” the idea of a human projection onto a temporally neutral plane, in which the past, present, and future of her appearances are coordinated and preserved. If, instead of choosing only three or four points in time of a gesture (as illustrated exercise manuals do), we were to integrally combine them all in the form of an object, the result would be the visual synthesis of curves and surfaces traced by each mobile point of the body.” *Little Anatomy of the Physical Unconscious*, 34-35

⁸⁸ This raises the question over whether the process of exchange itself is engaged, as a dynamic, with a materialisation of power: that becoming conspicuous is itself an eroticisation of non-knowledge because of its entry into a power relation with the visual. For discussion of precisely this aspect of the question see SAMOIS (Organisation) (1987) *Coming to Power: Writings and Graphics on Lesbian S/M: S/M, A Form of Eroticism Based on a Consensual Exchange of Power* (Boston: Alyson Publications)

⁸⁹ *Little Anatomy of the Physical Unconscious*. 26

when becoming conspicuous is not becoming reality. This immediately destabilises a power regime of the scopic, because what is seen, or known is not really determined. Secondly, building from this instability, Bellmer describes the type of hallucinated hidden as cenesthetic hallucination, which is a psychological term for blend of sensation “that produces an implicit awareness of being alive.”⁹⁰ These hallucinations act directly as stimulation on the nerve impulses: they are interoceptive. Vaginal formulation describes an embodied technique that makes the hidden or occulted of human being conspicuous in a way that destabilises the role of veracity, especially in the scopic, and replaces it with an embodied and hallucinatory surface of experiencing difference. Yet, this still relates extraversion’s gestural impact back to the move developed from Aquinas, where essential difference could be marked as total by a stain, because the hallucination, or the perceived real, now manifests hiddenness itself as hallucinatory stain. The part of being that is its hidden within is substituted for an experienced sense of the hallucinatorily conspicuous. Moreover, the embodied hallucination takes the part of the hidden and substitutes it for a sense of being that is experienced as its mark, so it emulates the process of unfolding/folding, discussed in Chapter Two, because it is generative of a total environment, albeit a fabricated environment, where the agency of the vaginal aperture determines the act of poiesis, or fabrication.⁹¹

Vaginal formulation has a direct application to the formation of the ‘other.’ Where the first section of this chapter developed ‘otherness’ in terms of a generic guilty body, vaginal formulation applies to a hermaphroditic ‘other’ where the constriction of flow emphasises invagination’s scissiparous effect. The constriction divides the embodied hidden from the conspicuous in a way that divides it without the divisions being realised as oppositional. The creates an analytic of intra-material difference that can apply to Bataille’s ‘other.’ Bataille’s ‘other’-without-a-normative statement– the guilty and unwilling *actus reus* body– is under the vaginal constriction, intra-material: its otherness-

⁹⁰ *Cenesthesia (coenesthesia)* n. the blend of numerous bodily sensations that produces an implicit awareness of being alive and of being in a particular physical condition, for example, well or ill, energetic or tired. American Psychological Association, *A Dictionary of Psychology*, <https://dictionary.apa.org/cenesthesia>

⁹¹ Bellmer refers to ‘pleats’ rather than folds; (‘plisser’ rather than ‘plier’ in French). The illustrations for *Little Anatomy* are instructive here, and are collected in, Webb & Short, *Hans Bellmer*, 174-175; Cf. “Le Vermoulu et le Plissé” (Drawing. 1940)

without normative statement is revealed as a scissiparous consequence of the passage of its material being through the constrictions of the vaginal aperture. Recalling the terms of Bataille's 'mathematical question', discussed in the first chapter of this thesis, Bellmer posits an "equation of the Other and the I" which sees (in this example, a female moving into/penetrating a male body), "her face became internalized within his own, her entire image was projected over his and she inhabited his entire body."⁹² Bellmer unifies genders, not as a single gender, but as intra-gender difference.⁹³ He says, "This is where his desire carried him exclusively, confusing the masculine and the feminine, and the self and the Other, and then sodomising the self in the Other."⁹⁴ Sodomy for Bellmer both auto-invaginates the image of the guilty/criminal 'other' in its intra-genital action, and doubles the genital space by a constraint/scissiparous action and is a reference to the agency of the aperture.⁹⁵

Yet this delivery is impaired by its reliance on the old order of the spectacle. As creative as it might be the presence being made conspicuous (by Bellmer's art which is the product of the extraversion process and represents exactly in Bellmer's drawing the invaginate interior of being and thought's movement) still enters presence into the realm of the cognitive that is recognition. The depiction of unrestricted embodiment is therefore restricted by its visually depictive definition, because the unknowable interior of being and thought's movement remains circumscribed by its presentation in a visual medium. This impairment of the vaginal formulation's central point of unrestricted being is the consequence of the accursed share of its visual definition and is the inevitable participle of the authority that the vagina principle summons in order to achieve this: that is, the principle of conspicuity.

Rather than accept impairment, instead this authority expiates itself. The next chapter will show how this happens. Expiation will address the viscosity of vaginal interiority by imagining the phenomenon of its presence away from the visual order as noise. Noise and the way it can be

⁹² *Little Anatomy of the Physical Unconscious*. 28

⁹³ For a discussion of androgyny as a technique for alteration or displacement of the self in the context of Bellmer and the wider post-surrealist group, including Bataille, cf. Webb & Short, *Hans Bellmer*, 167-170

⁹⁴ *Little Anatomy of the Physical Unconscious*. 29

⁹⁵ This aligns Bellmer's contribution to Bataille's invocation of 'compenetration.' This introduces a morphology of sodomy, see Chapter Two: Part Three footnote 74

externally experienced, as will be discussed, takes presence of interior thingness toward contingent intensity. A theory of expiation, as will be shown, is, in effect, a repeat of the vaginal principle, but a repeat which does not enter the interior presence into the spectacle and instead takes noise or sound material in-and-of-itself as a measure that establishes sensually (auricularly) the thingness of vaginal embodied interiority by its contingent intensity. Instead of Bellmer's multiple and superimposed limbs there are sound and objects, yet, as with vaginal principle and the limbs, these carry with them the *meaning* of being's interior presence of movement.

ii. Radical contextualisation: the agential aperture

This part of the chapter develops the body as defining context in two ways: firstly, the consequence of the aperture of exchange, the slit as an arbitrator of the 'is' of contingency, and how this is manifest in Bataille's work; secondly, the conspicuity of extraversion as ejaculatory marking of the excising body; the determining of the body of being by urinating or ejaculating on itself as the creation of its own defining context.

The extraversion of the vaginal formulation defines the atheological body by realising or making conspicuous its boundary in terms of passing the unknowable through an aperture, the vaginal slit or, fold, itself. This passing through enacts a modal logic of dissipation, where libidinal compression releases itself into burst mode, vaginal ejaculatory streaming, hallucinating, pissing or crying out.⁹⁶ The aperture of extraversion is the agent of arbitration, rather than the knowing or envisioning environment into or onto which the material unknowable is released. Extraverted release-bursts fall back on the contours of the excising body, making marks and stains on the body, which define it by a splatter pattern. This element of making conspicuous by extraversion is not a final word on staining and defining a body, but is in fact congruent with an ongoing flow of ontic expenditure. Rather than extraversion making the embodied hidden externally conspicuous, in fact it is the *universal sense* that is disequibrated and the great realms of the unseen and underground of the body

⁹⁶ Cf. the series of works by Helen Chadwick (1991-1992) *Piss Flowers*, Bronze, cellulose lacquer, where the artist captured streams of urine by casting the impressions that the streams made in snow.
<https://www.therobertsinstituteofart.com/programme/projects/collection-postcard-helen-chadwick>

chthonic and the permanent gaze of celestial heaven substitute themselves for each other at the moment of extraverted rushing through being's fold.

Following the emphasis placed on the aperture as a boundary of definition, this section develops a notion of how the movement of Bataille's system is detectable/ determinable as rushing, an ecstatic derivative of being's motion that is only detectable when the ecstatic flows through an aperture, such as an anus, vaginal slit or volcano. Internal coherence, coming together as sense, engages experience with its own form of entirety. The making sense of ecstasy is a coming together of being with totality in an immanent moment. Immanence arrives with a rush that signals its phenomenological totality.⁹⁷ In other words, experiential ecstasy creates its own total authority in the shape of an ipseous form, which, in the sovereign moment, completes possession of a commodified totality and obviates its objectivity in the absurdity of its movement. Bataille describes this in terms of an irreducible discord, a disequilibrium that interiority communicates as its (and being's) primal condition:

There exists an irreducible discord between the subject seeking ecstasy and the ecstasy itself. However, the subject knows ecstasy and senses it: not as a voluntary direction coming from itself, but like the sensation of an effect coming from outside. I can go before it, instinctively, driven by the distaste for being enmired: then ecstasy arises from a lack of equilibrium. I attain it better by external means, by virtue of the fact that a necessary predisposition cannot exist within me.⁹⁸

Notions of an outside are fictions generated by ecstasy's rush through an aperture of slit. The invagination process, where centrally-generated being falls back into itself because of an attraction exerted by the political mass of its margins, also creates the hallucinated dimension of the outside at the event of its invagination. Thus, it is not only being's own central substantive structure that falls back in on itself, but also the collapse of the hallucination of outside-ness that is created by the aperture. Ecstasy is a perpetual rushing invagination that, as it penetrates being, creates the hallucinated conditions of being's externality; invagination creates the conditions for being's extraversion. The process of extraversion is an operational counterdynamic that reverses

⁹⁷ "Suppression of the subject and of the object: the only means of not resulting in the possession of the object by the subject, that is to say in avoiding the absurd rush of *ipse* wanting to become everything." *Inner Experience*, 53

⁹⁸ *Inner Experience*, 60

invagination's inner-ness, by a counter-rushing: vaginal ejaculation: dirty-material expulsion squirts out. This is not the re-statement of a return of an outside into theory in order to validate it, nor is communication of ipseous discontinuity a non-positive affirmation of inner continuity: what happens here is a new kind of ontological arrangement, where the ecstatic rush of autonomous being is experienced in being's interior *as if* it were from the outside. But here the 'as if' scenario differs. Bataille has already declared that the authority of the inner experience is total. Because of this the 'sensation of an effect coming from outside' has no external legitimacy; the outside is a hallucination caused by the experience of this effect; it is just sensation. Ecstasy of inner experience validates this experience by fictionalising or fabricating an external objectivity. The counterfactual exterior is fabricated by its vaginal ejaculation, because its hallucinated experience is experience of an infinite disequilibrium to the internal continuity of being. The experience of an outside to being is a false fact, it is not true, but inner experience's in-dwelling sensation of the total authority of rushing ecstasy *feels* that it is, it feels an ecstatic truth, that is, in itself, a disequibrated state. The internal totality of being's pathology is validated by this absurd rush, and whereas, in fact, there is no outside to being, in fiction, existence is created here by mis-attributing ecstatic validation to an elsewhere: via a corresponding dynamic of the aperture which extraverts, ejaculates the internal elements of being. Therefore, where ecstasy appears to rush in from a fictitious outside, creative validity for the outside moves in the opposite direction, and, rushing out from inner experience's sole authority, there is now an external possible. This exchange is not an equilibrating level, but an affirmation of continuous disequilibrium, marked by perpetual energy transfer.

The 'other' validity of scripture, science and reason can now therefore be discarded in favour of this newly-minted emergence, of a concrete presence, via chthonic generation of its fictional validity: "The earth sometimes jerks off in a frenzy, and everything collapses on its surface."⁹⁹ It takes vaginal formulation (where hiddenness and occultation become conspicuous and complex) and restates its gesture of extraversion in terms of this rushing, as defined by a passing through an aperture. Whether via the vaginal lips, or via the mouth of the volcano of volcanic eruption, or via an anal sphincter, the

⁹⁹ "The Solar Anus" *Visions*, 8

flow of fabrication or hallucination is a hot, vaginal ejaculation; is hot urine; is hot lava; squirting through this sphincter, where lava splatters are analogous to the data points of being's fictional knowability. These terms are being's presence rendered in the liquid droplets of the concrete flow.

The inner and the outer are terms of imaginary differences that have no essential validity except in the hallucinations of implied substitution and fusion, but this now places flow as a mark of passage of perpetual and disequilibrated exchange between continuous interior of being and its hallucinatory outside. Absolute determinacy of being occurs when the passage of flow passes through the volcanic aperture, the vagina, the mouth, the eye of the penis, and the anus. This aperture is the absolute authority of the determinable position, but it is elusive, momentary and its authority is sovereign.¹⁰⁰ This moment of sovereign authority as realised disequilibrium is the most impure moment of the sacred: the moment of determinacy of being. The passage-sphincter is the final expression of atheology in the form of form— the ecstatic volcanic rim— but its final summation carries *within* its summation the maximum, objective authority possible, the authority of the immediate aperture; this maximum is *also* the maximum impurity, the dirtiest authority through which totality must pass at the moment of its definition. It is a sphincter, placed centrally in the sacred, and multiple-marking the terrestrial sphere on its surface.¹⁰¹

The rushing of Bataille's ecstatic being through the constricted aperture endows the aperture with an interoceptive agency.¹⁰² This agency, the same whether vaginal slit or volcanic (or other) rim, orders the full extent of universal being by contextualising the plenum of everything. This means, in the case of the volcano, the chthonic generative motion that orders the sphere, as discussed in Chapter Two; for the vaginal cavity, the plenum is the totality of knowledge and nonknowledge, a plenum of materialised datum of the everything. When Madame Edwarda, a character in Bataille's eponymous short novel orders the supplicant to press his lips to her vaginal aperture, he moves his lips adjacent to

¹⁰⁰ Although the moment of the aperture is absolute, there is no essentiality to the aperture. For a development of this in terms of the vagina, see Annie Sprinkle (2013) "Masturbating Onstage: The Legend of the Ancient Sacred Prostitute" in, Blud Zero Collective (March 2013) *The Vagina as Autonomous Zone* #1

¹⁰¹ "The terrestrial globe is covered with volcanoes, which serve as its anus." "The Solar Anus" *Visions*, 8

¹⁰² "I became in this "Nothingness" unknown-suddenly . . . I negated these gray walls which enclosed me, I rushed into a sort of rapture." *Inner Experience*, 34

hers in order to receive everything.¹⁰³ Edwarda announces this when she tells him: “I am GOD,” but these words are superfluous, as she ejaculates into his mouth, through her vagina’s open lips and into his which are pressed together in an act of cunnilingus. Edwarda’s squirting flow is a full transfer of material being into another vessel. Yet, just as the volcano empties its lava into the supplicating sky, what alters by the conjoining of the rim of the mouth with the vaginal aperture is the context of the interior, or the chthonic.¹⁰⁴ The lips pressed together are conjoined in a single agency or aperture, and it becomes impossible to separate one context from another: the supplicant’s mouth becomes God as he receives, or hosts, Edwarda’s ejaculation.

Bataille identifies the moment of aperture’s agency with that of sacrifice, and the exchange of context follows the interchangeability of executioner and victim that was developed in Chapter One.

Bataille says:

Sacrifice is heat, in which the intimacy of those who make up the system of common works is rediscovered. Violence is its principle, but the works limit it in time and space; it is subordinated to the concern for uniting and preserving the commonality. The individuals break loose, but a breaking-loose that melts them and blends them indiscriminately with their fellow beings helps to connect them together in the operations of secular time.¹⁰⁵

Violence is conducted by the interoceptive constraint noted by Bellmer, and being does not simply flow, but gushes through the agential rim.

Heat is the fricative inevitability of materiality’s motion, and here eroticises motion and transfer in paroxysmal terms; heat transfer is properly exemplified by Bataille’s volcano metaphor.¹⁰⁶ This advances the vaginal context of Madame Edwarda by a simple mechanism of exchanging the word erupting (movement breaking away) with irruptive (movement breaking into). The sky receives

¹⁰³ “At last, reeling, I sank down on my knees and feverishly pressed my lips to that running, teeming wound.” *Madame Edwarda*, 150

¹⁰⁴ “Mount Etna overflowed with meaning for us (...) we finally reached the edge of the immense and bottomless crater. We were exhausted and in a way taken back by the overly strange, overly disastrous solitude. It was heart-rending to lean over that gaping crevice, that starry void that we breathed in.” Bataille (1993 (1981) [1939]) “The Culpable” trans. Tom Gora, in, *Polysexuality* Semiotext(e) Journal #10, edited by François Peraldi, 136-144

¹⁰⁵ *Inner Experience*, 59

¹⁰⁶ Research by Jeremy Biles has discovered a manuscript document among Bataille’s notes with plans for a “universal history.” At the centre of this page is “what was likely the starting-point for Bataille’s universal history, a phrase whose ambiguous rendering allows it to be read either as “*le centre de l’Etre*” (the center of Being) or “*le centre de l’Etna*” (the center of Mt. Etna)”. Biles observes that this “amounts to the same thing for Bataille.” Jeremy Biles (2007) *Ecce Monstrum: Georges Bataille and the Sacrifice of Form*, 133

the lava, it is irrupted, because of this the sky is invaginated. By conflating the image of Edwarda's vaginal plenum with the active volcano, and juxtaposing the kneeling supplicant performing cunnilingus with the receiving sky of the irrupting volcano, it becomes evident that Edwarda's vaginal plenum (GOD) is erupting whilst the invaginated sky (or the heavens, the French is ambiguous) is being irrupted into. Two vaginas are pressed together; by the agency of their aperture their context is interchangeable, and the fullness of Edwarda's GOD-vagina passes through and passes for the emptiness of the cruel heavens.

The world and GOD and the volcano's interior are a certain communication of the eruptive flow, and its destructive force, but the world/ being in the world is a place of vaginal interiority (and interiority has gained something of the objective in this association): communication of interiority is achieved by its squirting exchange with the external world. Bataille shows us the world and its heaven as an inner-space. Irruption gives Bataille a renewed access to the blue of heaven. This phrase, *le bleu du ciel* in French, has been mistranslated into English, as the unnecessarily poetic homophone *Blue of Noon*.¹⁰⁷ Although *ciel* has the ambiguous meaning of either the sky, or of heaven, it does not mean noon; what the standard translation misses is the association that this phrase has historically with torture and abandonment.¹⁰⁸ The heaven into which lava irrupts is a contextual interiorization of the vast desolate wastes of space, abandoned, improvised and sadistic.¹⁰⁹ The sky that is in receipt of

¹⁰⁷ Georges Bataille (1979 [1957]) *Blue of Noon*, translated by Harry Mathews (London and Boston: Marion Boyars)

¹⁰⁸ Megan Vaughan makes the point that in Dutch or French colonial literature this phrase was used to reflect a detachment from the Metropole, a detachment that would then provoke savagery and murder in the colonists' social behaviour, that would not have been acceptable or legal in their countries of origin. "There was a phrase used often in correspondence through which the Dutch administrators expressed this feeling of abandonment—we are "under the blue sky," they wrote, or "sitting under the blue heaven." Megan Vaughan (2005) *Creating the Creole Island: Slavery in Eighteenth-Century Mauritius*. (Durham: Duke University Press), 16

¹⁰⁹ Vaughan recounts the letters of a Governor Deodati, improvising a legal process for the trial of four escaped slaves on the Isle de France/Isle Maurice in 1695 as follows. Note the use of the term 'under the blue sky' (*le bleu de ciel*) to indicate remorselessness and exposure: "Four men from the garrison were selected to constitute a Council that drew up and inscribed the "confessions" of the suspects and reexamined them on the basis of what was now a text. Duly convicted, their punishment was clearly intended as a display of judicial terror. The three male slaves were fixed to a cross, their flesh torn from their bodies "in six different places where it is thickest"; the female slave was strangled and scorched with palmetto leaves. All four were finally given the "stroke of mercy" at sunset, their bodies left exposed "under the blue sky," on a gibbet, as an example to others." Vaughan, on page 17 cites H. C. V. Liebrandt (1896) *Précis of the archives of the Cape of Good Hope: Letters received 1695-1708* (Cape Town: W. A. Richards), 49

the volcano's emissions shares the earth's ferocity and cruelty, its "inner incandescence"; heaven is interiorized because it shares the paradigmatic violence of the volcano's roiling depths.¹¹⁰

The moment of the volcanic aperture's agency is the sovereign moment where/through which being is determined, it is the moment of the positive miracle...but at the same time this aperture of the volcano's hot mouth is the negative miracle where all is indefinite flow. The torment is not the destruction of matter, but the destruction of the possibility for a definitive mattering. Bataille's irruption/eruption play indicates that the charged antipodes of the spheres of the miracles, discussed in Chapter Two, which can be summarized here as the possibility and impossibility of definite knowing of being, are transposable in their values like the earth (depths of the volcano) and the sky (the chthonic recipient of volcanic ejaculate), which are also transposable. Contextual being is transposable: Heaven ejaculates her being into the volcano's mouth, like Madame Edwarda into the mouth of the kneeling supplicant.¹¹¹ This transposability suggests that meaning in the sense of determinable knowing is contingent on a flicker state and the cruel ambivalence this represents is Bataille's lesson concerning sadistic movement.¹¹²

Cruelty and loss are conditions of a realisation of this monodirectional realignment's abolition of discontinuity.¹¹³ The application of atheology is the logic of the death of God, but it is, at heart, a logic of Bataille's universal expenditure. In this application what is the salient point is that form and dimensionality, including logical dimensionality under discussion, are themselves subject to contextual inversion/extraversion. This can be considered in a mode of fiction/reality exchange, or it

¹¹⁰ "Propositions" *Visions of Excess*, 200

¹¹¹ There is ontotheistic exchange via consanguinity. In the preface to *The Impossible*, Bataille quotes Catherine of Sienna, who is similarly conflating the labial aperture and the flow of blood from Christ, into her body, implying corporeal transposition: "His lips kept murmuring 'Jesus!' ...then, 'Catherine!' As he spoke my name I took his head between my hands, reminding him of the goodness of God and I said to him: 'I wish it!'" "When he was buried, my soul reposed in peace and quiet and in such a fragrance of blood that I could not bear the idea of washing away that blood which had flowed from him onto me." Catherine of Siena, cited in Georges Bataille (1991 [1962]) *The Impossible* trans. Robert Hurley (San Francisco: City Lights Books), 7

¹¹² "In front of me and inside me there's no God, no separate being, but flickering *connections*." "Games of Chance". *The Bataille Reader*, 48

¹¹³ See here also: Bataille's *Blue of Noon* where notions of interior and exterior are exchanged Xenia (possibly named for exteriority?), is *inside* the apartment, but falls out of the window— into the world. For Tropmann, "thought drains away" and his consciousness appears to follow Xenia out of the window. Meanwhile the image of a volcano (Krakatoa) erupting enters his mind. *Blue of Noon*, 78

can be considered as a continuum of movement, around which disequibrated states of being exchange, around the coherence of perpetual rushing expenditure. The sky that becomes chthonic becomes volcanic, and so on, ad infinitum, but the lava continuously squirts. Notions of interiority are objectified and notions of ipseity are dissipated on a momentary and instantaneous basis in a culminatory peristalsis, a building towards the eruption that becomes so powerful that thought, recognition and reflexivity cease before its movement. However, and this is critical to aligning Bataille's eroticism with its universal dynamic analogue, this building tension does not subsist after the event of eruption/irruption, but continues unceasingly and unwaveringly as a dissident energy discharge, as discussed in the first part of Chapter Two. Building towards the form of orgasm is only a building toward the agential authority of an aperture (and yet sovereign) moment of thoughtless definition.

