

# RADICAL IMAGINARY AND *SENSUS COMMUNIS*: JUDGMENT AND PRAXIS IN CASTORIADIS AND KANT

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## ABSTRACT

The present paper aims at manifesting the weaknesses that arise from the ontological interpretation and grounding of the radical imaginary in the work of Castoriadis. The perception of praxis as the incessant creation of a plethora of significations by means of the radical imaginary, as Habermas points out, allows neither praxis's interpretation in terms of an intersubjective practice nor the distinction between meaning and its normative validity. If the radical imaginary may give birth both to autonomy and heteronomy, good and evil, how can a normative account of the concept of praxis be given?

The paper will attempt to argue that the role the imagination plays in the formulation of the reflective judgments in Kant's *Critique of Judgment* in light of H. Arendt's interpretation of Kant, overcomes the aporias of the Castoriadis's ontological grounding of the radical imaginary by linking the normative validity of judgments with the intersubjective communication of the social actors.

## KEYWORDS

Autonomy, Heteronomy, Radical Imaginary, Society, History

## 1. PRAXIS AND AUTONOMY

The theoretical project of Cornelius Castoriadis seems to defy any classification based on the existent schools of thought and theoretical currents. His work dialogues with and relies upon a long tradition of the history of Philosophy aiming at subverting or re-interpreting it in view of the social transformation and the project of autonomy.

Agnes Heller characterizes Castoriadis “neo-Aristotelian” not on account of his inclusion in that school of thought but on account of his attempt to re-interpret the Aristotelian concept of praxis in light of modernity.<sup>1</sup>

Castoriadis’s translation of praxis in the idiom of modernity has a twofold aim: on the one hand, it intends to disclose modernity’s oxymoron to promulgate the new by making use of the conceptual material of the old. That refers to modernity’s unfulfilled promise to become incessantly the “radical new.” On the other hand, it aims at outlining the project of the political emancipation unfettered from the yoke of the orthodox Marxism and sustained, according to J. Habermas by “a radical hermeneutic self-interpretation of modern time-consciousness.”<sup>2</sup>

In opposition to Bible’s famous phrase, “in the beginning was the Logos,” destined to be the ground of almost all Western Philosophy, Castoriadis seems to subscribe to Goethe’s words in Faust, “in the beginning was the deed.” By refuting the primacy of theory haunted by the “phantasy of absolute knowledge”<sup>3</sup> and the self-complacent -almost conceited- vision of accumulating in “the strongboxes of its ‘demonstrations’. . . a treasure of everlasting truths,”<sup>4</sup> Castoriadis speaks of “theory in itself” as a “doing, the always uncertain attempt to realize the project of clarifying the world.”<sup>5</sup>

Castoriadis’s refusal to interpret praxis as the faultless implementation of an *a priori* theory is dictated not only by an epistemological modesty realizing the fragmentary and mutable character of knowledge; it mainly stems from the emphatic rejection of the identification of politics with technique. Dated in the beginnings of modernity, that identification gave birth to the ideal of an all-too-powerful subject resembling to an earthly God who dominates nature and constructs *a priori* states - as artifacts- in the “laboratory” of theory, which are of standards based on the thorough inquiry into human nature.

“But how could we think of society,” Castoriadis asks, “as the coexistence or the composition of elements that are held to pre-exist or that are supposed to be determined - really, logically, or teleologically - from elsewhere, when these so-called elements do exist as such and are only what they are in and through society?”<sup>6</sup>

Society, for Castoriadis, “is not a thing, not a subject, and not an idea - nor is it a collection or system of subjects, things and ideas.”<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Agnes Heller, “With Castoriadis to Aristotle, from Aristotle to Kant; From Kant to Us,” *Revue européenne des sciences sociales*, 1989, v. 27, No. 86, (pp 161-171), p. 161-162.

<sup>2</sup> J. Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, translated by Frederick Lawrence, Cambridge, Polity Press, p. 329.

