



RESISTING THE CREATIVITY NARRATIVE: CORNELIUS CASTORIADIS ON THE FUNDAMENTS OF CAPITALIST SUBJECTIVITY

Thomas Telios (University of St. Gallen)

After its proliferation as a primarily psychological term in the literature of the late 1960s, creativity has since advanced to a core notion also for sociology. The first part of the paper tackles “the creativity narrative” according to three paradigmatic readings brought forward by Luc Boltanski and Ève Chiapello, Maurizio Lazzarato, and most recently Andreas Reckwitz. Despite the insightful accounts that those readings provide concerning the entanglement of creativity to capitalist ways of production, the practical consequences they offer regarding how to contest this entanglement are debatable. Therefore, in the second part of the article a fourth understanding of creativity is invoked that was proposed by Cornelius Castoriadis. As argued, the radicality of this concept lies in defining creativity as a mode of production of the subject’s psyche as a collective co-existence from which broader, necessarily collective practices can be derived.

Après sa prolifération en tant que notion psychologique dans la littérature des années 1960, la créativité est aussi devenue une notion fondamentale pour la sociologie. La première partie de l'article aborde le « récit de la créativité » à partir des trois lectures paradigmatiques proposées par Luc Boltanski et Ève Chiapello, Maurizio Lazzarato et, plus récemment, par Andreas Reckwitz. Malgré le fait qu'elles éclairent de manière significative l'enchevêtrement de la créativité aux modes capitalistes de production, les conséquences pratiques que ces lectures tirent sur les contestations possibles de cet enchevêtrement sont sujettes au débat. C'est pourquoi, dans la deuxième partie de ce texte, une quatrième compréhension de la créativité est proposée à partir de Cornelius Castoriadis. La radicalité de ce concept repose sur sa définition en tant que mode de production du psychisme du sujet compris en tant que co-existence collective, à partir de laquelle des pratiques plus larges et nécessairement collectives peuvent découler.

Creativity is without doubt *a*, if not *the*, “salvational word” of the present moment.

—Ulrich Bröckling, *The Entrepreneurial Self*

The Creativity Narrative: From Value to Dispositive

There are three currently predominant sociological discourses tackling from a critical perspective the entanglement of the notion of creativity with capitalist production mechanisms. The first goes back to Luc Boltanski and Ève Chiapello’s pathbreaking *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, published in 1999.¹ The second was introduced around the same period, in 1996, by Maurizio Lazzarato in the framework of his study on immaterial labour,² and was further substantiated in his *Experimental Politics: Work, Welfare, and Creativity in the Neoliberal Age*, originally published in French in 2009.³ The third and most recent discourse was brought forward by the German sociologist Andreas Reckwitz in *The Invention of Creativity: Modern Society and the Culture of the New*, published in 2017. Though no continuity can be claimed to exist between those projects, since the methodological approaches and ideological convictions of their authors make them partially irreconcilable, a common narrative could be said to unravel, starting from the first discourse and culminating in the last.

In the first part of what follows, I provide a brief account of these three regimes of creativity in order to illustrate how differently creativity can be conceived as engendered and appropriated by capitalist discourses and modes of production. Given that these approaches have at least one feature in common, namely the wish to disentangle creativity from capitalist modes of production, through this account I briefly sketch the different solutions suggested in each of them in order to allow creativity to reconquer its free ground. As will be shown, all three of these attempts fail (1) to detach creativity from capitalist surplus value production, and, (2) to redefine creativity in a non-appropriable way, since they operate alongside the

¹ Luc Boltanski and Ève Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, (tr.) G. Elliott (London: Verso, 2005). Hereafter referred to parenthetically in the text as NSC.

² Maurizio Lazzarato, “Immaterial Labor,” in *Radical Thought in Italy: A Potential Politics*, (ed.) P. Virno and M. Hardt (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 132–57. Hereafter referred to parenthetically in the text as IL.

³ Maurizio Lazzarato, *Experimental Politics: Work, Welfare, and Creativity in the Neoliberal Age*, (tr.) Arianna Bove, et al., (ed.) Jeremy Gilbert (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2017). Hereafter referred to parenthetically in the text as EP.

modern ideal of a sovereign subjectivity. Therefore, in the second part, I approach a different concept of creativity. As I argue, Cornelius Castoriadis's theorization of creativity is radically opposed to the aforementioned ones because it does not begin from creativity as an individual disposition but addresses it as a collective situation. The latter is manifest in the emergence of the psyche, *i.e.*, the subject, as a collective co-existence, and Castoriadis appropriates the notion of magma in order to explicate it. Originally a geological concept standing for the molten and semi-molten rock mixture of elements found under the surface of the Earth, the notion of magma acquires a social-philosophical resignification that designates henceforth the collective social-ontological process of the structuration of the subject's psyche. Castoriadis sees in what he calls an *ensemblist-identitarian (ensidic) logics* a kind of logics that predominates western metaphysics and attempts to identify and totally determine all qualities of the subject according to one ground, register, and/or mode of subjectivity production. To counter it, he introduces the logics of the magma in order to argue that identification processes are plural, open, infinite, and undeterminable, and that the subject is the point of condensation of all possible discourses acting simultaneously upon it. Reconstructing Castoriadis's understanding of creativity not only enables us to locate the blind spots of the creativity narrative in the still-prevailing individualist foundations of the current capitalist-critical discourses; it also allows for a different understanding of collective agency and collective practices that are holistic, demanding the cooperation of all forces that lead to the creation of a psyche as a collective co-existence.

Creativity as Legitimization Strategy: Luc Boltanski/Ève Chiapello

Among the aforementioned three discourses on creativity, the first one debunks creativity as a powerful legitimization strategy of current capitalist modes of production. By analyzing the predominant managerial discourse in France after the generational breach that May 1968 induced, Boltanski and Chiapello take up Nicos Poulantzas's earlier critique of the traditional Marxist sociological framework. According to Poulantzas, this framework has failed and needs to be revisited in a structuralist way, since it has proved itself incapable of providing a conclusive answer to the question of the location of the managerial class.⁴ For Boltanski and Chiapello the

⁴ See Nicos Poulantzas, *Classes in Contemporary Capitalism*, (tr.) D. Fernbach (London: Verso, 1978).

managerial question was crucial, not because it showed (or did not show) the limitations of Marxist, anti-capitalist argumentation, but rather because it was indicative of a new tendency, a “new spirit,” a new counter-strategy that was emerging as a legitimization of processes of capitalist postmodernity. This strategy, according to Boltanski and Chiapello, results in capitalism not having to forfeit its main forms of social manifestation by allowing it to appropriate the anti-capitalist critique—pertaining to capitalism as source of the oppression of “freedom, autonomy, and creativity of the human beings” (NSC, 37)—in order to legitimize itself. The managerial class came in handy in order to corroborate this turn due to two decisive elements: (1) the managers did not have a clear bourgeois background and were therefore capable of demonstrating in the most persuasive way that the old regimes of social stratification have become permeable, thus allowing for unprecedented social mobility; (2) the creativity demanded and provided by the managers was to be perceived as the ultimate proof that capitalism no longer instituted alienating processes in order to maintain itself, but rather promoted and—having learnt its lesson—relied on the individual’s creative forces. As Boltanski and Chiapello conclude,