Bataille's deployment of erotic logic insists on an energy continuum that does not self-dissipate, therefore, it is a logic that it is not possible to erotically associate with a tumescent/detumescent narrative. Any logic which instrumentalises ejaculation in a way that places a phallus centrally, would disqualify it immediately as an organising trope for Bataille because of the phallus' subordination to its own inseminatory use, value and purposeful finality.¹¹⁴ Bataille's momentariness finds its better expression in vaginal formulation, because the vaginal aperture has logical capacities for genital ejaculation that are freely expressive, ancillary and obscure.¹¹⁵ The

114 A key text here is Shannon Bell "Feminist Ejaculations," in, Arthur Kroker & Marilouise Kroker (eds.) (1991) *The Hysterical Male: New Feminist Theory* (New York: St. Martin's Press), 155--169

115 In making a case for female ejaculation, 'squirting' in Bataille, see John Philips "The Law of the Mother," who makes an interesting point about "urinary eroticism" that it is "involuntary urination...in conjunction with sexual climax". Philips notes, rather prosaically that this is 'transgressive' but analytically speaking, it seems to contribute material evidence towards a closer alignment between erotic joy and movement in excess of function (especially in the sense that conspicuous female ejaculation does not have any reproductive function and is therefore, in Bataille's strict terminology, a perverted ejaculation; yet one that is in alignment with the excessive expenditure of the universe in terms of its exuberance. See *Madame Edwarda*: "The milky outpouring travelling through her, the jet spitting from the root, flooding her with joy, came spurting out again in her very tears: burning tears streamed from her wide-open eyes." (158). This occurs in a way that waste pathology 'excreta' does not enjoy: squirting has an excessive non-functional presence. John Phillips, "'The Law of the Mother: Masochism, Fetishism and Subjectivity in George Bataille's *Histoire de l'oeil*", in Andrew Hussey, ed. (2006) *The Beast at Heaven's Gate: Georges Bataille and the Art of Transgression* (Amsterdam: Editions Rodolphi), 111-125, 116. See also Habeeb Akande (2018) *Kunyaza: The Secret to Female Pleasure* (London: Rabaah Books) for research into squirting as practice, especially in Rwanda. Also of interest is the denial of female ejaculation, by the British Board of Film Classification, and its designation as 'urinary incontinence' (and therefore as obscenity and in contravention of its codes). "Determined to put the record straight, Anna Span presented the BBFC with irrefutable scientific evidence in support of model DJ's ability to 'squir', as it is known in the adult industry. Anna says; *"I am really proud to have changed this outdated ruling and to have made a difference to women who experience this in their own lives throughout the UK. It was never fair that*

volcano, then, is Bataille's register of a cleft in heaven, a vaginal mouth, a fold in an infinite realm. Logical coherence is derived from compulsion and explosion, in a way that disequilibrates the power of each by associating their concentrated shapes with an interchangeable power dynamic of interiority and exteriority. In conventional logic, objects of knowledge are assimilated, they are appropriated by subjective acquisition in order to form an ensemble of validity; erotic logic does not place ownership or assimilatory burdens on the data or subordinate the knowledge it encounters, but instead relies on a culminatory violence that coheres certain disparate motifs and iterative touches across an interior surface, before extraversion aligns them in communication with each other. The finality of death, or orgasm, is a constraint that orders a definite conscious realisation of disequilibrium, it ends a culminatory phase of erotic logic, but erotic violence continues anyway as its explosive discharge.¹¹⁶

iii. Iterations of otherness: figurations of atheology

This section of the chapter's third part takes a step back and considers how difference occurs as auto-determined marks and iterations of otherness; it examines the idea of systematic figuration, where atheology's embodiment defines itself as an actual body; then, this body's articulation, which is its perambulation down pathways that are formed from its own embodied pathology.

In the cleft of Heaven something unusual occurs: in the experience of ecstasy the volcanic command alters the perceptive experience of the mystic body and experience occurs as 'other.' Bataille turns attention to the experience of experience itself, and this is the presencing of disequilibrium as alteration or othering:

I felt the extent to which the sweetness of things had penetrated me. I had just had the desire for a violent movement of the spirit and, in this sense, I perceived that the felicitous state into which I had fallen did not differ entirely from "mystical" states. At the very least, as I passed quickly from inattention to surprise, I felt this state with more intensity than one normally does and as if an other and not me had experienced it.¹¹⁷

the BBFC dismissed their orgasms as urinary incontinence" Cited in, Blud Zero Collective (March 2013) *The Vagina as Autonomous Zone* #1 (not paginated)

¹¹⁶ "What I want to emphasise is that death does not affect the continuity of existence, since in existence itself all separate existences originate; continuity of existence is independent of death and is *even* proved by *death*." *Eroticism*, 21

¹¹⁷ *Inner Experience* trans. Kendall, 113

Bataille realises his materialised system in its particular iterations: Mount Etna is also Vesuvius, but the iteration strays into other proper names: *Jésuve*, a title of an essay by Bataille, is the conflation of Vesuvius (*Vésuve* in French) and *Jésus*.¹¹⁸ Bataille invites us to consider the volcano as a material expression of the organisation of being of which Jesus is one *particular* example.¹¹⁹ After the volcano this section's second iteration is the figure of a girl: she is an embodiment of mystery retrieved from the margins of Bataille's own obscurity to analogise the form of the thinker. She walks along a path which maps her own figuration in its course of its own following. The girl is a figure of trajectory. Her ambulation renders the organising logic for atheology as *pathology*. The girl is her own pathway; she is the figure of movement of thought through herself; her figure is the realised trajectory of thought through itself. Bataille writes of the "simple intensity of the inner movement" in terms of mystical experience, and also— and not separately— ecstasy.¹²⁰ The girl's inner movement articulates the pathways of her own inner ecstasy and torment. The torment that Bataille describes is not the torment of existential angst but the torment of the absolute subjugation before the remorseless *intrinsic* power of *her* neuropathways of ecstasy, laughter, defecation, orgasm.¹²¹ This power is its command to move in the sense of peristalsis, or pulse releases of endorphins or serotonin: their compress/release mechanisms group together pathologies of unwilling and unconscious tonic complicity under muscular command as an inevitable and unconscious force; one whose power imagines for itself the mappable validity of a non-existent exterior.

¹¹⁸ See Bataille "The Jesuve" *Vision of Excess*, 73-78; also "The Pineal Eye" *Vision of Excess*, 84-5 and "Solar Anus"

¹¹⁹ David Farrell Krell makes the same association in a wider context: "Bataille coins a word of his own: his is the system of the *Jesuve*. The *jesuve* is not only *Jésus*, (...) but also *sève*, the sap of Dionysos; the *Jesuve* is both the volcano, *Vésuve*, and the goddess, *Vénus*..." David Farrell Krell (1997) *Architecture: Ecstasies of Space, Time and the Human Body*. (Albany: SUNY Press), 155

¹²⁰ *Inner Experience* trans. Kendall, 115

¹²¹ Bataille actually lists these as domains (where) "'the effect of the unknown,' (or) 'the effect of an experience of the limit of knowledge,' would be encountered." And "enumerates" these: "Laughter; Tears; Sexual excitation; Poetic emotion (envisioned at first in the form of sentiment of the beauty of nature); The sentiment of the sacred; Ecstasy" *Unfinished System of Nonknowledge* 159-60

Erotic logic therefore serves as a collective term for this pathological determinacy; eroticism: a collective term attributable to Bataille's insistence that "intimacy is violence," that associates the remorselessness of violence with the inexorability of its intimate expression.¹²² Disequilibrium is the lover/God, other-engine, of the fictitious outside that generates ecstatic states by rushing into the lover. But it is the routes described by this violence, their blood splatters' trace-arcs and lava-flows, bursting through corporeal being, which unknowingly determine being's experiential surface for the curious/wise girl. The curious/wise girl is the figuration of the disequilibrium at the volcanic aperture: she instigates her being's movement through a curiosity that results in her taking a path to her wisdom; when she is wise, she knows that she knows nothing, and is curious about what she does not know; she abandons the path to wisdom, or walks back down it at night. She is figured as a universal extraversion of states of being expressed along its knowledge paradigm.

In the only work of critical theory that Bataille writes pseudonymously, he writes as 'Louis Trente': one imagines this character as a descendent of the headless King (Louis XVI) guillotined in the (subsequently named) *Place de la Concorde*, some fourteen generations into a future that never existed and whose numerical designation denotes a monarchy only of the pornographic film industry (Trente is French for 30, or XXX in traditional Roman numerals). In the passage cited below, Louis Trente introduces the reader to a mysterious figure, the otherwise unexplained and unintroduced 'unreflective but curious girl'. In a later passage, the reader is told the girl is 'wise'. Is it even the same girl? Trente does not elucidate. It is not the character of the girl that matters to Trente's theory, but her figural logic as a path-taker. The path of the 'curious girl,' is determined by *actus reus*: the girl's figuration is by way of the summit of being's determinacy: the volcanic rim. She needs to know; she needs to decide, but she cannot, because she is at the apex of her need, and her need has nowhere to go. She is a figure of thought's durational movement and maps its systematicity by the paths she determines through her own vector-sphere of sex, death and animal-technology. She figures modal being and she takes, and *is*, the path of systematic logic, which Trente describes, here, as simply: 'time'. The curious girl is an 'unreflective' figure in the sense that her figure cannot be externally

¹²² *Theory of Religion*, 51

envisioned and so she *cannot* recognise herself by her reflection; she is constituted being, experienced as a cenesthetic mode of inhabitation: hers is an unalienated state (it does not validate itself on notions of visual determinacy that is only available to an exterior entity (or ‘other’)), so the girl is unreflective because she inhabits her own corporeal figuration and *does not* regard herself (does not look in a mirror) to know herself, nor looks at her ipseous self for objective validity. She is not theory, and she does not reflect theory’s absence, because, here, pathology is the scissiparity of thought from unthought. Bataille explains how curiosity and pathological determinacy supplant reflective poiesis:

In matters of eroticism, time takes two forms. The desire for salvation with its counterpart, the fear of punishment. (...) It is always a question of fear linked to the feeling of duration of an identical being (isolated in space).

From two things one: to remain naïve and, in regard to eroticism, “to know” nothing (in this case: “being lived” by it, attaining an ultimate state without anything to premeditate—thus the unreflective but curious girl) or to reject innocence. In this last case, unquenchable thirst, each time the need to reach the summits, sense carried from excess to excess, from horror to horror. One comes to people who eat hot shit, to the characters of the *120 days*, to these impossible people (tortures, Sade’s howls, burning drool). The first path alone is happy but from the abandonment of the “project” one is on the second. Innocence assumes a “concern for time to come.” “Concern” comes to failure, comes to thirst and the search. Every “project” is abandoned, the wise girl is intoxicated, pisses on herself, shows her arse. The abandonment of the “project” is the volcano, dizziness, the earth moving, drunkenness, the exorbitant sun.¹²³

The *wise* girl (who is indeed the curious girl, a little further along the path, and so is different...) demonstrates that a raw plenum of inhabitation is not a static proposition, being can think with inhabitation, think mobile and durational logics and that thought can discern pathways or attune itself to channels; that is why the girl is wise. The girl is wise because the path she takes is the project that is her shape, her path is not some external tendential destiny (telos) but is a poiesis of her own pathology. The moment she exchanges curiosity for wisdom is the moment she defines her own shape of being by pissing on herself: the droplets mark her body by their stains; her body is generated by the drops’ (being’s) maculating effects. It is not being that is figured as her shape but being’s particular expression as individual urine droplets that defines her figuration.¹²⁴ Being ejaculates itself: it squirts

¹²³ “G. Bataille notes to the manuscript of “The Little One”” in, Bataille (2013) *Louis XXX: The Little One and The Tomb of Louis XXX* trans. Stuart Kendall (London: Equus Press), 132-133

¹²⁴ For more on the definition of a body by urination see Cassils (2017) *PISSED Ronald Feldman Gallery, New York*. Cassils work uses urine to illustrate the sense of marginalisation (and anger at marginalisation) over contemporary political legislation concerning the definition of trans bodies by which toilets/bathrooms were acceptable for the bodies to use. <https://www.artforum.com/print/201802/cassils-73661>

through the girl's vaginal aperture(s) and marks out her bodily contours with hot splashes. But the droplets have no need to fall back to a territory that is no longer the embodied case, because the girl has left her body, in the altered form of her droplets of urine, and the territory of her body— her volcanic depths— has exchanged itself with the cruel heaven. Her body engraves itself, by the splatter pattern of lava ejaculate, as a constellated staining, onto the vault of heaven. This is systematic logic that is itself a stream-pathology; the chance-pathways and trajectories of urination's rushing and gushing. It is unalienated being that is an unreflective state: the girl is not distinct from the material that defines her, she, as a particular being, and as being in general, is unalienated (non-separate, contiguous). Because she owns, and is, within the material sphere of her own possibility for definition, because she is both chthonic and heavenly flow, the girl is pathologically wise and free, rather than epistemologically so. She is sovereign, being flows through her, and so she is the mouth of the volcano. She is dizzy at the volcano's summit, she shows her arse, she shows her 'is' (sovereign momentariness): "the abandonment of the "project"", she is her arse and she is the volcano.

Bataille's version of acknowledgement registers nonknowledge and experience as a first path that can be assumed to refer to meditation's praxis, as a happy path to attaining an enriched state. The curious girl's second path is the abandonment of the first, in favour of particular debauchery; very particular in the sense of named erotic acts ("eating hot shit"), or simply references to categories of debauchery that have been delineated by the characters of Sade's *120 days*. She is thirsty for a homophone and so she becomes intoxicated on the blood of wine of the number 120 (*sang de vin/cent-vingt*). The wise girl who pisses herself on the second path is a cypher or psychopomp: an avatar of death who personifies or figures atheology at precisely the conjunction of her pissing vagina and its sky/volcanic and solar extraversion; she pisses on herself as volcano pisses into heaven. She is not different from the route that she takes, and nor is she different from the splatter-patterns of her piss, which constellate her body as the drops fall onto it. Yet her presence as seeker or sage redefines Bataille's oeuvre from that of critical heterogenous postmodernity to a cartographer of atheology as sacred method.¹²⁵

¹²⁵ Jess Larson explores themes of divination through menstrual blood in her work. Cf. *Menstruate/Divinate* (2015) The artist states that this, "highlights a theme in my creative work concerned with aestheticizing bloodstains, namely

The abandonment of path offers the ‘wise girl’ a kind of zero-velocity in the violence of expenditure, perhaps the sovereign moment of lava’s passing through the volcanic aperture. This zero-velocity of flow’s continuity recommences counting in the steady-stream, but now, surely, the integers that mark the passage of lava into a community space of heaven are *also inverse*; they are negative. The doubling of bodies becomes a passage “from two things to one.” Ground and God pass to chthonic sky. Since the discharge of energy is perpetual and monodirectional, the sacrificial ritual and the inversion of polarity implied by volcanic eruption are conflated: counting proceeds from one to two in experiencing otherness and *simultaneously* from two to one in the fusion of abandonment of the first path for the second. Expressed in a mathematical way that may not be necessarily appropriate here, the net effect is zero. Alteration— and this is alteration, as a radical otherness— shows the possibility of counting within the zero; the counting within being that Bataille’s thought abstracts to an outside of the purview of language.¹²⁶ Since Bataille opines that the momentary is “a kind of zero with which we no longer see that it is possible to count” and also that, “In place of God...there is only the impossible, and not God,” this is counting as an expressive atheology that occurs in the place of God.¹²⁷

The operation of atheology functions as counting within zero so that its summation includes both intra-material and extra-phenomenal alteration. The atheological body, and its associated consciousness, is the unit in which the counting within zero is denominated. The act of counting simultaneously in positive and negative bodies makes the body a fold in the limitless opening of the instant of a process, and its folding at the very orifice of the volcano from where the lava (which is

menstrual blood, but using it to explore the internal vs. external locus of control in individuals via games of chance, such as fortune-telling cards and tealeaf readings. By further marrying the blood imagery to fortune-telling structures, I see ways in which women forgo internal and instinctive methods of self-determination for those that are external and encourage conformity.” <http://jesslarson.com/wordpress/project/menstruatedivinate/>

¹²⁶ “I have been trying to talk a language that equals zero, a language equivalent to nothing at all, a language that returns to silence. I am not talking about nothingness, which sometimes looks to me like a pretext for adding a specialised chapter onto speech; I am talking about the suppression of whatever language may add to the world.” *Eroticism*, 26

¹²⁷ Bataille “The moment is nothing more than a kind of zero with which we no longer see that it is possible to count.” *Accursed Share Vols II and III*, 227; “In place of God...” in “The Little One” *Louis XXX: The Little One and The Tomb of Louis*, 24

never a metonym and never not metonymical) registers its state of eruption and irruption simultaneously *without ever changing* the direction of *its continuing dirty flow*. Moreover, the othering of consciousness and the abandoned moment of project (simultaneous positive and negative counting) must be in perpetual disequilibrium (which is to say, in a kind of coronal loop equilibrium, where plasmatic expenditure is distributed according to the magnetic field generated by the antipodean negative and positive miracle-differencing) or the recognition of expenditure would turn to accumulation in the material of consciousness. Speculation therefore, insists that the abandonment of the project of thought's expression outside language (the possibility of an effable and also reiterable inner experience) is an intrinsic device for maintaining a kind of zero-equilibrium, in states of altered-conscious bodies, and in the presences of altered bodies (bodies of difference, plural bodies, or a community):

Hence the word *human* never denotes, as simpleminded people imagine, a stabilized position, but rather an apparently precarious equilibrium that distinguishes the human quality. The word man is always connected with an *impossible* combination of movements that destroy one another.¹²⁸

Disequilibrium as simultaneous counting in bodies is fuelled by the reifying process with which Bataille's poiesis forms the bodies, forms iterative integers, forms monsters, forms refusals, and from these, forms atheology. Production of forms must be assiduously gauged in that it has a purpose but not a use: the thing that is reified and the gesture of its making operate in two registers where the second—its use-value—is only revealed in destruction, fulguration and violence, and the first, useless determinacy, is impurity. Atheology replaces God, and because it does this it, disequilibrium's rush must contain within its structure elements that it shares with God. Bataille summarizes these in this important passage, relegated to a footnote in *Eroticism*:

I know that violence and the unknown have never excluded the possibility of knowledge and reason. But the unknown is not knowledge, discontinuity is not continuity which destroys and kills it. The world of discontinuity has the horrible power of imagining death, since in discontinuity knowledge is possible--death lying beyond knowledge and beyond the conceivable. So the distance between God, in whom violence and reason (continuity and discontinuity) co-exist, and the prospect of being torn asunder that confronts the intact personality (knowledge confronted by the unknown), is a slight one.¹²⁹

¹²⁸ *Accursed Share Vols II and III*, 342

¹²⁹ *Eroticism*, 140-141 fn.

The torn-apart body of atheology's embodiment is actually a gestural poiesis that is a ritual gesture for the alteration of consciousness. Its disequilibrium is a meditative structure on the immanence of violent change.

