

## Cornelius Castoriadis/Agora International Interview Cerisy Colloquium (1990)

*During the Cerisy Colloquium organized around his work in January 1990, Cornelius Castoriadis kindly granted the then-new group Agora International the interview you will read below in English translation. The questions, prepared collectively by the members of Agora International, were posed to him by Ramin Jahanbegloo, the group's first president. Among those present during this interview (which was recorded on videotape): Ramin Jahanbegloo, Zarir Merat, Clara Gibson Maxwell, David Ames Curtis (members of Agora International), as well as a few of the colloquium's attendees.*

*At the start, Agora International was created expressly as an "association loi 1901" in order to catalyze a television project around this colloquium that was to be attended by several former members of the groups Socialisme ou Barbarie and London Solidarity, colleagues and friends of Castoriadis, members of his family, and a good number of students from his seminar at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales. Nevertheless, none of the French stations we contacted wanted to participate in this proposed television adventure. The filmmaker Chris Marker--director of the show L'Héritage de la chouette (The Owl's Legacy), which featured Castoriadis--nonetheless amicably gave us some advice so that we might be able to undertake the filming ourselves, which is what we ultimately did with good-natured amateurism. Members of Agora International were later able to convince Marker to do a brief and quite dazzling fifteen-minute video-montage on the occasion of Castoriadis's seventieth birthday. A copy of this "home movie," which we are not authorized to distribute, is available in the Archives of Agora International for viewing.*

*The interview Castoriadis gave us at Cerisy was part and parcel of a larger effort, on the part of Agora International, to interview, at Cerisy and elsewhere, former members of S. ou B. and London Solidarity, as well as researchers and scholars and other people who have written about Castoriadis's work and/or who knew him. These interviews, also recorded on videotape, are available in the Archives of Agora International, as are the video recordings of the totality of the Cerisy Colloquium around Castoriadis's work; the proceedings of this colloquium (which was organized by Philippe Raynaud), it is to be noted, have never been published.*

*On account of problems with the sound recording, we have not been able to transcribe, in a completely reliable way, certain phrases, or verify, in particular, a few names cited in passing and too hastily by Castoriadis. For years, we have made a slightly incomplete transcription available to researchers and scholars as well as to any other interested persons, with uncertain words and phrases indicated by asterisks (\*), asking them simply to promise not to distribute or publish excerpts without our prior agreement (in order to avoid the distribution and publication of possible unnoticed errors)--a promise almost everyone has respected.*

*In publishing this interview now, a decade after his death (original French transcription: July 2007, since revised; English translation: July 2008), we ask our readers to point out to us possible transcription errors and to furnish us with other information. We will correct in the transcription any error indicated to us and we will add missing names, thus improving, thanks to the collective intelligence of our readers, the quality of this transcription now available to all in electronic form.*

*Please be so kind as to communicate your observations as well as your corrections directly to our transcriber, François Loget [francois.loget@limousin.iufm.fr](mailto:francois.loget@limousin.iufm.fr) for the original French transcription, and to David Ames Curtis [curtis@msh-paris.fr](mailto:curtis@msh-paris.fr) for the present English-language translation.*

*Agora International*: Thank you, Cornelius Castoriadis, for granting us this interview. First question: You were born in Constantinople in 1922; what was your childhood like?

*Cornelius Castoriadis*: I was born in Constantinople in 1922, but I left Constantinople at the age of 2-3 months because my father had sensed that the Greek army, which was in Asia Minor at that time, was going to be defeated by the Turks. So, he took his family and went to Athens, where my mother came from--my father was from Constantinople. So, I spent my childhood in Athens, in an Athens that had nothing to do with what this city has become today; it was then a lovely medium-sized city of 500,000 inhabitants--not a masterpiece of a city--comparable to a Southern Italian city, with many neoclassical buildings and especially a splendid landscape, unpolluted, of course, not filled with cars. And still in my student years, it was truly a physical pleasure to stroll down the few avenues in central Athens in the sun, with the few trees there were there, and to chat with people.

A great deal of things could be said about my childhood; the most important, for what would follow, concerns first of all my parents, whom I loved a lot and who loved me a lot. I was lucky. There was my mother, who played the piano very well and to whom I owe my tremendous love of music, and my father, who had lived for a few years in France and who admired that country a lot. He was a sort of Voltairean democrat, ferociously anticlerical and ferociously antiroyalist, who had insisted upon teaching me French at a very young age--I still have in my head images of my father shaving in the morning before going to work and making me recite French poems drawn from French anthologies of that time, or else, a bit later, making me recite in the original Socrates' *Apology* by Plato. Also important was that, as soon as a good book came out, it arrived in my house. There was at the time a large Greek encyclopedic work in 24 volumes--the 1930 edition of [Constantine] Paparrigopoulos's *History of the Greek Nation*, a very good work.

And as I have recounted in "Done and To Be Done,"<sup>1</sup> at the age of 12 or 13 I purchased, at a used-book sale, a *History of Philosophy*, which was in no way original--the one by [Nicolaos] Louvaris, who hadn't copied but who had borrowed a bit from [Émile] Bréhier, a bit from [Friedrich] Ueberweg. From then on, I developed a passionate interest in philosophy and, at the same time, for Marxism; without my parents' knowledge, I bought the Communist newspapers of the time, in particular a monthly for intellectuals that wasn't badly done. In '34, '35, '36, there still was something.

All that happened while I was in high school. And during my last year there--it was already under the dictatorship of [Ioannis] Metaxas--I had a comrade who recruited me into a Greek Communist Youth cell. There were four of us. We held meetings, tried to recruit other people, and, at the end of the year, an incident took place--one of those that has made me think that I am very lucky. This guy got arrested, Theodoros Kostinas, along with the two other comrades who were in the cell, Dodopoulos and Stratis. They had the living daylight beaten out of them, and they were sent for six months to an island or wherever. But they didn't turn me in.

At that time, I lost contact. I entered the university, where no political activity was possible. Then, the Occupation began. So, I made some other friends, one of whom was a former General Secretary of the Communist Youth. And we found ourselves faced with the fact that the Communist Party, with which we wanted to get back in touch, already had a line we considered a betrayal--it was ultrachauvinistic, the line of [Ilya] Ehrenburg--and, at the same time, advocated national unity with all those who wanted to fight against the invader. We had formed a small organization that at the

start received a pretty good response. We recruited some people. It was called New Times--New Era, rather. And then as time passed, it turned out that the Greek CP's attitude was not a deviation but instead was following the line of the Third International--which, moreover, was disbanded soon thereafter (1943) by Stalin. Practically everyone abandoned us and left for the CP. And for my part, I joined the Greek Trotskyist party, the most left-wing faction, directed at the time by an extraordinary man named Spiros Stinas, who died a little less than two years ago--a hero and at the same time a secular saint, who was persecuted his whole life long and who surely almost never ate a hot meal for twenty years. I was active with them until the end of my stay in Greece, that is to say, until the end of '45, and I never had any differences with Stinas, except on the occasion of the Stalinist coup d'état of December '44--he thought that it was a military coup d'état, which in my view was meaningless; I, on the contrary, thought, not to go into details, that this attempt at a coup d'état was aimed at establishing [*instaurer*] in Greece what would later be called a people's democracy, that is to say, the seizure of power by the Stalinists in order to establish a Russian-type society, with, of course, the necessary local variations.

