THE DYNAMIC CONCEPTION OF THE SOCIAL IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF CORNELIUS CASTORIADIS[1]

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Translator's preface

This translation aims to present English-speaking readers with the Belarussian philosopher Vladimir Fours' reception of the ideas of the twentieth-century French political philosopher Cornelius Castoriadis. As the original text was designed for the Russian-speaking public, which, until its initial publication in 2005, had only a general idea of Castoriadis's philosophy, it was primarily intended as a systematization of Castoriadis's dynamic conception of the social and included only a limited critical analysis of this conception. To strengthen the critical component and to make more explicit V. Fours' position in regard to Castoriadis's conception of the social as well as its effectiveness in the Belarusian social-political context, we decided to complement the translation with fragments of two other articles by V. Fours — "The Belarussian Project of Modernity?" and "Socio-critical Philosophy after the *Death of the Subject*", which help to clarify the weak moments (from V. Fours' point of view) of the dynamic conception of the social by C. Castoriadis. The first fragment (see Appendix 1) shows the vulnerability of the "ontology of magma" in the context of the notion of "multiple modernities"[2]. The second (see Appendix 2) emphasizes two

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1   The text was originally published here: Фурс, В. (2005). *Динамическая концеп-ция социального в философии К. Касториадиса. Докса. Збірник наукових праць з філософії та філології. Вип. 8. Грецька традиція в сучасній культурі.* Одеса: ОНУ ім. І. І. Мечникова, 227–238. (Fours, V. (2005). Dinamicheskaya kontseptsiya sotsial'nogo v filosofii C. Castoriadis. *Doksa. Zbìrnik naukovih prac' z filosofìï ta filologìï. Vìp. 8. Grec'ka tradicìâ v sučasnìj kul'turì.* Odesa: ONU im. I. I. Mechnikova, 227–238).

2   See the full text here: Фурс, В. (2007) Белорусский проект "современности"?

weak points in Castoriadis's conception: the metaphoric ontology of "magma" as the foundation of the social-historical world and the dualism of Castoriadis's "philosophy of autonomy"[3].

Veranika Furs (translator)

Abstract. The article presents a reconstruction of the dynamic conception of the social in the philosophy of Cornelius Castoriadis. A meticulous study of the philosopher's most important works reveals, on the basis of various ideas about society and politics, the original version of his integral conception of the social. The reconstruction of this conception required a four-step study: (1) an analysis of his critique of "naïve realism" in the perception of social life; (2) an analysis of the method of revealing a symbolic component of social "things" in the interpretation of social institutions as functional-symbolic networks; (3) a study of the thematization of the virtual dimension of social life (Castoriadis's construction of the metaphoric ontology of the "magma" of social imaginary significations, his perception of society as a dynamic ("social-historic") formation, an elucidation of the duality of establishing and established); (4) an analysis of the way of a justification of a political project of autonomy. Our reconstruction demonstrates that the idea of autonomy is not a consequence but a cause of Castoriadis's dynamic conception of the social. Nevertheless, in the context of the notion of "multiple modernities", the idea of autonomy, being a key characteristic of "modernity", can be understood not as universal content but as a universal form. The regulatory horizon of "politics" (of the project of autonomy) is determined from the reverse — depending on what is identified as heteronomy in a given set of concrete circumstances. The interpretation we propose will allow us to proceed more consistently from the principle of the diversity of "modernities". It seems, also, that Castoriadis's position itself is characterized by two "defects": first, his conception of the social-historical world is based on the metaphoric ontology of the "magma", and, second, the "philosophy of autonomy" is dualistic.

Key words: Castoriadis, psychoanalysis, post-Marxism, social institutions, social imaginary significations, "magma", duality of establishing and established, political project of autonomy.

Европейская перспектива Беларуси: Интеллектуальные модели. Вильнюс, 43–58. (Fours, V. (2007) Belorusskii proekt "sovremennosti"? *Evropeiskaya perspektiva Belarusi: Intellektualnye modeli.* Vilnius, 43–58).

