

THE EARLY CASTORIADIS: SOCIALISM, BARBARISM AND THE BUREAUCRATIC THREAD

Brian Singer

Within the last two years much has been heard about an event that has rocked the intellectual salons of the Parisian "scene". Marxism, it seems, has just been condemned to death. The party for the prosecution, the "*nouveau philosophes*", having suddenly been made aware of the reality of the Goulag, has denounced the guilty with all the brutal pathos of former sinners who have just been saved. Now it is not my intention to join the cycle of denunciation and denounce the denouncers. (Beyond the knee-jerk reactions, how many in North America have actually read these authors?) Instead I would prefer to preface this essay by robbing the event of some of its novelty. Given the collective amnesia that accompanies the rise and fall of successive intellectual "fads", it would seem to be the fate of every "progressive" generation within the last forty years, at least in France, to have to combat the empire of Marx's ghost anew. In such a situation, one must move beyond the event and its apparently indefinite repetition, and examine the work of those theorists who have examined the underlying issues with the greatest depth and whose perspectives promise to be the most fruitful.

It is with this in mind that I have chosen to write this essay as an introduction to the work of Cornelius Castoriadis (and that of his pseudonyms: Jacques Chaulieu, Paul Cardan and Jean-Marc Coudray). For Castoriadis has pursued over the last thirty years a course that, while originating within orthodox Marxism and following its best impulses, has sought in a rigorous and exemplary fashion to question its most central tenets, and to extend this questioning to a more general reflection on the very nature of society and of its apprehension within theory. His thinking is marked by a certain dynamic quality that constantly pushes analysis forward, beyond the complacent assertion of what it already knows as given by the categorical structure of the moment. For the analysis, each time that it attains a given position, is obliged by following through its own implications, to re-examine its original presuppositions, such that a continuous, self-critical movement is set in motion. It is this

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movement, this relentless critical thrust, that solicits our own interrogation and demands that we re-examine our own intellectual development, whether individual or collective.

Bureaucracy Unravelled

Castoriadis once summarized his intellectual evolution by noting that he "had pulled 'the right string' — that of bureaucratization — and had simply and ruthlessly kept pulling".¹ Bureaucratization: the concept, although indebted to the pioneering work of Max Weber, was pulled from an essentially Marxist perspective. However, the unravelling of this concept could only proceed in a contradictory fashion relative to Marxism; the latter provided a privileged position from which bureaucratization could be criticized, but only by turning Marxism into the privileged object of critique. This movement was to be inherently unstable.

Castoriadis began pulling where the bureaucratization of Marxism was most obvious: the Soviet regime, and its associated regimes and parties. His critique of the latter had already led to his split with the Greek Communist Party and his subsequent adherence to the Fourth International. However, it soon became apparent to him that the Trotskyist analysis of the Soviet regime was condemned to recover and repeat similar bureaucratic moments in its own theory and practice. Thus in the late forties Castoriadis (now living in France) broke with the "apparatchiks in exile" and their Leninist heroics, and helped form a new party, *Socialisme ou Barbarie*, which published a journal by the same name (henceforth referred to as *SB*). In the journal's second issue an important article appeared that spelled out his critique of the Soviet regime and of the Trotskyist analysis.² At a more immediate level he lampooned secondary aspects of the Trotskyist position of the period: the belief that the communist parties were social-democratic parties in disguise, unwilling and unable to expropriate the bourgeoisie (a belief soon contradicted by the events in Eastern Europe); that these parties should be given "critical" support (when in fact such support was suicidal); that the Soviet regime represented a "degenerated workers state" (the Soviet regime, however, no longer had anything "workerist" about it, and those of Eastern Europe, not having undergone a "proletarian revolution", had not "degenerated"); that this degeneration was due to isolation (it now embraced half the world) and backwardness (it was now the world's second industrial power); and that this regime was transitional (when in fact it presented a remarkable stability). However, underlying and supporting these relatively superficial aspects of the Trotskyist position, was the idea that the Communist regimes contained a socialist base (defined in terms of the abolition of private property) coupled with a terrorist superstructure (defined in terms of "bureaucratic deformations"). Now

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Castoriadis was quick to point out, not only that such a distinction was grotesque — rendering the inseparability that underlay the separation meaningless — but that this conception of the base failed to penetrate beyond the juridical forms to the relations of production.³ Observed in terms of the latter the Soviet regime presented a “strata”, the bureaucracy, that had control over both the means of production and the distribution of the product, and attempted to expropriate the maximum surplus from the workers in their own (the bureaucracy’s) collective interest. Thus the analysis concluded that the bureaucracy was in Marxist terms, a “class”, that it had nothing “parasitic” about it, and that it was intimately connected to the base; in point of fact it organized the base. Castoriadis had reversed the signs: the juridical forms had been revealed as part of the superstructure, the bureaucracy, as part of the infrastructure. Henceforth the abolition of private property, nationalization and planning could in themselves only be considered meaningless from the perspective of the construction of a “socialist” society.

So far the analysis followed a mode of procedure and terminology traditional to an “orthodox” Marxism; the political was criticized by moving beyond the juridical appearances to the economic essence as defined by the reality of exploitation.⁴ (In fact the analysis was accompanied by an “ultimatist” scenario whose elements were even more orthodox; on the basis of the falling rate of profit, the rising rate of exploitation, and the mechanisms of imperialist expansion, it deduced the immanent outbreak of a Third World War.) However, once the implications of this analysis were drawn out, it would find itself on unfamiliar terrain.

In the first place these implications had touched on the very nature of capitalism. The analysis had shown that in terms of the productive relations, the Eastern regimes appeared similar to those in the west, and this similarity would become increasingly evident as the Eastern regimes liberalized and the Western regimes grew more and more bureaucratic. Certainly there were differences, but in large part they only served to confirm the underlying identity; for, at bottom, the Eastern regimes had merely taken that formal “rationality” embedded in the individual capitalist enterprise and applied it to the total organization of the economy and society. In short the Eastern regimes proved to be a concentrated, rationalized and “condensed” form of capitalism, or what Castoriadis termed “integral bureaucratic capitalism”. They revealed the “essence” of capitalism. This “essence” was to be found not so much in the division between capitals, as in that between “command” and “execution”, between planners and planned; and capitalism’s irrationality was to be located not so much within the anarchy of the market, as within the “rationality” of the productive process. As such capitalism could only be overthrown by abolishing the division between those commanding and those executing the commands, and socialism could only be realized as the

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management of production by the producers themselves. And it followed that socialism could not be legislated from above, but had to be instituted from below by the autonomous action of the mass of workers.