And then at the end of '45, the French School of Athens announced a competition for postdoctoral, higher-education scholarships in France; I had finished at the University, studying law and economic and political sciences; and, crucially, I had met some people around the neo-Kantian professors who had studied in Germany: [Constantine] Tsatsos, [Panayotis] Canellopoulos, and also [Constantine] Despotopoulos, who is still alive and with whom I spent my university years especially attending Tsatsos's seminars and doing philosophy; we read the key philosophical texts, we discussed them, we interpreted them. So, I went into the competitive exam saying that I wanted to go to France to do a dissertation in philosophy; the idea behind my topic was that there cannot be a closed rational philosophical system, that that entails absurdities or impossibilities or contradictions. I had myself, under the Occupation, given seminars on Kant's *Prolegomena*, on Hegel's *Logic*, etc. with young people--well, people younger than myself--who attended, and that's what we discussed.

Then I received a scholarship and I left in December '45 on a boat that was called the Mataroa--a New Zealand troop transport ship. It was a rather fascinating voyage. We crossed a devastated Italy in some completely unbelievable trains. We crossed Switzerland, where we were told of the enormous misfortunes that had befallen the Swiss people during the war--there was even a moment, in December '43, when rumors were flying that maybe chocolate was going to be rationed. The Swiss asked us to feel their pain; we nodded our heads. It has to be said that in Athens, during the Winter of '41-'42, the swollen cadavers of people who had died of hunger were lying in the streets. When we left Bâle and arrived in France, we found ourselves, in a sense, at home, for there were people who were laughing, who ate sausages, drank wine, etc. Then, we found ourselves in Paris.

*A.I.*: There were other Greek intellectuals and political activists with you on that boat?

*C.C.*: Yes. Perhaps that was due to the political orientation of the French Institute of Athens, which was directed by [Octave] Merlier and which was rather to the Left, especially on account of the influence of [Roger] Milliex and his wife [Tatiana Gritsi-Milliex]. But it was also the general trend: if they had selected 150 people for scholarships, there would automatically have been 120 from the

Left among the young intellectuals and people who had finished the Polytechnic School, young architects\*, etc. Among the guys with whom I was traveling, there were \*\*\*, Kostas Papaioannou with whom I became a close friend and who unfortunately died a few years ago; there were also [Kostas] Axelos, the architect [George] Kandyliis, a philosopher named \*\*\*, the painter \*\*\*, a number of people who settled in France.

*A.I.*: How did your first years in France go?

*C.C.*: I was supposed to prepare a dissertation in Philosophy. I made a hugely stupid mistake--I have never understood why I did it: I was at the Sorbonne; I had seen what was there. I was absolutely driven up the wall by the courses there. A completely unbelievable subject called "Morality and Sociology," highly neo-Kantian in character, that was taught, I believe, by the Dean, [Georges] Davy, himself. I made the stupid mistake of taking as my thesis supervisor a gentleman named René Poirier who taught logic. I don't want to make a value judgment, but that was a really unfortunate choice. I audited a few courses by [Gaston] Bachelard; it was his last year of teaching, I think. He did a very specialized course, possibly on the birth of thermodynamics. He was covering the blackboard all the time with equations. Well, math is my special hobby, in a sense, but back then I knew infinitely less about it.

But above all, at the end of a few months' time I came into contact with the French Trotskyists. I had begun to be active within the PCI [Parti Communiste Internationaliste], which at that time was preparing what was pompously being labeled the Second World Congress of the Fourth International, which was held in 1948. The preparatory discussions lasted two years, and obviously among the key questions was the famous Russian Question. On that, I myself had some very firm ideas since December '44: the assessment I made, which is clearly right, is that if the Stalinists had won in Greece, they would have made it into a Yugoslavia or a Bulgaria. It was because of the English army that they were unable to do so. That also led me to revamp Trotsky's whole conception about Russia as a degenerated workers' State as well as his view of Stalinist parties as reformist parties. It must also be stated that I had a good collection of Marxist (though not Trotskyist) books in '36 and that it had been confiscated when I was arrested by the police under the Metaxas dictatorship, in '39. I thus didn't have any more books, and in Greece there were very few revolutionary or Marxist or Left books. Yet, thanks to one of my friends with whom I had founded that little organization in '41, I was fortunate to have in my hands and to read quite attentively not only Trotsky's *The Revolution Betrayed* but also Victor Serge's *Destin d'une révolution* [*Destiny of a Revolution*, also published as *Russia Twenty Years After*], and especially [Boris] Souvarine's marvelous biography of Stalin--the one André Malraux and Gallimard rejected in '35, Malraux saying to Souvarine, "It's a wonderful book but we can't take it because for the moment you are the weakest; we'll take it when you are the strongest." That's André Malraux, and that has to be said. After which, Souvarine was at Grasset and the book was published anyhow, with a certain amount of success, I believe. I had also read a book by Barmine, a Russian diplomat who had escaped, a defector, and [Ante] Ciliga's *Au pays du grand mensonge* [*The Russian Enigma*]--that was the title of the edition at the time; Christian Bourgois later reissued this book under the title *Au pays du mensonge déconcertant* [In the land of the disconcerting lie].

I was already absolutely convinced about Russia. The events of December '44 had sealed

the deal. So, in the Trotskyist party, I began to develop the idea that Russia was not at all a degenerated workers' State but that it was a new exploitative class society. From there starts a whole line of development of ideas and theoretical conceptions; one had to revise what Stalinist parties were, what the crisis of contemporary society was. That is the path of ideas I described in the General Introduction to *La Société bureaucratique* [now in the *Political and Social Writings*].<sup>2</sup>

*A.I.*: So, it was at this time that the Socialisme ou Barbarie tendency was formed within the PCI and that you met Claude Lefort.

*C.C.*: That's right. There was a general assembly for the Paris region in the PCI's local headquarters, which was called (I don't know why) "the theater," on Rue de l'Arbre Sec. Well, I explained my position on the USSR, etc. And, among the militants and party members present, there was comrade Victorine [Jeanine "Rilka" Walter], who later became my girlfriend and with whom I had a daughter [Sparta], and Claude Lefort, who was called Montal within the Party. Both of them were very interested in what I said and Victorine told Montal, "You really must go see him, talk with him; that's the important issue." And as we were leaving the meeting, Montal asked me: "Can we get together?" We met, I think, at La Source, a Boul'Mich<sup>3</sup> café at the corner with Rue des Écoles, I think. It was evening, we had a discussion, then we went to eat with Victorine at La Mère \*Naudin\*, on Rue de Buci, a cheap greasy-spoon restaurant where one ate good steaks--there was a hotplate, the meat was thrown on for two minutes--and then we spent the evening discussing things at great length. Ultimately, I was going to live in the same place they lived, and we quickly started to prepare theses for the PCI's upcoming Third Congress--the first theses in which we presented ourselves as the Chaulieu-Montal Tendency (Chaulieu was my pseudonym; there was a Chaulieu family in Balzac). Some people began to manifest their agreement with us: a few in the Party, others in the Party's youth group. We fought to change the Party's orientation during the 3<sup>d</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> Congresses, without success. There was a moment when we had 50 members in all of France. Then there was the famous Second Congress of the International. The Americans came to France. There, I got to know Ria Stone--that is, Grace Lee [Boggs]--who was a member of [Max] Shachtman's party. One day, a dictionary will be compiled about the heresies of the Christian religion, which could fill 400 volumes [*laughter*]. For Trotskyism, it wouldn't be that many volumes, but, well, if one compiled a dictionary of the tendencies, heresies, schisms, etc., it'd be a rather huge one, too. They were with Shachtman's people--that is to say, with those who had rejected Trotsky's theory about Russia--but wanted to go with [James P.] Cannon's people, the official American Trotskyist party, even though they themselves were defending the view that Russia was a state-capitalist country, whereas Cannon's people obviously held the official view of Russia as a degenerated workers' State. That's as good as the mystery of the Holy Trinity!

