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Modern transportation infrastructure is built in service of the autonomous self – we drive our cars and burn fossil fuels in the pursuit of freedom. This economy of expenditure conceives of nature as a resource that can only do work – we stockpile resources for their preservation or consumption by the free and autonomous self.

Stoekl 7(Allan, professor of French and comparative literature at Penn State University, Bataille’s Peak: Energy, Religion, Postsustainability, p. 123-128)

The austerity-authenticity-sustainability school of social commentary is symmetrically matched by another, which defends the very status quo that seems so indefensible. These writers see little problem with lack of sustainability in a social or productive system or (put another way) with a profligate waste of resources; what they celebrate is the very extravagance that, to others, is guilty precisely because it is not accountable. Not surprisingly, this “bad duality” is linked to an affirmation of the freedom and autonomy of the self. This is not to say, however, that this extravagance is not fully, rationally grounded, or that it cannot be defended by having recourse to the history of philosophy or to the history of the American cultural experiment. Extravagance there may be, but it is grounded in **a highly problematic notion of subjectivity**. The first case we might mention is that of Loren E. Lomasky, a philosophy professor at Bowling Green State University in Ohio. Lomasky wrote the first, opening shot in the intellectual pro-automobile reaction: “Autonomy and Automobility” (1995). This essay, along with works by authors such as political scientist James Q. Wilson and economist Randal O’Toole7 (2001) attempt to relegitimize the automobile, after works such as Katie Alvord’s Divorce your Car (2001) and Jane Holz Kay’s Asphalt Nation (1998) had attempted to demolish the car’s ethical legitimacy. But Alvord and Kay focus on the sheer destructiveness of automobility and the needlessness of most driving. Lomasky, by contrast, argues that the automobile, more than any other transport mode, furnishes us with autonomy. His argument is less a pseudo-practical one than a larger philosophical one, focusing, ultimately, on what it means to be human. Following Aristotle (Newton’s maître à penser as well), Lomasky argues that what is human in us—what distinguishes us from the animals—is our ability to choose rationally: choices thus “flow from and have a feedback effect on our virtues and vices” (1995, 9). To choose, in other words, is to be ethically responsible—again, something animals are incapable of. Now freedom of choice, our glory and burden as humans, entails a transformation from “a state of potentiality with regard to some quality to the actual realization of that quality”; that transformation is traditionally deemed to be motion. Motion in Aristotle, as Lomasky reminds us, is “ubiquitous because everything has a level of highest possible self -realization toward which it tends to progress” (1995, 9). Movement, then, is human fulfillment, to the extent that free choice is the kind of movement particular to humans. To be human is to be free, and to choose morally (i.e., rationally, responsibly) is to be human in the fullest sense of the word. Lomasky thus invokes Kant as well: as humans we are threatened in our very being by “conditions—manipulation, coercion, intimidation—that impede . . . authorship” (11). Authorship—responsible action—is denied by any force that goes against our ability to choose, to move. Movement is freedom; movement is progression toward the human; movement is the human progressing toward ever greater fulfillment. And, it goes without saying, movement is driving in your car. The car is the device allowing one the most autonomy, that is, the fullest freedom in the “authorship of one’s own actions” (Lomasky 1995, 12). To be human is to be a car driver: “Insofar as we enjoy autonomy, we are free beings who thereby possess a worth and dignity that sets us apart from the realm of necessity” (12). Of course Lomasky begs the most basic question: does the car really deliver the greatest autonomy? Doesn’t it offer merely the greatest autonomy in a public realm—the modern freeway-split city—in a milieu that has been (badly) designed for it? Might not the human subject attain a greater level of autonomy in a different urban environment, one that fosters more ecologically friendly—and thus ultimately more satisfying—modes of displacement? Apparently not, for Lomasky at least. But these questions are secondary; Lomasky does not even consider questions of waste and resource use. Nor does he seriously consider the competing claims of different types of autonomy. Instead, his emphasis is on freedom defined as simple motion, presumably on a freeway; and in this case, the human is most free, most autonomous, in a car. She is most an author of herself: an autobiographical author. For Lomasky, then, the automobile “stands out as the vehicle of self-directedness par excellence” (1995, 24). The self directs itself toward ever greater freedom, responsibility, and thus selfhood. It directs itself to a car. Strange it is that this autonomy—we could also call it “authenticity”— is essentially the same value celebrated by Newman but in exactly the opposite sense: away from simplicity and in the direction of the seduction of the car and its culture. For Newman real motion was toward the self stripped of pretense, and that meant stripping it of its wheels. The problem, we could argue, in both of these approaches is that they justify car loving or car hating through appeals to the self: its freedom, autonomy, authenticity. But they never question the self. In the case of the car lovers, the self implies motion: but if the self is always (or should always be) moving, to what extent can we even speak of a coherent self? At least Newman’s model provided us with a self we could get back to, that presumably always was in residence, even if it was obscured, lost, in the midst of all its faddish whims (SUVs . . .). Lomasky’s self is always on the road, always embracing new things, to the extent that we might almost say that its selfhood consists of the motion away from itself, toward something other, in an endless series of simulacra. This is in fact the problem ultimately posed, if not faced, by another celebrant of modern car culture and suburbia, David Brooks. Brooks, a well - known conservative editorialist who writes for some reason for the liberal New York Times (do conservative papers employ liberals?), is as unconcerned with the moral dimension of suburban sprawl as Lomasky is with the ecological implications of his endlessly cruising self. While the latter appeals to Aristotle and Kant, Brooks appeals to the American Dream, which he argues manifests itself nowadays in the suburb: “From the start, Americans were accustomed to thinking in the future tense. They were used to living in a world of dreams, plans, innovations, improvements, and visions of things to come” (Brooks 2004, 255). The dream translates into constant motion: the continent is, always has been, infinitely rich, and the possibilities are endless. Americans always move because there is always the dream of betterment, self-betterment. America was the opposite of Old Europe, with its stagnation, its classes, its 125 internalized limitations, the repression it foisted on enthusiasm. If Europe was cynical acceptance of mediocrity and stagnation, America was a utopian affirmation of the possibility of change and progression. In most cases, people launched on these journeys [across the continent] because they felt in their bones that some set of unbelievable opportunities were out there. They could not tolerate passing out their years without a sense of movement and anticipation, even if their chances were minuscule. (Brooks 2004, 262) As with Lomasky, here too we see the glories of movement. But changing places for Brooks is not so much the human ideal as it is the American ideal. Perhaps Americans, through their military operations, can pass along to others their love of self-transformation, of freedom as they define it; but it is first and foremost their value, what they bring to the world. And that movement, today, Brooks associates with suburbia. Rather than a stagnant, conformist hell, the alienated breeding ground of teenage shooters and isolated housewives, suburbia is, according to Brooks, the last, greatest embodiment of the American ideal. Americans are always moving, always shoving off for some promised land, and that is what suburbia is: the split-level is only the temporary stopping point before one takes off again, moves to another suburb, another point from which to launch oneself. “This really is a deep and mystical longing” (Brooks 2004, 265). If movement for Lomasky is rational, and rational fulfillment, for Brooks it is a little bit irrational. The settlers set out not knowing where they are going, and their movement is a kind of blowout, a wasting of tradition, of knowledge, of all that was true but safe and bland. This “mystical longing,” this exurban will to power, is not moral in the conventional sense, but wild, reckless, destructive: It [what Brooks calls the “Paradise Spell”] is the call making us heedless of the past, disrespectful toward traditions, short on contemplation, wasteful in our use of things around us, impious toward restraints, but consumed by hope, driven ineluctably to improve, fervently optimistic. (269) So we have come full circle, back to the question of sustainability. But Brooks informs us that our greatness is precisely in wasting: it is a kind of index of our genuine Americanness, “our tendency to work so hard, to consume so feverishly, to move so much” (269). The self is now happy to drive—to find its ethical accomplishment not in freedom and autonomy, but in a feverish squandering we neither can nor should control. And yet there is a problem here, a fundamental contradiction that Brooks never acknowledges. This reckless self that is both the beginning and end of the American quest—that produces, incongruously enough, the placid suburbs and the humble minivan—is also at war with itself. What matters most absolutely is the advancing self. The individual is perpetually moving toward wholeness and completion, and ideas are adopted as they suit that mission. Individual betterment is the center around which the whole universe revolves. . . . This is a brutal form of narcissism. The weight of the universe is placed on the shoulders of the individual. Accordingly, in modern American culture, the self becomes semidivinized. . . . It is our duty to create and explore our self, to realize our own inner light. . . . Such a mentality puts incredible pressure on the individual. (276) The hell-bent wastage that Brooks celebrates—not only of the environment, but of tradition, the family, everything—turns against the self, “puts incredible pressure” on it. It does so for a reason: the self here, in its very movement, its racing forward toward blissful autonomy, is, precisely, never fully autonomous. If it were, it would not have to charge onward. The pressure comes from a profound contradiction making up the self itself: the utopia of the self is movement toward a plenitude of the self, which by definition can never be attained. The American self can only be itself when it is not; or, put another way, the self can only be itself at the cost of not being itself. Brooks’s self, his highest ideal, is really the unrecognized empty space of the ever-absent self. This is not an existentialist dilemma, because this self is less the constructive, project-oriented one of Sartrean labor than it is a destructive, never content, obsessive one: it is engaged in relentless burn-off and can’t seem to help itself. And yet, as Brooks informs us, “Everything is provisional and instrumental” (278). Instrumental because everything serves a purpose: the relentless movement of the self in its vain quest to find itself—which, if it were to happen, would result only in the self ’s loss. Wastage linked to relentless instrumentality: this is the curse, or blessing, of modern America, of America tout court, depending on one’s perspective. For Brooks it is a blessing, but one wonders how carefully he has read himself. Autonomist subjectivity is the ultimate signifier of the human here—the American human—and everything is burned, raced through, razed, in the process of elaborating it. But the self itself is only an instrumentality, always leading to something else: the self that it is not. And so on to infinity: everything destroyed to serve a purpose, but the purpose is not just inherently remote; it is by definition unattainable. Thus Brooks defends car culture, suburban culture, sprawl, the destruction of resources on a scale hitherto unimaginable in human history. Using a cold-eyed profit-loss calculus, we could say: not much return for the investment. A world of resources pumped and dumped for the pleasure of the unattainable self. But it is, as Brooks makes clear, an invigorating chase, or at least an entertaining one, and this alone would seem to justify it. Freedom, movement, always again blasting off, the exaltation of Dean Moriarty in On the Road. Dean makes strange bedfellows with the neocon readers, the developers and highway planners Brooks is seeking to bless. Or maybe not. We have moved, then, from authentic self to free self, to brutal, narcissistic (autonomous, automobilist) self, to deluded, unattainable self. Always a self: it seems as though the ultimate player in the saving or squandering of human resources is the self, whoever or whatever it is. To save it, to nurture it, to let it bloom in its full humanity, its Americanness, or its authenticity, we make use of resources, nature, either by saving it or spending it. Resources are the currency by which the self is either maintained, elaborated, or set in motion, in freedom. Saved, used, or wasted, resources are the means by which the true human is uncovered, recovered, or discovered. In simplicity, or in driving to the burbs. Man is dead? Not if there are still fossil fuel resources to conserve—or burn. This leads to a larger question: is there something in the drama of sustainability versus the suburbs other than the health of the self or its drama? If so, how can we formulate it?

This fossil fuel economy eschews intimate expenditure in favor of that which is directed toward efficiency and utility. This regime of production and consumption authorizes nuclear warfare, subordinating both nature and humanity to the horizon of a telos. Only affirming excessive expenditure – such as the intimate depletion of bodily energy – opens the possibility for planetary survival, de-linking expenditure from the expectation of return.

Stoekl 7 (Allan, professor of French and comparative literature at Penn State University, Bataille’s Peak: Energy, Religion, and Postsustainability, p. 52-59)

