

ENCUENTRO-ENCUENTRO, A “SITE-RESPONSIVE,” “MULTIARTS” VIDEODANCE

Commissioned by the [Cátedra Interinstitucional Cornelius Castoriadis](#) for a 2011 Castoriadis Colloquium involving nontraditional (including native) students at the early-16th-century Casa de la Primera Imprenta de América (House of the First Printing Press in the Americas) in Mexico City, *Encuentro-Encuentro* explores the interface between technological innovation and artistic invention in relation to the disparate, irregularly stratified social-historical imaginaries of communication physically present at the site. After its 2012 World Premiere at the Cinéma Chaplin-Denfert (Paris), there have been film showings in Rotterdam, Brussels, APEX Theater Kabarett (Göttingen), Universidad de Guadalajara, Mehringhof (Berlin), Loughborough University, Ex-Asilo Filangieri (Naples), Université de Sherbrooke à Longueuil (Montréal), Colegio de San Luis, la Facultad de Psicología de la Universidad Autónoma de San Luis Potosí, the Cinémaèque Québécoise (Montreal), CIESAS Unidad Regional Occidente (Mexico City), Center for German and European Studies (ZeDES) at Chung-Ang University (Seoul), and the Seoul Museum of Art. See [trailer](#).

CLARA GIBSON MAXWELL

[Clara Gibson Maxwell](#) is a dancer, choreographer, filmmaker, and producer who has published work on her somatic teaching and Zen practice. Maxwell studied Philosophy, Dance, and Film at Harvard University before completing a BFA in Dance at the Juilliard School (1984) and receiving accreditation from Alexander Technique International (1996). Based in Paris since 1985, Maxwell has created “site-responsive,” “multiarts,” and sometimes ambulatory events internationally, exploring the economic, cultural, historical, social, and philosophical aspects of such premiere architectural spaces as Frank Lloyd Wright’s Taliesin West, Le Corbusier’s La Tourette monastery, and the Hôtel de Ville in Paris. Her performances and video projections are usually followed by discussions with the audience, as led by anthropologists, art critics, art historians, artists, novelists, sociologists, and philosophers. Her longtime collaborator, the Pulitzer-Prize-winning composer and saxophonist Ornette Coleman, has stated, “Clara has already perfected what everybody else is still trying to do,” while her Juilliard School teacher Hanya Holm, who brought Mary Wigman’s German Expressionist Dance to America, declared: “Clara has the capacity to extract essential values for the dance.”

DAVID AMES CURTIS

[David Ames Curtis](#), who studied Philosophy at Harvard University, is a translator, editor, writer, and citizen activist. He has worked as a multiracial community organizer in the Carolinas and as a feminist union organizer at Yale University, where he also directed research for Henry Louis Gates Jr.’s Black Periodical Fiction Project. His translations and writings appear in American, European, and Australian journals and books. For each translation, he writes a Translator’s Foreword, each time new and each time improvised, to express, through philosophical reflection, how he himself has been transformed. Curtis, who has translated over a million words of Cornelius Castoriadis’s writings, coordinates a Bibliographers’ Collective for the [Cornelius Castoriadis/Agora International Website](#) (for free subscription: curtis@msh-paris.fr). He has spoken at conferences in Canada, France, Germany, Greece, South Korea, Mexico, and the USA.

CORNELIUS CASTORIADIS

Philosopher of the “social imaginary,” co-founder of the legendary group and journal [Socialisme ou Barbarie \(1946-1967\)](#) that foresaw the creation of Workers’ Councils during the 1956 Hungarian Revolution, seminal social and political thinker credited with inspiring the May 1968 student-worker rebellion in France, professional economist at OECD (1948-1970), practicing psychoanalyst (starting 1973), distinguished Sovietologist, and critical conscience of the international Left, [Cornelius Castoriadis](#) (b. Constantinople, 1922; d. Paris, 1997), though relatively unknown, was one of the most important thinkers of the second half of the 20th century. He graduated in 1942 from the University of Athens with a BA in Politics, Economics, and Law. From 1980, he taught at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (Paris). During his lifetime, this polymath wrote essays on Mathematics, Physics, Biology, Anthropology, Psychoanalysis, Linguistics, Society, Economics, Politics, Ecology, Philosophy, and Art. His widow, Zoé, is an architect. See: <http://www.agorainternational.org/about.html>, as well as the Summary Bibliography at the end of the present text.

Castoriadis received enthusiastic support from MIT Professors Noam Chomsky, who championed the translation of his writings at MIT Press (publisher of his *magnum opus*, [The Imaginary Institution of Society](#), 1987), and Thomas Kuhn, who invited him to present in a 1985 Paris seminar what became [“Ontological Import of the History of Science.”](#)

Below, a brief, thematically-organized introduction to the thought of Cornelius Castoriadis in his own words, which illustrates how he provides cutting edge thinking for ecological themes relevant to how Architecture may be practiced today. You can read from the top down or from the bottom up, depending upon whether you approach matters from the general to the specific or vice versa or even from the middle outward in both directions. See also “On the Translation” in the new version of the first volume of Crossroads in the Labyrinth, pp. xciv-cxx (first edition: MIT Press, 1984), for a helpful, more analytical exposition of Castoriadis’s key terminological contributions and inventions.

CASTORIADIS ON PHILOSOPHY

§“Philosophy...is the attempt to think the world without knowing, either before or after the fact, whether the world is effectively thinkable, or even just what thinking exactly means.” —[IIS:74](#) (translation modified)

§“The world—not only ours—is fragmented. Yet it does not fall to pieces. To reflect upon this situation seems to me to be one of the primary tasks of philosophy today.” —epigraph to [CL3](#)

§The “principle of the undecidability of origins...the question of knowing, in an ultimate sense, what comes from the observer and what comes from the observed is undecidable.” —[CL2:421/398](#)

§“Our subject is philosophical—not ‘epistemological,’ as contemporary prudery and pusillanimity would call it. No ‘epistemology’ holds good if it does not involve an enquiry into both the object of knowledge and the subject of knowledge.” —[CL2:415](#)

§The “inherited philosophy works with a radical separation of subject and object. The result has been a hovering between a subjective and an objective position.... This situation does not change, but is rather brought to the extremes, when the one [totally] absorbs the other—as happens with idealism or materialism. That takes place, of course, on the [‘theory of knowledge’] level, with empiricism (inductivism), and apriorism. What is neglected in both views is that there is a subject and that any world is a world for a subject—while, at the same time, there could not be a subject and a world for this subject without a world that lends itself to the existence of subjects and to their knowing something (this boils down to the same thing) about the world. ...we are always in the middle of a subjective world that would not exist, or be the way it is, simply because the subject is what it is. But the same is true on the ontological level, when the essential determination of subjective being, its self-creation *qua* subjective being, is either denied to it—or denied to the being of the world, considered as an inert assembly of elements subject to perennial, self-identical determinations.” [CL3:334-35](#)

