

ON PLATO'S *STATESMAN*

Cornelius Castoriadis

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Translator's Afterword

"Great minds think alike"—or so the saying goes. Often this adage is said in jest or to compliment both speaker and interlocutor who have fallen into agreement. Behind humor or mutual flattery, however, lies the idea that if a mind is great, it would (could, should) think *the same thing* as another great mind. As Pierre Vidal-Naquet points out in his Foreword, another Plato commentator, Leo Strauss, "followed the text quite closely—to the point of modeling himself upon it"; in that case, he explains, "the result is a constant justification of the most minor details of the argument." And this, despite the fact that Strauss, one of the principal proponents of the "great books" school of learning—"Liberal education consists in listening to the conversation among the greatest minds"—confessed that these "great minds" often disagree with one another, thus placing us poor Moderns in a situation of "overwhelming difficulty."¹ An impossible nostalgia for a consensual "meeting of the [great] minds" that, despite their "conversation," never occurred would therefore seem to rule Strauss's mind and to direct him toward mimetic "modeling," as well as "constant justification."

One would be hard pressed to find a more adamant—and fecund—refutation of the view that "great minds think alike" than the dissident writings and speeches of Cornelius Castoriadis. Castoriadis regarded Plato as by far the "greatest philosopher who ever existed" (*CR*, p. 372). But as he already said in 1981, "to honor a thinker is not to praise, or even to interpret, but to discuss his work, thereby keeping it alive and demonstrating that it defies time and retains relevance."² Speaking earlier, in 1974, of Marx's as "a great work," Castoriadis called not only for discussion but

deep interrogations: "It is ambiguous. It is also contradictory: there are different strata. An immense labor is required to begin to make something out of it—that is to say, to find therein especially some questions" (*CR*, p. 25). Later, when taking a more general view in his 1989 "critical/political reflection upon our history," he related that view back to relevant reading of great philosophy:

To reflect upon historical eras and processes critically . . . is to strive to find therein some germs of importance to us, as well as also limits and failures which, to begin with, put a halt to our thinking since they had served within reality itself as actual stopping blocks. (This is also the way one reads—or, rather, the way one ought to read—a great philosophical text, if one wants to make something of it for oneself.) It is certainly not to look in them for models, or for foils. Nor is it to look in them for lessons. (*WIF*, p. 73)

A great work of philosophy can, moreover, be greatly mistaken, Kant's assertion that he "could furnish the 'conditions of possibility for experience' by looking *uniquely* at the 'subject'" being "one of the most astonishing absurdities ever registered in the history of great thought" (*WIF*, p. 345).

Yet we are not offhandedly to dismiss a great thinker for his great mistakes any more than we should simply learn "lessons" therefrom. Castoriadis intensely reflected upon the reception of great works—which, he informs us, "is never and can never be a matter of mere passive acceptance; it is always also re-creation" (*CR*, p. 346). Indeed, these works invite us to think through their immense absurdities, flagrant errors, and bald contradictions so that we may think further ourselves, just as these thinkers have done—although without always knowing or acknowledging it. It is worthwhile quoting him at length on this matter to see how he conceives this process of reception (*IIS*, p. 174):

It is not these conceptions, as such, that truly matter, nor their critique, and even less the critique of their authors. With important authors, conceptions are never pure; the application of such conceptions in contact with the material these authors are attempting to think reveals something other than what they explicitly think, and the results are infinitely richer than their programmatic theses. A great author, by definition, thinks beyond his means. He is great to the extent that he thinks something other than what has already been thought, and his means are the result of what has already been thought, which continually encroaches on what he does think, if only because he cannot wipe away all that he has received and place himself before a *tabula rasa*,

even when he is under the illusion that he can. The contradictions that are always present in a great author bear witness to this fact; I am speaking of true, raw, irreducible contradictions, which it is just as stupid to think cancel by themselves the author's contribution as it is useless to try to dissolve or to recuperate at successive and ever deeper levels of interpretation.