3   See the full text here: Фурс, В. (2008) Социально-критическая философия после "смерти субъекта". В: Борисов, Е., Инишев, И. и Фурс, В. *Практический поворот в постметафизической философии.* Вильнюс: ЕГУ, 173–174. (Fours, V. (2008) Socialno-kriticheskaya filosofia posle "smerti sub'ekta". In: Borisov, E., Inishev, I. & Fours, V. *Prakticheskii povorot v postmetafisicheskoi filosofii.* Vilnius: EHU, 145–208).

The denaturalization of the concept of "society" is an important trend in the development of contemporary social thinking and a response to the realities of a "rapidly changing world". This trend implies a dissociation not only from the functionalist mainstream in sociological theory, but also from the alternative "subjectivist" tradition of "interpretative sociology", and it guides the conceptualization of a dynamic environment that generates different forms of social life (Фурс, 2004). It is important, when defining the outlines of a "dynamic conception of the social", to go beyond a generalizing reflection on reorganizations in sociological knowledge and also to make use of recent developments in contemporary social and political philosophy. In this sense it is interesting to address the original conception developed by Cornelius Castoriadis, a prominent representative of Western (post-)Marxism.

Despite a high degree of interest in his legacy, Castoriadis is a rather "detached" thinker, and this makes it difficult to define the internal motivation and the organizing principle[4] of his conception. Axel Honneth, for example, sees the basic pathos of Castoriadis's work as "rescuing the revolution with an ontology" (Honneth, 1990). However, if it were merely a matter of defending the project of social revolution, this would hardly have ensured that Castoriadis's ideas remained relevant. In our view, his belief that any true work of philosophy must belong to the project of autonomy can be considered as a determinant. To put it more concisely, Castoriadis can be defined as *a philosopher of autonomy*: "I believe it impossible to understand what philosophy truly is, without taking into account its central place in the birth and deployment of the social-historical project of (individual and social) autonomy" (Castoriadis, 1991a, p. 20).

It was no accident that philosophy and democracy emerged in the same place and at the same time — they have something essential in common. The rejection of heteronomy is inherent to both philosophy and democracy: the denial of an external origin of truth and justice and the questioning of current institutions — whether in knowledge or in collective activity. When this internal connection with the project of autonomy is broken, philosophy degenerates into a detached, scholarly activity, into "schools", and philosophers seek to construct a unified ontology, epistemology, etc.

Castoriadis's own theoretical optics were adjusted in his critical references to certain "classic" concepts — primarily to those of Marx, Parsons, Freud and Levi-Strauss. The leitmotif of all these references, both where Castoriadis borrows and where he departs from his sources, can be defined as his intention to look beyond the illusory evidence of the "real-rational" in understanding history, society and the individual.

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4   In the original text — "организующий стержень (the organizing pivot)" — translator's notes (Veranika Furs).

As for Marx, two of his scientific advances retain their significance for Castoriadis. First, regarding social life, Marx proposed a continuously holistic position, breaking with both substantive and methodological individualism in the social sciences. Marx taught us to regard society as an entity in development. Second, his conception presents the internal connection between the cognition of society and the political project.

Castoriadis emphasizes that the value of this connection consists not in the construction of the next utopia, in defining social justice once and for all, but in discovering, within the social movements of a society that actually exists, something that will allow that society to change for for the sake of a different future.

However, an internal as well as an external history of Marxism has demonstrated its fundamental internal ambiguity. On the one hand, there is the concept of praxis, which changes society. This concept, which is only vaguely outlined, leads us in one direction, prompting us to understand history as a creative process without end. On the other hand, there is a determinist conception of material production, which leads us to believe in the "objective logic" of the historical process. Under the influence of the positivism and the scientific-technical optimism of that epoch, on the whole, in Marx's position, an objectivist approach to the understanding of history prevails.

Not only has this fact considerably reduced the creative potential of Marxist theory, it has also opened an opportunity of its application as an ideology of bureaucracy. Thus, the political history that culminated in Stalinism was only a practical embodiment of the "determinist" tendency originally embedded in the theory. That is why, for practical and political purposes, as well as theoretical ones, it is necessary to eliminate the component of Marx's conception that postulates an "objective logic" to social and historical development.

