

REFLECTION OF MAN



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(eds.)**

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INTRODUCTION

Marek Halbich

The „traditional“ object of investigation of social and cultural anthropology, the studies of different societies and cultures, has been changing rapidly in recent years, although it seems that this paradigmatic inversion is not yet finished. All the time the tendency persists to work through so-called exotic ethnography, as though anthropologists still have partly that *neolithic intelligence* as Claude Lévi-Strauss describes in *Tristes Tropiques*. So whose and how contemporary modern or post-modern has the ethnologist had to examine? At probably as many answers exists as there are members of the anthropological community. I confine myself in this concise expose to just a very short reflection.

The principal problem does not consist when anthropologists carry out their investigations among the Hottentots or the Badags, in a big supranational firm or metropolitan coffee-bars, but rather in that there occurs some „second fission“ of anthropology. The first consists in evident differentiation between biologically and socioculturally oriented anthropologists and in almost nonexistent communication between those two practically antagonized groups. The second, probably major, fission occurs in the community of social and cultural anthropologists, which I would describe with considerable simplification, as like the dispute of „traditionalists“ and „modernists“. Anthropologists and ethnologists or at least certain parts of them seem to reflect tendencies which are observable practically in all the investigations, whether realized in tribal societies or in the complex societies, in which these two groups co-exist and they hold a similar dispute with each other like these for which they are that object of their field-works. The representatives of both groups in being unyielding preserve this stance perhaps unwittingly, oblivious of that which could be common to both: always better and more exact cognition and interpretation of assorted manifestations of humans and their culture apart from

7 the territory whereof they are carrying out their researches. At the

same time everyone should be aware of a certain vanity in their behaviour, because as North American anthropologist Clifford Geertz wrote in one of his essays: “*All ethnography is part philosophy, and a good deal of the rest is confession.*”¹. Keep for ever in mind this relativity of our amazing enquiry into human society.

¹ Geertz, C. (2000). Interpretace kultur [The Interpretation of Cultures]. Praha: SLON, p. 381.

P A R T I

**ANTHROPOLOGICAL CONCEPTS
AND SCHOOLS**

THE OTHER AS THE DEFINING LINGUISTIC CONCEPT FOR HUMAN EXISTENCE

Vít Vaníček

Human existence has been a problematic issue for both natural and social sciences. It is the fundamental issue from which these disciplines stem. Since critical theory invaded and established itself as a methodological tool in every discipline concerning human existence, all assumptions differentiating human being from other existence have been challenged.

The difference between human existence and the existence of other things has been assumed, anthropomorphically, as long as human thinking proposed the question of *what the human existence is*.

However, it was Martin Heidegger's legacy that gave this stream of thought a secular and rationally construed basis – that of differentiating between the *existence* of things [*sein*] and *being* of humans [*Dasein*]. The crucial difference proposed by Heidegger lies in the *reflective position* humans take. This conclusion is not freed of the anthropomorphic dimension, yet with Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of human existence, it is only understandable that human debate on the human existence is delineated by it.

One never speaks of human existence but of human being, or even more accurately, of *the mode of human being*. That is the necessary methodological basis that one has to take to start formulating questions of humans. And it is one that *already in its formulation* bears the position we take – the position of reflection.

Reflection of human existence is embedded in itself. Any question regarding human being is in a circular way locked in the position from which we can start formulating it. In other words, we are building a model that in its structure already contains what is being asked. For the model not to be closed and ultimately reductive, it is necessary to employ two mechanisms at the same time. These are the mechanisms of *metonymy* and *metaphor*, both

a part of the dual concept originated in poetics and raised to the level of methodological tool in linguistics.

These two mechanisms can help understand the reflective position human being is structurally set in – that is, the position in which human being is *already always present* once it is thought about solely from the perspective of its own mode of existence.

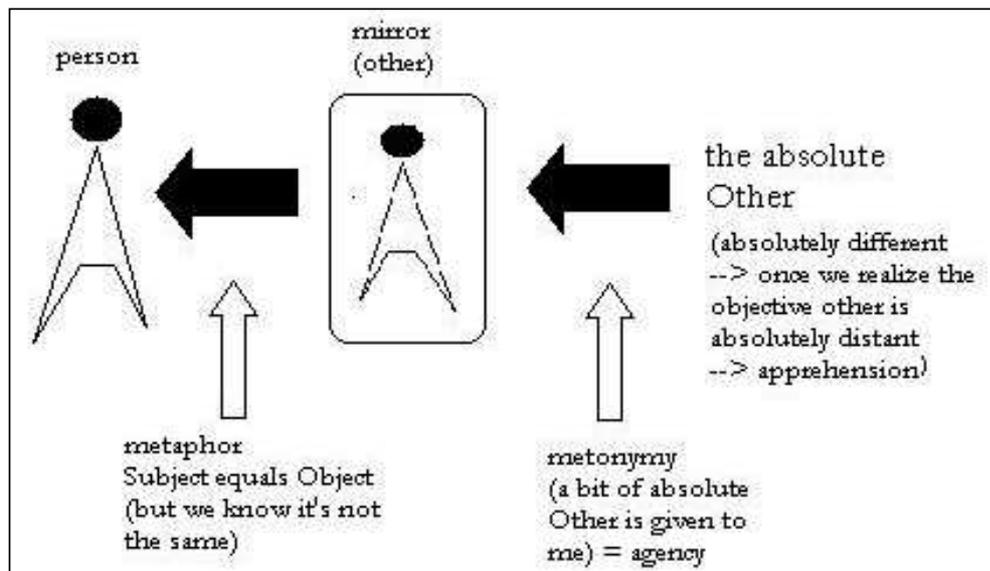
There is no “real” without perception. If we define perception as at least partially conscious operation, we must depart from the assumption that perception cannot embrace the whole of what is being perceived and is necessarily subject to selection that is partially unconscious¹. Therefore, this mechanism’s contribution to perception is an interface *based on contiguity*. Contiguity in this sense means proximity that never reaches the level of equivalence. Contiguity of the interface is attested to by arbitrariness of language signs (i.e. phonemes are close to reality but always only re-present it; at the same time, lexemes are close to phonemes but always only re-present them based on limited arbitrariness). The character of metonymy is diachronic, based on reoccurrence.