Those familiar with Castoriadis's thought know his thesis that, just as politics challenges instituted ways of being and doing in society, "the truth of philosophy is the rupture of closure, the shaking of received self-evident truths, including and especially philosophical ones" (*CR*, p. 371). Its characteristically radical creativity is that "it is this movement, but it is a movement that creates the soil upon which it walks." In being determinative rather than determined in advance—even in the case of "the whole of Greco-Western philosophy," whose soil "is the soil of *determinacy*"—such creation must always also determine itself as something particular: "This soil is not and cannot be just anything—it defines, delimits, forms, and constrains." Thus,

the defining characteristic of a great philosophy is what allows it to go beyond its own soil—what incites it, even, to go beyond. As it tends to—and has to—take responsibility for the totality of the thinkable, it tends to close upon itself. If it is great, one will find in it at least some signs that the movement of thought cannot stop there and even some part of the means to continue this movement. Both these signs and these means take the form of aporias, antinomies, frank contradictions, heterogeneous chunks. (*ibid.*)

The present seminars offer us an exemplary instance of this pragmatic, pertinent, and discriminating approach to thinking and reading through great works. Castoriadis himself concludes his seminar of April 30, 1986: "I mean really reading it, by respecting it yet without respecting it, by going into the recesses and details without having decided in advance that everything it contains is coherent, homogeneous, makes sense, and is true." His respected and disrespected adversary here is Plato, the great philosophical opponent of Athenian democracy—which, Plato himself claimed, "can never do anything great" (*Statesman* 303a). Castoriadis, we know, saw the capacity for human greatness not only in isolated individuals but especially in collective democratic endeavors that may foster rather than stifle creativity.³

Castoriadis examines the "quirky," "bizarre" structure of Plato's *Statesman*, situating it historically in a key position between the *Republic* and the *Laws*. But what is to be said of this series of transcribed seminars? While not aberrant in structure, they are indeed curious. Like the *Statesman*'s many digressions and incidental points, they do have their excursions (e.g., on Chomsky and Chopin). And like the *Statesman*, they hover between the written and the spoken—but not, as Castoriadis says of that dialogue, in the same deliberate, *signed* way.

To form an idea of where, within Castoriadis's overall oeuvre, to situate these transcribed talks, let us start with his own humorous response that he didn't know that he had written a new book. Not only that, but Castoriadis never wrote a book all the way through. The eight-volume Editions 10/18 series (excerpted translations in *PSW1-3* and *CR*) reprinted articles from his revolutionary journal, *Socialisme ou Barbarie* (*S. ou B.*), along with new introductory pieces. The six-volume *Carrefours du Labyrinthe* series (excerpted translations so far in *CL*, *PPA*, *CR*, and *WIF*) reprinted separate articles and interviews, as well as including previously unpublished material. Even what we call his magnum opus, *The Imaginary Institution of Society*, isn't a conventional book but four chapters added on to a five-part *S. ou B.* series. With the exception of one other transcription—his 1980 *De l'écologie à l'autonomie* public talk along with Daniel Cohn-Bendit, which now appears in *CR*—these seminars in fact constitute the first book-length Castoriadis volume published at one time on a single theme. (The first part of his pseudonymous contribution to *Mai 68: La brèche*, coauthored with Claude Lefort and Edgar Morin and now in *PSW3* with a twenty-year retrospective in *WIF*, was first distributed to protestors as a mimeographed pamphlet during "the events" themselves; *Devant la guerre*, his 1981 analysis of Russia as a "stratocracy," began as a 1980 magazine article.)

Castoriadis thus was an ever-engaged and evolving writer and speaker, "striving to find some germs of importance to us," rather than an author of weighty or slight tomes on, say, madness and civilization, capitalism and schizophrenia, or, perhaps, postcards. His speeches became moderate-length published essays, his essays became public talks and interviews, worked and reworked throughout his life. A good example is the sequence starting out as a 1965 lecture for British comrades printed as a London Solidarity pamphlet, "The Crisis of Modern Society" (*PSW3*), reappearing as an updated 1979 French-Canadian journal article, "Social

Transformation and Cultural Creation" (*PSW3*), and adapted for a 1987 American audience as "The Crisis of Culture and the State" (*PPA*).⁴

Castoriadis also wrote in 1979 "Socialism and Autonomous Society" (*SAS* in *PSW3*), an introductory essay to the 10/18 volume on the content of socialism in which he formally abandoned the much-abused term *socialism* in favor of *the autonomous society*. Similarities to *On Plato's "Statesman"* establish that *SAS* is indeed a precursor text for the Plato seminars.