Chapter Four, *Expiation: Acephalic Audition*

Introduction

This chapter develops a theory of authority's expiation, in part one, followed by a suggested mode of expiation's practice in part two, before part three applies theory and practice to the events Bataille describes in the tableau discovered in the cave at Lascaux, a tableau he describes as evidence of 'murder and expiation' without really expanding on what this meant to him. The chapter develops an ontopolitical case for expiation from the dramatized context of an expelled or excreted dynamic of material from the systematic body, and 'toward' a liberated outside of thought that is more proximate to an unstipulated and noumenal imaginary of being.¹ It does this in three parts: Part one, *Towards a hermeneutics of non-logical difference* imagines difference as a space that is described by the ridding of the atheological body of its waste product, excretory expiation. Waste is the ridding of the body of impurity of authority, so the excreted is material without definition in its general conception, it is a material that is unthought being: thought's inadmissible element, or difference as acephalic being. The first part of the chapter develops a way of sensually encountering undefined being by suggesting this encounter in a double mode: one which is audible only in actively hearing and not being attentive (listening) to sound, a non-cognitive and therefore non-logical action, and one in which the intensity of the sound itself is contingent on its definition as an intensified form, isolable yet not materially different from its general acoustic field. The intensity is material whose there-ness develops itself autonomously, and regardless of a phenomenal or noumenal distinction.² Part two, *Hearing non-*

¹ Worth noting is the argument made by Moira Gatens which asks whether the imaginary body is a stipulatory 'other' or a complementary body. Gatens engages the issue on the question of who has the authority to make this decision. Cf. Chapter 5 "Power, bodies and difference" Gatens (1996) *Imaginary Bodies: Ethics, Power and Corporeality* (Abingdon, Oxon.: Routledge), 60-75

² For a development of the aural background to hermeneutics see Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes*. He says: "the tradition of hermeneutics, which gained a new life in the early nineteenth century with Friedrich Schleiermacher, was also resolutely tied to aural experience. As one of its leading twentieth-century practitioners, Hans-Georg Gadamer has acknowledged that "the primacy of hearing is the basis of the hermeneutical phenomenon." Jay *Downcast Eyes* 106; citation original in, Gadamer (1975) *Truth and Method*, 420; See also: Martin Jay (1993) "The Rise of Hermeneutics and the Crisis of Ocularcentrism," in, *Force Fields: Between Intellectual History and Cultural Critique* (New York: Routledge), 99-113

logical difference concentrates on developing the technical mode of hearing's contact with noumenality or thought's outside. It does this by tracing noise's dramatization through the hermeneutic surface and proposes that this is a mode of contact that distributes contingency as difference through varying instances of its contingency's intensity of definition. Having developed a theory and method of expiation, part three, *Shamanic anarchism*, deploys both to assimilate the scenario of the Lascaux tableau into a wider theoretical ambit, showing how the 'auricular lubricity' Bataille identifies in Sade, can also be found in the caves, as has been identified by more recent research into parietal sonic aesthetics, specifically by Iegor Reznikoff, and which his research finds is a predominant feature of cave actions. The chapter concludes that expiation and its auricular contingency as unchannelling action is in fact a shamanic anarchist method for total alteration of onto-political forms and non-forms of being, drawing Bataille's preoccupation with Lascaux, via expiation, and its effect on wholly other-ing, into a central political trope in his cosmological summation.

Part One: Towards a Hermeneutics of Non-logical Difference

i. Expiation as Excretion: being and thought moving to its outside

This chapter departs from the systematicity developed in the previous chapters to establish expiation as a correlative dynamic to, and an external context for, authority's occurrence; because expiation is outside of authority it liberates itself from the final stipulatory element of a material 'is,' and concerns itself with difference by way of radical alteration of the person, either as form, or form of consciousness, or form of being, or no form at all. As discussed, Bataille places great emphasis that authority must expiate itself and, having argued that systematic determinacy is the crime of authority that Bataille himself commits, this chapter examines the manner of Bataille's expiation for this crime, whose guilty embodiment was discussed in Chapter Three. Locating authority's expiation in Bataille's thought draws an association between Bataille's movement of excretion from 1929 and

that of Caillois' movement of expiation to propose a 'theory of expiation' where the movement of the body's 'ridding' is understood as a ridding by the criminal/authority body of its obligation to be as determined form. This opens expiation to a formal ontic re-valuation of Bataille's call for radical alteration, specifically that towards the 'wholly other'. Radical alteration as expiation shows how being alters its form by 'vomiting' itself out. Vomiting, in this instance, maps its resonance onto vocalisation— crying out— and/or invocation.³ In practice, this means an alteration along a sonic cartography of broadcast channels and, within these, domains of intensity that correspond to dissolving consciousness exemplified in the listening/hearing shift.

The idea for sacred impurity is derived from ethnographic work undertaken by Durkheim, and taken up by Hubert and Mauss before Caillois' development, which defines sanctity objectively as simultaneously pure and impure.⁴ In his book *Man and the Sacred* Roger Caillois introduces this precept to the group that Bataille assembles around the name *Acéphale* in the late 1930s.⁵ Caillois' work links directly to Bataille's wider project by its association between purity and defilement: defilement in this case being the 'accursed' part or share of the sacred, a theme which Bataille deems sufficiently central to his thinking that it is the organising principle of all three volumes of its definition. Defilement as 'accursed' underpins this thesis's argument that the authority required as an organisational strategy for Bataille's entire cosmological definition is this 'accursed part' or accursed share.⁶ Bataille's title indicates that thought's definition is the moment or the 'part' of its accursedness. This is important to establish because defilement groups Caillois' more explicit

³ Vomiting as invocation in the same exchanged contextual sense as the chthonic sky/volcanic inversion developed in the previous chapter.

⁴ Cf. "What is pure and what is impure are not mutually exclusive opposites; they are two aspects of religious reality" Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss (1964 [1898]) *Sacrifice: Its Nature and Function* trans. W.D. Halls (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 60. Cf. 'contagiousness of the sacred' in Emile Durkheim (1995 [1912]) *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* trans. Karen E. Fields (New York: The Free Press), 321-329; cf. in this regard, Bataille's comments: "What paganism regarded as unclean was automatically regarded as sacred at the same time. That which condemned paganism, or Christianity, held to be unclean was no longer, or never became, the subject of a formal attitude." *Eroticism*, 123

⁵ Roger Caillois (2001 [1939]) *Man and the Sacred* Translated by Meyer Barash (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press)

⁶ By implication, Bataille's entire summation of his thought, the three volume *Accursed Share*, as not a description of the 'accursed part' of the sacred, but that it is being determined at all that is accursed. In other words, Bataille's research's definition by writing it, and its (posthumous) publication is the accursed part.

definition of the sacred with Blanchot's precursory remarks about 'spiritual' life that states that authority expiates itself.⁷ Therefore authority must expiate itself because its necessary participation in definition defiles the sacred. For Bataille, expiation of this accursedness is achieved by excreting some inassimilable element, a counterdynamic that because of base materialism's designation of covalence between ideas and substance, can be carried out by simply shitting or menstruating. The externalisation of this element expiates the authority of thought's attraction to form, to or toward a defined reality, by a corresponding dynamic. Definition is the moment of crime, and expiation purifies the moment so that crime can re-occur. The outside of thought's definition, its excluded rather than accursed element, opens out a new possibility for its aesthetic context in its own occurrence through expulsion. Vomiting is the counter-dynamic to the crime of definition. Caillois, in the text below, explains that this context can be identified by its 'ridding' or 'cleansing' or expelling dynamic. Thereafter authority's impurity can re-establish itself, in a renewal of its accursedness, as structural organisation of being/ human consciousness of its self-being, by committing greater crimes of authority, or accursedness. Meanwhile expiation, lying outside of structured thought, exists in different and possibly non-logical ways. Caillois says,

Defilement and sanctity [...] are designated by a unique term in the more advanced civilisations. The Greek word *ἄγιος*, "defilement," also means, "the sacrifice which cleans the defilement." The term *ἅγιος*, "holy," also means "defiled" according to an obsolete lexicographic usage. A distinction is made much later by recourse to two symmetrical words *ἄγιος*, "pure," and *εὐάγιος*, "accursed," the obvious construction of which indicates the ambiguity of the original word. The Greek *ἀφοσιῶν*, the latin *expiare*, "to expiate," are interpreted etymologically as "to rid (oneself) of the sacred (*οσνος*, *pius*) element that has been introduced by defilement." Expiation is the act that permits the criminal to resume his normal activity and his place in the profane community, by ridding him of his sacred character, by *deconsecrating* himself.⁸

Ontopolitical logic expiates itself by ridding itself of its logical form: this is what Bataille means by non-logical difference, as will be discussed presently. Logic's negation is its expiation, and

⁷ Bataille cites Blanchot as an authority and says that there are three rules for 'spiritual life'; "...[T]he foundation of all "spiritual" life, which can only: –have its principle and its end in the absence of salvation, in the renunciation of all hope, –affirm of inner experience that it is authority (but all authority expiates itself), –be contestation of itself and non-knowledge." *Inner Experience*, 102

⁸ Caillois, *Man and the Sacred*, 35

its difference is its ridding by embodied logic, a form which Chapter Three prepared in detail. From a materialist— and especially from an embodied— system, that element of expulsion is not simply the idealised impurity of authority, but another, different impure element. The ‘dejecta’ series is impurity because it defines the body *post partum*, defines systematicity in retrospective, because it is repulsive; it deconsecrates the body by exiting it.⁹ The body expels the dejecta because of its impurity and because the dejecta has committed the crime of authority in defining the human condition. The dejecta materials are expelled, as waste, from the sufficient body, from its systematicity and from the thought/being-human phenomenon. The dejecta trace thought itself to an outside of its phenomenal embodiment as inner experience: menstrual blood/faeces etcetera are not ‘only’ waste elements, they are trans-substances that cross, in their expiatory dynamic, over to the sacred of thought’s waste/excess: this excess is, Bataille says, the noumenal.¹⁰

Obligatory (sufficient) expiation happens on the outside, it determines what it can of the outside by actions of ridding. Yet it also imagines or fabricates the validity of there being any outside at all. Since ridding being’s interior of impure authority by expelling it would reinstate authority outside in some negative transcendental field, it follows that that which is got rid of is not pure authority. Excretion and expiation, which align in the argument’s construction, instead rid the systematic and atheological body of its possibility for a defined totality.¹¹ There is no longer possibility to declare being’s interior or exterior, and, instead, its occurrence happens as an open field of possibility. This makes a direct link between a series of socially inassimilable elements and the noumenal elements of thought. For Bataille these latter elements— “nothingness, infinity, the absolute”— lie outside of being only because being’s total *conception* expels its sufficient element: that element which, after Aquinas, renders it total.¹² These trans-substantiated elements are the ‘wholly other’ of thought: not thought’s

⁹ The ‘dejecta series’: incest, menstrual blood and faeces. *Accursed Share Vols II and III*, 61-66. See this thesis Chapter One, Footnote 19.

¹⁰ From proposition 6 in a list that “allows one to introduce the values established by the Marquis de Sade”, as will be presently discussed. Cf. “The Use Value of D.A.F. de Sade” *Visions of Excess*, 96

¹¹ “Entirety exists within me as exuberance. only in empty longing, only in an unlucky desire to be consumed simply by the desire to burn with desire, *is entirety wholly what it is.*” Preface to *On Nietzsche*, xxvii-xxviii

¹² See Chapter Three Part One on systematic sufficiency. Bataille also says: “To seek sufficiency is the same mistake as to enclose being in some sort of point: we can enclose nothing, we can only find insufficiency. We try to place

criminal expression, which implies that its authority is reinforced and contained by its otherness, as shown in Chapter 3, but an outside to thought's otherness, its inadmissible element; this can only be reached by passing into thought's outside by way of excretion/expiation. Excretion/expiation radicalises being to the degree that alteration of its substance occurs in the nonconscious state: a becoming radically altered within being. Bataille describes this as a 'break [with] the habitual homogeneity of the individual' as being passes to its outside, the way the human vomits food:

If one followed these associations, the use of the sacrificial mechanisms for various ends, such as propitiation or expiation, would be seen as secondary, and one would only retain the elementary fact of the radical *alteration* of the person which can be indefinitely associated with any other alteration that suddenly arises in collective life: for example, the death of a relative, initiation, the consumption of the new harvest....Such an action would be characterized by the fact that it would have the power to liberate heterogeneous elements and to break the habitual homogeneity of the individual, in the same way that vomiting would be opposed to its opposite, the communal eating of food.¹³

Radicality is achieved by the human nonconscious transubstantiating, that is, altering its substantive being to pass from experience phenomena to noumenal (non)form(s): becoming wholly other as radical alteration of the homogeneity of the individual by becoming indefinite and continuous.¹⁴ The link between expiation and excretion forges an accumulative logic for a 'theory of expiation' that applies to an outside/excreta of Bataille's thought, which, as will be shown, leads to a fuller understanding of how Bataille's pre-occupation with shamanic alteration in the caves of pre-history links to his wider body of work and allows Lascaux as his thought's culminating point rather than its coda. Moreover, rather than simply being a logical arrival of a conclusion to his project, what it also shows is how atheology's expiatory dynamic is a current-technology for shamanic anarchist alteration.

ourselves in the presence of God, but God alive within us demands at once that we die; we only know how to grasp this by killing. Incessant sacrifice being necessary to survival, we have crucified once and for all—and yet, each day, once again, we crucify. God himself crucifies." *Inner Experience*, 88

¹³ "Sacrificial Mutilation" in *Visions of Excess*, 70

¹⁴ The question is raised whether the outside of thought is substantial, or is continuously material for Bataille, and that transubstantiation is in fact, intra-material differencing. See footnote on Barad and intra-action in the context of transmateriality, Chapter One footnote 83, but see also Bataille's exposition of Prometheus (the God who is punished by Zeus for introducing fire to humanity by having his liver torn out by an eagle) and the eagle as a "single being" "the roles are normally shared between the human form of a god and his animal avatar (...). It is a case of automutilation." *Visions of Excess*, 70

This concludes a delineation of expiation and where it sits in Bataille's work. What follows is a rather more complex assemblage of an accessible modality, that is, how expiation accesses nonconscious modes in order to radically alter the person. This involves assembling a hermeneutic surface, that allows an acephalic and sensory interpretation of non-logical difference to occur across and in contact with a plane of intensity of possibility that corresponds to a surface for thought and being's outside. The surface of this plane itself marks a sense of materiality that is not or is no longer congruent with determined states of being. Johnny Golding has referred to something similar as an "entirely different sense of materiality, matter, and indeed agency," where the thickness of the surface's sensate is appropriated as a variance in its ontic contingency.¹⁵ Golding takes this sense as "how cohesions take shape, and become 'real' outside of a binaric-sum or the metaphysics of flow."¹⁶ The intensities that form at the surface are the point of sensual contact with flow and motion of being itself.

Bataille details the motion of excretion in 1930's "The Use Value of D.A.F. de Sade" which Caillois' book will later associate with expiation. Bataille describes the relation between appropriation and excretion as an 'alternating rhythm', where there is an absorption of material to a point, before it passes out beyond this point.¹⁷ He states that appropriation is an assimilatory dynamic leading to a position of homogeneity, and this is countermanded by excretion: this implies that excretion is in a symbiotic relationship with a dynamic of entirety, where the appropriation causes homogeneity to occur, therefore the authority of the homogeneous position, that of the individual body or discontinuous moment, is expiated by the countermanding dynamic. Bataille lists actions for both appropriation and excretion, gathering together through enumeration a comparative sense, where the appropriation of material in its organisation is always accompanied by 'physiological tumult'.

¹⁵ For a development of thickness in this context see "Thickness on the Margins of Discourse," Jean-François Lyotard (2011 [1971]) *Discourse, Figure*, translated by Anthony Hudek and Mary Lydon (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press), 103–114

¹⁶ Golding, Reinhart and Paganelli (2020) *Data Loam: Sometimes Hard, Usually Soft. The Future of Knowledge Systems*, (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter), 484

¹⁷ "Use Value of D.A.F. de Sade" in, *Visions of Excess*, 94

Appropriation results in a homogeneous position, and it is this that incites tumult as excretion of heterogeneous elements. Bataille includes in his appropriation list elements as diffuse as food eating and philosophy, and the comparative basis of their listing implies that their treatment be similar in their expiation phase. Of particular relevance to the argument are entry numbers 6 and 11 on Bataille's list. These correspond, broadly, to philosophy and to scientific data.¹⁸ Bataille develops a 'Sadean value' for philosophy where, from a homogenous and phenomenally finite cognitive position on the world, its excretion results in the waste products of an unknowable and noumenal world. Similar criticism is levelled at scientific data: Bataille objects to a 'dominant need' for scientific appropriation, and sees excretion of real exterior objects occurring in realms that are 'in practice unreal'. Unreality therefore becomes, via excretion, an escape from, or alternative to, existence in a 'servile world' of scientific objectivism. Bataille refers to this as "the practice of intellectual scatology (which) requires the excretion of inassimilable elements."¹⁹ Anticipating Caillois, Bataille describes this expulsion as one where something is expelled as if it were a foreign body. He uses the German term, *das ganz Anderes* here, which he notes is:

The science of what is completely other. The term *agiology* would perhaps be more precise, but one would have to catch the double meaning of *agio* (analogous to the double meaning of *sacer*), *soiled* as well as *holy*. But it is above all the term *scatology* (the science of excrement) that retains in the present circumstances (the specialization of the sacred) an incontestable expressive value as the doublet of an abstract term such as *heterology*.²⁰

By concentrating on the fungibility of excretory material this chapter will take the doubling of soiled/holy to build an argument that, via expiation's burgeoning intensity, there is a process created where being that exists as its own identifiable form, and with it the homogeneous conception of the human individual, excretes itself to radically alter into that which is soiled/holy, the 'wholly other.'²¹ Alteration of being, becoming 'tout autre' as a possibility of becoming infinite, or as through-form

¹⁸ Ibid. 96 and 98

¹⁹ Ibid. 99

²⁰ Ibid. 102fn2

²¹ See also Derrida's development of this alteration which he locates in its French translation (which Bataille uses) 'tout autre' which he characterizes as "Totally, absolutely, radically, infinitely other". Jacques Derrida (2007 [1999]) *The Gift of Death & Literature in Secret* trans. David Wills (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press), 82-116

contingency, opens up as a new hermeneutic surface for sensing, where logic is non-total or absent in non-cognitive interpretation, because material form ascertains itself acephalically in terms of its own valid/fictive occurrence. Relating this to the forms of definition that the thesis has discussed in previous chapters, it abolishes the prohibition of forms: that is to say, where once (in Chapter One) form was the very essence of human prohibition— that one cannot be one’s cause at the same time as one’s effect— this is now rescinded in favour of expiation as a passage to thought’s outside: libertinage opened up by excretion of being. Thought’s outside is a hermeneutic surface because interpretation replaces prohibition as knowledge appropriation, and as a consequence, enables human existence to liberate itself as movement between, into and through other forms of existence and non-being. Everything becomes possible, because nothing is prohibited. There is total hermeneutic availability at the surface of being and thought’s outside; there is total access to phenomena and noumena, and the movement of alteration that expiation inaugurates is anarchism as a shamanic practice.

As discussed in Chapter Three, the atheological body is situated in, and in reference to, a legal body which is guilty; this establishes the atheological body as ‘other’, criminal, monstrous: a term which, as also discussed, for Bataille has no normative reference, and therefore no antithesis. When this ‘other’ body needs to rid itself of its repulsive element, vitality and waste offer a central pathology to expiation. In the following quote Bataille tracks movement from the sacrificial instant (the affirmative/destructive moment of apex-authority) through an eruption to the vomiting that can be associated with the ridding of the body by deconsecration. The body deconsecrates itself by expelling the unconscionable element of its being. This part cannot be thought because it is thought’s definition. Therefore, this part is unthought, its partiality is acephalic. Unthinkability takes the form of some part of being that does not require thought for its existence. Sacrifice marks and ends being’s appropriation into form, but it is the thingness of consciousness which is severed and the acephalic form of being’s substance— its unthoughtness— which sacrifice expels freely into the world.²² The part expelled has no further debt to being’s defined form: for Bataille, it might be lava, female-ejaculation,

²² For more on inversion/extraversion of sacrificial ridding of impurity see Hubert and Mauss, who note that, waters used to clean the sacrificial victim are then drunk by the victim “at each orifice.” *Sacrifice: Its Nature and Functions*, 41

or urine, here it is vomited food, a bull, an eyeball, a gall (a growth on the outside of a tree) or an *aissaouah* (a Moroccan Sufi mystic): their undefinedness is their externality as unthought forms of being. All are being as ontically-becoming-external, the move outside an embodied sense of one's guilty otherness, or criminality, to a different initialisation of being; the wholly-other.

Sacrifice considered in its essential phase would only be the rejection of what had been appropriated by a person or by a group. Because everything that is rejected from the human cycle is altered in an altogether troubling way, the sacred things that intervene at the end of the operation—the victim struck down in a pool of blood, the severed ear, the torn-out eye—do not appreciably differ from vomited food. Repugnance is only one of the forms of stupor caused by a horrifying eruption, by the disgorging of a force that threatens to consume.

The one who sacrifices is free—free to indulge in a similar disgorging, free, continuously identifying with the victim, to vomit his own being just as he has vomited a piece of himself or a bull, in other words free to throw himself suddenly outside of himself, like a gall or an *aissaouah*.²³

Becoming 'wholly other' is Bataille's leitmotif for expiation's being-outside-of-itself. It is the vomiting out of a 'piece of yourself' that is also a vomiting out of an ontic entirety of self. Because of vomiting, the part is no longer attached to its source, the ontic object has been disgorged into an impossible exteriority. It is, as Bataille says 'free'. This means free in all possible forms and dimensions of existence; the vomited part is freely outside and can start again as exhibited difference, a different form of existence: free to be a severed ear or a god.

