

end," to the extreme experience of the Impossible as the only way of being authentic, which makes Bataille the philosopher of the passion for the Real—no wonder he was obsessed with Communism and Fascism, these two excesses of life against democracy, which was "a world of appearances and of old men with their teeth falling out."⁵⁵

Bataille was fully aware of how this transgressive "passion for the Real" relies on prohibition; this is why he was explicitly opposed to the "sexual revolution," to the rise of sexual permissiveness which began in his last years:

In my view, sexual disorder is accursed. In this respect and in spite of appearances, I am opposed to the tendency which seems today to be sweeping it away. I am not among those who see the neglect of sexual interdictions as a solution. I even think that human potential depends on these interdictions: we could not imagine this potential without these interdictions.⁵⁶

Thus Bataille brought to its climax the dialectical interdependence between Law and its transgression—"system is needed and so is excess," as he liked to repeat: "Often, the criminal himself wants death as the answer to the crime, in order finally to impart the sanction, without which the crime would be possible instead of being what it is, what the criminal wanted."⁵⁷ (This, also, was why he ultimately opposed Communism: he was for the excess of the revolution, but feared that the revolutionary spirit of excessive expenditure would afterward be contained in a new order, even more "homogeneous" than the capitalist one: "the idea of a revolution is intoxicating, but what happens afterward? The world will remake itself and remedy what oppresses us today to take some other form tomorrow."⁵⁸)

This, perhaps, is why Bataille is strictly premodern: he remains stuck in this dialectic of the Law and its transgression, of the prohibitive Law as generating the transgressive desire, which forces him to the debilitating perverse conclusion that one has to install prohibitions in order to be able to enjoy their violation—a clearly unworkable pragmatic paradox. (What Bataille is unable to perceive are simply the consequences of the Kantian philosophical revolution: the fact that the absolute excess is that of the Law itself—the Law intervenes in the "homogeneous" stability of our pleasure-oriented life as the shattering force of the absolute destabilizing "heterogeneity." In his Ethics seminar, Lacan himself clearly oscillates on this key point: in Chapter IV, he interprets the link between Law and desire along the lines of the Pauline "transgressive" model (it is the prohibition itself which engenders the desire to transgress it); while later, toward the end of the seminar, he moves toward the properly Kantian formula of the categorical imperative (the moral Law) as directly identical to pure desire.⁵⁹)

So, far from announcing a triumphant solution, Lacan's "Kant avec Sade," his assertion of Sade as the truth of Kant, rather names an embarrassing problem that Lacan failed to resolve—and did not even fully confront—in his Ethics seminar: how are we to distinguish the appearance of pure desire—the violent gesture of transgressing the social domain of "servicing goods" and entering the terrifying domain of *ate*, that is, the ethical stance of the subject who "does not compromise his desire"—from the