Thus, for example, the qualities that are guarantees of success in this new spirit—autonomy, spontaneity, rhizomorphic capacity, multitasking (in contrast to the narrow specialization of the old division of labour), conviviality, openness to others and novelty, availability, creativity, visionary intuition, sensitivity to differences, listening to lived experience and receptiveness to a whole range of experiences, being attracted to informality and the search for interpersonal contacts—these are taken directly from the repertoire of May 1968. But these themes, which in the texts of the May movement were combined with a radical critique of capitalism (particularly the critique of exploitation), and the proclamation of its imminent end, are often to be found in the neo-management literature autonomized, as it were—represented as objectives that are valid in their own right, and placed in the service of forces whose destruction they were intended to hasten. (NSC, 97)

Creativity as Potentiality: Maurizio Lazzarato

The second discourse accounts for a concept of creativity as a relational, political-ontological force that capitalism cannot appropriate, but only administer, since creative potentiality ultimately goes back to forms of life and the subjects that constitute them. Through the

concept of immaterial labour, Lazzarato confirms—to a certain extent—Boltanski and Chiapello's diagnosis that creativity has become one of capitalism's "new watchwords" (NSC, 90). Nevertheless, Lazzarato takes this a step further when countering that capitalism did not just suffice in appropriating creativity by propagating it as a normative ideal that can be realized through a respect and cultivation of individuality that only capitalist forms of production can promote. Rather—and this is the second step of the creativity narrative—creativity is henceforth to be understood as the result of immaterial labour, a newly detected form of labour, which capitalism could not resist to appropriate and incorporate in its alienating and exploitative regimes of production.

Immaterial labour is defined as a form of labour "that produces the informational and cultural content of the commodity" (IL, 132). It amounts to a form of work as "the capacity to activate and manage productive cooperation" (*ibid.*, 133) where capitalist control is maintained by the transformation of "prescription and definition of tasks...into a prescription of subjectivities" (*ibid.*) leading to "a technology for creating and controlling the 'subjective processes'" (*ibid.*). The result is the transformation of the subject to "a simple relay of codification and decodification, whose transmitted messages must be 'clear and free of ambiguity,' within a communications context that has been completely normalized by management" (*ibid.*, 134). Nevertheless, and herein lies the ingenuity of Lazzarato's argument, by introducing creativity in their modes of production, capitalist regimes transform the production process into something relational. The first mode of relation pertains to the fact that immaterial labour is a collective endeavor. In contrast to the classical individualist model of work and workforce, immaterial labour combines

the results of various different types of work skill: intellectual skills, as regards the cultural-informational content; manual skills for the ability to combine creativity, imagination, and technical and manual labor; and entrepreneurial skills in the management of social relations and the structuring of that social cooperation of which they are a part. This immaterial labor constitutes itself in forms that are immediately collective, and we might say that it exists only in the form of networks and flows. (*Ibid.*, 136)

The second mode pertains to the fact that the products of immaterial labour cannot be consumed under the same terms under which any other commodity of natural, corporeal, bodily labour can be consumed. Every commodity of immaterial labour—and innovation,

communication, the materialization of needs, imaginaries, tastes, etc. are just a few of them (cf. *ibid.*, 137)—when consumed,

enlarges, transforms, and creates the “ideological” and cultural environment of the consumer. This commodity does not produce the physical capacity of labour power; instead, it transforms the person who uses it. Immaterial labour produces first and foremost a “social relationship” (a relationship of innovation, production, and consumption). Only if it succeeds in this production does its activity have an economic value. (*Ibid.*, 137)

This “cycle of immaterial labor” (*ibid.*), as Lazzarato calls it, is not individual since it creates a social bond between producer and consumer and “is independent and able to organize both its own work and its relations with business entities” (*ibid.*). Seen in this way, capitalism is left bereft of creativity as its legitimization strategy because it never really came to possess it. As Lazzarato concludes, “For economics there remains only the possibility of managing and regulating the activity of immaterial labour and creating some devices for the control and creation of the public/consumer by means of the control of communication and information technologies and their organizational processes” (*ibid.*, 145). This shift results in the disassociation and structural disenchantment of creativity as “an expression of ‘individuality’ or...the patrimony of the ‘superior’ classes” (*ibid.*). Nevertheless, this disentanglement of creativity from the social-sociological mechanisms of capitalist production did not come without a cost. In order to liberate creativity from the “process[es] of valorization” (*ibid.*, 133) of capitalist postmodernity, Lazzarato transforms it into a political-ontological concept: ontological because it abolishes its embeddedness in societal processes such as the capitalist regimes of production, and political because it is capable of producing—at least according to Lazzarato—its own self-alteration since it does not depend on social structures such as the capitalist regimes of production but coordinates the relation of the subject to them. Recast as a political-ontological mode of subjectivity production, creativity becomes a vital force that presides over the relations of the subject and its environment and as such can be managed or administered but not eradicated or obliterated. It is the latter which Lazzarato demonstrates most convincingly in *EP*. As Jeremy Gilbert writes in the foreword to the English translation of Lazzarato’s book,

[W]hat is at stake is, again, a logic of potentiation, disruption, and capture, whereby the creative possibilities engendered by the

breakdown of established social forms and distinctions must be channelled in specific ways if they are not to pose a threat to the conditions necessary for capitalist exploitation and profit. (EP, xxxviii–xxxix)

This is the weakest point in Lazzarato's reconstruction of the notion of creativity. Although he succeeds in providing a broader account—in comparison to Boltanski and Chiapello—of the mechanisms of creativity that cannot be delimited to a certain class, and also provides a compelling argument for how ambivalent the mechanism of creativity may be (not only as a mode of subjectivity production but also as a tactic against it), Lazzarato does not succeed in substantiating the forms that such radical politics of creativity could acquire. He subtracts creativity from the ethical sphere and strips its status of ethical value, just as he insulates it from becoming a metaphysical concept. Through the former shift creativity is rendered intangible to capitalist legitimization mechanisms; through the latter creativity is reintroduced into the social sphere emerging henceforth from relational conflicts embedded in societal relationships. This transforms creativity from an individual trait to an assemblage, a collective process. It is for this reason that Lazzarato—in alignment with Félix Guattari—claims that “the unity of the individual subject and the political subject” can be destroyed and reshaped “to a complex ‘multiple individual-group exchange machine’” (EP, 195). Nevertheless, this all goes back to an understanding of subjectivity that originates as “not confined to the subject and language,” as “disseminated, in an almost animistic manner, in a multiplicity of objects, relations, and materials,” as produced “in the intersection of prelinguistic, preindividual, and transindividual multiplicities (social, political, cultural, and machinic)” and as comprising of a “‘nonhuman’ part of subjectivity, beside and beyond the individual” from which one “can put to work its transformation, its ‘heterogenesis’” (*ibid.*). The figure of the solitary artist—and here Marcel Duchamp and Franz Kafka play a pivotal role—is the most susceptible to rise up to such a task, and experimentation seems to be the only promising form of practice at our disposal to thwart postmodern capitalist ways of production. But beyond this, we are left with a rather bleak account of what is to be done. Although it is intended as a comment on Gilles Deleuze and Guattari's aesthetisation of the modalities of subjectivity production, the final sentence of the book could therefore be turned against its own author:

