Georges Bataille’s philosophy is actually the existential philosophy, or rather the philosophy situated between surrealism and existentialism. The core of it is a man trying to overcome rational aspect of his own existence and achieve completely different level of being. The level on which he will become independent and sovereign, the level on which he will acquire power and strength, he will recover formerly lost continuity.

Although finding the right meaning of human existence, forgotten or lost, could be perceived a relatively easy task, overcoming uncontinuity, especially sustainable, is very difficult problem, requiring enormous effort and many renunciations. The way to accomplish this aim leads through becoming aware of dualism in surrounding world, division of life into sacrum and profanum spheres, into heterogeneous and homogeneous. Only then the man may experience the act of transgression, which would open him for peculiar kind of communication and enable him to gain sovereignty.

However, to reconstruct this entire path we should start from the beginning, from George Bataille’s fundamental category - internal experience. It is clear only on the surface. It may of course be treated as a spiritual experience, deeply emotional, aesthetic, intellectual. But Bataille’s meaning is a little more complicated, more ethereal. “(…) Internal experience (…) is usually called mystical experience: states of ecstasy, elation or at least emotion subjected to consideration. Not so much a religious experience that
we were used to as naked experience, free of even rudimentary connections with any religion."¹

Internal experience constantly questions surrounding order. It doubts literally everything, brings into question every knowledge. In this way it becomes a method of philosophy, which should be precisely that kind of infinite enquiring and questioning.² But we should not identify the experience with philosophy. As Bataille said: „The difference (…) lies fundamentally in the fact that the sentence given in the experience is nothing, means at the most, yet even as means it is obstacle; what matters is not expression of wind but the wind itself.”³ Internal experience as an attempt to express inexpressible (mentioned wind, silence,) an attempt to say unspeakable, leads us to the end of our cognition and understanding abilities, to the place of “confusion and lack of sense”.⁴ It has to negate all of the values that keep us under control of rational action to bring us there. That is why, the experience rejecting all of the rules, must show itself a New direction, a New code. It becomes the only and unquestionable authority, the highest value. In this way it is the only way to achieve aim and at the same time aim in its own right.⁵

Each human being experiences drama for whole its life. Drama finds its own basis of existence in the authority, in all those things that are important and valuable for us. Only dramatizing these crucial to every man values allows reaching the state of ecstasy, which is essential for opening to outside. The fear overcoming a man when he is thinking about death, or religious offering, which is supposed to preserve his life, leads to elation that lets him go beyond himself. From now on I’m not focused on myself, isolated individual, but I am able to communicate with, let’s call it, some kind of “the outside”.⁶

Dramatizing is shoving me to the brink of a precipice, where on last legs, in the last flesh of rationality I try to dig my heels in and not to fall. What is occurring then is laugh, inseparable component of drama. The laugh, but only laugh at oneself, allows freeing from what makes us crying, what is unbearable. “There is some kind of heyday [renewed - note: M.L.] in the laugh at oneself, based actually on a decay.”⁷ The laugh is like chain reaction. It’s activating consecutive individuals and finally embracing all of present, resembling something like trance, unity of experiencing. “If the group of people is laughing (…), it is penetrated by stream of intense communication. Each isolated existence goes beyond oneself, (…) As long as laugh lasts there is no barrier between them.”⁸

So, internal experience appears as ecstasy opening man and forcing him to communicate. The thing that is most effective pushing us towards that is death (and also,

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³ Georges Bataille, Doświadczenie wewnętrzne…, op. cit., p. 68.
⁴ Ibidem, p. 53.
⁵ Ibidem, p. 58.
⁶ Ibidem, p. 64.
what will become to show little later, its erzac - eroticism, possessing clear aura of death\(^9\)). But man needs to find strength to be delighted with death, as a natural fulfilment of existence, logical and obvious consequence of living. In death he could find continuity, yet “it’s all about replacing human’s seclusion and its uncontinuity with feeling of deep continuity.”\(^10\) If man was able to laugh at all aspects of his existence, including agony, he would start to live fully.\(^11\) According to Bataille, laugh is actually always laughing at death. We are laughing at eternally awaiting sentence, or we rather rejoice over its postponing. Similarly, when we cry, we cry because of things that make us happy (lack of them).\(^12\) Finally, laugh is the only adequate, or perhaps self-preserving, nervous response to death that is beyond our comprehension and seems to be pointless.\(^13\)

Internal experience - “states of ecstasy, elation or at least emotion subjected to consideration” - could be started practically by everything that could make us touched: words, pictures, sounds, events…