All this is ultimately important because it shows us the dual nature of Bataille’s project. It is not just an affirmation of death, madness, wild destruction, and the leap into the void. These terms, associable with excess, expenditure, indicate “events” or “experiences” (for want of better words) moved toward — they can never simply be grasped, attained — what would seem to be their contrary: interdiction, the limit, down-to-earth research. Transgression would not be transgression without the human limit of meaning — of interdiction, of scarcity — against which it incessantly moves. Bataille’s method is not that of the raving madman but of the patient economist, writing against a “closed” economy, and of the Hegelian, writing against a narrow consciousness that would close off ecstasy, expenditure, and loss. Indeed, the final point Bataille wishes to reach is a higher “self-consciousness,” not of a stable and smug universal awareness but of a knowledge facing, and impossibly grasping, a general economy of loss — in dread. Thus Bataille can write of a self-consciousness that “humanity will finally achieve in the lucid vision of a linkage of its historical forms” (OC, 7: 47; AS, 41). A very particular self-consciousness, then, linked to a very peculiar concept of history. A self-consciousness, through a “slow rigor,” that grasps “humanity” not as a stable or even dynamic presence, but as a principle of loss and destruction. A history not of peak moments of empire, democracy, or class struggle, but as exemplary instances of expenditure. And a future not in absolute knowing, but in a finally utopian “non-knowledge,” “following the mystics of all periods,” as Bataille puts it in the final footnote to The Accursed Share (OC, 7: 179; AS, 197). But he then goes on to add, about himself: “but he is no less foreign to all the presuppositions of various mysticisms, to which he opposes only the lucidity of self-consciousness” (italics Bataille’s). So there is, then, what we might call a good duality in Bataille. In fact, the “accursed share” is itself, for want of a better term, doubled: it entails and presupposes limits, dread, self-consciousness, language (OC, 7: 596– 98), along with madness, “pure loss,” death. The accursed share, in other words, entails the duality of transgression, in anguish (l’angoisse), of the recognized and ultimately affirmed limits of self, body, and world. But the same thing could be said, again for want of a better term, of the various ways this “part” is diluted or betrayed: what we might call, to differentiate it, “bad duality” (in contradistinction to the “good” duality of the transgression, in angoisse, of the recognized limits of self, body, and world). “Bad duality,” as I crudely put it, is the indulgence in expenditure out of personal motives: to gain something for oneself (glory, social status) or for one’s social group or nation (booty, territory, security). From the chief who engages in potlatch, all the way to the modern military planners of **nuclear war**—all conceive of a brilliant, radical destruction of things as a useful contribution: to one’s own social standing, to the position or long-term survival of one’s own society. And yet, for all that, Bataille recognizes a kind of devolution in warfare: earlier (sacrificial) war and destructive gift-giving still placed the emphasis on a spectacular and spectacularly useless destruction carried out on a human scale. Later warfare, culminating in nuclear war, heightens the intensity of destructiveness while at the same time reducing it to the status of simple implement: one carries out destructive acts (**e.g., Hiroshima**) to carry out certain useful policy goals. “Primitive” war, then, was closer to what I have dubbed “good” duality. Implicit in Bataille’s discussion of war, from the Aztecs to the Americans, is the loss of intimacy. Aztec war was thoroughly subordinated, both on the part of victor and vanquished, to the exigencies of passion; as time went on, it seems that martial glory came to be associated more and more with mere rank. Self-interest replaced the “intimate,” exciting destruction of goods and life. Modern nuclear war is completely devoid of any element of transgression or dread; it is simply mechanized murder, linked to some vague political or economic conception of necessity. Ultimately, for this reason, war in Bataille’s view must be replaced by a modern version of potlatch in which one nation-state (the United States) gives without counting to others (the Europeans, primarily). Modern war remains, for all that, an example of mankind’s tendency to expend. It is merely an extreme example of an inability to recognize dépense for what it is. It thereby constitutes a massive failure of self-consciousness: “bad duality” as the melding of the “tendency to expend” with the demand for utility and self-interest. Something, however, is missing in Bataille’s analysis. This steady progression in types of warfare, while signaling the difference between what we might call “intimate” war (the Aztecs) and utilitarian war (the World Wars), nevertheless does tend to conflate them, in a very specific way. They are all seen as moments in which humanity plays the role of the most efficient destroyer, the being at the top of the food chain that consumes — in both senses of the word—the greatest concentrations and the greatest quantities of energy. Ultimately the difference between Aztec war and American war is exclusively one of self-consciousness; ironically, it was the Aztecs who, in their sacrificial/militaristic orgies, were in closer touch with and had greater awareness of the nature of war. The Americans, quantitatively, might be the greater consumers, but their knowledge of what they are doing is minimal (only the Marshall Plan, augmented through a reading of Bataille, would solve that problem).26 What is not discussed is the nature of the destruction itself. Bataille never considers that contemporary dépense is not only greater in quantity but is different in quality. How is it that mankind has gone from the relatively mild forms of destruction practiced by the Aztecs—mountains of skulls, to be sure, but still, relatively speaking, fairly harmless—to the prospect of the total devastation of the earth? Why has destruction been amplified to such a degree? Does it change the very nature of the expenditure carried out by modern societies? The answer, I think, is to be found in the nature of the consumption itself. Bataille in effect makes the same mistake that traditional economists make concerning the origin of value: that it is to be found primarily in human labor. If, however, we see the skyrocketing of the creation of value in the last two centuries to be attributable not solely to inputs of human labor (muscle and brain power) but above all to the energy derived from fossil fuels (as Beaudreau [1999] claims), we will come to understand that the massive increase in mankind’s capacity to waste is attributable not only to, say, technical innovation, the more efficient application of human labor, genius, and so on, but to the very energy source itself. The Aztecs, like many other traditional societies, derived their energy from muscle power: that of animals, slaves, and, in warfare, nobles. Destruction, like production, entailed an expenditure of energy derived from very modest sources: calories derived from food (solar energy), transformed by muscle, and applied to a task. We might call this energy (to modify a Bataillean usage) and its destruction intimate: that is, its production and expenditure are on a human scale, and are directly tied to a close bodily relation with things. This relation implies a corporeal engagement with and through an energy that cannot be put to use, that fundamentally defies all appropriation. Just as intimacy for Bataille implies a passionate involvement with the thing — primarily its consumation, its burn-off, the intense relation with a thing that is not a thing (as opposed to consommation, in the sense of everyday purchase, use, and wastage)—so in this case, having to do with the production and destruction of value, my muscle power assures that my relation to what I make or destroy will be passionate. A hand tool’s use will entail physical effort, pain, pleasure, satisfaction, or anguish. It will be up close and personal. The same will go for the destruction of the utility of that tool; there will be a profound connection between “me” and the destruction of the thing-ness of the tool.27 By extension, the utility, “permanence,” and thus the servility of my self will be put in question through an intimate connection (“communication”) with the universe via the destroyed or perverted object or tool. Just as there are two energetic sources of economic value, then — muscle power and inanimate fuel power—so too there are two kinds of expenditure. The stored and available energy derived from fossil or inanimate fuel expenditure, for production or destruction, is different in quality, not merely in quantity, from muscular energy. The latter is profoundly more and other than the mere “power to do work.” No intimacy (in the Bataillean sense) can be envisaged through the mechanized expenditure of fossil fuels. The very use of fossil and nonorganic fuels—coal, oil, nuclear— implies the effort to maximize production through quantification, the augmentation of the sheer quantity of things. Raw material becomes, as Heidegger put it, a standing reserve, a measurable mass whose sole function is to be processed, used, and ultimately discarded.28 It is useful, nothing more (or less), at least for the moment before it is discarded; it is related to the self only as a way of aggrandizing the latter’s stability and position. There is no internal limit, no angoisse or pain before which we shudder; we deplete the earth’s energy reserves as blandly and indifferently as the French revolutionaries (according to Hegel) chopped off heads: as if one were cutting off a head of cabbage. “Good” duality has completely given way to “bad.” As energy sources become more efficiently usable — oil produces a lot more energy than does coal, in relation to the amount of energy needed to extract it, transport it, and dispose of waste (ash and slag) — more material can be treated, more people and things produced, handled, and dumped. Consequently more food can be produced, more humans will be born to eat it, and so on (the carrying capacity of the earth temporarily rises). And yet, under this inanimate fuels regime, the very nature of production and above all destruction changes. Even when things today are expended, they are wasted under the sign of efficiency, utility. This very abstract quantification is inseparable from the demand of an efficiency that bolsters the position of a closed and demanding subjectivity. We “need” cars and SUVs, we “need” to use up gas, waste landscapes, forests, and so on: it is all done in the name of the personal lifestyle we cannot live without, which is clearly the best ever developed in human history, the one everyone necessarily wants, the one we will fight for and use our products (weapons) to protect. We no longer destroy objects, render them intimate, in a very personal, confrontational potlatch; we simply leave items out for the trash haulers to pick up or have them hauled to the junkyard. Consumption (la consommation) in the era of the standing reserve, the framework (Ge-Stell), entails, in and through the stockpiling of energy, the stockpiling of the human: **the self itself becomes an element of the standing reserve**, a thing among other things. There can hardly be any intimacy in the contemporary cycle of production-consumption-destruction, the modern and degraded version of expenditure. As Bataille put it, concerning intimacy: Intimacy is expressed only under one condition by the thing [la chose]: that this thing fundamentally be the opposite of a thing, the opposite of a product, of merchandise: a burn-off [consumation] and a sacrifice. Since intimate feeling is a burn-off, it is burning-off that expresses it, not the thing, which is its negation. (OC, 7: 126; AS 132: italics Bataille’s) War, too, reflects this nonintimacy of the thing: fossil fuel and nuclear-powered explosives and delivery systems make possible the impersonal destruction of lives in great numbers and at a great distance. Human beings are now simply quantities of material to be **processed and destroyed in wars** (whose purpose is to assure the continued availability of fossil fuel resources). Killing in modern warfare is different in kind from that carried out by the Aztecs. All the sacrificial elements, the elements by which the person has been transformed in and through death, have disappeared. Bataille, then, should have distinguished more clearly between intimate and impersonal varieties of useless squandries when it came to his discussion of the Marshall Plan.29 (In the same way, he should have distinguished between energy that is stockpiled and put to use and energy that is fundamentally “cursed” not only in and through bodily excess but in its ability to do “work.”)30 It is not merely a question of our attitude toward expenditure, our “self-consciousness”: also fundamental is how it is carried out. Waste based on the consumption of fossil or inanimate (nuclear) fuels cannot entail intimacy because it is dependent on the thing as thing, it is dependent on the energy reserve, on the stockpiled, planned, and protected self: “[This is] what we know from the outside, which is given to us as physical reality (at the limit of the commodity, available without reserve). We cannot penetrate the thing and its only meaning is its material qualities, appropriated or not for some use [utilité], understood in the productive sense of the term. (OC, 7: 126; AS, 132; italics Bataille’s) The origin of this destruction is therefore to be found in the maximizing of the efficiency of production; modern, industrialized waste is fundamentally only the most efficient way to eliminate what has been overproduced. Hence the Marshall Plan, proposing a gift-giving on a vast, mechanized scale, is different in kind from, say, a Tlingit potlatch ceremony. “Growth” is the ever-increasing rhythm and quantity of the treatment of matter for some unknown and unknowable human purpose and that matter’s subsequent disposal/destruction. One could never “self-consciously” reconnect with intimacy through the affirmation of some form of industrial production-destruction. To see consumer culture as in some way the fulfillment of Bataille’s dream of a modern-day potlatch is for this reason a fundamental misreading of The Accursed Share.31 Bataille’s critique is always an ethics; it entails the affirmation of a “general economy” in which the particular claims of the closed subjectivity are left behind. The stockpiled self is countered, in Bataille, by the generous and death-bound movement of an Amélie, of a Sadean heroine whose sacrifice puts at risk not only an object, a commodity, but the stability of the “me.” To affirm a consumption that, in spite of its seeming delirium of waste, is simply a treatment of matter and wastage of fossil energy in immense quantities, lacking any sense of internal limits (angoisse), and always with a particular and efficacious end in view (“growth,” “comfort,” “personal satisfaction,” “consumer freedom”) is to misrepresent the main thrust of Bataille’s work. The point, after all, is to enable us to attain a greater “self-consciousness,” based on the ability to choose between modes of expenditure. Which entails the greatest intimacy? Certainly not nuclear devastation (1949) or the simple universal depletion of the earth’s resources and the wholesale destruction of ecosystems (today). We face a situation through Bataille, then, in which, to paraphrase the Bible, “the left hand does not know what the right is doing.”32 By affirming the generosity of the self that risks itself, the irony is that, as in 1949, an economy of expenditure—one that affirms the bodily expenditure of sacrifice, of the orgy, of the celebration of cursed matter—will “save the world.”33 Instead of facing—and choosing an alternative to—nuclear war, as Bataille in his day did, today we effectively, and perhaps inadvertently, choose an alternative to ecological disaster brought about by unwise modes of consumption (consommation). Expenditure is double, and just as the affirmation of giving, according to Bataille, could head off nuclear apocalypse, so too today we can envisage a model of expenditure that, involving not the expenditure of a standing reserve of eighty million barrels a day of oil, but the wastage of human effort and time, will transform the cities of the world, already facing imminent fossil fuel depletion (what I call postsustainability). What indeed would a city be like whose chief mode of expenditure entailed not the burning of fossil fuel but the movement of bodies in transport, in ecstasy, in despair?

The contemporary economy of expenditure makes nuclear annihilation inevitable. Cultivating alternative forms of expenditure is key to planetary survival.

Stoekl 7 (Allan, Professor of French and Comparative Literature at Penn State University, “Excess and Depletion: Bataille’s Surprisingly Ethical Model of Expenditure,” Reading Bataille Now, Edited by Shannon Winnubst, pgs. 253-254)

The basis for Bataille’s approach can be found in the second chapter, “Laws of General Economy.” The theory in itself is quite straightforward: living organisms always, eventually, produce more than they need for simple survival and reproduction. Up to a certain point, their excess energy is channeled into expansion: they fill all available space with versions of themselves. But, inevitably, the expansion of a species comes against limits: pressure will be exerted against insurmountable barriers. At this point a species’ explosive force will be limited, and excess members will die. Bataille’s theory is an ecological one because he realizes that the limits are internal to a system: the expansion of a species will find its limit not only through a dearth of nourishment, but also through the pressure brought to bear by other species (1976a, 40; 1988, 33–34). As one moves up the food chain, each species destroys more to conserve itself. The amount of energy consumed by simple bacteria is thus much less than that consumed by a tiger. The ultimate consumers of energy are not so much ferocious carnivores, however, as they are the ultimate consumers of other animals and themselves: human beings. Man’s primary function is to waste, or expend, prodigious amounts of energy, not only through the consumption of other animals high on the food chain (including himself ), but in rituals that involve the very fundamental forces of useless expenditure: sex and death. Man in that sense is in a doubly privileged position: he not only wastes the most, but alone of all the animals is able to waste consciously. He alone incarnates the principle by which excess energy is burned off: the universe, which is nothing other than the production of excess energy (solar brilliance), is doubled by man, who alone is aware of the sun’s larger tendency and who therefore wastes consciously, in order to be in accord with the overall tendency of the universe. This, for Bataille, is religion: not the individualistic concern with deliverance and personal salvation, but rather the collective and ritual identification with the cosmic tendency to expend. Humans waste not only the energy accumulated by other species, but, just as important, their own energy, because humans themselves soon hit the limits to growth. Human society cannot indefinitely reproduce: soon enough what today is called the “carrying capacity” of an environment is reached.3 Only so many babies can be born, homes built, colonies founded. Then limits are reached. Some excess can be used in the energy and population required for military expansion (the case, according to Bataille, with Islam [1976a, 83–92; 1988, 81–91]), but soon that too screeches to a halt. A steady state can be attained by devoting large numbers of people and huge quantities of wealth and labor to useless activity: thus the large numbers of unproductive Tibetan monks, nuns, and their lavish temples (1976a, 93–108; 1988, 93–110). Or, most notably, one can waste wealth in military buildup and constant warfare. No doubt this solution kept populations stable in the past (one thinks of the constant battles between South American Indian tribes), but in the present (i.e., 1949) the huge amounts of wealth devoted to military armament, worldwide, can only lead to **nuclear holocaust** (1976a, 159–60; 1988, 169–71). This final point leads to Bataille’s version of a Hegelian “Absolute Knowing,” one based not so much on the certainty of a higher knowledge as on the certainty of a higher destruction. The imminence of nuclear holocaust makes it clear that expenditure, improperly conceived, can **threaten the very existence of society**. Bataille’s theory, then, is a profoundly ethical one: we must somehow distinguish between versions of excess that are “on the scale of the universe,” and whose recognition-implementation guarantees the survival of society (and human expenditure), and other versions that entail blindness to the real role of expenditure and thereby threaten man’s, not to mention the planet’s, **survival**.

Thus, we affirm excessive expenditure through the transportation infrastructure of bodily movement, such as walking and bicycling.

The expenditure of bodily energy through walking and cycling constitutes a different form of expenditure from that of the car – no longer directed toward a controlled circulation of autonomous selves, walkers and cyclists needlessly spend bodily energy rather than purposefully consuming energy resources.

