



**INHIBITED SYNTHESIS**

A Philosophy Thesis by Robin Fahy

## I. THE PROHIBITION OF INCEST

- Claude Lévi-Strauss claims that the prohibition in incest is crucial to the movement from humans in a state of nature to the formation of societies
- Claims that the prohibition is recognized in the anthropological record by nearly every social formation
- Argues against naturalistic fallacies that the prohibition of incest is
  - 1) An adaptation against the death of the species (eugenic)
  - 2) A biological distaste (natural state)
- Neither of these are strong enough to warrant a strict prohibition
- Ignores the social aspect

## RECIPROCAL EXCHANGE

- Lévi-Strauss argues that the limiting factor of societies was the distribution of women, because women bear children, and children continue society, thus women constitute a form of elementary wealth in the family
- Women within the family are off limits due to the prohibition of incest
- The prohibition of incest ensures that women are traded out between families (exogamy)
- “A reciprocal exchange is one in which the wealth (women) produced within one family is traded for the wealth produced in another.” (66)

## GENERALIZED EXCHANGE

- Where direct reciprocity (woman for woman) is impossible, substitution arises.
- 1) Rudimentary form of barter:
- E.g.: I trade my daughter to another family for a cow and a horse
- Or any variation of this sort; the point is that I agree that the cow and horse are just compensation for the daughter
- 2) Rudimentary form of capital:
- When both sides can be reduced to a level of currency. Daughter can be traded for X sum of unitary currency

## LIMITATIONS OF THIS THEORY

- Georges Bataille argues that the female occupies a form of incommensurable (sacred) wealth
- Includes the economic or productive form in the passage of the family name
- “The sacred excess of sexuality, of the play between emotions, conversation, and communal artistic creation, demands that the exchange escape from a simple economic reduction to account for an entire field of endowments.” (23)
- Emphasizes the importance of “giving”--- without an expectation of return, maximizes the ceremonial importance of exchange (marriage)

## II. THE GLOBAL METROPOLIS

- Wherever the preservation of genealogy is concerned, it is a matter of reconciling between holding on and letting go
- Kinship structures are pivotal to the idea of eurocentric colonialism
- Colonization is prevented from a total assimilation of world culture, since that would entail an internal rupturing and a redistribution of power and wealth
- Thus the Global Metropolis facilitates between continuously desiring to colonize and appropriate but to exercise restraint to condition future colonization

## SOUTH AFRICAN APARTHEID

- Recapitulation of the world in miniature
- The aspiration of the Boer state was to gradually segregate their society
- Moving blacks into Bantustan “homelands”
- Separating blacks from the white metropolis/political ruling class
- Granting the Bantustans a limited autonomy— where they elect their own leaders, taxes, etc. but must remain subsidiary to the white metropolis
- Was a way for the Boer state to exploit cheap labor while exporting their instabilities
- One can not do business with a slave

## POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC CENTRALIZATION

- The South African Apartheid as a recapitulation of the world in miniature
- Political ruling class of the “Global World Order” functions by a disassociation and co-dependence of politics, and economy, works by granting limited autonomy to nation-states
- Economic autonomy is supposedly an equitable form of decision making
- Political sovereignty is supposedly a way to grant voting rights to countries, enabling them to elect their own leadership, determine their own laws
- Ignores entrenched global political and economic powers that operate surreptitiously to undermine the autonomy and sovereignty of countries
- Entrenched GWO sets up the conditions of entry, which in turn benefit its own function, since it is at the center, is the only truly sovereign state
- Their agenda is to stay the same while incorporating changes, exploiting cheap labor in the Third world while exporting instabilities

## WEALTH

- Wealth becomes a primary concern. Credit Suisse report (2014) indicates the top 1% of world population owns 48.8% of wealth, whereas the bottom 50% of the world population owns less than 1% of wealth
- Wealth accumulation is the function of the GWO regime, that allows for their sovereignty, enables their agenda
- Thus GWO is always centralized, is never fully equitable, remains caught in “inhibited synthesis”
- To achieve the type of real synthesis, requires a sacrifice of wealth with no expectation of return
- Georges Bataille argues that the sacrifice of wealth creates a type of “ecstasis” that unites humans across social and political classes— seen in sporting events, gambling, philanthropy, and war

### III. MATERIALISM AND THE CRITICAL SHIFT

- The critical shift was a period in modern epistemology where discourse went from asking the question “what is knowledge and how do we know it?” to asking “what must the mind be like in order to know, and what forms of knowledge does this entail?”
- In other words, it was an attempt to chart the final limitations to knowledge, to disprove the existence of “truth” or “reality” in knowledge
- Main player was Immanuel Kant, who unified rationalist and empiricism frameworks for knowledge
- Kant was overturned by Hegel, who sought to create a teleology out of the Transcendental idealism that Kant ended with

## RATIONALISM/EMPIRICISM

- Two camps of idealists
- Rationalism is the argument that rational knowledge (mathematical/logical knowledge) is unconditional in the mind (analytic), does not require experience (a priori)
- Empiricism is the argument that experience precedes all forms of knowledge (a posteriori), all knowledge arises from perception (synthetic)
- Analytic a priori knowledge and synthetic a posteriori knowledge are seen as incompatible systems. In other words, both camps assumed that the relation to analytic and a priori knowledge and the relation to synthetic and a posteriori knowledge were themselves analytic to cognition

## KANTIAN IDEALISM

- Reconciled between empiricism and rationalism with the formation of the synthetic a priori
- Synthetic a priori: went from attempting to know “truth” in reality, to knowing truth as a function of the conditions of experience
- Divided between empirical knowledge (Synthetic a posteriori) and transcendental knowledge (synthetic a priori)
- Excluded cognitive or experiential access to the noumenal (reality-in-itself), limiting all knowledge to the phenomenal (experience-in-itself), but still requires the noumenal as the condition of the phenomenal.
- Remains caught in an “inhibited synthesis”— unable to explain the condition of the origin which he claims is fundamental to experience and knowledge

## HEGEL AND BATAILLE

- Hegel argues that all of culture engages in a meta-narrative “shift” between an undifferentiated state of nature to a totally differentiated state of humanity, which he gives the term “Spirit”
- Occurs through synthetic reflections— e.g. my recognition of nature as such entails a differentiation from it
- These syntheses gradually cause humans to recede from nature into pure thought, whose ultimate conclusion (teleology) is the final detachment from nature
- Georges Bataille argues that the thought of everything is no different from the thought of nothing, and that the syntheses trends towards an abstract negativity rather than positive enlightenment
- Inhibited synthesis is overcome through materialism, where materialism (reality) is abstracted from knowability in the first place