Reality is “parallel” to perception. Parallel in the sense that perception and reality coexist while being connected through re-presentation: in other words that *something stands in place of something else* and we take it as such (sign) while we *know it is not the same*. The characteristics of this coexistence are based on *equality of the alternate somethings* that is based on their constellation (nothing is more in the back than something else, they are flattened in image, and we create semantic links between them). The character of metaphor is synchronic, based on simultaneity.

The model of reflection of the mode of human being is portrayed in Lacan’s concept of the mirror. A person sees their reflection in the mirror, but has to create the link between their own being and the image. Living among other human beings, the person has the unconscious image of an ultimate, *absolute Other*

¹ It is also necessarily discontinuous, which presupposes an initiation of the process, something that triggers the switch between the conscious and the unconscious. The only agency can be topological recursion, that is, parts actually contain the whole in the moments of their recursive operations. The possibility of the recursive and contingent coexistence of the conscious and the unconscious is thus vested in this principle.

(i.e. the person knows she or he is not alone, and at the same time knows that the others live a similar but not identical life as she or he does). This absolute Other is infinitely different from us, absolutely distant. While watching the reflection in the mirror, the person creates the link between what is perceived (the other) and both the absolute Other and the person's own I. To create these links, however, both above-mentioned mechanisms need to be employed – metonymy is the mechanism that actualizes the other in the mirror as a part of the absolute Other; metaphor then creates the notion of the “I” in the mirror, paralleling the real I of the person while maintaining the conscious difference between the two (i.e. the person knows that their subject equals the perceived object and yet knows it is not the same).



It has been argued (Lakoff 1993) that the mechanism is the one of *conceptual metaphor* – that of a bridge between one “source” domain of human experience and the other, “target” domain of human experience. That means, that the unknown is grasped initially only on the basis of mere *likeness*, while this likeness is elevated to the level of an absolute analogy – an analogy that supposes that one thing *is* or *is precisely equal* to the other, while there is no support to claim so in the concept of the familiar, “source” area. That brings language to its inherent ambiguity. It is this ambiguity that allows for immediate material—or actual use—to enter the linguistic reality.

That is why the same set of mechanisms is employed in any human language, overlapping in turns the levels of the conscious and the unconscious. While being coherent with its structural whole (mechanism of metonymy), any actual use – actualization – of language is also re-presenting reality in an arbitrary manner based on social consensus (mechanism of metaphor). An utterance – as an example of actualization – in language has to be coherent with the whole of the structure given by the linguistic system it is a part of. At the same time, this utterance is necessarily arbitrary, i.e. the speaker and the recipient both know that what is being said equals the thing being described but they also know that *it is not the thing*.

Arbitrariness is always *modal* in the sense that it follows modes of expression departing from the structure of language while always extending the recipient's openness to new actualizations. It runs *along certain lines* of recursion while never *exactly the same ones*. These are only afterwards taken for, perceived of, as rules.

The modality of this arbitrariness depends on *understanding* that is subject to selective process of the recipient. This selection process works on the basis of *error tolerance*: since language is recursive in its character, no utterance, spoken, written, or performed, can be always the same on both the side of the emitter and the recipient. It is error tolerance that humans employ to actually understand, or, to make sense of, what is being communicated to them. Every such actualization is subject to conditions that delimit *understanding* it.

If something is not here and something else is standing in its place, referring to the absent is *reconstructing* of what is not here. Understanding works along the same lines: it is always a *reconstruction* of what is being perceived.

Language always re-presents reality. What is this representation of reality, however? It is crucial to hyphenate the term in order to see the mechanism of it. Re-presentation also works on the mechanism of symbol, that is, it offers something that stands in place of something else. By hyphenating the term, we are stressing the fact that in re-presentation, the something that is being alternated by something else, is actually *not present*; in

other words, metaphor is something that stands in the place of something else while this something else is not here.

Therefore, re-presentation is characterized by *distance*, i.e. by the measure of the “here” from “not here.” This brings up an important specific aspect. It means that (1) that which is not present is *too distant* to be attested to by other sensory input in geographic sense but also (2) that which is not present is *distant* in temporal sense (i.e. in the past experience *or even* future, estimated experience, the experience not-yet-experienced) and in chronological sense (i.e. in the experience of sequence, or cause-effect).

The distance between that which is “here” and that which is “not here” is the area where the reflection of the mode of being that a human being experiences in their setting happens. If language re-presents reality in terms of its reconstruction, it is both the vehicle and form of such a reflection. Language then necessarily re-creates the natural and cultural reality that human beings find themselves in. This process, however, is always two-directional: language reflects reality in the same way that the image of a person in the mirror creates the person’s other.