Stoekl 7(Allan, professor of French and comparative literature at Penn State University, Bataille’s Peak: Energy, Religion, Postsustainability, p. 187-188)

The universal city, one of whose greatest moments would no doubt be the ville radieuse of Le Corbusier, is dependent on cheap fossil fuel inputs, on the official segregation of social spaces, and on the universalized movement of the car.4 A city with no street life whatsoever depends on the rapid movement of its idealized, derealized citizens through programmed routes determined by experts in traffic safety. Hazards, chance encounters, moments of whimsy, friendship, surreal madness, all are reduced to zero: protected from chance, the motorist is able to move along quickly, never experiencing anything other than the now and the here. This is the beauty of de Certeau’s analysis, though he doesn’t seem to recognize it: by positing the walker against this ideal city, he has struck upon a figure who consumes energy differently, who spends it gloriously. No doubt de Certeau, when he proposed the walker, was thinking of the flaneur in Baudelaire or in Benjamin. But from an early twenty-first-century perspective, there is more to this figure: he or she is moving physically, is out of a car. It is not just that the walker’s movements are “under the radar,” microscopic, rhizomatic, and therefore unpredictable, subversive, particular, peculiar. They are that, to be sure, but they are also the practice of **a different kind of expenditure of energy**; they are of a different energy regime. To burn energy with one’s body is grossly inefficient if one has a car at one’s disposal.5 If gas is cheap, as it always has been, and (from the perspective of the official energy experts) evidently always will be, it is inefficient to walk. You needlessly expend time, you incur physical discomfort, you are distracted by inessential things. Movement is choppy, disarticulated; you are constantly reminded of the passage of time and the finitude of your own body: death. Unfortunate surprises suddenly arise. The world is full of base matter, matter coursing with uncontrollable energy: you are confronted with disgusting smells, the vision of dirt, of rotting things in gutters. You are needlessly spending bodily energy, and time, perilously in contact with matter that could just as easily be entirely separated from the movement of a pure awareness, a pure present. Your “glad rags” get sweaty, limp, and you risk somehow coming down in the world. People might think that you can’t afford to drive. Thus more is at stake than simple strategies of resistance and complicity. The walker is using energy in a way that expends the easy certainties and the enforced legal parameters of the autonomist, “strategic” city. By walking or cycling—another way of confronting the city through the sacrificial expenditure of corporeal energy — you are passing through the car, through the logic of the car, on the way to an a-logic of energy consumption: post-sustainable transport in a spectacular waste of body energy.6 The autonomist self has revealed its void: dependent on the car, that empty signifier,7 the self justifies and generates a vast, coherent system of urban organization and energy consumption, a flat universe of blank walls and identical off-ramps, an absolute knowledge of pedestrian crossings and rights of way. But the self at the peak of the system is literally nothing: a simple now, an awareness, a vision, of a freeway guardrail. This self is ever changing, completely volatile, “free,” but always the same particle: it can lead nowhere beyond itself, mean nothing other than itself. What is more, the self is the awareness of the gas gauge on the dashboard, which can, often does, and most certainly will read “empty.” At the height of the autonomist regime, the self is pitched into the finitude of energy depletion: walking, the spending of energy in and of the body in transports of ecstasy and dread, is the moment of temporality and mortality, the sense of the human in non-sense. The empty self is torn from its ideality; it is pure separation: “Man,” enshrined in two tons of metal, is about to emerge, to fall, violently “communicating” with the death of God. As in Mme Edwarda, the dead God is about to get into the back seat. Every spark of combustion, the burning of every drop of gas, announces a radical finitude at the heart of seemingly endless, quantified waste.

The affirmation of transportation through the excessive expenditure of bodily energy breaks with the modern fossil fuel economy and its expectation of return – only placing the telos of autonomy in question opens up the possibility for a post-sustainable world and planetary survival.

Stoekl 7(Allan, professor of French and comparative literature at Penn State University, Bataille’s Peak: Energy, Religion, Postsustainability, p. 140-145)

Where does that leave Bataille’s future? Recall our analysis of The Accursed Share in chapter 2: the Marshall Plan would save the world from nuclear war not because it was the goal of the plan to do so, but because the aftereffect of “spending without return” is the affirmation of a world in which resources can be squandered differently: **the alternative is World War III.** The world is inadvertently sustained, so to speak, and the glory of spending can go on: this is what constitutes the ethics of “good expenditure.” Now of course we can say, from today’s perspective, that Bataille was naive, that the “gift-giving” engaged in by the United States under Harry Truman was a cynical attempt to create a bloc favorable to its own economic interests, thereby saving Europe for capitalism and aligning it against the Soviet Union in any future war — and that was probably the case. But Bataille himself was perfectly aware of the really important question: after all, as he himself puts it, “Today Truman would appear to be blindly preparing for the final — and secret — apotheosis” (OC, 7: 179; AS, 190). Blindly. Even if Bataille may have been mistaken about Truman, who after all was giving the gift of oil-powered technological superiority, the larger point he is making remains valid: giving escapes the intentions of its “author.” What is important is gift-giving itself, and the good or bad (or selfish) intentions of the giver are virtually irrelevant. What counts, in other words, is how one spends, not what one hopes to accomplish by it. Intentionality, with its goals proposed by a limited and biased self, reveals its limits. Derrida noted in his famous controversy with Jean-Luc Marion about gifting that there can never be a real gift because the intentions of the giver can never be completely unselfish.12 Thus the very idea of the gift is incoherent: a completely unselfish gift could not be given, because it would be entirely without motive. It could not even be designated as a gift. To give is to intentionally hand something over, and as soon as there is intention there is motive. One always hopes to get or accomplish something. But, as Marion would counter, there is a gifting that escapes the (inevitable) intentions of the giver and opens another economy and another ethics. This is a gift that, past a certain point, always defies the giver. Of course, one “knows” what one is giving; there are criteria for the evaluation of the gift—but then that knowledge is lost in non-knowledge. The left hand never really knows what the right is doing. Nor does the right necessarily know what it is doing, for that matter. The ethics of The Accursed Share: by giving, instead of spending for war, we inadvertently spare the world and thus make possible ever more giving. Energy is squandered in the production of wealth rather than in nuclear destruction. As we have seen, however, Bataille never adequately distinguishes between modes of spending and modes of energy. Heidegger does: quantified, stockpiled energy has as its corollary a certain objectified subjectivity, a certain model of utility associated both with the object and with the self. Another spending, another “bringing-forth” is that of the ritual object, which (even though Heidegger does not stress it) entails another energy regime: not the hoarding and then the programmed burning-off of quantified energy, but energy release in a ritual that entails **the ecstatic and anguished movements of the mortal, material body**. If we read Bataille from a Heideggerian perspective, we can therefore propose another giving, another expenditure. This one too will not, cannot, know what it is doing, but it will be consonant with the post-Sadean conceptions of matter and energy that Bataille develops in his early writings. Bataille’s alternative to the standing reserve is virulent, unlike Heidegger’s, no doubt because Bataille, following Sade, emphasizes the violence of the energy at play in ritual. Bataille’s world is intimate, and through this intimacy it gains a ferocity lacking in Heidegger’s cool and calm chalice or windmill (though both represent, in different ways, the lavish expenditure of unproductive energy). Bataille’s matter now is certainly not quantified, stockpilable; it is a “circular agitation” that **risks, rather than preserves, the self**. Through contact with this energy-charged matter, and the non-knowledge inseparable from it, the dominion of the head, of reason, of man’s self-certainty, is overthrown: God doubts himself, reveals his truth to be that of atheism; the human opens him- or herself to the other, communicates in eroticism, in the agony of death, of atheistic sacrifice. Just as in The Accursed Share, where the survival of the planet will be the unforeseen, unintended consequence of a gift-giving (energy expenditure) oriented not around a weapons buildup but around a squandering (give-away) of wealth, so too in the future we can posit sustainability as an **unintended aftereffect** of a politics of giving. Such a politics would entail not a cult of resource conservation and austere selfhood but, instead, a sacrificial practice of exalted expenditure and irresistible glory. Energy expenditure, fundamental to the human (the human as the greatest burner of energy of all the animals), would be flaunted on the intimate level, that of the body, that of charged filth. The object would not be paraded as something useful, something that fulfills our needs; its virulence would give the lie to all attempts at establishing and guaranteeing the dominion of the imperial self. One cannot deny the tendency to expend on the part of humans; on the contrary, following Bataille, we can say that this conscious tendency to lose is what both ties us to the cataclysmic loss of the universe, of the endless, pointless giving of stars, and at the same time distinguishes us through our awareness, our savoir, of what cannot be known (sheer loss). It is vain to try to deny this tendency, to argue that destruction is ultimately somehow useful, that our role here on the planet is necessary, and necessarily stingy. Parsimonious sustainability theory ends only in a cult of the self, jealous in its marshalling of all available resources. We are, on the contrary, gratuitous losers (like any other animal, but more so, and conscious of it), and this is our glory, our pleasure, our death trip, our finitude, our end. If on the other hand we try to substitute a mechanized, quantified, objectified version of expenditure and claim that it addresses all of our needs, our freedom, extravagance will be subordinated to our personal demand, energy will become mere refined power, and we end up running the risk of destroying ourselves on a planet where every atom has been put to work, made to fulfill human goals—and where every usable resource has been pushed to the point of depletion.13 But most of all, in wasting in this way, engaging in this blind travesty of the tendency to expend, we deny any communication with and through the intimate world, the other torn in erotic ecstasy, the movement of celestial bodies, the agony of God. For Bataille, in 1949, peace was the unforeseen, unplanned aftereffect of spending without return on a national scale. By expending excess energy through the Marshall Plan, the world was (according to Bataille) spared yet another buildup of weapons. But — and this perhaps was the weakness of Bataille’s argument—the Marshall Plan distributed money, the ability to buy manufactured goods, energy stored in products and things. For us today, expenditure entails the eroticized, fragmented object, the monstrous body that moves and contorts and burns off energy in its death-driven dance. Expenditure cannot be mass-produced because in the end it cannot be confused with mechanisms of utility: mass production, mass marketing, mass destruction. All of these involve, are dependent on, and therefore can be identified with a calculation, a planning, a goal orientation that is foreign to expenditure as analyzed by Bataille. At best they afford us a simulacrum of the dangerous pleasure of sacred expenditure (and thus their inevitable triumph over sustainability as austere renunciation). If then we affirm Bataille’s expenditure, we affirm an energy regime that burns the body’s forces, that contorts, distorts, mutilates the body, and we affirm as well the forces that are **undergone rather than controlled and mastered**. The energy of these forces spreads by contagion; it cannot be quantified and studied “objectively.”14 Which is not to say that it does not make its effects felt quite literally; the blood-covered voodoo priest in a trance (a photograph reproduced in Erotism), L’Abbé C. squirming in agony, and Dirty retching violently (in Blue of Noon [1978]) bear witness to this shuddering force.15 This energy, however, has little to do with that put to use in a modern industrial economy. This is not to deny that some rational instrumentality is necessary to survival; in order to live, spend, and reproduce, all creatures, and humans above all (because they are conscious of it), marshal their physical forces and spend judiciously. But, as Bataille would remind us, there is always something left over, some excessive disgusting or arousing element, some energy, and it is this that is burned off and that sets us afire. By separating this loss from industrial postconsumer waste, **we inadvertently open the space of a postsustainable world**. We no longer associate sustainability with a closed economy of production-consumption; rather, the economy of the world may be rendered sustainable so that the glory of expenditure can be projected into the indefinite future. What is sustained, or hopefully sustained (since absolute sustainability makes no sense), is not a permanent subjectivity that slices and dices and doles out an inert and dangerously depletable (but necessarily static, posthistorical) world; instead, the world is sustained as a **fundamentally unplanned aftereffect** of the tendency to expend. Unplanned not in the sense that recycling, reuse, and so on, are to be ignored, but in that they are an integral part, inseparable from and a consequence of, a blind spending of the intimate world. The logic of conservation, in other words, is inseparable from expenditure: we conserve in order to spend, gloriously, just as the worker (according to Bataille), unlike the bourgeois, works in order to have money to blow. Thus postsustainability: sustainability not as a definitive knowledge in and as a final, unalterable historical moment, but rather a knowledge as non-knowledge, practice as the end of practice, the affirmation of “nature”— including its fossil fuel energy reserves—that refuses to see it simply as a thing, as a concatenation of energy inputs that need only be managed. Rather, nature is what sustains itself when we sustain ourselves not as conservers but as profligate spenders—not of stockpiled energy, but of the energy of the universe (as Bataille would put it) that courses through our bodies, above us, below us, and hurls us, in anguish, into communication with the violence, the limit, of time. The postsustainable economy is a general economy; beyond the desires and needs of the human “particle,” it entails the affirmation of resources conserved and energy spent on a completely different scale. Rejecting mechanized waste, the world offers itself as sacred victim. The world we face, the world of “Hubbert’s peak” (see Deffeyes 2001) and the rapid decline of inert energy resources, is thus, paradoxically, a world full of expendable energy—just as Bataille’s austere postwar era was wealthy in a way his contemporaries could not comprehend. The peak of consumption and the revelation of the finitude, the depletion, of the calculable world is the opening of another world of energy expenditure and the opening of a wholly different energy regime. And it is the blowout at the summit of a reason through which society has tried to organize itself. The available energy that allows itself to be “perfected,” refined, and that therefore makes possible the performance of the maximum amount of work, in service to the ghostly identity of Man, gives way to another energy, one that cannot simply be retrieved and refined, that defies any EROEI, that does work only by questioning work, that traverses our bodies, transfiguring and “**transporting**” them. We just need to understand fully what energy expenditure means. Wealth is there to be grasped, recycled, burned, in and on the body, in and through the body’s death drive, as a mode of energy inefficiency, in the squandering of time, of effort, of focus.

Ext – Cars/Fossil Fuels = Expenditure With Return

The transporation infrastructure of the automobile nullifies the body, narrowly conceiving of expenditure as the consumption of fossil fuels while denying the possibility for chance encounters and excess – only affirming the bodily movement of the walker/cyclist solves.