First, Castoriadis's only substantial prior discussion of the *Statesman* appeared in *SAS*.⁵ There, Castoriadis examined Plato's idea of the law acting as an "arrogant and ignorant man" and stressed that a power "unbound by law . . . cannot purely and simply be dismissed out of hand," for this "discussion of law in the *Statesman* cannot be underestimated either in its profundity or as to its relevance today" (*SAS*, p. 329). As in the March 26 seminar, he attacked communist dictatorship, linking Marx back to Plato while affirming the necessity of rules and institutions (*ibid.*, pp. 328–30). There is, however, not only the rule but a distance from the rule, an "ineffaceable gap which opens [society] to its proper question, the question of justice" (*ibid.*, p. 329), an "essential gap between the rule and the concrete case [which] isn't absolute" (April 23). At the end of the last seminar, he drags out, against its manifest intention, the "consequence of the Platonic text": "it's the permanent democratic self-institution of society," just as, in *SAS*, he draws therefrom his conclusion about "a society . . . constantly in the movement of explicit self-institution" (*SAS*, p. 329). We can, in this way, even supply one last unattributed reference: it was Edward Bellamy (*ibid.*, p. 317; Castoriadis adding, "I think") who gave the Platonic "critique of the law . . . a socialist form: The law, for example, just as strictly forbids rich people from sleeping under bridges as it does poor people" (March 26).⁶

We nevertheless must trace these roots even deeper. The key texts in the volume *SAS* introduced were the first two parts of "On the Content of Socialism" (*CS1* and *CSII*, now in *PSW1* and 2). Following preliminary remarks, Castoriadis deliberately began his classic 1957 text on council-based workers' management with a "positive definition of socialism": "The very content of our ideas leads us to maintain that, ultimately, one cannot understand anything about the profound meaning of capitalism and the crisis it is undergoing unless one begins with the most total idea of socialism" (*CSII*, p. 92). Similarly, after opening remarks on the *Statesman*, he explains: "I offer here and now these anticipations . . . because,

if we don't have in sight this central kernel of the dialogue—the positions developed there and the problematic to which they give birth—we cannot understand the genuine stakes that are there during the discussion of the two [statesman] definitions" (February 26). These seminars "anticipations" concern "self-government at all echelons" as well as "a radical and entirely justified condemnation of every utopia" (*CSII* being based upon projections from actual experiences of the workers' movement and also resolutely opposed to "a backward-looking type of utopian thinking" [p. 101]).⁷

Now, there is a tendency to contrast an early, "political" or "revolutionary" Castoriadis to a later one, described variously as "intellectual," "academic," a "philosopher," and so on—as if these two sets of terms must always be mutually and totally exclusive.⁸ To see that such a dichotomous temporal division of Castoriadis's oeuvre doesn't hold, let's examine how a number of apparent anomalies in *On Plato's "Statesman"* can be illuminated by reading these seminars in light of what I call its precursor texts.

First, a minor point concerning an error in Diès's translation that stole into the transcribed text. Here is the restored passage for *Statesman* 292e, one of Young Socrates' most significant responses to the Stranger from Elea, the former uttering more than his usual few words of agreement yet still reinforcing the latter's idea of the statesman as single "royal man":

STRANGER: But in a city of a thousand citizens, would it be possible that a hundred or even fifty citizens might possess this [political] science?
YOUNG SOCRATES: By this count, statesmanship would be the easiest of all the arts. Out of a thousand citizens, it would already be quite difficult to find fifty or a hundred who knew how to play checkers well. So, for this art that is the most difficult of all, if there were one citizen to possess it, that would already be miraculous!

Intriguingly, Castoriadis, who knew the difference between the correct "a thousand" (*chilioi*) and Diès's incorrect "ten thousand" (*myrias*) perfectly well and noted the mistake in his copy, may also have had this specific passage in mind back in 1957 when he spoke about the deep-seated irrationality, contradictions, wastefulness, and perpetual conflict of "the capitalist organization of society [which] denies people's capacity for self-organization": "If a thousand individuals have among them a given capacity

for self-organization, capitalism consists in more or less arbitrarily choosing fifty of these individuals, vesting them with managerial authority and deciding that the others should just be cogs" (p. 93). Not only "a thousand" but "fifty" appears in both passages!⁹