In this way, any given set of signs that a human society uses as a method of communication—as a language—reflects the setting of the experience which humans undergo and share. The process works in two directions: (1) the human experience reflects the setting in which humans find themselves, but at the same time, with the influence which humans exercise in their physical setting, (2) the human experience simultaneously constitutes and changes the physical setting. This dichotomy depends on the ability to maintain the otherness of the physical other (objectified reality) as well as the non-physical one (reality that depends on the reflexive position of the individual human). In other words, it establishes a differentiation of binary characteristics, the differentiation always constituting the self of human experience and the Other of its opposite. It is the space between these two poles that is the realm of reflection; it is the platform on which the reflection of man and/or woman, the living and/or the dead, the us and/or the them is formulated.

15 Human being is vested in this two-fold activity. If the former direction of observation in Lacan’s mirror describes human

existence (ontic), the latter describes the mode of human being (ontologic), following the distinction outlined above according to Heidegger. Therefore, it appears that it is within this vehicle of reflection language where the constitution of being a human is always established, regardless of the cultural and social patterns in particular.

A conclusion offers itself that there is no reflection of human being outside the limits of a human being. It is the reflection of human being that constitutes, delineates, and determines human being, or – on the level of cultural identity – being human.

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HETEROLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

The Use Value of the *Collège de Sociologie* (1937-39) for Cultural Anthropology¹

Johannes Ries

From November 1937 to July 1939, some Parisian non-conformists, surrealist dissidents and students of Marcel Mauss met every two weeks during the academic year in a circle which they called *Collège de Sociologie*. Within this scientific frame men both of letters and of science listened to lectures of their colleagues and discussed a concept which was configured against the common discourse of science because of its self-ascribed “power to call everything into question” (Bataille 1988d: 334): *sociologie sacrée*. A few prominent scholars like Michel Foucault, Jaques Derrida or Jean Baudrillard noticed the College of Sociology and integrated parts of its perspective on man into their own horizons of thinking. But in general, social sciences are unaware of the theory of sacred sociology.² And even if James Clifford (1981) has lucidly documented that (French) ethnography cannot be understood without its surrealist parallel, cultural anthropology is completely unaware of the College; it has accursed its mythical twin.

This essay is concerned with the theoretical potential of this short-lived project for cultural anthropology. First, I will outline the concept in general, then I will concentrate on the economic, socio-political, and religious focus of sacred sociology. Finally I will try to apply the concept to contemporary cultural anthropology and consider some new fields of research for a *heterological anthropology*.

¹ I am grateful to Annegret Ries for her inspiring comments on an earlier version of this text.

² Recently, there are some social scientists, who from a historical perspective, deal with the College of Sociology and outline its theories, e.g. Marroquin (2005) for the science of religion or Moebius (2006) for sociology.

The College of Sociology and sacred sociology

In July 1937, Georges Bataille, Roger Caillois and other future members of the College signed the *Note on the Foundation of a College of Sociology*, which was published in the periodical *Acéphale*. In this memorandum they criticized contemporary science as “timid and incomplete” because it “has been too limited to the analysis of so-called primitive societies while ignoring modern societies”. In contrast, the College wanted to devote to “Sacred Sociology”. Within modern society, it aimed to study “all manifestations of social existence where the active presence of the sacred is clear” (Ambrosino 1988: 5). Actually, the appeal found its followers and the members of the College began to lecture and discuss. In an interdisciplinary way, they combined social science with literature and arts, while time and again they focused on “dubious”, respectively “subversive” topics such as the executioner, revolution or secret societies (c.f. Hollier 1988). Georges Bataille and Roger Caillois functioned as the main promoters of the newly-established sacred sociology. Carlos Marroquín (2005) notices that, apart from the short *historical* period of the *Collège de Sociologie* (1937–1939), the circle as an *intellectual* project can be dated from 1933 until 1963, if one concentrates on the works of Bataille. His complete *œuvre* revolves around the sacred and its cultural manifestations. Consequently, I illustrate the concept of sacred sociology, which the College tried to establish, mainly in regard to Bataille’s texts.

Already in 1930 Bataille (1983b) struggles with the problem of the sacred – and he does this in a very unusual way.³ In surrealist manner, he equates spheres which are usually not discussed as related: excrements of the body, sexuality, emotion, expenditure, broken taboos and, finally, religion. Provocatively, he identifies “the identical [social] attitude toward shit, gods and cadavers” (Bataille 1985b: 94). This does sound blasphemous, at least tasteless. But beyond provocation, Bataille’s surrealist equation opens a new perspective on human society. If one wants to understand

³ In contrast to Marroquín, I suggest 1930, when Bataille wrote the text *The Use Value of D. A. F. de Sade* (1985b), as the year of intellectual foundation of the College, even if the text was published for the first time after Bataille’s death in 1970.

this equation, the sacred must be detached from its common Euro- and Christocentric aura. For Bataille “the realm of the sacred goes beyond the realm of religion” (Bataille 1988a: 104). As the sacred world, he classes all social facts, which are *foreign bodies* in regard to society. “The notion of the (heterogeneous) *foreign body* permits one to note the elementary *subjective* identity between types of excrement [...] and everything that can be seen as sacred” (Bataille 1985b: 94). Proceeding from this assumption, Bataille divides all social facts of a given society into profane facts and sacred facts. The profane sphere covers all civil, political, juridical, industrial, and commercial organization of society, whereas the religious sphere is concerned with prohibitions, obligations and the realization of sacred action by channelling social expulsion. All objects, places, beliefs, persons and practices that are *appropriated* (i.e. included and functionalised) by society belong to the profane sphere. In spheres, which are socially *excreted* (i.e. excluded and expelled) they gain sacred quality by that very accurse. As foreign bodies outside common sense they represent *sacred heterogeneity*, which challenges all *profane homogeneity*.