In light of these conclusions, what then was the role of the party? The experience of the Russian revolution had demonstrated that the party was not innocent (nor was the proletariat, but that is a much stickier problem). Guilt did not belong simply on the side of this or that historical "accident" (whether "isolation" or "backwardness").⁵ Indeed the party had proved to be the privileged point for the importation of a bureaucratic "rationality" into the workers' movement and its revolution. How then was a repetition of the past to be avoided? At one level this posed problems relative to the party's internal organization. Once the Leninist and Social Democratic positions had been criticized, one had to ensure that all members of the party functioned in an autonomous and equal manner — and this involved considering the relations between members of the party as more than purely "political" relations. Despite the group's best efforts, the actual functioning of *Socialisme ou Barbarie* never really provided a solution; Castoriadis complained about certain members being unable and unwilling to take an active role, and members complained that "they felt that they had to write twenty-five pages of critical exposition on Hegel before they were ready to debate with Castoriadis".⁶ At another level there were the problems concerning the relation between the party and the workers. Again, once one had criticized the more obvious bureaucratic forms, there was the much more difficult problem of how this relation was to be conceived in its positivity. Obviously the party could not force the workers into realizing their own autonomy. This was simply a contradiction in terms. But even if the party was not to lead the workers, but only to encourage or inform them, this still implied that the workers were to some extent ignorant of their real interests and therefore required the party's intervention. And such intervention appeared to contain the seeds of the party's privilege vis-a-vis the workers and their history. No matter how one posed the problem, the party's separation from the mass of workers was in contradiction with the workers' self-activity. For even if the party was able to abolish this separation, would it not be threatened with losing its integrity and coherence as a political project? The problem seemed insoluble and served only to fuel a series of disputes and scissions, most notably between Castoriadis and Claude Lefort.⁷

Despite the absence of any positive solution, by the very act of addressing these issues, Castoriadis was led to broach another more perplexing problem. This problem concerned not merely the contents of the theory — its analysis of the past, evaluation of the present and prescription for the future — but the very mode in which the theory was elaborated and valorized. It was a matter of comprehending how theory was endowed with an authoritative certitude and

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consequently, how the theorist himself became a hidden political category blessed with a certain authority, and even authoritarianism. In short, it was a matter of the problem of "bureaucratic theory". For coextensive with the distinction between execution and command was that between the theorist who, having understood History and the corresponding interests of its major actors, is able to deduce a revolutionary strategy and tactics, and those others who, led by the latter, are raised out of their "immediate" interests in order to become the cannon-fodder of this strategy. This critique of "traditional theory", of that mode of theorizing which in this case allowed the revolutionary theorist to establish a space from which he could pontificate on the *truth* of history and the *real* interests of the proletariat would, however, be elaborated only after a long and tortuous process.⁸

The "bureaucratic rationality" inherent to a certain mode of theory was glimpsed soon after the critique of the Soviet regime, and once again Castoriadis began pulling at this theory's privileged locus within Marxism: economic theory. As noted before, the critique of "integral bureaucratic capitalism" had proceeded in orthodox fashion, puncturing the polity's juridical forms by penetrating into a hidden economic reality. Furthermore it was noted that Castoriadis had accepted Marxist economic categories in their entirety, including the underlying concept of laws. But now one had to ask, what was this region entitled the economic, what endowed it with its integrity and intelligibility, and what was the significance of the categories used to grasp it? Once these questions found a response, the "economic critique of the political" would be replaced by a "political critique of the economic" such that, in the end, neither "economics" nor "politics" could be conceptualized in the traditional manner.

The critique began with the problem of the determination of wages and of their evolution. According to Marx wages are determined by the costs of the labour force's reproduction. But what determines the costs of reproduction? Two possible answers are given. In the first, wages revolve around a subsistence level; but after the second half of the nineteenth century this was empirically false. In the second, wages are determined by "historical and moral factors"; but nothing is said about the contents and direction of this relation. For Marx the problem did not seem all that serious since he believed that wages either remained constant or increased at only a very slow rate. However, such a belief could be maintained only by abstracting the workers' struggles for higher wages out of the equation. But workers do struggle for higher wages, and this struggle, in part, "determines" the wage rate and its evolution. (This is particularly true of a period like the present, when, given full employment policies, the restraining influence of the supply and demand for labour is minimally felt.) In other words, wage rates must be seen as the result of a balance of forces in struggle and as such remain fundamentally indeterminate.

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Thus there is nothing in the economic, considered as a separate region of society subject to its own laws, that would allow one to deduce the evolution of wages. Nor is there any "rational" scheme that would allow one to deduce an "optimal" wage rate. And given the indeterminacy of wage rates, and therefore of the mass of wages (variable capital), it follows after a moments reflection that nothing can be said in advance about the rate of exploitation (surplus over variable capital), the organic composition of capital (constant over variable capital), or the rate of profit (surplus over variable and constant capital). In short there can be no economic laws.⁹

What concerns us here is not the specifics in the critique of this or that aspect of Marxist economics,¹⁰ but the *logic* of Castoriadis' critique as a whole — a logic which demonstrated that, at bottom, the economic is if not illogical, at least allogical. In other words it cannot be conceived of as a region separated from the rest of society, as a region that can be grasped by a technical science based on a closed system of law-like determinations. Of course the economic, and particularly the free market economy, was at the time of Marx instituted with a certain degree of autonomy (and even primacy), but this autonomy was not "absolute", since the central variables of the economic were heterogeneous and accidental to the economic. It is true that the economic exhibited and still exhibits a "local" regularity and intelligibility, but this regularity is bathed within a sea of indeterminacy. Indeed, the economic appears as that sphere in human affairs which is preeminently rational, where the quantifiable appears as essential, and pure maximalization as optimal; but for all this we cannot consider the economic as a "homogeneous flux of values" without emptying it of all its contents.¹¹ These points, however, while they are important, only suggest what for Castoriadis was the essential, namely, that insofar as Marxist economics must eliminate the workers struggles from the parameters of its theoretical vision, it can only conceptualize the worker as being a commodity like any other, as incapable of autonomous activity, as totally reified by capitalism. In short, it realizes in theory what capitalism attempts to realize in practice, but cannot.

If the workers are not to be seen as merely passive objects of economic laws, neither are the bourgeoisie. At one time, during the period of laissez-faire capitalism, one could perhaps speak of the bourgeoisie's inability to intervene in the economic, and of its lack of a coherent political vision, but since that time it has learned from hard experience how, within certain limits, to regulate the economy. In fact it has learned how to incorporate the workers struggles over wages within a dynamic equilibrium that assures the expansion of the internal market, *via* the constant and increasing flow of wage goods. In such a situation what remains of a conception that perceives the primary contradiction of capitalism as that between the relations and forces of production, of a conception whose critique is based on capitalism's inability to realize that

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optimal maximalization inscribed in the "rationality" of the economic? Such a critique is meaningless from a revolutionary perspective, that is from a perspective that suggests the positive contents of a new society, of a society that would struggle to break with the sovereignty of the economic. This is not to say that economic crises have been eliminated, though it is increasingly unlikely that they will take on a catastrophic form. Such crises might very well occur in the future — though they will not result from "economic laws" but will depend on, for example, the decision of a few desert chieftains to raise the price of oil. What is equally important, other types of crises might occur and probably will occur.¹² However, these at best provide a negative condition for revolutionary activity; in themselves they provide no guarantee for the emergence of a socialist society.