Stoekl 7 (Allan, professor of French and comparative literature at Penn State University, Bataille’s Peak: Energy, Relgion, and Postsustainability, p. 183-185)

Public, organized space, then, can be formulated as commerce, translation, and the organization of desire in the law of the father. But, as Goux reminds us, this organization is itself a play of masks, of empty signs: acceding to them, we recognize their emptiness, their fragility. This would seem, in Bataille, to be the role of the automobile: the traffic circling the Place de la Concorde, the taxi in which Mme Edwarda takes on the driver, are vehicles for a rapid movement that indicates the imminence of the death of God, the atheism of God. Mme Edwarda, as God, steps into the taxi, stops the movement, releases time, but in that sudden paralysis her madness reveals the emptiness of the values, the divinities—the specie, the masks—that were already empty. The car, then, for Bataille, is the ultimate secular mover, the device whose speed illuminates the fall of the statue, the tumble of the elevated divinity — in general indifference. It is worth considering, however, in more detail how the car brings about this fall. Quantified and quantifiable technology, epitomized by the automobile, first presents itself as the empty signifier par excellence, replacing gold as the standard measure and excess of the economy. The car resituates the city to its interior: the public square, the central urban space, is no longer that which the car circles around — as it was in Bataille’s day—so much as it is the point, the particle, reproduced to infinity in all the cars of the world. The square and the self— that of the driver and his or her passenger(s) — are coterminous: where the car is, there is pure space. As Paul Virilio has pointed out, with speed comes a paradoxical exhaustion of time: the faster one goes, the less the past and future count. “Going quickly” is precisely the suppression of waiting and the passage of time: Man will be delivered from the apprehension of the future which will no longer have a reason to exist, since everything is already there, here and now, both present and disappeared, in the instantaneous apocalypse of messages, of images, in the happy pleasantry of the end of the world! (Virilio 1993, 123) In high-speed travel we lose the sensorial experience of movement: instead there is the merely visual passage of the surroundings, “the projection of a film onto a big screen” (116). Moreover, the movement of this landscape freezes, disappears in the “distance of altitude.” The car is the device par excellence that is capable of reproducing a subjectivity bound in the pure vision of the now. Speed is the revelation of an unchanging presence, an object presented to a subjectivity that, encased in metal, becomes an object to other subjectivities. The timelessness of this mechanically reproduced subject is the fulfillment of the promise of the obelisk: it is the signification of the ultimate fulfillment of a godhead, a pure meaning, not as elevated divinity but as mechanically reproduced identity, sheer indifference. The automobile—the self-movement of technology—becomes, by metonymy, the empty signifier at the summit of fossil fueled modernity. It is speed, the mastering of time, the empty and necessary eternity—comfort — of the encased, packaged, identically emptied and reproduced subjectivity. Reality is an always but never changing image on the (wind)screen: the obelisk glanced at, indifferently. Everything is mediated through the automobile, everything translates into everything else, but the car itself is empty, the excess that in itself means nothing other than an empty now and an empty space from which there is an empty never/ever changing vision of space. And then the car, opened out by the death of God, falls, and Man (“freedom”) falls with it. As the ultimate common denominator, the car brings together, in the isolation of vapid subjectivity, social classes and identities. All are one on the freeway, mixing while not mixing, moving around the empty circuit of gutted urban space. All is mediated through the automobile: everyone derives the meaning of their lives through it: as a status marker, as a simulacrum of the freedom of movement and consumption (David Brooks’s utopia), as the timelessness of a religion shared by all. Virtually everyone in American society works as hard as they do to pay for their cars: it is their major investment, the acquisition that justifies and represents human labor (“drive to work, work to drive”). And, as common denominator, it is the transcendence of labor, of meaning: sitting in traffic jams, the driver does nothing, just sits, and in this way lavishly neutralizes the labor devoted to purchasing the vehicle. Finally, pure space leads to a triumph not only over time but over the body, and bodies as well. In the car we do not need a body, we have no thought for its energy flows and expenditures. Cursed flesh is miraculously transformed into an idea. The body’s energy is stored as immense amounts of fat, it can barely move on its own, barely breathe; fewer and fewer people notice. And the bodies of others are also derealized; we see no one else’s body in their car, just indifferent heads, and as we zip past ghettoes made possible only through the judicious construction of freeways, the hypertensive bodies of people of other colors are happily ignored as well. The car is the temple, the ultimate monument, of the empty self, the all-powerful self in its pure objectivity/subjectivity. Like gold, like the father, the phallus, it brings all together, signifies all, is invisible in its materiality, and refers to a transcendent but empty signified.1 When we gaze at this speed, really lose ourselves in it, the great abstraction to which the car is devoted, its god, the human self, collapses: it is nothing but a pure now, a pure vision of the different, which is always the same. The self “sees” only urban space, the same interchanges, the same off-ramps, the same blur of buildings passing in the night.2 But at the heart of this empty plenitude, this universal in which all things are recognized but only as subsidiary, indistinguishable moments, there is a limit, a cut, a finitude. It is the temporality, the death, at the heart of empty ideality, automobility, self-erected as law. Mme Edwarda puts the brakes to it in her impossible and carnal knowledge. The car runs on fuel. It burns it, consumes it, and it can only move if the fuel is burnable, if the fuel is finite. The car’s universality, and the self on which it depends, are a function of an energy that can be expended and that will soon be gone: the car’s fall. At the moment of the recognition of the finitude of fuel, the space of the car opens out to another space, the space of another expenditure: that of the walker, dancer, or cyclist in the city; the flaneur, the voyeur, the exhibitionist. The one who lurks under the arch. The finitude of one energy regime, one model of expenditure, opens the way to another. As we saw in the Accursed Share, it is the limit that inscribes the cut of excessive energy. One limit to energy, based in a fundamental scarcity, entails another burn-off, another non-knowledge of excess, another mode of ecstatic or dreadful transport, in short, another, this time, cursed energy.

Ext – Current Transportation Infrastructure = Focus on Utility/Efficiency

Current US infrastructure is used as a utilitarian tool of efficiency – this paradigm reduces the quality of public space and encounters.

Meyboom 09 (Annalisa, Assistant Professor of Architecture at the University of British Columbia, May, Journal of Architectural Education, “Infrastructure as Practice,” Volume 62, Issue 4, page 73-74, Ebsco) cma

Yet unlike buildings that can be singularly and completely erased, infrastructure is more difficult to excise; it tends to remain in the landscape in modified and expanded forms—some improved, some deteriorated. North America has evolved into a landscape populated with dense urban centers and sprawling suburbs connected by a new generation of infrastructure. The construction of this newer infrastructure is no longer a heroic adventure; its presence is ubiquitous and in most places mundane and utilitarian; its manifestation is dominated by economics and efficiency. Since the passing of the heroic period of infrastructure, the method of building transportation infrastructure in North America has remained consistent from the recent past through the current period: its design considers travel demand, property acquisition requirements, cut and fill balance, economy of time and materials and, more recently, some ecological issues. This methodology is evidenced by the South Fraser Perimeter Road in British Columbia (Figure 2), a project currently under design by the Province of British Columbia with engineers Delcan and CH2M Hill.4 With political will established, the engineering begins: a horizontal alignment is laid out based on travel demand and property acquisition requirements. Once the horizontal alignment is roughly established, vertical alignment is determined based on balancing the cut and fill of earth. Bridges are located where crossings of rail or water are required and most efficient. This stage is then followed by design, detail, and construction, as well as property acquisition. The South Fraser Perimeter Road represents a design paradigm based on economy and efficiency. The methodology of this paradigm is carried into more dense urban areas, but the fit is ill-suited. The clearing of urban areas for construction of massive infrastructure is difficult because more people and politics are concerned, and the result often divides the city into parts. Even if the goal of the infrastructure is “green,” the physical manifestation often has a significant impact on the surrounding landscape with an attendant increase in noise and a reduction in the quality of public space both visually and experientially (the Gardiner Expressway in Toronto and the Georgia Street Viaduct in Vancouver are examples). Furthermore, the physical nature of the infrastructure may prove to be an impediment to interaction across its boundaries. Infrastructure, in spite of its overall necessity to society, can become a bad word to those who must live near it. When cities were young and growing in North America, highways could be widened in response to the demand for transportation capacity, which was then a fairly straightforward undertaking. This type of expansion for road transportation is currently unfeasible in many urban areas owing to lack of space and the multiple, frequently conflicting, agendas of groups such as property owners, public interest groups, environmental groups, and politicians.5 These parties are well justified in their concern about the construction of large-scale infrastructure; even though as a community we espouse public transportation, personally powered transportation, and walkable cities, the magnitude of infrastructure required for this new paradigm of transportation is monumental. At the same time, society requires more access to ports than previously for the movement of goods and services.6 There is a greater population in urban centers than ever before, which requires greater access of all types to bring commodities in and out of these centers. In a rapidly increasing number of locations, these requirements can no longer be solved by a matter of simply widening or adding capacity to an existing system: it is no longer possible to construct infrastructure as in the past.7 Given these conditions, North America requires a different type of infrastructure and a different approach to building it.

Ext – Oil Economy 🡪 Endless War

The restricted economy of expenditure centered on oil entails endless war – cultivating alternative methods of expenditure is crucial to avert catastrophe.

Hutnyk 2003 (John, Professor of Cultural Studies at Goldsmiths College at the University of London, Critique of Anthropology, Vol 23(3), “Bataille’s Wars: Surrealism, Marxism, Fascism,” p. 281-285)

How useful an experiment would it be to try to ‘apply’ Bataille’s notion of expenditure to politics today? Klaus-Peter Köpping asks questions about ‘modernity’ which arise explicitly from his reading of Bataille as a theorist of transgression, addressing political examples such as Bosnia, Serbia, Croatia and Indonesia (Köpping, 2002: 243). A more extravagant general economy framework for such questions might take up the massive accumulation that is the excess of an arms trade promoting regional conflicts as integral to sales figures on the one side, with the performative futility of massed anti-capitalism rallies and May Day marches that fall on the nearest Sunday so as not to disrupt the city on the other. Expenditure and squandering today, in Bataille’s sense, might be seen in both the planned obsolescence of cars, computers and nearly all merchandise, as well as in the waste production and fast-food service industry cults and fashionista style wars, tamogochi and Beckham haircuts that currently sweep the planet. No doubt it would be too mechanical to rest with such applications, too utilitarian, but the relevance is clear. The use-value of Georges Bataille is somewhat eccentric and the deployment of pre-Second World War circumstances as a comparative register for today is of course merely speculative. No return to the 1930s (colourize films now). Yet, taking account of a long list of circumstantial differences – no Hitler, no Moscow, no Trotskyite opposition, etc. – is also unnecessary since it is only in the interests of thinking through the current conjuncture so as to understand it, and change it, that any return should ever be contemplated. The importance of French anthropology – Mauss – as well as psychoanalysis and phenomenology, cannot be underestimated and all are crucial in Bataille’s comprehension of the rise of fascism. Can these matters help us to make sense of political debates in the midst of a new world war today? That the intellectual currents which shaped Bataille’s analysis were post-Marxist did not, then, replace the importance of Marx. Today the comprehension of Bush’s planetary terror machine still requires such an analysis, but one that can also be informed by the reading of Bataille’s thought as shaped by the intellectual currents mentioned above. In a period of capitalist slump, crisis of credit, overextended market, defaulted debt and threatening collapse, the strategy of war looms large. Even before the events of 11 September 2001 in New York, Bush was clearly on the warpath with missile defence systems, withdrawal from various international treaties and covenants, and massive appropriations for military and surveillance systems. The imperial element is clear and sustained – the aggression against the Palestinians, the adventure in Afghanistan and the war on Iraq (to defend papa Bush’s legacy) obviously have their roots in the imperialist mercantile tradition – plunder and war in pursuit of resources, primarily oil, secondarily armaments sales. If this is potlatch, it is of the destructive kind that Bataille feared. The possibility of a geo-political solution other than war should be evaluated. But it is a matter of record that, under the Bush family regime, the US–Europe alliance has not been interested in pursuing any programme of reduction of disparity, a few suspensions of Third World debt and UN summits notwithstanding. When Bataille searches for an alternative to war in some ‘vast economic competition’ through which costly sacrifices, comparable to war, would yet give the competitor with initiative the advantage (Bataille, 1949/1988: 172), he holds out hope for a kind of gift without return. That he showed some enthusiasm for the Marshall Plan after the Second World War as a possible model for this might need to be ascribed to the exhausted condition of post-war France, but he soon revised his assessment. The Marshall Plan was not as disinterested as Bataille implied; it facilitated circulation and recoupment of surplus value as profit. The Cold War and nuclear proliferation turned out to be the preferred examples of reckless waste in actuality – as recognized in volume two of The Accursed Share (Bataille, 1991: 188). Today, redistribution is not considered an option, the threat of Asian capitalism – after the slaughter of millions – can be ignored, and the war on Islam (known variously as the Gulf War, Zionism, and the War on Terror) appears as the primary strategy (combined with a war on South America, mistakenly named as a war on drugs, and a war on immigration disguised as a security concern). The secondary strategy is a newly hollowed out version of liberal welfare. In 1933 Bataille had written of the bourgeois tendency to declare ‘equality’ and make it their watchword, all the time showing they do not share the lot of the workers (Bataille, 1997: 177). In the 21st century, Prime Minister Blair of England has made some gestures towards a similar pseudo-alternative. At a Labour Party congress in the millennium year he spoke of the need to address poverty and famine in Africa, and no doubt still congratulates himself on his pursuit of this happy agenda; as I write a large entourage of delegates and diplomats are flying to Johannesburg for another conference junket – the Earth Summit. The party accompanying Blair and Deputy Prescott includes multinational mining corporation Rio Tinto Executive Director Sir Richard Wilson (The Guardian, 12 August 2002). Rio Tinto is hardly well known for its desire to redistribute the global share of surplus expenditure for the welfare of all. If there are no gifts, only competitions of expenditure, what then of the effort of Bataille to oppose fascism? It is not altruistic, and yet it is the most necessary and urgent aspect of his work that is given to us to read for today. Is fascism a charity-type trick? A deceit of double dealing which offers the illusion of more while giving less? Something like this psycho-social structure of fascism appears to be enacted in the potlatch appeasements of the propaganda spinsters surrounding Blair. The New Labour and Third Way public offering is ostentatiously to be about more healthcare, more police, more schools, but Blair spins and rules over a deception that demands allegiance to a privatization programme that cares only about reducing the costs (fixed capital costs) of providing healthy, orderly, trained employees for industry, of short-term profit and arms sales to Israel, of racist scare-mongering and scapegoating of asylum seekers, refugees and migrants, of opportunist short-term gain head-in-the-sand business-as-usual. Similarly, the gestures of multi-millionaires like George Soros and Bill Gates in establishing charity ‘foundations’ to ease their guilt is not just a matter of philanthropy, it is a necessary gambit of containment (and these two in particular bringing their cyber-evangelism to the markets of Eastern Europe, South and South-East Asia). The liberal rhetoric of charity and the militant drums of war are the two strategies of the same rampant restrictive economy. Carrot and stick. Team A and team B of capitalist hegemony – the critique of the gift is clear, a gift is not a gift but a debt of time – and this is not really generosity or hospitality. The same can be said perhaps of war – it is not war but profit, just as the gift reassures the giver of their superior status, the war on terror unleashes a terror of its own; war does not produce victories but rather **defeat for all**. Bataille shows us a world in ruins. September 11 has been made into the kind of event that transforms an unpopular (even unelected) figure into a leader under whom the nation coheres in a new unity – much as Bataille saw Nuremburg achieve for the National Socialists. Of course I am not suggesting Bush is a Nazi – he hasn’t got the dress sense – but people were betrayed by the trick of a ‘democracy’ that offers pseudo-participation once every four years, and this time in a way that has consequences leading inexorably to a massive fight. The kowtowing to big business with a rhetoric of social security has been heard before – it was called the New Deal (or welfare state) and was a deception almost from the start. Where there was perhaps some contractual obligation of aid in the earlier forms, today the trick of the buy-off bribery of service provision is contingent and calculated according only to corporate strategic gain. While we lurch towards endless war, governments reassure us with the watchwords of security that really mean death and despair to those on the wrong side of the wire. The largest prison population ever (under democracy or any other form of government), mass confinement for minor offences (three strikes), colour overcoded death row (Mumia Abu-Jamal etc.), arrest and detention without trial or charge, celebratory executionism, etc. The incarcerated souls in the concentration camps of Sangatte,10 Woomera,11 Kamunting12 or Guantanamo13 are wired in and offered up as sacrificial gifts to the rule of new judicial-administrative fascism. A new toothy-smiling Christian cult of death and technology, spun carefully via press conferences and TV sitcoms – television has given up any pretence of journalism in favour of infotainment. Does the US administration dream of a new post-war era where, once again like Marshall, they could come with a plan to rebuild upon ruins? This would indicate the exhaustion of the current mode of production, which, with ‘information’ promised renewal but quickly stalled. Whatever the case, the enclosure of the US and Europe behind fortress walls does not – experience now shows – ensure prophylactic protection, and ruin may be visited upon all. It was Bataille who said that perhaps only the ‘methods of the USSR would . . . be equal to a ruined immensity’ (Bataille, 1949/1988: 167–8). Polite critiques and protest have no purchase – orderly rallies against the aggression in Afghanistan, against asylum and immigration law, against the destruction of Palestine, etc., get no ‘airtime’ (instead, ‘political’ soap opera like The West Wing, as the current equivalent in ideological terms to the Cold War’s Bomber Command). Every leader that accedes to the ‘War on Terror’ programme and its excesses (civilian deaths, curtailment of civil liberty, global bombing) is an appeaser. This is like the dithering of Chamberlain, only this time the opposition activists are fighting in a ‘post-national’ arena and Stalin’s slumber will not be broken, the Red Army cannot run interference, there is no Churchill rumbling in the wings, the fascist empire will prevail without militant mobilization across the board. This is the appeaser’s gift – betrayal into the ‘ranks assigned to us by generals and industrial magnates’ (Bataille, 1985: 164). The unravelling of the tricks of social welfare, of ‘asylum’ and ‘aid’ programmes, of ‘interest’ even (the narrowing of news broadcasts to domestic affairs) or respect, of the demonization of others, of tolerance, the hypocrisy of prejudice – all this prepares us for a war manufactured elsewhere. After the breakdown of the gift’s tricks, fascism is the strategy, the obverse side of capital’s coin. In this context, the geo-politics that enables, or demands, appeasement of the imperious corporate/US power is the restricted destruction we should fear, and we should fight in a struggle that goes beyond national defence, wage claims or solidarity. The discipline of the Soviets and of Bataille could be our tools. Bataille reads on in his library. We are left speculating with him, rashly charging in with ideas that are less excessive, less exuberant, that moderation might withhold. But there is no more important time to consider the efforts in the arts to fight militarism out of control, and, as Bush drags the world into permanent war, it is worth asking why Bataille’s surrealistic opposition to Hitler was inadequate. Is it because there are no more thinkers in the Party? Is it that subversion is uninformed and its spirit quiet? Chained to the shelves, it is not enough to know that appeasement of the military-industrial machine is the obverse side of liberal charity. Why are we still unable to acknowledge this is the path to war? What would be adequate to move away from appeasement to containment and more? What kind of sovereign destruction would Bataille enact today? Against the ‘immense hypocrisy of the world of accumulation’ (Bataille, 1991: 424), the answer is clear: we should ‘condemn this mouldy society to revolutionary destruction’ (Bataille, 1997: 175). The Bataille of La Critique Sociale might argue for a glorious expenditure as that which connects people together in the social and recognizes their joint labour to produce themselves, and this must be redeemed from the restricted economy that insists on expenditure for the maintenance of hierarchy. If he were leaving the library today, the Bataille of anti-war Surrealism might say it is time for a wake-up knock-down critique of the barking dogs. The castrating lions of appeasement must be hounded out of town. Back in your kennels, yelping pups of doom. Fair call, Georges Bataille.