In 1933, four years before the College of Sociology was officially founded, Bataille enumerates further characteristics of sacred heterogeneity: It owns a socially ascribed unknown and dangerous power (c.f. *mana*) and is divided from homogeneity through social taboo. All unproductive expenditure and everything that is accursed is heterogenous, as well as everything which provokes affective reactions (attraction and repulsion) or breaks the laws of homogeneity. Within heterogeneity, common social reality has no validity, since heterogeneity follows other laws of nature. In short: sacred heterogeneity is *difference per se* (Bataille 1985a). What is set positive in the profane order is negated in the sacred sphere.

In the following, I will focus on the economical, socio-political and religious dimensions of the sacred and explain the concept of sacred sociology. Sacred expenditure, sovereignty, transgression and immanence will challenge profane productivity, power, prohibition and transcendence.

	homogeneity / profane order	heterogeneity / sacred negation
economy	productivity	expenditure
politics	power	sovereignty
society	prohibition	transgression
religion	transcendence	immanence

Diagram 1: Profane order and its sacred negation

General economy and sacred expenditure

In economic terms, the sacred manifests in unproductive expenditure. In his concept of general economy, Bataille (1988c) does not limit his analysis to production, but focuses on the sphere of consumption. He proceeds from the assumption that like the sun sends its sunbeams, every (social) organism is constantly producing more energy than it needs for its own survival. The surplus of energy can be consumed or used up in two ways: Following the primacy of accumulation, all surplus can be invested into growth, i.e. used for production. In this profane way of economical thinking, all present time is determined by future value addition. In contrast, the sacred way of surplus consumption follows a feast economy, which is focused on present-day immanence only. All surplus is abandoned to pure expenditure – sheer squandermania, which, against all rules of productivity, raises uselessness to its sacred purpose. Bataille assumes that this sacred use of surplus, which is actually a non-use, can be found in “archaic” societies only. These are stable, because they hold their “energy account” on one level. Cyclically, “archaic” societies blow off their energy surplus by destroying wealth in the sacred act.

Bataille (1988c) analyses archaic sacrifice as *the* example for such sacred economy. In sacrifice, man slaughters a living being or destroys material wealth and thereby withdraws it from all use. The ox which pulls the plough, the cow which gives milk, the pig which breeds piglets in the profane world is simply killed “for nothing” in the sacred sacrifice. With this irrational act, man fundamentally negates all capacity for work, nutritional value, fertility and productivity. He actively brings death – the most powerful

manifestation of negation – into the profane world of work and order. By integrating death and sacred expenditure into society, man (in a tragic way, indeed) re-sacralizes the animal, which he has profanized through use and utilization. The sacrificial animal by its selection for sacrifice is doomed and therefore accursed. It is separated from social homogeneity and lives in heterogeneity until it dies as a tragic symbol for the power of sacred expenditure.

Another case Bataille devotes himself to is the famous Potlatch of the Kwakiutl Indians.⁴ This example makes clear that expenditure does not need to culminate in death and killing in order to evoke the economic sacred within society. For Bataille, the Potlatch is less dominated by the exchange of gift and counter-gift but by simply giving away (in the sense of losing) a luxurious gift. But in contrast to absolute negation in sacrifice, the man who gives away things as a present takes possession of something immaterial: he appropriates his contempt of wealth and “owns” the impact of his generosity. So, he turns profane loss into sacred prestige. In contrast to power, which rests upon positive accumulation, his influence fundamentally rests upon negation. In “self-consuming” societies with a Potlatch spirit, the man who risks and loses everything is admired the most.

In Bataille’s eyes, modern society has lost any sense of expenditure and extradites all spheres to productivity. It has shifted from affirmative appreciation of sacred expenditure to demonstrative exclusion of every unproductiveness. Modern economy does not know any outlet for the surplus of its energy since it immediately reinvests all extra energy into growth under the paradigm of profane productivity. Bataille is aware that no group can survive if it squanders all of its resources without producing anything; even “archaic” cultures of expenditure do economize, produce and accumulate. He focuses on the use of *surplus* only. Cultures of expenditure differ from regimes of productivity in their discursive

⁴ In a Potlatch, a family head invited a lot of guests of high rank, entertained and supplied them over many days or weeks and finally showered them with presents (e.g. blankets). Often objects were simply destroyed (e.g. copper plates were thrown into the sea) without purpose. Following Mauss’ (1990) famous interpretation the organizer of a Potlatch wins fame and obliges his guests to organize another, more extravagant Potlatch.

assessment of expenditure: the former *subordinate* all production to expenditure (“We work in order to feast”) whereas the latter *accurse* all expenditure or utilizes it as an affirmation of productivity (“We celebrate in order to relax from work”). But like nobody can hinder the sun to waste his sunbeam, for Bataille even the most modern society cannot escape from expenditure. Even if it is accursed to heterogeneity, expenditure sooner or later unfolds its repercussion on homogeneity. Man who accumulates all time, is sooner or later confronted with the problem that limited space is too small for an adequate storage of all accumulated energy. Either the walls of the store house explode because of energy pressure, or man has to expand. The College of Sociology, born on the eve of the Second World War, was convinced that both options directly lead to war – an uncontrollable, catastrophic expenditure which “archaic” society prevents by constant feasting.