To show better the essence of that experience it is worth to think for a while about this kind of “arousing” and the way it looks like. First sounds of Ase’s Death\(^14\), taking musical example, are moving us by mild and warm mood of sorrow. The following, slowly starting to leak this sorrow into heart, imperceptibly, as composition last, fulfilling it completely. Slow crescendo is lifting up more and more violently, higher and higher, to finally, when the end is near, bring into the depth. Excruciating dilemma is painfully gripping throat, making impossible to speak, making shudder, contorting face with silent sob. However the music in that experience isn’t object, it is only dramatizing that causes all that internal agitation. It gives rise to anxiety, not to say fear, and feeling of overwhelming seclusion in drama. Entity can’t stand that state any longer and at last it’s opening itself, going beyond itself in search of object to communicate with (another man). As a matter of fact this object is reflection of searching entity, “projection of dramatic losing of oneself”.\(^15\)

Entity in internal experience wants to communicate with similar objects, that is: internally agitated in the same way, and gain community spirit, with this end in view it has to imagine a point, on which it concentrates all of its internal movements, achieved by dramatizing. This point should be “location all of existence and all of unity, all of separation and (…) fear, (…) unsatisfied desire and (…) death”.\(^16\) It becomes object of experience as it is exact reflection of entity’s experiences.

When the man made that point, his mind changes now into the eye and starts looking for a person that can be the point, that is, person which would be possibly most similar to the entity, most close to him. Because – as Bataille said – for the first time entity can go

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\(^10\) Ibidem, p. 19.


\(^12\) Georges Bataille, Madelaine Chapsal, *Georges Bataille we własnej osobie…*, op. cit., p. 390.


\(^15\) Georges Bataille, *Doświadczenie wewnętrzne…*, op. cit., p. 213.

\(^16\) Ibidem, p.213.

\(^17\) Ibidem, p. 218.
beyond oneself only into love”.\textsuperscript{18} When object (objects) is found, the thread of intensive communication between it and entity of internal experience is coming into being immediately. It could be seen for example in the form of laugh, mentioned earlier.

Internal experience, being continuous questioning and constant attempt at expressing the impossible, connects finally in act of communicating entity with object. Where entity that still undermine knowledge as it stands, becomes as a result pure “un-knowledge”, and turns object into “unknown”.\textsuperscript{19}

Now when we successfully shed a little light on internal experience and made its nearly esoteric issues somewhat clearer, we could at last say something about matter of division all surrounding world for heterogeneous and homogeneous sphere.

At the very beginning of Bataille’s “general economy”, which was presented in book entitled “Cursed part”, and which is foundation of our problem, author places a proposition that every living organism gets more energy than it actually needs to exist. This energetic surplus is used for growth and reproduction, as a general rule. All energy that living being can not digest to keep its own existence will be destined for its development. However when growth limit is reached and organism can’t develop any longer, it is necessary to lose lingering energetic surplus unproductive, without any, even smallest, profits, to keep energetic balance.\textsuperscript{20}

Bataille finds a justification for that state in his belief that the sun is fundamental to our world.\textsuperscript{21} It is the source of earthly life, gives us the energy (we could say that it wastes this energy for us) and doesn’t expect anything in return. And when we can’t consume it any longer for growth or reproduction, we’re starting to expend it unproductively,\textsuperscript{22} as if we wanted to “give it back”.

Our planet is filled with life nearly up to the limits. There is a huge variety of living forms everywhere. These forms have adapted to a very harsh environmental conditions and annexed all accessible space, as the extent of our world is the only limit of uncontrollable growth.\textsuperscript{23} It could be seen on example of an aquarium: fish reach specific size and keep it until death, unless living space will expand. It is the same with people, though when man reaches the final limit, he has to relieve the tension, destroy surplus of energy. And the most extreme form of losing is death, which gives a new accessible living space to the others.

It is clear that every growth takes place at the cost of earlier destruction, as the global increase is practically impossible (as it was said before: life is occupying almost every space that could be occupied).\textsuperscript{24} And that is how the circle is closing: the system grows until it can, when limits are reached it needs to destroy surpluses, what as a result allows

\textsuperscript{18} Ibidem, p. 214.  
\textsuperscript{19} Ibidem, p. 66.  
\textsuperscript{21} Bataille mentioned about that many times in many works, but crucial to this problem is cosmological poem entitled Anus solei, published in 1927; see: Krzysztof Matuszewski, Bataille - praktyka ekstazy..., op. cit.  
\textsuperscript{22} Georges Bataille, Część przeklęta..., op. cit., p. 37.  
\textsuperscript{23} Ibidem, p. 37.  
\textsuperscript{24} Ibidem, p. 42.
for renewed or further evolving. It makes Bataille’s *general economy* a conception describing all of the movements of living energy on our globe.

