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Castoriadis's Language of Radical Imagining, in light of Aristotle and Saussure on Signitive Imagination

Le langage de l'imagination radicale de Castoriadis, à la lumière d'Aristote et de Saussure sur l'imagination signitive

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Abstract

Cornelius Castoriadis, in *The Imaginary Institution of Society* (*IIS*), offered the late twentieth century a powerful account of the role of imagination in the creation of society and all its particular institutions. Drawing especially on Immanuel Kant's schematism and Sigmund Freud's derivation of symbols from conscious and unconscious desire, Castoriadis showed that both the natural and the social worlds are organized by the basics of ensidic logic (sets plus identity and noncontradiction), but that they achieve experiential density adequate for living in community only through the institution of practices understood according to networks of symbols that constitute the social imaginary. The social imaginary, however, is itself instituted and constantly re-instituted by those living within the imaginary institution of society through the exercise of radical imagination.

IIS frequently appeals to the radical imagination but offers few examples and virtually no explanation in detail of how it functions. A possible supplement in this respect might be drawn from two sources with which Castoriadis was familiar : Aristotle's account of sensation and imagination in *On the Soul*, and Ferdinand de Saussure's *Course in General Linguistics* (more specifically, his neglected ventures therein into the psychology of sign formation and use). Taken together, these sources allow for a more exacting and illuminating account of the foundational institution of signification in language, with consequences for encouraging

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social change through education that might awaken in students a sense for the richness of the signitive networks that support practices of enriched living and knowing.

***Keywords**: Castoriadis, Imagination, Language, Signs, Aristotle, Saussure, Kant, Freud*

Résumé :
Dans *L'Institution imaginaire de la société* (*IIS*), Cornelius Castoriadis a offert à la fin du vingtième siècle une explication puissante du rôle de l'imagination dans la création de la société et de toutes ses institutions particulières. S'appuyant en particulier sur le schématisme d'Emmanuel Kant et sur la dérivation par Sigmund Freud des symboles du désir conscient et inconscient, Castoriadis a montré que les mondes naturels et sociaux sont organisés par une logique de base, ensidique (des ensembles avec l'identité et non-contradiction), mais qu'ils n'atteignent une densité expérientielle adéquate pour vivre en communauté que par l'institution de pratiques comprises selon des réseaux de symboles qui constituent l'imaginaire social. L'imaginaire social, cependant, est lui-même institué et constamment réinstitué par ceux qui vivent au sein de l'institution imaginaire de la société à travers l'exercice de l'imagination radicale.

L'*IIS* fait souvent appel à l'imagination radicale, mais ne propose que peu d'exemples et pratiquement aucune explication détaillée de son fonctionnement. Un complément possible à cet égard pourrait être tiré de deux sources que Castoriadis connaissait bien : le récit d'Aristote sur la sensation et l'imagination dans *De l'âme*, et le *Cours de linguistique générale* de Ferdinand de Saussure (plus précisément, ses tentatives négligées de psychologie de la formation et de l'utilisation des signes). Prises ensemble, ces sources permettent de rendre compte avec plus de précision et de clarté de l'institution fondatrice de la signification dans le langage, ce qui a pour conséquence d'encourager le changement social par le biais d'une éducation qui éveille chez les étudiants le sens de la richesse des réseaux de signes qui soutiennent les pratiques d'une vie et d'une connaissance enrichies.

***Mots-cléfs:** Castoriadis, Imagination, Langage, Signes, Aristote, Saussure, Kant, Freud*

You taught me language, and my profit on't is I know how to curse.
Caliban, Shakespeare's *Tempest*, Act 1, Scene 2, ll. 437-8

I. Castoriadis and the Radical Imagination

Since the publication in 1975 of *L'Institution imaginaire de la société*, the work of Cornelius Castoriadis (1922-1997) has become ineludible for thinking seriously about imagination[1]. No other theorist of the second half of the twentieth century has offered a comparably detailed and powerful conception of the role of imagination in politics and social life. A major source of its power is being rooted in Castoriadis's understanding of the history of philosophy, psychological theory, and political and social thought.

For twenty-first century readers, this manifold rootedness can be easily obscured by the first quarter of the book, in which Castoriadis focuses on critiques of Marxism and, to a lesser extent, functionalist explanation in the social sciences. The former critique is hardly surprising, in view of his involvement with Marxist movements in Greece and then, after his flight in 1945 to escape persecution from the Greek regime, in France. By 1948 he and his French colleagues had left the Communist party to establish the movement known as Socialism or Barbarism. The argument presented in part 1 of *IIS* is in sum the critique of Communism he had been developing over almost three decades.

I shall forgo any attempt to elaborate Castoriadis's critique of Marx and his concomitant dissatisfaction with contemporary approaches in the social sciences. Nor will I go beyond mentioning his undergraduate studies in Greece of law, economics, and political science, his professional employment in France as an economist at the OECD, and his polymathic studies in Paris, especially of philosophy and mathematical logic, all of which circuitously and ultimately led to his becoming a psychoanalyst with the *Organisation psychanalytique de langue française*, the Freudian group that sought a "third way" between Lacanian psychoanalysis and the more traditional International Psychoanalytical Association. Suffice it to say that almost all his intellectual undertakings were guided by the intention to remain faithful to the revolutionary impulse that had been fundamental to the origins of Marxism and a striving for autonomy that he found to be rooted in the simultaneous emergence in ancient Greece of philosophy and democracy.

The turn to Freudian psychology provided a way out of the dead ends of both functionalist social sciences and contemporary Marxism. With functionalism, every social phenomenon and institution existed to serve a relatively specific, socially required function. This might hold some limited truth, but in the face of the bewildering, seemingly irrational variety of cultural practices uncovered by more than a century of anthropological field work, it had no more than schematic and often

[1] Castoriadis, 1975. The work will henceforth be designated "*IIS*" and cited according to the English translation (Castoriadis, 1987).

trivial explanatory power. Marxism adopted its own varieties of functionalism that aimed more at achieving ideological closure than genuine understanding (Castoriadis, 1987: 68-70, 115-7).

After two chapters of this critique, the third chapter of *IIS*, "The Institution and the Imaginary : A First Approach", turns to positive purposes. It begins by drawing theory into commensuration with social reality through the *symbol*, the ultimate support for which, Castoriadis argues, resides in the imaginary. Symbols, not singly but in interrelation, provide an inescapable and productive framework for actions. « Real acts, whether individual or collective ones — work, consumption, war, love, child-bearing — the innumerable material products without which no society could live even an instant, are not (not always, not directly) symbols. All of these, however, would be impossible outside of a symbolic network » (*ibid*. : 117). Human beings first and most richly encounter the symbolic in language, but also (and in many different ways) in institutions; and although « institutions cannot be reduced to the symbolic, … they can exist only in the symbolic » and are « impossible outside of a second-order symbolism; for each institution constitutes a particular symbolic network » (*ibid*.). That is to say : all individuated institutions are themselves first-order systems supportive and expressive of their own symbolism, and at the same time embedded in the more all-embracing, second-order symbolisms of the encompassing society. « These systems consist in relating symbols (signifiers) to signifieds (representations, orders, commands or inducements to do or not to do something, consequences for actions — significations in the loosest sense of the term) and in validating them as such, that is to say in making this relation more or less obligatory for the society or the group concerned » (*ibid*.).