Is this numerical comparison between *Statesman* 292e and *CSII* far-fetched? Castoriadis had already alluded two years earlier to the *Statesman*'s likening of the law to "an ignorant and crude man," concluding that "a socialist solution can only be socialist if it is a concrete solution that involves the permanent participation of the organized unit of workers in determining this solution" (*CSI*, p. 300). He was thus already working through the *Statesman*, its ambiguous critique of law, and its determined denial of the self-organizational capacities of (finite, specific) people when he composed his landmark mid-1950s texts on the content of socialism.¹⁰ The idea that Castoriadis was once an engaged political activist who later became an academic philosopher enthralled by Greece therefore cannot withstand sustained scrutiny of continuities and developments in his thought.

Were one nevertheless disposed to contrast an early, "councilist" Castoriadis to a later "academic philosopher" merely commenting on Plato, many of these seminars' intricacies would defy comprehension. When, for example, Castoriadis states (April 30) that Plato presents the Athenian democracy "as if it were a regime that arbitrarily decides upon what is good or bad in medicine," one might surmise that he is also abandoning the absolutist "all power to the councils" position one imagines he formerly championed. In fact, an advocacy of the "dictatorship of the proletariat," already attenuated in *CSII*, was mercilessly criticized in *SAS* (p. 326): "the present-day partisans of the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' should have the courage to explain that they are, in principle, for the abolition of the political rights of farmers, craftsmen, massage therapists working at home, and so on; also, that the publication of medical, literary, and other such journals should depend on ad hoc authorizations granted by 'the workers.'" *CSII* argued that a radical system of councils requires not only extensive decentralization but also central decision-making—a thoughtful, sober position, upsetting to many anarchists and liberals. His central socialist goal, however, was to foster a set of institutions that would allow for a *self-integrated articulation* of participatory democratic rule at all levels under modern conditions (*CSII*, p. 99), not aggregation around the center or disaggregation at the "margins." (It is, rather, in a totalitarian society that, for example, scientific issues—e.g.,

Lysenkoism—are transformed systematically into objects of governmental decree.) Castoriadis's insistence in these seminars upon the relative autonomy of workers in various technical fields is thus consonant with earlier remarks and in fact extends and refines them.

In this last seminar, Castoriadis judges Plato's argument "utterly inadmissible and dishonest, because as a matter of fact at Athens the city does not decide the problems, the questions, the subjects on which there is a technical knowledge of some sort." Again, some may be tempted to think that a now mellowed Castoriadis is attempting to remove certain issues from the purview of direct-democratic organs, whereas before he would have favored such solutions. But the relevant issue here refers directly back to *CSII*'s distinction between *technique* and *technology*: technology is the societal choice—among "a 'spectrum' of techniques available at a given point in time"—of "a given group (or 'band') of processes," for example, capitalist technology's selection of techniques that seek to *exclude* workers from the management of their own work so as to "fit in with capitalism's basic need to deal with labor power as a measurable, supervisable, and interchangeable commodity" (p. 104). Not just the use but the choice and orientation of a technology is a *political* question of the first magnitude, whereas technical questions are not to be settled in "democratic-centralist" fashion (though demarcations between "the political" and "the technical" themselves remain ever-open political questions). The whole discussion of Greek *technē* in these seminars and elsewhere must be read in light of *CSII*'s key distinction.

Castoriadis explains that "the city decides upon laws in general or decides upon governmental acts," adding, "but there are no laws concerning government as activity . . . there were no instructions given concerning government as activity. The activity of the *dēmos* concerns points that are absolutely not technical in nature" (April 30). This particular explanation might appear merely empirical, a nostalgic appeal to the practices of his beloved Athens, as if he had become enamored of ancient Greece at the expense of the practices of workers' management. But in fact he had already brought out the same point when generalizing from the 1956 Hungarian Revolution's creation of councils, *even within governmental departments*, as a way for workers' to manage their own affairs democratically (*CSII*, p. 151).