*A.I.*: What was the originality of S. ou B. within the scope of French and international politics?

*C.C.*: It is first of all that we tried not just to repeat or choose. . . . How are sects or heresies formed in history in general or in the Trotskyist party in particular? You take one point within the doctrine, or one problem, and you define yourself solely on that basis. S. ou B.'s originality is that, starting from a revision of the official Trotskyist theses on Russia, from the conception of Russia as a country

in which there is a ruling bureaucratic class, we began to develop an overall conception and to see all problems in terms of [*en fonction de*] that--I mean, not "in terms of" that, but in *connection* with that: if Russia is a bureaucratic country, it is not only on account of the revolution's degeneration; there is something like a bureaucratic evolution of capitalism in general. And then, especially, there's the other aspect, the political aspect, which is obviously the most decisive, beyond one's analyses: How and why did Russia become a bureaucratic-capitalist country; what happened after the revolution and what does that say in relation to an attempt to change society? Whence came very quickly the idea--it's even there before the first *S. ou B.* texts, already in any case in the texts for the PCI's 5<sup>th</sup> Congress, maybe already for the 4<sup>th</sup>--of what I called at the time *workers' management*, and afterward *self-management*, that is to say, the idea, first of all, that one can speak of revolution only starting from the moment when there are autonomous organs of the population that are self-governing and that retain power (not by delegation to a bureaucracy, to a party, to people in the know, etc.) and that, secondly--this is very important, too, and later this underwent developments I still consider central and very important--if one speaks of the power of the population (or as we said at the time, of proletarian or workers' power--on that point we had remained Marxists), it could not be a matter, as I said very early on, of Sundays of political freedom that follow weeks of slavery at work; that is to say, that this self-government, this self-management also and especially has to be there in people's everyday activities: wherever there is a work collective, it must be the collectivity that decides, which leads immediately to the problem of how one organizes oneself, on the one hand, and then, on the other, the problem of how these self-managed producer-collectivities can put themselves together and form an economy, a society, a collective power. Since the problems involved go far beyond the size, competence, and rights of one business firm (automobile workers decide to build cars like that from now on; they are the only ones to have a say since, well . . . ). So, there are answers to be found that later were worked out in much greater breadth in the texts on the "content of socialism," this sort of project of a self-managed socialist society, which I published in 1957.<sup>4</sup>

*A.I.*: There were several periods in the work of *S. ou B.*, that is to say, the major splits, the problem of organization, the critique of Marxism.

*C.C.*: As concerns myself, I distinguish several periods in my personal development or in my personal work. There are phases where other ideas came in, where prior ideas entailed consequences I had not seen at the outset. That's for me a very important thing, one on which I am reflecting and which ought to serve as a lesson for those who try to reflect: thinking is a conscious activity; one works some things out and one stops writing a text, an article, a book when one thinks that one has said what one had to say and one thinks that one has drawn out all the consequences of the ideas one has raised. Or, if one has not done so, one adds a footnote saying that there might also be this or that, but that one hasn't had the time to develop it. And 5 or 10 or 20 years afterward, one discovers some implications one had just not seen at all at the outset because in the meantime one has evolved, because something else has happened, because one has become less dumb.

Soon [1990] the publisher Christian Bourgois is going to reissue *La Société bureaucratique* in a large, one-volume edition.<sup>5</sup> I had to reread all the texts, especially the old ones, in order to turn in a volume ready to be reset. I asked myself why I had waited until '56 to write down such and such

an idea, whereas it was already there in '47. Or why I waited until '64 since in '49 it was already there; it was just waiting to be formulated more clearly. In another sense, that's not true at all. That can also be a retrospective illusion. But *that* is, I believe, the labor of thought [*le travail de la pensée*].

I am coming back to the question. In my personal work, there are phases--I have described them in my General Introduction. First and foremost, there is the revision of Trotskyist theory and its replacement by the theory of workers' management. Next--in terms not only of my activity in the group but also of my professional work and my professional experience as an economist [at the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, OECD]--there was a reevaluation of Marx's economics, criticism of it, and the finding that it doesn't stand up at all. (It's a great sociological and historical work, but as a system of economics, such as Marx had intended it to be, it doesn't stand up.) There are two articles published in *S. ou B.*, which were not reprinted and which perhaps one day will be, that explain that.<sup>6</sup> And then there were, it must not be forgotten, some events: the Hungarian Revolution. That proved to be a huge practical stimulation because it confirmed the prognostic that was made when I wrote the editorial for the first issue: the day when the masses rise up against totalitarian bureaucratic tyranny and try to form autonomous organs . . . in Hungary, there were councils that demanded the management of production. So, that was one period.

Then there was the moment or the phase that was correlative with the victory of Gaullism in France and with the pretty much definitive modernization of French capitalism, followed by all the problems this modernization brought with it. Here I wrote "Modern Capitalism and Revolution,"<sup>7</sup> with the whole problem of depoliticization, privatization, and the question of what would happen if things continued like that. What is the ideal project of bureaucratic capitalism, which is not at all fascism or totalitarianism but which is a society of stupefied brutes whose real annual income is raised 3 percent every year so that they can buy those illusions called commodities? So, at the same moment the revolutionary problematic was being enlarged beyond the problems of production and of power to the entirety of problems of life within society: school, family, education, youth, etc. And practically immediately afterward arose the observation that one had to abandon the idea of the privileged role of the proletariat in all that; this was written down in 1963 as "Recommencing the Revolution":<sup>8</sup> if the revolutionary program is indeed what we are saying--that is, it concerns all aspects of human life--not just workers, but practically all people in society, are concerned by this (that had so much success in May '68).

And then, afterward, there was the end of *S. ou B.*, which was very difficult and very painful, and which was motivated basically by two things. The main one was that we had only a passive response. The last years of *S. ou B.* were far from the worst from the standpoint of the audience we had. At the time, the review was selling well and the meetings we held at the Mutualité attracted a good number of people--according to the criteria of the time and in relation to the previous period--and at the same time people were not responding. They were passive consumers of ideas. We were offering them open working groups and suggesting that they do things with the group, and they didn't come. At that moment, there was a discussion within the group, and it was decided to disband. In '67, a letter was sent out that has now been republished.<sup>9</sup> And then a year afterward, there was May '68. We met again with the comrades of the group; I wrote this text--which I think we had discussed, moreover--that was Roneographed and was distributed, but which had practically

no response because very quickly people were overcome by two opposite obsessions: some didn't want any organization because every organization produces bureaucracy, supposedly, and the others had only one wish, to go get directed by an organization, and who joined the Trotskyists or the Maoists. Very little in between.