Despite the important direction that the aesthetic paradigm gives us, the assemblages of being-against and being-together, the as-

semblage of rupture and sutures, the assemblage of techniques of not-being governed and governing oneself, have not yet found the war machine that could express them, or enunciations that could carry them. Under these conditions they can only be, as was possible in the case of this struggle, objects of experimentation. (EP, 205)

Although Lazzarato disentangled creativity from the individualist basis of the liberal subjectivity, it comes to the vanguard, modernist, solitary artist to purport this analysis.

Creativity as Social-Ontological Dispositive: Andreas Reckwitz

While creativity was addressed as an ethical value according to Boltanski and Chiapello and recalibrated as a relational political-ontological force according to Lazzarato, Andreas Reckwitz's more recent reformulation of creativity tackles creativity as a subjectivization process, or in Reckwitz's terminology, as a dispositive.⁵ Reckwitz eschews any understanding of creativity as a political-ontological, vitalist signification and is straightforward concerning the embeddedness of subjectivization *qua* creativity in societal structures. In other words, whereas Lazzarato opts for a bipolar structuration of the social world between the subject on the one side and societal structures on the other side, where the latter precedes and constrains the former, Reckwitz intercedes for a praxeological notion of creativity that accounts for a subjectivity being brought about by the creativity dispositive. Furthermore, Reckwitz is clear about the social character of the creativity dispositive, *i.e.*, the fact that creativity has no ontological character whatsoever but is indissolubly embedded in societal structures. As insightfully commented recently, "Reckwitz's genealogy of the creativity dispositif...entails a shift in focus from the individualistic qualities of creative activity to the collective level of sociality."⁶ It is this social embeddedness that allows Reckwitz to address creativity as an ambivalent feature not only of capitalist, post-capitalist, or neoliberal modernity, but also of

⁵ To be sure, Reckwitz is not alone in addressing creativity as a dispositive. Fabian Heubel in his *Das Dispositiv der Kreativität*, (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2002) and Angela McRobbie in her *Be Creative: Making a Living in the New Culture Industries*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2016) brought forward similar reinterpretations of the notion of creativity.

⁶ Timon Beyes and Jörg Metelmann, Introduction, *The Creativity Complex: A Companion to Contemporary Culture*, (ed.) T. Beyes and J. Metelmann (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2018), 12–13.

modernity as such. In this way, creativity is yet another aesthetic form to decipher modernity, and thus Reckwitz seems to be closer to the German tradition of the Frankfurt School than to the French post-structuralist philosophy from which he borrows the term “dispositive.” Just as reification is—in the tradition of the Frankfurt School—the paradigmatic touchstone for the paradoxes underlying modernity, creativity in Reckwitz’s account incorporates the “duality of the *wish* to be creative and the *imperative* to be creative”⁷ functioning as the catalyst of how “[m]odernity is not only a de-aestheticization machine but also an *aestheticization machine*” (IoC, 14). From Boltanski and Chiapello’s asymmetric-hierarchical world where the ethical (values) determine(s) the practical (modes of production) via Lazzarato’s bipolar-symmetrical scheme where creativity and subjectivity co-determine each other, we obtain from Reckwitz’s concept of creativity a unified model where creativity is nothing but a socially constructed subjectivity, and subjectivity is nothing but embodied social structures who are productive in a twofold way: emancipatory and authoritarian. It is exactly because of this otherwise insightful twist that the conclusion of Reckwitz’s theory of creativity is insufficient. In Lazzarato’s framework, the ambivalence of the direction that the potentialities at hand could acquire is condensed in the paradigmatic figure of the artist. Reckwitz’s framework does not just reassert this collective amalgam of potentialities, but further develops collectivity to refer henceforth also to the agents of this set of potentialities. The latter is easily underpinned by the omnipresence of notions designating collectivity in Reckwitz’s *Invention of Creativity*,⁸ among which “aesthetic sociality” is undoubtedly the most significant. From this perspective, it is disappointing that Reckwitz in his postscript to this companion turns away from the notion of the collective and regresses back to individual(ist) theoretical models. Contrary to Lazzarato’s dilution of the radicality of Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of “lines of flight” that

⁷ Andeas Reckwitz, *The Invention of Creativity: Modern Society and the Culture of the New*, (tr.) S. Black (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2017), 2. Hereafter referred to parenthetically in the text as IoC. It is interesting that Reckwitz does not refer at this point to the almost identical formulation of Lazzarato according to which “one *has to* express oneself, one *has to* speak, communicate, cooperate, and so forth” (IL, 134).

⁸ See the lemmata “Artist,” “Atmosphere,” “Co-Creation,” “Creative Cities,” “Creative Crowd,” “Creativity Techniques,” “Organisation,” “Performativity,” and “Play” in Beyes and Metelmann, *The Creativity Complex*.

“change in nature and connect with other multiplicities,”⁹ Reckwitz suggests that collective agents are brought forward and required to counter creativity. At the same time, Reckwitz also dilutes collectivities by denying them their collective character and aggregating them as a singular, no longer super-individual, but supra-individual unit. As he writes,

Alongside the logic of the general, however, there has always been an alternative, even contradictory, logic of the social—that which revolves around the fabrication of the particular, the singular. In classical sociological discussions, one would usually say “individuality” and “individualism.” However, I prefer the new and more precise concepts of “singularity” and “singularization,” which are not limited to human subjects. According to the social logic of the particular, subjects, objects, and things, spatial and temporal units, as well as collectives are produced, received, observed, and evaluated as particular, as singular, unique and non-fungible.¹⁰

Through the latter Reckwitz does not deprive subjectivity its social structuration. As he unmistakably ascertains, “‘doing singularity’ and ‘doing culture’ go hand in hand here.”¹¹ Nevertheless, what goes astray is that—should the creativity dispositive refer to collective practices—it is only collective practices that can resist it. And the latter is missed by both Lazzarato and Reckwitz.