Of course death is not the only way to liquidate surpluses of energy. Consuming and sexual reproduction function similarly and both of these activities stay in very close connection with dying. Consumption, in fact, takes place when one species eats another one; reproduction, because - as Bataille said - “it is (…) the largest single energy expending that individual can stands”\(^{25}\) (larger than that is only death). And in that sense, sexual activity, giving us a delusion of closeness to the end of existence, is a poor substitute for death.

But the man, subjected to the same laws like every living organism, is an extraordinary creature, because of rational thinking ability and self-consciousness, which make man’s life rational and intentional. Human work, making technical devices and equipment helping people out, is manifestation of intentional action, concentrated on accumulating goods. And because of his extreme efficiency, the increase of energy surpluses is very big and very sudden. That’s not all; man harnesses these surpluses to multiple speed and amount of accumulating goods.\(^{26}\) As a result of those actions, amount of collected energy achieves enormous, unprecedented until now size and finally excess of energy is so big that it can’t be usefully spent any longer and at least part of it, if not all, needs to be wasted. So here comes luxury, splendour and wealth – wasting of goods, which in traditional form almost always is connected with injustice, for the sake of unequal division of goods. Wastage of wealth that the others could successfully exploit brings feeling of curse. That’s why energetic surplus, excess of wealth, is called *cursed part.*\(^{27}\)

So everything that is utilitarian, useful and helpful is named *homogeneous*. This is world of work, intentional and rational production, concentrated on accumulating goods and what follows, improving living conditions. However unproductive and pointless wasting of energy, expending that doesn’t bring any profits, squandering goods is identified with *heterogeneous*. We could also put here everything that is foreign to a man and is treated as foreign by him: “sexual activity, perversion or not, sex exposing, defecating, passing water, death and corpse cult (generally gave in the form of stinking decay), various taboo, ritual anthropophagic, making totemic offerings, (…) derisive laugh, tears (which object is generally death), religious ecstasy, identical attitude towards excrements, gods and dead bodies, horror accompanying involuntary defecation, taking painted women as dazzling and lascivious at the same time, game, being extravagant with money and some fantastic ways of spending them etc…”\(^{28}\) So *cursed part* belongs to *heterogeneous* as well.

It is also etymology of Bataille’s terms that is worth mentioning. Well, homogeneous means simply “belonging to the same kind”, (that is “the same one”). However heterogeneous is diverse, (“completely different”, “foreign”). It brings us closer to better

\(^{25}\) Ibidem, p. 44.

\(^{26}\) It is a phenomenon characteristic of capitalism, see: Georges Bataille, *Część przeklęta…*, op. cit., p. 33 i 45.

\(^{27}\) Ibidem, p. 47.

understanding dual nature of the world, reduced by Bataille to opposition sacrum-profanum. World of profanum is the world of mind that by means of knowledge wants to reign the whole world and subjugate it to secure survival for oneself. It is homogeneous – world of work, intentional and rational production. And heterogeneous is reduced to sacrum world – world of violence, excess, wasteful expending and repealed ban. Everything in the sacrum world, as “different” or “foreign” evokes conflicting feelings: it attracts and deters at the same time, because world of sacrum represents different, higher level of reality.

It is impossible to overlook that death in Bataille’s system plays substantial role. As I mentioned it has power to restore, in ecstasy of internal experience, our lost continuity. Off course death, when it occurs, pulls us out from the uncontinuity, and yet to us, as to rational individuals, it doesn’t make any sense. Because what benefit follows from continuity when individual doesn’t already exist and can’t gladden. As Heidegger said: “Until an existence [dasein - note: M.L.] is a being, it never achieves its own ‘completely’ [continuity – note: M.L.]. But when it achieves that, it will lose a being-in-the-world. It can’t experience it never again as a being.”

Much more important than death, it is to continuously make it present in our consciousness and life. Prospect of death or associating with it (for example on the funeral) fills us up with fear which is very often bigger than fear that accompany our own dying, when it finally occurs.

Some ways of calling death, allowing us to experience it, though incompletely, bring us closer to the continuity, making life internally richer possible, more complete and fulfilled – life sovereign. These ways are actually all manifestations of transgression, which means exceeding bans. The bans connected with violence, manslaughter, religious sacredness and first and foremost with eroticism, which refers more or less to the all priors.