Now, if one is speaking of *S. ou B.* as a group and not of my work, there were two big quarrels or two major splits. The first was over the question of organization, with Claude Lefort and those who thought like him. There was a first quasi-split in '52-'53. Lefort left for a year, a year and a half, to go to Brazil, and when he returned he came back to the group. Then in '58, at the time of De Gaulle's coup, as a good number of sympathizers and others wanted to come work with us, suddenly the Parisian group found itself to have swollen rather well in numbers, and we could no longer function under a system of permanent and total general assemblies (once a week, all the members of the group met together and we discussed what we were going to do and what we were going to put in the review; the main texts were read; people spoke up to say it's not good, or this or that should be added). Starting when we became too numerous, we had to get organized; some of us, including me, proposed that there be 3 or 4 cells that would be coordinated by a committee of people in positions of responsibility made up of elected and revocable delegates; and there were Lefort and others who said that they didn't really want to create a political organization, or a party--or, that the group could not be a party. The texts are there; they were published in *S. ou B.* and reprinted in Lefort's *Éléments pour une critique de la bureaucratie*<sup>10</sup> and in my *Political and Social Writings*.<sup>11</sup> So, ultimately Lefort and the others who were in the minority left; that's another story.<sup>12</sup> We continued on, and then very soon afterward we began publishing a Roneographed monthly that was called *Pouvoir Ouvrier* [Workers' Power], less heavy-going than *S. ou B.*, more concerned with the problems, let's say, of struggle in the workplace.

Starting in '59, another fight began. Following the establishment of Gaullism, I began to write "Modern Capitalism and Revolution," which was initially distributed within the group for discussion before publication. It provoked a very intense crisis. The group found itself practically evenly divided, with many people fluctuating for a long time, moreover (including [Jean-François] Lyotard himself). Finally, on the other side there were Lyotard and another comrade who is called [Alberto] Véga, and [Pierre] Souyri who has since died. They said I was revising Marxism. Well, I don't know what they were saying. They ultimately never formulated it clearly, but the discussion lasted three years. It was a bad discussion. And ultimately, what had to happen happened: there was a separation. We were slightly in the majority, but, well, we didn't want to make a big deal about it. They took *Pouvoir Ouvrier*; we kept *S. ou B.* and continued on.<sup>13</sup>

*A.I.*: Can we come back to the events of May '68? How did you experience May '68?

*C.C.*: Personally, I lived through it with an enormous amount of difficulty. It must be pointed out that I was an alien in France. I wasn't naturalized until the end of 1970. At the time, deportation of an alien from France was a purely administrative matter--an immediately executable decision by the Minister of the Interior: you are asked to leave the territory of the Republic within 24 hours; no legal recourse. It's on account of this, indeed, that my father had been deported from France twice, even though he wasn't in *S. ou B.* [*laughter*], but for political reasons all the same. And that's how Danny [Cohn-Bendit] was deported in '68, without further ado.



I don't know when the law was changed. It already was under Giscard, I think. One could request a stay of the order. But at that time, that wasn't the case.

On the other hand, there was the fact that I was working at OECD, where one's status as an international civil servant excluded participation in political activities of any sort. So, I was doubly in breach of the law, committing two offenses, a criminal twice over [*laughter*]. Until then, I somehow or other had some inkling. There was a small alert in '58: the cops had gone to my ex-wife's place, then to the home of a comrade from the group to ask who this Chaulieu guy is. That's how I ended up changing pseudonyms (that couldn't fool anyone, but it was the least I could do). But in '68 it was damned annoying, exasperating, because, ideally, one should have presented oneself in public. After having hesitated, I abandoned the idea for a moment. I nevertheless went to Nanterre; I talked with people. The first days at the Sorbonne, I spoke in front of the students. All that didn't receive much of a response, any more than the paper we had done,<sup>14</sup> which was the first half of my text in *La Brèche*,<sup>15</sup> completed later on.

Subjectively, I lived through May '68 as a very painful experience, for logic told me, well, it didn't make sense to participate like I should have done (I participated, of course, I went to the demos, but I couldn't put myself forward as much as I would have liked). I had certain things in my head \*\*\*. At the same time, I was full of rage because I saw this enormous amount of creativity in the movement being manifested in actions, in the slogans they invented, but also this enormous difficulty they had in organizing themselves in a stable way. There was a fantastic capacity for organization when it came to digging up the paving stones on the Boul'Mich or when the students at the School of Medicine organized emergency services and brought to the hospitals students who had been beaten by the cops or injured. And at the same time, the permanent general assemblies that were being held at the Sorbonne and then on the Jussieu campus, apart from some moments when there were some more than moving things--people belonging to layers of the population who had never been able to express themselves in this screwed-up society, who came and said what was in their hearts and on their minds; I recall a nurse who had come to speak there, an old man, too--but apart from this sort of speaking up by society, there was an inability, a refusal, a lack of will, a lack of desire, a lack of capacity to organize something truly collective, truly democratic, truly \*\*\*. And this, independent of my personal annoyances, I experienced it--I wrote about it at the end of the General Introduction<sup>16</sup>--as, in a sense, the modern--in any case, contemporary--political tragedy. This terrible sort of situation in the modern world--on which Sartre, moreover, built up his political pseudophilosophy by saying that that's how things are, period, that there's either the group-in-fusion or the practico-inert, seriality, which falls back--but it's true that, in the nature of modern political societies, the population expresses itself actively only via explosion: '89, '30, '48, '71, '36, and again '68 (and in other countries, something else; France is nonetheless privileged from this standpoint). And then, the rest of the time, one abandons everything to those who are in charge: the ruling strata, the State, the bureaucratic apparatuses, those who manage things for others. And that was ultravid, ultrarobust--especially during the second period of May '68. For, there was an initial period when one could still tell oneself, "It's rising, it's spreading, the factories are coming into play. Soon there will be something like the French version of councils or soviets," and then it didn't come. And starting from that moment, the enthusiasm began to die down. And we saw that those who reaped the inheritance were the Trotskyists of various tendencies, the French Maoists [*les maos*], who were completely delusional at the time--they published newspapers in which they said that the

people's armies were about to cross the Loire River in their march on Paris [laughter]. Blatant madness! At the same time it was terrible to think that people could subscribe to such things.

A.I.: To what extent do you think that the thinking that went on [*le travail réflexif*] in *S. ou B.* might have influenced May '68?

C.C.: That's a very difficult question to answer. First of all, there is the popularized media version now being spread--[Patrick] Rotman and [Hervé] Harmon, and stuff on TV--according to which May '68 was the work of young people (well, relatively young people) with bright prospects who gravitate now around the Socialist government, or around [the Parisian newspaper] *Libération* [laughter]: people like [Bernard] Kouchner, [Roland] Castro, and those who were with them. That's totally false, in my opinion. May '68 was essentially a spontaneous movement. In the preparation for May '68 on the ideological level, the March 22<sup>nd</sup> Movement played a role. As is known, the people who belonged to the March 22<sup>nd</sup> Movement had read *S. ou B.*; they had been influenced by *S. ou B.* Cohn-Bendit wrote that in black and white in one of his books.<sup>17</sup> They were also influenced by the Situationists, that's certain, who themselves were quite active during the days of May.