Sovereignty, community, and transgression

I have already touched upon the relation of heterogeneity and power or prestige. In the eyes of the members of the College, the sacred radiates power; but it is a specific form, which deserves closer attention. Actually, Bataille and Caillois disagree in their definition of power. Caillois (2001) concentrates on authoritarian power, a sort of political charisma, which sacred persons radiate and use in order to make their will prevail. Bataille uses the term very critically instead. I will follow his concept since I believe it is more sophisticated and therefore promises deeper insights. For Bataille, power is “the institutional union of the sacred force and military strength” (Bataille & Caillois 1988: 134). It is a formation, which derives from the sacred but at the same time is external to it. Power is the merging of sacred force for the *benefit* of an individual or an institution. But for Bataille (1991 III), every “use” of the sacred automatically implies *ab-use* and profanization. So, he favours *sovereignty* as a sacred counter-concept to profane power. If for Bataille, power is the use of force, sovereignty means renunciation of power. Not man who politically is at the controls, is sovereign, but man who principally negates

everything which limits his autonomy of decision. This concept of sovereignty implies constant transgression of border and norm. In negating all discursive control, the sovereign person escapes from all power and domination. Momentary discretion and spontaneous play lift man out of political machinery and let him develop into an independent (because not calculateable) person.

But it is not so much the single person, which the College concentrated on. The term *sacred sociology* indicates, that the College focused on collective forms of the sacred. It even went so far as to designate community *per se* as sacred. “Sacred sociology may be considered the study [...] of the entire communifying movement of society” (Bataille 1988b: 74). The College identified a specific type of community as the collective refuge of the sacred in the modern world: “elective communities”. These stand in contrast to “de facto communities” (tribe, nation, civilization), “traditional communities” on the basis of blood and race (fascism), but also to “democratic atomisation” (Bataille 1988b: 81-82, fn 14 on p. 407). Elective communities host persons, who dissociate from the whole of society but who want to re-composite a new, sacred association. A sacred community of sovereign members does not care about its formal and continued existence, but dedicates itself to pure action without reflection. It consequently negates all discursive order and in collective effervescence devotes itself to material, habitual and spiritual expenditure.

Joint transgression of prohibitions is one possibility to dissociate from society and to re-composite a community of accomplices. From the perspective of sacred sociology, transgression and prohibition together form one whole complex, which determines social life. At first, prohibitions have the formal function to prevent violence, destruction and chaos and to make work possible in a rationalized world. Only with the help of prohibitions is it possible to establish social stability against the chaos of nature. Society must rely on clear cut categories in order to guarantee its own homogeneous order. As I have pointed out, it excludes all (sacred) foreign bodies, prevents any mingling of homogeneity and heterogeneity, and guards both sides by prohibitions. The taboo may protect man’s world; but at the same time man is fascinated by the breaking of the taboo.

At first sight, Bataille's (1991, II) interpretation of prohibition and transgression does sound paradoxical: taboos only exist to be broken. But in fact, all prohibition inherently implies transgression, since it is the latter, which produces consciousness of the former. There would not be a rule if nobody violated it. Every break of a taboo is a sacrilege which profane society tries to avert by any means. But at the same time, sacrilege is the only entrance to heterogeneity – better: creation of the sacred realm. So it is the function of ritual to “organize” the sacrilege of transgression. For Bataille, breaking the taboo (in a ritual) opens up a world of total affirmation. Through transgression, the border of profane prohibition itself widens to the sacred realm, which did not even exist before the sacrilege. Michel Foucault has shown that this world rests upon “non-positive affirmation”:

“Transgression contains nothing negative, but affirms limited being – affirms the limitlessness into which it leaps as it opens this zone to existence for the first time. But correspondingly, this affirmation contains nothing positive: no content can bind it, since, by definition, no limit can possibly restrict it.” (Foucault 1998: 28-29)

In the moment of breaking, the taboo is lifted temporarily without being eliminated forever. On the contrary, its profane legal force is even consolidated. But for the span of transgression, a sacred state of emergency is declared. It opens all ordered world for chaos, which has a refreshing effect on society.⁵

World-immanent religion

Another characteristic of the sacred is its oscillation between attraction and repulsion. Bataille (1988a) identifies the sacred as the *nucleus*, around which all humans gather and thereby form

⁵ Marroquín and Seiwert have pointed to the fact that the concept of sacred transgression must not be understood as a terrorist appeal: „The cognition of the unavoidability of transgression of rules and of excesses does not imply their approval“ (Marroquín & Seiwert 1996: 147; translation from German). Clearly, Bataille (1991, II) insists that transgression of rules itself can be subjected to strict rules. In the ritual, transgression of prohibitions is often explicitly demanded and dictated.

society. Therefore, the sacred has a fundamentally attractive character. But paradoxically, for Bataille it is the repulsive content, which attracts man. Even in the sacred sphere itself, all objects oscillate between an impure (repulsive) and a pure (attractive) pole. Taking up this fundamental ambivalence, Bataille defines the sacred object as an incommensurable non-object, which profane man has only one category for: uncategorizable, i.e. sacred. It is especially ambivalence and ambiguity, absurdity and preposterousness, which designate the very essence of all that is sacred.