<sup>3</sup> Cornelius Castoriadis, *The Imaginary Institution of Society*, translated by Kathleen Blamey, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2005 p. 72.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 89.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 74.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 178.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

Turning his gaze to the very moments of the birth of new institutions from the womb of revolutionary explosions, reforms, and new significations, Castoriadis renounces once and for all any claim to the articulation of a theory of society. “Society,” he writes, “establishes itself as a mode and a type of coexistence”.<sup>8</sup>

The interpretation of society in terms of self-institution, and incessant creation of new worlds emphatically rejects the primacy of theory and the role it plays as the procrustean bed upon which it tries to make praxis fit; moreover, society as self-institution manifests the significance of praxis the conception of which relies largely on a modern translation of the Aristotelian tradition.

In opposition to the Aristotelian *poiesis* and Castoriadis’s *teukhein*, both of which are reduced to the rational organization of means for achieving an end, and hence, the ends they set are not contained within themselves as their immanent determinations,<sup>9</sup> *praxis* is no subject to the interpretive scheme of means-ends. To put it differently, *praxis* brings within itself its own end which is in fact identified with a principle or imperative preceding theory: that of the autonomy of other or others “which is at once the end and the means.”<sup>10</sup> For Castoriadis, “praxis is what intends the development of autonomy as its end and, for this end, uses autonomy as its means.”<sup>11</sup> But what is autonomy or self-institution, according to Castoriadis? In his own words:

“. . . the Law not to be simply given, but for me to give it to myself at the same time. The person who remains constantly in the infantile situation is the conformist and the apolitical person, for they accept the Law without any discussion and do not want to participate in shaping it.”<sup>12</sup>

Behind that plain -almost stripped of any philosophical idiom- formulation could be traced the Kantian project of the Enlightenment summarized in the famous imperative, *Sapere Aude*: “Have courage to use your own understanding!”<sup>13</sup> Castoriadis’s “conformist” and the “apolitical person” could be the “immature” individual who is giving his/her judgment over to various intellectual guardians and whose main features are “laziness and cowardice,”<sup>14</sup> referred to by Kant in his Enlightenment Essay. That Kantian “immaturity” identified with heteronomy refers to the

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 181.

<sup>9</sup> “The ‘end’, ‘result’, ‘product’ in view of which the means, tool, instrument or act is posited or simply is, does not exist ‘effectively’ at the moment when this positing is made. It exists as an aim, an intention, and this intention can exist socially only as an *eidos*, form or type, an instituted figure representing that which is, possibly, going to exist.” (Ibid., p. 263).

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 75.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 93.

<sup>13</sup> “An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?” in *Kant Political Writings*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992, p. 54.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

uncritical endorsement as “true” or “right” of anything dictated by authority, tradition, and dogma rather than of anything infiltrated by the sieve of Reason the right use of which is equivalent, for Kant, with its public use.

Though Castoriadis’s insights on autonomy are mainly inspired by the ideal of the self-governed citizen of the Athenian Democracy, they could also be viewed as the political and social correlate of the Kantian “*will of every rational being as a will giving universal law*”<sup>15</sup> and acting as if it were “a lawgiving member of the universal kingdom of ends.”<sup>16</sup>

The *prima facie* similarities between Kant and Castoriadis are rather misleading. Castoriadis converses with the Kantian *opus* in a rather small number of pages in *The Imaginary Institution of Society* focusing essentially on Kant’s account of imagination developed in the *Critique of Judgment*. This is not surprising if one considers that even Kant’s transcendental idealism is included, for Castoriadis, in the aspects and manifestations of ensemblistic-identitary logic. By rendering anything once and for all the determinable and determined part of an ensemble, identitary logic is indubitably the necessary presupposition of the existence and reproduction of society. And how could it be otherwise since, for Castoriadis, *legein*, i.e., the social representing/saying<sup>17</sup> and *teukein*, i.e., the social doing, both of which constitute the pillars of the aforementioned identitary logic, make possible the very existence of society in general? As Castoriadis himself writes:

“For we could neither think nor speak if we were to abandon identitary logic entirely. We can question it only by using it; bring it into doubt only by confirming it in part.”<sup>18</sup>

Expressed in Castoriadis’s philosophical idiom, there always “exists a layer or a stratum of what is, of what is given.”<sup>19</sup> This is the first natural stratum referring to the unmediated fact of nature -both the external and the human as the biological dimension of human being, the institution of society in terms of the ensemblistic-identitary logic has been based upon. Though the ensemblistic-identitary logic is a necessary condition of the institution of society as to ensure the means of survival and the communication codes -inter alia- it is by no means exhausted by it.

<sup>15</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, translated and edited by Mary Gregor, and with an Introduction by Christine Korsgaard, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006, 4:431, p. 39.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 4: 438, p. 45.

<sup>17</sup> *The Imaginary Institution of Society*, p. 238.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 228.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

## 2. THE UNFULFILLED PROMISE OF MODERNITY: CASTORIADIS'S CRITICISM OF IDENTITARY LOGIC

The originality of the terms Castoriadis creates to conceive of society's modes of existence and the never-ending explosions of history consists in his break with the whole of the history of thought occasioned by his diagnosis of the "imprisonment" of Philosophy by the identitary logic. For Castoriadis, not only is Ontology, i.e., the premodern philosophical idiom of an immutable, unperturbed world which "is," captive to the ensemblistic-identitary logic but also modern philosophy itself. The latter whose condition of existence is its very resistance and opposition to the standstill of ontological thinking has implicitly surrendered to the standstill of the identitary logic, according to Castoriadis's argument. Though expelled by modernity's project of the incessant creation of the "new," the temporality and the becoming, Ontology seems to have returned insidiously, dressed in new forms.

Following the periodization of the history of thought Castoriadis makes, according to the extent of Philosophy's assimilation by identitary logic, one may vaguely discern two approaches: The first reduces the representation to "a projection screen which, unfortunately, separates the 'subject' and the 'thing.'"<sup>20</sup> Representation plays the role of a camera reflecting an order of things which simply "is." The second approach views the "object" as the product of thought proclaiming the "I think" to the *sine qua non* presupposition of anything that exists. If the first approach pertains to the tradition of Ontology, the second is the hallmark of Idealism. In the first approach the thing is there, already given, I relate to it passively<sup>21</sup> as a humble subject who "gazes upon a black sky in which the star of the idea, or of Being is said to rise,"<sup>22</sup> to recall Adorno's *Negative Dialectics* which casts its own severe criticism of the identity thinking. The second approach by contrast views anything that exists as the projection of the subject. Reducing both the subject and the object to the "forever intemporal (*aei*)"<sup>23</sup> which erodes any creation in Castoriadis's sense of term, i.e., as "a genesis that is not a mere becoming, generation and corruption, engendering of the same by the same as a different exemplar of the same type, but is instead the emergence of otherness, ontological genesis, that brings about beings as eidos, and as the *ousia* of eidos, another manner and another type of being and of being-a-being."<sup>24</sup> The identitary logic fully justifies reality as it "is." It is another

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 329.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 332.

<sup>22</sup> T. W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, translated by E. B. Ashton, London, Routledge, 1990, p. 140.

<sup>23</sup> *The Imaginary Institution of Society*, p. 181.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 181.

version of TINA (“there is no alternative”) or, as Adorno claims, mythological thinking since mythical “is that which never changes.”<sup>25</sup>

Adorno's polemic against identity thinking is carried out with weapons supplied by the Hegelian dialectic itself. He resorts to the Hegelian "negativity" and "contradiction" that read "is" as the context of “becoming” by purifying at the same time Hegel's version of dialectics from its strict teleology.