The fact that Castoriadis turned to Parsons' sociological theory became an important step in transcending the material production model. Making it an object of strong criticism, Castoriadis nevertheless, adopts the concept of the social institution, turning it into a basic element of his own social and historical theory. In Marxism the notion of the "institution" was not adequately conceptualized, as institutions in the strict sense belonged to the "superstructure", which was determined by the "base". This understanding of the institution postulated the material existence of a certain social substance, a substance that becomes recognizable in institutions. It is this objective determinism that Castoriadis attempts to overcome, thus accepting that any "truly social attitude" has been already institutionalized. Accordingly, it is necessary to conceptualize social life as a multitude of institutions of different kinds, including society itself as an all-encompassing institution.

In fact, the question is how to understand the nature of social institutions. The "functional-economic" point of view supposes that

the existence of any institution as well as its specifications can be explained by that institution's function in society in a given set of social circumstances and by its role in the all-encompassing economy of social life.

Whether we consider institutions as the products of conscious establishing, of accidental occurrences, or of the "logic of the historical process", in all of these cases the emphasis is on functionality, on a strict correspondence between the features inherent to the institutions and the "real" needs of the society under consideration.

Castoriadis, in his turn, perceives a need to expand this understanding of social institutions beyond the theoretical framework of functionalism, because any attempt to explain the emergence and continued existence of social institutions through their functional contribution to the maintenance of the social order ignores the fact that what constitutes this order is itself established by social interpretations.

The scale of the social process is provided by the world's interpretations and images, which give sense and order to the interconnection of social life. That is why social institutions must be regarded not so much as functional instances of the maintenance of a given status quo, but as a kind of realization of sketches created in the past. Castoriadis does not deny that institutions execute vitally important functions that are indispensable for society's continued existence, but he strongly rejects both the notion of reducing institutions to this fact alone and the possibility of fully comprehending institutions on the basis of their functionality.

Considering Freud's conception and criticizing it for a prevailing spirit of positivism, Castoriadis elaborates his own interpretation, a radically politicized one, of psychoanalysis as an integral part of the "great project of autonomy".

Castoriadis sees the main goal of psychoanalysis as the establishment of an "other relation" between psychic agencies: repression must be replaced by the recognition of and reflection on the contents of the unconscious. This replacement leads not to the elimination of psychic conflict, but to the formation of a subjectivity that is capable of self-reflection and consideration. Because subjectivity in its essence is not a state that can be achieved once and for all, but an ongoing process, and because the goal of psychoanalysis consists of the individual's transformation, it is vital that the individual in question be actively involved in the process of his own transformation.

> "Thus, psychoanalysis is not a technique, nor is it correct even to speak of psychoanalytic technique. Psychoanalysis is rather a practical/poetical activity where both participants are agents and where the patient is the main agent of the development of his own self-activity. I call it poetical because it is creative: its outcome is, or ought to be, the self-alteration of the analysand — that is, strictly speaking, the appearance of another being. I call it practical, because I call praxis that lucid activity whose

object is human autonomy, an activity that can be reached only by means of this same autonomy" (Castoriadis, 1997a, p. 129).

Psychoanalysis, seeking to help the individual to become autonomous, encounters the existing institutions of society: the patient's "ego" is to a considerable extent a social product and is usually organized as an element of the reproduction of a current social order. That is why psychoanalysis proposes a supplement in the form of the analysis of institutions. This analysis, as it goes beyond the framework of the "functional-economic point of view", immediately leads to the notion of the symbolic.

Everything that is presented to us in the social world, as Castoriadis remarks, has a complex connection with — although it is irreducibile to — the symbolic. Real actions, whether individual or collective — work, consumption, war, love, children's education, material products — are not symbols. But they are impossible outside the symbolic network. We deal with the symbolic, first of all in language, but also in all social institutions. The symbolic is a mode of existence, in which the institution of society is given to us. Any given economic organization, legal system, established power system, or religion — all these exist in society as authorized symbolic systems.