Bataille makes a repeated use of the phrase '*tout autre*' throughout his work which is a translation of Rudolf Otto's German phrase '*das ganz Anderes*'. This set phrase has been variously translated into English and its original reference to Otto's specific meaning and its central application to Bataille's thought has consequently been lost or diluted.²⁴ The meaning that Bataille retains by its repetition is one that relates to the holy/wholly aspect of 'othering', where that which is not internal to one's perception is not simply an 'out there' or an alien but has an altered physical and noumenal dimension: it is in this world but no longer of this world; it is sacred, or Godly. The 'other' is a guilty body, but the 'wholly other' is a bodily excretion, spectre or a corpse: the technology of its

²³ *Visions*, 70

²⁴ Jonathon David York (2003) "Flesh and Consciousness: Georges Bataille and the Dionysian" *Journal for Cultural and Religious Theory* 4.3 (August 2003) 53 For original source see Rudolf Otto (1958 [1917]) *The Idea of the Holy*, translated by John W. Harvey (London: Oxford University Press), 25-50.

designation as wholly other is completely based on this energetic *ex corpore*. With the ‘wholly other’ comes an obligation to understand that something quite different from systematic ontogenesis is underway: the central importance of this expulsion is ontological emergence in itself: “it is necessary to become wholly other or cease to be.”²⁵

The very trajectory of expiated matter describes a sensory surface through its dynamic arc where meaning is momentary and meaning’s interpretation is sensually contingent, rather than absolute. All matter that is expelled crosses this surface, establishes it. The surface is surplus, is waste, is filth, and is holy. The intersection with Rudolf Otto’s phrasing emphasises Caillois’ sacred impurity, that matter has no general meaning but is also God. Bataille qualifies this,

The identical nature, from the psychological point of view, of God and excrement should not shock the intellect of anyone familiar with the problems posed by the history of religions. The cadaver is not much more repugnant than shit, and the specter that projects its horror is sacred even in the eyes of modern theologians.²⁶

God and excrement form between them an ontic tension across the surface which is not immediately apparent in the choice here of the word ‘identical’. Where the repulsion of the repugnancy is pathological rather than intellectual, its excretion is, in a sense, noisy: it is cacophonous. Resonant channels of expulsion form the arcs of escape routes from ‘science’ as ‘intolerance toward that which appears in it as crime.’²⁷ Its noisiness is an intolerance of definition, and noise increases as consciousness’ definition recedes. Bataille states that this increase is of:

a spectral content [which] only truly exists as such from the moment when the milieu that contains it defines itself through its intolerance toward that which appears in it as a crime. The strongest repulsion by science that can be represented is necessary for the characterization of the excluded part. Such a characterization must be compared to the affective charge of an obscene element whose obscenity derives only from the prohibition leveled against it.²⁸

²⁵“*Secrètement ou non, il est nécessaire de devenir tout autres ou de cesser d’être.*” OC I, 443 My translation.

²⁶ *Visions*, 102fn1

²⁷ The channelling of the inchoate aligns with the erotic flow developed in previous chapters. This is not original to Bataille: Rudolf Otto already makes the connection between the erotic and the holy in his earlier text: “Another way the ‘erotic’ is analogous to the ‘holy’ is in the main having no means of linguistic expression...” Rudolf Otto *The Idea of the Holy*, 46-47

²⁸ “The Pineal Eye” *Visions*, 81

Expiation is a moving outside of the obscene spherical shape of the burst, discussed in Chapter Two. But this is being moving outside itself, as a spectral or repulsive form which does not really differ from its original defined body. This being's movement can be gauged by the 'unity' of excreted elements. Unity is what inaugurates a new sensual hermeneutics of being, and corresponds to the equivalence proposed by atheology's base materialism. It is possible that Bataille's expiation, or inspiration for it, is derived from Aeschylus' *Oresteia* trilogy. Written in 500 BCE, in the final play the protagonist Orestes is pursued by a trio of goddesses called the Furies. These beings originated from drops of blood splattered on the earth.²⁹ There can be an inference drawn from Bataille's titular *Oresteia*, written in 1945, that Bataille is making an oblique connection to deities that are auto-generative from waste blood products; or in the same breath, to shit-deities that have figured themselves.³⁰ The droplets of waste/deity are important as markers for the new acephalic consciousness: as will presently be shown, the resonant channel of noise is marked by these splatters as moments of unchannelling, where the prophylactic of temporal difference is dissolved and alteration occurs as immersive contact with the everywhere of a surface expressed as a drop of blood/sound as its intense point.

Yet the emergence of the furies from the scattering of drops of blood illustrates the potential for alteration across a hermeneutical surface that coheres through its interpretative tension. The insignificance of being's scattered waste is the inauguration of goddesses. Tension creates a new modality for interpreting the 'is': where what is waste is also divine; where what the body must be rid of because it defines the crime of its humanity, is now a pantheon of terrible deities. The 'wholly other' is expiation as alteration where the *is* is altered, where the *is* becomes *dimensionally* other in the disaggregation between being as an initiation of encounter, and the point of initiation itself.

²⁹ The description of blood/deity emergence of the furies (also known as Erinyes) is taken from Hesiod's *Theogony*, where Kronos, "who loathed his lusty father", having been hidden in a cavern of the Earth by a father who similarly loathed his children, ambushes Zeus, with a sickle, cutting off his genitals. "All of blood that flew off were received by the Earth, and as the years went round she bore the powerful Erinyes..." Hesiod (1988 [498 BCE]) *Theogony: Works and Days*, trans. M.L. West (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press), lines 161-191, 8

³⁰ See also the Hindu asura (demon) Raktabīja, who reproduces himself when drops of his blood are spilled on the ground, usually in a battle with the goddess Kali. <https://hinduaesthetic.medium.com/the-slaying-of-raktabīja-60e936763007>

Bataille's spectre, or cadaver is *wholly* other because it enters the movement of being at an altered other point of the flow of being; because totality is interpretive and not stipulatory, it diffuses itself across the surface. Experience of being re-initiates from a dissimilar point of reference, or dissimilar points of reference (being becomes wholly multiple).³¹ 'Ridding oneself' of the accursed share of being is suggestive of a consciousness alteration that transitions the point of initiation of being into, or onto, a different part, juncture or plane of being.³² Rather than the subjective ontic encounter, the becoming 'wholly other' installs different marks of initialisation, but this installation is not the moment of becoming, it is only *after* the installation, *after* the move to different parts of the flow, that existence-as-difference is initiated. Being disgorged by being does this because it is politically and materially free, (existence re-starts as an aissauuah, or a puma or duck; existence initiates as a ghost; an 'other' existence inaugurates itself as menstrual flow or as a god).

Although an encounter starts with movement, here the encounter itself is rendered as determinate and plural possibility, (like a menu of encounter). Becoming 'wholly other' is a bifurcation in the flow. It engenders not an alternate form *in* being but an alternative flow *of* being.³³ This mode of altered-being addresses Bataille's fundamental aporia (of the discontinuous encounter) by a potential inauguration of multiple ontic experiences, which come about through these wholly-other initiation points within continuity: wholly alternate realities because being is othered from itself.

³¹ Shane Weller has argued that decomposition is an 'undoing of difference' in Bataille's work, a return to continuity where 'to decompose is to live too.' Shane Weller (2012) "Notes on Decomposition: Georges Bataille and the Language of Necrophilia", *Modernist Eroticisms*, 25. See also "Le silence de Molloy" in *OC v. XII*, 85-94

³² This occurs at the moment corresponding to compenetrative fusion: "What fusion brings into me is another existence (it brings this other into me as mine but at the same time as other); and insofar as it's a transition (the contrary of a state) and in order to be actually produced, fusion requires heterogeneity." And : "Fusion introduces *another* existence in me (it introduces this *other* in me as *mine*, but at the same time as *other*): insofar as it is passage (the opposite of a state), fusion demands heterogeneity in order to produce itself." *Guilty* Kendall translation, 129

³³ And alteration doesn't close itself in completion, but is itself continuous: "But the problem posed at the moment of the convergence of currents that can never converge finds its true position only in solitude, sovereignty, the disposition of infinite energy, therefore the instant realized and negation accomplished from the *condition*. (Return to the point of departure. Definition of atheology)." *The Unfinished System of Nonknowledge*, 166

ii. Assembling a hermeneutical surface for an outside of thought

This second section of the chapter's first part examines the notion of interpretation as a material of liberation within thought and being by taking up hermeneutics within the idea of excretion/expiation as noise. Noise surrounds; it is immersive. Noise is heterogeneous and can be information without meaning. Individuated sounds are intensities within the immersive field; intensities in experience can be contextualised as sonic objects.³⁴ The surrounded-ness becomes both an immediate contact surface and a depth of field of contingency itself, thereby re-stating the tension between waste and deity as if it were a sensory, immanent 2- and 3- and 4-dimensional mode of psychic material-infinite alteration. Interpretation becomes a technical approach to presencing that operates across the open field of possible being. This works in a way that re-directs the tension of a surface that is created by the expiatory dynamic as a power source that, rather than hegemonic, in expiation turns to something closer to an erotic masochist sensorial pleasure transportation. Paul Hegarty has made an explicit association between noise and exactly this dynamic and explains it as follows:

This is not us perceiving and understanding it, it is the supplanting of perceptual control - noise parallels masochistic writing in that it is our senses in the plural that are addressed, and most of all the proper processing organ is displaced - the eye for reading is supplanted by erotic response; the processing ear, how we understand sound, is disturbed and becomes the means to the end of a sensory experience that is more hearing than listening.³⁵

The expiatory dynamic of 'ridding' has an apparent logic of reducing proximity.³⁶ This is not true. Expiation increases proximity to the noumenal. When defined being rids itself of its waste, the move condenses the distance between being's phenomenon and being noumenal. Shit becomes identical to God. The apperception of being moving away from its own definition is in reality being

³⁴ This is developed as a method of critical engagement with heterogeneous elements in line with that established by Stephen Kennedy (2015) *Chaos Media: A Sonic Economy of Digital Space* (London: Bloomsbury Academic), especially Chapter Five [Aesthetics]- Echostate.

³⁵ Paul Hegarty (2013) "Brace and Embrace: Masochism in Noise Performance" in, Marie Thompson and Ian Biddle (eds.) (2013) *Sound, Music, Affect* (New York and London: Bloomsbury), 133-146, 139

³⁶ See Joseph Libertson (1982) *Proximity: Levinas, Blanchot, Bataille and Communication* (The Hague, Boston and London: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers) especially the chapter 'Same and Other' 297-343

contracting to a point of intense difference, where intensity has a contingent value.³⁷ The simultaneous motion between expiation as expanded space and expiation as intensity is the same relation as the intense sound experienced by the body as an interruption of silence: the reality is that the sound interrupts its own immersive totality of silence.

The spillage of a drop of blood can share identity with the goddess because intensity and field are identical. This fusion is provoked by the alteration of political power from a stipulative mode, which restricts the is, as a ligature of form, and a ‘masochistic’ mode which, although still dynamic (and still in the same direction vector) now creates a continuous ecstatic transportive surface. Although this surface is not original (its violent transportive function was noted by St. Teresa de Avila) Hegarty’s astute location of its masochistic and auricular sensibility means that it can be developed as a ‘meditative’ practice by analytical attention to its sonorous materiality. Hearing Bataille is informative at this point, because he describes this process in relation to Hindu practice:

Hindus have other means, which have in my eyes only one value, to show that poor means (the poorest) have alone the property of effecting rupture (rich means have too much meaning, come between us and the unknown, like objects sought for themselves). Intensity alone matters.

Now-

Barely have we directed our attention towards an inner presence: what was concealed up to then takes on the fullness not of a storm-it is a question of slow movements-but of an invading flood. Now sensibility is exalted: it suffices that we detach it from the neutral objects to which we usually attach it.

A sensibility having become, by detachment of what attains the senses, so inner that all returns from the outside, a fall of a needle, a cracking, have an immense and distant resonance . . . The Hindus have noticed this peculiarity. I imagine that it is as in vision, which is rendered sharp in darkness by the dilation of a pupil. Here darkness is not the absence of light (or of sound) but absorption into the outside. In simple night, our attention is given entirely to the world of objects by way of words, which still persist. True silence takes place in the absence of words: that a pin should then drop: at the stroke of a hammer, I jump involuntarily . . . In this silence made of the inside, it is no longer an organ, it is entire sensibility, it is the heart which has dilated.³⁸

In this passage Bataille describes a moment of attunement and unchannelling in terms of its relation between the hearing of the intensely sensible and the interoceptive moment of the heart’s dilation. The two are not distinct: Bataille (The Hindu) is not listening for the pin to drop, or the hammer to stroke, but the pin-drop’s hearing occurs involuntarily, and it is this *actus reus*, where the

³⁷ For a full development of aesthetic contingency, see Martha Buskirk (2005) *The Contingent Object of Contemporary Art* (Cambridge, MA.: MIT Press)

³⁸ *Inner Experience*, 17

attention dilates and the sensual is paramount, where hearing occurs acephalically, away from knowing. It is this moment of shock which makes the material of the sound acephalic, makes it aesthetically materialise in the sensual moment. It is attunement to a silence which is not different from the unchannelling of the noise: intensity alone matters in the impoverishment of meaning.

It is this point of silence/noise that embodies continuity. Auricular embodiment is an immanent rush as the sonic context changes between field and point, and at the same time does not change at all. Rushing is alteration, a raw contingent differencing: alteration is not becoming 'wholly other' but is the ending of the mediatized condition and its replacement by the rushing of alteration's differential. This means the physical moment of death and volcanos rushing into being as vaginal ejaculation occurs.³⁹ Bataille/the meditant's being is the chthonic sky and the entire plane of intensity. Ejaculation occurs as a vomiting out of menstrual blood, faeces, cries, and God. Hegarty has called this sound a 'cataract' that is the sound of the point of the body's somatic failure.⁴⁰

What this sound offers thought is a materiality of auricular lubricity that, in its intensity, transposes itself throughout both notions of form and content. Hegarty has noted that "noise is the specific content of the form of bodily activity", and so noise here provides a point of empirical contact between the embodied condition and the infinitely continuous.⁴¹ The work of lesbian s & m photographer and performance artist Tessa Boffin encapsulates precisely this noise in her work.⁴² Beginning with *Angelic Rebels: Lesbians and Safer Sex* (1989) Boffin ritualises the mediatized state between the body and the angelic (noumenal) by arranging tableaux of human-angel lesbian sexual encounter that include and divide the bodies by the additional inclusion of prophylactic devices, such as dental dams for oral sex and latex gloves for fisting.⁴³ These props, as well as having a

³⁹ For Bataille's description of this: "I am going to say how I attained so intense an ecstasy" see *Guilty*, 28

⁴⁰ Paul Hegarty "Violent silence: Noise and Bataille's "Method of Meditation"" in, Jeremy Biles and Kent L. Brintnall (eds.) (2015) *Negative Ecstasies: Georges Bataille and the Study of Religion*, 98-105, 105

⁴¹ Hegarty "Brace and Embrace," 139

⁴² A key text here is Sue Golding "Pariah Bodies" in, Elizabeth Grosz and Elspeth Probyn (eds.) *Sexy Bodies: The Strange Carnalities of Feminism* (London, Routledge, 1996), (Chapter 9), 172-180

⁴³ Reproduced in: Tessa Boffin and Sunil Gupta (1990) *Ecstatic Anti-Bodies: Resisting the AIDS Mythology*. London: Rivers Oram.

conventional meaning for sexual health, organize the image of the encounter via its mediatization. However, in a performance with her lover Nerina Ferguson, “Crucifixion Cabaret,” (1992, Purgatory Nightclub, London) the latex gloves are dispensed with.⁴⁴ Fisting without a prophylactic device permits an embodied encounter with the angelic noumenal. The proximity to Bataille’s expiation is underlined by the ridding of the body of menstrual blood, in this case, visibly smeared over Boffin’s withdrawn fist.

The moment of condensation between Boffin’s image of 1989 and her performance in 1992 is the precise same attunement/ unchannelling of the embodied condition to the hearing of the sound of the pin drop, a burst of intensity that might last three years, or be instant, either way it does not matter (because it is, anyway, atemporal) except in the sense that its materiality is the noise of the condition of embodied/noumenal contact as attunement or unchannelling.

Sensory experience is effectively becoming headless, or acephalic, and this happens in the auricular environment that Bataille imagines for the Hindu in that it is precisely that one does not engage cognitively with the sound of the pin dropping. Because of this the acephalic body is not only sensorily responsive to the sound, but is not in a mediated relationship with the sound at all. The identity of God and shit, rather than being some feeble attempt at a transgressive statement, is the fulcrum of the mediative structure at the point of identity between embodied phenomenon and the noumenal condition, and this identity sounds like a cataract. Being and materiality are acephalically mutualised in noise.⁴⁵ In turn this takes Boffin’s fisting into a different realm, as the embodied lesbian and the angel are not simply proximate or unprophylacticised, but are blood/Fury mutualised in noise.

These inassimilable elements come to presence in the outside of attention; they are its waste products. An unchannelling of consciousness touches, or senses, other parts of the surface, it is a transport across ‘theres.’ Transitions toward an unreal being noumenal of ‘nothingness, infinity and the absolute’ – Bataille’s waste products of thought, rather than of attention – are transitions in

⁴⁴ For details of this performance, cf.: <https://hyperallergic.com/505433/how-tessa-boffin-one-of-the-leading-lesbian-artists-of-the-aids-crisis-vanished-from-history/>

⁴⁵ For a summation of the metaphysical problems this overcomes, see chapter, “Spectral Metaphysics: Errant Bodies and Bodies in Error” where Judovitz describes the embodied problem in its Cartesian manifestation. Dalia Judovitz (2001) *The Culture of the Body: Genealogies of Modernity* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press), 83-107

nonconscious states that negotiate different and nonrecursive ‘theres.’ Alteration, which, as will presently be shown, occurs as nonconscious contact with the hermeneutical surface, changes being by altering the principle of contact itself. The section will explain this under the rubric of ‘ubiety’ as a development of the idea of mode of contact with the ‘there.’ This mutuality is intense hearing as a non-cognitive object: but its intensity is contingent. Its momentary burst form is also experienced as the wider field of its resonance. The channels of auricular lubricity, as will presently be shown, create and striate this field that is populated by the auditory intensities but movement through the field is always immanently available through transport between intensities. The pin drop shock experienced by Bataille’s Hindu can be the drop of blood that regenerates as a lesbian fisting moment through this mechanism of attention’s waste product; and this is becoming wholly other.

The general surface of noise has a general heterogeneous purpose; it resembles the noise described by Jacques Attali, where noise is total information and has no meaning. The argument developed above shows how difference as a plastic material operates in a non-logical (non-cognitive) mode. It will now follow the shape of difference through the information/meaning register in order to demonstrate how unchannelling operates. Attali suggests a model for noise where “difference [is] artificially created in the multiplication of semi-identical objects,” explaining that this model makes audible “*an anxiety-ridden quest for lost difference, following a logic from which difference is banished*” [Italics in original].⁴⁶ But instead of an artificial quest, the general immersivity of noise *precedes* the creation of difference, which, as Didier Anzieu notes below, emerges through it as a formulation of self. Prior to self, there is noise as an undifferentiated field. Anzieu describes the process of formation of difference as a self, forming from a ‘sound bath’. He says that in foetal existence:

(The illusion of a space where no difference exists between the Self and the environment and where the Self can draw strength from the stimulation and calm of the environment to which it is joined). The psychical sound space – if we can, by resorting to metaphor, give it a visible experience – is shaped like a cavern. It is a hollow space like the breast or the Bucco-pharyngeal cavity, a sheltered, but not hermetically sealed, space. It is a volume within which

⁴⁶ Jacques Attali (1985) *Noise: The Political Economy of Music* Translated by Brian Massumi (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press), 5

there are rumblings, echoes and resonances. It is no accident that the concept of acoustical resonance has provided scientists with a model of physical resonance in general, and given group psychologists and psychoanalysts a model for unconscious communications between persons.⁴⁷

Anzieu shows a way that 'being-self' forms from this bath as a cry that is projected through immersivity and yet, as sound, is of the immersive. Bataille understand precisely the same developmental exchange:

And no doubt it is a question of an arbitrary projection of oneself, but what appears in this way is the profound objectivity of existence, from the moment that the latter is no longer a little entity turned in on itself, but a wave of life losing itself. The vaporous flow of inner movements is in this case the magnifying glass as well as the light. But in the flow, there was nothing yet crying out, whereas starting from the projected "point", existence gives way in a cry.⁴⁸

Bataille's intercession reminds the argument that a sonic 'self' forms around a contextual rim that has already been developed in an embodied context in Chapter three of the thesis, by vaginal formulation and chthonic sky extraversion. Crying's noise comes out of the foetus as an already religious force towards alteration, because its intensity and excitement form its envelope as a grain or striation on a plane whose affective dimensions are between non-logical non-difference (sound-bath immersivity) and non-logical difference (excitation and the value of intensity).⁴⁹

The next section will show how this grain, texture, patination operates; how channelling/unchannelling develops a different kind of nonconscious surface towards that of alteration/communication in— after Anzieu— a sheltered but not hermetically sealed dimension. The hermeneutic surface develops as a plane of intensity in two ways: firstly, the erotic impact of vocality and audition on the grain of the surface; secondly, how attunement to the grain causes nonconscious alteration to occur. What this means in terms of realising a 'theory of expiation', or becoming aware of Bataille's thought, is a revaluation of its aesthetics away from reason or perceptive acuity and towards a nonconscious unchanneled sensual surface of intensity. Not theory, and not theory's

⁴⁷ Didier Anzieu (1989) *The Skin Ego: A Psychoanalytic Approach to Self*, trans. Chris Turner (New Haven and London: Yale University Press), especially chapter 11 'The Sound Envelope', 157-173, 170-71

⁴⁸ *Inner Experience*, 118-19

⁴⁹ "Religious forces are characterised by their intensity" Hubert and Mauss *Sacrifice*, 60

externality, but theory's inadmissibility.⁵⁰ The surface permits an expression of, or attunement within, an unfixed or floating correlation, as inadmissible noise: for the active hearer (because it is not possible to listen without consciousness) this sound is a stochastic attunement, where noise suggests from its immersive totality a sensory exposure to a stochastic deep-bath of nonmeaning, from whose resonances any concentration by the sensate on a granular element of noise may have total meaning or none.⁵¹ The excretory/expiatory is a movement of human-defining material (and this includes thought, as its consciousness of self, as well as the excitation of preconscious crying) to an outside of thought. Menstrual blood, faeces, crying, are being's inassimilable elements as well as being-as-it-is defined, and by their movement outside it becomes possible to move being into being's outside, by moving thought and consciousness outside its embodied systematicity.