During the previous seminar, Castoriadis mocked one French military-industrial-complex leader's caricature of self-management (*autogestion*),

paraphrasing him thus: "They want the hospital's cleaning ladies to operate on us! And it's these general assemblies of surgeons, nurses, the cashier, the social worker, and the women who wash the floors that will decide by vote whether the patient has an appendicitis rather than bronchitis!" But does this mean that Castoriadis was abandoning the idea of sovereign decision-making councils and general assemblies? Certainly not. The same year, he praised the May '68 student-worker rebellion in France for its "sit-ins and teach-ins of all sorts, in which professors and students, schoolteachers and pupils, and doctors, nurses and hospital staff, workers, engineers, foremen, business and administrative staff spent whole days and nights discussing their work, their mutual relations, the possibility of transforming the organization and the aims of their firms" (*WIF*, p. 48). Again, *CSII*'s distinction between technical and political matters and its idea of an articulated set of institutions capable of self-governance (and thus self-limitation) at all levels are of prime importance for understanding the direction of his thought and the tenor of his voice.

In the aftermath of May '68 (whose premises he and his revolutionary group were so instrumental in preparing) and with the generalization and popularization of *S. ou B.*'s theses and ideas on workers' management, *autogestion* became a slogan on the French Left.¹¹ To the extent that this slogan entailed mitigations of those theses and ideas, he expressed reticence:

The domination of a particular group over society could not be abolished without abolishing the domination of particular groups over the production and work process. . . . [T]he only conceivable mode of organization for production and work is *collective management* by all those who participate, as I have not ceased to argue since 1947. Later on, this was called "self-management"—usually in order to make of it a reformist cosmetic for the existing state of affairs or a "testing ground" while carefully remaining quiet about [its] colossal implications, upstream and downstream. (*SAS*, p. 320)

Thus when he spoke (April 23) about what the late Marcel Dassault would have said fifteen years earlier about *autogestion*, he not only wasn't abandoning principles and practices behind *autogestion* but defending them, rather, against their post-'68 reformist watering-down, as well as against the conservative caricatures formulated in reaction to such bastardizations.

One irony is worth mentioning here. In *CSII*, Castoriadis still spoke ambiguously about *representative democracy*. Citing advances in the "technique of communication" well before the advent of the Internet, he

ridiculed the claim "that the very size of modern societies precludes the exercise of any genuine democracy. Distances and numbers allegedly render direct democracy impossible. The only feasible democracy, it is claimed, is representative democracy, which 'inevitably' contains a kernel of political alienation, namely, the separation of representatives from those they represent" (*CS II*, p. 144). This argument is quite familiar to readers of the "later" Castoriadis. Yet he also allowed in 1957 that "there are several ways of envisaging and achieving representative democracy. A legislature is one form. Councils are another, and it is difficult to see how political alienation could arise in a council system operating according to its own rules. If modern techniques of communication were put in the service of democracy, the areas where representative democracy would remain necessary would narrow considerably" (*ibid.*). Clearly, the relevant issue here is not labels but the existence or nonexistence of "political alienation." Later in life, however, Castoriadis condemned "representative democracy" *even more clearly, radically, and adamantly*, stressing its "opposition" (*WIF*, p. 75) to direct democracy—an opposition he terms "immediate and obvious" (*ibid.*, p. 89)—while championing the latter (and allowing for delegation by lot, rotation, or revocable election, not "representation," in cases where on-the-spot participation isn't feasible).

Upon close examination of precursor texts, we see how these Plato seminars continue to explore the "colossal implications" of popular management of the economy and of society as a whole—what Castoriadis (*CR*, p. 30) came to call "no longer simply collective management ('self-management') but the *permanent and explicit self-institution of society*; that is to say, a state in which the collectivity knows that its institutions are its own creation and has become capable of regarding them as such, of taking them up again and transforming them." Each Wednesday from 11 A.M. to 1 P.M. during the French academic year, Castoriadis's seminar brought together an impressive number of people—50 to 100—at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales.¹² Participants included not only students, whose studies he conscientiously directed, but also a wide variety of persons of all ages: academics and anarchists, ex-Trotskyists and former members of S. ou B., as well as many others interested in his work and the topics he was discussing. Thus, as subsequent planned volumes will also show, the seminars allowed him to try out his evolving ideas on a large, diverse, critical, and attentive audience.¹³

Audiotapings as well as transcriptions of seminars by Castoriadis and other participants commenced early on. Transcriptions began to circulate informally. Starting in 1991, Agora International, a group dedicated to fostering the project of autonomy as elucidated by Castoriadis, made photocopied transcriptions available to all at cost.¹⁴ Castoriadis's only proviso was that circulation of unpublished work remain limited to interested parties and not itself become a form of publication: he had already seen his ideas plagiarized and debased too many times,¹⁵ he said, and he didn't want unfinished work turned into someone else's fashionable book.¹⁶