§“Whatever Heidegger says about it, the very distinction—the ‘ontological difference’—between a thought that thinks being as such and a thought that thinks beings as such cannot be made.” —[CL2:345](#)

§“...insofar as multiplicity in being exists as otherness, or alterity, the unity of being is essentially fragmented. This is because, despite all the recent talk about the ontological difference, being and modes of being are not separable—and modes of being emerge, thereby altering being itself, and manifesting being as self-alteration. ...Being as self-alteration entails also alterity in the modes of emergence—and talk about emergence as such, abstracting from the mode of emergence, which is in turn inseparable from that which is emerging, would be empty talk.” —[CL3:369](#)

§“these same individuals who have been fabricated by their society, who are its walking fragments, have been able to change themselves essentially; they have been able to create for themselves the means to challenge and to call into question the institutions they have inherited, the institutions of the society that had raised them—which obviously goes hand in hand with an essential change in the entire instituted social field. And this is expressed both by the birth of a public political space and by the creation of free inquiry, of unlimited interrogation. The possibility of having a thought about the institution, of elucidating it, exists only from the moment when—in deeds as well as in discourse—the institution is called into question. This is the birth of democracy and philosophy, which go hand in hand.” —[CL6:150](#)

CASTORIADIS ON BEING

§“‘Being’ is not a system, is not a system of systems, and is not a ‘great chain.’ Being is Chaos, Abyss, or the Groundless. ...Being is not only ‘in’ Time, but is through (by means of, by virtue of) Time. In essence, Being is Time.” —[CL2:148](#)

§Being “is only inasmuch as it is always also *to-be*; it is creative-destructive temporality.” —[CL2:341](#)

§“What is is Chaos, or Abyss, or Groundlessness. What is is Chaos with nonregular stratification.” —[CL2:398](#)

§“Being is Chaos, Abyss, Groundlessness. But it is also creation. It is, to employ a Latin expression, a *vis formandi* (a power of formation) that is not predetermined and that superimposes on the Chaos a Cosmos, a World that is organized and ordered somehow or other.” —[CL4:271](#)

§“beings have in themselves principle and origin of creation of forms, Being itself is defined by *alloiōsis* in the strong sense of the word—self-alteration, self-creation.” —[CL5:271](#)

CASTORIADIS ON EMERGENCE/CREATION-DESTRUCTION/NEWNESS

§“As emergence of the otherness—of that which cannot be produced or deduced from what is there—being is creation: creation of itself, and creation of time as the time of otherness and of being. And creation entails destruction—if only because another form alters the total form of what was there.” —[CL3:362-63](#)

§“The emergence of the other is the only way to give a more than verbal meaning to the idea of newness, or the new as such. The new is not the unforeseeable, unpredictable, nor the undetermined. Something can be unpredictable (for example, the next number in a roulette) and still be the trivial repetition of a form; or be undetermined, and again, a sheer repetition of a given form (for example, quantum phenomena). Something is new when it is the positing of a form neither producible nor deducible from other forms. Something being new means, therefore: something is the positing of new determinations, of new laws. This is the meaning of form—of *eidōs*. ...‘form’ in the full sense of the term (union of the

organization and of the organized.... The new *eidos*, the new form, is created *ex nihilo* as such. It is not, *qua* form, *qua* *eidos*, producible or deducible from what ‘was there.’ This does not mean that it is created *in nihilo* or *cum nihilo*. ... The existing, or part of it, conditions the new form; it does not cause or determine it.” —[CL3:359/CL2:402/CL3:359](#)

§“Chaos: the Groundless, the generative-destructive Abyss, the life-giving and death-dealing Gangue, the Inside of every Outside and of every Inside. I do not intend by these expressions an unknown or unknowable residue, or what is called *transcendence*. The separation of transcendence and of immanence is an artificial construction whose *raison d’être* is to permit the very covering over I am discussing here. Alleged transcendence—the Chaos, the Abyss, the Groundless—is constantly invading alleged immanence—the given, the familiar, the apparently domesticated. Without this perpetual invasion there would quite simply be no ‘immanence.’ This invasion is manifested both through the emergence of the irreducibly new, of radical alterity, without which what is would be only the Identical, absolutely undifferentiated—that is to say, Nothing—and through destruction, nihilation, death.” —[CL2:350](#)

§“The fact of creation...entails the abandonment of the hypercategory of *determinacy* as absolute (and of its avatar, the idea of a complete determinism). But it is a logical error to think...due to this fact one must replace this hypercategory with the idea of absolute and complete indetermination. My philosophy is not a ‘philosophy of indetermination.’ Creation means, precisely, the *positing* of *new determinations*—the emergence of new forms, *eidē*, therefore *ipso facto* the emergence of new *laws*—the laws appertaining to these modes of being. At the most general level, the idea of creation implies indetermination uniquely only in the following sense: the totality of what is is never so totally and exhaustively ‘determined’ that it might exclude (render impossible) the surging forth of new *determinations*. The idea of creation is equally foreign to the idea of a full and absolute indetermination from another, equally important point of view. Whatever its specific makeup and whatever the degree of internal indetermination it includes, every form (therefore also every new form) is a *being-this* and a *being-thus*.” —[CL5:15](#)

§“what Merleau-Ponty calls Being—namely, the reciprocal inherence of ‘that which’ is and of ‘the manner in which’ it is—can no longer be thought as Being-given, Being-achieved, Being-determined, but as continued creation, perpetual origination, which concerns not only ‘concrete existents,’ and is not reproduction of other exemplars of the same, but also and essentially the forms, the *eidē*, the relationships, the types, the generalities, which we are therefore unable in any way to exhaust within the horizon of any sort of determinacy whatsoever, be it real or rational, and which we see at work in its most eminent manner in human history.” —[CL5:24](#)

§“Neither in the social-historical domain nor anywhere else does creation signify that just anything can happen just anywhere, just any time and just anyhow.” —[CL5:17](#)

CASTORIADIS ON LOGIC, THE ENSEMBLISTIC-IDENTITARIAN, *POIĒSIS*, MAGMAS

§“A brief explanation on the content of the term ‘logic’.... I simply intend thereby ordinary logic, what I also call ‘ensemblistic-identitary’—or, for brevity’s sake, ‘ensidic’—logic, because, once purified, this is what presides over the constitution of set theory, or in any case the so-called naive theory of sets [*ensembles*], which is at the basis of modern mathematics. These terms should not scare anyone off: this logic concerns everything that can be constructed and built up starting from the principles of identity, contradiction, the excluded third or n^{th} (n here being finite), and from the organization of anything given, by means of univocally defined elements, classes, relations, and properties. The paradoxes to which this logic can lead when one introduces infinite sets on the one hand, and self-reference on the other, cannot detain us here. ... What is—the totality of Being/being—is, in itself, intrinsically regulated, in *one* of its strata (i.e., the first natural stratum), by...ensidic logic—and it is so, undoubtedly as well, though with lacuna and fragmentarily, in all its strata.” —[CL5:335-36/349](#)