On the contrary, for Castoriadis, the emancipation from identitary logic is equivalent to the emancipation from dialectics, which he considers merely a variation of identitary logic. This is not “because Hegel employs identitary terms - otherwise, how could he speak? - but because he operates essentially with the schema or hyper category of determinacy.”<sup>26</sup> Dialectics' “becoming” is not annulling the “being.” Instead, in Castoriadis's own words, “the different must be identical and the identical must be different or capable of differentiating itself, multiplying itself, making itself plural without ceasing to be the same.”<sup>27</sup> In his criticism of the popular schemes of the Philosophy of History, Castoriadis considers the end of any teleological view of history as imminent and in fact preordained to the extent that it constitutes nothing other than the unfolding and realization of possibilities inherent in the essence or concept of a being. In his own words:

“. . . for every complete and necessary teleology, everything is controlled from the end, and the end is posited and determined already at the start of the process, positing and determining the means that will make it appear as accomplished.”<sup>28</sup>

Admittedly, the teleological consideration confines itself not merely to the Hegelian dialectics and its materialist translation and concerns not only history but also nature. In Kant's *Critique of Judgment*, living organisms are analyzed and understood exclusively in terms of teleology, precisely because the function of their parts is perceived only in relation to the whole that precedes them. Moreover, a living organism is both the "cause and effect"<sup>29</sup> of itself. Kant illustrates the above position through the example of the epigenetic process of a tree: First, a tree, according to Kant, “generates another tree of the same species - *Gattung*-. Hence, “the tree produces itself: within its species, it is both cause and effect. . .”<sup>30</sup> Second, “a tree also produces itself as an individual,”<sup>31</sup> and finally, it can regenerate damaged parts of it.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>25</sup> *Negative Dialectics*, p. 56.

<sup>26</sup> *The Imaginary Institution of Society*, p. 341.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 194.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 173.

<sup>29</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, translated by Werner Pluhar, Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1987, p. 249 [Ak. 5: 370].

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 249, [Ak. 5: 371].

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 250, [Ak. 5:371].

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 250 [Ak 5: 372].

In opposition then to a mechanism, a living organism or “an organized product of nature”, Kant writes, “is one in which everything is a purpose and reciprocally also a means. In such a product nothing is gratuitous, purposeless, or to be attributed to a blind natural mechanism”<sup>33</sup>

The above thesis constitutes in fact the core of the first proposition of Kant’s essay on history, according to which, “all the natural capacities of a creature are destined sooner or later to be developed completely and in conformity with their end. . . An organ which is not meant for use or an arrangement which does not fulfil its purpose is a contradiction in the teleological theory of nature.”<sup>34</sup> That proposition surely entails the idea of the whole of nature as a teleological system.

It is precisely against the above teleological conceptions, which captive to the identitary logic, reproduce but not create that Castoriadis argues. He formulates himself a new idiom by breaking with and transcending the limits of the so far accepted theoretical tradition. To the Kantian version of the teleology of nature and history, the Hegelian dialectics and its materialist translation, even to the Platonic conception of Demiurge as “craftsman” rather than Creator, Castoriadis juxtaposes creation, not as repetition, reproduction or mimesis of the already existing but as the construction or creation of a different species.

Resorting to the Aristotelian categories of matter and form -with the former playing the role of the ‘container’ receiving the latter, Castoriadis gives the example of a statue made of bronze. If the bronze is determined as such irrespectively of the form it takes, the statue is solely defined via its form. As Castoriadis writes:

“So, to say that someone creates the statue (ontologically) is meaningful only if we say (which is true, at least for the sculptor who is not copying any other sculptor) that someone creates the *eidos* of the statue, that what is created is the *eidos*. The statue is brought into being as a statue and as this particular statue only if its *eidos* is invented, imagined, posited out of nothing.”<sup>35</sup>

The historical analogue of the above could be, for example, the institution of *polis* which “neither imitates nor repeats anything but is the creation of an *eidos*.”<sup>36</sup> Viewed from that perspective, history cannot be viewed as the transition to the terminus of a planned route or the “happy end” of an already written script, and consequently cannot be divided into stages each of which is normatively superior from the preceding one. What is given, Castoriadis claims “in and through history is not the determined sequence of the determined but the emergence of radical otherness, immanent creation, non-trivial novelty.”<sup>37</sup> History is, therefore, “impossible and

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 255 [Ak 5:376].