Part Two: Hearing Non-logical Difference

i. A Sadean acousmatic surface: valueless value

This part develops the hermeneutic as a plane of intensity formed by noise and 'auricular lubricity,' a surface whose thickness, or grain, is calibrated by its singularities: variations in intensity

⁵⁰ Amber Jamilla Musser has described this process in terms of sensation within masochist practice, says that feeling of the power dynamic is itself a "participation in this economy of aesthetics." Cf. Amber Jamilla Musser (2014) *Sensational Flesh: Race, Power and Masochism*, especially chapter 3 "Objectification, Complicity and Coldness: The Story of O's Narratives of Femininity and Precarity", 58-87, 63.

⁵¹ Stochastic attunement refers here to the mathematical development of stochastics, a randomising feature that leads randomness itself to be somehow compelling. It has a history in sound that can be dated to Iannis Xenakis' development in the 1950's of 'stochastic music' where he asked that "The listener must be gripped. . .and-whether he likes it or not- drawn into the flight path of the sounds, without a special training being necessary. The sensual shock must be just as forceful as when one hears a clap of thunder or looks into a bottomless abyss." Xenakis is quoted in Alex Ross (2008) *The Rest is Noise: Listening to the Twentieth Century* (London: Fourth Estate), 397. See also, Attali, *Noise* "The musical message has no meaning, even if one artificially assigns a (necessarily rudimentary) signification to certain sounds, a move that is almost always associated with a hierarchical discourse.", 25 "Music, then, constitutes communication with this primordial, threatening noise- *prayer*. " 27. "...Despite the death it contains, noise carries order within itself; it carries new information. This may seem strange. But noise does in fact create a meaning: first because the interruption of a message signifies censorship and rarity; and second, because the very absence of meaning in pure noise or in the meaningless repetition of a message, by unchannelling auditory sensations, frees the listener's imagination. The absence of meaning is in this case the presence of all meanings, absolute ambiguity, a construction outside meaning." 33.

marked by alterations in valueless values. Sound intensity emerges acousmatically, where emergence is sonically contingent and acephalic.⁵² It is now the hermeneutical surface that rids itself of its stochastic cries: these mark its surface by way of vocal enumeration, a technique of erotic evocation-as-counting that leads Bataille, via Sade, to a set of differencing points, where aesthetics augments the points' own contingency as consciousness recedes, becoming potential differences for shamanic ontic alteration, as will be shown in the next and final part of the chapter. This part's first section will develop the plane, in its 'wholly' other side, as a Sadean acousmatic surface. Variations of intensity fluctuate in the value of their relative contingency in the plane's acoustic features, in the same way that Boffin's angelic fisting causes erotic contact with the unreal of the angel. The part's second section discusses how techniques for attunement to these features are also techniques for zoomorphic alteration (and, then, onwards to unlimited alteration). This compares an example of vocal intensity in Sade with Bataille's own Sadean encounter with enumeration (introduced as teratology in Chapter Two). Comparison of Sadean and Bataillean enumeration suggests a formal technique for incorporating the integer as a dissolving point of acoustic auditory unchannelling which encourages alteration, as a contact between nonconsciousness and ubiety.⁵³ Sade and Bataille's values are meaningless numbers they have no intrinsic value, except to demonstrate alteration: they are valueless values. Each integer is a point of contact with a surface that represents only difference between its relative ubiety with another point of a surface, as well as its internal register of difference, where engagement itself with the surface increases in value as consciousness dissolves. The valueless value is a dissolving point of contact which will be theorized through the work of Pierre Schaeffer; the sound object, and its contingency within a sound field is re-proposed as a form of this point of contact, and its acousmatic materiality (split between its aesthetic material consideration and its original source) is identified as an expiatory acephalia. This oblique approach to Schaeffer offers a

⁵² A key text here is, Konstantin Raudive (1971) *Breakthrough: An Amazing Experiment in Electronic Communication with the Dead* trans. Nadia Fowler ed. Joyce Morton (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe). The author assembles experimental conditions where, by taping empty rooms, voices of the dead emerge from the noise of the tape/room in playback.

⁵³ The dissolving point integer follows a masochist logic that liberates at the same time that its order is imposed, in the same way as the system of atheology and the cry. "Once again this time, recalling *what is there*, I must have started sobbing." *Guilty*, 28

concrete material basis for returning to Bataille's work, where texts such as the obelisk, and various anomaly figures, such as the tiger-in-space and the lion-in-water, as well as the rather better known *acéphale*, now yield a revelation of expiatory artefacts in terms of their forms of contact with the plane of intensity. This adds attunement, contingency or unchannelling to the hermeneutical surface of thought's outside, and these sonic dissolving points are precursory relics of alteration of the person.

"The Use Value of D.A.F. de Sade" is written as a letter to a crowd-to-come.⁵⁴ In the letter, Bataille develops the idea of heterology to explain within profane, or 'scientific' parameters, that which addresses a wider sense of political ontology, in a list that he describes as presenting 'Sadean values.' What follows is a development of the counting aspect of Bataille's list of values and how it compares to Sade's own strategy of enumeration. The two approaches illustrate how excretion and erotic intensity can form a grain of a sonic surface. The strategy of enumeration, rather than relating the list to a supply of information for the purpose of homogeneous organisation, is used to stimulate difference by drawing out points of intensity in a way that makes counting and crying (as will be shown) a strategic sonic cartography for mattering and alteration. Bataille's enumeration of Sadean values is read comparatively with a passage Bataille selects from Sade's *120 Days of Sodom* chosen to profile Sade's auditory lubricity.⁵⁵ This comparison allows excretion to be followed more obviously in the body ridding itself of its voice, or its words. Sade's characters, who are actresses, heighten the lubricity of the libertines' orgy by voicing out loud, crying out and using their vocalisation as a strategy for the erotic alteration of the libertines. The grain of the actresses' voices is the surface of erotic transport: it does not have meaning or reason as its purpose, but instead the voice is excreted from the actresses' throats and transverses the orgy space. The stimulatory effect maps out the space of the orgy as a plane of intensity, and the difference in intensity, its variance in its value, is Sade's imposition of integers along channels of vocal enunciation. By reading Bataille's Sade alongside the vocality of the original it becomes possible to understand enumeration as creating a surface of plane of sensory contact with the outside of thought where the integer becomes a locatory feature of a sonic

⁵⁴ "The Use Value of D.A.F. de Sade" *Visions of Excess*, 91-102

⁵⁵ "Sade" in, *Literature and Evil*, 104

surface, a timbre, which, as it becomes more complex and valueless becomes more aesthetically shamanic.⁵⁶ Stimulation happens because of an indelible association between sound, voice, guilt and eroticism: Bataille says that this raises the general level of lubricity, citing Sade when he says that, “true libertines believe that sensations communicated through the auricular organs are most acute.”⁵⁷

Bataille’s privileging of intensity raises a question of its technique. By making a connection between expiation and dramatization by the actresses it becomes possible to assemble a technical understanding of how dramatization’s role in expiatory practice can induce alteration. Hegarty notes that, “Bataille’s access to inner experience will be a mediated one, where material, whether physical, sensual, or philosophical, will be needed,” and adds “to get to the ecstatic realm of the sacred requires ‘dramatization,’ an acknowledgment that the thinking moral self cannot just be switched off but needs lowering, perversion, undoing.”⁵⁸

Resituating expiation as an extra-systemic diffusion allows the argument developing here to return to the exchange of form for system in a more assured way. The diffusion of expiatory forms is a dramatic dynamic, and this contrasts with the precise aperture of exchange between the erotic/death object and method, as limit-forms of thing and of system. Authority must expiate itself, and the authority of the limited form is completed only by subsequent dramatization. Only when, to borrow Patrick Ffrench’s phrase, “the drama of inner experience takes place after the completion of the system” can systematic form be said to have taken place with any defined certitude.⁵⁹ Dramatization indicates systematic and embodied completion and completion expiates itself dramatically. Because

⁵⁶ For more on the term ‘valueless value’ especially in a shamanic context see Michael Cepek (2019) “Valueless Value: The question of production in Cofán shamanism” in *Hau: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 9 (2) 320-333

⁵⁷ Donatien Alphonse François de Sade (2016 [1785, 1904]) *The 120 Days of Sodom, or, The School of Libertinage* trans. Will McMorrin and Thomas Wynn (London: Penguin Books), 28

⁵⁸ Paul Hegarty (2015) “Violent silence: Noise and Bataille’s “Method of Meditation”” in, Jeremy Biles and Kent L. Brintnall (eds.) (2015) *Negative Ecstasies: Georges Bataille and the Study of Religion*, 98

⁵⁹ Ffrench, *After Bataille*, 115. This poses drama as a correlate to authority, so that form and bodily form are indissociable yet separate from drama, which suggests that drama might be a good candidate for identifying expiation. Bataille says here: “Now what is the key to dramatization: it is authority, such that one can say, if one manages to grasp the drama, that one is dealing with authority-and reciprocally that if one is lacking authority, if nothing has a particular value, no drama is possible // in the same way if an authority, a value exists, there is necessarily drama // for that amounts to saying: one can only take it totally seriously// further on: but authority is always something common, commonly felt, or is not. One must seek its authenticity. One can only seek it in common.” *Inner Experience*, 180

knowledge and definition have both succumbed to sacrifice, the extra-systematic drama of expiation is the way the external querant knows that internal coherence is assembled, or human sentience takes place. And whereas the drama to which ffrench refers is the motion of material dehiscence, diffusion and expulsion are indicative of extra-systematic and extra-sentient action.

Auricular lubricity is the dramatization of the sonorous in the vocal expulsions of four actresses.⁶⁰ Sade's actresses confirm Hegarty's claim that "The connection between eroticism and noise is not metaphorical."⁶¹ Yet what Sade's dramatization elucidates is how, in the noise of the orgy, the intensity of the auricular lubricity or unchannelling/angelic fisting can be simply enumerated, and, indeed, for Sade, this enumeration inaugurates the points of intensity within a grid arrangement that can be associated with the space of expiation:

The first woman, for example, would include in the story of her life the 150 simplest passions and the least refined or the most ordinary excesses; the second, within the same constraints, an equal number of more peculiar passions involving one or more men with several women; the third would likewise include in her story 150 of the most criminal manias— and the most outrageous to law, nature and religion; and since all these excesses lead to murder, and murders committed through libertinage vary infinitely (and with every different torment devised by the libertine's inflamed imagination), so the fourth was to combine the events of her life with the detailed account of 150 of these different tortures.⁶²

The actresses' voices are channels of material broadcast, each channel is calibrated by 150 intensities, giving 600 locations in total; these are intensities of auricular lubricity within a field (a noise-orgy immersive sound-bath) of general auricular lubricity. Sade develops a grid where channel one is actress voice one: (animal-continuity) 'ordinary' sexual activity; channel two is (actress voice two): perversion (or human-animal 'peculiar' excessive eroticism) channel three is the move between criminality and infinite libertinage and channel four is the recuperation of the infinite into the experience phenomenon.⁶³

⁶⁰ "The dramatization will require others, or, at least, something which is other to yourself." Hegarty "Violent Silence", 98

⁶¹ Hegarty (2013), "Brace and Embrace: Masochism in Noise Performance" in *Sound, Music, Affect*, 140

⁶² Sade *120 Days*, 28-29

⁶³ Channel 4 is where Bataille departs from the possibility of language. Language, and especially narrative, has a propensity to recuperate sound into meaning. For Bataille this would contravene Blanchot's caution against the soteriological in 'Spiritual' life. Instead of this fourth channel Bataille has nothing, perhaps a nothing (that) is outside the text. What Bataille does develop with enumeration is something of the hidden of meaning that is sound and/or language's glossolalic element, where glossolalia is a broadcast of infinite silence and is a perpetual discourse

Bataille's enumeration of 'Sadean values' is a proto-typical attempt at a similar organisation. A theory of expiation modifies this slightly, as follows. Bataille's channel one and two are the same as Sade's, the simplest passions are the animal body-sexual continuity that Bataille sees underlying being as its continuous generative principle; channel two is Bataille's focus on sexual perversion, that is, eroticism that is outside reproductive function. This channel segregates Bataille's sacred logical separation from an ordinary productive and subordinate function in channel one. Bataille's grid then splits Sade's channel three between two discrete channels: Bataille's channel three retains the criminal other, this is partially the same as the Sadean third channel but does not contain the infinite. Bataille's third channel is systematicity in the criminal other's embodiment; Bataille's fourth channel, however, is the other part of Sade's third, that part that corresponds to the infinite variation of libertinage. However, Sade's fourth channel, which is the accounting within experience of the infinite does not exist for Bataille, or, if it does, is empty and is the whole of his practice of his writing as recuperation or worse, salvation. Instead, a theory of expiation argues that the move of expiation occurs between Bataille's 3rd and 4th channel, and this move replaces Sadean recuperation, a replacement that is announced in Blanchot's 'rules for a spiritual life', that "can have its principle and its end in the absence of salvation."⁶⁴ This is the move between the criminal other body and the wholly other, a sliding toward an infinite noumenal body that is outside of thought, a move evidenced in the previous passage discussing Tessa Boffin's practice. The move of expiation, or becoming wholly other, occurs therefore by 'unchannelling'. This is a technique that does not involve a 'changing lanes' move, but a more radical attunement to the separate domains of the calibrated enumerations: movement that is free within the circumscribed set of enumerated domains, in other

of nonmeaning. Derrida says of speech: "We must find a speech which maintains silence. Necessity of the impossible: to say in language—the language of servility— that which is not servile." 332. Bataille's silent channel 4 is where Bataille silences the textual body. He does this so that it broadcasts nonmeaning. Derrida says in saying nonmeaning, "it slides and it erases itself, does not maintain itself, not as silence, but as speech. This sliding simultaneously betrays discourse and nondiscourse." Anticipating the alteration that is enabled by the enumerative grid, Derrida develops Bataille by saying: "We must find. "Bataille explains to us, in choosing "*silence*" as "an example of a sliding word," "words" and "objects" which "make us slide." Toward what? Toward other words, other objects, of course, which announce sovereignty." Derrida, "From Restricted to General Economy" in, *Writing and Difference*, 332

⁶⁴ Blanchot's rules for a spiritual life. *Inner Experience*, 104; Note however, by contrast, that Bataille himself makes an association between expiation and salvation in extreme states of being. Cf. "Preface" to *On Nietzsche*, xxxiii

words, radical alteration slides between 22,500 possible correspondences, there being that number of integers in the Sadean grid/surface.

Attunement here is something similar to that which Johnny Golding has called the ‘task of art’. This is where consciousness does not dissolve to nothingness, but dissolves to different intensities, or, as Golding would term it, to different singularities. The functioning of non-binary technology is, a way of enumerating the integer as a: “‘1’ that marks out plurality as the multiple listening-gathering gestures which produce in their attunement, the ‘here’, right ‘now.’”⁶⁵ For Sade, these four channels for voice and their 150 integers means 150 points of contact with the singular plurality and the space of orgy has a finite yet plural cartography. At any one point the libertine can orient themselves in terms of the acoustic intensity of its surface. Rather than enabled by visual reconnoitering, this orientation is made possible by the relative intensity of the erotic and auricular lubricity of enumerated domains, precisely the task of art, and of alteration’s conjoined possibility. What this suggests to a ‘theory of expiation’ is that counting is a Sadean/Bataille technique of orientation for radical alteration of the person, and, as much as the libertine, in the orgy, the shamanic practitioner of alteration can use the technique as a guide across a hermeneutical surface of vocal intensity. For both Bataille and Sade’s enumerative structural attempts, the context establishes the possibility of counting within the zero or of counting an infinite segment, because the greater the domains’ intensity the greater the loss of consciousness.⁶⁶ Enumeration builds towards a surface hermeneutics where it is possible to discern a ‘valueless value’ of the integer. This creates something more akin to a timbre of surface, the grain of the sound, or a sonorous texture where counting is a striating technique, a graining of the timbre, or leads stochastics towards the surface’s cymatic patination.⁶⁷ Expiation hears Sadean thought through

⁶⁵ Johnny Golding (2010). ‘Fractal Philosophy: Attunement as the Task of Art.’ in, Stephen Zepke and Simon O’Sullivan, (eds.) *Deleuze and Contemporary Art* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press), 148

⁶⁶ “I shall later demonstrate that Sade (and in this he differs from the normal sadist, who is instinctive) had as his goal the clear consciousness of what can only be attained by “release”— though release leads to the loss of consciousness. That is to say that he had as his goal the clear consciousness of suppression – of the difference between subject and object. Thus his goal only differed from that of philosophy by the path he chose in order to attain it: Sade started with an examination of violent ‘releases’ in practice which he wanted to make intelligible, while philosophy starts from a calm consciousness – from distinct intelligibility – in order to bring it to a point to fusion.” “Sade” in, *Literature and Evil*, 97

⁶⁷ For a review of sound-waves and pattern-making, or patination, see Hans Jenny (2001 [1967, 1974]) *Cymatics: A Study of Wave Phenomena and Vibration* trans. D.Q. Stephenson (Eliot, ME.: Macromedia Publishing)

the drama of the actresses' voices, but it hears only glossolalia and its patterns of migration across the orgy-space, a murmuration which expiation understands as an exterior image of being's interior movement: its 'fusion'.

In the passage cited below, Sade's third channel *evokes* murders committed through libertinage which vary infinitely. This *invokes* the infinite segment of death: the infinite is a philosophical waste element according to Bataille's 6th enumeration of Sadean values; it also qualifies as refused element, as discussed in Chapter Two. The release (excretion) of noumenal philosophical waste is countermanded by the fourth channel, the actress whose invocation appropriates the infinite noumenal immediately to the 'events of her life': or, the phenomenal. Sade's enumerative grid of 4 x 150 erects the final moment of systematicity's demise, as philosophy's totality, in the shadow of Bataille's critique, where:

The interest of philosophy resides in the fact that, in opposition to science or common sense, it must positively envisage the waste products of intellectual appropriation. Nevertheless, it most often envisages these waste products only in abstract forms of totality (nothingness, infinity, the absolute), to which it cannot give a positive content; it can thus freely proceed in speculations that more or less have as a goal, all things considered, the *sufficient* identification of an endless world with a finite world, an unknowable (noumenal world) with the known (phenomenal world).⁶⁸

By making his gesture of accounting rather than enumeration, Sade's fourth channel broadcasts soteriology; his grid is saved from the noumenal by the recuperation of infinite erotic death and murder into the events of the life of the fourth actress. Sade's actresses are narrative weavers of the most extreme sort, but nonetheless their senses are a sufficient identification because this fourth channel is a narrative form saved for, and by, the experience phenomenon. By contrast, Bataille's voice, as will be discussed, is also carried by the erotic undercurrent— and, although it is dramatic in the strict sense of heightening affect rather than conveying dramatic meaning— it does not have the attachment of discourse or context, nor— with the slide to wholly other points of enumeration— is its vocal expiation attached any longer to any experience phenomenon. This differs Bataille from Sade, as the latter is careful to demonstrate how philosophy tames the infinite of the noumenal. For Bataille

⁶⁸ "The Use Value of D.A.F. de Sade" *Visions*, 96

the libertinage of interiority, is sounded out libidinally as political noise without the applied ligatures of philosophy of consciousness construction of any kind. Bataille's voice is glossolalia, because it does not follow a soteriological strategy. There is no longer a 4th actress broadcasting the phenomenon of experience to save the material; rather it deploys itself to unlimited movement that is free because it is not restricted to logical recuperation or salvation.

Unchannelling is a way of dissolving consciousness in the passage between Bataille's channel three and channel four which occurs as alteration between points of contact with the plural integers of the valueless values. Critically speaking, this is a version of shamanic alteration that occurs across and through contemporary material adjustment, rather than alchemy or other magical invocation. The 150/600 domains are each singularities, domains of attunement or, of momentariness as wholly other; yet this strange grid is a modal practice that through participation or an encounter with it, that is, unchannelling, or psychic alteration, reveals an organisational structure of being: continuity, difference and momentariness, atheological authority and its expiation respectively. The final part of this chapter, on 'shamanic anarchism,' presently returns to the notion that channel three-to-channel four transport (or exchange) is a shamanic alteration technique that is based on this grid of enumerated material domains and not a hierarchical or rigidly specific organisation, meaning that alteration, as well as being radically heterogeneous is also anarchist. The following section focusses on the point-to-point transport of the grid.

ii. Dissolving points of contact

Building from the image of the Sadean plane of intensity, this section describes the point of contact with its acousmatic surface of expiatory excretion, and explains how intensity dissolves consciousness while augmenting aesthetic contingency by reference to a sound object. Because the sound object is both a concentrated form, according to the theory of *musique concrete* and an immersive environment, as discussed, it has contingent aesthetic form; its interpretation is aesthetically determined; it is hermeneutic. The point of consciousness is imagined as the precise correlate to this, where its form of attention, rather than being contained within the notion of an

objective form, is instead a contingent form that, like sonic immersion, can be interpreted as both object-like and materially dissipative. The acoustic aesthetics of this new form of attentiveness, distils the hearing, rather than the listening consciousness, to a dissolving point of contact with the Bataille/ acoustic plane of intensity; this opens onto the alteration of the (previously) homogeneous individual by radical elision between these points of dissolving contact, a process of unchannelling and transubstantiation: a becoming wholly other by transport through sound across a grid of interpretive intensities.