§“either there exists an ensemblizable part of being that is ‘everywhere dense,’ or being is ‘locally’ (or ‘piecewise; or by strata) ensemblizable.” —[CL2:395](#)

§“Here, the sovereign scheme is that of determination (determinacy or determinateness, *peras*, *Bestimmtheit*). The requirement here is that everything conceivable be brought under the rubric of determination and the implications or consequences that follow therefrom. From the point of view of this dimension, existence *is* determinacy.” —[CL2:161-62](#)

§“If [ensidic] logic thoroughly exhausts what is, there could never be any question of a ‘rupture’ of any kind, or of any autonomy. Everything would be deducible/producible from the ‘already given,’ and even our contemplation of the effects of eternal causes (or of laws given once and for all) would be merely an inevitable effect, coupled here with the inexplicable illusion that we are able to tend toward the true and to try to avoid the false.” —[CL2:404](#)

“This [creative multiplicity of objective and subjective time] is always deployed in two modes: the mode of the simply different, as difference, repetition, ...ensidic multiplicity...and the mode of the other, as otherness, emergence, creative, imaginary, or poietic multiplicity. ...we cannot restrict the two modes of difference and alterity to the world of the subject(s): they are inherent in the world as such. There is ensidic multiplicity, difference, repetition: there are trees, in the plural; a cow produces calves and not parrots, etc. And there is creative, poietic multiplicity: a jaguar is other than

a neutron star, a composer is other than a singing bird.” —[CL3](#):332-34

§“The ensidic dimension is everywhere present, and even when we transgress it knowingly and with considerable results we still once again discover that this dimension has been utilized. ...the two dimensions—the ensidic and the poetical—are everywhere dense, as one says in topology: however close you wish to approach an element of one of these dimensions, you will find an element of the other one. This is evidently true even in madness.” —[CL5](#):121

§“What we seek to understand is the mode of being of what gives itself before identitary or ensemblist logic is imposed; what gives itself in this way in this mode of being, we are calling a magma. It is obviously not a question of giving a formal definition of it in received language or in any language whatsoever. The following statement, however, may not be unhelpful: A magma is that from which one can extract (or in which one can construct) an indefinite number of ensemblist organizations but which can never be reconstituted (ideally) by a (finite or infinite) ensemblist composition of these organizations.” —[IIS](#):343

§“We have to think [the social] as a magma, and even as a magma of magmas—...not chaos but the mode of organization belonging to a nonensemblizable diversity, as exemplified by the social, the imaginary, or the Unconscious.” —[CR](#):211

§“To ensidic logic I oppose what I call a logic of magmas” —[CL3](#):373

§“this strange plurality is not a system; it is what I call a *magma*, a *sui generis* mode of coexistence with an ‘organization’ that contains fragments of multiple logical organizations...not itself reducible to a logical organization.” —[CL3](#):275-76

§“A magma contains sets—even an indefinite number of sets—but *is not reducible* to sets or systems, however rich and complex, of sets. (This reduction is the hopeless endeavor of functionalism and structuralism, causalism and finalism, materialism and rationalism in the social-historical domain.) Neither can it be reconstituted ‘analytically,’ that is, by means of set-theoretical categories and operations.” —[CL2](#):163

CASTORIADIS ON THE FOR-ITSELF

§“the living being brings about the appearance of laws and qualities that, as such, have no meaning in the physical realm. It is immediately evident that the emergence of being-for-itself (the living being, psyche, the social-historical) entails an *essential fragmentation* of total Being/being.” —[CL5](#):14

§There are “six regions in which the for-itself appears...1. The for-itself is the *living being* as such (I mean: already, at least, at the cellular level). ...2. The for-itself is the *psychical*, both as such and in its plurality, namely through its various ‘instances’ and ‘for’ each of the ‘psychical persons.’ 3. The for-itself is the *social individual*, in other words, the socially constructed or fabricated individual, or again, the product of society’s transformation of the psychical—language and the family already being two aspects of society. This transformation, which occurs starting from each singular soma-psyche, brings into existence an entity that is socially defined and oriented in its sexual and professional roles, in its state and its appurtenances, in its motivations, its ideas, and its values. 4. The for-itself is *society*, as given each time and as such. ...I am not referring here to hypersubjects, to a collective consciousness or unconsciousness or to the spirit of a people but rather to the evident fact that each society possesses the essential attributes of the for-itself: the finality of self-preservation, self-centeredness, and the construction of a proper world. ...In these four regions, we are dealing with the *merely real*. But we do not encounter here what, in psychoanalysis, is of greatest interest to us: the *human subject* properly speaking. ... *human subjectivity*, is characterized by *reflectiveness* (which ought not to be confused with simple ‘thought’ and by the *will* or the capacity for deliberate action, in the strong sense of this term. Similarly, we ought to reserve a place for a *society* that would not be simply a for-itself beyond individuals but would be *capable of reflecting on itself* and of deciding after deliberation—a society that can and should be called ‘autonomous.’ We are authorized, and even obliged, to speak of it in this way because certain societies have emerged in history that are capable of broaching this sort of reflection on their own law, of calling it into question, and, up to a certain point, of deciding to modify it as a consequence of this reflection.” —[CL3](#): 258-59

§“the preceding distinctions allow us to strip naked and expose to full scrutiny the sinews of the arguments made by the heroes of [the ‘French Ideology’ of the 1960s and 1970s]. These people wanted, in effect, to tear the human subject in two; the two resulting ‘subjective’ modes, while related to it, in no way get to the heart of the problem. On the one hand, if one considers the for-itself as a simple self-centered process of self-preservation that is nevertheless ‘blind’ to everything that goes beyond the instrumental activities on which these two finalities, self-centeredness and self-preservation, depend and that therefore is apparently fully ‘mechanizable,’ the human being would no more be a ‘subject’ than, for example, the immune system (which, as is known, exhibits a very strong tendency toward selfhood) is. One thus arrives at the ‘subjectless process’ (Big discovery! But what, then, is a galaxy but a ‘subjectless process?’) and the Lévi-Strauss/Althusser/Foucault line of argumentation. Or else, one claims that the human subject can be entirely resorbed into the dimension of the social individual, and in particular into language; one will then say that it is caught, lost, alienated in language (and in the tinsel of society), that it does not speak but is spoken (or—why not?—that it does not write but is written)—only to install ‘behind’ it a ‘subject of the Unconscious,’ which obviously cancels itself out

as soon as a word is uttered. This gives us the Lacan/Barthes/Derrida line of argumentation.” [CL3](#):260