<sup>34</sup> “Idea of a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose,” in *Kant: Political Writings*, p. 42.

<sup>35</sup> *The Imaginary Institution of Society*, p. 197.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 184.

inconceivable outside of the productive or creative imagination, outside of. . . the radical imaginary.”<sup>38</sup>

### 3. THE RADICAL IMAGINARY AND ITS APORIAS

The social-historical, for Castoriadis, as “the radical imaginary, namely the incessant originating of otherness”<sup>39</sup> expresses and illuminates itself as “explosion, split, rupture - the rupture of what is as such.”<sup>40</sup> This is because it refers not to the “future perfect” of society, to its already existing institutions and structures, which sometimes appear as an “other,” beyond and outside the will of the social actors, but to those revolutionary moments that the instituting social enters violently into the scene of history and begins to form its fluid matter.

In conclusion, if the condition of possibility of any society is the imaginary, then “the institution of society is in each case the institution of a magma of social imaginary significations, which we can and must call a world of significations.”<sup>41</sup> These social imaginary significations, which create *ex nihilo* and organize the world -both the external and the social, include *-inter alia-* the historical formations, the Greek cities, the national states, the empires but also the tools and the machines.<sup>42</sup> When Marx was writing that “a machine is no more, in itself, capital than gold is, in itself, money.”<sup>43</sup> He meant, according to Castoriadis, that “for a machine to become capital, it has to be placed within the network of socio-economic relations which capitalism institutes.”<sup>44</sup>

Borrowing material from diverse theoretical currents and Schools, such as the Freudian unconscious, the Aristotelian psyche, and the Kantian imagination, Castoriadis delineates the process of the social institution of individual in terms of a history of the psyche. Psyche as the place of the radical imagination of the subject, which is defined as the incessant “representative (-affective-intentional) flux” that only death puts an end to, Castoriadis argues, creates *ex nihilo* the first representation like God “out of a nothingness of representation, that is to say, out of nothing.”<sup>45</sup> And the inverse holds: For Castoriadis, the entry of the psyche into the world

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 146.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 204. Castoriadis defines the social-historical as “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.” (Ibid., p. 108).

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 201.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 359.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 359-360.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 356.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 283.



is marked by the imposition of the social institutions. Only the institution of society, Castoriadis maintains, “can bring the psyche out of its originary monadic madness.”<sup>46</sup>

This *ex nihilo* genesis of a universe of representations prior to language, emerging like volcanic lava from the depths of the imaginary soul, gives birth to the private world of the individual, constantly collides with the socially instituted world, and fails to offer a form of mediation between individual and society. This constitutes the main point of Habermas's criticism of Castoriadis. As Habermas points out:

“Society breaks down the childlike monads and transforms them. The type proper to the socially institutionalized world is impressed upon the individual. Thus, the process of socialization is depicted in the model of crafts production. The socialized individual is produced and, as in Durkheim, remains divided into monad and member of society.”<sup>47</sup>

Castoriadis's claim on the inseparability and yet irreducibility of society to psyche<sup>48</sup> could possibly be a reply to Habermas's critique and an attempt to overcome the dilemma between the conception of the social individual on the one hand, as a replica of society while on the other, as a creative imagination, capricious, arbitrary, and subject to no rules and social norms. Castoriadis seems to be trapped to the dilemma of having to choose between an omnipotent creator, inspired by the Fichtean Ego that posits itself, and a robot which monotonously and stereotypically reproduces the socially instituted. His account of the irreducibility of society and psyche does not manage to refute convincingly Habermas's criticism according to which “the anonymous hurly-burly of the institutionalization of ever new worlds from the imaginary dimension”<sup>49</sup> leaves no room “for an intersubjective praxis for which socialized individuals are accountable”<sup>50</sup>, and consequently “permits no differentiation between meaning and validity.”<sup>51</sup>

Moreover, since the institution of any society is a *creatio ex nihilo*, the question “why a society institutes a specific horizon of meanings”<sup>52</sup> not only is it not answered but it is dismissed out of hand. As Agnes Heller claims, Castoriadis's radical imaginary may give birth both to good and evil but not to the criterion of distinguishing them.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 309.

