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History in the philosophy of Cornelius Castoriadis

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Abstract

This dissertation is an introduction and presentation of the philosophy of the Greek-born French philosopher Cornelius Castoriadis (1922-1997). It studies its aspects relevant to the theory of history, and to the history of ideas. The first part is devoted to the genesis of his philosophy, which through a critique of Marxism, posits the basis on an anti-rationalist and objectivist approach of history. It criticises the absolute determinist approach of traditional philosophy of history and proposes a mid-way between relativism and causality : the indeterminacy of human actions are always considered in their historical context. The second part of this work puts forward the original elements that form Castoriadis' philosophy of history : the notion of radical imaginary is the creative momentum for the emergence of the "other", of the new. As such a society which is always what it is in and by itself, in the channel through which the creative force of the radical imaginary can emerge. As such, social significations are always imagined, and in the closing commentary, it is explained how the tradition of critical approach and hence the tradition of democracy are never given, but are a necessary constant and self-regulated creative force. It concludes on the problems of adapting the theory to the history of ideas, as there is always a certain discrepancy between a theoretical corpus and its methodological application, and shows the relevance of an author like Castoriadis who, while acting outside the field of history, offers interesting perspectives of historical interpretation and is of major relevance to the debate on the philosophy of history of ideas.