If it is futile to search for guarantees in a world of indeterminacy, one can still attempt to pinpoint an activity that prepares workers for the positive constitution of a new society. Such an activity cannot be found in the worker's wage struggles, since, even though they demonstrate the workers' autonomy and combativity, they do not, as suggested earlier, present an irresolvable contradiction for capitalism. Nor do they — and this point is fundamental — demonstrate that the workers are potentially willing to and capable to concretize the rupture with bureaucratic capitalism by taking production into their own hands. Castoriadis was forced to look further, beyond the "determination" of labour's exchange value to that of its use value.¹³ And once again labour reveals itself to be a commodity unlike any other. For when the capitalist purchases a ton of coal he knows how many calories can be extracted from it, yet when he buys a unit of labour power he never really knows its use value, i.e., its productivity, for the latter remains dependent on a different type of struggle, one which unfolds on a daily basis within the work-place.¹⁴ In this struggle the capitalist or manager has at his disposal a number of weapons — the fragmentation and hierarchization of the labour process, scientific management, piece rates, bonuses, technological forms, etc. — all of which seek to expropriate the control of the worker over his own activity in order that he will become a passive object in a productive process "rationally" organized from above and "from outside".

However, the workers are able to resist. In the first place, in opposition to the formal organization of the productive process they can institute informal organizations which, though fragmentary and transitory, embody in an embryonic form a new rationality that originates from within the productive process and that responds as much to the needs of the producers as those of production. Thus they demonstrate in their everyday activity, at a level which need be neither explicitly self-conscious nor political, the arbitrary and violent character of the bureaucratic organization of production.¹⁵ Their very activity suggests that in a new society, labour need not be a necessary evil to be com-

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pensated by increased consumption or leisure, but can be instituted on a new basis and endowed with a new meaning or signification. In the second place, the workers "passively" oppose the bureaucratic organization of the productive process by, paradoxically, complying with its demands, that is to say, by withdrawing their initiative. In most cases this results in waste and a deterioration of quality (a particularly acute problem in the eastern regimes, precisely because there bureaucratic capitalism exists in a "purer" form). In extreme cases, e.g. "work to rule", the productive process simply grinds to a halt.

Such analyses were, for Castoriadis, of great theoretical importance, for they provided the key to understanding the contradiction fundamental to bureaucratic capitalism whether in the east or west (and by contradiction was not meant the "objective" mechanics of breakdown). They suggested that bureaucratic "rationality", being abstractly conceived and instituted from above and outside, is incapable of directly controlling all aspects of the productive process, particularly in a dynamic system where old methods are soon rendered obsolete and new situations constantly emerge. Thus, although the system attempts to exclude the workers' active participation, it constantly requires, and is forced to solicit, their initiative and responsibility. In short, the system demands that the worker be simultaneously a subject and an object; absolute reification is impossible. The instability inherent in this situation unleashes an implicit struggle whose forms and contents are being ceaselessly redefined and transformed, and whose effects are translated throughout the economy and society. It is a struggle within which neither side can act without affecting the other side and the situation common to both sides. And consequently it is a struggle that produces a dynamic in which every problem poses solutions and every solution, problems.

The process of bureaucratization, and the parameters of Castoriadis' analysis, would not remain restricted to the point of production. "Bureaucratic capitalism seeks to achieve on the scale of society what it is already incapable of achieving at the shop-floor level: to treat the activities of individuals as so many objects to be manipulated from the outside."¹⁶ The generalization of this process is due in part to the failure of the traditional workers movement as expressed, following the traditional dichotomy, in both its "subjective" and "objective" aspects. As regards the latter, the working class in the traditional sense of the term, has become a diminishing quantity. Certainly the proportion of those earning wages and salaries is increasing, but one can not for all that simply transfer the characteristics of the proletariat to the totality of the working population. Even the distinction execution and command is coming to have only an analytic validity, since the pure types at either pole are becoming increasingly rare as the intermediary strata within the bureaucratic pyramids expand. As such the working "class" is becoming increasingly differentiated

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and heterogeneous, and consequently the totalizing of such a group into a coherent political agent is becoming increasingly difficult. This, according to Castoriadis, need not represent an insurmountable obstacle. The "universality" of the class — and the very fact of its being a "class" — is never a simple reflex of its "objective" situation, but is always created and instituted within its political practice. But such a "subjective unification" is not occurring. The workers' organizations, their unions and parties, are largely bureaucratized and as a result (and cause) their "constituents" no longer actively participate in them. The implicit and everyday struggles within the productive process, although undiminished in intensity, are unable to achieve an explicitly political expression. It even appears that political activity, that is activity turned towards society as a whole, is becoming increasingly impossible. These tendencies, however, were for Castoriadis only an aspect of a process that went much deeper.

At its most profound level, the bureaucratization of the productive process strips work of its significance as a process creative of meaning. Or, more specifically, the meaning of work is reduced to that of the pay-check, as a means to consumption. And consumption is, in its turn, also becoming bureaucratized; fuelled by a vague sense of "something lacking" and fulfilled passively as a spectacle, it exists as the simple production and manipulation of needs. And coextensive with the bureaucratization of production and consumption is the disappearance of collective solidarity: a sense of community is giving way to an anonymous juxtaposition of individuals; collective activity is receding behind a wave of privatization; and political activity, being smothered by a barrage of propaganda and a play of imagery, is being emptied of its meaningful contents.¹⁷ This, however, is only one half of the process, since the fundamental contradiction of bureaucratic capitalism remains intact. As society becomes increasingly "one-dimensional", the conflict is generalized to all levels of social life.¹⁸ Given then the existence of implicit and everyday struggles in the spheres of sexual, familial, personal, pedagogical and cultural relations, the struggle around production loses its privilege (which is not to say that it becomes unimportant) both within bureaucratic capitalism and, what is equally important, in terms of the creation of a socialist society. And given that these struggles put into question the meaning and orientation of all aspects of social activity, the revolutionary project can no longer be conceived only in terms of the self-management of production, but in terms of the self-management of society or what would later be termed its "auto-institution".