This section introduces these ideas through those of sound theorist Pierre Schaeffer. Two aspects of Schaeffer's work connect to the theory of expiation, each in a new and original way. The first turns to the sound object to examine the way that Schaeffer considers the aesthetics of sound in a way that related to its envelope rather than to its immersive environment. Although sound is effectively everywhere, including already within the resonant cavities of the body, Schaeffer shows that a process of attunement to a form of an object can be made on an elective basis informed solely by aesthetic considerations, or "sum of the psychological phenomena of perception which constitute the sound object."⁶⁹ This completely alters an approach to that which is form: from its stipulatory physics to its contingent aesthetics. This connects to a hermeneutic surface of noise by filtering out general immersivity in favour of an aesthetic intensity of the contingent basis itself. Depending on the extent that this is enforced, this is a useful way of describing the journey from impure authority (stipulatory homogeneity of form) to an excretory scatological object; the drop of blood that springs to become a goddess is precisely an attunement to the drop's noumenal aesthetic vaporous suggestibility. The second connection is the *way* that Schaeffer proposes the first radical move: this is to identify the sound's material as acousmatic. This term, which means that the source of the sound cannot be ascertained, empowers the aesthetic value of the sonic material in its libertinage. In particular, its contingent aesthetic becomes mobile within its resonant channel, and the sound belongs to the aesthetics of this channel's physics and not its onto-generic productive source. Because the

⁶⁹ Pierre Schaeffer and Guy Reibel (1998 [1967]) *Solfège de l'objet sonore et traité des objets musicaux*. Translated (into English) by Livia Bellagamba (Paris: coédition Ina-Publications), 11

sound cannot be identified as belonging to the body that made it (whether that is a musical instrument or a human actress or an environmental sound like a train) the aesthetics of its acoustics come to the fore as the most salient aspect of its being-in-the-world. Applying this to a theory of expiation aides an understanding of Bataille's vomiting out of being by itself, in a way that is not underscored by separation. Because the source is absent, the sound object is free from an overdetermined condition; this freedom is expressed by its enhanced aesthetic, or its contingent intensity, as discussed. Here it becomes possible to move the sound image of noise and enumerative striations to a position of ontic- and sonic- autonomy. If the uttered object does not know its source, or is detached from it, then expiation gains a political aesthetic register, and becomes acephalic. Moreover, the political aesthetic of libertinage is a non-determined attunement to the noise surface. The elective basis for attunement to the acousmatic object's qualities or sonic material conditions is, therefore, its contingent intensity, and is the very basis for alteration to occur within a radicality of being that only comes to presence through the expiatory dynamic. Bataille's scatology becomes caca-phonics.

The contingency of the sound object's presence in a wider and unlimited field of noise aligns consciously with the point developed from Anzieu where the non-logical non-difference of sound-bath immersivity becomes a non-logical difference of a foetal cry. The contingent electivity of the aesthetics of the sound object is unwilled, and thus non-logical, and caused by the relativity of the valueless values of the Sadean encounter. This ties back with Golding's notion of attunement as connected with a multiple or plural version of the one, as an enumerated domain of intensity; and in turn this seems to correlate with 'counting within the zero,' first developed as an embodied technique for atheology in Chapter Three, yet which now seems also to work as a technique for consciousness' elision to its own outside, where attunement is its unchannelling; this unwilled aspect of aesthetics is the intensity that brings autonomous being to the acousmatic object, as an auto-acephalic glossolalist annunciation.

This next passage identifies acousmatic sound in Bataille's work, with the implication being that these are evidence of expiatory forms, and, therefore, supporting evidence not only for this chapter's argument, but also- dramatically- proves the case for systematicity in the preceding chapters.

It starts with cries-as-explosions that circulate the obelisk in the *La Place de Concorde*.⁷⁰ La Place de Concorde is the site in Paris that witnessed the execution of Louis XVI and his wife, Marie-Antoinette. An obelisk was placed on the empty plinth where had previously stood a statue of the King; an action about which Richard Burton has observed, “for the first time in history a public monument was deliberately selected for its very meaninglessness.”⁷¹ Bataille, in his essay “The Obelisk” offers a slightly different view:

The *Place de la Concorde* is the space where the death of God must be announced and shouted precisely because the obelisk is its calmest negation. [...] The obelisk is without a doubt the purest image of the head and of the heavens.⁷²

Writing in 1938, at the time of his engagement with the *Collège de Sociologie/Acéphale* group, Bataille emphasises the dialectical structure of the death of God, and its negation. However, something different occurs here instead of sublation: the announcing and shouting of God’s death. Instead of the dialectical structural arrangement that states that God is dead/ God is not dead, there is shouting. The calm shouting of God’s death has a quality of theological, rather than philosophical, waste, and is the stuff of the noumenal as a consequence; negation of this fact, in the calm reasoning of the obelisk, is the head. The shouting of death’s noumenality is already something quite different from sublation, and shouting expels this noumenality by the force of its vocal exhalation. That-which-is-expelled is projected away from the binary of god’s death/ intellectual tranquillity and enters some kind of Bataillean orbit. This orbit is, precisely, the plane of intensity and its channels and striations of explosive patination and alteration. Bataille says,

This is the deceitful and vague response of places to the fathomless multitude of insignificant lives that, for as far as the eye can see, orbit around them—and the spectacle only changes when the lantern of a madman projects its absurd light on stone.

At that moment, the obelisk ceases to belong to the present and empty world, and it is projected to the ends of time. It rises, immutable—there—dominating time’s desperate flight. But even while it is blinded by this domination, madness, which flits about its angles in the manner of an insect fascinated by a lamp, recognizes only endless time escaping in the noise of successive explosions. And there is no longer an image before it, but it *hears* this noise of successive

⁷⁰ “The Obelisk” *Visions of Excess*, 213-222

⁷¹ Richard D. E. Burton (2001) *Blood in the City: Violence and Revelation in Paris, 1789-1945* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press), 64

⁷² *Visions*, 215

explosions. To the extent that the obelisk is now, with all this dead grandeur, *recognized*, it no longer facilitates the flight of consciousness; it focuses the attention on the guillotine.⁷³

The auditory response to the shouting of death is an opening of acoustic space between the phenomenon of perpetual perception– the hearing obelisk– and the fliting noise of successive explosions: this is where Bataille recognizes the madness of the noumenal. These are no longer conjoined as a philosophical thesis and antithesis but occupy some sort of sonorous dramatic or theatrical volume, whose outlines recall the intimate compenetration of substance, now present as an order of death, and the enveloped dynamic contours of which are described by circulation, or the flight-paths of these ‘escaped noise of successive explosions.’ These explosions are sound objects, as evidenced by Bataille’s advocacy of the anti-visual: ‘there is no longer an image before it’. Bataille plays against dialectical recognition here, understanding the move away from the obelisk as diminishing the possibility for an envisioning environment by the sightless explosive iterations, and the contact points they open with the acoustic and auditory surface of ‘*hearing*.’ The guillotine, present in the reader’s historic knowledge, but absent in the *Place de la Concorde* itself, returns through Bataille’s invocation: its task now is to sever the clear-consciousness of the head from the shouted explosions.⁷⁴ The moment of its cut is the moment of the sovereign material instant; this form exists and moves as an acousmatic object that is, in each and every case, a re-initialization of being as death of God. Bataille returns to this scenario a couple of years later, in *Guilty*.⁷⁵ This time the noise is excreted from his own body (italicized emphasis as in the original):

*I came to associate the Obelisk and the Place de la Concorde with a series of nocturnal explosions: this noise was composed of my sobs: the memory that I have retained of it is also dark like a dream (I don't know how that double association can assume for me the simplicity of a falling blade).*⁷⁶

⁷³ *Visions*, 221

⁷⁴ For the obelisk in place of a head, or in place of a head’s absence, see Masson’s illustration in, *The Sacred Conspiracy*, 186

⁷⁵ Citation is from “Friendship”, an early part of *Guilty* written in 1939-1940.

⁷⁶ *Guilty* Kendall translation, 172

The fall of the guillotine ends hierarchy. Decapitation ends reason and closes the eyes for good. The simplicity of a guillotine that puts an end to image, is also that which severs sound from its source. The sound of the moment of decapitation resonates freely as an ancillary object of death's being-in-the world: its form (nocturnal explosion/sob) is the interoceptive spasm that occurs at the audition of a pin-drop. Epistemology ends at the same time, and lowers a curtain of mystery that separates knowledge from its 'other'. The genesis of this derives from Pythagoras' teaching, which he separated between initiates to his cult, and those '*akousmatikoi*' who were obliged to listen from the other side of a curtain, in order to focus on his voice or words rather than his face.⁷⁷ Acousmatic sound becomes a reference to, as Pierre Schaeffer defines it: "referring to a sound that one hears without seeing the causes behind it."⁷⁸ Pierre Schaeffer develops this content in terms of an obliged attention to aesthetics. Schaeffer divorces aesthetics of hearing from its epistemological basis, so that a train's whistle becomes an airy flute-like sound rather than that which specifically announces its productive source as a train. In Schaeffer's move 'meaning' (i.e., this sound means a train) is discarded. The aesthetic qualities of sounds are empowered as if the loss of the sun king had enfranchised them at the margins. New technology, the turntable and after the second world war, magnetic tape, take the place of Pythagoras' curtain (and take the place of Bataille's falling blade, or guillotine). Schaeffer's designation of the concrete-in-sound (*musique concrète*) parallels precisely Bataille's base materialism, as an aesthetics of an autonomous, and then, as a consequence, autarkic materiality.⁷⁹ Not just material independent from its source but aesthetically self-sufficient, sound in-and-of-itself.⁸⁰ Schaeffer's *Solfège* (music theory) shares with atheology the ambition to organise this

⁷⁷ See Seth Kim-Cohen (2009) *In the Blink of an Ear: Toward a Non-Cochlear Sonic Art* (New York: Continuum Books), 9

⁷⁸ Schaeffer and Reibel, *Solfège des objets sonores*, 91

⁷⁹ Perhaps the best theoretical engagement with Schaeffer is found In Part One of Brian Kane (2014) *Sound Unseen: Acousmatic Sound in Theory and Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press), 15-44; see also Kane's treatment of the Pythagorean veil, *Ibid.*, 45-72

⁸⁰ For a review of the aesthetics of sound in-and-of-itself see Kim-Cohen *In the Blink of an Ear*, 123-46

material logically.⁸¹ Without a source, the cry is its own aesthetic element, but its aesthetics are of its difference, its noumenality rather than its phenomenality.⁸²

An aesthetics of intensity sounds difference through glossolalia. The explosions that Bataille describes circulating the headless figure of the obelisk are like the plosive and fricative sounds emitted by the head at the moment of its decapitation; the same sounds are made in the unchannelling of the consciousness at the point of orgasm. The cries have no meaning, they are liberated whilst knowing nothing, yet they register intensity in their shape and form. In the passage below Bataille makes this point explicitly as an association between glossolalia and the vanishing of thought or the ending of cognition's ceaseless operation. The passage also extends this by linking being's continuity with these new forms: when being ends as authority the effect of its knowing would also fail, but glossolalia is being vomiting itself out into these points of altered being: their cacophonous aesthetics are a displacement or disbursal of being's value, or its knowable point.⁸³ Bataille describes this as 'moments':

I reflected on un-knowing, and I saw that human life was full of moments—which I assign to knowledge—when the ceaseless operation of cognition is dissolved. I referred to those moments in speaking of sobs, of laughter that makes one gasp...saying that in them the train of thought was broken off. I fastened on this aspect, if not of nature, of human life, seeking in the experience a way out of my servitude. The object of tears or of laughter—and of other effects such as ecstasy, eroticism or poetry—seemed to me to correspond to the very point at which the object of thought vanishes. Up to that point, that object might be an object of knowledge, but only up to that point, so that the effect of knowledge would regularly fail.⁸⁴

⁸¹ See translators' note by Christine North and John Dack to *In Search of a Concrete Music*; "Schaeffer frequently used the term *généraliser*, and it is important to remember that his ideas, particularly in later works such as the *Traité des objets musicaux* (1966), can be applied beyond their obvious origins of studio practice." (translators' introduction, x)

⁸² By contrast, Derrida argues that vocal phenomenality persists into the noumenal: "The ideality of the object, which is only its being-for a nonempirical consciousness, can only be expressed in an element whose phenomenality does not have worldly form. *The name of this element is the voice. The voice is heard.*" Jacques Derrida, (1973) "The Voice That Keeps Silence" in, *Speech and Phenomena: Introduction to the Problem of Signs in Husserl's Phenomenology* translated by David B. Allison (Evanston: Northwestern University Press), 76

⁸³ Performance artist Ron Athey has addressed explicitly the relation between glossolalia and automatism and, by extension, the aesthetics of envoiced nonsense in his work. He said of this work "Rather than erasure of oneself, the gesture is also grand: erasing the singular emphasis and using infinity as texture." See Ron Athey (2011-18) *Gifts of the Spirit: Prophecy, Automatism and Discernment* (London, Manchester, Los Angeles) <https://www.thebroad.org/events/gifts-spirit-prophecy-automatism-and-discernment>

⁸⁴ *Accursed Share II and III*, 208

The significance of the dissolving operation is its corresponding point of contact with the glossolalic sound object: this is because in these moments of noise, Bataille finds the non-sense that is the continuous identity he seeks. He describes this in terms of emotional eroticism, where:

In emotional eroticism the beloved can no longer escape, he is held fast in the vague memory of the successive possibilities which have made their appearance as eroticism has evolved. The clear realisation of these diverse possibilities written into that long development leading up to the power of profanation is above all able to show the unity of the ecstatic moments which make a sense of the continuity of all being accessible to discontinuous creatures. An ecstatic lucidity is thereafter possible, bound up with the knowledge of the limits of being.⁸⁵

Bataille invokes in this passage how the burst of laughter, or the sob (or the cry, of erotic pleasure, or pain) corresponds to the dissolution of thought as a mark of its ubiety. The thing, that Bataille understands as 'being there' in liberated space, dissolves, leaving the sound object as a reliquary of there-ness of being: it comes as relief, and "the eternal instant is resolved in nonsense."⁸⁶ The continuity of laughter, laughing as an unconscious stream, is punctuated by an object of laughter: its burst-ness.⁸⁷

Bataille describes this (in his italics, below) in terms of excretory/expiatory requirements; his analysis follows this (in his un-emphasised text), addressing itself to ontic liberation implied by heterogeneity: the re-initialisation of different (path-) ways (but not means) of being, enacted by the drama of each burst:

As soon as the effort at rational comprehension ends in contradiction, the practice of intellectual scatology requires the excretion of unassimilable elements, which is another way of stating vulgarly that a burst of laughter is the only imaginable and definitively terminal result—and not the means—of philosophical speculation. And then one must indicate that a reaction as *insignificant* as a burst of laughter derives from the extremely vague and distant character of the intellectual domain, and that it suffices to go from a speculation resting on abstract facts to a practice whose mechanism is not different, but which immediately reaches concrete heterogeneity, in order to arrive at ecstatic trances and orgasm.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ *Eroticism*, 128 fn.

⁸⁶ "Aphorisms for the System" *Unfinished System of Nonknowledge*, 182; For more on the dual possibility of glossolalia see: James N Amanze, and Tino Shanduka (2015) "Glossolalia: Divine Speech or man-made language? A psychological analysis of the gift of speaking in tongues in the Pentecostal Churches in Botswana." *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae*, 41(1), 3-19.

⁸⁷ For a discussion of the idea of punctuation as an attunement to the sonorous, see Hainge's development of Barthes' 'punctum' in his eponymous chapter section in, Greg Hainge (2013) *Noise Matters: Towards an Ontology of Noise* (New York and London: Bloomsbury), 147-151

⁸⁸ "The Use Value of D.A.F. De Sade" *Visions of Excess*, 99

The intensity of the sound object is that which marks its aesthetics as there, but it is a mark that is made as consciousness dissolves. What follows is an abstract hermeneutical approach to several minor figures in Bataille's work that assimilate themselves into a wider 'theory of expiation' because, instead of anomalous or poetic images, they fit into a theory of consciousness as dissolving points of ubiety, where a figural aesthetic intensity indicates empirical contact with a hermeneutic surface of the outside of thought or being.

The first dissolving point is the lion-in-water. In the following passage it is possible to read— as it is with the burst within a stream of laughter— the sovereignty of an acousmatic sound object within an overall field of noise, by radically imagining this object as a lion.⁸⁹ As the lion, moreover, who is situated in air, or water, as a sonic intensity which is equally: impossible; possible-but-contingent and initiating a possible being-present:

[The lion] flows nevertheless insofar as this situation escapes him. The lion is never completely different from the water or the air, which are without ever needing anything else, without needing any other particle flowing in the world in the same way that they themselves are flowing away. Water or air remain in a state of perfect immanence: no necessity imposes itself and, more generally, nothing ever matters in the immanent relation of one particle to one or several others [...] It is true that this flow doesn't take place,⁹⁰

The lion-in-water is not an absurd juxtaposition any more than the burst of laughter is funny. The lion-in-water is Bataille's radicalisation of ubiety, where its 'thereness' is a totalised political summation— an immersivity— of all spectra of possibility and impossibility. Bataille realises the lion's thereness as being materially comprised from a continuity of water or a continuity of air; its ubiety does not require difference from thalassic continuity to occur in material terms. It has a presence mutualised with water, or air, but rather than its individual existence being governed by antithesis, being not-mutual or not-continuous to water, or not-water, its point of shared origin— because it is

⁸⁹ Sovereignty (the image associated with the lion) is not proper to its individuality, but is of aesthetic individuation within movement (of water, air, of sound); one wave featuring more prominently than an adjacent or subsumed wave: "the lion is not the king of the beasts: in the movement of the waters he is only a higher wave overturning the other, weaker ones." *Theory of Religion*, 18-19

⁹⁰ *Unfinished System of Nonknowledge*, 240

never completely different from water— has shifted into a more radical understanding of contingency within dimensional autonomy. It is never not water, but it is a lion, something that we know is wholly different from water. The lion-in-water radicality is a break from the dialectical antithesis of negation; it shows how relational aesthetics might appear after this break. It has radical autonomy so absolute that it does not even need to take place, either as flow, as lion, or as truth: it is pointlessly original.

The second dissolving point is the tiger-in-space. When Bataille states that “the sexual act is like a tiger in space’ he offers abstraction as a stipulated concrete.⁹¹ The tiger situates and embodies a plastic abstract whose intramuscular tension and torsion in its leaping process (through aerated cartesian space rather than a non-Terran vacuum) denotes an *a priori* and *a posteriori* indication of violence and material duration. This monster comes to kill, and its sense of total being is similar to its apex predatory depredation of the form of its prey: Sadean intensity is invoked, yet set into a surface of continuity. The tiger-in-space flexes the valueless value of noisy space’s dissolution into a sound object. Instinct and death are implied whilst also being simultaneously immanent to the tiger’s leaping and tensed dynamic; its posture is an image of death/instinct flux that is written in its spatial musculature. Bataille offers the tiger-in-space as a *situated image* of movement. It is a hyperbolic definition within a continuous and therefore nondefinite context. Moreover, this situation of movement is contingent for its being on the three-dimensions in which the image is situated, rather than its duration. The tiger replaces the duration of movement with something of equal fundament: an image of alteration.

The *acéphale* is the lion-in-water, or the tiger-in-space, set in a political context. S/he arrives without head and without being named as the monster.⁹² The articulation of their limbs indicates ritual practice, and their genital-skull reminds us that the vectors of expulsion flow through a genital conjunction of Eros and Thanatos. Their crotch is the motor of their ontic motility. Their articulation

⁹¹ *Accursed Share Vol. I*, 12

⁹² Bataille doesn’t name the figure he describes in the citation. Sophia al Maria has written of the *acéphale* as a ‘headless queen’. Al Maria’s concerns reflect a body that may only be masculine in its English mis-translation (‘Il’ in French; ‘He’ or, in the context of a monster (masculine noun), also ‘it’). “But, who is she? / This headless queen? / Stars over nipples / Snake in belly. / Skull strapped onto crotch. / Heart in one hand. / And knife in the other. / Her name is Acéphale!” Sophia Al Maria (2019) “We Ride and Die with You”, in, *Sad Sack: Collected Writings* (London: Book Works), 140-169, 152-153

of ritual is the aesthetic content which generates the contingent tegument of form itself, from their unawareness of the limits of prohibition; they are unaware because they have no head. They are the beyond of you and me: they are our expiation that we project through our laughter, from/at our own bodies, from/at our own crotches. They are our naïveté, a being made of innocence and crime. Their belly is our vaginal complexity: a labyrinth from which we shout the death of God. Shouting words that make no sense, these plosive forms move beyond our humanity, liberating its being:

Man escaped from his head just as the condemned man has escaped from his prison. He has found beyond himself not God, who is the prohibition against crime, but a being who is unaware of prohibition. Beyond what I am, I meet a being who makes me laugh because he is headless; this fills me with dread because he is made of innocence and crime; he holds a steel weapon in his left hand, flames like those of a Sacred Heart in his right. He reunites in the same eruption Birth and Death. He is not a man. He is not a god either. He is not me but he is more than me: his stomach is the labyrinth in which he has lost himself, loses me with him, and in which I discover myself as him, in other words, as a monster.⁹³

The political context of the *acéphale* derives itself from two directions. The first is the rather obvious point that because the monster has no head, it represents something of the political economy of the autonomous or the anarchist. The monster is acousmatic: not deprived of logical thought, but separated from its source, separate from reason, self-consciousness, ideas, the prison of being ipseous in awareness. The monster is free from the ontogenesis of conceiving itself, it is form liberated from the conceiving order. Evidently the *acéphale* is beyond conventional evocation, because s/he has no vocal chords, so possibly is already the evocation itself: s/he is the articulation of the inchoate, and this, if one imagines these things visually, is what an acousmatic sound object might look like.