Castoriadis's development of the link between the "social institution" and the "symbolic", supposedly based on Levi-Strauss's conception, also included a radical departure from structuralism. First of all, Castoriadis did not accept the notion that semiotic systems should be considered separately, without any connection to the extra-semiotic state of affairs. He thought that social institutions could not be understood as self-sufficient symbolic networks, because symbolic networks, according to the definition of a symbol, refer to something other than the symbols themselves. That is why, in order to fully grasp the nature of social institutions, it is important to consider the correlation of symbols with representations, orders, motivations, commands to do or not to do something, the results of actions, etc. Second, it is illegitimate to consider value only as an effect of the difference between signs. Society exists only in and through symbolic systems, but it is also a history that forms and transforms them. That is why it is impossible to ignore a question of paramount importance concerning the historical production of meaning and of the emergence of new symbolic systems.

Thus social functionality acquires its meaning from outside; symbolism inevitably refers to something that is not symbolic. This element — which gives a specific orientation to every symbolic system and which is itself the creation of each historical period and its singular manner of living, of seeing, and of conducting its own existence, of having its own world, and constructing its relationship with that world — this originary structuring component is, according to Castoriadis, nothing less than the imaginary of society in a given historical period (Castoriadis, 1987 [1975], p. 145).

Taking into account the influence of Lacanian psychoanalysis and seeking to indicate his own understanding of the imaginary, Castoriadis emphasizes that one of the main drawbacks of Lacan's conception is its fixity on the model of vision, on the "scopic". The imaginary originates neither from the image in the mirror nor from the gaze of the Other. The imaginary is created from nothing and can be likened to the imaginary of a composer: "...we speak of the "imaginary" when we want to talk about something "invented"..." (Castoriadis, 1987 [1975], p. 127). The imaginary is not an image of something. It is the unceasing and essentially undetermined (social-historical and psychic) creation of figures/forms/images, on whose basis alone there could ever be a question of "something". The social imaginary is not the creation of images in society, but the creation of the entire world of a given society.

The imaginary and the symbolic, according to Castoriadis, pre-suppose each other: the imaginary reveals the nature of social-symbolic systems, while the symbolic provides the imaginary with the flesh of social existence. This interconnection is fixed in the basic notion of Castoriadis's social-historical conception, that of "social imaginary significations". These significations do not represent something that "really exists"; instead, they are the final articulations, the organizing patterns, and the preconditions for existing in society. The imaginary significations construct the world of the society under consideration, resting — in a new way each time — on the internal organization of a primordial natural stratum. Moreover, Castoriadis defines the term "social imaginary significations" not only in the "noematic" way: they simultaneously determine the representations, the affects, and the intentions that prevail in society (Castoriadis, 1991b, p. 42–43).

Social imaginary significations can be captured only indirectly: as a gap, clearly tangible and distinctly indeterminable, between a society's true being and its existence, when that existence is regarded in a "real-rational" way. Social imaginary significations are an "invisible cement", holding together the endless collection of the "odds" that form any society, or the "curvature" specific to every social space (Castoriadis, 1987 [1975], p. 143). For the ontological characteristics of imaginary significations, Castoriadis uses the metaphor of the "magma" — a creative, pulsating mass of energy, generating everything that exists in society.

Nevertheless, the symbolic contains not only the imaginary significations but also a "real-rational" component. Correspondingly, Castoriadis regards institutions as a socially authorized symbolic network, one in which the functional and the imaginary components are mixed in various modes and proportions.

The expansion of the notion of the institution beyond a functionalist interpretation leads Castoriadis to his conception of the "social-historical dimension".

"The social-historical is the anonymous collective whole, the impersonal-human element that fills every given social formation but which also engulfs it, setting each society in the midst of others, inscribing them all within a continuity in which those who are no longer, those who are elsewhere and even those yet to be born are in a certain sense present. It is, on the one hand, given structures, "materialized" institutions and works, whether these be material or not; and, on the other hand, that which structures, institutes, materializes. In short, it is the union and the tension of instituting society and of instituted society, of history made and of history in the making" (Castoriadis, 1987 [1975], p. 108).