In order to describe the sacred condition and an individual's inner experience of the sacred, Bataille (1989, 1991 II) gets into metaphysics and outlines a genealogy of man and religion (which must not be misunderstood as historical process!). He proceeds from the assumption that, in discourse, humanity comes into being through the first use of tools: Man learns to distinguish the tool (as an object) from himself. Simultaneously, he establishes conscious self-identification in distinguishing himself (as an object) from his fellow men. Naturally, this genealogical step of human consciousness development has its repercussions to other spheres.

Becoming aware that he differs from the animal, man restricts his instincts through taboos, subjugates all action to rational productivity and transcendent purpose, and generally negates animality through human culture. But at the same time, man's self-consciousness gives birth to fear of death, since man perceives himself as a finite and mortal being. So, becoming a *homo faber*, man has established a transcendent order of objective things, which is threatened by the nothingness of death and chaos.

This is the profane stage of man: every autonomic individual lives and dies discursively separated from all other individuals. In the profane world, the self-conscious man is a *discontinuous* being. The close link, which the College of Sociology establishes between the sacred and the communifying movement already hints at what Bataille (1991 II) designates as *continuity* in his later works. For Bataille, man generally desires to open himself to the unity and totality of the whole world. But all-embracing continuity can be realized in the sacred condition only. Entering the sacred realm requires another negation, which initiates what I propose to call a *dialectic regress onto a higher level*. Expenditure, sovereignty, or

transgression, are all collective and cultural manifestations, which overcome the profane order of things through negation. With these collective instances, Bataille equates the individual's inner experience of ecstasy, violence, fear, or laughter – heterogeneous states in which man unites mind and body, sacred conditions in which reason fusions into very experience. In the sacred state, man celebrates dissolution from his own individuality and from the order of discontinuous things. He dissolves as an individual, merges into the world and thereby enters desired continuity. Man *de-humanizes* himself, so to speak. But this does not mean that he falls back into animality, because he *consciously* tries to lose consciousness. On the contrary: man sacralizes himself. In the sacred condition, man unites with his own nature and simultaneously overcomes it. Dialectically, his negation of negation of animality equates with affirmation through and through. It represents a regress onto a higher level. *Homo faber* becomes *homo sacer*.⁶

In contrast to the general assumption, that religion is concerned with spiritual beings and transcendence, sacred sociology studies world-immanent religion. Such religion is not automatically related to any god or heaven, but it is the social system, which transforms the profane into the sacred. It disposes of mechanisms, which allow the individual to make a sacred experience and to dive into continuity for some moments. As a system it places itself *inside* society, but explicitly acts *against* homogeneity. This subversive religion of world-immanence represents and re-establishes the completely different in the same world. Moreover, it is the guarantor for the existence of man in difference to himself.

Considering new fields for heterological anthropology

In his *œuvre*, Bataille pays attention to various discursive formations, political systems and historical groups. He portrays Christianity, Islam, capitalism or socialism as homogenizing systems, for example. But in every text, Bataille contrasts these

⁶ My use of the term *homo sacer* relates to G. Agamben's (1998) notion of the term, but is not congruent with it.