On the other hand, is another political context. The radicality of imagined beings ends visibility with the loss of eyes and head. Imagination is freed politically by this move. Leon Marvell is suitably radical when he posits that: “The *acéphale* signals (...) an end to all images illuminated by light.”⁹⁴ What Marvell suggests as a replacement for the luminescent image, is an invocation of darkness. Marvell posits that Bataille may, with the *acéphale*, have been familiar with *Papyri Graecae*

⁹³ “The Sacred Conspiracy” *Visions of Excess*, 181

⁹⁴ Leon Marvell (2013) “Headless and unborn: interfering with Bataille and Masson’s image of the Acephale” in *Second International Conference on Transdisciplinary Imaging at the Intersections between Art, Science and culture: Conference Proceedings*, Transdisciplinary Imaging Conference, Sydney, N.S.W., 205-212, 208

Magicae; in particular one text, the “Stele of Jeu the Hieroglyphist.”⁹⁵ In this text a ritual is enacted, where, *Acephalos*, the Headless One, is invoked.⁹⁶ Marvell continues,

what makes this ritual even more unusual, unusual in terms of the entire Greco-Egyptian magical corpus in fact, is that after the standard banishing of demons from the ritual chamber, the magician invokes the “Holy Headless One” *into* himself, thus *becoming* the one who “makes the lightning flash and the thunder roll...the one whose mouth burns completely ...the one who begets and destroys.”⁹⁷

Marvell’s magician invokes the demon into themselves in the same way that authority’s impurity is expelled (see above). The magician has performed something of the chthonic sky inversion described in the last part of atheological embodiment, and exchanged their body for the outside of thought. Becoming *acéphale* is becoming the outside of thought. When Bataille, in the passage just cited, says that the *acéphale* ‘loses himself in his belly, loses me with him, and I become him,’ radicality turns toward the impossible in its noumenal context: to lose oneself in one’s own belly, to be autophagic or to self-ventriloquise.⁹⁸ The direction of the voice thrown out or the voice consumed is irrelevant in the designation of invocation/evocation: it is alteration that is pertinent. In becoming monstrous Bataille’s ‘I’, or the magician, has dimensionally-altered: they/we are shamanically free to re-initialise as ‘wholly other’ by invocation of the demon and its ingestion inside ourselves, or following the holy Headless One into his own stomach.⁹⁹

⁹⁵ Hans Dieter Betz, ed. (1976) *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 96-172.

⁹⁶ Marvell proposes that *La conjuration Sacrée*, the French title of the text in which the *Acéphale* appears would be better translated as “The Sacred Conjunction” Marvell, 208

⁹⁷ Marvell, 210. Citation is Betz, 103

⁹⁸ This perspective underscores that the noumenal is not restricted to the ‘out there’ but is, also, dangerously, internalised: cf. “What is sacred, what is dangerous is crudely held to be internal, having basically no meaning but inwardness.” *Accursed Share II and III*, 245

⁹⁹ The inference being drawn is that the *acéphale* is a figuration of the impossible elements of the systematicity of the miraculous, discussed in Chapter Two, and the mutualised ingestion is an aspect of compenetration of spheres. On the metaphor of eating and republicanism (as a post-guillotine political installation) Burton suggests in *Blood and the City* that the metaphor of monarchy as monster was figured by the Bastille, whose labyrinthine interior would swallow up prisoners, never to be seen again, 27. In the inaugurating years of the revolution into the First Republic “once more the motif of eating (was) ghoulishly parodied in the hay, grass, and other ordure stuffed into the victims’ mouths, (this) forms an essential part of the sacrificial paradigm.” Burton (2001) *Blood in the City: Violence and Revelation in Paris 1789-1945*, 36

A ‘theory of expiation’ creates the *acéphale* as a point of contact for the surface of the outside of thought. This surface can be sensed in a way that is non-visual, because it does not know that it does not have a head; it is erotic, it is auditory, it is noisy. This surface is a ‘plane of intensity’ and contact is through the body of a sound object, a glossolalic ubiety, a dissolving, vertiginous flat-field, where consciousness alters and there is invocation at the same time as crying out.

Invocation/evocation liberates possibility as sobs and cries whose intensity is valued at its liberated point(s). These are: lion-in-water, or tiger-in-space; they are erotic intensity within the plane.

Alteration gathers these points as attunement, or unchannelling.

What this conclusion of a ‘theory of expiation’ sets up in terms of Bataille’s work is a way to return to his thoughts around pre-history. Bataille writes that in Lascaux, the critical tableau in the shaft is one of murder and expiation. Murder is extreme stipulatory authority, and expiation should be interpreted at the same extremity. Expiation at Lascaux is a mode of radical alteration. What follows in the next section is how expiation works in Lascaux as a surface of non-logical difference within an auditory mode of alteration. This applies the conclusions made in this chapter, so expiation’s preferred forms of ubiety are animal/acephalic/acousmatic alteration. Because death is the authority to which expiation corresponds, its response to stipulatory extremism is anarchism: specifically, shamanic anarchism, where radicality in ontology turns to its noumenal context, being as animal other, and/or being as auditory other.

Part Three: Shamanic Anarchism: Invocation of the Acéphale

In light of the development of expiation undertaken so far, that it is materially excretory, that it has an aesthetic value that inversely corresponds with consciousness and that it effects a differencing that Bataille describes as radical alteration of the person to the wholly other, this part of the chapter makes the case from these components for expiation as a technique of shamanic anarchism. This is, in effect, an attempt to further Bataille’s claim for expiation into the caves at Lascaux, re-examining the

tableau he discusses there in terms of forging a general theory of expiatory unchannelling as shamanic practice by way of its politicised materiality of noise and/or body excreta. As Bataille says: “It is first of all a question of *altering* what one has at hand.”¹⁰⁰

The section will discuss Bataille’s ideas in the context of both theories of pre-historic conscious alteration (especially Clottes and Lewis-Williams) and of pre-historic sound manipulation (Reznikoff) to propose a hybrid “practice of expiation” which amounts to shamanic anarchism, or, more poetically, an invocation of the acephale that concludes Bataille’s work by vocally summoning inadmissible figured elements into it.¹⁰¹ The hybrid practice culminates or concludes the onto-political theory of Bataille by taking Bataille’s anomalous and inconclusive study of the art/practice of Lascaux, and showing it to be central to a new political way of being, one that has been practiced since archaic times. This shows that expiation as becoming wholly other is a refutation of the dominion of the singular or discontinuous consciousness in favour of a becoming ontically othered. In the context of the cave, this takes the shamanic practice to a becoming auricular-sonorous, where the shaman’s being alters to become that of the material form of a duck’s quack. The thesis claims that this move within being’s material expression is a politically radical move because of this refutation, and that, in Lascaux, as well as murder and expiation, there is sovereignty. Therefore autonomy, or anarchism in this context, means a liberty in the choice of context for being’s inauguration for the shaman. This liberty is expressed through auditory, erotic or vocal contact-intensity with the hermeneutical surface discussed previously. In this way the valueless value of the intensity—accessed through attunement as dissolving point—alters or transports being-in-and-for-itself through empirical contact with unlimited imaginations, contingent dimensions, animal bodies, forms and spirits: the continuous bodies of Bataille’s erotic imagining. This section will focus on being’s transition to its

¹⁰⁰ Bataille (2005) *The Cradle of Humanity* ed. Stuart Kendall, trans. Michelle Kendall and Stuart Kendall (New York: Zone Books), 41

¹⁰¹ Jean Clottes and David Lewis-Williams (1998) *The Shamans of Prehistory: Trance and Magic in the Painted Caves* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc); Igor Reznikoff (2008) “Sound Resonance in Prehistoric Times: A Study of Palaeolithic Painted Caves and Rocks” *The Journal of the Acoustical Society of America* June 2008 123(5):3603, 4318-4340

wholly other, as articulated by the quack of a duck. As a preliminary to the resonant unchannelling, this proposal notes Bataille's words on birds. He says:

It is true that birds have found an equilibrium in an intermediary position, but it is fairly evident that that is a new equilibrium entirely different from that of the other animals, and determined by flight, in other words by a movement of displacement as continuous as that of the quadrupeds; the movement from branch to branch that determined the semivertical stance of apes implied, on the contrary, a movement of discontinuous displacement that never permitted a new harmony, and it developed little by little a manner of being and at the same time a monstrous appearance.¹⁰²

If the invocation of the *acéphale* articulates the end of the image, effacement brings about monstrosity as the end of figuration. The visibly sensible, and, with it, a static, and quiet sense of unitary consciousness of being that visibility associates with the *ipse*, is left behind by expiatory actions inaugurated by human-shamanic effacement.¹⁰³ The invocation of the demon, where image follows the headless one into its stomach, puts noisy darkness into the labyrinth of the body's imageless cavity. Bataille's interest in parietal art did not really explore the caves' counter-visibility; it was limited to noticing that caves "are almost always very dark and difficult to access."¹⁰⁴ Nonetheless he pays attention to acoustic actions, ritual and performances that surround parietal art, "these signs are the paintings that very early man left on the walls of the caves where he must have celebrated his incantatory ceremonies."¹⁰⁵ This section turns its attention to the possibility that, in light of more recent studies of cave art, the effacement of the figural body was an effacement of conflated visually-affirmed conscious unity in favour of an noisy wholly-othered expanded sonic continuity; one based on resonance, and realised by the incantatory shaman within the body of the cave.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰² "The Jesuve" *Visions*, 76

¹⁰³ Concerning the role of the visual image in power relations with animals see "Sympathetic Magic" Jean Clottes, and David Lewis Williams, *The Shamans of Prehistory*, 67-68

¹⁰⁴ *Cradle of Humanity*, 194

¹⁰⁵ *Tears of Eros*, 29

¹⁰⁶ Igor Reznikoff (2008), *The Journal of the Acoustical Society of America*, 4,318. Approximately 80% of images are found in places with unusual acoustics. "The more resonant the location, the more paintings or signs are situated in this location. (..) "Most of the paintings are located in the most resonant locations of the cave."

Igor Reznikoff's work has identified resonance as being the principal determinant factor in the location of parietal image-making. Resonance is a sonic effect where, through the manipulation of frequency (number of sound-waves per second, across a given space, calibrated as Hertz), the wavelength of each wave can be made to reflect from the walls of the body, or cave, in a whole integer relationship with the sound source.¹⁰⁷ The effect is to make the sound louder and more powerful, (increase the amplitude of the wave). Simply put, resonance is measured by "the number of echoes."¹⁰⁸ Sound becomes more *present* in this exchange with the cave walls: the sound *itself* recruits the resonant cavities and chambers into a work of presencing, amplified by the cave's interior. The cavity of the cave, its interiority, makes sound more materially present. The same process applies to the cavities of the human body. When Reznikoff states that "because of the resonance, the whole body is implicated, sometimes in a subtle way," he is emphasizing the role performed by the resonance of the human body in incantation; the body has three chambers, or cavities, through which soundwaves can travel: the cranium, the mouth/nose, and the chest.¹⁰⁹ Depending on location, the exterior and interior chambers of cave and body can be made to vibrate as one, by modulating the vocal chords in chanting or ululation to match the whole integer relationship of one to another, implying a single material field of sound that no longer respects a division between bodily interior and exterior.¹¹⁰

The case for interpreting Bataille's thought on Lascaux through resonance then, is not that the shaman practitioner speaks to, or invokes animal spirits, but that the images of effacement suggest an exchange of unitary human consciousness for the animal continuum exemplified by the sound objects carried by the resonant relationships in the cave chambers and shafts.¹¹¹ The shaman is unchannelling

¹⁰⁷ If the whole integer aspect of the sound wave is not respected then the power (amplitude) of the sound is dampened and may even be silenced if the negative and positive phases of the wave cancel each other out.

¹⁰⁸ Reznikoff (2008), 4,318

¹⁰⁹ Igor Reznikoff, "On Primitive Elements of Musical Meaning" in *Journal of Music and Meaning* 3 Fall 2004/Winter 2005, section 2

¹¹⁰ The dimension of the inner cavities can be 'felt' in the moment of an alteration in a hum's pitch becoming momentarily resonant. Then incantation must find a space which matches this space. The matching of space is a scale where the dimensions of the exterior space must be whole integer proportionate, i.e., 1:2 or 1:8 (resonances occurs) and not 1:2.5 or 2:3, (in which case phase cancellation of the original vocal emission is cancelled out by asymmetric resonance from the reflection of the sound from the far wall).

¹¹¹ Mircea Eliade (1964) *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy* trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 88-89; Igor Reznikoff, "On Primitive Elements of Musical Meaning" in *Journal of Music and Meaning* 3, Fall/Winter 2005, Section 2.8

his or her consciousness by accessing the individuated intensity of the sound-burst and its parietal echoes along resonant channels. If the shaman were speaking *to* the animal, then the shamanic form would, presumably, obey some logic of official integrity. When the human form is obliterated from the discontinuous order of the image, so the shaman joins continuity: effacement is continuity, a continuity that was formerly enjoyed by the animal, before it became figured as a meat-object. What also occurs, by invoking alteration within the channels and intensities of the Sadean-value grid, is that channels one and two, the animal and the erotic also become available, so that the restricted cartography referred to in the previous section as an enumerated alteration of 22,500 (150 x 150), now becomes a four-channel transmissibility giving potential alteration communicativity of 506,250,000 (150 x 150 x 150 x 150) correspondences.

Engaging alteration happens by means of the mimetic ability of the shaman to leave his or her body behind, and attune to a new form of ejaculated-sound: animal cries that are measured by the number of echoes along the vectors of resonant space. That which is effaced by unchannelling is the inassimilable element of discontinuous form. Continuity is evidenced by the sequential aspect of the cries and their echoes, as voice travels across the cathedrals and into the crypts and crevices, and through the interior cavities of the resonant body: the body and cave are sonically mutualised. The shaman becomes animal apparition after the image's effacement; the shaman is vocally continuous. Perhaps the shaman has sacrificed this element of themselves, in exchange for the animal's participation in becoming meat. This places loss of the figuration of consciousness, and consciousness of the loss of figuration together as, "the effacement of man before the animal, at the very moment when the animal within him became human" and this, Bataille says, "is the greatest effacement that can be conceived."¹¹²

Throughout the survey of cave drawings, painting and carving there are few human figures, but those who are present invariably have only semi-human form, the other parts of their physiognomy are bison, or deer, or a mixture of animals: as noted by Abbé H. Breuil, in *Four Hundred Centuries of*

¹¹² *Cradle of Humanity*, 60

Cave Art, images of transmutation or zoomorphic transition are the rule rather than the exception.¹¹³

After Breuil, Bataille and Reznikoff, these would seem to form two divisions in parietal art: firstly there are images of animals that were rendered as part of a manifest ritual involving a central performer who mimicked these animals *in sound and in costume*, and secondly, depictions of this performance, *in mid-performance*, with the semi-human figure, whose form is only relevant as its own alteration and loss, a loss that is achieved through acoustic mimesis: becoming or being as animal-sound.¹¹⁴ Mimesis becomes a performative negation of the durable object, presencing-in-echo an apology, an affirmative expiation, for the crime of the durable object, Bataille remarks on this performative element as follows:

Even this unique aspect of parietal art is very meaningful. These works were not, by any measure, at any time, objects of art: when one considers the products of every era, nothing is further from what normally constitutes a thing. Their meaning was in their APPARITION, not in the durable object that remained after the apparition. In my opinion, this is what gives the cave walls such charm: the continual lively negation of the durable object, which, in the end, each and every figure became, without ever merging with the confusion wherein it is lost- which is not reducible to a unity in the sense of a thing.¹¹⁵

Mimesis' gesture, the invocation *and* the evocation of the animal sound, offers to exchange the migratory sound image of the shamanic practitioner in substitution for the tangible characteristic of the animal image. Whilst Bataille observes, "it was effectively necessary to give the evocation of the animal not only the central value but a *tangible* characteristic that the naturalistic image alone allowed them to obtain," Reznikoff's research reappraises this aspect, and allowing that the figural visual image was not alone in its duties of representation, the sound image did this job too.¹¹⁶ The difference in the tasks of the images is expiation: the sound image expiates the image of the durable object.¹¹⁷

¹¹³ Abbé H. Breuil (1979 1952]) *Four Hundred Centuries of Cave Art* trans. Mary E. Boyle (New York: Hacker Art Books), 24

¹¹⁴ "They were indifferent to the state of the cave wall after a drawing. The condition of the cave wall was so unimportant to them that they would not erase or cover the older images, generally resulting in a muddle, contrary to every principle of composition." Bataille, *Cradle of Humanity*, 50

¹¹⁵ *Cradle of Humanity*, 77-78;

¹¹⁶ *Cradle of Humanity*, 50

¹¹⁷ Bataille draws extensively on Breuil's work, and cites it above in the essay "The Passage from Animal to Man." Breuil's interpretation of the cave actions is informed by the notion of sympathetic magic. In the essay Bataille endorses Breuil's view, agreeing that, "More probably they are members of the tribe performing some magic rite, or

Bataille's identification of this "crude and distorting art ... reserved for the human figure," indicates an effacement that altered— and showed this alteration of— consciousness *and being itself* into an aural materiality.¹¹⁸ This unifies two distinct channels of obliteration: the obliteration of representational visual logic described by Bataille and the obliteration of conscious distinctions between interior and exterior provoked by the activation of the resonant fields, the body and cave chambers that Reznikoff's work explores. Counter-figural art therefore is depictive of, or aligns with, sonic phenomenon.

Reznikoff finds that "sounds needed to test the resonance are vocal" and his research places the pre-lingual nature of these sounds (grunts, glossolalia and animal sounds) as, at the same time, a *movement* of sound through both space and the body.¹¹⁹ The ululations of the shaman are explosively forced out to better reflect off the walls of the cave and thus to sonically animate the artwork, as ventriloquism; literally, speaking from the stomach. As this occurs in the lithophonic spaces there is a violent division between source and place of projection, a casting out of the shamanic voice; the ridding of it from the body's homogeneous or subordinate form. The shaman casts out his or her identity to become that of a bison, a lion, a bird, and speaks in its voice and *from* its located representation, linking voice and its ubiety irrevocably as equal partners in the power of alteration.¹²⁰ Interior consciousness, such as it is, departs and transverses material space, as the identity of the voice object now speaks from the *other* side of the cave; but there has also been a unity in annihilation, as the *being other* has been achieved in a material of resonant sound. The body has not been annihilated, but has expanded to accommodate the entire cave *within* its own interiority, as if, by entering the cave, the shaman had entered his or her own stomach, whilst swallowing the cave; the invocation of the acéphale: the cave becomes acephalic. The cave returns consciousness to a primal experience of

mythical beings from whom favors must be requested and who must be conciliated." *Cradle of Humanity*, 68; Breuil, *Four Hundred Centuries of Cave Art*, 95

¹¹⁸ "Primitive Art" in, *The Cradle of Humanity*, 40

¹¹⁹ Iegor Reznikoff, "On Primitive Elements of Musical Meaning", *JMM: The Journal of Music and Meaning* 3, Fall 2004/Winter 2005 [<http://www.musicandmeaning.net/issues/showArticle.php?artID=3.2>], sec.2.1

¹²⁰ "As soon as human beings give rein to animal nature, in some way we enter the world of transgression forming the synthesis between animal nature and humanity we enter a sacred world, a world of holy things." *Eroticism*, 84

disembodied space, much as Anzieu posited with the sound bath.¹²¹ The immersive experience is now an animal interior, a growling, quacking interior, but it also materialises as the inside of the sound envelope of the growl, grunt or quack.¹²² At the same time, the shaman is immersed in darkness, and *prestigious filth*:

The forms of animality were excluded from a bright world which signified humanity. These forms, however, could only be denied fictitiously. Men were able to enclose the world of animal activity within strict limits – where it was, precisely, in its *place* – But they never sought to do away with it. They could not even have intended to do so; they had to subtilize it, withdrawing it from the light and confining it in darkness where it is hidden from notice. The place for filth is in the dark, where looks cannot reach it.¹²³

The volume of the sonic interior is sanctity of humanity's flow: "I was bound to mention this world first, for then animal nature formed a cathedral, within which human violence could be centred and condensed."¹²⁴

Bataille's interest in Palaeolithic art was triggered by the discovery of the cave at Lascaux, in the Dordogne valley, France in 1940: when Bataille visited in 1952, the cave was still open to the public. This interest is understandable in the context of seeing art created some 20,000 years previously so marvellous that even Picasso declared that "no one had done anything better since."¹²⁵ Lascaux's merit is the depictive proliferation of animals, particularly bulls, spread out over large halls and along passage ways. Yet in the whole of the complex there is only a single anthropomorphic figure, which is located in an inaccessible part of the cave known as 'the pit' or 'the shaft'. It is this particular figure in the darkest part of the cave which illuminates greatest. The figure is contained

¹²¹ Reznikoff suggests this is a fundamental material presence, "The deep primitive sound level is always present in our consciousness (in the corresponding areas of the brain) and because of its primitiveness it remains unaffected even when other, more superficial levels of consciousness are damaged or destroyed, by accident, illness, stressful situations or age." JMM 3, Section 2.4

¹²² "But often, still in caves, small recesses or narrow hollows in the ground resonate strongly with low sounds that transform themselves into growls, mooing, bison-like lows, stag-like bells or lion's roars, sounding in a whole gallery or part of the cave, the quality of growls depending on the shape of the recess. And taken by the power of these animal sounds and imitating them, you cannot help identifying with the corresponding animal, for instance a bison. It is sometimes frightening, due to the power of the identification; this reminds us strongly of shamanic possessions or trances." JMM 3, Section 2.8

¹²³ *Accursed Share Vol. II & III*, 61

¹²⁴ *Eroticism*, 85

¹²⁵ "Lecture, January 18, 1955" *Cradle of Humanity*, 100 editor's fn

within a group of non-human animals, and their remote location, close grouping and heterogeneous aspect has caused them to be read together as a tableau.¹²⁶ In this tableau there are a group of images: there is a rhinoceros, which is defecating, there is a bison, which has been disembowelled, and there is the anthropomorphic figure.¹²⁷ The latter is situated between the other two animals, it is crudely drawn and has the head of a duck, and a pointed phallus; near the hand of the anthropomorph is a whole duck on a stick; both the duck head and the whole duck have their beaks open, and the figure appears to be falling backward, with its arms outstretched, as if fainting or losing consciousness.¹²⁸ There are also two single lines with hooks reminiscent of fishing barbs or harpoons, one of which passes through the point of contact of the bison's stomach's rupture. Bataille has stated that this scenario describes "murder and expiation," without really explaining what he means by this.¹²⁹ The following analysis undertakes this explanation.