Now, in depth, I don't know what can be said. These are questions that are very difficult to answer.<sup>18</sup>

A.I.: Now we arrive at the period of *Textures*. How would you say that the transition between *S. ou B.* and *Textures* occurred?

C.C.: There really was no transition, because the two reviews were absolutely not the same in character. *S. ou B.* was and wished to remain an organ of criticism and revolutionary orientation. We stopped publishing it as soon as we realized it couldn't remain so. For, as I said, there was no response from the public, but also it was becoming a more and more theoretical review, treating more and more abstract questions and written--not by a single person, but, well, there always were articles signed [Paul] Cardan [another Castoriadis pseudonym]. It no longer was a collective work.

*Textures* was something else entirely. It was a little review done by some people from Brussels who had known a former student of Lefort's, back when Lefort was teaching in Caen: Marcel Gauchet. They had offered Gauchet to collaborate in the introduction to *Textures*. Gauchet spoke to Lefort about it, and Lefort spoke to me about it. So, we created an editorial committee, and, starting with number 3 or 4 of *Textures*, there were all these people plus [Marc] Richir and a *philosophe*-man of letters who is named Max Loreau, I think, or "was named": he just passed away. As a review, *Textures* was rather heavy-going, with some very difficult, very theoretical texts.

A.I.: And then there was the period of the review *Libre*.

C.C.: *Textures* ceased publication because Richir and [Robert] Legros quarreled basically with Gauchet, and perhaps [Miguel] Abensour and Lefort--for my part, I was rather neutral in the matter. There was a separation. We found a publisher, Payot, and we created *Libre*, which was a rather theoretical review, with a general orientation--a critical review and some critical reflection, but not militant as was *S. ou B.* to a certain extent: *S. ou B.* was a review that took a position on current-

affair--though not day-to-day--issues, or spoke in such a way that people might find for themselves a position on current affairs. *Libre* was entirely different: we published an article on Tocqueville,<sup>19</sup> an article on Aristotle.<sup>20</sup> I'd sure like for that to be, at some ultimate level, very relevant for one's political orientation [*laughter*], but it wasn't what one calls a militant review.

*A.I.*: You again had disagreements with Lefort during this period.

*C.C.*: I didn't really have disagreements, in the plural, with Lefort. There was a big break in '80 when the Russians invaded Afghanistan. It was decided that we could not *not* write something on it. So, I wrote what became the first chapter of *Devant la guerre* [Facing war],<sup>21</sup> which modified the analysis of Russia, or rather explained that the Russia of today [the 1980s] is no longer the Russia we had spoken of before: the regime had changed; it had become a stratocracy, that is to say, its basic orientation was expansion through brute force. Brute force had become the sole signification holding this society together.

There were some incidents that were very difficult to bear. On the level of simple politeness, humanity, and civility, I found Lefort's behavior intolerable. (As he is not present [at the Cerisy Colloquium], I am not going to dwell upon this.) Of course, Lefort, who had already published his book on Solzhenitsyn,<sup>22</sup> regarded his theory of totalitarianism as more important to him than the apple of his eye--though I don't know what he makes of it now. There was a break: Gauchet, [Krzysztof] Pomian, and I, on the one hand, Lefort, Abensour, and Maurice Luciani--a comrade who formerly was in S. ou B.--on the other. Since that time, I no longer do reviews, nor do I attempt to restart a group or reestablish any sort of collective political activity, although--as I say a bit in jest, but it is not completely in jest--I am on the verge of doing so every odd day of the month.<sup>23</sup> And then, on the even days, I tell myself [*laughter*], "Well, what, we're going to start the same story all over again."

*A.I.*: On the subject of *Devant la guerre*, many people criticized your "stratocracy" thesis, especially after the arrival of Gorbachev.

*C.C.*: They are right to say that, starting with Gorbachev's arrival, something else is happening. The question is whether the analysis and description of Russian society that are given in *Devant la guerre* for the period are correct. What happened with this regime of total and totalitarian bureaucratic capitalism through its long history? It remained immutable. It underwent no major internal change. In particular, after the death of Stalin, there was nonetheless a huge attempt at self-reform on the part of the bureaucracy--which in part succeeded, moreover, since there no longer was mass terror (there was no Stalin 2)--and in part failed as far as the basic problems of the regime are concerned. And then, the crowning moment of this failure was the ouster of Khrushchev in '64. Brezhnev--along with Kosygin, at the outset--settled into power. And what does one notice during this period? A growing expansion on the foreign level, a fantastic accumulation--which had already begun during the previous period, under Stalin--of military might. After '45, something had been neglected. One also notices a fantastic development of military production. One notices, too--now, it's documented, one knows, but at the time it was denied--the separation of the military economy from the nonmilitary economy and the existence of closed factories; one notices--it's more than verified--a

huge part of the national product being devoted to the military economy. All that has a logic to it. This period is now called one of “stagnation,” but what was this period of stagnation? Russia was stagnating, but it wasn’t stagnating at all: well, it was stagnating, much worse than stagnating from a certain point of view, but from another standpoint it was not stagnating. It was producing more and more H-bombs; it had created for itself sorts of protectorates or colonies in Africa and in Central America. There was the Vietnam War, the huge Russian base in Vietnam, etc. All that mustn’t be forgotten. Does all that not have a logic to it? Doesn’t that correspond to a policy of some sort? *That’s* the question. Didn’t, during this period, absolute cynicism reign within Russian society? Wasn’t the desire to become the strongest power on earth the only thing that could appear besides just day-to-day life?

I wouldn’t change one iota of the analysis I made of Russian society in *Devant la guerre*. The only point on which I was mistaken was about the possibility of the Communist Party apparatus drawing out of itself a group of reformers. But on that point, I don’t see who hadn’t been mistaken. That’s obvious. It was something unforeseen--indeed, unforeseeable. And there another story begins: this is an event that, on its own, changes a whole series of things in the evolution of the matter. In fact, I don’t know if Gorbachev (and the Gorbachev group) had that in his head in ’85 or ’86, but the result of this affair is in any case the dismantling of the Russian empire, both in Eastern Europe as well as overseas. We know the changes that have taken place: there are things that resist (Vietnam, though it’s leaking, too, Mozambique, etc.) and other ones are no longer holding up so well (the fact that the Sandinistas agreed to hold elections is not just a domestic matter, either; it is also due to orders, pressure, from the Kremlin, and so on).