The relationship between society and history cannot be understood from the outside: societies are not "located" in history; instead, history is the self-deployment of society (Castoriadis, 1991b, p. 33–34). The forms of social life are not determined by historical (and even less by natural or divine) "laws". What creates society and history is the "magma" of social imaginary significations: "The instituting society is the social imaginary in the radical sense" (Castoriadis, 1991c, p. 84).

The social-historical transcends any "intersubjectivity" and is irreducible to it. The self-establishment of any society is the creation of its whole world: "things", "reality", language, norms, values, ways of living and dying, goals for which we live and die, and, of course, the human individual in which society is imprinted as an institution in its totality.

However, although Castoriadis sometimes states that the only "reality" is social reality (Castoriadis, 1997b, p. 191), he generally adheres to a position of moderate sociocentrism: although society creates its own world, the pre-social world always remains its boundary.

Society's construction of its own world is, in essence, the creation of its social imaginary significations, which organize the natural world and establish the ways in which socialized individuals are to be fabricated (Castoriadis, 1991b, p. 41).

Thus all human groups have the capacity to give birth (with no perceptible motivation, though conditioned by their concrete circumstances) to the forms, figures, and schemas that not only organize things but also create worlds. This capacity itself is revealed in the social-historical dimension. We find a parallel to this creative dimension in the human individual, whose "radical imagination" is the analogue of the social imaginary.

According to Castoriadis, even nonhuman beings have a corporeal imagination that transforms the external shocks they receive from the outside world into "something". What is passive here is the shock, but not the impression: not only in perception, but also in sensation, there are activity and intentionality; the body *creates* its sensations. In nonhuman living beings, however, this corporeal imagination is both enslaved to functionality and is given "once and for all". In human beings,

it is defunctionalized and goes hand in hand with the new dimension of radical imagination (Castoriadis, 1997b, p. 178–179).

Castoriadis proceeds from the assumption of an initial unconscious state of the subject (monad), which is characterized by the experience of undifferentiated unity with the world. This monadic state, in which libidinal intentions are subjected to the pleasure principle, is unwillingly violated when a child becomes capable, through the process of socialization, of perceiving independent objects. The subject reacts to the loss of his world during the process of socialization, continuously struggling to reproduce that initial monadic state in his imagination and yet incapable of achieving this instinctive goal. All needs that develop in his further life can be understood, in a certain light, as the images of the substitution of the primary desire for perfect unity. This desire forms an energetic source, one that motivates all humans to unceasing imagination. Radical imagination, in which this unrealizable primary desire is unconsciously expressed, permanently draws the human beyond his present horizon of meanings.

The principal element of Castoriadis's conception of the social is his statement that the individual's nature is irreducible to the social: the core of the individual is the "psyche" (a psychic monad), which is irreducible to the social-historical, but susceptible to its formalizing effect. Society socializes the psyche of the newborn and imposes a complex of restrictions thereon: the newborn's psyche must refuse all egocentrism and the omnipotence of its imagination, recognize the existence of others and of their "realities", subject its desire to the rules of social behavior, and accept the models of the sublimated satisfaction of desire and even death in the name of social goals. Thus society succeeds (though never completely) in reorienting and channeling egocentric and asocial desires into internally coherent and socially significant activities. For its part, the psyche imposes an essential demand on social institutions: they must provide the individual with meaning. In the real world created any given society, all things possess meanings, which are, for the individual, a subjective refraction of the social imaginary significations of the society in which he lives. From the perspective of the psyche, the process whereby the psyche abandons its initial modes of fulfilling its own desires and invests in socially meaningful behaviors is sublimation. From the standpoint of society, this same process is the social fabrication of the individual (Castoriadis, 1991b, p. 41–42).

Thus the social individual is constituted through the internalization of the world and of the imaginary significations that are created by his society; he explicitly internalizes the multiple fragments of this world, and implicitly internalizes its virtual totality.

"If we define power as the capacity for a personal or impersonal instance (Instanz) to bring someone to do (or to abstain from doing) that which, left to him/herself, s/he would not necessarily have

done (or would possibly have done), it is immediately obvious that the greatest conceivable power lies in the possibility of preforming someone in such a way" (Castoriadis, 1991d, p. 149).

Before any explicit power, the institution of society as a whole performs in relation to the individual a "radical power-ground" or "non-localized primordial power".