Ext – Expenditure With Return = Mass Death

The economy of expenditure that glorifies the free and autonomous self as one who exploits and consumes resources renders humanity itself as a resource ripe for exploitation. Car culture goes hand in hand with the use and disposal of humans in concentration camps.

Stoekl 7(Allan, professor of French and comparative literature at Penn State University, Bataille’s Peak: Energy, Religion, Postsustainability, p. 129-133)

It is worth noting that for Heidegger energy plays a prominent role in this revealing, despite what this fourfold model would seem to indicate (energy expended in the making of the chalice is not included, interestingly, as a cause). Heidegger later cites the case of the windmill, which “does not unlock energy from the air currents in order to store it” (14). In other words, the windmill, no doubt consonant with the tools of the craftsman, serves only to “bring forth” the energy needed to carry out an operation— the milling of wheat—which is itself a bringing-forth of the wheat as flour. In the poeisis of the craftsman or miller, then, energy does have a role, but it is an immediate instance of energy, not stockpiled or accumulated. It is directly applied. In the case of technology (techné), however, there is a movement in which Man, investigating, observing, ensnares nature as an area of his own conceiving[;] he has already been claimed by a way of revealing that challenges him to approach nature as an object of research, until even the object disappears into the objectlessness of standing-reserve. (19) This ensnaring is not so much a product of man’s will as the aftereffect of a certain kind of revealing. Likewise, man himself as subject is an effect of this mode of revealing. In the case of the craftsman making the chalice, there is an awareness that the human is only one factor in the bringing- forth of the (sacred) object; now, in the realm of techné, man takes himself to be the author of the process, a process carried out exclusively by him, on nature, for his own benefit. Heidegger mentions “The Rhine” as title, and subject, of an artwork—a product of poeisis as sacred bringing forth—in the poem of the same name by Hölderlin. He contrasts this with “The Rhine” as the source of hydroelectric power or as an “object on call for inspection by a tour group ordered there by the vacation industry” (16). Techné is a form of revealing, and as revealing it is a bringing-forth. This is the movement of the craftsman. Modern technology is also a revealing, but not a bringing-forth. Thus technology is inseparable from techné in its original sense, but it is also quite different in that it is a kind of confrontation, a military ordering, a regimentation. The revealing that holds sway throughout modern technology does not enfold into a bringing-forth in the sense of poéisis. The revealing that rules in modern technology is a challenging [Herausfordern], which puts to nature the unreasonable demand that it supply energy that can be extracted and stored as such. (14) Ensnaring entails a “monstrous” entrapment of natural energy. The Rhine becomes a standing reserve of energy. Techné entails not a bringing-forth but a “challenging-forth.” Heidegger writes: That challenging happens in that the energy concealed in nature is unlocked, what is unlocked is transformed, what is transformed is stored up, what is stored up is, in turn, distributed, and what is distributed is switched about ever anew. (16) Nature has lost what we might call its autonomy; its model is no longer the bringing-forth of the flower bud, or the energy of the windmill (which “does not unlock energy from the wind currents in order to store it” [14]), but the violent, commandeering, ordering, and stockpiling of energy by the human as challenging-forth. The human, now revealed as a sort of martial monster, is opposed, in its actions, to the bringing-forth that best characterized poeisis (a causal model in which the human plays only a part). And, Heidegger makes clear in another essay, “The Age of the World Picture,” reality itself in and through technology can only be grasped as a standing reserve, ripe for quantification, stockpiling, use, and disposal, if it is isolated in an objective “picture,” a coherent, passive, inert totality whose only aspect is that it can be brought-forth, by man, violently, in techné. “To represent” objectively (as the Rhine is represented by those who would harness its energy) is “to set out before oneself and to set forth in relation to oneself ” (Heidesser 1977, 132). “That the world becomes picture is one and the same even with the event of man’s becoming suiectum in the midst of that which is” (132). The rise of subjectivity, of the isolated, active self, conquering nature, storing its energy, is inseparable from the appearance of an “anthropology” through which “observation and teaching about the world change into a doctrine of man” (133). Or, we might say, observation and teaching about the world become observation and teaching about man: the measurement of nature’s resources and their stockpiling—and wanton expenditure—are **inseparable from the stockpiling and wastage of the human** in techno-scientific methods. Man the subject for whom the objective world exists as a resource is quickly reversed and becomes man the object who, under the right conditions, is examined, marshaled, and then releases a specific amount of energy before he himself is definitively depleted. Although Heidegger does not stress this point in “The Age of the World Picture,” he does make this point elsewhere, noting what for him is the **inevitable link** between the transformation of the world into a giant energy reserve and the transformation of man into a resource to be exploited in, for example, **concentration camps**.8 Subject/object; this is the infernal duo that, for Heidegger, characterizes modernity. The world is quantified in order to be exploited by “man,” but man himself is a consequence of this mode of expenditure. The man who hoards, who works to preserve his individual existence and protect it from all threats, is inseparable from a natural world completely transformed and rendered “monstrous” by a kind of instrumental mania. Man himself becomes a resource to be scientifically investigated, fully known, perfected, made fully human (with an identity and consciousness) and put to use.9 This brief excursion through Heidegger on technology is useful, I think, to put the work of ideologists of suburbia and **car culture**, like Lomasky and Brooks, in perspective. We could argue, following Heidegger, that their version of car culture inevitably entails a subjectivity, one that, as in Heidegger, is both produced by their model and in turn produces it. The illusion “Man” derives his “freedom” from the quantification and commodification of natural resources: oil, to be sure, but also the steel, plastics, and other materials that go to make up the “autonomist” lifestyle. Utility as the autonomists conceive it is inseparable from a freedom that wastes, though they are notably reticent when it comes to discussing the consumption of resources on which their favorite lifestyle depends. Heidegger, although he does not explicitly pose the question of waste, certainly implies it: the Rhine, ruined by all those who exploit it, is a “resource” that has been squandered for the self-satisfied pleasures of domestic life and tourism. I have discussed the analyses of Lomasky and Brooks at such length because they are the most articulate and coherent defenders of the current culture in which we (attempt to) live. These proponents of the ideology of the current American fossil fuel regime valorize a lavish and ruinous wastage but do so in a way that masks it, invoking as they do utility: the squandering of vast amounts of wealth is necessary, indeed is a given, be- cause we are necessarily engaged in developing to the fullest our nature as autonomous, free, individuals. As those free individuals we are the highest being on the earth (as Aristotle would remind us), the most developed. And as such we can be expected to reject any calls to conservation or sustainability. Heidegger, however, would note that our being, our subjectivity, is a quantifiable term that is a function of the very same movement, the very same bringing forth as techné, that renders the world a quantifiable mass ripe for exploitation. And such a subject, immediately transformed into an object, a standing reserve, warehoused in an institution (concentration camp, prison, army, hospital, school, freeway, suburb), is itself ripe for use and disposal. The vaunted subject of the autonomists is for that reason autonomous only in its slavery to a “monstrous” energy regime. Energy is surely wasted in a challenging, but it is a wastage that goes hand in hand with the production and wastage of a subjectivity that is closed in on itself, concerned with its own comfort, stability, and permanence. The freedom of car culture, of the fossil fuel era, is the freedom of a subject whose imperial grasp is inseparable from its weakness as a quantifiable “dust mote” (as Bataille would put it).

Ext – Affirming Walking/Cycling Solves

Affirming the bodily movement of the walker/cyclist as expenditure without return contests the closed economy of fossil fuel consumption – only the refusal to subordinate expenditure to a telos opens up the possibility for planetary survival.

Stoekl 7 (Allan, professor of French and comparative literature at Penn State University, Bataille’s Peak: Energy, Relgion, and Postsustainability, p. 188-189)

If we uncouple the “tendency to expend” characterizing humanity from the simple consumption of huge amounts of fossil fuel–based energy—if, in other words, we posit a “good” duality in contradistinction to the current regime of the “bad” — we then can continue to affirm excess, but excess, the destruction of the thing, as a movement of intimacy. From the (current) “bad” duality of the automatic production of excess as a mode of utility (the gas guzzler and the “freedom” it proffers are “necessary,” “useful,” etc.) we pass to a “good” duality: a possible utility — the survival of the species — as an aftereffect of glorious loss.8 Energy now will be wasted on an intimate level, that of the human body. The expenditure analyzed by Bataille, in the wake of Sade, is always on the level of corporeality: the arousal of sexual organs, the movement of muscles, the distortions of words spewing from mouths. And, we could add, using de Certeau’s terminology, the expenditure of the walker/cyclist is the **tactical alternative** to the strategic law imposed by social and city planners, developers, disciples of autonomist Man: the vast arrayed forces of modernism in its era of imminent dissolution.9 There is virtually no point any more in trying to work out a critique of modernity: depletion does it for us, relentlessly, derisively, definitively. Perhaps the knowledge modernity has provided, both technical and theoretical, has been necessary; in this case the fossil fuel regime inseparable from modernity has been a necessary, if ephemeral, stage of human development. But the fall, the die-off, looms. The larger problem (entailing a task never fully undertaken by Bataille) is to think a “good” duality, the postmodern affirmation of sheer expenditure through dread and the recognition of limits (interdiction, the mortality of reference) on the scale of human muscle power and the finitude of the body. A return to the past? Not really, since the imminent depletion of fossil fuel resources will push us in that direction anyway: muscle power, body power, will be a, if not the, major component in the energy mix of the future.10 But certainly what is imperative is an awareness that any economy not based on the profligate waste of resources (commonly called a “sustainable” economy) must recognize and affirm the tendency to expend, indeed be based on it. And inseparable from that tendency, as we know, are the passions, as Bataille would call them: glory, but also delirium, madness, sexual obsession. Or, perhaps closer to home, a word rarely if ever used by Bataille: freedom. Not the freedom to consume, the waste of fossil fuel inputs, but the freedom of the instant, from the task, freedom disengaged from the linkage of pleasure to a long-term, ever- receding, and largely unjustified goal. An “intimate” freedom—but not the freedom of prestige, rank, not the freedom of Man in and as security.

The expenditure of bodily energy through walking and cycling affirms transportation as something other than the contemporary fossil fuel economy, opening up toward alternative conceptions of freedom not linked to hyperconsumption.