Living Beings (“Life”)

§“The initial for-itself, the archetypical for-itself, is the living being. ... For-itself signifies being one’s own end. ... With self-finality goes a world of one’s own. This proper world is constituted, each time, in and through a series of encasements and interlacings of various types; ... There is necessarily each time—at least as soon as one reaches the cellular level—presentation, representation, and a bringing into relation [*mise en relation*] of that which is represented. Certainly ‘there is’ something ‘outside,’ there is X. But X is not information, as its very designation here indicates. It ‘informs’ one only of the following thing: that ‘there is.’ It is mere shock, [Fichteian] *Anstoß*... For whom is there something? Nature contains no ‘information’ waiting to be gathered. This X becomes something only by being formed (in-formed) by the for-itself that forms it: the cell, immune system, dog, human being, etc., in question. Information is created by a ‘subject’—obviously in its own manner of doing so. ... Actual information is always a presentation—therefore always a setting into images [*mise en image*], and an image can never be an atom but always already is also a bringing into relation: it includes, indissociably, ‘elements’ (of an indeterminate number, moreover) and their own mode of cobelonging. This bringing into relation can be built up in an indeterminate number of stages up above or down below, ... Whence derive two other essential determinations of the for-itself of the living being. What is presented must be valued in one manner or another, positively or negatively; it is ‘affected’ by a value (good or bad, food or poison, etc.), and therefore it becomes a support for (or correlate of) an affect, positive, negative or, at the limit, neutral. And this evaluation—or this affect—henceforth guides the intention (the ‘desire’), leading eventually to a corresponding act (of advancement toward or avoidance). ... Everywhere there is the for-itself, there will be representation or image, there will be affect, there will be intention; in ancient terminology: the logiconoetic, the thymic, and the orectic. This goes for a bacterium as well as for an individual or for a society. ... self-finality... and the construction of a proper world... require each other in a reciprocal manner. If any entity whatsoever is to preserve itself as it is—to preserve itself numerically (this dog) or generically (dogs)—it must act and react in an environment, it must give a positive value to what favors its preservation and a negative value to what disfavors it; and for all this, it must be aware of... of this environment, be it only in the vaguest of senses. For the parts, the elements, of this environment to exist for it, they must be present for this entity and therefore represented by it. Now, such representation can be neither ‘objective’ nor ‘transparent’... each living for-itself constructs, or better creates, *its own world* (I call ‘world,’ in opposition to environment, that which emerges through and with this creation). Quite obviously, the construction/creation of this world supports itself each time—it leans, to take up Freud’s term (*lehnt sich an*...)—on a certain being-thus of what is. Of this being-thus, we can say strictly nothing—except that it must be such that it allows, precisely, for the ongoing existence of living beings in their unending variety. ... First of all, the living being exists in and through *closure*. In a sense, the living being is a closed ball. We do not enter into the living being. We can bang on it, shock it in some way, but in any event we do not enter into it: whatever we might do, it will react *after its own fashion*. ... In the second place—this may seem paradoxical and indeed it is, but it is also a consequence of the first point and a response to it—... we cannot think of the living being except from within. ... Finally, we encounter the supreme paradox: closure and interiority go hand in hand with a universality and a sort of participation. There is not *a* cell, there are an incalculable number of them. There is not *an* oak tree, there are oak trees—and the oak tree would not be able to exist without there being *oak trees*. But to closure and interiority is opposed not only a generic universality. Each singular entity participates in entities at other levels, it is integrated within them—or it is itself formed by the integration of such entities. An oak tree cannot exist without a forest, a forest cannot exist without birds, nor can they without worms, and so on.” [CL3](#): 261 ff.

Psyche-Soma/Psychical Monad

§“the psyche is but the ‘form’ of the body. ... We are speaking of a psyche/soma, of a psyche that is the ‘imperceptible’ dimension of the body, ‘duplicating’ it through its entire length.” —[CL5](#):33-34

§“The psyche is strongly dependent on the soma; even short of piercing your head with a bullet, I can make you talk nonsense with the help of some additional glasses of bourbon. The soma is strongly dependent on the psyche: even without mentioning hysterical symptoms or psychosomatic illnesses, I decided to write this text, therefore I am banging on my typewriter. The soma is strongly independent from the psyche: I have no control over the innumerable organic processes going on all the time within my body, some of which perhaps, at this very moment, are preparing my death. The psyche is strongly independent from the soma: even under the most horrible tortures, there are people who will not give their comrades over to the police. This strange relationship definitely requires from us new modes of thinking. These should certainly start from something different from a reduction of one of the two entities to the other, or an irreversible and irreparable separation of soul and body.” —[CL5](#):347-48

§“‘Below’ the Freudian Unconscious, we have to postulate a psychical monad, initially closed upon itself and, until the end, constantly endeavouring to enclose in itself whatever is ‘presented’ to it. *Ich bin die Brust* (I am the bosom), wrote Freud in one of his last Notes in 1938.” —[CR](#):330

§Psychical “meaning is essentially solipsistic, monadic; ... it is the pleasure of relating everything to oneself.” —[CL2:337](#)
§“There is ... a preservation of closure for each of its {psychical} instances, as is the case for the living being: each knows its world and does not want to know anything but that world, each pursues its ends and is opposed to all the other ends. But at the same time there is in the psychical apparatus a relative rupture of this closure: these different instances do not exist in a relation of pure mutual exteriority.” —[CL3:275](#)

§“the psyche’s successively formed strata present, each in itself and all of them together in their almost impossible coexistence, traits and modes of operation very closely resembling psychosis—in the sense that the latter tends to preserve large portions of these traits and modes.” —[CL2:338](#)

§“There certainly is a certain unity to each singular psyche, at least as the common origin and obligatory cobelongingness of forces that are plunged into an extended war taking place on the same theater of operations.” —[CL3:300](#)

§“The term *stratification* obviously ought not to be taken to signify a sedimentation of deposits that are ordered and regular. It is in thinking about this indescribable mode of coexistence among various psychical processes that I have been led to reflect on a logic of a different type, the logic of *magmas*.” —[CL3:273n13](#)

§“the capacity of the human psyche—and this it shares with every living being, in any case certainly with the animal psychism—to create images and to bring them into relation to each other, starting from ‘stimuli’ having no qualitative connection with these images.” —[CL5:340](#)