A society can exist only by embodying its institutions and its imaginary meanings in living, existing, and acting individuals. The individual psyche is endowed with plasticity as far as accepting a socially defined form is concerned, as well as with the capacity of retaining its monadic nuclearity and its radical imagination. That is why the individual as such is not completely dependent on society.

Explicit social power (as opposed to implicit power, i.e., the formation of the social individual by the society in which he lives) is related to the existence and acting of the forces that defend society from threatening circumstances and factors and are therefore capable of explicitly formulating commands that are reinforced by authority. Castoriadis defines a specific dimension of the institution of society in its totality, a dimension that is related to explicit power and one that is also a dimension of the "political". This political dimension is broader than the state, but it cannot be legitimately equated with the institution of society as a whole.

As for politics, it is an explicit collective activity, tending to transparency and having as its object the institution of society in its totality. As Castoriadis believes, it is possible to speak of politics when the current institution of society is in question. The reis "a coming to a light" — though always partial — of social creativity. This means that politics is an explicit manifestation of the relationship between the establishing hypostasis of society with the established. The emergence of politics in ancient Greece as democracy served as the prototype for the project of autonomy. "Autonomy", according to Castoriadis, is "a new *eidos* within the overall history of being: a type of being that reflectively gives to itself the laws of its being" (Castoriadis, 1991d, p. 164). Autonomy consists not in acting according to this law, which is opened in an unchangeable mind and given once and for all. Rather, autonomy is our endless self-questioning with regard to the consistency of any "universal" law, as well as our capacity to act in the light of this questioning.

"It is the unlimited self-questioning about the law and its foundations as well as the capacity, in light of this interrogation, to make, to do and to institute (therefore also, to say). Autonomy is the reflective activity of a reason creating itself in an endless movement, both as individual and social reason" (Castoriadis, 1991d, p. 164).

It was heteronomy, mediated by the view of an extra-social source of legality (first of all in the form of religion), that was presented as a current status quo that has historically prevailed in society. Heteronomy is a direct consequence of the establishing social imaginary's concealment behind the established form of society. For Castoriadis, heteronomy is a synonym of social alienation, which he interprets, of course, beyond Marxist orthodoxy. In the narrow sense of the word, exclusion, indeed, can refer to the historical particularities of certain institutions, as they express and authorize the antagonistic division of society and the domination of a particular social group over the social totality. But it is also possible to speak of exclusion in a more general sense: once established, institutions acquire a certain inertia from their continued existence and can practically be perceived as possessing autonomy and their own "objective" logic. Thus, exclusion is a particular modality of this attitude toward institutions and toward the social-historical in general: it takes place when a society fails to recognize these "imagined" institutions as its own products, and instead practically perceives them as a material reality. This concealment of the establishing behind the established is accompanied and strengthened by the social production of individuals, whose lives and thoughts are governed by repetition, whose radical imagination has been curbed and who are individualized to the least possible extent.

Where social heteronomy in fact predominates, autonomy is never anything more than a project, with the aim of reinstalling the political (as a dimension of explicit power) into politics: the absorption of the political by politics. If a society could not only recognize its institutions as its own work but could also liberate the social imaginary to such an extent that it might be able to change those institutions through reflexively reasoned collective activity, that society would be sufficiently autonomous.

It is important that the autonomy project, according to Castoriadis, is a two-part one: it consists of two non-identical, though analogous, projects, each with its own dynamics. In a state of heteronomy, the rigid structure of institutions and the concealment (or misconception) of the establishing social imaginary correspond to the rigidity of the socially produced individual and the suppression of the psyche's radical imagination. The project of individual autonomy, which is related to psychoanalysis, is aimed at the construction, in the individual, of the "other relation" between, on the one hand, the reflexive agency of the will and thought and, on the other hand, his Unconscious (radical imagination). By extension, the project of individual autonomy is also aimed at the liberation of the individual's ability to form and execute the continuous project of his own life. Analogously, the project of collective autonomy is aimed at the achievement of an "other relation" between the establishing and the established society and, therefore, at the liberation of collective creativity.