There is an extraordinary historical power of the event as such. And starting from that moment, another phase of Russia’s history begins, one which in my view also changes as little the fact that, from ’64 to ’85, Russian was what I described as the fact [of] the Russian Revolution [would] change the fact that before, there was Czarism, under which a certain amount of capitalism had developed. There is a massive event, which was unleashed by one person and a tiny group; that, too, is important. Why *at that* moment? Here we are within the simultaneously most trivial and most profound problems of history. Why ’85? Why Gorbachev? To what extent did Gorbachev have in mind what was going to happen and to what extent is he just a sorcerer’s apprentice? I have the clear impression that, at least since the Summer of ’88, he has been chasing after events in order to catch up with them, though that is not the topic of our discussion. But in any case, it is certain that there are things that have happened rather differently than what he would have wanted, just as it is very clear that today [1990] one has absolutely no idea what they want to do in relation to the hard kernel of this whole story, the economic system. It’s true that the Russian economy is in a state of “continual collapse”--a bit of a bizarre notion, but that’s the only way to describe it. And it’s true that it’s unknown how much time this can last, nor is it known how any sort of transition is possible.

*A.I.:* Today you are one of the few people--or perhaps the only one--who criticizes the political apathy that exists in the East after the collapse of Marxist-Leninist systems.

*C.C.:* I don’t criticize it; I note it. It depends on the standpoint one is adopting. You know what’s happening. Everyone--not just the American right or the right in all countries and the journalists--says, “In the competition between the two systems, it’s capitalism that has won” or “It’s democracy

that has won” or else “A kind of democratic capitalism has won.” As for me, I don’t think it’s like that. First of all, we must take a few steps back. I was saying a moment ago that one will never be able to explain why Gorbachev arrived in power--why at *that* moment. But when one speaks of this change, people seem to forget another very important factor, which for my part I have never forgotten: the struggle against the bureaucratic system within the bureaucratic system. There was June ’53 in Berlin, Hungary and Poland in ’56, Czechoslovakia in ’68, Poland again in ’70, and then in ’80-’81 the Kremlin and Brezhnev noted that they were powerless against the Poles; a military dictatorship was needed. They didn’t do what they did in Czechoslovakia. They invaded Afghanistan, and the Afghans resisted; that’s another failure. And then, domestically, there’s a sort of silent, passive resistance on the part of the population that’s been going on there for fifty years. It’s also all that. In addition, there’s American rearmament (real or fictive, it doesn’t matter much; in the heads of the people who are at army headquarters, things go differently). But the main thing is the resistance abroad and the passivity within Russia itself, which favored this collapse. If you wish, to resume the perspective of *Devant la guerre*: for the Russian system to maintain itself, either the Russians would have had to win straight away in Afghanistan and crush the Polish resistance or they would have had to unleash a world war between ’80 and ’83 or ’85, or else, then, more and more of those who wanted to undertake reforms and abandon *that* path would gain the upper hand. I forgot what your question was. . . .

*A.I.*: On the topic of political apathy.

*C.C.*: Oh, yes! So, who won in this affair? One should be very pleased by the fact that, first of all, the Poles, the Czechs, the Hungarians, even also in Russia a bit, even in Bulgaria a bit and in Romania a very little bit, people can say what they think. Nonetheless, distinctions must be made. Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and then the others, it’s not the same. They can get about, go out, go home, etc. And something else, too. One must note and be pleased, too, about the power of entirely peaceful movements like in East Germany and in Czechoslovakia, which constrained a so-called--well, really--armed-to-the-teeth and so-called monolithic regime--the Bolsheviks, the Stalinists, those who were marching in the vanguard of humanity and who yielded before nothing and who collapsed like sand in a week.

There’s *that* side, which shows the power of social action, but there’s something else. There is also during this action something that is truly on the order of tactical genius, which is not the genius of someone in particular. People defuse the provocations of the established power, and they provoke the established power in turn. We rediscover here things that existed already in ’68. But on the other side, what does one see? At no moment was there the constitution of organs of self-government. At no moment. Though it is said about this, as the now-disappointed protagonists of the German movement say, that all that was done for bananas, that’s not true, either. It was a peaceful, antityrannical revolution (or, rather, an uprising)--though not an antitotalitarian one, for, in a sense, these countries had no longer been totalitarian for a long time. Totalitarianism is when the regime truly succeeds in obliging the population to participate in the collective delusion [*délire collectif*]. There, one knew what was going on and everyone was pretending. That was cynicism; totalitarianism is not cynicism. An SS man was not cynical. A CP member during the height of Stalinism was not cynical. He was something else. He might be deeply immoral. He would have

said four contradictory lies at once, if that had been logically possible. But he was not cynical in relation to the Party. Stalin himself maybe was so. I don't know. He was thinking about his personal power, that's it. The Russian regime became cynical in fact starting with the Hungarian and Polish Revolutions, which showed everyone what the Stalinist period had been. Despite all the mental gymnastics of the Communists, whoever was endowed with a minimum of logical sense could never have said that an "overall positive" socialist proletarian regime could have been erected, built, directed for thirty years by a man who was officially described, in the Khrushchev Report, as a bloodthirsty madman! It's completely nutty [*délirant*], moreover, to run military operations on a world map during the war against Germany. So, the Communists could find more or less suitable internal rationalizations, but in fact things had been shattered starting at that moment. And that's what explains, in my opinion, the instantaneous pulverization of Parties where they were least well rooted, as in the countries of Eastern Europe. In Russia, it's different because they really are the social class that has all posts; they hold things; they have privileges and they struggle to preserve them. And at the very moment we are now speaking [1990], what is happening at the Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union is no doubt a manifestation of all that.

To come back to the Eastern European movements, you didn't have that. What conclusion may be drawn? Everything has happened as if--at least in these three countries [East Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia]--from one day to the next, people had entered into the shoes of the Western citizen. That is to say, they no longer aspired to anything other than to have a job and to earn enough money. And for the rest, leave me the fuck alone. And allow me to travel, to exit the country and reenter, etc. As a young American woman said in a report published in the *International Herald Tribune*: to be a citizen is not to be harassed by the police. In this sense, they [the people in the East] have wanted to become and have become citizens; they are not harassed by the police any more than we are in France. This is a highly miserable conception of freedom, even if psychologically it is understandable among people who lived 40 or 70 years under those regimes. And I am not speaking now only of the level of consumption. I am speaking, too, of the certainty that no plainclothes cop can come at 4 in the morning and say, "Take your toothbrush"--or don't take it, even--"it's over, you've had enough fun going on like that." That, indeed, is a huge difference. That said, this shows as well what can be called, if one is not too respectful of words, the "metaphysical" power of consumerism--that is to say, that the attitudes corresponding to the attitudes of a citizen who is a member of a consumer society have been transplanted into the GDR, into Czechoslovakia, into Poland, even before there was a shadow of a doubt of a hint of a consumer society, since there's still nothing of it there; in East Germany, which is the most privileged country from this standpoint, the merchandise is beginning to arrive, but people find it too expensive. It's too expensive for their salaries. Nothing is too expensive in the absolute. Nothing is too expensive for Mr. Trump \*\*\* [*laughter*].