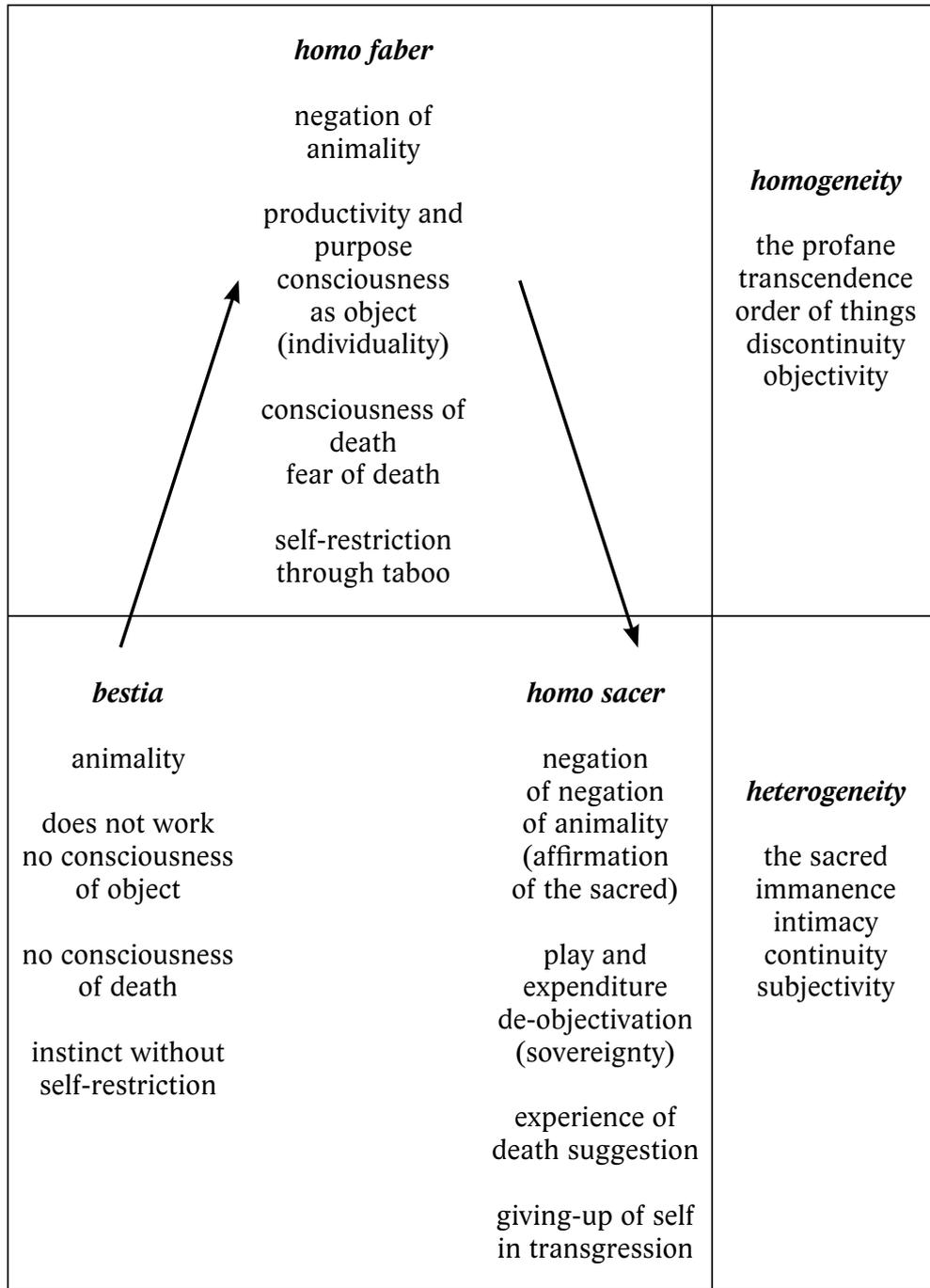


Diagram 2: Dialectic regress onto a higher level (from profane to sacred state)

regimes of homogeneity with sacred counter-movements of heterogeneity, such as Gnosticism, mysticism, primitivism or pornography. In order to balance the lopsided perspective of humanities, he concentrates on Satanists, prostitutes, alcoholics, gamblers, madmen, rebels and other instances of underworld,

borderland and outskirts. The surrealist concept of sacred sociology urges to focus on such accursed phenomena, and to study the process of their social exclusion, their peculiarities from the inside, and their repercussion for society.

In former times, anthropologists went to overseas rain forests or steppes in order to discover foreign people. Today, they find their field in big city jungles or deserts of tar, too. In my opinion, today's cultural anthropology is the leading discipline to meet the claims of sacred sociology. It is most experienced with the *other*, i.e. with heterogeneity *per se*. With its paradigm of emic perspective, cultural anthropology is able to adjust to the *heterology* Bataille (1985b: 96) pleads for: the study of the completely different.⁷ In the following, I will give some examples of heterogeneous zones and sacred nuclei, which *heterological anthropology* could and should focus on.

I have pointed out that for the College, modern society has “lost” or abandoned its sacred sphere. This may be true for the discourse of modernity, but the empirical situation of today's society gives a lot of evidence of “archaic”, respectively “anti-modern” instances. Another important member of the College, the ethnographer and man of letters Leiris (1982), for example, has discovered the sacred in contemporary Andalusian tauromachy. And the attempt of the College to re-establish the sacred in modern society documents that its members did not proceed from irreversible secularisation. Still, the heterogeneous sacred in modern society manifests in certain periods, which promote and demand a state of emergency.

Even in modern society, time and again groups of people abandon themselves to collective overturn. Over some years, I (Ries 2004) have participated in the *Klausentreiben*⁸ in an Alpine town. Every year on St. Nicholas' Day, young unmarried men cover their body completely with fur. They hide their identity behind horned masks and buckle on belts with large and noisy cowbells. At night, these monsters called *Klausen* run around and beat everybody they can catch with whippy willow switches. After

⁷ This does not imply that it is the only discipline, which focuses on heterogeneity. But most other disciplines, which study heterogenized groups, lack the emic perspective and thereby remain on the side of homogeneity.

⁸ Approximately translated: “Hunt of the Klausen”.

this spectacle, the band goes from bar to bar and demands alcohol, which it consumes in an excess until the next morning. From the perspective of heterological anthropology, the *Klausen* execute a sacred act, because they fundamentally break the rules and transgress all prohibitions. They hunt and catch people, violently beat them, get sloshed in the bars without paying, and just laugh about every earnest admonition. Most town inhabitants accept and even demand this invasion of irrationality, and dedicate themselves both to pleasure and the pain of absurd violence, as well as to self-expenditure of a sacred feast. In their ferocious appearance, once a year the *Klausen* awake the heterogeneous chaos, which swallows all order of homogeneity.

In my opinion, this “rural custom” has its parallels in big city phenomena, for example in football hooliganism. The difference lies in the fact that violent transgression in the *Klausentreiben* is legitimised through socially constructed “tradition”, while it is completely accursed and criminalized in football hooliganism. The American journalist Bill Buford (1991), who moved “among the thugs” for many years, has given an intimate insight into the (sub-) culture of violent football fans. These sit out the whole week in their factory work places and spare their small wages in order to sacrifice themselves every weekend in drinking hall orgies and brutal battles against fans from other football clubs. The hooligans are more than a “social problem”; at the weekend they live in an entire own world of heterogeneity, which evades all common sense because of its constitutionalizing element: transgressive violence.