One would think that Castoriadis' analysis provided, even if only in seminal form, the elements necessary for theorizing the struggles of the late sixties. However, by the beginning of the second half of this decade, *Socialisme ou Barbarie*, if not its individual members, had exhausted itself. In June of 1967, a circular was distributed announcing the dissolution of both the party and the

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journal. In this circular Castoriadis invoked the following reasons: the impossibility of bridging the gap between theory and practice, the disappearance of politics, the unlimited capacity of the general population for self-deception, the consumerist attitude of new members towards the party's activities, and the individualist forms of rebellion adopted by the alienated — forms "which are not even deviant, but the indispensable complement of cultural publicity".¹⁹ What we seem to have here is the ascendancy of the "pessimism" inscribed within the analysis of the "one-dimensional" tendencies immanent to the process of bureaucratization.²⁰

Of course the collapse of *SB* was only a partial failure. The disintegration of the party did not prevent its theory from exercising "subterranean" effects of far-reaching consequence, helping to open up the space from which a new revolutionary discourse would burst forth only a year later.²¹ Nonetheless, we might take up this opportunity to interrogate the theoretical limits of this success.

Castoriadis always painted in bold strokes, and although many of his ideas may at this late date appear familiar, the rigour and force with which they were argued allows them to remain both interesting and compelling. However, one hesitates before the expanse of his central category: bureaucracy. What are we to think of a category that subsumes the U.S.A., the U.S.S.R. and China under the same designation? In part this problem arises because the concept retains from Marxism a certain fetishism for the infrastructure — not in the sense of the structure of the economy, but the sense of that which lies behind the economy, that which was always Marxism's real concern, exploitation, or more generally, the structure of power. Power, however, is not simply articulated through a functional hierarchy of roles or an order of command. It also partakes of a symbolic dimension, and it is the latter that enables a society to define itself as an "ordered totality" and to maintain a "political" discourse on itself as a "signifying totality". With this in mind how can we ignore the difference between a society whose representation of power is raised so far above society that it attempts to enclose the latter within a single and unified discourse and practice, and one whose representation remains only partially external, constantly dependent on and open to the possibilities inscribed within a recognition of its own internal divisions? And how are we to treat a process (I am thinking here of the Chinese Cultural Revolution) which attempts to destroy the bureaucratic mediations separating the instance of power from the "masses", by moulding these "masses" into the image of that power; a process in short, which attempts to destroy the structure of power by generalizing and fixing its representation within each and every individual? I am not trying to argue here for an absolute separation between the structural and symbolic aspects of power; even in the case of the Cultural Revolution the attempt to eliminate the externality of power only resulted in its delirious reproduction as manifested by certain aspects of the cult of the personality.²² I

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am, however, trying to argue for the importance of what Castoriadis will later call a "signifying" dimension, and I should suggest that a recognition of the latter will necessitate a rethinking of the problem of structural mediations.

Perhaps Castoriadis approached the problem of signification when he noted that at its most profound level, *bureaucracy is destructive of meaning* — a process not restricted to the sphere of production. As such bureaucracy is not foreign to signification — even if it exists as the latter's negation. Moreover, his earlier analysis should have alerted him to the fact that, although the destruction of meaning may exist as a fundamental tendency, it is strictly speaking impossible. The order that bureaucratic "rationality" attempts to fix cannot exist in a world of total "non-sense"; bureaucratic "rationality" is constantly forced to co-opt, solicit and recreate meaning. And it is this requirement of meaning that endows it with its specificity; social institutions can never be only the embodiment of a purely abstract "formal rationality". The fact that this "rationality" partakes of a world of sense has profound effects on both its own articulation and on the manner in which "substantive" meanings are elaborated. In other words the externality of bureaucratic rationality can only be partial. By forgetting this, one runs the risk not only of closing off one's analysis to entire dimensions of social reality, but of transforming the critique of bureaucracy's externality into an external critique. It should be noted that when, after the lapse of approximately a decade, Castoriadis re-examines some of the problematics explored in *SB*, he can do no more than reiterate his earlier ideas.²³ It would seem that the critique of "bureaucratic capitalism" had reached an impasse.

The critique of "bureaucratic theory", however, was to be renewed, extended and deepened. It was as if Castoriadis' intellectual evolution, having exhausted itself in the analysis of modern society, could only revive itself by turning inward. In part this was always the case; the critique of the various aspects of the modern bureaucratic system always rebounded onto a critique of the manner in which Marxist theory handled these problems. However, as this process unfolded, Castoriadis was increasingly led to rethink the problem of theory *per se*. This would not concern the falsification of this or that idea, or even all of them together, but the mode in which these ideas related to each other, and consequently, the mode in which they related to reality and practice. Such a project lay beyond the framework of the publication schedules of a small magazine, and beyond the scope of the collective activity of a political organization.

The Thread of Bureaucratic Rationality Pulled Further²⁴

We have already seen the basic "mechanisms" of bureaucratic "rationality" and how they function, and, in the critique of Marxist economics, we saw how

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these mechanisms were transposed into theory. In particular, we saw how theory had constructed the economic as a realm separated from the rest of society; how it attempted to grasp this realm as a closed set of determinate relations in the rationalist sense; and how it attempted to treat its object as just that, an object to be apprehended from the outside. And we noted how the workers' activity escaped such a thematization and in the end, rendered it meaningless. This critique would be extended and deepened; it would move beyond the economic theory to the underlying theory of history and from there to the underlying metatheory or philosophy of history.

The centrality accorded to the economic in Marxism is based on the autonomization and primacy accorded to the infrastructure and within the latter, the autonomization and primacy accorded to the forces of production or technique. The productive forces are then endowed with an active nature as expressed by the essentially linear increase in the range and quantity of goods produced, while the relations of production are endowed with a passive nature, reflecting the development of technique, although undergoing progressive and qualitative changes when no longer able to contain the increase in the productive forces. And what is true of the relations of production applies all the more to the superstructure. This conception has a number of serious defects. At the factual level the progressive development of technique only provides a very rough approximation to actual history — one need only think of the Dark Ages. And as for the superstructure in terms of what could one gauge its progress?²⁵ The problems that arise at the factual level, however, are only indications of problems that lie at a much deeper level: within Marxism's categorical structure. For the infrastructure is conceptualized as belonging to the realm of matter (and the superstructure is conceptualized as belonging to something less than matter, but something that falls under matter's determinations). And this reference to matter, what does it suggest if not that the infrastructure can be grasped according to the model of the natural sciences, according to a material causality that postulates a closed set of determinate elements and relations such that the same causes produce the same effects? But production and technique are not simply given in nature, they are human creations — and as Marx noted in a famous passage in the first volume of *Capital*, human creation is not simply reflexive (based on material causality) but also reflective (based on final causality: the objectification of ideas according to a schema of means and ends). Why then should technical ideas be privileged relative to other types of ideas? Because they are materialized? But then so are juridical ideas, being materialized in courts, prisons, judges, prisoners, laws, etc. Of course the latter do not exist only as material objects, but then neither do the productive forces. And here we come to what, for Castoriadis, is the heart of the "matter": social objects (including social individuals) exist — are perceived, used and created — only insofar as they have a

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sense or meaning for the society under consideration, that is to say, only insofar as they are mediated, either directly or indirectly, consciously or unconsciously, in a "network" of significations. Thus a machine in capitalist society is not merely the sum of its material properties. It is also and above all capital, and it therefore has a significance that is independent of its material (and technical) properties and that refers to its social qualities. Similarly, the goods produced by these machines have a commodity-signification (though these are not the only significations of machines and goods). Thus a machine or good in capitalist society (or any other moment of this society) exists in the full sense of the term suggested above, only insofar as it implies and refers to other aspects of capitalist society. Significations always exist as an open "system" of referrals and counter-referrals, that is they always refer to other significations and social "realities". One can therefore not hold a conception that perceives those significations embedded in the "infra-structure" as complete in themselves, and those in the "superstructure" as referring to something else (the infra-structure). There are no "autonomous" significations, and consequently, there are no determinate and determining significations.