⁹ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, (tr.) B. Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 9. Given that what is at stake in this paper is to measure the critical potential of the capitalist-critical creativity narrative according to the extent to which creativity as a critical concept promotes collective agency and/or collective actions, one would assume on good reasons that a more thorough discussion of Deleuze’s notion of the “creative act” or of Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of assemblage would be appropriate at this point. Nevertheless, the reason why Cornelius Castoriadis’s understanding of creativity as a magmatic process is being consulted instead pertains to the fact that while Deleuze (and to a lesser extent Guattari) extrapolate an understanding of the subject as a torn apart, schizoid “Dividuum” (cf. Gilles Deleuze, “Postscript on Control Societies,” in *Negotiations 1972–1990*, (tr.) M. Joughin (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 177–82), Castoriadis’s notion of the psyche as collective co-existence accounts for a holistic, inclusive, and all-encompassing, but neither totalitarian, nor hierarchical-authoritarian understanding of the structuration of the individual.

¹⁰ Andreas Reckwitz, “Postscript. The Society of Singularities and the Creativity Dispositif,” in *The Creativity Complex*, 241.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 242.

Towards a Magmatic Agency

The Collective Character of the Psyche

In Castoriadis's theoretical framework the notion of creativity undergoes a significant reorientation. He reinterprets what has conventionally been understood as creativity under the notion of productivity in order to lend creativity a completely new content. Given Castoriadis's vehement anti-Marxism, it would not be out of place to assume that Castoriadis's redesignation of the notion of creativity correlates to his critique of Marxist determinism. Certainly, when arguing for history's inherent non-causality, Castoriadis attacks the blind, linear, and foreseeable Marxist doctrine of history in favor of an understanding of history as a "behaviour that is not merely 'unpredictable' but *creative* (on the level of individuals, groups, classes or entire societies),"¹² *i.e.*, in favor of history:

[N]ot as a simple deviation in relation to an existing type but as the positing of a new type of behaviour, as the *institution* of a new social rule, as the *invention* of a new object or a new form—in short, as an emergence or a production which cannot be deduced on the basis of a previous situation, as a conclusion that goes beyond the premises or as the positing of new premises. (IIS, 44)

Nevertheless, the radicality with which Castoriadis vests creativity lies in disentangling it from the notion of production. Neither Karl Marx, nor Martin Heidegger—an equally expected suspect when it comes to identifying creation with production (*Hervorbringung*)—are to be made responsible for condemning creativity to a mere vector of (re-)productive activity. Rather, it was Immanuel Kant who, in his theory of imagination, curtailed creativity to a forward-oriented activity that, instead of bringing forward something new, guarantees and sanctions that "what was thought" was thought according to the categories with which it could *only* have been thought. As Castoriadis argues, as soon as Kant distinguished imagination as productive and not creative, he degraded creativity "always to produce the *same* forms, forms that are valid only in so far as they perform *determined* functions in and for knowledge of given data" (IIS, 199). It is this ahistorical and asocial, forward-looking activity that has haunted creativity since the beginnings of critical moderni-

¹² Cornelius Castoriadis, *The Imaginary Institution of Society*, (tr.) K. Blarney (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987), 44. Hereafter referred to parenthetically in the text as IIS.

ty, and which culminates in Marx's historical determinism. Ahistorical and asocial is this understanding of creativity that locates its point of emergence in a theoretical mechanism that was crafted to transcend history and prevent the former from being determined by the latter. More importantly, however, this understanding of creativity is forward-looking because as soon as no space is given to historicity or sociality to influence creativity's emergence, and as soon as creativity was affixed to an ahistorical, transcendental location, the only orientation left for creativity to acquire is the future. The problem lies in the fact that, though conceptually forward-looking, the idea of the future designated here is of a future that cannot constitute a breach, a scission, or a change to the past because it has never been in contact with a past; a future that, seen this way, is the eternal reproduction and projection of its point of departure; a future that is not indeterminable or open, and therefore neither promising, aspiring, or hopeful. The ideological character of this cluster of meanings was of course not discovered firstly by Castoriadis. However, instead of collectivizing consciousness and extrapolating the proletariat as a supra-individual subject (as Georg Lukács and the western Marxism did), or instead of abandoning "the philosophy of consciousness and 'subject-centered reason'" in favor of a "philosophy of intersubjectivity and communicative rationality"¹³ (as Jürgen Habermas and other theorists of the second generation Frankfurt School suggested), Castoriadis chooses a third way to overcome the Kantian shortcomings, and this way was to abandon Kantian philosophy once and for all. Instead of coming up with yet another meandering reconstruction of Kantian reason—and it could be argued that the shortcomings diagnosed, respectively, in the theorizations of Boltanski and Chiapello, Lazzarato, and Reckwitz can also be attributed to the more or less explicit Kantian origins of their projects¹⁴—Castoriadis de-

¹³ Joel Whitebook, "Intersubjectivity and the Monadic Core of the Psyche: Habermas and Castoriadis on the Unconscious," *Revue européenne des sciences sociales*, vol. 27, no. 86 (1989): 225–44, here 227.

¹⁴ From the aforementioned, it might come as a surprise to suggest that Boltanski and Chiapello's, Lazzarato's, and Reckwitz's accounts of creativity are just as ahistorical, asocial, and self-referential as Kant's understanding of creativity when read through its concept of imagination. And truth be told they are not; quite the opposite. They were drafted explicitly and from the very beginning as critical concepts. Nonetheless, their blind spots concerning collectivity, *i.e.*, their understandings of collectivity independent of the fact of how different they are from one another, could be conceived as deriving and representing different lines of interpretations of the Kantian manifold. If—when it comes to analyzing collectivity—the Kantian manifold is the horizon that all three tendencies share,

cides to go back and revisit the early modern origins of the notion of creativity in order to let a different narrative unfurl. Sophie Klimis's question whether modernity, capitalism, and neoliberalism constitute for Castoriadis "one and the same social-historical *eidos*" should be answered affirmatively.¹⁵ Just as affirmative should be the answer to the question whether the neoliberal individual constitutes "not a subject anymore but the oxymoron of a social monadic psyche."¹⁶ Castoriadis does spawn a collective subject, a social monadic psyche, a subject which in its "individual existence is at the same time a social being" as Marx ironically enough had already written. Nevertheless, this is not an oxymoron, and even if it were, the understanding of the individual as an original collective form of being is the solution to the problems of capitalist post-modernity. Instead of seeking for a collective agent that will be able to heal *a posteriori* the pathologies that capitalist post-modernity induced upon the subject, Castoriadis chose to show how the subject is—social-ontologically—an *a priori* collectivized one. The reason is that, as soon as this social structuration of the subject as an *a priori* collective entity becomes acknowledged, endorsed, and materialized, capitalism will be bereft of its foundational notion, that of an integral, autonomous, sovereign subjectivity, and that this realization will precipitate capitalism's demise. Castoriadis calls such a project "collective autonomy" and comes down to drafting a revolutionary praxis "which takes as its object the organization and orientation of society as they foster the autonomy of all its members and which recognizes that this presupposes a radical transformation of society, which will be possible, in its turn, only through the autonomous activity of individuals" (IIS, 77).