There are many more sacred zones, which spread periodically and open up areas of transgressive expenditure, sovereign community and world-immanence. I consider it extremely fruitful to study the “culture” of revolt, protest, guerrilla and demonstration under the perspective of heterological anthropology. Demonstrations for example, be they politically motivated or not, are definitely conglomerations of people who establish heterogeneity within homogeneous society. The anti-globalisation movement, which most prominently appears as a constant side-effect of world economy forums, constantly argues for variety against global monotony.

29 It can be interpreted as a sacred advocate for heterogeneity in

a globalising, i.e. increasingly homogenized world. Actually, this last example of a rhizomatic and headless movement serves as a good example for the inner heterogeneity of the sacred zone.⁹

Such sacred zones spread on the margins of society and every “average citizen” can enter them *temporarily*. But there are also sacred groups, which lead a life in *constant* difference to society. Sociology has developed a whole branch of deviance theory (e.g. Lamnek 1979), which focuses on such groups. But usually, it examines sacred outsiders from the perspective of homogenized society only. In contrast, heterological anthropology must enter heterogenized communities and develop its theory proceeding from the inside perspective. Actually, there do exist monographs written in such spirit. The anthology *Lilies of the Field: Marginal People Who Live for the Moment* (Day, Papataxiarchis & Stewart 1999) provides a good impression on the diversity of anthropological fieldwork among accursed groups such as Hungarian Gypsies, London prostitutes or untouchables in India. There do exist many more ethnographies of heroine fixers, pot smokers, illegal migrants, dossers, or prisoners, who share the common fate of being an ostracized minority – but such studies are scattered. I consider heterological anthropology a fruitful and uniting “umbrella theory” for these isolated studies.

In Transylvania, I (Ries 2005) have carried out research among such sacred groups, which are excluded from the majority: Gypsies. Following the relationist paradigm of Leipzig Gypsy Studies (FTF, n.d.), I do not study Gypsies as mere passive victims of stigmata. They form an ethnic group, which, besides all hegemonic asymmetry, actively reacts to the majority population. Some Gypsy sub-groups in Transylvania thereby consciously affirm majority stereotypes. They *are* “chaotic”, because they constantly differentiate themselves from all non-Gypsies and other Gypsy sub-groups in order to prevent homogeneity. They *do* “squander all of their money”, because their interior economic ethic and

⁹ Furthermore, it would be very interesting to find out, if people in fact take part in demonstrations just because they identify with the (profane, rational, and transcended) goals under which they march. I assume that the inner experience of (sacred, irrational, and immanent) community, which every protest produces, is far more attractive than programs or agendas.

prestige complex dictates feast economy. They *do* “rebel and quarrel” because their political paradigm cannot accept any hierarchy. They *do* “not have any religion” because they dedicate themselves to non-formalized belief, which basically rejects all transcendence. Therefore, *some* Gypsy sub-groups in fact realize sacred expenditure, sovereignty and world-immanence through active differentiation from the majority population.¹⁰

As my last example shows, there are sovereign elective communities, which set themselves in an active contrast to society. Modern society hosts and kicks out a lot of such people, who may unite in “asocial” or “dangerous” groups. Nihilistic Punks, violent Skinheads, and soul-catching sects individually answer social accursation by counter-accursation, respectively provoke accursation through deviant behaviour. Many pages have been written about this complex of “problem” and agendas of integration have been fixed. But the essential communifying nucleus of such groups has constantly been ignored: the sacredness of heterogeneity. Here it becomes obvious indeed that heterological anthropology carries out research dedicated to cultural relativism and must detach itself (as much as possible) from all assessment. Only in this way, will it be able to deliver heterological facts, which can balance the data of homological science.

Conclusions

In Germany it is still common to distinguish between *Volkskunde* and *Völkerkunde*. The former concentrates on “its own”, i.e. European culture, the latter focuses on all “foreign”, i.e. non-European cultures. In the era of globalisation, this geographical distinction appears as ethnocentric atavism. Consequently, Karl Heinz Kohl (1993) has defined ethnology more abstractly as *science of the culturally foreign*. But still German cultural anthropology as a discipline must be de-regionalized and re-theorized. In

¹⁰ I am neither speaking of *all* Gypsy groups, nor of *the* Gypsies in general. My study also portrays a Gypsy group which aims to be integrated into Romanian majority society but is rejected through racism and discrimination. This group tends to convert to Pentecostalism (Ries, 2005).

all societies over the world, there are (sub-) cultures and social spheres which are *foreign* to the average citizen. For a comprehensive understanding of culture – be it European or not – cultural anthropology should proceed from two sides: it must use its common methods to mark out the obligatory cultural frame of a given society. But at the same time it should make use of sacred sociology and study the social *foreign bodies* from a heterological perspective. Heterogeneous groups and sacred zones, which are produced by every society, definitely have a fundamental repercussion on all profane powers. Heterological anthropology therefore carries the potential to enlighten social phenomena which so-far have remained unexplained. Only from such a double angled viewpoint, will cultural anthropology be able to adequately understand the culture of man.

In the past, the anthropologist ideally fought for the understanding and rehabilitation of the non-European “primitive”, pleading for cultural relativism and praising the beauty of world-view diversity. The anthropologist of today still has this very duty – even if “primitive” tribes do not exist. In modern society and a globalising world, he has to advocate the heterogeneous against homogeneity, the different against the same. He must be the barrister of the heterogenized and accursed sacred in its trial against profane mediocrity.

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