Functionalism acts as though the signification should have clarity like that of mathematical symbols. But symbols are not fundamentally like that. They are already a form of human imagining, a social or collective form of imagining instituted in bodies, things, and practices sanctioned by use; contrariwise, images would be hardly more than a variety of delirium or hallucination if they were not attached to practices, stabilized, and shared through the processes of symbolization (*ibid*. : 127-8). It is the human capacity for imagining, both originally and in connection with previous imagining, that thus provides the key to human meaning through the original production and the constant reproduction of symbols. In this way Castoriadis introduces the real burden of the book : to understand the functions of imagination, from the radical imagining of the individual to the established social imaginary, and how they institute and embody society's symbolic significations and practices.

Castoriadis describes important distinctions of the imaginaries in a note:

> One might attempt to distinguish in the accepted terminology between what we term the ultimate or radical imaginary, that is the capacity to make arise as an image something which does not exist

> and has never existed, and the *products* of this imaginary, which could be designated as the *imagined*. The grammatical form of this term, however, might lead to confusion, and I prefer to speak instead of the actual imaginary. (*ibid*. : 388)

The ultimate or radical imaginary, which is the human capacity to make what is currently nonexistent nevertheless appear to mind, is the ultimate source of the previously imagined and instituted contents of the social imaginary proper. Once an image has entered, by virtue of radical imagining followed by social acceptance, into the realm of what has already been previously imagined, the future imagining of that image and its symbolism becomes largely a repetition and thus part of the social imaginary, so that one can no longer simply attribute it primarily to the radical imaginary. The social imaginary inevitably becomes conventionalized. Still, any actual imagining by a human being, no matter how conventional, requires a scintilla of open possibility and novel connections.

IIS makes clear that the chief historical inspiration for this unfolding of symbolism and imagination comes from Kant and Freud. The debt to the former is more immediately evident than the latter. Even a cursory glance at chapters 4 and 5 of *IIS*[2] shows Castoriadis quite deliberately expanding and deepening what Kant presents in the *Critique of Pure Reason* as functions of imagination in its transcendental use. For Kant, this means that, first, there is a positioning of sense appearances in the pure intuitions space and time, which underlie mathematics, physical reality, and historical eventality, and, second, there is an implementation of the pure concepts of understanding through transcendental schemata[3] that govern the basic logical / relational structure of what appears in the world of nature, i.e., of everything that appears to and is concretely imaged in sensibility's perceptions of things and events in space and time.

Kant's critical inquiry takes almost completely for granted the nature and correctness of *general logic*. The transcendental aesthetic and logic that are the focal concerns of the *Critique of Pure Reason* "merely" explicate how our experience of the space-time world of nature provides us with imageable terms and propositions that fit and fill the forms of general logic. The transformation of general logic in the

[2] The work is divided into two major parts, "Marxism and Revolutionary Theory" (three chapters) and "The Social Imaginary and the Institution" (four chapters). Chapter 4, the first chapter of part 2, thus follows immediately after chapter 3, the last chapter of part 1.

[3] A schema for Kant is a bidirectional relation between concept and image. The concept activates at least incipiently an image in the manifold of sensibility in accordance with the concept, and in turn an image or otherwise intuitable figuration of the manifold begins to activate the concept. The fundamental schemata implement the pure concepts of the understanding, but Kant also expressly considers schemata for numbers and for 'dog' in the early chapter of the First Critique's analytic of principles, "On the Schematism of the Pure Concepts of Understanding".

course of the later nineteenth and twentieth centuries into mathematicalized formal logic plus set theory (which Castoriadis calls *ensidic* logic, for 'ensemblistic-identitary') demanded a renewed examination of its foundations, however; this is part of the deeper motivation of Castoriadis's extension of Kantian schematism.

In Castoriadis the rules of schematism are no longer aimed solely at the conceptualization of experience that leads to mathematical and physical knowledge. Schematism is now more generally also about the foundation of symbolization. The society of socialized human beings acquires a thoroughgoingly symbolized manner of living in a communal world of nature-and-culture and of practices that involve manifold ways of both *legein* and *teukhein*, of appropriating things with meanings and of making and manipulating them with the most varied background purposes and placed in different signifying networks, both social and material. By the end of chapter 5, Castoriadis establishes a logico-technical apparatus for understanding and building a world not just for physics but for comprehensive habitation by human beings with all their diverse interests. In chapter 6 he proceeds to incorporate into the human imaginary the complications produced by conscious and unconscious desire and the psyche's translation of desire into symbols that suffuse imagination and the process of symbolization. (This is obviously where Freud comes fully into play.) The imaginary institution of the world thereby supports the constitution of a primal psychological subject and its further development into a social-historical being possessed of a social imaginary that shapes, and is shaped by, the human capacity for (further) radical imagining. Although it is not the case that every attentive glance at the world exhibits the creative innovation of radical imagination, with every such glance the individual human being begins to reactivate the already-acquired networks of signification; and every reactivation, because of the radical power of imagination, has to at least rediscover and reinstantiate past creations of meaning, with the ever-present possibility that something novel might emerge.

The goal of the concluding chapter 7 is to bring everything to a focus under the rubric *signification* — signification in language, in the social imaginary, and in the physical and social reality they superintend :

> to think of the world of social significations as the primary, inaugural, irreducible positing of the social-historical and of the social imaginary as it manifests itself in each case in a given society; a positing which is presentified and figured in and through the institution, as the institution of the world and of society itself. It is this institution of significations — always instrumented in the institutions of *legein* and *teukhein* — which, for each society, posits what is and what is not, what has worth and what does not, and *how* (in what way) the "is" or "is not" *has worth* or *does not have worth*, can *actually be* or *have worth*. This is what estab-

> lishes the conditions and the common orientations of the do-able and the representable, and in this holds together, in advance and by construction, so to speak, the indefinite and essentially *open* multitude of individuals, acts, objects, functions, institutions in the second-order and customary sense of the term, which multitude in each case, concretely, constitutes a society. (*ibid.* : 368-9, lightly emended for clarity)

Such is the goal of Castoriadis's grand theory of the elements and the archeological stratigraphy of imaginary signification.

It is perhaps odd, then, that we do not encounter in *IIS* any attempt to portray the social imaginary and radical imagination at work. This is not anything like a fatal objection, of course, since Castoriadis sketches the elements and the levels in detail sufficient to know how to look for them, through a kind of differential analysis, in imaginative results. But it is, I think, possible to do and see more, if we know where and how to look.