Of course in a bureaucratic society which in accordance with a self-destructive tautology institutes as one of its central significations, "production for the sake of production", and in which technique is perceived as the indispensable means for the latter's realization, production and technology will be endowed with a relative primacy and autonomy. The fact that the latter is reproduced theoretically within Marxism, is a mark of both its rootedness in and understanding of this society. Marxism, however, does not restrict this primacy and autonomy to capitalist society, but attempts to give it an "ontological" status, such that in all societies, past, present and future, the infrastructure determines the superstructure. This conception supposes that in all societies there exist the same fixed and discrete "substances" linked to each other in the same fixed and determinate relations. It assumes a thought whose categories, corresponding to the "substances" and their relations, are also discrete and determinate, having the same meaning throughout. In short it presupposes the same articulation of human activities in all societies, and calls forth a "trans-historical" thought (even if its realization is historically contingent) that can, in spite of "appearances", grasp this articulation, thereby rendering the "essence" of society transparent to the gaze of the theorist. By endowing production and technique with an ontological status, and by conceptualizing the latter in terms of material causality, Marxism attempts to impose a "rationality" on history from the outside — a "rationality" that in its specific contents is deeply capitalist in inspiration and in its general form is wedded to a dogmatic concept of truth.

Now history and society appear to involve material causality, but they can not be reduced to such causality. If they could, we would have to deny (or treat

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as insignificant) all human motivation and all meaning, such that society and history would appear as unmotivated and meaningless, as a sort of chaos of brute facts embedded in causal chains. In order to escape these problems the existence of meaning in society and history can be attributed to the conscious activity of individuals motivated by specific ends pursued according to specific means. But this formulation only raises other problems. How is it that these means and ends pursued by numerous individuals are integrated into a larger collective unity? And if we move beyond the naive idea of a sovereign individual consciousness motivated according to a final cause, if we consider unconscious intentions and undesired effects, how is it that society appears to present a coherence and history an "internal logic", that underlies all conscious and unconscious intentions, all desired and undesired effects, such that even the "accidental" appears as having a larger significance? And how is it that this coherence and this "logic" appear to endow history and society with a value, meaning and intention (in the metaphorical sense) independent of and beyond the values, meanings and intentions lived by individuals? How is it that significations not only exist within society and history, but society and history themselves appear as signifying totalities — as if significations construct an order of meaningful links, other than and yet inextricably woven into all "local" causes whether material or final, conscious or unconscious, intentional or accidental? At this point we are on the threshold of what will become one of the Castoriadis' major concerns: the enigma of institution.

Marxism is not unaware of the existence of such an "internal logic" at work within society and history. More than perhaps any other theory, it has understood that significations can be assigned to social activities and historical phases, and it has attempted to totalize these significations by constructing a general signification for all historical societies — a signification that is realized in the struggle for and establishment of a communist society. But how does Marxism establish such a pole of signification, and how is this pole related to that of material causality? Castoriadis answers: "by affirming that everything must be grasped in terms of causation, and that at the same time everything must be thought in terms of signification, that there is only a single and immense causal chain, which is simultaneously a single and immense chain of meaning"²⁶ Marxism collapses the problem of signification into a tight synthesis of two causal orders; inscribed in and superimposed on a reason of fact (material causality as expressed in laws of history) is a reason of value (final causality as the realization of reason in history). And the unfolding of this reason, this ever-present and invisible subject that expresses itself through the movement of objects, is not only teleological, it is properly theological.²⁷

This maximalization, this ontological progress of society measurable by the potential social product, goes together

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with the enslavement of the subject... But the latter is only a moment, certainly a very long one, in the Calvary of reason. There is a *ratio abscondita* to this "negative" development that will in the end engender its "positive opposite". Here is the Judeo-Hegelian influence. But the final synthesis is not Judeo-Hegelian: it is Greek. The ultimate finality that orients the whole of historical development is a good life (*eu zên*) in *this* world.... Reason, at the end of and after its ruses, is Providence: the ultimate realm of freedom is guaranteed to us by historical necessity....²⁸

Thus, Marxism, by labouring under the sign of a double determinism, attempts to reduce the totality of experience to a series of known rational determinations. In the end Marxism simply repeats Hegel's claim that "the real is rational" and thus slips back into the manoeuvres typical of what Castoriadis will later term "inherited thought" or the "traditional logico-ontology". Marxism, like the latter, seeks to assure itself of its capacity to grasp the ultimate truth of the real by forging the real in the image of its own *a priori* categorical structure. In this forced attempt at a perfect fit, it endows the "theoretico-speculative" with an autonomy, primacy and sovereignty that renders all disputes between "materialism" and "idealism" secondary. In order to attain a sovereign knowledge over history, the "theoretico-speculative" must be given a place that allows it to submit all of history to its gaze — a place outside of history, or consubstantial to the end of history. In the end it matters little whether this place falls under the denomination of a "science" removed from the influence of history, or of a "universal class" that would incarnate history in its final form.²⁹ In both cases that which escapes the "theoretico-speculative" is precisely that history which it attempts to theorize. For that which escapes the "reason" of theory — and it is always a particular reason — can only be perceived as unreasonable, accidental, and ultimately meaningless.³⁰ Theory remains closed in on itself; locked in the symmetry of its own tautology, it has its mechanisms to maintain both the purity of its perspective and the "universality" of its vision. History on the other hand is the source of impurity and particularity; it is the constant emergence of the unexpected, the creation of the new. The attempt by theory to escape history can only result in a sterility of perspectives.