In previous presentations, I've experimented with the form of the translator's foreword. In light of Castoriadis's praise for Thucydides', Plato's, and Aristotle's tendency to follow their own thought wherever it leads them, it certainly would be tempting to emulate here that particular aspect of the text through extended improvisation, riffing on the seminar's motifs. Let me instead simply express my satisfaction at seeing in print Castoriadis's own thoughts on improvisation, "jam sessions," Chopin as a "great improviser," and so on, in relation to the *Statesman*, its errant structure, and its "turbulences," which land us "smack dab in the chaos." From my very first translator's foreword (*PSWT*), I have been underscoring this jazz theme of improvisatory creation as a basic feature of Castoriadis's elucidation of the project of autonomy.¹⁷

It is with regard to Barthes and structuralism that Castoriadis decried an "inability to see that the social being of man implies at once a rule and a distance from the rule" (April 23). Similarly, in response to a questioner, he responded the following week that "Plato doesn't see the problem of the institution—and neither does Derrida, indeed, in *Speech and Phenomena*. He doesn't see the relationship of the play between subjectivity and its works." It is neither that all language is "fascist" (Barthes utilizing precisely language to make this dubious claim) nor that we are ensnared in logo-, phono-, or whatever-centrism. Our inherited philosophy—with its tendency, even among those who make the most conspicuous denunciations thereof, to maintain subject-object dualisms—has yet to assimilate Castoriadis's original contribution concerning the imaginary institution of society, as well as its political, social, philosophical, psychoanalytical, and other implications. The project of autonomy isn't an exclusive autonomization of the written or an alleged absoluteness of the oral but the capacity to adopt *another relation* to our works, and to ourselves. One's ca-

capacity for improvisation—like that of societies fostering such creativity—is no more exclusively subjective than it is fully objective; it is historical, always tentative, and ever to be renewed.

There is in the end perhaps something apt as well as evocative in the unfinished nature of Castoriadis's oeuvre. Castoriadis envisioned two great multivolume works, *L'Élément imaginaire* (The Imaginary Element) and *La Création humaine* (Human Creation). As a series of 1986 notes explained (WIF, pp. 213, 416 n. 4, 428 n. 6), *L'Élément imaginaire* was to be a written work on the imagination. The same year (*ibid.*, p. 413 n. 1) he spoke about *La Création humaine*, which was to be based upon his seminars. As it turns out, even this separation between the written and reworked oral presentations couldn't be maintained. He eventually folded both tomes into one huge Human Creation project. It was never published. The present seminars form the first published part of that unfinished work.

Ultimately, it's up to us to continue this unfinished project of autonomy and to find "some germs of importance to us," speaking, writing, reading, and acting today with our fellow human beings on and around this planet. The possibility of human greatness is not to be reserved for a few but is open to all engaged in dialogue with great works who dare to think differently, more deeply, further than what has been thought so far, as Castoriadis did in relation to Plato—and as we may in turn do in relation to him by relevantly discussing his work. Not to "discover," beneath some "new" interpretation, the merits of representative democracy, to be sure, nor by blithely opposing "earlier" and "later" Castoriadis. More than ever, we are "incited to go beyond" what his unfinished work and his times were able to think; to think through, in this new millennium he never reached, the issues he raised and the ideas he formulated; to broach a "re-creative" reception of his work; to foster the greatness of the democratic project of individual and collective autonomy he helped advance. Merely assenting to his propositions would make him *monumental*, not great. It is in unearthing and sifting through Castoriadis's "aporias, antinomies, frank contradictions, heterogeneous chunks" as well as in smashing "actual stopping blocks within reality itself" that we can lay down new foundations upon soil we shall create, raise new edifices thereupon, and, perhaps, discover in him one of the great thinkers of the past two and a half millennia.¹⁸

television surveillance of George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and other fan-tasms of this type that have been expressed, whether in literature or in reality. The total internalization by each citizen of the ideals of the totalitarian State ultimately means that each becomes—and there are interpretations from Jean-Jacques Rousseau through Hannah Arendt that head in this direction—his own surveillant and his own informer in relation to . . . the general will, in relation to the State, in relation to the Party, in relation to whatever you want; here you have an *x* you can fill in to your own liking. In these observations from the *Statesman* are found, then, the kernel of the criticism of every totalitarian regime and even of all bureaucratic power, including management of labor in factories, regulations, foremen, and so forth.