Eroticism derives from human sexuality, shy and fortified by plenty of various bans. The difference between it and animal sexual activity is that it is putting in doubt man’s internal life, because the main and probably the deepest sense of eroticism is violation of inner integrity of human being, related with breaking into his personal space, into his intimacy. According to Bataille eroticism is nothing but violation of partners’ essences. “The meaning of every erotic act - said Bataille - is destroying closed structure - partner of game in the normal state. Exposing is decisive here. Nudity is the opposite of closed state, being inconstant. It is state of opening, searching of possible continuity of being beyond itself. Bodies are opening its secret channels for continuity”.

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29 This terminology is taken from Durkheim. See: Jürgen Habermas, Między erotyzmem a ekonomią ogólną: Bataille, [in:] Jürgen Habermas, Filozoficzny dyskurs nowoczesności, przeł. M. Łukasiewicz, Universitas, Kraków 2000, p. 248.
30 Ibidem.
32 Georges Bataille, Erotyzm..., op. cit.
33 Ibidem, p. 31.
34 Ibidem, p. 21.
In that joining, in the act of communication, lonely, inconstant individuals could find the feeling of continuity.

A certain qualifying about continuity/uncontinuity should be done here. Until now we’ve been considering this problem only on temporal level, in the context of existence’s duration and its finished nature. But new sense of that duality of human existence appears now, namely its physical aspect. Human being is inconstant until he is finite, lonely and isolated individual. In the erotic act he is opening to the other beings and while communicating with them, he’s exceeding his physical closure, wishing to secure feeling of continuity for himself.

These efforts would become more effective when we amplify eroticism of body with eroticism of heart, amorous passion, which “is actually extension of physical join of lovers in the spiritual sphere”. This passion could cause even bigger agitation then carnal desire. It brings confusion into loving man’s life. It causes inner agitation of thoughts and feelings. Finally, it causes suffering, because it calls fear of parting and renewed loneliness. “Only when our happiness is seasoned with poison - said one of Bataille’s characters - we could savour it”. Amorous passion, promising lovers being unity, melting down theirs lonely hearts into one, is such a sudden feeling that - as Bataille said - it calls death. “This kind of beloved person’s picture that for lover has meaning of every existing thing, could become to show only in violation, tailored to death. Beloved is for the lover clarity of world. (…) World’s complexity disappears and lover sees the essence of being.”

The function of death appears even better in sacred (religious) eroticism, where death could be in literal sense, for example while offering. Associating this kind of religious rituals with erotic movement could be surprising a little, because it is completely foreign for Christian culture. Nevertheless some societies put much stress on ritual offerings and orgies, which were either the answer to requirement of specific holiday or evidently magic procedures, putting a spell on weather or crops. In any case the amorous act was very often associated with offering. “In the amorous act and in the offering - said Bataille - the body reveals”.

Also, certain aspect of sacred eroticism, which most of all opens us to continuity, giving possibility to communicate with the absolute, reveals in the mystic experience, connected with peculiar religious maturity following when there is no real erotic experience (because of advanced age or asceticism). Bataille is far away from reducing mystical experiences to sexual organs’ activity (what among others James Leuba and Maria Bonaparte suggest), he is sceptical about this kind of conception. Even so he doesn’t exclude some similarity between mystic and erotic ecstasy. What is crucial to
understand subtle difference, dividing these two mentioned approaches, is deleting the equals sign between sexual and erotic ecstasy. These are two completely different phenomena, with completely different meaning to man. Mystic ecstasy could be compared (or even reduced) with erotic ecstasy on condition that the basic sense of eroticism is remained: internal agitation and opening to communication (in this case with absolute embodied by God), aiming to continuity.

Now let’s go back for an instant to the moment when man stopped to be an animal. It was related with work that he started to do by means of tools made by him, with burring the dead, which was probably caused by gained consciousness of death, and with shyness related with sexuality. Man became conscious, rational individual, and from ability to controlling and smothering his impulses and desires, characteristic to natural world, he made a criterion of humanity. He built rational world which is yet based on unusual agitation and impetuosity of desires, attributed to us by nature in the same way as to other living organisms. To avoid a decay of newly arisen, based on work homogeneous world, it was necessary to restrict some fields of life with bans, which would determine a border between man and animals. That’s how the bans related to death and man’s sexual activity came into being.44

These were caused by fear aroused by dead bodies’ sight. Corpses were bringing menace of “infecting” by violence, epitomized by death, and destroying the order of entire world. Burring corpses could be caused by desire to preserve from another violations (for example scavenger’s attack), but in Bataille’s opinion, more accurate is deeming funeral to be an action removing contaminated by violation body from the living space, action which prevents dead body from infecting others by that destructive “suddenness”. This is where the author of Eroticism finds justification for ban on touching corpses.45 That ban as ban on killing, was supposed to protect against bringing destructive elements, promised by sight of death, into rational, stabilized world. Firmness of that ban is justifying by “infectious” premise, which in fact implicates spreading death with velocity making renewing losses impossible, what as a result would annihilate order of homogeneous world created by man.