§“color and colors: colored-being in general is a pure creation of the living being (of certain species of living being). *There are no colors* in nonliving nature. ... The fact and the *being-thus* of the subjective sensation of color are absolutely irreducible (as are those of odor, of taste—or of pleasure, of pain, etc.).” —[CL2:432](#)

§“Through its successive phases ... this history is the origin for the stratification always manifested in the human psyche (absolutely nothing analogous could be said concerning the animal psyche, which has no genuine history), where traces of previous stages coexist with the most recent ones (without their ever being ‘harmoniously integrated’), as well as crystallize into psychical ‘instances’ and persist in a contradictory or incoherent and ever conflictual totality.” —[CL5:201](#)

§“Now, the rupture that is expressed in the emergence of the human is tied to an alteration in this {animal} imagination—which becomes, henceforth, radical, constantly creative imagination, the uninterrupted surging forth, in the (unconscious as well as conscious) psychical world, of a spontaneous and unmasterable flux of representations, affects, and desires.” —[CL5:198](#)

§“There is unlimited, unmasterable representational flux, representational spontaneity without any assignable end, disconnection of ‘image’ and ‘shock = X’ or, in the sequencing of images, disconnection between the representational flux and what would be a ‘canonical representative’ of biological satisfaction. ... by means of a monstrous development of the imagination, this psychical neoformation, the human psychical world becomes *a-functional*.” —[CL5:352](#)

§“What can we say, what can we suppose, about the differences between the ‘psychism’ of echidnas and the human psychism? The difference is obviously not sexuality as such. What is specific to humans is not sexuality but the *distortion* of sexuality, which is something else entirely. ... In this human psychical world—which is characterized by defunctionalization, the domination of representational pleasure over organ pleasure, and the relative autonomization of the imagination, of the affect, and of desire—remain floating debris of the animal’s *functional* ‘psychical’ apparatus—namely, mechanisms dependent upon ensidic logic—and these are, moreover, constantly being utilized by the various instances of the ‘psychical apparatus.’ It is obviously not the existence of such mechanisms that can be said to characterize the human psyche but rather their ‘disintegration,’ their being put into operation for goals [*finalités*] that are contradictory or incoherent.” —[CL3:269/272](#)

The Social Individual

§“Neither permanent biological ‘needs,’ nor eternal psychical ‘drives,’ ‘mechanisms,’ or ‘desires’ can account for society and history. Constant causes cannot give rise to variable effects.” —[CL2:153](#)

§“the human psychism [is] incapable of producing institutions and social imaginary significations.” —[CL5:275](#)

§“Psyche is irreducible, in its kernel, to society.” —[CL3:348](#)

§“The individual is not, to begin with and in the main, anything other than society. The individual/society opposition ... is a total fallacy. The opposition, the irreducible and unbreakable polarity, is the one between *psyche* and society. Now, the psyche *is not* the individual; the psyche becomes individual solely to the extent that it undergoes a process of socialization (without which ... neither it nor the body it animates would be able to survive an instant).” —[CL3:60](#)

§“the socially fabricated individual, as solid and structured as it is in other respects, is never but a thin film covering the Chaos, the Abyss, the Groundlessness of the psyche itself, which never ceases, under one form or another, to announce itself to the individual and to be present for it.” —[CL2:338](#)

§“The mother is the first, and massive, representative of society for the newborn baby. And as society, whichever one it is, participates in an indefinite number of ways in human history, the mother is to the newborn the acting spokesperson for thousands of past generations. This process of socialization begins on the first day of life, if not before—and ends

only with death, even if we think that the decisive stages are the very first ones. It culminates in the social individual, a speaking entity that has an identity and a social state, conforms more or less to certain rules, pursues certain ends, accepts certain values, and acts according to motivations and ways of doing things that are sufficiently stable for its behavior to be, most of the time, foreseeable...for other individuals. The condition for the whole process is the *psyche's capacity for sublimation*.” —[CL3:276-77](#)

§“sublimation is the process by means of which the psyche is forced to replace its ‘own’ or ‘private objects’ of cathexis (including its own ‘image’ for itself) by objects which exist and which have worth in and through their social institution, and out of these to create for itself ‘causes,’ ‘means’ or ‘supports’ of pleasure.” —[IIS:312](#)

§“For Hegel, man was ‘a sick animal.’ Rather, we must say that man is a mad animal who, by means of his madness, invented reason. Being a mad animal, he naturally made of his invention, reason, the most methodical expression and instrument of his madness. We can now know this, because it has taken place.” —[CL2:119](#)

§“The monadic psyche of the singular specimen of *homo sapiens*, mad as it is, is transformed into a social individual by undergoing the imposition of a language, behaviors, and realizable aims. It is made capable of coexisting with others. ...it has imposed on it concretely coinable aspects of the magma of social imaginary significations.” —[CL2:436-37](#)

§“The psychical monad could not survive an instant if it did not undergo violent and forced socialization; ... And the sap of the psychical monad—which never runs dry once it is caught in a socially instituted space and formed by a language, objects, ideas, and norms that it could never produce by itself—contributes to the nourishment of historical creation. ...It is this assignment of an origin and of an end *outside* itself, tearing it out of the world of the psychical monad (which is, for itself, origin and end of itself), that makes of the individual something socially determined, that permits it to function as social individual, compels it to reproduce, in principle indefinitely, the same form of society as the one that made it be *what* it is. —[CL2:355/360-61](#)

§“This more or less gentle process of socialization is in fact essentially violent. What it signifies is that the psyche has to renounce omnipotence, must renounce being the center or the totality of the world. Yet, if we are just a little bit sincere, we must admit that this is something we never renounce and cannot renounce.” —[CL5:122](#)

§“The socialization of the psyche, even its sheer survival, requires that it recognize and accept the unfulfillability of its core, primeval desires.” —[CL5:197](#)

§“disconnected from its drive, the singular imagination becomes capable of offering the psyche public objects as objects of cathexis.” —[CL5:367](#)

§“The socialization of the psyche is the internalization of social imaginary significations.” —[CL5:149](#)

§“Society tears the singular human being from the closed universe of the psychical monad, forces it to enter into the harsh world of reality, but offers it, in exchange, waking meaning. In the real world created by each society, things make sense, life and (usually) death have a meaning that, for the individual, is the subjective face of that society’s social imaginary significations.” —[CL5:200](#)

§“The institution of society always and necessarily reconstitutes, re-creates a logic which adequately corresponds to this ensidic logic—thus allowing it to survive *qua* society—and it does so under the aegis of the social imaginary significations instituted each time—thus allowing it to create a world endowed with meaning (which, each time, is different). Like the imaginary significations instituted each time, this ‘social’ ensidic logic is *imposed* upon the psyche during the long and painful process of fabricating the social individual.” —[WIF:256](#)