II. The Places of Proportionated Imagining in Aristotle

Castoriadis did not see himself in any simple sense as following in the footsteps of past thinkers, not even Kant and Freud. His own task was not to recover anyone else's doctrines but rather to use resources they (and others) provided to think things through for himself (*ibid.* : 174).

Yet sometimes a deeper dive into originating texts and historiography reveal not just nuggets that can be reworked for one's own purposes but different vectors of investigation that point to new aspects and connections hidden from a first or even second view, whether in their work or in one's own. Here I want to look to two thinkers, Aristotle and Ferdinand de Saussure, for whom Castoriadis had considerable esteem and who, read against the customary grain, allow important insights into the ontology and psychology of imagination's function in language[4].

Aristotle's writings do no more than touch on the relationship between language and images / imagination. One of the few immediately relevant passages occurs in *On the Soul*, II.8, where he distinguishes sound from voice, which is « a certain sound of an animate being » (*On the Soul*, II.8 : 420b6)[5]. He remarks that not every sound made by an animal is voice, only those in which the impact (required for

[4] The most extensive treatment in *IIS* of « the question of social imaginary significations in the widest and most familiar domain : that of signification in language », occurs in the second section, "Significations in Language", of concluding chapter 7. See Castoriadis, 1987 : 345-353.

[5] My quotations from *Peri psuchēs* (better known by the Latin name, *De anima*) are drawn, occasionally with light emendations, from Aristotle, 2001. For this and the rest of Aristotle's works, I shall henceforth cite the standard English title followed by [book and] chapter and Bekker page and line numbers in the form given, above.

sound) is « ensouled and done with some imagining » (*ibid.* : 420b31-32)[6]. If animal voice requires some imagining, one would expect the same to be true of the special human voicing of language. Aristotle's discussion of words and their use in the brief *On Interpretation* does not, however, even mention imagination. After asserting the symbolic semantics of the written with respect to the spoken and of the spoken with respect to the affections (*pathēmata*) of the soul, he refers us to another study — presumably *On the Soul* — for the ground of this assertion. It is left to the reader to parse what Aristotle means.

The *locus classicus* of Western philosophy's conception of imagination — and not just Western philosophy's — is book 3 of Aristotle's *On the Soul*, most especially chapter 3. It is this chapter of Aristotle that Castoriadis thinks is the foundation of almost all investigation into imagination; he calls it Aristotle's first discovery of imagination. It begins with the fact that predecessors had not sufficiently distinguished the powers and acts of sensation and thinking, and in particular had not distinguished the source of *false* sensing and thinking. It ends, after a long discussion of what imagination is not, with a conceptually "thin" definition of what it is. It scarcely prepares the reader for claims a few chapters thereafter, so striking to Castoriadis that he regarded them as Aristotle's *second* discovery of imagination : claims that images are elemental, omnipresent, and even constitutive in all thinking and human praxis[7].

The thin definition is given in a very long, complex, conditional sentence predicated on the already-established notion that sensation is a kind of motion (*kinēsis*). The nub of the definition is this : imagination (*phantasia*) « seems to be some kind of motion and not to occur without sense ». It occurs only in animals that have sense, and it must be about things that are sensible. « Since it is possible for a motion to come about as a result of the being-at-work [Joe Sachs's translation of *energeia*, usually 'actuality' in other translations] of sensation, and necessary for it to be similar to the sensation, then this motion would be neither possible without sensation nor present in beings that do not sense, and the one having it would both do and have done to it many things resulting from this motion, which could be either true or false» (*ibid.*, III.3 : 428b11-18).

A few observations can clarify. (1) Although distinguishing imagination from other psychological acts requires contrasting it with other (higher and lower) powers, the definition is given generically, so that it will hold true of all animals capable of

[6] The last word is the genitive singular of *phantasia*, which is of course Aristotle's term for the power of imagining, but which can also indicate the act of imagining. The appearance that is evoked in such actions is the *phantasma*, plural *phantasmata* : the phantasm or image.

[7] Castoriadis, 1997 : 213-45. Castoriadis says that the second discovery — that there is no thinking at all without phantasms / images — ought to have *exploded* Aristotelian ontology. Then came the epigones: « Less profound — or less courageous — interpreters and philosophers who succeeded him will try relentlessly and repeatedly to smother the scandal of the imagination » (*ibid.* : 245). This failure was not a one-off but a perennial syndrome congenital to Western philosophy whenever it turns to questions of imagination and the "threat" it poses to philosophical and scientific reason (*ibid.* : 213-6).

imagining. (2) As (Aristotelian) *motion*, imagination needs to be specified both with respect to its source and its destination. The definition mentions only the source, the *energeia* (actuality, being-at-work) of *aisthēsis* (sensation). The destination, or destinations, cannot be specified without knowing more about the specific animal in question and other powers it has. Generically Aristotle says that animals do many things and have many things done to them according to this *phantasia*-motion. Later, in *On the Soul*, III.11, he distinguishes the sensory imagination of nonrational animals from the calculative and deliberative imagination of the rational animal. (3) Although Aristotle states that « most imaginings turn out to be false » (*ibid.* : 428a12-13), this is misleading when taken without qualification. Properly speaking, truth or falsity is in question only insofar as the appearance in imagining is accompanied or followed by *hupolēpsis*[8] (in terms of the psychological acts discussed in III.3) or by the composition of intelligibles in phantasms (as at *ibid.*, III.6 : 430b2-7)[9]. That imagination can be either true or false is especially important to keep in mind whenever an animal, human or not, is in process of imagining with respect to prospective behavior. In the sense that any imagined future activity does not (yet) exist, the imagining is false, but that is trivial — or rather is a category mistake, since the imagining per se is not an assertion that a state of affairs exists. (4) Although nothing about chapter 3's definition prepares us for the stark assertion in chapter 7 that there is no thinking without phantasms, it is foreshadowed by chapter 3's assertion that there is no *hupolēpsis* without imagination (*ibid*., III.7 : 427b15-16). Without an appearance that has originated (however remotely) in sensation, there is no being struck by appearances, no having it begin to appear that something they present is the case. (5) Because imagination, like sensation, is a motion, imagining must have a certain beginning-and-end structure as a consequence of Aristotle's general theory of motion. Moreover, because it is a motion that originates in sensation, and sensation is diverse — to begin with, there are proper, common, and incidental sensibles, and each of the five kinds of proper sensation (vision, hearing, touch, smell, taste) perceives multiple sensibles (e.g., white, black, red, green, shiny, matte, etc., in the case of sight) — even in nonrational animals there can be manifold kinds of complex images and imagining in the field of color perception.