Sexual activity violates this world in a little different sense. It is a collection of enormously strong and sudden stirs, demanding immediate satisfying. Excess of sexual energy calls all that is irrational in man, what makes steering the energy difficult, makes intentional action impossible, in other words - it interferes with work, which is the essence of rational world. That’s why sexual activity has to be subordinate to certain restrictions, to not disrupt world’s harmony.

Bataille places these two spheres of life, death and sexual activity, in one line not only because of the fact that they disrupt the order of human world to positive degree, but also because of close relation between them (“state of collapse after final spasm [of erotic ecstasy - note: M.L.] French calls little death”46). Although they seem to lie on the opposite poles of our life, the author of Eroticism puts them into cyclicality of living organisms’ natural order. He namely claims that death is necessary to give space for life,
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being the effect of sexual activity.\footnote{Ibidem, p. 64.} It is known that when surpluses of goods becoming too high, the vent has to be given to remain the state of harmony. The bans regulating social life, concerning death and sexuality, have to be suspended. What has to be done is transgression, that is infringement of ban.

It is quite sensitive issue, as it’s not about removing the ban, but only temporal repealing, necessary to go beyond norms being in force.\footnote{Ibidem, p. 40.} The annulment of ban would take away any sense and the meaning of transgression, which follows its unusual strength from the ecstasy experienced while doing something banned - violating taboo.

It is enabled by certain specially constructed regulations, which exactly specify when ban can be broken. Ban on killing for example subordinates to repealing in case of fight, vendetta or war\footnote{Ibidem, p. 75.}, but not only, besides that there are plenty of religious or magical rituals that allow or even demand murdering from man.\footnote{Ibidem, p. 84. This issue is widely discussed in general economy’s outline. See: Georges Bataille, \textit{Część przeklęta…}, op. cit., p. 57-70.} As I mentioned before, the issue of erotic life is very similar: sacred prostitution\footnote{Georges Bataille, \textit{Erotyzm…}, op. cit., p. 128-130.} , ritual orgies, having magical meaning (putting a spell), or festival meaning (for example Bacchanalia)\footnote{Ibidem, p. 111-115.} – all of them allow unusual freedom and debauchery in the field of human sexuality. But it is important not to identify transgression with return to the nature. It is as far from that as it can be. The sense of transgression discloses in consciousness of the ban, while for the world of nature this ban is completely foreign.

As I mentioned, internal experience should be infinite asking and questioning, should throw aside all authorities and treats solely itself as the only and final authority. “Internal experience shows us complete sense of the ban, sense that finally justifies it”,\footnote{Ibidem, p. 41.} and after that tells us to break that ban. In fact transgression turns out to be the essence of internal experience, and even more - its method.

To recapitulate, man was originally placed in the world of nature, where he wasn’t restricted by any norms and regulations; however, in the course of time he developed enough to consciously mark out the line between human and animal world. Building system of bans and restrictions (moral mainly) and spending practically all available energy, he created homogeneous world of work (profanum). Then by means of transgression he exceeded these bans, questioning (but only for a moment) order created by himself. The world of profanum is a “human world, created by negating (...) nature, negating itself [transgression - note: M.Ł.] and in that second negation it transgress itself, but it doesn’t come back to state that it negated before”.\footnote{Ibidem, p. 87.} In other words it doesn’t come back to the world of nature, but gains new quality, higher level, it becoming world of sacrum.

However all that agitations stays in sphere of culture, it means that we don’t realize the reasons of certain phenomena and processes that take place inside our world. Besides that our culture is especially strongly rooted in the profanum sphere and there is not
much place for transgression here. But Bataille, perceiving in the transgression some internally invigorative strength, postulates going beyond rational, homogeneous world and entering a sacrum world. As only there man is no tied by laws, bans and norms; he becomes a sovereign man. He has to continuously sustain this sovereignty by transgressing all human order (social or moral). The transgression is opening him to communication with the “outside”, and what follows, allows for achieving certain specific, higher level of conscious human existence.

Bibliography