Stoekl 7 (Allan, professor of French and comparative literature at Penn State University, Bataille’s Peak: Energy, Relgion, and Postsustainability, p. 191-192)

Expenditure, then, plays against—and not through ressentiment, but through a difference with and a recognition and transgression of the limits of the closed economy of utility and the cult of personal satisfaction, of the personal tout court. If we return to our model of hyperwaste, with which we are so familiar (to the point of its invisibility), we can say that loss can be framed as inefficiency in relation to the apparent efficiency and universality of the commercial (fossil) fuels regime and the automobile that serves as its ultimate metonym. Thus, to put it simply, walking or cycling is a gross waste of time and effort when one could just drive. The expenditure of bodily energy is tied to an immediate pleasure, a jouissance, of spending in relation to the great closed (“global”) economy of the world. Of course the “closed” economy is based on waste as well, but the cyclist knows her waste, revels in it, and revels in all the things she defies (and defiles) in the current economic conjuncture: not only fossil fuel use, but the logic of obesity, the regime of spectator sports (only hyperconsuming athletes are allowed phys- ical exertion), the segregation of society by physical space and social class, the degradation of the environment in support of the production, use, and disposal of cars, and the economy of “growth” dependent on the use of ever greater quantities of depletable resources.12 This difference with the closed, global economy, subordinated to a universal autonomist Man in the ideality of virtual time (the pure now) — this affirmation of anguish, physical pleasure/agony and “self-consciousness” in a Bataillean sense is what we might call one version of a contemporary affirmation of the general economy. Walking and cycling year-round, if judged by contemporary standards of comfort and well-being, are a ridiculous waste of time and effort; they condemn one to a harrowing descent into “discomfort.”13 Arriving sweaty at one’s job at the Department of the Treasury, after having cycled sixteen miles from Bethesda, Maryland, is the indication of a grossly inefficient expenditure of time and effort that would be better invested in tending to the details of the American economy. The worker who does this sort of thing is **participating in another economy** at the moment he or she works for the larger, inanimate fuel-fed economy headquartered (one of its heads, in any case), in Washington, D.C. The expenditure of personal energy is nevertheless tied to an immediate pleasure, a jouissance, of spending set against the great closed (“global”) economy of the world. The cyclist’s body, from the perspective of triumphant autonomist culture, is little more than an open wound, screaming for a rich energy input of fossil fuel and exposed to the contempt or aggression of the world. It is only if we see the renunciation or necessary abandonment of the car and the affirmation of muscles, in and as an economy of difference and knowledge—impossible knowledge — that this act can be put in perspective. Bodily movement as **transportation**, display, dance, exhaustion, passion, “communication,” all together, in a labyrinthine urban space made dense and polysemic by the different sensory modalities of ecstatic expenditure 14—all this entails the **reinscription of “freedom**,” its **reassignment** from the sociotechnical frame 15 previously associated with the regime of hyperconsumption, social standing, and fuel depletion.

AT: Performative Contradiction – You Have a Goal

Thinking within some horizon is inevitable – our affirmation of the excessive expenditure of bodily energy is the most ethical precisely because it contests the telos imposed by hegemonic modes of thought associated with the fossil fuel economy.

Stoekl 7 (Allan, professor of French and comparative literature at Penn State University, Bataille’s Peak: Energy, Relgion, and Postsustainability, p. 192-193)

Our first questions, which are inseparable from an ethical approach to economy, will be: How and what do we expend? What model of expenditure will condition the practice of maintaining or modifying a carrying capacity? And we will inevitably think within a horizon, a series of limits, as Bataille himself does when he elaborates the ethics of expenditure; no thought can be elaborated in and as a realm of limitless, sheer waste (or sheer gift-giving). But from within, and transgressing, the ethics of limits, we have no choice but (miming Bataille) to elaborate a theory of excess in an era of radical shortage,16 a practice of human-powered velocity in an era of gas lines, a theory of glory in and against an epoch of seemingly relentless constraint. Against the decaying urban space of experts—space that will no longer seem so expertly configured in the absence of cheap energy inputs—and the divinized space of the motorist on his or her lofty perch, the universalized SUV that doubles as the summit of the social and conceptual pyramid—another time emerges, one of the parodic recycling of castoff goods, of skills made worthless in a growth economy,17 of lives made redundant in a society of mandatory, rigorously quantified inanimate waste. A space of the communication of wounds, a void into which the subject falls—from the eternal but evanescent peak at the center of the traffic circle to the emptiness in the opening of the Porte St. Denis. “Good” duality, in effect: the duality of an ecology of “religion” that entails not a law of the perfect human, but of the aroused animal, death-bound, confronting the other not as a pure freedom, an identical-different human face, but as an exhausted, mad, and elusive wound. The “limits to growth” are affirmed as the instance of a mortality before which the fossil fuel reserve stands (before falling): they are transgressed in the night of “transport” and “communication.”

AT: Marshall Plan Indicts

Our author doesn’t defend the Marshall Plan as expenditure without return – that’s Bataille’s example and it’s off the mark. Affirming the expenditure of bodily energy coheres much better with Bataille’s overall project.

Stoekl 7 (Allan, professor of French and comparative literature at Penn State University, Bataille’s Peak: Energy, Religion, and Postsustainability, p. 136-137)

Having said all this, however, we should note that the two energies can never be rigorously separated either. Just as absolute knowledge is and loses itself in non-knowledge (the limit of knowledge affirmed and transgressed), so too homogeneous and heterogeneous energy are inseparable: energy is dual, not a singular concept, and in its duality it both founds and overturns, both renders possible and conceivable, and destroys in a void. Bataille’s point, one that he himself perhaps loses sight of, is that energy, like knowledge, is both unitary and double and that energy that merely founds and sustains in a coherent, quantifiable fashion — like the energy implied in the accomplishment of the Marshall Plan—is only one version of energy, and it is **not the sacred share**. It is limited, depletable, transgressed in and through another energy. Heterogeneous energy, like cursed matter, can never be depended on to guarantee an autonomous and free self. The consequences of the necessary Bataillean revision of Heidegger (or the Heideggerian revision of Bataille) are extremely important, and in my opinion were never fully recognized by Bataille himself. If the economy of stable and closed subjectivity is tied to quantification and mechanization—“anthropology” in Heidegger’s terminology—then the economy of the “communicating” self does not entail the products, or the quantified excess, of a modern economy. It certainly entails energy, but the fate of energy is very different. What is expended is cursed matter, heterogeneous, charged “filth” and not the useful/fun products marketed in an autonomist, subject-centered postindustrial paradise. Thus Bataille himself was **off the mark** when he proposed the Marshall Plan as an example of twentieth-century potlatch: the problem was not so much that the Americans were “giving”out of self-interest—ultimately the self always reappears as a limit, as an interdiction, to the continuity of blind communication — but that the gift-giving itself was inseparable from the maintenance of an energy regime based on stockpiling and quantification (a fossil fuel energy regime, in short). Americans were giving away money and finished products, not, say, objects carrying a powerful ritual or sacrificial charge, the “power of points” resulting from the exuberance of muscle power, the anguished “experience” of time, and ecstatic participation in frenetic and death-bound activity.

The main thrust of Bataille’s argument counters a simplistic affirmation of the Marshall Plan or fossil fuel consumption.

Stoekl 7 (Allan, professor of French and comparative literature at Penn State University, Bataille’s Peak: Energy, Religion, and Postsustainability, p. 57-58)

Bataille, then, should have distinguished more clearly between intimate and impersonal varieties of useless squandries when it came to his discussion of the Marshall Plan.29 (In the same way, he should have distinguished between energy that is stockpiled and put to use and energy that is fundamentally “cursed” not only in and through bodily excess but in its ability to do “work.”)30 It is not merely a question of our attitude toward expenditure, our “self-consciousness”: also fundamental is how it is carried out. Waste based on the consumption of fossil or inanimate (nuclear) fuels cannot entail intimacy because it is dependent on the thing as thing, it is dependent on the energy reserve, on the stockpiled, planned, and protected self: “[This is] what we know from the outside, which is given to us as physical reality (at the limit of the commodity, available without reserve). We cannot penetrate the thing and its only meaning is its material qualities, appropriated or not for some use [utilité], understood in the productive sense of the term. (OC, 7: 126; AS, 132; italics Bataille’s) The origin of this destruction is therefore to be found in the maximizing of the efficiency of production; modern, industrialized waste is fundamentally only the most efficient way to eliminate what has been over- produced. Hence the Marshall Plan, proposing a gift-giving on a vast, mechanized scale, is different in kind from, say, a Tlingit potlatch ceremony. “Growth” is the ever-increasing rhythm and quantity of the treatment of matter for some unknown and unknowable human purpose and that matter’s subsequent disposal/destruction. One could never “self-consciously” reconnect with intimacy through the affirmation of some form of industrial production-destruction. To see consumer culture as in some way the fulfillment of Bataille’s dream of a modern-day potlatch is for this reason a **fundamental misreading** of The Accursed Share.31 Bataille’s critique is always an ethics; it entails the affirmation of a “general economy” in which the particular claims of the closed subjectivity are left behind. The stockpiled self is countered, in Bataille, by the generous and death-bound movement of an Amélie, of a Sadean heroine whose sacrifice puts at risk not only an object, a commodity, but the stability of the “me.” To affirm a consumption that, in spite of its seeming delirium of waste, is simply a treatment of matter and wastage of fossil energy in immense quantities, lacking any sense of internal limits (angoisse), and always with a particular and efficacious end in view (“growth,” “comfort,” “personal satisfaction,” “consumer freedom”) is to misrepresent the main thrust of Bataille’s work. The point, after all, is to enable us to attain a greater “self-consciousness,” based on the ability to choose between modes of expenditure. Which entails the greatest intimacy? Certainly not nuclear devastation (1949) or the simple universal depletion of the earth’s resources and the wholesale destruction of ecosystems (today).

AT: Bataille’s Expenditure = Capitalism/Modern Industrial Economy

This expenditure of bodily energy constitutes a different form of expenditure from the industrial economy that opens out from, rather than closing in on, an autonomous self.

Stoekl 7(Allan, professor of French and comparative literature at Penn State University, Bataille’s Peak: Energy, Religion, Postsustainability, p. 134-136)

The strength of Heidegger’s argument is that it shows us the connection between extravagant expenditure in a mechanized, technological economy and restrained, parsimonious spending in a sustainable one. Both economies are fundamentally technological, involving the standing reserve and the basic role of the subject-object opposition, in which the integrity of the subject, the self, is guaranteed through the mechanization of nature and the preservation and quantification of energy resources. Both are dependent exclusively on a conception of energy as a “power to do work,” what we might call a “homogeneous” energy whose very identity is inseparable from (apparently) useful labor. Bataille in effect makes possible the revision of Heidegger in one very important way. Heidegger’s silver chalice is seemingly unconnected with the stockpiling of ore and the use of concentrated energy in fuel. (Ritual for Heidegger appears to be somehow radically distinct from all the material processes of energy expenditure.) Bataille, on the other hand, understands that conservation and expenditure are an inherent part of “ritual” production as well as production associated with the cult of Man and the mechanized standing reserve; what for Heidegger was a bringing-forth that seemed only in a minor way to involve pristine, unstockpiled energy (wind, in fact), in Bataille becomes an expenditure that counters the selfish movement of acquisition. This does not mean, of course, that Bataille is somehow against the reuse of materials, any more than Heidegger is against the use and reuse of silver in the production of the chalice. But Bataille is interested in the economy of the excessive part, the ritual or sacred part, nonrecuperable matter or energy, in and through which the self is opened out in “communication.” There is, in other words, an economy of the excessive part for Bataille; ritual is always already a matter of the concentration of energy in an object and the expenditure of that energy. The chalice for Bataille is an object that defeats utility and its own object-hood in and through its (mis)use in an intimate moment (sacrificial ritual). Both the fabrication of the chalice (as well as the carrying out of the ritual with which it is associated) and the quantification and storage of energy from the Rhine would be, for Bataille, instances of the use and expenditure of energy. The chalice provides an instance of a lavish expenditure of energy (mining silver takes a lot of work; the chalice is uselessly decorated and finished), as does the use of Rhine energy (electricity used to power a wasteful consumer society life- style). Heidegger ultimately loses sight of this connection, and difference, by largely ignoring the relation between energy expenditure and ritual. But seeing the connection between chalice and Rhine power (both entailing energy conservation and expenditure) also helps us see the difference, one that can be derived from Heidegger and that brings a useful correction to Bataille. Ritual—sacrifice—entails a production and consumption of energy that is not stockpiled or quantified in the same way as are raw materials or energy resources used in industrial society. This energy is not and cannot be simply quantified, measured, and doled out in a Marshall Plan; like the “formless” matter it animates, it does not go to the production of a coherent and meaningful (ideal) universe, be it a universe of God or science. We might call this energy “heterogeneous,” in opposition to the energy that is merely the power to do work and generate (apparent) order. This “other” energy is **energy of the body**, of useless body motion in deleterious time; it is inseparable from the putting into question of the coherency of the body, of the self, and of God, that supreme self. It is energy as the flow of generosity, of the revelation of the void at the peak. It is the energy of celestial bodies, matter beyond or below appropriation by the human. The energy of the Rhine, on the other hand, as discussed by Heidegger, is quantifiable, and hence can be harvested by a scientific-technical grasping of nature. This latter energy involves an objectification of nature but also an objectification of subjectivity itself (stockpiled subjects as just another standing reserve). This energy is “useful,” it “serves a purpose,” it enables us to be free by strengthening our autonomous (autonomist) subjectivity. Our self, selfhood, selfishness. Ultimately, the sacred (or cursed) share of energy is not quantifiable because the “inner experience” tied to it does not entail representation; indeed, as we have seen, it entails the expenditure of a language (in Bataille’s counter-Book) that would simply represent a stable (phantasmically eternal) world. Thus “communication” of the self, its opening out to death or to the other, is doubled by the monstrous movements of the body and the disgusting dualism of matter to which the body in turn reacts in and as communication (vomiting, sexual arousal, horror, etc.).