In Castoriadis's conception, the two projects — of individual autonomy and of collective autonomy — are interconnected. One the one hand, individual autonomy consists of the idea that the establishment of the "other relation" liberates the radical imagination and transforms it into the source of the individual's reflexive self-formation. On the other hand, individual autonomy is based on the idea that the individual cannot be free in a state of separation but rather depends on the state of society. An important object of the politics of autonomy is therefore the creation of institutions that, once internalized by individuals, will enhance their capacity to become autonomous and their effective possibility to participate in all forms of explicit power, that exists in society (Castoriadis, 1997a, p. 132–133).

The justification of the project of autonomy is combined, in Castoriadis's conception, with the recognition of the fact that human society will never be completely transparent: first, because there is an individual unconscious; second, because the social presupposes something that can never be given as such — something in which we are fully immersed, but whose "face" we shall never be able to apprehend, a formative element without a form. The social-historical dimension as a dimension of the collective and of the anonymous can never be controlled. There will always be a distance between society as the establishing and something that is established at a given moment in time. This distance is neither negative nor insufficient; it only indicates the openness of history.

Thus Castoriadis's philosophy presents a complex original version of the dynamic conception of the social. Our reconstruction has shown that its deployment postulates the subsequent fulfillment of four main steps. The first step is a critique of "naïve realism" in the perception of social life: disengagement from the "functional-economic" vision as the exemplary embodiment of "real-rational" thought. The second step consists of revealing the symbolic component of social "things" through the interpretation of institutions (including the all-encompassing institution of society as a whole) as functional-symbolic network. The third step is the thematization of the virtual dimension of social life (the elaboration of the metaphoric ontology of the "magma" of social imaginary significations), which provides a perception of society as a dynamic ("social-historic") formation, a duality between the establishing and the established. The fourth and final step is the justification of the political project of autonomy. It is evident that the idea of autonomy in Castoriadis's conception is not a consequence but a cause of the construction of the dynamic conception of social. Specifically, an initial non-scholarly understanding of philosophy as possessing an internal affinity with the political project of autonomy stimulates a shift in the perception of social "reality" and provides a sensibility to the potential, hidden under seemingly solid social forms, for radical change. Thus Castoriadis's example confirms an observation we have made in relation to an advanced sociological theory (Фурс, 2002,

p. 99–107): the construction of a dynamic conception of the social presupposes the immanent politicization of knowledge.

Appendix 1.
V. Fours. The Belarusian Project of Modernity?[5]

No matter how we may treat Castoriadis's attempt to root the imaginary in the speculative ontology of the "magma", it is necessary to state that the idea of the "social imaginary" (fundamental for the conception of "multiple modernities") transcends the limits of "culture" and refers to the creative ("establishing") component of the "social-historical". In the context of our exploration, the fact that Castoriadis defines the idea of autonomy through the reflexive actualization of this imaginary dimension by means of politics is of paramount importance. Castoriadis believes that it is possible to speak of politics in the proper sense of the word only when (1) the present institution of society is in question; (2) as a result, the creative dimension of the "social-historical" and its interaction with present institutions explicates itself (though always partially); (3) the reestablishment of society occurs in reflexively transparent collective activity.

Having argued this point, we will take the risk of passing from the respectful reproduction of Castoriadis's thesis to a radical reinterpretation (in fact, an "inversion") of his theoretical position. To clarify: the idea of the imaginary as the source that fills the social-symbolic networks of institutions with meanings and therefore generates the particular world of any given society, indeed, opens the new perspective of a theoretical reflection on the irreducible diversity of societies and is logically realized in the framework of the conception of "multiple modernities". But furthermore, Castoriadis's position manifests evident dissonance between the empiric productivity of the idea of the diversity of social imaginaries and the extremely limited usage of this idea: in fact, [the purpose is — *added by translator*] only to ground the substitution of a determinist social ontology for the indeterminist — metaphorical ontology of the "magma", which is as "transcendental" as its predecessor. The idea of multiple imaginaries remains, in Castoriadis's conception, abstract and empty, because it functions only as an axiomatic starting point for the introduction of the "ontology of creation", but from the "ontology of creation" it is impossible to pass to the study of real social diversity in the concrete circumstances of geographic space and historical time (Gaonkar 2002: 9).