3. Here I've translated the one appearance of "le politique" as both *politikos* (the original Greek term for *statesman*) and as "the political" in general, so as to fit with the dual meaning of this French term, as I believe it is intended here. —Trans.

4. On musical composition, see, e.g., "The Social-Historical: Mode of Being, Problems of Knowledge," *PPA*, pp. 44–45; and "From the Monad to Autonomy," *WIF*, pp. 182–83. —Trans.

5. "Modern Capitalism and Revolution," *PSW*2, pp. 226–325. —Trans.

6. The Socialist-Communist alliance had just been defeated in the March 16, 1986, legislative elections. French President François Mitterrand, a Socialist, was forced into a "cohabitation" (divided government) arrangement with the neo-Gaullist leader and Paris mayor Jacques Chirac, who became his new prime minister. Thus, Chirac as well as the outgoing prime minister, Laurent Fabius, a Socialist, had just been doing the rounds of the television news shows, including *L'Heure de vérité* (The Hour of Truth), which Castoriadis mentions here in the French original. —Trans.

7. The Situationist International leader Guy Debord, author in 1967 of *The Society of the Spectacle*, trans. from the French (Detroit: Black and Red, 1983), was briefly a member of Castoriadis's revolutionary organization, Socialisme ou Barbarie. For a former S. ou B. member's close-up view of Debord's year-long passage through S. ou B., see Daniel Blanchard (known as Canjuers in the group), "Debord in the Resounding Cataract of Time," trans. Helen Arnold, in *Revolutionary Romanticism: A Drunken Boat Anthology*, ed. Max Blechman (San Francisco: City Lights, 1999), pp. 223–37; for a historian's analytical view, see Stephen Hastings-King, "L'Internationale Situationniste, Socialisme ou Barbarie, and the Crisis of the Marxist Imaginary," *SubStance: A Review of Theory and Literary Criticism* 90 (1999): 26–54; for the view of a Situationist 'zine also sympathetic to Castoriadis and S. ou B., see Bill Brown, "Strangers in the Night . . ." *Not Bored!* 31 (June 1999): 74–83 <<http://www.notbored.org/strangers.html>>. —Trans.

8. Michel Rocard, who had quit Fabius's cabinet in a staged protest the year before (1985), was later appointed prime minister by Mitterrand during the latter's second presidential term in office. Such resignations are a common practice for *présidentiables*, potential presidential candidates, as has occurred again recently with the departure of the *énarque* Jean-Pierre Chevènement, who has resigned from Socialist governments in 1983, 1990, and 2000. —Trans.

9. For Castoriadis's views on the "New Philosophers," see "The Diversionists" (1977), in *PSW*3, pp. 272–77, and "L'Industrie du vide" (his response to "New Philosopher" Bernard-Henri Lévy), *Nouvel Observateur* 765 (July 9–15, 1979): 35–37. The latter text was reprinted in *Quadranti di storia* 11 (January 1980): 322–29, along with the June 18 and 25, 1979, *Nouvel Observateur* letters of Pierre Vidal-Naquet (ibid.: 315–17, 319–21) and the June 18, 1979, *Nouvel Observateur* letter of Lévy (ibid.: 317–19). A second reprint of Castoriadis's text alone appeared in his *Domaines de l'homme: Les carrefours du labyrinthe II* (Paris: Seuil, 1986), pp. 28–34. —Trans.

Translator's Afterword

1. Quoted in Lefort, *Writing*, p. 188.

2. "The Destinies of Totalitarianism" (1981), *Salmagundi* 60 (Spring–Summer 1983): 107–22, correcting a grammatical error and, in light of the French translation, what appears to be a typo (p. 107).

3. Compare his remarks on Plato and the Parthenon on April 30, 1986, to *CR*, p. 348, on postrevolutionary Greek, French, and American democratic creativity: "tragedy and the Parthenon," "Stendhal, Balzac, Rimbaud, Manet, and Proust," and "Poe, Melville, Whitman, and Faulkner."