§“An enormous part of the rhetoric of the Sixties and Seventies concerning the subject as a simple effect of language and its ‘un-being’ was in fact questioning only this social individual, more exactly the (fairly naive) idea that this individual represents a ‘substantial reality.’” —[CL3:278](#)

The Social-Historical/Instituting and Instituted

§“The radical imaginary exists as the social-historical and as psyche/soma. As social-historical, it is an open stream of the anonymous collective; as psyche/soma, it is representative/affective/intentional flux. That which in the social-historical is positing, creating, bringing into being we call social imaginary in the primary sense of the term, or instituting society. That which in the psyche/soma is positing, creating, bringing-into-being for the psyche/soma, we call radical imagination.” —[IIS:369](#)

§“The social-historical creates a new ontological type of order (unity, coherence, and organized differentiation).” —[CL2:163-64](#)

§“The institution permits the psyche to survive by imposing on it the social form that is the individual, by proposing to it and by imposing on it another source and another modality of meaning: the social imaginary signification, the mediated identification with this signification (with its articulations), the possibility of relating everything to signification.” —[CL2:337](#)

§“The *social-historical* is neither the unending addition of intersubjective networks (although it is this too), nor, of course, is it their simple ‘product.’ [It] is the anonymous collective whole, the impersonal-human element that fills every

given social formation but which also engulfs it, setting each society in the midst of others, inscribing them all within a continuity in which those who are no longer, those who are elsewhere and even those yet to be born are in a certain sense present. It is, on the one hand, given structures, ‘materialized’ institutions and works, whether these be material or not; and, on the other hand, *that which* structures, institutes, materializes. In short, it is the union *and* the tension of instituting society and of instituted society, of history made and of history in the making.” —[IIS](#):108

§“The social is what is everyone and what is no one, what is never absent and almost never present as such, a non-being that is more real than any being, that in which we are wholly immersed yet which we can never apprehend ‘in person.’ The social is an indefinite dimension, even if it is walled in at every instant—a definite structure and at the same time one that changes, an objectifiable articulation of individual categories and that which, beyond all articulations, sustains their unity. It is what is given as the structure—indissociable form and content—of human ensembles, yet which goes beyond any given structure, an ungraspable productive element, an unformed forming element, something that is always more and always other. It is something that can be presented only in and through the institution but which is always infinitely more than the institution, since it is, paradoxically, both what fills in the institution, what is formed by it, what continually overdetermines its functioning, and what in the final analysis founds it: creates it, maintains it in existence, alters it, destroys it. There is the social as instituted, but this always presupposes the social as instituting. ‘In ordinary times’ the social is manifested in the institution, but this manifestation is at once true and, in a sense, fallacious—as in those moments in which the social as instituting bursts onto the stage and pulls up its sleeves to get to work, the moments of revolution. But this work aims at an immediate result, which is to provide itself once again with an institution in order to exist in a visible manner—and once this institution is set in place the social as instituting slips away, puts itself at a distance, is already somewhere else.” —[IIS](#):111

§“The difficulty or the refusal to recognize the mode of being proper to the social-historical necessarily means that, whatever the concomitant reservations, qualifications, restrictions or modalizations may be, these elements and relations will, in the final analysis, be those whose being and mode of being have already been recognized elsewhere, and hence both will ultimately be determined in other ways and from elsewhere. Such are the relations of causation, finality or logical implication. Such are also the elements to which inherited thought, for deep-seated reasons, was led at a very early stage to ascribe an ultimate substantiality and consistence: individuals, things, ideas or concepts. —[IIS](#):177

§“The radical break, the alteration represented by the emergence of the social-historical in pre-social nature is the positing of signification and of a world of significations. Society brings into being a world of significations and itself exists in reference to such a world. Correlatively, nothing can exist for society if it is not related to the world of significations; everything that appears is immediately caught up in this world—and can even come to appear only by being caught up in this world. Society exists in positing the requirement of signification as universal and as total, and in positing its world of significations as what can satisfy this requirement. And it is only in correlation with this world of significations as it is instituted in each case that we can reflect on the question...: what is the ‘unity’ and the ‘identity,’ that is to say the *ecceity* of a society, and what is it that holds a society together? What holds a society together is the holding-together of its world of significations. What permits us to think of it in its *ecceity*, as *this particular society* and not another, is the particularity or specificity of its world of significations as the institution of this magma of social imaginary significations, organized in a particular way and not otherwise.” —[IIS](#):359

§“Society is, therefore, always the self-institution of the social-historical. But this self-institution generally is not known as such (which has led people to believe that it cannot be known as such) . The alienation of heteronomy of society is self-alienation; the concealment of the being of society as self-institution in its own eyes, covering over its essential temporality. This self-alienation—sustained by the responses that have been supplied by history up to now to the requirements of psychical functioning, by the tendency proper to the institution, and by the practically incoercible domination of identitary logic-ontology—is manifested in the social representation (itself instituted in each case) of an extra-social origin of the institution of society (an origin ascribed to supernatural beings, God, nature, reason, necessity, the laws of history or the being-thus of Being). From this point of view, an essential part of inherited thought is but the rationalization of this heteronomy of society and, as such, one of its manifestations.” —[IIS](#):372

Human Subjectivity and Autonomous Society

“the ‘subject’ presents itself as this strange totality, a totality that is not one and is one at the same time, a paradoxical compound of a biological body, a social being (a socially-defined individual), a more or less conscious ‘person,’ and, finally, an unconscious psyche (a psychical reality and a psychical apparatus), the whole being supremely heterogeneous in makeup and yet definitely indissociable in character. Such is how the human phenomenon presents itself to us, and it is in the face of this cloudy cluster that we have to think the question of the subject.” —[CL3](#):255

§“autonomy emerges when explicit and unlimited interrogation explodes on the scene—an interrogation that has bearing not on ‘facts’ but on the social imaginary significations and their possible grounding. This is a moment of creation, and

it ushers in a new type of society and a new type of individuals. I am speaking intentionally of *germ*, for autonomy, social as well as individual, is a *project*. The rise of unlimited interrogation creates a new social-historical *eidōs*: reflectiveness in the full sense, or self-reflectiveness, as well as the individual and the institutions that embody it.” —[CL3](#):169

§“the social-historical is the ontological form that can call itself into question and, through self-reflective activity, explicitly alter itself. To be sure, this is not a fated or necessary result, nor does it happen [in most cases], but rather as an exception. Nonetheless, it is only in the social-historical domain that we encounter an *eidōs* that calls into question its own laws of existence (politics in the proper sense) and that, more particularly, calls into question the transmitted representations it has for itself of a world and of itself (philosophy). We are not talking about an ‘immanent’ or ‘essential possibility’ of the social-historical.” —[CL6](#):346

§“Autonomy is possible only if society recognizes itself as the source of its norms.” —[CL2](#):248