In Czechoslovakia, the economic situation was never terribly catastrophic, but it hasn't changed. And yet people have immediately become like passive Western citizens. I think that that's very important. I think, for example, that in Latin American countries where the situation is not so tragic (as it is in Peru or in Bolivia)--in Brazil, for example (it is tragic in many spots, in the Northeast, etc. for the peasants or in the *favelas* in the interior; well, there are parts where it isn't tragic), but what's the situation in Brazil? It's this, that there isn't the consumer level one finds in the United States, in France, or in England or in Germany; there, in Brazil, the complement is no

doubt supplied by a supplement of television and soccer, plus Macumba of course, that is to say, magic. It is known that the Brazilian equivalents of *Dallas* enjoy huge success not only in Brazil; perhaps that's the thing that exports the best: their television series. As for soccer, one knows what's going on. The English are nothing by comparison. There is a collective fanaticism. Life is centered on soccer [*laughter*].

*A.I.*: Before closing this interview, perhaps we could speak of your professional life as an economist and psychoanalyst. How has your work gone as an economist and psychoanalyst?

*C.C.*: I don't know what can be said about that. I worked at OECD from '48 to '70. I was obliged to work, of course, in order to live, and at the same time it was very convenient because it gave me total legal cover, so long as what I was really doing wasn't known, since I was an international civil servant. In addition, it gave me a real [*effective*] knowledge of the economic operation of the capitalist countries. For 22 years, my work was to analyze the short-term and medium-term economic situation of all the "developed" countries, the wealthy countries. That played a certain role, moreover, in my decision to take back up the problem of Marx's economics; and it also taught me, from within, how a bureaucracy works at the highest levels, since not only was the OECD itself a bureaucracy--there weren't a lot of people, altogether 1,200-1,300 civil servants, but it was modeled on the upper reaches of administrative bureaucratic pyramids (apart, of course, from the typists, the General Secretary's driver, the cleaning ladies)--but especially, the economic reports we drew up each time were discussed, before publication, with the summits of the national economic bureaucracies. In France, it went from the Minister of Finances and the Governor of the Central Bank to the Director of the Treasury and to the Commissioner of the Plan. In Japan, it was the Vice-Minister of Finance and the Vice-Governor of the Bank of Japan, the Minister of MITI. The way those people reason and the distance there is between what they can decide and what happens in reality--in a sense, that was my daily job. Well, that wasn't what one was officially supposed to write about, but that was what I saw. In some of the things I wrote, in particular in relation to growth in the '70s, one can read, not just between the lines, the underlying reasons for the failure of incomes policy and of regional policies.

There were two periods in my work at OECD. During the first one, from '48 to '60, I could polish off my work in 4 hours. So, the other 4 hours I spent in a well-heated office with lots of very white, very thick paper [*laughter*] writing the articles for *S. ou B.* or anything that came into my head. In the main, what I wrote at the time were instead things that have not been published, philosophical things that are in boxes at home. Starting in '60, that changed because--while never having done anything to get promoted--I was promoted anyhow to Division Chief, then Deputy Director, then Director. And then, it was death, for the little bit of interest there was in the job that allowed me to have some firsthand contact with macroeconomic reality--analyzing the French economy, making Giscard d'Estaing come back from his vacation in '62-'63, when he had made a pseudoplan for stabilization, a piece of stupidity--was disappearing more and more beneath administrative tasks, managing 30 people, 60 people, then 120 people, 140 people, plus the first IBM for OECD, the implementation of the IT service, technical discussions about the choice of IBM or Burroughs computers, and all the rest. That didn't interest me at all. Especially managerial tasks. And so this second period was truly dreadful.

At the end of '68, I resolved the dilemma that had been haunting me for several years: whether or not to request naturalization, with the risk that it might instigate a police investigation. In the Autumn of '68, through an acquaintance I won't name, I was able to reassure myself that there would be no police investigation [*laughter*]. I requested naturalization in October of '70 and the day after the implementation of the decree I submitted my resignation, even though we were hard at work.

I began to practice psychoanalysis starting at the end of '73, and I continue today. That's much more difficult to talk about; it would take too much time. Speaking of the work of psychoanalyst, physically that has no meaning; everyone knows what it consists in. To speak of it from a more substantive standpoint is another matter. All that I can say is that it is gripping [*passionnant*] work, that one is constantly in contact with problems that touch on the human psychism and on the depths of the psychism (and at the same time it keeps the mind alert), from which arise a whole series of questions, even and perhaps especially philosophical questions, moreover.

*A.I.:* A last question: Your work is translated and read now across the five continents; do you believe that it retains its full relevance outside of what you call the Greco-Western tradition?

*C.C.:* You speak of the five continents. First of all, I am not read everywhere. There are translations in Australia and England; there are Japanese translations; there are going to be an Iranian translation and a Turkish translation;<sup>24</sup> there is also a text translated into Arabic. But there's nothing in Africa--well, something's going to be done in Tunisia--but as a matter of fact in those zones, there is a question of relevancy that does indeed get raised: what I write has meaning only for those people who, in a certain way, have become naturalized, if I may say so, mentally within the European or Greco-Western tradition. Does it have a relevance beyond? I don't know. I hope that those people will be able, starting from their own tradition, to make something on the basis of certain questions I have tried to think through, but that's a problem that goes far beyond my work.

Can the democratic and philosophical tradition, in the sense given to *philosophy* in Greco-Western history (because there is a Hindu philosophy--it matters little whether or not it will be called *philosophy*, let's not get into that quarrel--there's a Chinese form of thought, too, that is very important no doubt to the Chinese, but that's not the same thing), can what is done in general, the best of what is done in the West, and which belongs \*\*\* to a critical tradition, have a meaning for the Chinese or for Hindus, not to speak of Africans? I don't know. And truly speaking, it's not I who doesn't know; it's an absolutely unprecedented historical experiment in a sense. What has one known about this up till now? We have seen the Germans get themselves assimilated by the remnants of the Roman Empire and by Christianity. But as Henri Pirenne--the great one, the father--repeated *ad nauseam* in his *A History of Europe* (which is a masterpiece, even if it was written in '18, and which is to be read and reread), the Germans most certainly experienced the civilization they encountered as quite superior to their own. Of course today, a Palestinian-American woman will say that Pirenne was a Eurocentrist-male chauvinist-sexist-fascist because he says that the Barbarians got themselves assimilated by Greco-Roman (and, moreover, especially Latin) Christian civilization. But the fact is that they got themselves assimilated. They contributed a certain number of things--the institution of the jury, for example, it's certain that that's of Germanic and not Greek



origin. Can one say for all that that the Iranians', or the Arabs', or the Indians', or the Chinese people's relation to Western civilization is of the same type? Certainly not. Here we have civilizations that, for some of them, are older or as old--even if one dates Greece back to 1500 B.C. and the Hebrews to I don't know when--and on many points more refined, no question about it. The Chinese and the Japanese in relation to the rest of us, especially in relation to the Americans, are by far ultrarefined [*laughter*]. All that forms a whole. I don't know. The fertile path for broaching this question would be as follows: to transform the seeds of true universality the Greco-Western tradition contains in such a way that the others might make a fertile hybrid. I don't know if what I am saying is clear: it's not a matter here of some process of mechanical standardization, and not the "respecting difference" crap, all that nonsense people keep repeating all day long that it's enough to make you vomit. It's not a matter of respecting difference for the sake of respecting difference, but of a sort of universality that is capable of making room for alterity while maintaining it all the while as alterity, but while also creating a unity--right?--at a certain level that remains to be defined. That's something we ourselves still haven't done: well, after all, what have we drawn from these cultural forms (I am not even talking about the political problem per se)? Of course, during a certain time, we pulled out Japanese prints (an allusion to the fact that, around the year 1900, when a gentleman wanted to make an indecent proposition to a lady, he said, "I have a lovely collection of Japanese prints"--erotic ones, of course--"would you like to come up to my place to look at them?"). More generally, there is the problem of the relation of Japonaiseries and Chinoiseries to certain changes that took place in Western painting starting in 1850; likewise, Picasso's relation to *Art Nègre* and Aztec Art. Now there are some young Americans and young Europeans who do Transcendental Meditation. But aside from that? Few things have been drawn.