Let us further complicate point 5. Aristotelian motion in general involves con-

[8] In this passage *hupolēpsis* is the genus of *episteme*, *doxa*, and *phronesis*. It is usually translated "belief", sometimes "judgment", but the former is too generic and the latter too perfective (in the sense of something completed) to capture the *incipient* aspect implied by the Greek word. *Hupolēpsis* occurs when the imagined thing begins to strike us as having a certain character, a striking that precedes any propositionalization, much less an attitude (like belief) toward any resulting proposition. It is the beginning or incipience, not the completion, of making sense of what the image is showing. Perhaps one could call it a first impression, as long as one remembers that it is preceded by the impression of the image.

[9] The medium for such composition, for human beings, is typically predication. A foraging insect with color vision might well be able to discriminate a green tomato from a red one, but to say that a tomato is red or green requires apprehending red and green as colors and a tomato as a material substrate for colors.

traries (*enantia*) in a field-substrate (*hupokeimenon*)[10]. Although local motion, *phora*, is distinct from the other two kinds of *kinēsis*, qualitative change (*alloiōsis*) and increase-and-decrease, Aristotle claims that the latter two both are also accompanied by local motion[11]. In the case of the activity of sensation that is the origin of *phantasia*-motion, there is a strong *prima facie* reason to emphasize the involvement of local motion : in animals having common sensation, the activity of the external sense organs must be somehow physically conveyed to the place in the body (presumably near the heart, according to Aristotle, although the interpreters of Aristotle soon relocated it to the head) where they are joined in common sensation[12]. Again, if there is a motion that commences with the activity of common sensation that is carried to other parts of the body (to the memory, or to the muscles to execute the animal's purposeful locomotion in response to sensation), these motions would be *phantasia*-like if not *phantasia* proper — to be *phantasia* proper they have to (eventually) produce an awareness of something like the original appearance.

But even more important for the structuring of both sensing and imagining is that sensation is a kind of proportion between the contraries or extremes (*enantia*) in the substrate (*hupokeimenon*)[13]. A change in a perceived quality involves a change of some ratio of participation or mixing with respect to extremes in the substrate. Although in the first instance the Book II discussions in *On the Soul* of the external senses appear to identify a single set of contraries for each sense, it turns out that there are many for each[14]. When we add to these considerations (regarding each sense individually) the common sensibles (e.g., unity, place, and time) that appear in common sensation, and consider further that their becoming conjoined makes it possible for overall sensation to distinguish the various proper sensibles more distinctly[15], we begin to approximate more closely how an actual impression of sensation strikes us (a *phantasma*-appearance with *hupolēpsis*).

Even at the level of nonrational animals, this coimplication and codistinction of sensibles according to the more and less between various sensory contraries could produce highly articulated sensory images that lead to different purposeful behaviors corresponding to an animal's situation. With human beings' rationality, however, we would need to add all the sensibles that Aristotle calls *accidental* or *concomitant* (these are synonymous English renderings of *sumbebēkos*; see *On the Soul*, II.6 :

[10] See *Physics*, I.1 : 189a11-191a22.

[11] See *Physics*, VIII.7 : 260a26-261a26, and *On the Motion of Animals*, 5 : 700a27-700b3, and 7 : 701a2-32,

[12] See *On the Parts of Animals*, II.7 : 652b4-7 and 17-27, and II.10 : 656a14-656b7.

[13] See especially *On the Soul*, III.2 : 426a28-426b15. The *hupokeimenon* of a sensible difference need not be substance per se : for example, the *hupokeimenon* of color is in the first instance bodily *surface*.

[14] See *On the Soul*, II.11 : 422b17-33, and II.12 :, 424a25-33. Today, besides light and dark, we would identify many other contraries in (color) vision : for example, saturated-unsaturated, matte-glossy, blue-yellow, and red-green (most of which would, as with Aristotle, be understood to have some physiological basis).

[15] *On the Soul*, III.1 : 425b5-11.

418a21-24). When we glimpse a white-clad figure just coming around a corner and say "That's the son of Diares", we have sensed Diares himself *accidentally, concomitantly*. This seems to be the phenomenon in virtue of which we apply names and words to the typical look of a thing, and because of the naming and predication involved this would be impossible without reason. If it makes sense to say that there is imagination corresponding to proper and common sensation, it should also make sense, although with a more complex reckoning of its activity and motion, to say that there is accidental / concomitant imagination[16]. When I imagine or conceive Diares in a white tunic, I am engaging in concomitant imagining, which opens up to the manifold distinctions made possible through language.

If it is true that in Aristotle's conception of sensation as activity and motion it is important to locate any sense quality as a ratio between extremes in an appropriately distinguished substrate or field, then something similar would hold for the motion that is imagination. An image or phantasm is never a simple given; it is rather the product of a complex (re)determination, (re)production, and new positioning of the substrate's *phantasia*-motions that reevoke the appearance against a relevant background. A corollary would be this : if to have a phantasm is to activate a substrate in a proportion between extremes, there is no reason to think (with, say, Hobbes, Locke, and Hume) that one can imagine only those appearances one has experienced before, recalled exactly as one experienced them before. Once a field of imagining is activated, it should be able to move toward ratios one has never actually encountered previously. Imagination as a motion derived from sensation is in essence abstractive, whereas as reevocation it is newly concretive. With respect to a real thing, or a simulacrum of a real thing, one can reevoke as many sensory fields potentially involved and their variant possibilities as one wants or needs; thus a concretive, imaginative reevocation is necessarily also abstractive in comparison with the original, since one mentally removes it from its original situation.

An irrational animal can have nuanced behavior with respect to images because images and their features bear specific information by being situated between contraries in a sensory field. The same is true of a rational animal, but this kind of animal has the surplus of noting, marking, recombining, and newly positioning the possibilities in conscious and self-conscious ways, in view not merely of action with respect to a specific desire or behavior but with respect to background contexts of all types : the good and the bad in the forms of the pleasant and the painful or the desirable and the noxious; the good and the bad in the forms of the true and the false per se; and the true and the false in both the unqualified sense and in the myriad ways that the true and the false can appear (as I shall consider in the next paragraph) as qualified[17].

[16] This corresponds more or less to the medieval faculty called *vis cogitativa* in human beings (the corresponding noncogitative power in animals is called *vis aestimativa*), which Thomas Aquinas also called *ratio particularis*, particular reason.

[17] I am adverting here to the terms of Aristotle's discussion in *On the Soul*, III.7.

This reinforces a sense in which imagination is phenomenologically as well as physically a movement : an image-appearance is almost never an end in itself, it serves as a way-station. It is a way-station that depends on the typical, but also the contingent, workings of the sensitive and cognitive capacities and on characteristics and possibilities of things of the world that the human being has experienced. Most of those experiences are shared or shareable with others by virtue of the physical and physiological character of sensation and imagining, though some are dependent on the vagaries of individual experience and on what Castoriadis calls radical imagination.