**The expenditure of human energy, the useless body of motion, is fundamentally different from capitalist expenditure**

**Stoekl 7** (Allan, professor of French and comparative literature at Penn State University, Bataille’s Peak: Energy, Religion, Postsustainability, p. 136-139)

The consequences of the necessary Bataillean revision of Heidegger (or the Heideggerian revision of Bataille) are extremely important, and in my opinion were never fully recognized by Bataille himself. If the economy of stable and closed subjectivity is tied to quantification and mechanization—“anthropology” in Heidegger’s terminology—then the economy of the “communicating” self does not entail the products, or the quantified excess, of a modern economy. It certainly entails energy, but the fate of energy is very different. What is expended is cursed matter, heterogeneous, charged “filth” and not the useful/fun products marketed in an autonomist, subject-centered postindustrial paradise. Thus Bataille himself was off the mark when he proposed the Marshall Plan as an example of twentieth- century potlatch: the problem was not so much that the Americans were “giving” out of self-interest—ultimately the self always reappears as a limit, as an interdiction, to the continuity of blind communication — but that the gift-giving itself was inseparable from the maintenance of an energy regime based on stockpiling and quantification (a fossil fuel energy regime, in short). Americans were giving away money and finished products, not, say, objects carrying a powerful ritual or sacrificial charge, the “power of points” resulting from the exuberance of muscle power, the anguished “experience” of time, and ecstatic participation in frenetic and death-bound activity. Heidegger, then, did not recognize, fully at least, the energy-based aspect of ritual. He saw that energy was involved—the windmill—but he did not recognize that the bringing-forth, the revealing, was itself an expenditure of energy. He saw energy expenditure as a central focus of poeisis only in the context of techné and the militarily ordered standing reserve. Bataille sees fully the economic aspect of ritual expenditure, of sacrifice, but he does not see the fundamental connection, noted by Heidegger, between a “technological” expenditure and a stockpiled, protected, and projected self. Had Bataille recognized this connection, he would have been able to distinguish the exuberant wastage of autonomist culture—tied ultimately to the growth economy, consumer culture, and the overweening self—from another expenditure, of the body, of heterogeneous matter, of death as internal, and internally recognized and transgressed limit and end. He would have distinguished the faux constructive spending by and for Man from the sacrificial expenditure of the death of God and Man. This confusion is fundamental because a number of commentators have come to see Bataille’s work as an ultimate celebration of the exuberance of postmodern capitalism. Thus Jean-Joseph Goux, in a brilliant article, argues that George Gilder, a Reagan-era apologist of capitalism, essentially co-opts Bataille’s argument; if the bases of capitalism as it is practiced in the West today is risk taking, squandering resources blindly in the hope of a far from assured profit, capitalism will have more in common with the risky potlatch ritual than it has with the miserly savings plans of Ben Franklin. One can now point to an “antibourgeois” defense of capitalism, an apposition of terms which resonate disturbingly, like an enigmatic oxymoron. Everything happens as if the traditional values of the bourgeois ethos (sobriety, calculation, foresight, etc.) were no longer those values which corresponded to the demands of contemporary capital- ism. And it is in this way that Gilder’s legitimation...can echo so surprisingly Bataille’s critiques of the cramped, profane, narrowly utilitarian and calculating bourgeois mentality. (Goux 1990a, 217) Thus for Goux, Bataille becomes a Reaganite avant la lettre, and the ac- cursed share is not much more than the motivation of every contemporary billionaire. If, however, we shift our focus slightly, from bourgeois versus “primitive” economy to the difference between the economies of energy regimes, a move authorized by Bataille himself in his emphasis on energy as the fundamental factor in wealth, then we will see that there is a profound dif- ference between expenditure as a feature of the standing reserve and expenditure as it appears as a function of intimate ritual. In the first case, expenditure is tied to the production and maintenance of the self (Brooks and Lomasky would certainly agree); in the second, to the fundamental “communication” of the self in loss, dread, eroticism, death: the intimacy that accomplishes nothing, goes nowhere, but that is inseparable from an “in- ner experience” (which is neither inner nor an experience). Even if there are (obvious) elements of sexiness or risk taking in mechanized, quantified expenditure (as both Brooks and Lomasky would argue as well), the latter is fundamentally tied not to dread and non-savoir, but to the faux permanence and dominion of human subjectivity. Heidegger’s critique, which is perfectly consonant with Bataille’s, is not so much antibourgeois as it is one that is established against a certain way of conceiving the production, storage, and waste of energy resources. The energy stored in and released from a strip-mined mound of coal is qualitatively different from, for example, the bodily energy discharged at the contact of an eroticized object.10 Heterogeneous energy is what is left over, in excess, after the other energy has depleted itself, either literally or logically, in the completion of its job. It is there after homogeneous energy is quantified and used to the point of its own extinction, or after it has revealed itself as nonsustainable in the sense that its excess is inseparable from the production and maintenance of an illusory presence (its end is the production and sustenance of a moder¢n subjectivity that is riven, death-bound, but that takes itself to be total, essential). Thus Bataille’s affirmation of expenditure and loss cannot be simply identified with the waste of consumer culture and modern capitalist economies. To be sure, “modern” economies are based on an ever more frantic rhythm of production-consumption-destruction, and in that they are deeply implicated in a wastage process more fundamental than the world has ever seen. The amounts of food, metals, fuels consumed, and the amount of all types of nonrecyclable waste produced are staggering. Whole forests and ecosystems are destroyed without sentimentality in the name of utility (furthering the necessary comfort of Man). But, simply put, this is not the kind of consumption, or expenditure, that Bataille is talking about. At best we could say that they are “bad” versions of expenditure: without any aware- ness of it, people “waste” because this society has turned its back on expenditure. It is their only option, their only way of spending — and for this reason they would hardly refuse this waste if their only other course of action was a radical conservation from which all expenditure, waste or burn-off, consommation or consumation, was eliminated. Our detour through Heidegger indicates that modern subjectivity— subjectivity that itself can be objectified, quantified—is inseparable from an instrumental conception of “resources”: matter is now quantity—measured, hoarded, and then spent. The self is a function of the world as standing reserve, the collection-disposal of accumulated raw material. And the self becomes raw material as well.

AT: Framework/No Spillover

The Neg’s call for massive transformation and end goals replicates the error we critique – affirming local and minor instances of expenditure without return is a crucial gesture for the thinking of a post-fossil fuel economy.

Stoekl 7 (Allan, professor of French and comparative literature at Penn State University, Bataille’s Peak: Energy, Relgion, and Postsustainability, p. 190)

“Expenditure without return” is a floating concept, defined in opposition to the restrained economy whose possibility it opens but which it defies. As an end not leading outside itself, it could be anything; but what is most important is that with it there is a movement of “communication,” of the breaking of the narrow limits of the (ultimately illusory) self-interested individual, and no doubt as well some form of personal or collective **transport**, enthusiasm. This concern with a mouvement hors de soi can no doubt be traced to Sade, but it also derives from the French sociological tradition of Durkheim, where collective enthusiasm was seen to animate public life and give personal life a larger meaning.11 As Bataille puts it in L’économie à la mesure de l’univers (Economy on the Scale of the Universe): “You are only, and you must know it, an explosion of energy. You can’t change it. All these human works around you are only an overflow of vital energy. . . . You can’t deny it: the desire is in you, it’s intense; you could never separate it from mankind. Essentially, the human being has the responsibility here [a la charge ici] to spend, in glory, what is accumulated on the earth, what is scattered by the sun. Essentially, he’s a laugher, a dancer, a giver of festivals.” This is clearly the only serious language. (OC, 7: 15–16) Bataille’s future, derived from Durkheim as well as Sade, entails a community united through common enthusiasm, effervescence, and in this sense there is some “good” glory — it is not a term that should be associated exclusively with rank or prestige. Certainly the Durkheimian model, much more orthodox and (French) Republican, favored an egalitarianism that would prevent, through its collective enthusiasm, the appearance of major social inequality. Bataille’s community would continue that tradition while arguing for a “communication” much more radical in that it puts in question stable human individuality and the subordination to it of all “resources.” On this score, at least, it is a radical Durkheimianism: the fusion envisaged is so complete that the very boundaries of the individual, not only of his or her personal interests but of the body as well, are ruptured in a community that would communicate through “sexual wounds.” De Certeau brings to any reading of Durkheim an awareness that the effervescence of a group, its potential for “communication,” is not so much a mass phenomenon, an event of social conformity and acceptance, but a “tactics” not only of resistance but of intimate burn-off and of an ecstatic movement “out of oneself.” If we are to think a “communication” in the post–fossil fuel era, it will be one **of local incidents, ruptures, physical feints, evasions, and expulsions** (of matter, of energy, of enthusiasm, of desire)—**not one of mass or collective events** that only involve a resurrection of a “higher” goal or justification and a concomitant subordination of expenditure.

AT: Utilitarianism

The allocation of energy for utility inevitably leads to extinction because utility cannot account for the inevitability of excess – only the affirmation of expenditure without return enables survival.

Lee 7 (Richard a. Lee Jr., Associate Professor and Chair in the Philosophy Department at DePaul University, “Politics and the Thing: Excess as the Matter of Politics,” 2007 Reading Bataille Now, Edited by Shannon Winnubst, pgs. 244-245)

“What is before me is never anything less than the universe; the universe is not a thing, and I am not at all mistaken when I see its brilliance in the sun” (Bataille 1991, 57). When we take a step back from the specific economies in which Dasein finds itself in its concernful dealings to the general economy of those concerns taken as a whole, we step back from the world of Dasein to the universe. That is, what allows for one to have concernful dealings such that one is “in-the-world” is the fact that the universe presents the need for such concernful dealings. Why do we engage with entities in this concernful fashion? Certainly a particular answer can be given once a particular concern has been put in play: We are concerned with lasers and computers in order to build bombs. But can we not push the analysis to a general level? Why are we concerned with building bombs? That is, why is there, in general, production, consumption, and work at all, and not just this or that particular form of concern? While one may set to work on this or that project, are there not principles of a general economy that delineate the need to set to work in general? This is the task that Bataille sets for himself in The Accursed Share. While Heidegger’s phenomenological analysis is, precisely because it is phenomenological, delimited by the sphere that pertains to the mode of being of Dasein, Bataille’s shift to the level of general economy necessarily moves beyond that mode of being to the conditions for the possibility9w0 of concern at all. This move “requires thinking on a level with a play of forces that runs counter to ordinary calculations, a play of forces based on the laws that govern us” (Bataille 1991, 12). From the point of view of the general economy, the main principle is that “the living organism, in a situation determined by the play of energy on the surface of the globe, ordinarily receives more energy than is necessary for maintaining life; the excess energy (wealth) can be used for the growth of a system (e.g., an organism); if the system can no longer grow, or if the excess cannot be completely absorbed in its growth, it must necessarily be lost without profit; it must be spent, willingly or not, gloriously or catastrophically” (Bataille 1991, 21). It may seem strange at first to situate Bataille’s concerns within the framework of Heidegger’s phenomenological analysis of worldhood. However, it should be clear that the function of utility in both analyses provides the proper link from Heidegger’s specific analysis to Bataille’s general economic analysis. In other words, Heidegger’s account uncovers the worldhood of the world by means of an analysis of Dasein’s concern. In this case, Dasein works on the basis of some end, that is, in-order-to. Yet as we saw, Heidegger’s analysis must stop short of thinking through the principles of the setting of tasks. For Bataille, however, the setting of tasks is the crucial point of departure: “Humanity exploits given material resources, but by restricting them as it does to a resolution of the immediate difficulties it encounters (a resolution which it has hastily had to define as an ideal), it assigns to the forces it employs an end which they cannot have. Beyond our immediate ends, man’s activity in fact pursues the useless and infinite fulfillment of the universe” (Bataille 1991, 21). The exploitation of material resources is tied to a difficulty—one might call this a concern—that requires solution. The difficulty sets a goal, a telos. Yet Bataille goes one step further, toward “useless and infinite fulfillment of the universe.” Heidegger’s analysis of being in the-world rightly sets out the principles of the specific economies that Dasein constructs on the basis of its ends. Bataille, however, inserts these specific economies within the flow of energy on the surface of the earth. Bataille’s principle of general economy is that there is always excess. It is this excess that poses the “economic” problem in that it is what constitutes the wealth that circulates in this most general economy.4 The excess has to be put to work in growth, or it has to be spent in exuberant squandering, or it **threatens the very existence of all beings within the system**. So the work that exhibits one’s concern in dealing with the world has a utility of its own. If there is always excess, work must either lead to growth or to spending the excess without return—in glorious exuberance. From the point of view of this general economy, then, focus must be placed, not on those operations that lead to growth, but on those operations that allow for expenditure without return. That is, utility now has a dual function. Its proper function is in the operation of growth and reproduction. However, there is a strange kind of utility present in the glorious exuberance, for it allows for life when the limits of growth have been reached. However, this inevitable loss **cannot be accounted for as utility** except that it is useful for the system as a whole. In other words, the sphere of utility itself presupposes an entire sphere of expenditure without return **that makes possible** the sphere of utility in which energy is used for productive purposes. Without the sphere of glorious exuberance, **utility itself will come to be destructive**—un-useful. This is not to indicate that expenditure without return is not destructive. Indeed, much of Bataille’s first volume is taken up with historical investigations into the destructive ways in which excess has been outside the system—in ways that are often destructive to things outside.

AT: Moral Obligation

Imagining ourselves as moral denies humanity’s inherent and communal cruelty, making extensive violence more likely and more dangerous.

Itzkowitz 99 (Kenneth, associate professor of philosophy at Marietta College “To Witness Spectacles of Pain: The Hypermorality of Georges Bataille.” College Literature, Winter, Vol. 26, Issue 1)

Thus Bataille's first point is that the need for nonproductive usages does not diminish when it is denied. His second point is that this denial in which the need persists represents a decline in self-awareness, one with obviously dangerous consequences. No longer do we congregate as a community to witness the violence we desire to bring into this world and to affirm our lack of control over this violence, our lack of control over this desire. We no longer congregate to produce the sacrificial spectacle, to produce thereby a community of mutual complicity in the knowledge of the sacred continuity of being. We no longer allow ourselves to organize spectacles in the name of the sacred that enact that which exceeds the good. Such spectacles would have to violate every stricture of human rights known to us today. Yet we have not changed, according to Bataille, except for becoming less known to ourselves than ever. We are now more than ever the condemned on the way to becoming the destroyed by way of imagining ourselves as the good. Even an utter catastrophe like the Holocaust does little to alter our naive self-image. In his short piece on David Rousset's book The Universe of the Concentration Camp, Bataille refuses to side with the moralists because moralistic self-delusion here is our problem, not our solution, There exists in a certain form of moral condemnation an escapist denial. One says, basically, this abjection would not have been, had there not been monsters .... And it is possible, insofar as this language appeals to the masses, that this infantile negation may seem effective; but in the end it changes nothing. It would be as vain to deny the incessant danger of cruelty as it would be to deny the danger of physical pain. One hardly obviates its effects flatly attributing it to parties or to races which one imagines to be inhuman. (Bataille 1991, 19) Based on what we have already seen in this paper, Bataille can never accept the moralist's claim, distancing us from the purveyors of evil, no matter how attractive it is to join hands at a particular moment of victory over an oppressive enemy. It would be inconsistent for him to specify a particular set of disagreeable behaviors and state that they aren't human, that they aren't ours. Even at this point, standing in the ruins, the main point would be to obstruct our all-too-ready inclination to find ways of denying the cruelty at the heart of us all; to interfere with our desire to attribute all cruelties to the monstrous one or the aberrant few. For hypermorality, this cruelty is precisely what we need to take into account of ourselves, rather than to deny it as the evil of others.