<sup>47</sup> J. Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, p. 334.

<sup>48</sup> *The Imaginary Institution of Society*, p. 320.

<sup>49</sup> *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, p. 330.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 331.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 332.

<sup>53</sup> Agnes Heller, “With Castoriadis to Aristotle, from Aristotle to Kant; From Kant to Us,” p. 168, 170.

The impasses of the radical imaginary seem to stem from Castoriadis's rather hasty movement to include the Kantian faculty of imagination to the emsemblistic-identantitary logic and his effort to "correct" it by lapsing back into an Ontology which renounces any normative account of the intersubjective praxis. In what follows, I will maintain that Kant himself of the *Critique of Judgment* viewed with the spectacles of H. Arendt's interpretation could enrich the concept of imagination.

#### 4. THINKING WITH KANT AGAINST CASTORIADIS

The crux of Castoriadis's critique of the Kantian concept of imagination consists in underlining its productive rather than creative character. "This corresponds perfectly", Castoriadis argues, "to the role he had necessarily to assign to it: always to produce the same forms, forms that are valid only in so far as they perform determined functions in and for knowledge of given data."<sup>54</sup>

That could be regarded as a valid critique if one goes back to the very definition of imagination Kant develops in his *Critique of Pure Reason*. According to that: "Imagination is the faculty of representing in intuition an object that is not itself present."<sup>55</sup> Moreover, the synthesis of the manifold of intuitions is the "first origin of our knowledge" and the "mere result of the power of imagination"<sup>56</sup> in "providing an image for a concept", Kant calls schema.<sup>57</sup>

The question that arises, however, concerns whether the Kantian imagination identifies itself solely with the above reproductive role assigned to it by Kant in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, i.e., with the re-presentation, the image of an object that is not present.

Comparing genius with the taste which takes the form of a reflective judgment in the famous paragraph 50 of the *Critique of Judgment*, Kant considers the latter of greater significance. In his own words:

"In order [for a work] to be beautiful, it is not strictly necessary that [it] be rich and original in ideas, but it is necessary that the imagination in its freedom be commensurate with the lawfulness of the understanding. For if the imagination is left in lawless freedom, all its riches [in ideas] produce nothing but nonsense, and it is judgment that adapts the imagination to the understanding. Taste, like the power of judgment in general, consists in disciplining (or training) genius. It severely clips its wings, and makes it civilized, or polished; but at the same time, it gives it guidance as to how far and over what it may spread while still remaining purposive. It introduces clarity and order into a wealth of thought, and hence makes the ideas durable, fit for approval

<sup>54</sup> *The Imaginary Institution of Society*, p. 199.

<sup>55</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, translated by Norman Kemp Smith, London, Macmillan Press, 1992, B 151, p. 165.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, B 103, p. 111-112.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, B 180, p. 182.

that is both lasting and universal, and [hence] fit for being followed by others and fit for an ever-advancing culture.”<sup>58</sup>

While then the creation of a beautiful work requires genius, for Kant, or the radical imaginary, for Castoriadis, its judgment requires taste. While genius for Kant is bound up with the creative imagination, taste refers to the faculty of Judgment.<sup>59</sup> Apparently a judgment cannot exist without an artwork – and how could it exist since a judgment is always a judgment on something, and conversely: a beautiful object is worth its name in virtue of its being subject to a judgment of taste which Kant includes to the reflective judgments. To recall the distinction Kant makes in the *Critique of Judgment*:

“Judgment in general is the ability to think the particular as contained under the universal. If the universal (the rule, principle, law) is given, then judgment, which subsumes the particular under it, is *determinative*. . . But if only the particular is given and judgment has to find the universal for it, then this power is merely reflective.”<sup>60</sup>

What is the criterion of validity of the reflective judgment though and what is the role the faculty of imagination plays?