Gottfried Leibniz's theory of the monad seems to be the proper framework to underpin such an objective. However, Leibniz's notion of the monad serves Castoriadis not in order to argue for a computable, determinable, harmonic entity. As matter of fact, it is due to these qualities of the Leibnizian monad that Castoriadis argues that "the birth of capitalism and the work of Descartes/Leibniz, say, were

then it should really not come as a surprise why Boltanski and Chiapello, Lazarato, and Reckwitz could not address collectivity in the radical way that—as will be shortly shown—Castoriadis manages to.

¹⁵ Sophie Klimis, "From Modernity to Neoliberalism: What Human Subject?" in *Creation, Rationality and Autonomy: Essays on Cornelius Castoriadis*, (ed.) I. S. Straume and G. Baruchello (Copenhagen: Nordiskt Sommaruniversitet Press, 2013), 133–58.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

parallel manifestations of a new social-historical imaginary.”¹⁷ Nevertheless, what he finds as already existing in Leibniz is the foundation of a pluralistic monism (immanentism).¹⁸ The monad is a collective, a co-existence, and whether this co-existence is given from God and therefore harmonious is at first irrelevant to Castoriadis. Furthermore, what he also finds as being at hand in Leibniz’s monadology is that the psyche is the paradigmatic monad. Therefore, the psyche should be regarded as being a collective co-existence and the difficult task lies in giving an account of the “substances” that the psyche as a collective monad comprises. Language, unconscious, representational mechanisms, desire, drives, somatic needs, signification mechanisms, and social imaginaries—to mention some of the most prominent traits of the psyche’s development—are acknowledged, and all of them find their way in in Castoriadis’s notion of the psyche. What allows Castoriadis to put aside Leibniz, for whom the substances do not really converse but appear to be doing so, is when he analyzes the way in which those substances are articulated and interrelated to one another.

When forced to come to terms and process the external world, what becomes apparent and confirmed is—in Karl E. Smith’s words—that the “primary form(less-ness) of the psychic flux is chaos.”¹⁹ The point here is not that this chaos ought to be conceived of as a primordial void, a *tabula rasa*, waiting to be inscribed by the social imaginary and its institutions. Furthermore, there is no first, original, absolute ground/entity/quality to function as this inscription’s catalyst. Finally, according to Castoriadis, the psychical flux of the subject’s psyche can never be forced to counteract the incentives of the empirical world. Rather, it has to interact with them since the “psyche’s representative flux continues whether or not there is any ‘outside stimulation’; it unceasingly makes *itself* and the ‘primary

¹⁷ Cornelius Castoriadis, *Philosophy, Politics, Autonomy*, (ed. and tr.) D. A. Curtis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 26 n.10. A similar argument is to be found in Cornelius Castoriadis, *Political and Social Writings, vol. 3, 1961–1979: Recommencing the Revolution: From Socialism to the Autonomous Society*, (ed. and tr.) D. A. Curtis (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 180.

¹⁸ Leibniz, as a father figure for both Deleuze and Castoriadis, could be a further point of convergence between those two thinkers. For some first insights concerning the latter, cf. Simon Tormey and Jules Townshend, *Key Thinkers from Critical Theory to Post-Marxism* (London: Sage Publications, 2006), 40.

¹⁹ Karl E. Smith, “Psyche,” in *Cornelius Castoriadis: Key Concepts*, (ed.) S. Adams (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 83. For the same topic, see also Karl E. Smith, “Re-Imagining Castoriadis’s Psychic Monad,” *Thesis Eleven*, vol. 83, no. 5 (2005): 5–14.

processes' continue to unfold" (IIS, 301). Therefore, the assumption that the psyche is an original chaos has to be understood not as a moment from which the psyche originates, but as the result of the interaction that takes place as soon as the metaphysical inevitability of having to have a psyche encounters stimuli external to it. Seen this way, Castoriadis's structure of the psyche refers to a psyche that can neither be consumed in an exhausting listing of qualities, nor is the consequent unravelling of phenomena going back to one concrete ground. Rather, the psyche comes to dispose over and possess—in Castoriadis's vocabulary—"a radical imaginary" because its be(com)ing is indeterminately overdetermined, *i.e.*, because—due to the plurality of the factors determining the subject's psyche—the subject has no possibility but to emerge as the amalgam of all interacting factors, and at the same time because—due to the contingency of the outcome of the interplay of those factors—the subject can never become totally determined.²⁰ As Castoriadis explicates in the case of the unconscious, there is no doubt that "[t]his being of the psyche is governed at one of its poles by the primal unconscious" (IIS, 298). At the same time, however, and *contra* Freud, this unconscious "has never been repressed but instead rendered impossible—unrepresentable—from the moment a world of diversity and of displeasure has been set up and which, unrepresentable in person, is presentified and figured in and through the very modalities of the deepest psychical processes" (IIS, 298). That there is a psyche is Castoriadis's only supposition; yet that does not presuppose that this psyche is endowed with rationality, emanates from drives, is attached to emotional complexes, attends to bodily needs, etc. Rather, the psyche is the collective amalgam of all of those factors that act together. As he asserts of the subject,

It is the active and lucid agency that constantly reorganizes its contents, through the help of these same contents, that produces by means of a material and in relation to needs and ideas, all of which are themselves mixtures of what it has already found there before it and what it has produced itself. (IIS, 106)

In this way, the psyche is a collective co-existence, yet one that avoids identification because it is overdetermined by the institutions of the subject's exterior, empirical world of social institutions. This ongoing collectivization of the psyche results in a co-existence that

²⁰ Another way to address this indeterminate overdetermination of the subject *qua* its collective structuration would be through the notion of the "excess."

guarantees that the subject's psyche will never be totally appropriated by any of the psyche's components. This is what Castoriadis clarifies through what has always been one of the most difficult notions of his philosophy, namely the notion of the magma. As he claims, "An individual's representations at every instant and throughout his entire life—or, better, the representative (-affective-intentional) flux that an individual is, are first and foremost a magma. They are not a set of definite and distinct elements and yet they are absolutely not pure and simple chaos" (IIS, 321).

Making Sense of the Magma: From epistemological indeterminacy to collective action

Magma is undoubtedly not an idiomatic word, at least in the context of social and political philosophy. Yet this idiosyncrasy allows Castoriadis to provide for a way to solve the subject-paradox by striking a balance between the sovereign historical supra-individual subject of (traditional and Western) Marxism, as exemplified by the Proletariat, and the hollowed socially structured subject so predominant in certain tendencies of the post-war French philosophy. By arguing for a psyche as a collective event, Castoriadis opts for a third position between those two tendencies. The motor of history is neither a supra-individual actor, nor is the death of the subject the solution to all problems related to power structures. Rather, the social-ontological collectivization of the subject is suggested as a third way to tackle the subject-paradox that consequently allowed for creativity to be asserted not as the premise but the result of social-ontological structures.