§“autonomy is not just the self-institution of society, because there is always self-institution of society. God does not exist, and ‘laws of history,’ in the Marxian sense, do not exist. Institutions are a creation of man. But they are, so to speak, a blind creation. People do not know that they create and that they are, in a certain sense, free to create their institutions.” —[CL2](#):25

§“Autonomy is not closure, but rather opening: ontological opening, the possibility of going beyond the informational, cognitive, and organizational closure characteristic of self-constituting, but heteronomous beings. It is ontological opening, since to go beyond this closure signifies altering the already existing cognitive and organizational ‘system,’ therefore constituting one’s world and one’s self according to other laws, therefore creating a new ontological *eidōs*, another self in another world. ... Autonomy is therefore, for us, at the social level, explicit self-institution, knowing itself as such. And this idea animates the political project of the instauration of an autonomous society.” —[CL2](#):403

§“the project of autonomy is completely incompatible with the idea of mastery; the project of autonomy is quite literally also a project of *self-limitation*, as can be seen today in the most concrete way: if people don’t stop this race toward ‘mastery,’ [the capitalist project of the ‘unlimited expansion of pseudorational pseudomastery,’] soon they won’t exist at all.” —[CL4](#):181-82

CASTORIADIS ON TECHNIQUE/TECHNICS/TECHNOLOGY

§“The real intention of capitalist technology is not to develop production for production’s sake: It is to subordinate and dominate the producers. Capitalist technology is characterized essentially by its drive to eliminate the human element in productive labor and, in the long run, to eliminate man altogether from the productive process. That here, as everywhere else, capitalism fails to fulfill its deepest tendency—and that it would fall to pieces if it achieved its purpose—does not affect the argument. On the contrary, it only highlights another aspect of the crisis of this contradictory system. ... There is no capitalist chemistry or capitalist physics as such. There is not even a specifically capitalist ‘technique,’ in the general sense of the word. There certainly is, however, a capitalist technology, if by this one means that of the ‘spectrum’ of techniques available at a given point in time (as determined by the development of science) a given group (or ‘band’) of processes actually will be selected. From the moment the development of science permits a choice of several possible procedures, a society will regularly choose those methods that have a meaning for it, that are ‘rational’ within the framework of its own class rationality. But the ‘rationality’ of an exploiting society is not the rationality of socialism. The conscious transformation of technology will therefore be a central task of a society of free workers.” —[PSW2](#):104 (1957)

§“the question of the ‘technical’ orientation of production will ... not be a technical question at all, but rather a *political* question of the unity of workers on the shop floor and in offices, of cooperation between them, and of collective management of production.” —[PSW2](#):196 (1959)

§“as long as this [capitalist] type of technics prevails, it is impossible to speak of self-management. The self-management of the assembly line by the assembly-line workers is a sinister joke. To establish self-management, it is necessary to abolish the assembly line [*casser la chaîne*]. I am not saying that all existing factories should be destroyed overnight. Nevertheless, a revolution that does not immediately tackle the question of a conscious transformation of technics in order to allow people, as individuals, as groups, as a working collectivity, to have access to the control of the production process—such a revolution would be condemned to a rapid death.” —[CL2](#):48

§“The institution of society is the institution of social doing and of social representing/saying. In both of these aspects, it includes as an ineffaceable part of itself an identitary-ensamble dimension which is manifested in *legein* and in *teukhein*. *Teukhein* is the identitary dimension (which can be termed functional or instrumental) of social doing; *legein* is the identitary dimension of social representing/saying which presents itself in particular in language inasmuch as language is also always necessarily a *code*. But we have also seen... that language cannot simply be a code, that it includes as an ineffaceable part of itself a signitive dimension as well, related to the magma of significations, that it is always *language* (*langue* [tongue]) as well. This is because a formal system cannot be closed up within itself—or, if you

prefer, because nothing starting from or residing *within* an identitary system permits the production of such a system in general, allows it to refer to anything other than to itself, or decides anything about its concrete, peculiar tenor or organization. Or again: language must say the world, and nothing in the code allows positing a world or deciding what this world will be. Likewise, social doing cannot be simply *teukhein* or technique. The acts and objects which are posited in and through the schema of finality, in the instrumental and functional dimension of doing, cannot be defined and grasped on the basis of sheer instrumentality or functionality. They are what they are and in the way that they are through the global orientation of social doing, an orientation which is but one aspect onf the world of imaginary significations of the society considered. And, in this case too, the instrumental or functional dimension of doing (*teukhein* and technique) and its signitive dimension are indissociable . It is not only that it would be absurd to consider *teukhein* and technique as purely neutral instruments, capable of serving any sort of ends. It is just as impossible to think of them as a ‘consequence’ of the ends and the significations posited by society, to see in them the conclusion to a syllogism for which the orientation of doing would provide the premises. Society does not, ‘first,’ posit ends and significations on the basis of which it would then deliberate as to the techniques most suited to serving and embodying these. Ends and significations are posited together in and through technique and *teukhein*—just as significations *are* posited in and through *legein*. In a sense , the tools and instruments of a society are significations; they are the ‘materialization’ of the imaginary significations of that society in the identitary and functional dimension. An assembly line is (and can only exist as) the ‘materialization’ of a host of imaginary significations central to capitalism.” —[IIS:360-61](#)

CASTORIADIS ON COMPUTERS AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

§“the ill-named theories of ‘chaos’ do not, philosophically speaking, offer anything new; they are intrinsically deterministic—as is shown by the fact that the processes called, absurdly, *chaotic* can be calculated by, and shown on the screen of, that deterministic machine that is a computer.” —[CL5:281](#)

§“A wheel around an axle, a distilled brew, a piano, written signs, the transformation of rotational movement into alternating linear movement or the opposite transformation, as well as a fisherman’s net, are ‘absolute creations.’ There is in nature no equivalent, near or far, to the pulley, the stirrup, the potter’s wheel, the locomotive, or the computer. A computer does not ‘imitate’ the central nervous system; it is constructed on other principles [von Neumann].” —[CL2:304](#)