There can be no privileged place, no transcendental perspective, that permits the existence of a complete and closed theory. History can only be known with history, and historical knowledge is itself historical. In this sense our understanding of the past, the meanings we attribute to it, are in part dependent on the significations we live in the present. This is not to say that "true"

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knowledge of the past can only be attained from within the past, that the past is transparent to itself; if this were the case, there could be no historical knowledge. Nor is this to say that the present provides perspectives that allow a "final" gasp on the past's significance; if this were the case there could be no history of historical interpretation. There can be no absolute knowledge of history; the significance of the past is always open to other significations. Historical knowledge is always relative (which is not to say that just anything can be said), and it is this relativity that is the source of both its limitations *and* its fecundity. That Marx gave an inordinate weight to the role of productive forces of past societies has taught us something about these societies. That our society differs to some extent from that of Marx, that our society contains different significations, allows us to relativize and circumscribe Marx's history, and to say something else about that history. History can never be given as an already completed sequence of facts. The particularity of the present enables us to constantly remake and reinterpret the particularity of the past; and the particularity of the past, in its turn, allows us to relativize and circumscribe the particularity of the present — assuming that we do not dogmatically transpose the latter onto the former.

The problem with Marxism, however, is not so much that it remains a particular theory with only a relative validity, but that it attempts to "ontologize" this particularity into the myth of a purely rational history. Now such a history is impossible: "a rational history would be much more incomprehensible than the one we know; its total rationality would be based on a total irrationality for it would be of the order of pure fact, and a fact so brutal, solid and all-encompassing that we would suffocate".³¹ Nor can history be conceptualized as a total chaos; the latter would render all thought and activity equally meaningful, that is to say, equally meaningless. And it is because history is neither totally rational nor totally chaotic, that there can be a praxis creative of history; a praxis that finds support in "reality" but is not determined by that "reality"; that utilizes and is utilized by logical schemas but is not their simple expression. For praxis is above all that activity by which men give their individual and collective lives a meaning that cannot be pre-assigned; that can be neither predicted on the basis of a pre-existing situation, nor deduced from an already-given theory, nor legislated by a pure and lucid consciousness. By constituting itself as a closed and complete theory, Marxism tended to eliminate the problem of praxis at the level of theory. At the level of "practice", of course, it became merely the technical application of pre-established truths. To a contemplative theory was added the complement of a bureaucratic practice.

It will be said that Castoriadis' critique of Marxism is only partially correct. After all, Marxism, more than any other theory attempted to break with the contemplative dualism and incorporate an active relation to practice. Is not

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Castoriadis then merely using the theory of Marx to criticize that of Marxism, or perhaps using certain aspects of Marx's theory to criticize other aspects?³² In part Castoriadis agrees: one can find within Marx the germs of a new mode of theorizing history (in the early writings, in the historical writings, and in the concept of "class struggle"). However, it is precisely because Marxism attempted to transcend the traditional mode of theorizing that it cannot be treated like any other theory. It is because Marxism attempted to generate a historical praxis, that we cannot interrogate and interpret a few texts in the search for a "true" or "good" Marx. Instead we must examine Marxism's present historical actuality, its contemporary significance, and it is at this level that Marxism has attempted to attain a bureaucratic monopoly on truth and, where possible, on power. Certainly there has been a degeneration: "[Marx] wanted to be neither Newton nor Mohammed, but [his historical fate] is not foreign to the fact that he has become both at once; such is the ransom of his destiny, with none other like it, of the Scientific Prophet".³³ Marx, however, is not innocent. As should be evident by now, his writings lend themselves to such a degeneration. His genuine intuitions tended to remain without any sequel, being buried under that which they were meant to deny.

Castoriadis' critique of Marxism is perhaps not totally justified. Even by his own standards, it is too harsh. For underlying his critique lies an attempt to reduce Marx's thought to a system, a determinate set of ideas that correspond, perhaps for polemical reasons, more to a particular representation — even if, to be sure, it is the dominant representation — of Marx's work than to the work itself. The latter, however, is sufficiently indeterminate so as to escape any attempt to reduce it to any single or even series of significations. As such I have refused to quote Marx in order to prove any particular assertion made in this essay. For the point is not to establish what Marx really said, but what he allows us to say. In the wake of the "*nouveau philosophes*" with their clumsy dualisms and sledgehammer denunciations we must take the risk of reading Marx and of learning from him. To quote Claude Lefort: "[Marx] is important for [us] because in the present (we are) continually referred to his work, because [we] have never finished reading it, because it provides the place for a questioning which goes far beyond the conclusions it happens to draw".³⁴

And what applies to Marx applies to Marxism. Is not a movement which is so widespread that it has become part of the general social environment, and so differentiated that it speaks both the discourse of power and that of its opposite, amenable to other significations? Is not Castoriadis — at least until 1964 — an example of Marxism's potential creativity? There is always the danger that the critique of the "theoretico-speculative" will reproduce within its own critique that which it seeks to criticize — if only by reducing the object of its critique to "theoretico-speculative" schemas, and thereby rendering itself external to that object. And yet, in spite of these qualifications, Castoriadis'

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commentary remains valid. The inability of certain tendencies within Marxism to attain total closure should not blind us to the fact of their overwhelming predominance. Unless we wish to link ourselves to an honorific genealogy, it remains true that "in order to recover Marx, we have to break with him". This is not to say that we should simply recover Marx under another denomination; we can not let Marx's insights remain without consequences.

What is needed then is the elaboration of a sort of "anti-theory" which refuses to enclose itself in its own "truth"; a theory whose totalizations are always provisional and whose foundations are always uncertain; a theory that constantly recognizes its own limits not only on its frontiers, but in its very heartland. For theory must take seriously the idea that "every rational determination leaves a non-determinate and non-rational residue, that this residue is just as essential as that which has been analyzed, that necessity and contingency are continually imbricated in each other..."³⁵ Theory must recognize the irreducibility or alterity of that which lies outside theory, of its own otherness. And with this in mind what then would be this theory's relation to activity and in particular, revolutionary activity or praxis? Certainly the latter would neither exist as the pure application of established knowledge (as technique) nor as an activity without knowledge (as reflex). Such activity would be supported by knowledge, but this knowledge would always be fragmentary and provisional, for it would emerge only within and through this activity. And this activity itself would exist as indeterminate, as an exploration with neither fixed ends nor means, as constantly open to the world with and within which it is engaged. And this world and those present within it would exist for activity not simply as objects to be manipulated, but as irreducible and autonomous subjects, always-already-present and always-changing. And revolutionary praxis would be that activity which explicitly recognizes the others' alterity and aims at the realization of the others' autonomy.

It should be understood that when Castoriadis speaks of the other he is not referring only to the other person, another *logos* in either the singular or plural. He has in mind that which both limits the *logos* and provides the condition for its existence and its creativity; that which is the other for both the individual (the unconscious and the body) and the "collective self" (institution and history). And, just as one cannot postulate the existence of a sovereign thought that would exhaustively grasp all experience, one cannot postulate the existence of a sovereign ego that would replace the phantasmatic content of the unconscious with its own clearly-defined propositions. The complete suppression of the unconscious by an absolutely free and rational consciousness could only result, if it were possible, in absolute unfreedom and irrationality. The problem lies elsewhere; not in the unconscious but in its relation with consciousness. Similarly one can not postulate the existence of a society that would eliminate all institution.