Through elucidating the collectively co-existing psyche as a magma, Castoriadis brings to light the following clarifications: Magma is a socio-ontological notion that designates results of societal processes as axioms bound to their own historicized self-transformability. Therefore, the ontological status of the magma is not to be held apart from the social character of the magma.²¹ By addressing magma as an ontological entity, Castoriadis attempts to examine whether there is "an alternative to the view that everything that *is* is fully and exhaustively determined, that everything that is can be completely explained in causal terms and that everything that

²¹ This is one point where the analysis put forward here disagrees with Mats Rosengren's fabulous analysis of the notion of the magma; see Mats Rosengren, "Magma," in *Cornelius Castoriadis: Key Concepts*, 66.

is ultimately can be reduced to the same essence or substance.”²² At the same time, by addressing magma as a societal entity, Castoriadis argues against both the reducibility of forms of existence to one primary ground of significations and the possibility that those multiple sources of signification could exist outside the societal nexus.

What is the source, the root, the origin of this magma and of its unity? Here, we can see clearly the limits of the traditional ontology. No “subject” or “individual” (or “group” of subjects and individuals) could ever be this origin. Not only is the amount of ecological, sociological, psychoanalytical, etc., knowledge, both theoretical and applied, necessary to engineer the organization of a primitive tribe, for instance, of such a complexity that it defies imagination and is, at any rate, far beyond our grasp; but, more radically, “subjects,” “individuals,” and their “groups” are themselves the products of a socialization process, for their existence presupposes the existence of an instituted society. Neither can we find this origin in “things”; the idea that myths or music are the (however roundabout) outcome of the operation of the laws of physics is just meaningless. Nor, finally, can we reduce the various institutions of the known societies and their corresponding significations to “concepts” or “ideas” {Hegel}. We have to recognize that the social-historical field is irreducible to the traditional types of being, that we observe here the works, the creation of what I call the social imaginary, or the instituting society (as opposed to the instituted society)—being careful not to make of it another “thing,” another “subject,” or another “idea.”²³

Therefore, the reason why magma has to be read as a social-ontological entity is that, first, only due to the interplay of socially changing institutions can magma develop its ontological characteristics—namely, indeterminacy, uncontrollability, and openness. Second, while allowing for those qualities to be purported by ontologized social institutions, Castoriadis’s method provides a metatheoretical framework investigating the correctness or falseness of his social analysis.²⁴ It is under the spectrum of this double, co-

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Cornelius Castoriadis, *World in Fragments*, (ed. and trans.) D. A. Curtis (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 8.

²⁴ At this point, it is important to recall that Castoriadis had a very thin understanding of ontology. As Castoriadis responds to his critics, everyone

determining perspectivism that such definitions of the content and functionality of magma must be understood. When Castoriadis argues that “[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), he points out the open character of the magmatic mechanisms. Similarly, when Castoriadis writes that what he intends to comprehend under the notion of magma is “the mode of being of what gives itself before identitary or ensemblist logic is imposed” (*ibid.*), he explicitly suggests that there is already a socially generated complexity at play before getting compressed, reduced, and at the end controlled and subordinated to a singular, identitarian logic.

This interplay between amorphous, existing material and attempts to describe, categorize, and control it accounts for a further quality of magmatic reality, namely that such tensions cannot be rendered dormant and that claims arguing or attempting to render it inactive are already ideological. This is the reason why Castoriadis—commenting on the political arena of his time—is critical concerning notions like consensus or insignificance.²⁵ By striving to achieve consensus—*i.e.*, by trying to render insignificant the differences that programmatically distinguish the left from the right, and by trying to minimize the political claims to a common denominator—the political landscape fails to correspond to the tensions emanating from the

puts the weightiest cosmological postulates into action when he sits down in front of his typewriter or when he goes out into the street: he acts as if he were certain that the former was not going to explode in his hands or that his fellow citizens had not been transformed, overnight, into headhunters. In brief, he is postulating at least a regularity and stability to phenomena, sufficient as to need/usage [as Aristotle would say], which no transcendental consciousness, no *Wesensschau*, no intersubjective communication could produce or draw out of themselves.

Cornelius Castoriadis, “Done and To Be Done,” in *The Castoriadis Reader*, (ed. and tr.) D. A. Curtis (New York: Blackwell Publishing, 1983), 362. The best analysis on Castoriadis’s notion of ontology is of course Nicolas Poirier’s *L’ontologie politique de Castoriadis, Création et Institution* (Paris: Editions Payot & Rivages, 2011). Nevertheless, I disagree that Castoriadis’s ontology is a logical one and understand it—as has been argued until now—as a social-ontological one.

²⁵ Cornelius Castoriadis, *Postscript on Insignificance: Dialogues with Cornelius Castoriadis* (London: Continuum, 1998), 5. See also Cornelius Castoriadis, *The Rising Tide of Insignificancy (The Big Sleep), Not Bored!* (2003), [<http://www.notbored.org/RTI.pdf>], accessed Feb. 10, 2019. Translated from the French and edited anonymously as a public service.

underlying magmatic structuration of societal institutions. Against such necrotic political tactics, the magmatic structuration of social reality emphasizes that social signification processes are living substances, incessantly on the move and, therefore, unidentifiable, unexpectedly creative, inexhaustible, limitless, infinite. From this perspective, magmas strive for dissensus instead of consensus, and even if convergences take place, the character of the magma does not let the elements that merged together become undistinguishable in the new mixture that was thusly created. As Jeff Klooger argues, "Magma is the name Castoriadis gives to the mode of being which he sees as underlying all others, and which is characterized by an indeterminacy in which particular determinations come to be, but without congealing into inalterable forms, and without diminishing the potential for the emergence of new and different determinations."²⁶

Taking into account the magmatic structuration of social-historical processes does not just show the indissolubly interwoven matter upon which social existence is built as a complex. It also provides for a diagnostic-epistemological tool since it shows the horizon of possibilities of perception as well as the normative measure according to which we judge whether we have thought and acted accordingly to the underlying matter.²⁷ Furthermore, magma is also an argument towards a pluralist-immanent rapprochement of the social reality. The latter is made clear in the text "The Logic of Magmas and the Question of Autonomy,"²⁸ published in 1983, which accounts also for the most systematic presentation of the notion of the magma provided by Castoriadis.²⁹ In this text, Castoriadis adds a competency the magma possesses, and which had not been included in the presentation of the magma in his *IIS*, namely self-referentiality and self-regulation. As Castoriadis asserts, the magma self-institutes itself (*s'auto-institue*; LoM, 316). He continues on to clarify the logical

²⁶ Jeff Klooger, "The Guise of Nothing: Castoriadis on Indeterminacy, and its Misrecognition in Heidegger and Sartre," *Critical Horizons*, vol. 14, no. 1 (2013): 1–21, here 7.