The criterion of validity of that type of judgment seems to be its public exposure, i.e., its communicability to the domain of public sphere. Disclosing the political implications of the Kantian reflective judgment, Hannah Arendt pointedly remarks that when Kant refers to the “public use of Reason” he means something more than the freedom of expression. He refers to the very condition of the possibility of thinking. No thinking can ever be possible without its being subject to the test of publicity.<sup>61</sup> In Arendt’s words, “when one judges, one judges as a member of a community.”<sup>62</sup> He/she is guided by the “common sense” -*sensus communis*- which is a community sense referring to the community of actors, spectators, and judges of the work of creative imagination. The Kantian *sensus communis* seen from the perspective of Arendt’s interpretation is a kind of communicative action that renders judgments and thoughts communicable via speech.

According to Kant, the maxims of the *sensus communis* are the following three:

<sup>58</sup> *Critique of Judgment*, p. 188, [Ak 5: 319].

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, par. 48. In the beginning of the paragraph, Kant writes: “Judging beautiful objects to be such requires taste; but fine art itself, i.e., production of such objects, requires genius” (p. 179, Ak 5: 311) and he concludes by specifying taste: “. . . taste is merely an ability to judge, not to produce; and if something conforms to it, that [fact] does not yet make the thing a work of fine art” (p. 181, Ak 5: 313).

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18-19, Ak 5: 179.

<sup>61</sup> H. Arendt, *Lectures on Kant’s Political Philosophy*, edited and with an interpretive essay by Ronald Beiner, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1982, p. 39.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 72.

First, “to think for oneself” emancipated from prejudices and superstitions. This is the Enlightenment’s imperative of autonomy.<sup>63</sup>

The second maxim requires “to think from the standpoint of everyone else”<sup>64</sup> and refers to “a broadened way of thinking” for which one should reflect “on his own judgments from a *universal standpoint* (which he can determine only by transferring himself to the standpoint of others).<sup>65</sup>

Finally, the third maxim concerns “a *consistent* way of thinking.”<sup>66</sup>

The crucial role the imagination plays mainly concerns the second maxim, that of the “broadened way of thinking.” The center of gravity falls not so much on the impartiality of the spectator’s judgment that Adam Smith formulates in his *Theory of Moral Sentiments* but on the emancipation from the burdens and limitations of a subjective, private judgment and the inclusion in its field of the judgments of others which is achieved by putting ourselves in their own position in virtue of our imagination.

While Castoriadis’s radical imagination refers finally to an ontologically grounded, creating *ex nihilo* solitary psyche, the Kantian imagination constructs a modern and enlightened community. And if the lava of the imaginary significations gives birth to the radically new, just as the Kantian genius is breaking and overcoming the given standards, the Kantian spectator seeks to reflect, embody, or reject these standards via his imagination. Yet he is doing so neither as the lonely spectator from the standpoint of an absolute knowledge nor as a rational member of a kingdom of ends but as the member of a historical community and at the same time as a citizen of the world.

Last but not least, Castoriadis’s radical imagination embodied in the active social actors who neither found “democracy amidst the other wild flowers growing on the Pnyx”, nor “unearth the Commune when they dug up the boulevards,”<sup>67</sup> but invented instead new modes of existence and co-existence is not opposed to the Kantian spectator. On the contrary, Castoriadis’s revolutionist seems finally to pave the way to the conditions of the possibility of exercising public criticism, of the validity of justice and rationality, of the truth of any institution, idea, custom, signification. Castoriadis’s social actor seems in the end, to pave the way to the Kantian judge-spectator: the way of the autonomy.

<sup>63</sup> *Critique of Judgment*, pp. 160-1, Ak 5: 294.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 160, Ak 5: 294.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 161, Ak 5: 295

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 161, Ak 5: 295.

<sup>67</sup> *The Imaginary Institution of Society*, p. 133.