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5   Translated from: Фурс, В. (2007) Белорусский проект "современности"? *Европейская перспектива Беларуси: Интеллектуальные модели*. Вильнюс, 46–48. (Fours, V. (2007) Belorusskii proekt "sovremennosti"? *Evropeiskaya perspektiva Belarusi: Intellektualnye modeli*. Vilnius, 46–48).

But if it is namely this "ontological obsession" that blocks the research and realization of this fruitful idea, then why not eliminate it, depriving Castoriadis's conceptual model of its fundamentality and, at the same time, inverting the logical order of its deployment? Castoriadis's order is as follows: (1) the magma; (2) the social imaginary (the creative, "establishing" element of society); (3) autonomy (the reflexive appropriation, in "politics", of the anonymous creativity that establishes social forms); (4) heteronomy — the alienated state of society: this concealment of the creativity behind the established form of society, in which human communities do not recognize "imagined" institutions as their own products and practically perceive them as a quasi-natural reality.

If we deny the ontological "foundation" of the social imaginary in the "magma" while keeping in mind the unacceptability of its reduction to culture, we come to the conclusion that the social imaginary is grounded in "politics" — the historical and geographical reestablishment of asociety. This reestablishment, first is never full or universal: its scale and boundaries are defined by identifying several features and summands of the current form of life as composing the social "heteronomy". Second, this reestablishment is reflexive in the sense of being directed by the regulative idea of autonomy. This leads to the conclusion — important for our inquiry — that the idea of autonomy, as one of the key characteristics of "modernity", is not a universal content but a universal form (though it is possible for some of the different contents of this idea to have a "family resemblance"). The regulatory horizon of "politics" (of the project of autonomy) is determined from the inverse of autonomy — depending on what is identified as heteronomy in a given set of concrete circumstances. This proposed interpretation, in our opinion, allows us to promote more consistently the idea of the principal diversity of "modernities".

Appendix 2.
V. Fours. Socio-critical Philosophy after the "Death of the Subject"[6]

Thus, proceeding from the idea of the "internal affinity" of true philosophy and the project of autonomy, Castoriadis discovers a theoretical position that not only allows him to construct an original version of the non-anthropomorphic understanding of the social-historical

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6   Translated from: Фурс, В. (2008) Социально-критическая философия после "смерти субъекта". В: Борисов, Е., Инишев, И. и Фурс, В. *Практический поворот в постметафизической философии.* Вильнюс: ЕГУ, 173–174. (Fours, V. (2008) Socialno-kriticheskaya filosofia posle "smerti sub'ekta". In: Borisov, E., Inishev, I. & Fours, V. *Prakticheskii povorot v postmetafisicheskoi filosofii.* Vilnius: EHU, 173-174).

world (as the unity of social-symbolic institutions and the impersonal-collective imaginary), but also to inscribe it with a praxeological dimension (in the form of impersonally interpreted "politics"). But if from the point of view of the overcoming of theoretical objectivism the "philosophy of autonomy" presents a subsequent step in the development of post-Marxism, Castoriadis's position itself is characterized by two defects: first, the conception of the social-historical world is based on the metaphoric (not to say "speculative") ontology of the "magma"[7]; and, second, the "philosophy of autonomy" is a dualistic one: the social-historical and the individual-personal dimensions are treated as juxtaposed, though interconnected. This fact allows us to interpret not only Althusser's "anti-humanistic" reformatting of historical materialism, but also Castoriadis's "philosophy of autonomy" as the "threshold" versions of post-Marxism, whose mature variants have shed this speculative "lining" and have inscribed the individual-personal dimension in the dynamics of the social-symbolic field.

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7 Let us specify: in Castoriadis's conception, we find not a speculative ontology in the traditional sense of the word, but rather an inevitable result of the "romanticism of creativity": the indoctrination of the perception of social reality, which is shifted toward a scanty layer of potential. But this "primary" dimension of the social self-establishment itself cannot be characterized "positively" or denotatively (literally), but only metaphorically.

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