I will conclude this speculative reflection on Aristotle's imagination with the merest of indications of what it means to extend this line of inquiry. In *On the Soul*, III.7 (431b2-3), Aristotle says that the thinking part of the soul « thinks the forms in the images ». He cites a few examples : at night, from the citadel of the city, we see a light (that is, by *proper*-sensing); as the light moves (recognized by *common*-sensing) we identify the appearance as enemy troops on the move (this is *concomitant*-sensing); and then (in a process he calls *deliberative* imagining in III.11), the military commander can make a rational plan for marshaling troops. Aristotle for similar reasons brings up the phenomenon of a snub nose. We can conceive it merely according to its curvature (abstraction or *aphairesis* proper) — this would happen in imagining it mathematically; alternatively, we can imagine / conceive it as flesh with concavity (as a plastic surgeon might). In *On Memory and Recollection*[18] Aristotle brings up the various ways in which we can take the same geometric figure with respect to other geometrical entities and to the figure's instantiation in different matter in different situations. Such passages, in combination with the many ways in which the various proper and common sensibles can be distinguished from one another (explained in *On the Soul* III.1 and 2) and the ways in which the indivisible can be taken in III.6 — not to mention the perplexing moment at the end of III.8 where Aristotle regards as a possibility that the ultimate intelligible things might themselves be phantasms[19] — give us more than enough to see how and why there is for Arisotle no thinking without phantasms and how far, as Castoriadis insists, that dictum extends: as far even as questioning basic *topoi* of Aristotelian ontology of knowing. Imagination is, in effect, what reason does to, about, and with respect to phantasms. There is no thinking without the mobility of *determinable, designatable, mobile, field-located appearances* — not even when thought thinks the ultimate intelligibles. And the intelligibility of forms in images is not absolute, since intelligibility is a reading of phantasms placed against highly variable and optionally selected backgrounds.

Castoriadis was doubtless wrong to think that a chasm separated Aristotle's first discovery of imagination from the second. Aristotle's thinking about mind and the

[18] *On Memory and Recollection* 1 : 450a1-14.

[19] *On the Soul*, III.8 : 432a4-13. In the same breath he discounts the possibility, but his response is a rhetorical *question* rather than an *explanation*, and he immediately reemphasizes that ultimate intelligibles cannot exist without phantasms.

motions of mind carved out *places* for signs and names that might have been used by subsequent thinkers to map the mobility of intellect with respect to phantasms. « No thinking without phantasms » was at least foreshadowed in what the first discovery laid down about imagination with respect to the genus *animalia*. Unfortunately, Aristotle himself said hardly anything about these places, much less explained how imagination and reason move in them. Is there a contemporary, and not just antiquarian, way in which we might begin to do this on his behalf, in accordance with the conceptual topology of imagining he laid down — and in a manner that could strengthen and extend Castoriadis's project?

III. Saussure : Language as the Fundamental Interface of Mobile Psychological Fields

Ferdinand de Saussure's putative masterwork, *Cours de linguistique générale*, (*Course in General Linguistics*) — henceforth *Cours* — was cut-and-pasted together and published in 1916 by colleagues and students from notes that had been taken in three different offerings of the course at the University of Geneva between 1907 and 1911. The 1996 discovery of manuscript notes in the Orangerie of the Saussure house in Geneva has produced a deepened conception, even a reconception of major themes in his general linguistics[20]. In particular, Patrice Maniglier has published a rereading that turns Saussure into a real philosopher of language and an ontologist of signs[21]. My aim here is much more limited : drawing on Maniglier, I will elaborate, with the Aristotelian framework we have sketched in mind, the *field positioning and mobility* of the sign and its character as a *complex image* situated in or against a variety of specific (back)grounds.

Signs and their structure are evidenced only in acts of speaking, *paroles*, but those acts of speaking are made possible by and conform to the socially-inculcated sign-system, *langue*, into which children are born and which they acquire from those around them[22]. Signs are a psychological phenomenon, but they are a phenomenon

[20] The Orangerie manuscripts constitute about a third of Saussure, 2002 [2006]. The rest of the volume is drawn mostly from Saussure's notes published in Engler's critical edition of the *Cours*, which prints, in six columns, the posthumously published pastiche alongside the contents of student notebooks plus assorted notes from Saussure himself; see Saussure, 1967.

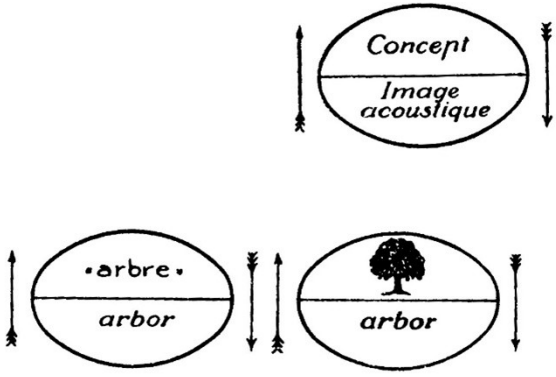
[21] Maniglier, 2006. Some scholars have even proposed that it might be time to abandon the pretense that the *Cours* represents the thinking of Ferdinand de Saussure; see, for instance, Stawarska, 2015.

[22] In any attempt to render the distinctions of *langage*, *langue*, and *parole* in English or any other language, it is important to keep in mind that they bear to one another Aristotle's distinction (explained in *On the Soul*, II.1) between potentiality, first actuality (*protē entelecheia*), and second actuality — a distinction Aristotle in fact introduced using the example of "being grammatical". (To my knowledge Saussure never pointed out this connection.) *Langage* typically is used of the basic linguistic capacity of human beings and of languages in general as realizations of that capacity; *langue* refers to the sum total of words and structures in a specific natural language that are instantiated in every possible particular act of speaking; and *parole* refers to all the specific acts of speaking governed by *langue*. An infant is capable of acquiring a *langue*, so therefore "has" *langage* (pure potentiality); once it has begun speaking and understanding, it to some degree possesses *langue* (first actuality); when it is actually speaking and listening, here and now,

of social psychology before appearing in individual psychology[23]. They are thus intersubjective. The sounds that are produced in speech can be studied by the methods of the physicist, but physics as such knows only sounds as vibrations of a medium, not phonemes. The linguistic scientist knows phonemes expressly, but only by virtue of being, like all others in a language community, a speaker who uses phonemes.

The sign is a fusion of concept and acoustic image. Saussure's typical figuration of it (Fig. 1, from Saussure, 1922 : 99) uses an oval bisected by a horizontal line, with the conceptual aspect indicated above, the acoustic image below. The up and down arrows indicate that, analogously with Kant's schematism, one can go as easily from signification to signifier / image as vice versa. Several possible misconceptions need to be set aside immediately. By "concept" Saussure does not necessarily mean some high-level intellectual abstraction; it can be virtually any contents of consciousness[24]. This is why Saussure can unembarrassedly fill the upper part of the oval now with the word "concept", now with "signified" or "signification", now with a word in quotation marks (for example "arbre", standing for the signified of a specific sign that is fused with the sound of the Latin word "arbor"), now a silhouette or picture of a tree.