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If by communism ... one understands a society in which all resistance, thickness and opacity would be absent; in which everybody's desires would agree spontaneously, or even, in order to agree, would have need only of a dialogue that would never be weighed down by the glue of symbolism; a society that would discover, formulate and realize its collective will without passing through institutions, or whose institutions would never be a problem — if that is what is meant, it must be clearly stated that that is an incoherent reverie, an unreal and unrealizable state whose representation must be eliminated. It is a mythical formation, equivalent and analagous to that of absolute knowledge, or of an individual whose "consciousness" has absorbed all being.³⁶

Revolutionary activity cannot be based on the search for a total and totalitarian transparency in an attempt to institute the end of history, that is, the end of institution. Again social alienation does not reside in the fact of institution, but in the relation of society to its own institution. But what then is this institution? How is it that society is able to establish an apparent collective will out of numerous individual desires and an apparent coherence out of a manifold number of events? How is it that such unity is given to society only through the introduction of a certain measure of opacity that resists absorption? And how is it that society is never truly capable of escaping the menace of time? What then accounts for the fixity of the instituted and the fluidity of the instituting? And what is the relation of "rationality" to institution, and how is the former limited by the latter? These are questions that in a sense were always latent in Castoriadis' writings, but that, once having risen to the surface, would have to be confronted head on in spite of and because of their very abstractness. They are also questions that we, as readers tacitly participating in the risks of following Castoriadis' theoretical evolution, must make our own.

Social and Political Thought
York University

Notes

1. This quote is taken from Dick Howard, "Introduction to Castoriadis", *Telos*, 23 (Spring 1975), p. 119. This article and the interview that follows provide a certain overview of Castoriadis' oeuvre, particularly the earlier period. The later period is examined in greater depth in the last chapter of Dick Howard's *The Marxian Legacy*, (New York: Urizen Books), 1977, pp. 262-301. cf. also Castoriadis' "Introduction" to his *La société bureaucratique*, 1: *Les rapports de production en Russie*, (Paris: ed. 10/18, 1973), pp. 11-61).

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2. "Les rapports de production en Russie", *SB* 2 (May 1949), reprinted in *La société bureaucratique*, 1, *op. cit.*, pp. 205-282. Supplementary analysis of the Eastern regimes, dating from the *SB* period, can be found in *La société bureaucratique*, 2: *La révolution contre la bureaucratie*, (Paris: ed. 10/18, 1973).
3. There is a tendency to attribute all the accomplishments of "socialist" regimes to the base, and all their "short-comings" to the superstructure — which only demonstrates that the distinction refers less to "fact" than to "value".
4. The analysis is sufficiently orthodox that, twenty years later, its basic elements have been reproduced under the impulsion of a certain Maoism. Cf. Charles Bettelheim, *Class Struggle in the U.S.S.R. 1917-23* (New York: Monthly Review), 1976 and on a more advanced level, Antonio Carlo, "The Socio-economic Nature of the USSR", *Telos*, 21 (Winter 1974).
5. Such explanations, even if they contain a germ of truth serve only to distance our reflection on the significance of the event under question. As such they teach us nothing: At best we can only hope that the next revolutionary upsurge occurs under circumstances different from that of the last one. Cf. "Sur la dégénérescence de la révolution russe", *La société bureaucratique*, 2, *op. cit.*, pp. 381-386.
6. Cited in Dick Howard's "Introduction", *op. cit.*, p. 125. In turn, Claude Lefort has commented on Castoriadis' personal "neo-Leninism", cf. "Interview with Claude Lefort", *Telos* 30 (Winter, 1976-77) pp. 173-192.
7. The nature of these debates and scissions is spelled out in greater detail in the two interviews cited above as well as in Richard Gombin's *The Origins of Modern Leftism*, (Middlesex: Penguin) 1975, pp. 97-105. It should be noted that Castoriadis' position tended to be more orthodox, though his more recent evolution has resulted in a gradual if not final approximation to Lefort's position. For those interested in the original debates the key essays are: Cornelius Castoriadis, "La direction prolétarienne", *SB* 10 (July 1952), reprinted in *L'Expérience du mouvement ouvrier*, 1: *Comment Lutter*, (Paris: ed. 10/18, 1974), and "Prolétariat et organisation", *SB* 27, 28 (April and July, 1959), reprinted in *L'Expérience du mouvement ouvrier*, 2: *Prolétariat et organisation*, (Paris: ed. 10/18, 1974), pp. 123-248; Claude Lefort, "Le prolétariat et sa direction", (1952), reprinted in *Eléments d'un critique de la bureaucratie*, (Geneva-Paris: Droz, 1971), pp. 30-38, and "Organisation et parti", (1958), *ibid.*, pp. 109-120.
8. This problem was approached in a series of articles of which the most important are "Bilan, perspectives, tâches", *SB* (March 1957), reprinted in *L'Expérience du mouvement ouvrier*, 1, *op. cit.*, pp. 383-407, and "Prolétariat et organisation", *op. cit.*, though its full implications were only drawn out with "Marxisme et théorie révolutionnaire", *SB* 36-40 (April 1964 to June 1965), reprinted in *L'Institution imaginaire de la société*, (Paris: Seuil, 1975), pp. 13-230.
9. What's more — and this is a related but different point — if one considers that technology is introduced unevenly into the economy, it becomes impossible to develop a consistent measure of constant capital (because: given two machines both in use, one older, less efficient, requiring a greater expenditure of labour time for its production, and the other newer, more efficient, requiring a lesser expenditure of labour for its production - we cannot for all that say that the value of the former is greater than that of the latter).
10. For those interested in pursuing these points further, the key essay is "La dynamique du capitalisme moderne, I and II", *SB* 12, 13 (August 1953 and January 1954). These ideas are elaborated and deepened in "Le mouvement révolutionnaire sous le capitalisme moderne", *SB* 31, 32, 33 (December 1960, April and December 1961), translated into English as *Modern Capitalism and Revolution*, (London: Solidarity Press), 1974, and in a recent essay, "Valeur, égalité, justice, politique: de Marx à Aristote et d'Aristote à nous", *Textures* 12-13 (1976), reprinted in *Les carrefours du labyrinthe*, (Paris: Seuil), 1978, pp. 249-316, & translated into English as "From Marx to Aristotle, from Aristotle to Us," *Social Research*, Vol. 4. No. 4 (Winter 1978).
11. These ideas obviously extend beyond Marxist economics to all economic thought. For a critique of the latter see some of Castoriadis' more recent writings, in particular, "Science moderne et