4. See my essay "Castoriadis on Culture" <<http://www.costis.org/x/castoriadis/culture.htm>>.

5. See, however, n. 5 of "On the Translation," this volume, and *CSI*, mentioned below.

6. Similarities appear even in tiny details, e.g., his paraphrasing of Hegel about the freedom of one, a few, and all (*SAS*, p. 322, and April 30).

7. The most convincing evidence, though, is the final seminar's added note about the *Statesman* containing "the kernel of the criticism of every totalitarian regime and even of all bureaucratic power, including management of labor in factories, regulations, foremen, and so forth."

8. The most egregious, sustained example is Philippe Gottraux's Bourdieusian-inspired sociology thesis, "*Socialisme ou Barbarie*": *Un engagement politique et intellectuel dans la France de l'après-guerre* (Lausanne: Éditions Payot Lausanne, 1997).

9. Although Plato was developing a deeply antidemocratic argument, he re-

mained profoundly Greek. Ten thousand in Greek is *myrias*, and *myrias* means "countless." We know from the last chapter of *Cleisthenes the Athenian*—Vidal-Naquet and Lévéque's classic work, much admired by Castoriadis, on the birth of democracy—that Plato developed his negation of the Athenian democracy by borrowing therefrom, and especially from its numerical features—three, five, ten, and their multiples being privileged Cleisthenic numerals. (My English-language translation, *Cleisthenes the Athenian*, includes as an appendix *On the Invention of Democracy*, the proceedings of a 1992 conference in Paris with Lévéque, Vidal-Naquet, and Castoriadis that was organized by myself and Clara Gibson Maxwell along with Pascal Vernay and Stéphane Barbéry and chaired by former S. ou B. member Christian Descamps; this minicolloquium was held to celebrate and critically examine the 2,500th anniversary of Cleisthenes' reforms. It was Castoriadis himself in 1991 who first recommended that I take a look at *Cleisthenes l'Athénien* in preparation for this anniversary.) Even Plato didn't describe the crowd of citizens here as "myriad." Rather, it is in relation to the disturbing unendingness of not-being that the term "ten thousand," meaning "innumerable," appears: "Ten thousand times ten thousand, being is not and not-being is," as Castoriadis quotes *Sophist* 259b.

10. In *CSII*, p. 142, contemporary denials of the possibility of "real democracy" were also linked to Plato's *Protagoras*, a dialogue mentioned several times in the 1986 seminars too.

11. Appropriating *S. ou B.*'s distinctive red and white cover, *Autogestion et Socialisme*, for example, became an influential journal in the 1970s.

12. Castoriadis took pride in the fact that his teaching post resulted not from a state "appointment" but from election by fellow EHES members.

13. Another volume of transcribed Castoriadis seminars is now forthcoming from Éditions du Seuil under the general series heading *La Création humaine*. The April 29, 1987, seminar from this volume had already appeared as "La Vérité dans l'effectivité social-historique" in a special issue of *Les Temps Modernes* (609 [June–July–August 2000]: 41–70) devoted to Castoriadis.

14. See app. E/19910, *PSW*3, p. 346. Agora International—27, rue Froidevaux 75104 Paris FRANCE; <curtis@msh-paris.fr>—has now ceased photocopy distribution of these transcriptions.

15. See, e.g., April 30, n. 9 on the "New Philosophers."

16. The name he cited, seemingly out of the blue, was Gilles Deleuze's. Only later did I form the hypothesis that Castoriadis may have felt that Deleuze/Guattari's book on capitalism and schizophrenia may have taken over, without attribution or the same depth of revolutionary purpose, his own ideas on the contradictory nature of capitalism, which simultaneously *excludes* workers' participation and *solicits* it.

17. Six months before his death, Castoriadis spoke on the theme of musical

improvisation at a La Villette (Paris) colloquium organized by the jazz musician and classical composer Ornette Coleman. Another Coleman friend who participated was the artist Jean-Jacques Lebel, organizer with S. ou B. members and others of Paris "happenings" in the mid-1960s.

18. I thank Max Blechman, Zoé Castoriadis, Clara Gibson Maxwell, Pierre Vidal-Naquet, and Dominique Walter for their helpful comments and suggestions concerning this Afterword's earlier drafts and my editor Helen Tartar for her ongoing interest and much welcome support.