Figure 1



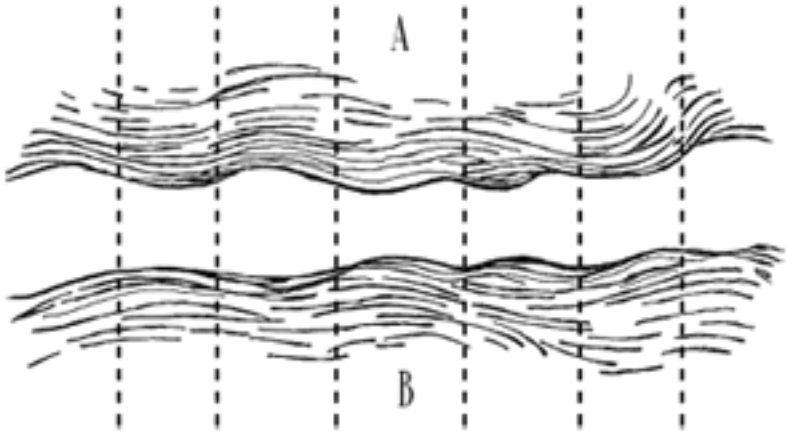
it is engaged in *parole* (second actuality). *Langue* is a first actuality that is social in nature but embodied in each individual psyche, where it generates second-actual language (in the sense of actively speaking and listening) at work.

[23] At the very outset of the *Cours* Saussure presented language as the *prototypical* system of signs and designated the science of signs and their use *semiology*. Semiology is a branch of *social psychology*, and social psychology of *general psychology*. See Saussure, 1922 : 33. This is the second edition (with slight emendations of the original 1916 text, also published by Payot), which has become the standard for French citation. For a widely available English version, see Eng. trans. Harris, 1986 : 15. Harris's translation includes marginal references to the French pagination.

[24] See Saussure 1922 : 28, where "concept" is introduced for "facts of consciousness".

What is the ontology of the sign and its formation? Saussure explains using a figure (Fig. 2, from *ibid.* : 156*)* that the *Cours* presents at the outset of the crucial chapter "Linguistic Value". A mass of squiggles and dashed lines presents a stormy sea (designated B) beneath clouds driven by wind (designated A). Waves are formed on the ocean surface by wind (due primarily to atmospheric air pressure changes). In the first instance there are two systems present, two fields, that of the air and that of the water. When the two interact — when the wind moves over the waters — we get waves, a form or structure that belongs to neither the one nor the other but to the field or plane of their interface. In an analogous way the mind / spirit moves through the sea of sound and the sea of presentative ideas, and at the interface is formed all the structural complexities of the language system, the fused signifieds / signifiers produced not just singly but *en masse*[25].

Figure 2



This is a moment of near-poetry in the *Cours*[26]. It is a symbol of the total relationship between « the plane of vague, amorphous thought » and « the equally featureless plane of sound » (*ibid*.). The first point to make, then, is that before their encounter there is vague, amorphous psychic content and sound, but neither is fully or distinctly articulated; one cannot identify distinct ideas or definite, phonemic sounds in advance. Their form, or rather their formation, comes precisely in the encounter of the realms of ideation and of sound. The second point is more subtle and corrects an imprecision in the first point. It looks initially as though Figure 2 represents an

[25] « What happens is neither a transformation of thoughts into matter, nor a transformation of sounds into ideas. What takes place is a somewhat mysterious process by which "thought-sound" evolves divisions, and a language takes shape with its linguistic units in between those two amorphous masses » (*ibid*., : 156).

[26] It is all the more evocative in that it alludes to the first *Genesis* account of creation.

interaction of the psyche with the physical realm of acoustics. But on this issue Saussure is resolute : both mediums, that of sound and that of meaning, are psychological, they are both image-appearances, already in mind. The sound that the analogy is concerned with is what can be apprehended by the socially formatted hearing of members of a language community. The sea represents all sounds in general, which are thus "mere" facts of audial consciousness; the air in turn stands for all the facts of (blooming and buzzing) presentative consciousness other than the aforementioned sounds. Both meaning-presentation and sound-hearing take place in fields in process of articulation; out of the encounter of the fields arises an interface-field that is neither concept nor sound but their dually articulated fusion. This fusion is the uniquely social-psychological dynamic of language, which is the most typically human form of *incipient imaginative appearance*[27].

What starts out as two different, amorphous fields issues in a fused interface, the articulated field of signs. And this process of articulation is not once and for all entirely complete, because every time the linguistically competent person speaks, that person engages anew in the process of sound-and-meaning differentiations. Fixity in this process is only ever a relative matter; no two speakers pronounce all their phonemes in exactly the same way, each individual pronounces each phoneme differently according to circumstances, and meaning always varies according to education, intention and context. That is characteristic of semiology, wherein nothing is fully positive and preestablished once and for all[28].

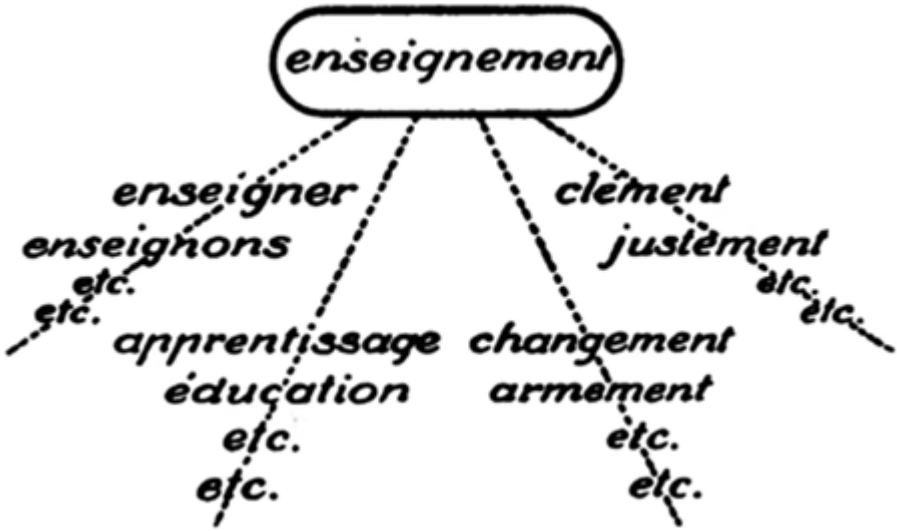
Every time "walk" is heard (by listeners) or intended (by speakers) there is a potentiation of conjugations and declensions, synonyms and antonyms, suffixes (-ing, -ed, -er, -like), verb-compounding auxiliaries and particles (as in "shall walk", "would walk", "walk up to", "walk down", "walk along", etc.), assonances, rhymes, and so on and so forth. This is all part of a network of signifier modulations that allow for a finely nuanced thinking and speaking about things because they are simultaneously signified modulations. The potentiated dynamism of language is not, of course, exhausted at the level of the individual sign and its grammar, not least because, as Saussure insistently affirms, signs as such exist only in networked combination. In the section "Linguistic Values" he produces a figure in which all the ovals with their dual-arrow potentiation are placed in series, with a double-arrow between adjoining signs (*ibid.* : 159*).* Our understanding of this representation of phrases and sentences has to be amplified further by a figure he introduces in the succeeding chapters to represent virtual relationships. He places a word of interest in a circle or a box and

[27] To return to Kant, this may be a moment of insight into the « blind but indispensable function of the soul without which we should have no knowledge whatever but of which we are scarcely even conscious » : imagination in its transcendental function.