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- interrogation philosophique*", *Les carrefours du labyrinthe*, *op. cit.*, pp. 147-217 and "Réflexions sur le 'développement' et la 'rationalité'", *Espirit* 5 (May 1976), pp. 909-913.
12. Castoriadis sardonically notes that "if we must at all costs assure ourselves of the inevitability of an economic collapse of capitalism, it is because we think that these same masses ... are always motivated only by their economic situation. Here the contradiction reaches the grotesque. But the essential point is that one has the same representation of the workers that the bosses have (or had). It is in effect strictly equivalent to say that a worker works only under constraint or with the incentive of a bonus, and that workers only make a revolution when forced by their economic situation". "*La question de l'histoire du mouvement ouvrier*", *l'Expérience du mouvement ouvrier*, 1, *op. cit.*, p. 15, translated in abridged form as "On the History of the Workers' Movement", *Telos*, 30 (Winter, 1976-77), pp. 3-42.
 13. The key essay in this respect is "*Sur le contenu du socialisme, III*", *SB* 23 (January 1958), reprinted in *l'Expérience du mouvement ouvrier*, 2, *op. cit.*, pp. 9-88. In part this essay is based on the experience of workers who militated within *SB*, in particular Daniel Mothé, cf. his *Journal d'un ouvrier* (1956-58), (Paris: Minuit, 1958).
 14. Needless to say, this only deepens the preceding analysis concerning the indeterminacy of the economic, since the struggle over "a fair day's work" concerns not the contractual value of the wage, but the real contents behind this abstraction.
 15. Once again, fifteen years later, elements of this analysis have been reproduced within certain sectors of the left. For example, cf. Harry Braverman, *Labour and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century*, (New York: Monthly Review, 1974), and André Gorz, "The Tyranny of the Factory", *Telos* 16 (Summer 1973).
 16. *Capitalism and Modern Revolution*, *op. cit.*, p. 74. This essay and "Recommencer la révolution", *SB* 35 (January 1964), reprinted in *l'Expérience du mouvement ouvrier*, 2, *op. cit.*, pp. 307-365, are important for the themes that follow.
 17. This analysis never got much further than that suggested above. A more advanced elaboration of these themes would only be developed in France by others. For example, cf. Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, (Detroit: Black and Red, 1970), Henri Lefebvre, *Everyday Life in the Modern World*, (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), and Jean Baudrillard, *La société de consommation*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1970).
 18. "Introduction", *La société bureaucratique*, 1, *op. cit.* p. 25.
 19. Cf. "*La suspension de la publication Socialisme ou Barbarie*", *l'Expérience du mouvement ouvrier*, 2, *op. cit.*, pp. 417-425.
 20. Castoriadis' analysis, however, had always attempted to bring to light those counter-tendencies which these original tendencies necessarily evoked. Are we then to ascribe *SB*'s demise to a temporary forgetting of the possibilities highlighted by its own theory? Or perhaps this "crisis of confidence" should be ascribed to the disorientation resulting from the break with the traditional workers' movement and all that this implied in spite of what was proclaimed in the journal's articles. (This break had already led to a split within *SB* during the early sixties.) Or perhaps the generalization of social struggles to all of society, and their subsequent diffuseness, combined with the inner movement of the critique of bureaucracy, had rendered the notion of the party unbearable — if not in theory, at least in practice. (For Lefort and those who had left *SB* to form the I.C.O. in 1958, the notion of the party had already in some sense become unbearable in theory.)
 21. For Castoriadis' on-the-spot reaction to the May events see his essay "*La révolution anticipée*" (the title is only partially honest), published under the pseudonym of Jean-Marc Coudray in *Mai 68: La Brèche*, (Paris: Fayard), 1968.
 22. Thus, as the masses were incited to identify with Chairman Mao, the latter came to be seen as increasingly non-identical with the masses, being endowed with eternal youth, the gift of poetry, record-breaking athletic capacities, etc. The preceding ideas are indebted to Claude Lefort's masterly analysis of Stalinism in *Un homme en trop: Réflexions sur "l'Archipel du Goulag"*, (Paris: Seuil), 1976.
 23. Cf., for example "*La question de l'histoire du mouvement ouvrier*" *op. cit.*

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24. The following section is by in large based on the long essay "*Marxisme et théorie révolutionnaire*", *op. cit.*, and in particular its first two sections.
 25. The same problem can be raised with respect to the "progress" of the productive forces. In terms of what has there been progress? In terms of the capacity to produce? to expropriate the workers of their activity? or to wreak havoc on the environment? Because production appears to treat mathematizable quantities, the problem appears simpler, but is in fact equally complex.
 26. *L'Institution Imaginaire de la société*, *op. cit.*, (henceforth referred to as *IIS*), p. 72.
 27. This applies not only to Marxism's meta-theory of history, but also to the construction of some of its more specific concepts. For example, the concept of "class", is referred to both its situation in the relations of production and its "historical role". "Thus the object (class) receives its final dignity. Its existence is tightly bound from two sides by the totality of existants: it has its necessary and sufficient causes in what has already been, its final cause in what must be. It accords as much with the logic that dominates the effects of things as that which governs the acts of subjects." "*La question de l'histoire du mouvement ouvrier*", *op. cit.*, p. 56.
 28. *Ibid.*, pp. 44-45.
 29. For a variety of reasons Castoriadis rejects the notion of the "proletariat as the universal Class". In the first place the proletariat no longer represents itself as a "class", let alone as a "universal class". Second, the proletariat is not undifferentiated, and any attempt to pose its "universality" results in the imposition of only one of its moments (the party) over the others. Third, all differences are not class differences and the absence of the latter does not imply the absence of that which escapes (and resists) the universal. Fourth — and this is not an unrelated point — the suggestions of an undifferentiated rational totality which underlies this concept has "totalitarian" implications; the imposition of such a totality results in the attempted suppression of all "otherness" — that very stuff out of which history is made.
 30. More advanced versions of Marxism, in order to avoid a total determinism, postulate the possibility of either socialism or barbarism. Thus history is free: it can become either totally rational, or totally irrational. Once again that which escapes theory, not only has no signification, but is the negation of signification.
 31. *IIS*, *op. cit.*, p. 72.
 32. Thus George Lichtheim sees Castoriadis, or more precisely, his pseudonyms, as opposing the Marx of "The Thesis on Feuerbach" to that of *Capital*. Cf. *Marxism in Modern France*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), p. 191.
 33. "Introduction", *op. cit.*, p. 49.
 34. Cf. "An Interview with Claude Lefort", *op. cit.*, p. 192. For an exemplary attempt at such an interrogation see Lefort's essay "*Marx: d'une vision de l'histoire à l'autre*", in *Les formes de l'histoire*, (Paris: Gallimard), 1978, translated into English as "Marx: From One Vision of History to Another," *Social Research*. Vol. 4 No. 4 (Winter, 1978).
 35. *IIS*, *op. cit.*, p. 76.
 36. *Ibid.*, p. 153.
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