²⁷ Castoriadis, *World in Fragments*, 299.

²⁸ Cornelius Castoriadis, "The Logic of Magmas and the Question of Autonomy," in *The Castoriadis Reader*. Hereafter referred to parenthetically in the text as LoM.

²⁹ For an outstanding analysis and critique of Castoriadis's notion of the magma from a mathematician's perspective, see Athanassios Tzouvaras, "Sets with Dependent Elements: Elaborating on Castoriadis' Notion of 'Magma,'" *Research Gate* (2019), [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228443357_Sets_with_dependent_elements_Elaborating_on_Castoriadis'_notion_of_'magma'], accessed Feb. 21, 2019.

operations that qualify such a claim. He distinguishes between five properties of the magma: (1) Necessity—*i.e.*, the fact that, just as the psyche as a co-existential monad has to be posited as a *necessary hypothesis* if we are to describe the observable history of the patient,³⁰ it must also be presupposed that there is a given magma at play as the set from which theoretical elucidation has to start even if it is not yet clear what kind of set we're dealing with. (2) Inexhaustibility or indefinite potentiality. (3) Inseparability—*i.e.*, the fact that there are no submagmas that do not comport the totality of determinations applicable simultaneously also to other submagmas. As explicated in the case of the family, while developing its own qualities the submagma "family" carries in it the determinate content of every quality of the main magma of society. (4) Voidlessness—*i.e.*, even if decomposed, new magmas appear, and the decomposition of the magma does not lead to the breaking of the magma down to mere elements, ensembles, or subsets which lack magmatic qualities. (5) Universality and universalizability—*i.e.*, the fact that everything that is not subjugated to the identitarian/ensemblist logic must be addressed as a magma and that even those sets being subordinated to the identitarian/ensemblist logic can be transformed to magmas (see LoM, 297–99). To give an example of what kind of social theory can be derived from the background of those properties, in his rejoinder "Done and To Be Done" Castoriadis proceeds in a rather classical tripartite institutional arrangement of society's strata: *oikos*—the private/private; *agora*—the public/private; *ekklesia*—the public/public. Castoriadis's political ideal lies in the fact that all three of them cannot but strive to become fully-developed, since their creation must have an open, self-elucidating, and self-transformative character. Moreover, the criteria that Castoriadis poses—*i.e.*, the independence of the *oikos*, the creation of the free *agora* and the becoming truly public of the *ekklesia*—have to be additively met, *i.e.*, all three strata have to develop their particular identities. If only one of them achieves completion, or if one of them achieves completion at the expense of the others, if we decide to disentangle them in order to avoid such appropriation attempts, and lastly if we allege that those strata never should have been thought of as belonging together, then we fall prey to this ensidic/ensemblist logic that has managed to impose itself on the autonomous organization of society.³¹ Therefore, the political institutions envisaged by Castoriadis are

³⁰ See Cornelius Castoriadis, *Figures of the Thinkable*, (tr.) H. Arnold (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 168.

³¹ Cf. IIS, 177.

magmatic in the sense that on the one hand, those institutions or domains have to enjoy a certain autonomy, and on the other, they have to realize that each one has to guarantee the autonomy of the other if it wants its autonomy to be also guaranteed by the other. Seen this way, magmatic social structuration allows for a plurality of institutions, politics, and actors that are therefore indispensable in order for a society to become and remain collective and autonomous. To state that such a collective autonomy can be achieved only by radical and direct democratic procedures would result in a truism that is nevertheless worth mentioning.³²

This brings us to the temporal functionality of the magma, more precisely to the fact that temporality is in itself also the result of a magmatic situation. Despite Castoriadis's rediscovered loyalty to Aristotle and the Aristotelian tradition of politics (after his Marxist phase), Castoriadis aligns himself with the Hippocratic understanding of time and distances himself from the Aristotelian understanding of time as the addition of sequential and distinctive now-moments. Time is, for Castoriadis, the possibility to act, not just time's passing. *Kairos* in comparison to *chronos* and *hora* in comparison to *stigma* designate exactly this urgency to make the most out of the given temporal situation. This is how we ought to understand Castoriadis's slightly elliptic considerations on the Hippocratic *kairos*

as that in which there is occasion and opportunity for acting. The time of doing must thus be instituted so as to contain singularities that are not determinable in advance, as the possibility of the appearing of what is irregular, of accidents, of events, of the rupture of repetition. It must, in its institution, preserve or make room for the emergence of otherness as intrinsically possible (not as the possibility of miracles or of acts of magic). For this very reason, the time of doing is necessarily much closer to true temporality than the time of social representation is or can be. (IIS, 212)

Time in the form of *chronos* is not to be discarded, since "time is that in which there is *kairos* (propitious instant and critical interval, the opportunity to take a decision) and *kairos* is that in which there is not much time" (*ibid.*). Yet, exactly therein lies the politicization of

³² In an article just published, Vangelis Papadimitropoulos makes an interesting case concerning this point by theorizing the reciprocal growth in autonomy as a learning process. Such a reading could result in liaising Castoriadis with the pragmatist tradition—an interesting comparison that, to my knowledge, has not yet been attempted. See Vangelis Papadimitropoulos, "Politics and the Political in Castoriadis," *Critical Horizons*, vol. 20, no. 1 (2019): 1–14.

temporality that Castoriadis facilitated. As soon as it gets realized that every temporal moment is akin and appropriate to be appropriated for political action, we do not need to await the political conditions to mature or the revolution to take us by surprise.

Conclusion

After recovering Castoriadis's understanding of creativity as a magmatic process, the landscape of the discourses concerning the entanglement of the notion of creativity in capitalist production mechanisms has to be reshuffled. Creativity is no longer a former capitalist-critical value that has in-between been engendered from capitalist regimes of production in order to undermine, counter, and invalidate henceforth the legitimacy of any similar critique and thus discredit the criticality of capitalism as economic system of production (Boltanski and Chiapello). Neither is creativity a vital force, inherent to the subject and whose realization provided capitalism with yet another, actual form of labour to be exploited (Lazzarato). Even less is creativity, in Reckwitz's understanding, a subject-external enigmatic dispositive bringing aesthetic practices to the fore that manifest themselves in "practices and...technologies; forms of discursive truth production, imaginary and collective problematization or thematization; artefacts...; and patterns of subjectivization" (IoC, 29) aiming to an "aesthetic normalization," *i.e.*, to a "paradoxical attitude of expecting the unexpected and awarding it" (*ibid.*, 27). Rather, creativity is the historical process which entails "[t]he process of the social institution of the individual, that is to say, the socialization of the psyche" and pertains to following indissoluble double activity: "the process of psychogenesis or *idiogenesis*, and [the process of] sociogenesis or *koinogenesis*" (IIS, 300). Creativity is "the history of the psyche in the course of which the psyche alters itself and opens itself to the social-historical world, depending, too, on its own work and its own creativity; and also, the history of society's imposition on the psyche of a mode of being which the psyche can never generate out of itself and which produces-creates the social individual" (*ibid.*). Defining creativity as the history of the psyche depending on its own creativity is not a *petitio principii* since the psyche's own creativity is the result of "historical *doing* and...of a universe of *significations*" (*ibid.*, 146). From the latter, a picture of a psyche emerges that is the "coexistence of a private world (*kosmos idios*) and of a common or public world" (*ibid.*, 300).