[28] Castoriadis's distinction between the radical imaginary and the social imaginary is, in the last analysis, perhaps too positivistic about socially constituted images. It is precisely their inevitable fluidity, even as social institutions, that allows for the freedom of each individual to recognize and utter meaning-with-differentiation in the moment.

then extends dotted lines leading away from the word, with other words arrayed along those lines as variants on the circled word according to possible signifying or signified features (Fig. 3, from *ibid.* : 175*).*

Figure 3



Each word along the dotted lines is not placed according to an absolute necessity of appearing precisely there. These are potentialities rather than actualities; they are proper to the language (*langue*), but they are specifically instantiated in different ways in the social-psychologized mind of each speaker. None of the potentialities pictured in the array is assumed to be fully conscious or even at the threshold of consciousness, and their "closeness" would vary not just from person to person but also according to circumstance. Each word can thus be activated against indefinitely many such backgrounds taken to be relevant at the moment, for whatever reason. In the process of speaking, the person is constantly, almost continuously engaged in settling on terms by discrimination along such "lines"; the process sometimes breaks through to consciousness (e.g., when we are about to speak a word but pause because we know that we know a word that would be better) but is typically at a preconscious or even unconscious level. This, I believe, is the characteristic Saussurean inflection of radical imagination.

Each word-sign thus is a sound-meaning fusion subject to innumerable variations and combinations according to directions or vectors of differentiation (analogous to Aristotle's manifold differentiation of phantasms by way of changing backgrounds and concerns). Once "conjugating" or "synonymizing" or "rhyming" or "noun-forming" or "adverb forming" or "alliterating" is an activated interest, the

relevant network / field of potentiation will be at work in the social-psychologized mind. These are associations, but unlike seventeenth- and eighteenth-century empiricist associations they are not *just and simply* contingent and uniquely individual experience. They are developments of generations of the accumulated diachronic, differentiated experience of a historical community of speakers.

IV. Castoriadis after Aristotle and Saussure : Imagining's Politics of Words

That language is conventional and the first political / social institution is a thesis nearly as old as formal inquiry into language. Aristotle is one of the earliest sources for this claim : for the primacy of convention, in the first chapter of *On Interpretation*; and, for language's priority in the political, in book one of the *Politics*[29]. In the former, he says that although the things of the world and the affections (*pathēmata* — notice there is no reference to *phantasia* or *phantasmata*) that they produce in the human soul are the same for all, the sound signs that indicate them, as well as the written marks that indicate the sound signs, are different. In the latter, he says that voice (which *On the Soul* says is sound produced by organs touched with imaginings [*phantasiai*]) allows animals to communicate feelings of pain and pleasure to each other, whereas human beings « alone have sensation [*aisthēsin*] of good and evil, just and unjust, and so forth » — sensation of proportionable contraries in various substrates. *Logos* accordingly enables them to indicate the useful / harmful and the just / unjust, and it is the association of human beings who possess this common sensibility that makes a *polis*. Affections of the soul, signs, symbols, likenesses, *phantasiai* joined with vocalizations, a common sensibility for contraries that constitute a field of possible experience for the community : these are the elements of Aristotle's conception of the relationship between imagination, reason, and speech. As I have argued in the second section of this essay, the background that Aristotle indicates in *On the Soul*, concerning the principles that govern the relationship between things and their likenesses in the soul, directs us to the appearances and motions that, in the soul, originate in sensation and move deeper into the body and the body's activity[30]; the qualitative changes accompanied by physical movement he understands to be *phantasiai* or *phantasmata*. Furthermore, the physics of *kinēsis* and qualitative change requires conceiving the forms of sensation (whether sensed or imagined) as complexly structured by the contrarieties of the various sensibles, of the qualities originally perceived by sense. When Aristotle remarks that the noetic capability thinks the forms in the phantasms (*On the Soul*, III.7 : 431b2), we must avoid taking his words too casually. That is, we must not ignore the manifold underlying and nameable structures of sensible forms (these are *logoi*-structures) and the network of (possible) motions and positions between contraries that they imply and that reason

[29] *On Interpretation* 1 : 16a3-9, and *Politics* I.2 : 1253a7-18.

[30] Recall that what soul is for Aristotle is precisely the first actuality / activity of the body; see *On the Soul*, II.1 : 412a20-2 in particular.

is capable of noting and marking. Quite apart from any historical, hermeneutic work this entails for us more than two millennia after Aristotle, any genuinely Aristotelian interpretation needs to fill in the texture and detail that Aristotle himself omitted but nevertheless suggested and that is required for understanding these psychological phenomena.

If the ground of Aristotle's understanding is the natural psychology of each human being, shared by members of the species, for Saussure it is social psychology, which is hardly more than implicit in Aristotle. Moreover, the relationship between sound and soul *pathēmata* follows upon the likeness relationship of *pathēmata* to real-world things in Aristotle, whereas the natural affecting of the soul by things appears at first glance to be missing from Saussure. But we must not forget the wind over the water, the incipient structuring of the sense- and thought-affected mind that is in process of apprehending distinctly what would otherwise be a blooming, buzzing confusion and speaking accordingly. This is the Saussurean complication of *On Interpretation*'s process whereby thing in the world causes an affection in the soul (the same for everyone), and the latter leads to a sound and then the sound to a written sign that is different for different peoples with different languages. In Aristotle there is, however, a surrogate for Saussure's social psychology : education in the *polis*. Saussure in his turn can argue that the politics of language is more complicated than Aristotle presents. The dynamic process between the flux of sounds and the flux of meanings (as in Fig. 2) that fixes, at least for the present moment, the formation and fusion of signifiers with psychic content is a dynamic analogue to Aristotle's connection of affections of the soul (*pathēmata*) with word-sounds that designate them. This dynamism implies that the social imaginary (as we may now call it) is not a rigid automatism but is a process always at work in seeing, speaking, hearing, and designating. The exact character, import, and signification of what presents itself in first-approximation to the mind undergoes the shaping process of the social imaginary – applied by the potentially radical imagination of each person – so that the commonality of the total soul-appearance can be more or less the same, thus understandable, for all speakers of the same language community.