The dead bison encourages the reading of this tableau; clearly there is import to this scene, it is not simply decorative, it carries significance, or the bison would not be so obviously disembowelled and would be simply a platonic bison. But in the tension of the relationship between anthropomorph and big beast the question of the duck-mounted stick has been overlooked; Bataille says of the 'mask': "This kind of bird signifies the shaman's voyage into the beyond, into the kingdom of death," but of the mounted duck he ventures only that, "the bird on the perch emphasizes this deeply religious meaning."¹³⁰ This does not explain why there are two ducks in the tableau. The second, clearly,

¹²⁶ "The existence at Lascaux of a painted scene, the dead man and his fallen weapon...shows that the Perigordians or Upper Aurignacians knew composition." Breuil, *Four Hundred Centuries*, 149

¹²⁷ Bataille privileges defecation in human and non-human animal distinction, observing that the "general taboo on obscenity" that covers (in ethnography) menstruation and (in the Bible) nudity nowhere covers the human repulsion to faeces" the "horror of excremental matter which belongs to man alone (..) There is therefore an aspect of the transition from animal to human so radically negative that no one talks about it." *Eroticism*, 214-5

¹²⁸ Clottes makes the point that the loss of consciousness for the shaman is not a binary but part of an altered state of consciousness "at the heart of shamanism the world over ...from a neurological perspective...they may, however, be thought of as ranging along a continuum." Clottes, *The Shamans of Prehistory*, 12-13

¹²⁹ *Eroticism*, 75; However, he footnotes this in a reference to his 1955 Skira book *Lascaux, or the Birth of Art* where he says "I have listed and criticised the various explanations then current. Others no more satisfactory have been published since. By 1955 I had relinquished the idea of putting forward my own hypothesis." *Lascaux, or the Birth of Art*, 139-140

¹³⁰ *Cradle of Humanity*, 172; Of note here is a development made by Yue Zhuo who links the two: "The bird's head, portrayed both as an integral part of the man and outside him (poised on the stick)." Yue Zhuo "Alongside the

because it is mounted on a handle, is meant to be carried, but then this doubled animal is superfluous unless it too carries relevance *as a doubled location*. The ducks must have some shared characteristic, a dualistic communication between them, one demarcating their separation; this demarcation cannot be solely reserved for the visual image. One duck is not *the other* duck. One duck is *here, I am duck*; the other, at the end of my arm, is *there, duck-in-world*. The duck is a notoriously noisy animal, where its quacks while flying will often serve as a punctuation for the path of its flight. Herein lies evidence for some kind of relation between the two fowl: one, a mask obscuring the face, and mouth, of the shaman that now speaks as duck, and, on the other hand, *the other animal*, the duck-speaking image. The inference is that the shaman has distributed the iterated sense of his or her being through the ventriloquial envoicing of the quacks of the duck, using echo technology, or resonant ventriloquism, to quack from the stick as well as from various remote locations: the cave walls. Bataille believes that the mask concealed ‘man’s’ humanity, affirming it, and defining itself as king of the animals, but if this was the case the archaic human would probably not have selected the duck as its corona when nearby (on the cave wall) are the more majestic bison and even rhinoceros.¹³¹ Surely these are more *prestigious* candidates for monarchical associations. Indeed, if the human figure has hierarchical status, if he or she is a priest or sorcerer, then it is difficult to situate the figural depictions “all distinguished for the extreme negligence of the way they are made.”¹³² The shaman’s effacement is therefore a *continuing* operating mode; he or she desires the (inverted, or filthy) prestige of noisy animals, the water fowl— and not the silent lion— because of the punctuation of space that the noise of the quacks offer auditive consciousness.¹³³ The noisy animals broadcast affective presence from the

Animals: Bataille’s Lascaux Project” *Yale French Studies* 127 “Animots: Postanimality in French Thought” eds. Senior, Clark, and Freccero (2015), 27-8

¹³¹ *Cradle of Humanity*, 107

¹³² *Cradle of Humanity*, 66. The quote is from (Abbé) Henri Breuil, *Four Hundred Centuries of Cave Art*, 95; On shamanic prestige, see Michael Cepek (2019) “Valueless Value: The question of production in Cofán shamanism” in *Hau: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 9 (2) 320-333

¹³³ Bataille disagrees, saying that the animals represented in the cave “are not all the animals. They are those that arouse man’s desire, those that he eats (always on the condition that they also be large and worthy of respect), and wild beasts.” Bataille, *Cradle of Humanity*, 74 It is challenging to think of the duck as prestigious. But it is noisy and eminently edible. It should be noted that even today in the Dordogne (where the Lascaux cave is) the duck is respected and forms, together with beef—the bovine descendent of the bison—the staple protein of the local diet. Moreover, speculation on this edible staple and its place in the archaic cosmology might rest on its disappearance to feed underwater, an underworld and death-like voyage, or crossing between thalassic continuity and objective surface.

resonant walls of the cave.¹³⁴ In cacophony, the two ducks affirm the communicative contact between the destroyed shaman and their ventriloquised voice, not at the end of the stick, but reflecting (echoing) from a different inaugural, or initial, point on the cave walls.¹³⁵ In other words, in the moment of shamanic human visual effacement it is not just the visual-image that is destroyed as discontinuous control, but the entire notion of space-time dimensionality that is altered. The shamanic sound-image, has expanded from the self-stick, subject-object, self-world, to an engorged immersive sonic field where a hypertrophied noumenal being is interiorised by the effect of the cave resonances.

From the rhinoceros: excrement.¹³⁶ Just as figuration is rejected in the human, the excreted element is privileged as the anti-form, the waste. This is being-rhinoceros ‘vomiting’ out being-faeces. Effacement, or figural rejection, is evidenced by the shaman’s faint; it is just as Sade warns, ‘release leads to loss of consciousness.’¹³⁷ The body, of the rhino who defecates, and the zoomorphic shamanic duck’s head, is being, left behind. The tableau announces a moment of destruction of unified consciousness (and entry into continuity) commensurate with the opposite alteration of the bison: the moment it moves from continuity to meat-object. The faint announces being’s move toward continuity in the following iterative sequence: the shamanic being is, a) becoming duck b) becoming the quack of a duck c) migrating as quack from the position formerly occupied by the duck ‘I’ to that of the duck-there d) affirming the destruction and migration by *responding* as duck-there in the quack thrown back: the sound image of the squawk returning (as echo) from the cave wall. Sonic mimesis announces this primal violence through the echo of the cave:

¹³⁴ The placement of the animal images on the walls has been observed by Steven Waller: “in the deep caves of Lascaux, the images of horses, bulls, bison and deer are found in regions with high levels of sound reflection, whereas feline art is found in regions of the caves with poor acoustics.” S.J. Waller, “Sound and Rock Art”, *Nature* 363 (1993): 501

¹³⁵ *Cradle of Humanity*, 55

¹³⁶ For Bataille’s original interpretation of the tableau, where “the rhinoceros that moves away after having gutted the dying animal” see *The Cradle of Humanity*, 170-173, 172

¹³⁷ See Section 2 of this chapter and Bataille “Sade” *Literature and Evil*, 97

My thought then passes from one world to the other, from the objective one where it constructs itself to the subjective one where it is undone, but in the time it takes to come undone, before it is completely *undone*, I can still externalize its content.¹³⁸

The shaman is acephalic in their lost consciousness, they have externalised their content as noise: a cry and its retorts, shamanic reliquaries, sonic rhino shit and cacophony. Menstrual marks appear as well, noting the calendar of shamanic activity.¹³⁹ The only *is* of shamanic being is now the animal cry itself. This acephalic object has no consciousness of itself– it is an iteration of corporeal continuity. Just as an animal is continuous, it has no knowledge of its ipseity– but it is in contingent communication with the immersive field of which it is part. Bataille describes this process in terms of a swarm of flies:

No doubt the individual fly dies, but these flies are the same as those of last year. Last year's would be dead? They may be, but *nothing* has disappeared. The flies remain, equal to themselves like the waves of the sea. This may seem contrived: a biologist separates a fly from the swarm, a brush stroke is all it takes. But he does it *for himself*, he does not separate it for the flies. To separate itself from the others, a 'fly' would need a monstrous force of understanding: then it would name itself and do what understanding normally does by means of language, which alone founds the separation of the elements, and by founding it founds itself on it, within a world formed of separated and dominated entities.¹⁴⁰

Entering the swarm– coming to presence plurally and continuously– the shamanic faint tells us this: it is a dissolving point of attunement to the channel of the duck's quacks; next to the shaman the mounted duck's head lies discarded. If the image is representative *at all* of some drama that occurred within the cave, that is the transmission of sound across space, the communication between animals that indicates not just space, but empirical contact with continuity by its calibration in the flight path of the quacks. As individuated elements of being, the singular transversal movement of points of re-origin mitigate a spatial-becoming wholly other: each quack is a new existence inaugurated in a bifurcation of being's flow, like flies– for flies– within the swarm. Space is abolished as geometry in these inaugurations. The shaman starts existence again in every iteration of being's distinct parietal

¹³⁸ *Accused Share Vols. II and III*, 242

¹³⁹ For a detailed study of menstrual signalling in parietal art see: C. Power (2004) "Women in Prehistoric Rock Art" in G. Berghaus (ed). *New Perspectives on Prehistoric Art* (Westport, CT.: Praeger), 75-103

¹⁴⁰ "Hegel, la mort et le sacrifice." *OC XII*, 331-2 translation Michael Richardson in Richardson, ed. (1998) *Georges Bataille: Essential Writings*, (London: Sage Publications), 19

echo across the cave's inner space. The shaman has travelled emetically, as if vomit, through being within the medium of their own voice and in so doing has crossed into the knowledge of death that is only possible from a perspective of absence of consciousness. In becoming duck-quack-echo they have become a noisy pulse on the resonant frequency of their own being's interior. This prestigious cacophony is a mark of the 'wholly other'— becoming the duck, becoming dead, becoming spirit. Becoming duck quack: animality perhaps selected for the way its noise explodes in a linear punctuation of sky and water.¹⁴¹ Each festive point, each echo, each quack, each duck, each existence, is a maculation, a mark that effaces, stains and liberates being on its own sex-death flow: anarchic liberation from an objective rendering. Ululation, throwing out, vomiting, throwing up, ridding the body of its preconditional embodiment: these are an alignment with the ceaseless energy of the universal, a return to its flow after the realised dream of perceptual individuation. Bataille's cries return to the animals:

In the darkness of the cave, with the glow of the lamps, he celebrated a rite of evocation. He cared little about the images that were already there; all that mattered to him were the animals, which would appear suddenly, making their presence tangible, in response to the intensity of his desire. The nascent image ensured the approach of the beast and the communication of the hunter with the hunted. Previously, the one who evoked a bull or a stag was its intimate, its possessor.¹⁴²

The animal spirit and the animal body return the noumenal to an internal corporeality for the shamanic practitioner. The desire for the animal eroticises continuity and alteration, as 'the very point where the totality of being takes form.'¹⁴³ Becoming not-thing by becoming animal is freedom from

¹⁴¹ The emphasis here remaining that alteration is not notional, theistic, or conditional, but physically occurs. David Hendy reports on a similar physical sound experiment using a tapping of flints: "...it seemed that the tapping had suddenly woken some real yet invisible entity'—like an avian spirit. He knew there was a perfectly good scientific explanation to hand: the shape of the courtyard, the mix of the building materials, the sound produced, the men's position— all this had set up a pattern of sound waves, which created a moving, fluttering echo with a life of its own. For the rest of the afternoon they tapped the stone blade again and again, and discovered that, given the right mix of circumstances, they could keep evoking the sound of a bird flying across the courtyard. They knew there was a hard science behind the phenomenon. But they claimed this 'did nothing to dispel the "magical" qualities' of the fluttering sound they'd created." David Hendy, *Noise: A Human History of Sound and Listening*, 6-7 reports on the work of Ian Cross and Aaron Watson. See "Acoustics and the Human Experience of Socially-organized Sound," in, Chris Scarre and Graeme Lawson, eds. (2006) *Archaeoacoustic* (Cambridge: McDonald Institute Monographs)

¹⁴² *Cradle of Humanity*, 77

¹⁴³ *Accursed Share Vols II and III*, 118

the servitude of instrumentality.¹⁴⁴ The enumeration of echoes, like Sade, is an enumeration of release expiation, and the painting of dot matrices, claviers and grids found on the cave walls indicate ontic invagination.

The doubled volume of inner sound space and exterior release of this interior in the cave-cathedral gives the shaman a total physical image of their innermost animal desiring-body. The vectors of call and response are therefore the auricular lubricity of unchannelling. It is this precise doubling that announces the sovereign momentary coronation of the bestial, as an *affective* coronation.

On important occasions human life is still bestially concentrated in the mouth: fury makes men grind their teeth, terror and atrocious suffering transform the mouth into the organ of rending screams. On this subject it is easy to observe that the overwhelmed individual throws back his head while frenetically stretching his neck so that the mouth becomes, as far as possible, a prolongation of the spinal column, *in other words, it assumes the position it normally occupies in the constitution of animals.*¹⁴⁵

In the darkness the echo is the value of the intensity, which it measures in echoes, and these cross its inner-space not as time-space dimensions, but as raw animal textures of sex and death. Bataille makes the channel resonate between the embouchement of the mouth and the ejaculatory/excretory chambers. The cave-plenum-vagina makes the same connections: its alignment marks the gesture of coronation, of prestigious noise-filth, effaced, animal anarchism, as that which was once apart becomes continuous as animal, and in so doing it becomes, acephalic, broadcast, singular and sovereign. The tilting back of the head to align the screaming mouth with the screaming continuity of the imperiously wasteful universe aligns the human with the universal *as unchannel*.

Here,

in the labyrinth of thought, the paths that lead, through movements of vehement gaiety, to that place of death where excessive beauty begets excessive suffering, where all the cries that will ever be heard are mingled, cries whose powerlessness, in this awakened state, is our *secret* magnificence.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁴ For a full development of Bataille's position here, see "Kinsey, the Underworld and Work" in *Eroticism*, 149-163, especially 158-159

¹⁴⁵ Bataille, "Mouth" in *Encyclopædia Acephalica*, 62

¹⁴⁶ *Accursed Share Vols II and III*, 370

Powerless cries as dissolving points of contact suggest some kind of correlation action to atheological systematic empowerment (as discussed) and this action engages a technique for alteration where, in the outside of thought, because the person is nonconscious it becomes possible to aesthetically alter that person's being through contact with the surface in exactly the same way as the sound object alters from the sound of a train to an information-less whistle. Because expiation ends the totality of thought it ends the totality of being in a headless operation: then, the guillotined aspect of its severed form is autonomous and free and this means that it no longer has any ontogenetic structure, no hierarchy and no history. It can be either immersive (continuous) or an inassimilable or inadmissible form, such as faeces or infinity, or both— as the sonic/auditory focus is here— a (human) animal cry or a burst of laughter. The point of expiation is alteration, but alteration through invocation/evocation— expiation as exchange of the figure for the inadmissible. The imageless headless demon or the continuous animal; neither knows itself. With this alteration the person is free from their personhood not as an intention of atheology, or its systematicity, or its product, but as its radical ancillary.

Conclusion

*In the essence of humanness, a fierce impulse seeks autonomy, the freedom to be.*¹

It is necessary to become wholly other or cease to be.²

The thesis proposes that atheology is essentially a manifesto for unsubordinated being. By starting with essence as tendency towards autonomy Bataille counters the stipulative authority of God. The problem, then comes not with God, but with a version of power that is stipulative. Bataille discovers this in the stasis of determinacy, which exists in being not as the antithesis of expenditure, but as its impure limit, against which expenditure necessarily determines its own limitlessness. The movement of expenditure is itself a force, or a power exercised by a point of determinacy that attracts matter toward it and repulses matter away from it. This point of determinacy is a nucleus of definition, but the power of the movement to which its stasis is in relation alters from essential to totalitarian, or hegemonic at the point of alteration from attraction to repulsion.

Bataille cannot think conceptually without invoking reason, concept or ideality without invoking logical authorities of the head, the vestigial tail of God's presence. By directing focus to the morphic logic of the thingness of the point, generative materiality's autonomy affirms and destroys its own formation from within its own material body. This alters the nucleus' stasis to make it atemporally momentary and, therefore, infinitely continuous. Although it still exercises authority as a defining principle, this authority is distributed to the parts that are attracted and repulsed by a gesture of political substitution.

Being affirmed and destroyed is embodied as a human being penetrated by their own systematic singularity. Gestural poesis animates atheology's authority by its motion of perpetual invagination. This establishes the radicality of its technical authority by matching atheology's

¹ Georges Bataille, "Preface," *On Nietzsche*, xxi, this citation also heads the thesis' Introduction

² Bataille *OC v. I*, 443 My translation. This citation is discussed in Chapter Four: Expiation.

generative dynamic of being to a distributive political counter-dynamic. If compenetrative being is not seeking autonomy then it is not able to be.

Expiation is a way of directing focus, not by tensing the muscles of an eyeball but by unchannelling the attention of the intellectual operation through the ear, and, instead of listening to being, hearing it in an active mode. Unchannelling is an alteration to a wholly other installation of being, by becoming lubricious at the same time as becoming auricular, being passes with acephalic agency into other forms and non-forms, and the singular, sacrificed object-consciousness turns into a desired and continuous animal or a prestigiously noisy quack of a duck.

As a body logic this comes about by ridding the body of all authority; becoming wholly other is the ridding the body of impure authority, because authority is a crime, and the body is criminally guilty of its own definition, expiation rids the body of itself. This reveals the extent of Bataille's atheological radicality: because his technique rids the body of all authority it rids it of all being. The remainder, that which is left behind as authority after expiation/alteration leaves its body behind, is atheological systematicity. This remainder is a form of perpetual motion of expenditure where the limit is only its own systematicity. Bataille has created a practice or form of embodiment of perpetual non-being, which is death, a death that is not opposed to being. Passing through this mode as an embodied practice means sensing or experiencing non-conscious cognition as a repetition of a crime, where each repetition is of being as difference.

Bataille's difference, as a consequence, has moved away from the exclusionary rigidity of the antithetical negation and into an interpretive ontologically immanent way of incorporating both impossibility and dimensional impossibility without invoking necessity. Because the research does this it has discovered atheology as a modal form that is a prosthetic to existence, but no longer one that is attached to existence, or being's external prosthetic, but one that is incorporated into existence's embodied sense, as an insertion of the whole of being by way of its part. What the thesis has developed is a way of encountering the momentary form that is internal and yet adjunctive to embodied existence, and this development is religious in the sense that it is not useful. The question of whether the argument the thesis presents 'solves' Bataille by somehow 'completing' him should be treated in the same manner as an ancillary question whose purpose is profane because it tends towards

usefulness. Instead, the adjunctivity of the question forms a shape which can insert itself into any statement of entirety, invaginating it as it does so. At the same time, expiating this, contemplation rests on its unchannelling or excretion as a noisy affirmation that a crime of determinacy has been committed. Its author might otherwise be a burst of laughter.

The thesis has sought a way to articulate a practice of political mattering. By re-evaluating the role of materialism in Bataille's work it has uncovered a strange hybrid form of logic, where the sacred, as a religious practice of thinking, can be situated or expressed within the material, including the material human body, but only as a political economy. This has far-reaching implications for counter-cultural practice, where the tendency is to either engage with the world politically, as a binary or a dialectically-derived proposition, or retreat from the world to realms of the spiritually transcendent. There can be no doubt from the research's findings that Bataille has established a locus for this hybridity in the form of the sovereign moment. Chapter Two shows how this locus can, through its formation, reach into the beyond of an envisaging meditative environment to make mattering happen as difference, and in different ways. Chapter 3 demonstrates that this environment can be— or rather is always— available as the politically corporeal. Because of this, materiality itself is established by the momentary practice of difference, as a political obligation. Therefore, to practice non-conformity materially becomes a sacred devotion, not least a devotion to an anti-essentialist position of what it means for existence to be generative.

To be productive or, more cogently, to be sexually reproductive is to be subordinate. The generativity of being asks that its homage be paid in the currency of difference, of mis-shape and of freakishness, in a token of momentariness that it mints itself. This means that material existence is generated in a political mode as freedom from the burdens of procreation. The creative gesture, as Chapter Three has developed, is the momentary realisation of these political modes by acts that balance diffusion of materials and contextual exchange. Sexual license, body fluids and the genital parts are sites and gestures that define political contexts and modes of empowerment. As a cultural practice this aligns creative and religious expression with the forming of political momentariness.

The question then opens as to the possibility of developing a formal practice from what is, ultimately, a theory of a practice. The thesis has developed suggestions for this that lie outside the

possibilities of conventional Western thought, but within parameters of other contemporary belief systems, because the archaic record is still practiced in many parts of the world. The overall suggestion of the thesis is that, by opening thought to a more radical form of embodiment, these practices can and probably should be more widely attempted as a way of understanding what it is to exist freely without sensual constraint. The thesis hopes that it finds an audience of willing practitioners, who decide to pursue its methodology as meditative strategy in ways of defining their existence as continuous. These practitioners might be artists, scientists, philosophers, shamanic operatives, or all and none of these, but each might contemplate that what they do, if they do, is a way of mattering politically that owes a form of debt to Georges Bataille.

**The Continuous Body:
Emergence, Authority and Expiation
in the Œuvre of
Georges Bataille**

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