Could more have been drawn? Can one draw anything at all out of a culture? Does that mean anything? I believe that that's the fantastic problem, a very difficult question. What is going on today is assimilation at the lowest level, through consumer goods, videocassettes--or submachine guns, of course. A problem.

©1990-2008 Agora International. Partial transcription by François Loget, reviewed by David Ames Curtis. English-language translation by David Ames Curtis.

## Notes

1. “Done and To Be Done” (1989), now available in *The Castoriadis Reader*, ed. David Ames Curtis (Malden, MA and Oxford, England: Basil Blackwell, 1997), p. 371.
2. General Introduction (1972), in *Political and Social Writings*, vol. 1: 1946-1955, *From the Critique of Bureaucracy to the Positive Content of Socialism*, trans. and ed. David Ames Curtis (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), pp. 3-36.
3. “Boul’Mich” was student argot for the Boulevard Saint-Michel, which traverses the heart of Paris’s Latin Quarter; the “Saint” was thus elided among anticlerical students.
4. “On the Content of Socialism, II” (1957), now available in *Political and Social Writings*, vol. 2: 1955-1960, *From the Workers’ Struggle Against Bureaucracy to Revolution in the Age of Modern Capitalism*, trans. and ed. David Ames Curtis (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), pp. 90-154. (In each case, we provide the original date of publication, not the date of composition, of Castoriadis’s *S. ou B.* texts.)
5. Many of the texts from the first two volumes of Castoriadis’s *Political and Social Writings* were drawn from the initial two-volume “10/18” edition of *La Société bureaucratique* (1973).
6. “Sur le dynamique du capitalisme,” in *S. ou B.*, 12 (August-September 1953): 1-22, and in *S. ou B.*, 13 (January-March 1954): 60-81.
7. “Modern Capitalism and Revolution” (1960-1961), now available in *Political and Social Writings*, vol. 2, pp. 226-343.
8. “Recommencing the Revolution” (1964), now available in *Political and Social Writings*, vol. 3: 1961-1979, *Recommencing the Revolution: From Socialism to the Autonomous Society*, trans. and ed. David Ames Curtis (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), pp. 27-55.
9. “The Suspension of Publication of *Socialisme ou Barbarie*” (1967), *Political and Social Writings*, vol. 3, pp. 118-23.
10. Claude Lefort, “Le prolétariat et sa direction” (1952) and “Organisation et parti” (1958), reprinted in *Éléments d’une critique de la bureaucratie*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Gallimard, 1979), pp. 59-70 and 98-113.
11. Cornelius Castoriadis, “Le parti révolutionnaire” (1949), reprinted in *L’Expérience du mouvement ouvrier*, vol. 1, *Comment lutter* (Paris: Éditions 10/18, 1974), pp. 121-43, “Proletarian Leadership” (1952) and “Postface” (1974), in *Political and Social Writings*, vol. 1, pp. 198-205 and 205-6, as well as “Proletariat and Organization, I” (1959), now available in *Political and Social Writings*, vol. 2, pp. 193-222, and “Prolétariat et organisation, II” (1959), reprinted in *L’Expérience du mouvement ouvrier*, vol. 2, pp. 189-248.

12. See “On the Experience of ILO and ICO,” in “‘The Only Way to Find Out If You Can Swim Is to Get into the Water’: An Introductory Interview” (interview conducted January 26, 1974), now in *The Castoriadis Reader*, pp. 10-13.
13. See “Postface to ‘Recommencing the Revolution’” (1974), in *Political and Social Writings*, vol. 3, pp. 80-88, including the first Translator/Editor’s note, *ibid.*, pp. 85-87.
14. The Roneographed text “Réfléchir, agir, organiser” (Reflect, Act, Organize).
15. “The Anticipated Revolution” (May-June 1968) is now available in *Political and Social Writings*, vol. 3, pp. 124-56. *La Brèche* refers to a joint work on May ’68 by Edgar Morin, Claude Lefort, and Jean-Marc Coudray (Cornelius Castoriadis) published in June 1968. “La révolution anticipée,” the expanded version of “Réfléchir, agir, organiser,” appeared in *Mai 68: La Brèche* (Paris: Fayard, 1968), pp. 89-142, and in the second edition: Edgar Morin, Claude Lefort, and Cornelius Castoriadis, *Mai 68: La Brèche, suivi de Vingt ans après* (Brussels: Éditions Complexe, 1988), pp. 89-142.
16. General Introduction, *Political and Social Writings*, vol. 1, pp. 32-36.
17. Daniel and Gabriel Cohn-Bendit, *Le Gauchisme: remède à la maladie sénile du communisme* (Paris: Seuil, 1968), pp. 18-19.
18. “The Movements of the Sixties” (1968), now available in *World in Fragments. Writings on Politics, Society, Psychoanalysis, and the Imagination*, ed. and trans. David Ames Curtis (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997), pp. 47-57.
19. Claude Lefort, “De l’égalité à la liberté: Fragments d’interprétation de *La démocratie en Amérique*,” in *Libre: Politique-Anthropologie-philosophie*, 3 (1978): 211-46.
20. Cornelius Castoriadis, “La découverte de l’imagination,” *Libre: Politique-Anthropologie-philosophie*, 3 (1978): 155-89; now available in translation as “The Discovery of the Imagination,” *World in Fragments*, pp. 213-45.
21. “Devant la guerre (I),” *Libre*, 8 (1980): 217-50, now available as the first chapter of *Devant la guerre*, vol. 1, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Paris, Fayard, 1981), 13-51. Partial translation available as “Facing the War” trans. Joe Light, *Telos*, 46 (Winter 1980-81): 43-61. Under the title “Facing War,” this text appeared in translation in the second issue of *Solidarity Journal*.
22. Claude Lefort, *Un homme en trop: Essai sur “L’Archipel du Goulag”* (Paris: Le Seuil, 1975).
23. In an early 1996 interview granted after the November-December 1995 student and railway-worker strikes in France (“A Rising Tide of Significance? A Follow-Up Interview with *Drunken Boat*”, which appeared in *The Rising Tide of Insignificance (The Big Sleep)*, pp. 155-164--available at: [http://www.costis.org/x/castoriadis/Castoriadis-rising\\_tide.pdf](http://www.costis.org/x/castoriadis/Castoriadis-rising_tide.pdf) and at: <http://www.notbored.org/RTI.html>), Castoriadis says: “I have spoken to some friends about

beginning some kind of bulletin or journal” and he offers some additional comments about the possible goal of such a review.

24. Now published.