I have already suggested in this essay that joining the horizons of a psychologically-embedded conception of language in Aristotle with the social psychology of Saussure's linguistics might allow for understanding language specifically as a constitution of and opening to a manifoldly differentiable world. Whether these readings of Aristotle and Saussure in light of one another will satisfy Aristotle or Saussure scholars is hardly the point. That they provide us with conceptual resources and fruitful directions for our own thinking is what counts, especially in light of a Castoriadian concern for better understanding how the radical imagination works.

If Castoriadis had read the first discovery of imagination, in *On the Soul*, II.3, expressly against the background of Aristotle's physics of motion, he might easily have recognized that the gap between the two discoveries could be easily reduced.

The flexibility of imagination as a motion in domains (*hupokeimena*) with contrastive / contrary features (*enantia*) might easily have appeared to him as at odds with the subsequent Western conventional reading of the power as a slavish reproduction of an already experienced sensation. That in turn could have countered the traditional assumption that intellect simply reads in each image an invariant essence somehow imperfectly borne in it. If anything, it was the subsequent, increasingly rationalizing reading of Aristotle in later, Platonizing antiquity and in the Islamic and Latin Middle Ages, and the imposition on him of an inauthentic theory of abstraction, that led to this result.

Showing all that would require a very long book, of course.[31] But we have already indicated the presence of clues in *On the Soul*. Aristotle never says, neither in that work nor elsewhere, that all thinking is based on the abstraction of essences from phantasms. Such a notion platonizes Aristotle nicely but does nothing to express the burden of the key sentence in book 3, chapter 7 of *On the Soul* (431b2-3) : « for the thinking power knows the forms that are in the phantasms »[32]. An essence is a kind of form, to be sure, but form is myriad, and that is precisely what the "second discovery" of imagination explores. The light in the distance at night does not lead to grasping the essence of light or fire, but rather as many forms of being as are relevant to the context and the question being posed (it is a torch; it is a person walking in the night; it is a scout leading an invading army; it is Odysseus returning home; etc., etc., etc.). To think just in terms of the invariable essence of fire is to be ideologically blinded rather than genuinely enlightened.

Castoriadis cites as the culminating expression of the rationalist attitude the formula that « to be means to be determined » (Castoriadis, 1987 : 176). If that formula were rigidly true, then there could be no such things as change, individuation, innovation, freedom, or revolution. "To be is to be determinable", on the other hand, is compatible with the Aristotle who understood nature as what changes, what has potential, what has actuality incorporating the readiness for change.

Castoriadis's discussion of signification in language, in the last chapter of *IIS*, shows that he understands being as many-layered and signification as being intricately networked within and between layers of being. Without having any explicit concern for the ontology of nature and epistemologically-oriented psychology, Saussure arrived more than sixty years earlier at a conception of the dynamics of multiply differentiated fields in the networking of sign formation, a dynamics that did not just produce the fused signifier / signifieds of semiology but also the constant signitive in-formation of attentive consciousness.

Castoriadis was highly critical of structuralism, but when he cites Saussure he is inclined to acquit him of the later abuses introduced in his name (as at *ibid.* : 216). Castoriadis's writings in effect began to bridge any apparent gap between Saussure

[31] See Sepper, 2013.

[32] τὰ μὲν οὖν εἴδη τὸ νοητικὸν ἐν τοῖς φαντάσμασι νοεῖ.

and himself. The radical imagination to which each human being has access is the anthropological basis for understanding the "reality" of possibility and creativity that the metaphysical slogan "to be is to be determined" denies. To think the ontology of this possibility and creativity, it is useful to look through the lens of the dynamic indeterminacy of Saussurean meaning by differentiation. One of the fundamental errors of the structuralist adaptations of Saussure was to dichotomize *langue* and *parole*. At the previously cited *IIS* 216, Castoriadis recognizes this specifically as an important betrayal of Saussure's legitimate insights. The two (*langue* and *parole* — if it even makes sense to count to two in such matters!) subsist in a constant dialectic that is rehearsed in every speaker's mind at every moment of listening and speaking. A very simple corollary is that, at every such moment, the language-possessor is engaged in the differentiating meaning-seeking of linguistic competency. At every such moment, unanticipated and possibly creative openings upon the world are potentiated, not least by way of the networking that is anticipated in our Figure 3 (which has multiple, networked "roots" descending indefinitely far from the apex term of interest). Once a speaker offers to auditors a repositioning in the networks, they most often will reject the innovation as a failure or at best an attempted *bon mot*; but occasionally it will strike them as right, and thus the radical imagination will have begun to send out rhizomes of a new symbolic relationship in the social world. The network of roots never has the reality character — the positivity — of a drop of water or a molecule of H_2O, but it will have effective, labile determining force in the social imaginary of the community.

In this essay we have followed a Castoriadian path from Kant, very briefly Freud, to Aristotle and then to Saussure. What are the consequences? There are many, but here at the end I want to describe just one, an essentially social and political one.

In the first instance this consequence is one for an audience of philosophers, or at least para-philosophers. There is something positive to be gained from an explicit understanding of language as the imaginative and creative first actuality of a locally, and densely, embodied world. Those who believe that language can be understood in the first instance, or even the second or third, as bringing us into contact, direct and face to face, with ideal or real being are trapped by an illusion of easy universality. Those who believe they are living rationally or universally by virtue of logic and a scientific worldview are as much romantics as those who surrender to one or another provincialism that seems to soothe deep needs of the soul but often turns out to be philosophical *and* historical barbarism.

It is not a very deep truth to claim that, in the long run, you will not *achieve* anything more than you *say*, but it is a basic truth, and one that we ignore at civilizational peril. If you take education to be the transfer of information and skills, it will soon become little more than that. Instead of making language everywhere-denser in the field of experience, that take actually makes it more attenuated, isolated, and abstracted. Language will still, in its essence, be imaginative, but imagination can

be made sketchy and poor and merely provincial — perhaps better at uttering curses than casting light onto the world. If you describe and bespeak your environment in impoverished ways, the best that you can hope for is a correspondingly impoverished image of it. It takes an appropriately responsive and articulated culture to make imagination and linguistic imagination rich. The task of education should be to bring to first actuality for the public essential and already developed fields and field possibilities of human experience. And in order to have a first actuality, there has to first be a second actuality, an actual uttering of an illuminating and articulate word in the world. This is a basic lesson in Aristotle, and in Castoriadis, too.

Given the state of the political world and the contraction of higher education to forms of the technical and the financial-commercial, or even the governmental-ideological, it may seem too little, too late to talk of a pedagogical mission that is implicit in the radical imagination of language. But if we commence, at an elemental level in the everyday world, to speak more freely, carefully, and responsively about things of all kinds with those we encounter — especially the young — and if we cultivate in schools and other institutions an appreciation (and one might hope, eventually, a love) of wit and creativity, of poetry and lucid prose, and of the artist's capacity for modeling material realities and relations, past and present, then we might gradually become more accustomed to describing our world in ampler and more productive ways and thus, through the ordinary magic of language, evoke ever more possibilities by what we utter. And that would be a revolution of the *demos* very much worth having.

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