The reason why this understanding of creativity leaves us better off resides in the fact that in contrast to the paradigms of Boltanski

and Chiapello, Lazzarato, and Reckwitz that are modelled on the Kantian scheme of creativity as (re-)production, Castoriadis's conceptualization of creativity allows for change to creep into the theoretical fundamentals and the practical manifestations of the intertwinement of regimes of creativity and capitalist subjectivity. For Boltanski and Chiapello change was rendered possible as soon as it was realized that the hierarchical structures of capitalist modes of production remained unaltered despite the shift from the mass-productive and mass-consumerist Fordist model of production to a creative one, more individualist and respectful of the individual's singular mode of production. For Lazzarato change was manifested by proclaiming a certain type of social activity (*e.g.*, the artist) as the revolutionary figure *par excellence* (Lazzarato). For Reckwitz, debunking the paradoxes of modernity and realizing the state of affairs of the political-sociological discursive environment we live in results in the turning point from which social reality can be restructured thereafter upon a more conscious understanding of social reason, practices, and mechanisms.

The aforementioned theoretical conceptualization of change inherent to Castoriadis's understanding of creativity pertains to the fact that Castoriadis's theoretical framework is able to endorse the descriptions of the entanglement of subjectivity and capitalist modes of production offered by the other three stages of the creativity narrative we explored. If ethics should still be regarded as the most promising register to exert capitalist critique, then this would correspond—in Castoriadis's theoretical universe—to ethics as a sub-magma of the overall magmatic structure that society is. If the problem that Lazzarato highlights is the reappropriation of creative immaterial labour as a form of labour intrinsic to the subject by capitalist modes of production, it would be a case of overtaking, for example, the characteristics of the private sphere (the *oikos* in Castoriadis's terminology) from the market, *i.e.*, the public/private sphere (the *agora* in Castoriadis's terminology). Last but not least, if creativity is a discursive dispositive bringing about subjectivation processes, then this should be considered as being already entailed in Castoriadis's understanding of the collective creation of the subject's psyche as co-existence.

Secondly Castoriadis enhances conceptually the understanding of creativity, to let collectivity appear as its constitutive element. It is through the latter that change appears not only theoretically but also practically. The fact that Boltanski and Chiapello always come back to the managerial class as the paradigmatic point of reference to scrutinize modern capitalism's still existing exploitative structures is

indicative for a monistic point of view from which—in the sense of an Archimedean point—capitalism ought to be observed, examined, and criticized. This is not to say that they do not offer a series of examples concerning workers' connectivity, global interdependence, or the role of legal and social networks. Nevertheless, the role and functionality of the managers still comes forth as the paradigmatic category of capitalism's antinomies. The fact that in the end of their analysis artistic critique appears as a parallel mode of critique prepares the passage from this regime of creativity to the next regime of the prevailing creativity narrative, *i.e.*, Lazzarato's notion of the artist as the exemplary anti-capitalist figure. Lazzarato's essentialism—the fact that also for Lazzarato there is one standing point from which capitalism is to be observed, examined, and criticized—is even more problematic given the more significant role that notions like rhizome, networks, etc. occupy in the theoretical scheme upon which he builds his theory. However, just as the proletariat was for Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri the paradigmatic force of the early capitalism, it is the artist who for Lazzarato becomes the vanguard figure capable of both exhibiting the problems and providing the solutions for current capitalism's reconfigurations. Coming to Reckwitz, his understanding of creativity as a dispositive demonstrates similar problems rendered obvious by his normative need to reinstitute singularity. Sociality is introduced by Reckwitz as the vector for the aesthetic subjectivation dispositive, yet Reckwitz's ideal seems to be the return to a sovereign singularity.

When arguing that Castoriadis is successful in theorizing change more effectively in comparison to Boltanski and Chiapello, Lazzarato, and Reckwitz, because he manages to include collectivities in his theorization of creativity, we do not argue in favour of collectivity for the sake of collectivity. Rather, for Castoriadis change can necessarily be collective as it corresponds to creativity as a collective social-ontological process. Putting creativity into practice means acknowledging that creativity has indeed become “the new watchword,” but that this is the case only for western capitalist societies. The Global South keeps operating under conditions of production that are similar to the conditions of the Manchester capitalism of the 19th century. Seen this way, anti-capitalist tactics have to remain pluralistic: they have to invent and implicate simultaneously different forms of struggle corresponding to the differentiated forms capitalist ways of production demonstrate on the global level and not on the local level. Artistic forms of practices are therefore a valid and indispensable form of struggle, but should not be considered as a compass with which any supposedly parochial form of anti-capitalist

struggle should be oriented. Last but not least, singularities must be respected, and at no moment should they be subsumed under higher values or be suppressed from a supra-individual collective. Nevertheless, singularities owe their irreducibility and incommensurability to the differentiated condensation of the different modes of subjectivity production that each subject has socio-ontologically experienced. Thus, collective self-determination must take into account this collective process of subjectivity production. In Castoriadis's words,

If therefore a new society should emerge from the revolution, it can be constituted only on the power of the population's autonomous organizations, extended to all spheres of collective activity and existence: not only "politics" in the narrow sense, but production and the economy, daily life, etc. Therefore, self-government and self-management [autogestion] (what at that time I called workers' management and collective management) resting on the self-organization of the collectivities concerned. (LoM, 313)

The notion of magma designates therefore a threefold: (1) the totality of all existing societal institutions, (2) the interplay between them and the subject's psyche, and (3) the collective origination of the psyche as a collective co-existence. Seen this way, the introduction of the notion of the magma did not result in Castoriadis's "fleeing from its own radicalism" and in rendering Castoriadis's theory of society "into a metaphysical cosmology which today can scarcely be discussed with scientific arguments."³³ On the contrary, it is exactly because of the notion of magma that Castoriadis reclaims radicality via collectivity in order to shatter the individualist foundations of capitalist subjectivity.³⁴

thomas.telios@unisg.ch

³³ Axel Honneth, "Rescuing the Revolution with an Ontology: On Cornelius Castoriadis' Theory of Society," (tr.) G. Robinson, *Thesis Eleven*, vol. 14, no. 1 (1986): 62–78, here 78.

³⁴ For a further argumentation as to why collectivity constitutes the radical punchline of Castoriadis's philosophy, cf. Gerasimos Karavitis, "On the Concept of Politics: A Comparative Reading of Castoriadis and Badiou," *Constellations*, vol. 25, no. 2 (2018): 256–71.