AT: Empiricism/Methodology

Tactical resistance to the contemporary economy of expenditure requires provisional and contingent affirmation of bodily expenditure. The demand that results be “objective” or “empirically validated” replicates the very gesture we criticize – installing utility as a telos.

Stoekl 7 (Allan, professor of French and comparative literature at Penn State University, Bataille’s Peak: Energy, Relgion, and Postsustainability, p. 190)

Yet there is nothing that is inherently excessive. Because waste can very easily contribute to a sense of rank, or can be subsumed as necessary investment/consumption, no empirical verification could ever take place. Heterogeneous matter—or energy—eludes the scientific gaze without being “subjective.” This is the paradox of Bataille’s project: the very empiricism we would like to guarantee a “self-consciousness” and a pure dépense is itself a function of a closed economy of utility and conservation (the study of a stable object for the benefit and progress of mankind, etc.). Expenditure, dépense, intimacy (the terms are always sliding; they are inherently unstable, for good reason) are instead functions of difference, of the inassimilable, but also, as we have seen on a number of occasions, of ethical judgment. It is a Bataillean ethics that valorizes the Marshall Plan over nuclear war and that determines that one is linked to sacrifice in all its forms, whereas the other is not. In the same way we can propose an ethics of bodily, “tactical” effort and loss. We can go so far as to say that expenditure is the determination of the social and energetic element that does not lead outside itself to some higher good or utility. Paradoxically this determination itself is ethical, because an insubordinate expenditure is an affirmation of a certain version of the posthuman as aftereffect, beyond the closed economy of the personal and beyond the social as guarantor of the personal. But such a determination does not depend on an “in-itself,” on a definitive set of classifications, on a taxonomy that will guarantee the status of a certain act or of a certain politics.

\*\*\*Automobility\*\*\*

Ext – Automobility 🡪 Class Segregation

Automobility creates a barrier that prevents social growth of the poor.

Waller 05 (Margy Waller, Domestic Advisor in the Clinton-Gore White House, poverty/transportation writer, November 2005, “Auto-Mobility” http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/2005/0510.waller.html#byline)

A century ago, getting to work seldom required a lengthy commute. In rural areas, farmers walked out the kitchen door to their jobs. And most urban residents either lived within walking distance of their places of employment or could rely on convenient public transit systems like streetcars. Today, however, two-thirds of residents in metropolitan areas live in the suburbs, and two-thirds of new jobs are located there as well. It's therefore no surprise that 88 percent of workers drive to their jobs. Left behind in this car culture are central-city poor residents without cars, who have become increasingly isolated from the American economy. As Mark Alan Hughes, William Julius Wilson, and other scholars have documented, the steady movement of jobs out of cities and into the suburbs has helped create and sustain the concentrated poverty that is now endemic to America's urban areas. Because new jobs tend to be located in ever-expanding suburbs, which are poorly served by mass transit, poor central-city residents find themselves living further and further away from economic opportunities. Evelyn Blumenberg, a professor of urban planning at UCLA, found that car-driving residents of the Watts section of Los Angeles have access to an astounding 59 times as many jobs as their neighbors dependent on public transit. Even more isolated are the car-less low-income families that now live in the suburbs--nearly half of all metropolitan poor.

Ext – Automobility 🡪 Alienation

Automobility leads to social alienation

Furness, 07 **(**Zack,Assistant Professor of Cultural Studies in the Department of Humanities, History, and Social Sciences at Columbia College Chicago, Mobilities, Vol. 2, No. 2, July,“Critical Mass, Urban Space and Vélomobility,” p. 307)

For Critical Mass cyclists, the automobile is not ‘an evil in itself’ (Debord, 1959, p.57), but it is a direct reflection of capitalist propaganda and a ‘sovereign good of an alienated life’ (Debord, 1959, p.56). This alienation is felt at a deep level by many who spend a great deal of their life in commuter vehicles, separated from their environments and one another (Kay, 1998, p.14). However, alienation is a complex phenomenon that is not exclusive to, or embodied by, a particular transportation technology. Those who ‘dwell-within-the-car’ (Urry, 1999, pp.16–17) frequently do so by themselves, but this isolation is not simply reducible to alienation. In addition to the emotional attachments that people have to their vehicles (Sheller, 2004), there are many who explicitly prefer the isolation of the car because they enjoy both a sense of control over their privatized (acoustic and/or technological) space (Bull, 2004, pp.248–249) and the experience of private contemplation (McCreery, 2002, p.311). On the other hand, when the isolated practice of driving is analyzed as part of a wider socio-cultural shift towards the privatization and individualization of public spaces, the workplace and the home, it is difficult to deny the alienating impetus of automobility. In the age of private content-controlled, enclosed malls and sidewalk-less, single-use, subdivision pods, the only public space we know in common is that which we traverse by car. But in our cars we are usually alone, even if together on a ‘crowded’ road. We peer at each other through tinted glass or stare at taillights, or sometimes we get out of the car to stand in line together to buy something. (Switzky, 2002, p. 188)

Ext – Cycling Challenges Automobility

Cycling counters the domination of automobility

Furness, 07 **(**Zack,Assistant Professor of Cultural Studies in the Department of Humanities, History, and Social Sciences at Columbia College Chicago, Mobilities, Vol. 2, No. 2, July,“Critical Mass, Urban Space and Vélomobility,” p. 307-308)

Bicyclists do not magically transcend the alienating impulses of capitalism and consumerism through their transportation choices, and in certain ways bicyclists are actually alienated from the entire high-tech, high-speed reality of modernity.6 Bicyclists do, however, develop a unique connection with, and perception of, material space that is impossible to achieve behind the wheel of a car (Furness, 2002, forthcoming). Critical Mass amplifies these individual experiences and it creates an entirely new social space through collective mobility. The creation of a mobile street party is an attempt to directly subvert the utilitarian function of motorized space and the norms that disrupt the ‘dialectic of the human milieu’ (Debord, 1959, p.58). As ‘a unique laboratory for experimenting with group dynamics’ (Klett, 2002, p.90) Critical Mass creates spaces of resistance where people can celebrate and communicate face-to-face. Not only does this defy the norms of motorized space, it also gives people a chance to pause and reflect on the act itself: Putting ourselves and our bicycles on the line, confronting automotive dominance through direct action, we invent the impossible: an island of safety, calm, and conversation in the middle of a busy street. And, in fine reflexive fashion, we inhabit this island with talk of Critical Mass rides in other cities, strategies for surviving encounters with motorists, sabotage in the workplace, anarchist history, and other subversions. (Ferrell, 2002, p.124) Often, this type of reflection and communication forges important bonds for activists who might not otherwise meet one another or understand the depth of their community. Through Critical Mass, activists share stories and common experiences, and use this as a basis in order to develop new activist networks and new modes of resistance. In this sense, the event functions like a ‘situation’ because it is both ‘made to be lived by its constructors’ (Debord, 1957, p.25) and it can potentially sow the seeds of revolutionary discontent: Such individuals share an alternative culture, but – for as long as they remain anonymous to each other – are unable to develop joint projects from their shared ways of life, values, and goals. Critical Mass made – and continues from time to time to make – visible and tangible the connections between them, transforming anonymous inhabitation of an imagined community into meaningful and possibility-laden participation in a realtime face-to-face community. Herein lies the undoubted importance of Critical Mass; it is a tool not only for enhancing the activist identities of the individuals, but also for building a wider sense of political community. (Horton, 2002, pp.63-64)

Cycling can break the ideology of automobility and bring about social change.

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Critical Mass is part of a wider terrain of urban struggles waged against this process of spatial homogenization, for the purpose of creating more participatory public spaces (Jordan, 1998; Ferrell, 2001; Duncombe, 2002). But unlike activist groups that attempt to physically change motorized spaces through direct action or sabotage, Critical Mass cyclists reclaim public space to ‘assert a positive vision of how things should be in order to expose the current injustice of car dominated public space’ (Burton, 2001, p.21). This experiment attempts to expose the motorway as a dominant space of automobility – one that has been transformed and mediated by the automobile and the practice of driving (Lefebvre, 1991, p.164). As a mobile intervention, Critical Mass events have similarities with the practice of skateboarding, which Iain Borden describes as an ‘appropriative negation of the space which precedes it’ (2001, p.211). In Skateboarding, Space and the City, Borden brilliantly describes skateboarding as a critique of dominant architecture and space that advocates pleasure rather than work, use values rather than exchange values, and activity rather than passivity (2001, p.173). Borden states that skateboarding’s representational mode is not that of writing, drawing or theorizing, but of performing – of speaking their meanings and critiques of the city through their urban actions: Here in the movement of the body across urban space, and in its direct interaction with the modern architecture of the city, lies the central critique of skateboarding – a rejection both of the values and of the spatio-temporal modes of living in the contemporary capitalist city. (Borden, 1998) Borden’s notion of performative critique is an apt way of describing what it is that Critical Mass ‘does’ when cyclists take to the streets, because cyclists not only use the street for a non-utilitarian purpose, they call attention to the ideological norms that dictate both the prescribed function of the environment and the manner in which such environments can be traversed. One important distinction between Borden’s examples and Critical Mass is that skateboarding is an individual spatial practice that is not ‘consciously theorized’ (Borden, 2001, p.173) and Critical Mass is a collective spatial practice intended to amplify a wider political and cultural critique: Bicycling is generally a very individual experience, especially on streets filled with stressed-out motorists who don’t think cyclists have a right to be on the road. But when we ride together in Critical Mass, we transform our personal choices into a shared, collective repudiation of the prevailing social madness. The organic connections we’ve made (and continue to make anew, month after month) are the root of a movement radically opposed to the way things are now. As we continue to share public space free from the absurd domination of transactions and the economy, we are forging a new sense of shared identity, a new sense of our shared interests against those who profit from and perpetuate the status quo. (Carlsson, 1998) To restate this, one of the goals of Critical Mass is to initiate a break with dominant ideology through a direct intervention in the spaces where such ideologies are materialized. This tactic echoes the spatial politics of the Situationist International, or ‘situationists’, an avant-garde political cadre that sought to politicize everyday engagements with material space as a means to break through the capitalist ideology that inhibits revolutionary struggle. In the following section I will briefly reflect upon the situationist project because their ideas provide a theoretical framework to contextualize the possibilities of Critical Mass and the prospects for activist groups to effectively utilize situationist tactics in the twenty-first century.

Cycling challenges the ideology of automobility even if it doesn’t reconfigure material relationships of power.

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The experiential process of Critical Mass undoubtedly facilitates ‘meaningful connections with public space’ (Mallen, 2005) but the symbolism of the event is one of its distinguishing characteristics. In Critical Mass, bicyclists symbolically challenge the cultural, technological, and spatial dominance of the automobile while they simultaneously demonstrate the symbolic power of both bicycles and bicyclists. This symbolic transference of power is threatening not because it changes material conditions or undermines the power of automobile/oil corporations, but because it challenges the dominant ideology of automobility – the notion that cars can provide maximum flexibility, uninhibited movement and individual autonomy (Dunn, 1998; Sheller & Urry 2000; Featherstone, 2004; Hagman, 2006). For example, traffic is an unintended consequence of automobility that implicitly disrupts the illusion of freedom (Hagman, 2006) promised by the automobile, but traffic caused by Critical Mass is an unacceptable situation for drivers – particularly those in the United States. Why? One reason could be attributed to aggressive Mass participants, as there have been in various rides throughout the country. However, these individuals are always in the minority of an already small group of cyclists. A more likely reason why Critical Mass elicits such negative responses for blocking traffic is because Americans are not comfortable with the idea that bicyclists have the power to control what drivers can and cannot do. This ‘power’ is obviously not authentic, seeing as how bicyclists can only exert it once a month for a short period of time, but it is symbolically relevant because bicycles are considered inferior forms of transportation, typically utilized by people who are seen as ‘too poor to own a car, ‘anti-auto,’ eccentric, or deviant’ (Pucher et al., 1999, pp.21–22)

Ext – Transportation Infrastructure Key

Transportation infrastructure can open up public space to the possibility of human encounters and interaction, but thinking of it as more than a mere object of efficient movement is key.

Meyboom 09 (Annalisa, Assistant Professor of Architecture at the University of British Columbia, May, Journal of Architectural Education, “Infrastructure as Practice,” Volume 62, Issue 4, page 72, Ebsco) cma

Infrastructure can generally be defined as an underlying foundation or basic framework of a system. More specifically, it is defined as the system of public works of a country, state, or region, or the resources required for an activity: essentially that which supports and facilitates human activity. In the highly-structured environment of the developed world, infrastructure is ubiquitous: it includes everything from satellites to wastewater treatment, prisons, ports, trash removal, ATMs, the Internet, and disaster response systems, to name a few examples. As is evident from such a list, there is an extensive variety of infrastructure that affects our daily lives. For this reason, there is a growing interest in the design profession to play a greater role in the formations and transformations of the infrastructure that surrounds us. Sanford Kwinter for example, comments that: What is interesting today and what matters, is infrastructure . . . . Infrastructure simply has an aura different from that of building: it possesses a critical resonance, a direct reach or extensivity into the adjacent material environment that no architecture alone can approximate. 2 Kwinter’s observation, which is borne out in transportation infrastructure, is of **particular relevance** to architects not only because infrastructure is a support structure to human activity and serves public purpose, but also because of the extended impact it has on our built environment due to its scale and impermeability. It is also of critical relevance because of its ability to provide a reference point in the urban fabric, to be memorable and to gather activity. The proclivity to place-making can be demonstrated by the manner in which a transit station, for example, that has been brought into existence by an infrastructure system, makes a new place present by providing a reason to be in that space. This place-making results in a multi-layered program which relates to commercial businesses, restaurants, and public service programs and also to connections with other transit and streets. This initial function, to provide a transit route and space for transportation, then results in interaction with the transit space and others within it, producing activity and memories. One can consider the Tokyo subway stations, the London Underground, or the Zu¨rich Main Train Station when reflecting upon the experiences provided by such architectural infrastructure. There are numerous bridges and cycle paths which also demonstrate this place-making ability in that they provide a place for transportation but also for an experience of the city that is more spectacular and recreational, even while commuting; all of us have our own local examples that have affected our lives. I would argue that the quality and specific types of spaces of an infrastructure will result in consequential interactions. If the design of infrastructure is such that it acknowledges and supports human activity and interaction, then a lively public space is more likely to occur than in infrastructure designed with its only objective being functionality and efficiency of transport. In order for transportation infrastructure to result in a space that generates a lively public place, **it must be deliberately designed as such**.