§“independent of its solidarity with social imaginary significations, the ensidic as it is reconstituted and instituted by society seems quite different from the ensidic as we encounter it in nature, and in particular in the functioning and the organization of the living being. That, in my opinion, is the profound truth von Neumann glimpsed when he wrote, as early as 1955-1956, that ‘the language of the mind is not the language of mathematics.’ At least not our mathematics, up till now. And this is probably also what is behind what can roughly but very well be called the failure of ‘artificial intelligence,’ or, more exactly, the coexistence within the latter of advances that go incommensurably beyond anything the living being is capable of and an apparently insurmountable, congenital infirmity when ‘artificial intelligence’ is faced with a host of tasks that, for the living being, are more than trivial. And there appears to be at least one main reason for this. In and for the human (and, no doubt, also animal) central nervous system, there is certainly no separation of strictly logical functions from thymic (affective) and oretic (intentional or desiderative) ones. There is, therefore, at first glance nothing astonishing about the fact that one cannot, by means of a stripped-down and impoverished logic—that of calculators, that of ‘artificial intelligence’—reconstitute a magmatic organization at its highest point, the point at which, for example, not only the thymic (the affective) is not and cannot be separated from the noetic or the logical, but also at which the thymic itself cannot exist (and thereby, for example, ‘perturb’—from the engineer’s point of view—the logical) without itself being, in part, intrinsically ‘determined’—therefore ensidic, the converse being no doubt true, though infinitely more difficult to formulate.” —[CL2:439-40](#)

CASTORIADIS ON ART

§“The work of art exists only by suppressing the functional and the everyday, by unveiling an Underside that removes [*destitue*] the usual Right Side Up, creating a tear through which we glimpse the Abyss, the Groundlessness over which we constantly live while constantly endeavoring to forget it. Art is—as much as and more than and in another fashion than thought and before and after thought: it has spoken before thought speaks and it is speaking still when thought can no longer be but silent—presentation/presentification of the Abyss, the Groundless, the Chaos. One goes into raptures about the Form that is art’s own, but this Form is that which allows it to show, and to make be for us, that which is beyond Form and the Formless. It is, of course, this possibility that makes art similar to religion.... Yet this is also what distinguishes it therefrom. Instituted religion, a compromise formation, is always presentation/presentification of the Abyss. The sacred is the instituted simulacrum of the Abyss. Yet for art, the simulacrum is the face of the Truth; there is here the unique miracle that presents without hiding anything. This is the astounding wonder [*Prodige*] of the shown object that does not dissimulate but still shows what is behind it. Art presents without occultation..” —[WoC:30](#)

§“There always is a social field of signification, which is far from simply formal in character and from which no one,

be she the most original artist ever, can escape: all she can do is contribute to its alteration.” —[CL4:274](#)

§“The Athenian citizen is not a ‘private philosopher,’ or a ‘private artist,’ he is a citizen for whom philosophy and art have become ways of life. This, I think, is the real, materialized, answer of ancient democracy to the question about the ‘object’ of the political institution.” —[CL2:260](#)

§“On the [modern] creator’s part, one can no doubt speak of an intense sense of freedom and of a lucid intoxication accompanying it. There is the intoxication of exploring new forms, of the freedom of creating them. Thenceforth, these new forms were explicitly sought after for their own sake. They did not arise as a mere outgrowth of the artistic process, as had been the case in previous periods. This freedom, however, remained linked to an object. It entailed a search for and an instauration of a meaning in the form—or better, an explicit search for a form that would be capable of bearing and conveying a new meaning. ...Here, the actualization of freedom is freedom in the creation of norms, exemplary creation (as Kant says in the *Critique of Judgment*). And for this reason, such creation is destined to endure. This is eminently the case in modern art..., where there was an exploration and creation of forms in the strong sense. Even if it was not easily accepted by those to whom it was addressed, and even if it did not correspond to ‘popular taste,’ modern art was thereby democratic—that is to say, liberatory. And it was democratic even when its representatives happened to be politically reactionary, as was the case with Chateaubriand, Balzac, Dostoyevsky, Degas, and so many others. But above all, it remained linked to an object. While it ceased to be religious, modern art became ‘philosophical’—it involved the exploration of ever-new strata of the psychical and the social, of the visible and the audible, so that it might, in and through this exploration, and in its own unique way, give form to the Chaos. This does not mean that modern art is philosophy, but it was able to exist only by questioning meaning as it was each time established and by creating other forms for it.” —[CL4:275-76](#)

§“Granted that any designation is conventional, the absurdity of the term ‘postmodern’ is obvious. What is less frequently noted is that this absurdity is derivative. For, the term ‘modern’ itself is very infelicitous, and its inadequacy was bound to appear with the passage of time. What could ever come after modernity? A period naming itself modern implies that history has reached its end, and that henceforth humans will live in a perpetual present.” —[CL3:3](#)

§“And how is it that the proclamation of ‘the end of grand narratives’ [by former *Socialisme ou Barbarie* comrade Jean-François Lyotard] is not itself a narrative? The clearest image of this situation is provided by the ‘theories of postmodernism,’ which are the plainest—I would say the most cynical—expression of the refusal (or the inability) to call the present-day situation into question.” —[CL4:99](#)

§“Already before Postmodernism, but especially with it, one enters into the era of conformism...the unscrupulous practice of eclecticism and collage. One imitates the creations of previous times by mixing them up; one puts together the most heteroclitic kinds of plagiarism. ...Postmodernism is the ideology that attempts to theorize and glorify these practices; more generally, it tries to present the stagnation and regression of the contemporary era as the expression of maturity, of an end to our illusions. It expressly champions the rejection of novation and originality, and even of the coherency of form. In 1986, in New York, I heard one of the most famous postmodern architects pronounce, during a speech, this memorable line, ‘Postmodernism has delivered us from the tyranny of style.’ In these people’s minds, style is a tyranny, whereas style is the coherency of form, without which there is no work of art.” —[CL6:137](#)

CASTORIADIS ON PRESENT TASKS

§“Even the term ‘revolution’ no longer was appropriate to describe this thing. It was not a matter simply of a social revolution, of the expropriation of the expropriators, of people’s autonomous management of their work and of all their activities. It was a matter of the permanent self-institution of society, of a radical uprooting of the several-thousand-year-old forms of social life, challenging man’s relation to his tools as well as to his children, his relation to the collectivity as well as to ideas, and ultimately all the dimensions of his possessions [*avoir*], of his knowledge [*savoir*], of his powers [*pouvoir*]. Such a project, which, by definition, tautologically, can be carried forth only by people’s autonomous and clearheaded activity and which is nothing but this activity, implies a radical change in individuals, in their attitudes, in their motivations, in the way they are disposed toward others, toward objects, toward existence in general. This is not the age-old problem of changing individuals as a prerequisite to social change or vice versa, which is meaningless even in its own terms. We never envisaged revolutionary transformation except as an indissociable transformation of both the social and the individual where, under changed circumstances, changed people blaze a new trail, thus making their own development toward the next stage easier rather than more difficult.” —[PSWI:33](#)

§“breaking the grip of the ensemblistic-identitary logic-ontology under its various disguises is at present a political task that is directly inscribed in our work toward achieving an autonomous society. What is, such as it is, permits us to act and to create. And yet it dictates nothing to us. We make our laws; this is also why we are *responsible* for them.” —[CL2:406](#)

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