From Resistance to Autonomy: Power and Social Change in the Work of Castoriadis and Foucault

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Abstract: *The philosophical trajectories of Castoriadis and Foucault share the goal of bringing about a social change based on freedom and autonomy. This common ground, however, along with its philosophical presuppositions, varies a great deal. In this article, I intend to highlight the differences and similarities of the political philosophy of Castoriadis and Foucault with regard to their common goal of social change. In the first section, I examine Castoriadis's project of individual and collective autonomy on the basis of his ontology of creation. In the second section, I analyse Foucault's "dialectics" of power and resistance. I conclude that Castoriadis's project offers a much more concrete potential of social change in comparison with Foucault's vague "dialectics".*

Keywords: *Castoriadis, Foucault, autonomy, power, freedom*

1. INTRODUCTION

Cornelius Castoriadis and Michel Foucault lived most of their lives in France. They both began developing their work after 1945, a period marked by the end of World War II and the subsequent flourishing of existentialism, phenomenology, structuralism, psychoanalysis and Marxism. They were immensely influenced by the philosophical trends of their era, but they both followed quite distinct philosophical paths, reflecting their different backgrounds respectively. Whereas Foucault is considered one of the major thinkers of postmodern thought, Castoriadis distanced himself from postmodernism by developing an autonomous political philosophy. Despite the immense differences, their work is penetrated by striking similarities. As Marcela Tovar-Rest repo puts it: "Both Castoriadis and Foucault sought to contest modernist and rationalistic perspectives that implied unified and objective realities, absolute values, and transcendental ideas or forms of subjects. They opposed metaphysical philosophical traditions, criticizing any ultimate anthropological foundation, such as reason, or any teleological vision of history or human progress"[1]. Finally, they both shared the goal of bringing about a social change based on the values of freedom and autonomy.

I make the claim, however, that even this common goal varies a great deal. In the first section, I demonstrate Castoriadis's political philosophy on the basis of his ontology of creation. In the second section, I illustrate Foucault's analytics of power and resistance. In agreement with Tovar-Rest repo, I argue that Castoriadis's project of individual and collective autonomy offers a much more concrete liberating potential in comparison with Foucault's vague "dialectics" of power and resistance. The goal of this paper is to further highlight this potential in light of the differences between two of the most important thinkers of our time.

2. THE PROJECT OF INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE AUTONOMY

Castoriadis's work was influenced by diverse streams of thought, including ancient Greek philosophy, modern philosophy, contemporary physics and mathematics, psychoanalysis, phenomenology, political economy, ecology and Marxism. He joined the communist party in Greece in 1941 to abandon it one year later, accusing it of chauvinism, authoritarianism and centralism. He then joined the trotskyist group of A. Stinas, but he left it also to form together with Claude Lefort an autonomous group in France, which published the journal *Socialisme ou Barbarie* from 1949 till 1965. In the 40 issues of the journal, Castoriadis developed a radical critique of both capitalism and Marxism, resulting in the redefinition of the content of socialism, the latter crystallized in his project of individual and collective autonomy. In his later writings, the project of individual and collective autonomy was supplemented with the logic-ontology of Magmas, the traces of which had already appeared in *Socialisme ou Barbarie,* but developed further due to Castoriadis's professional engagement with psychoanalysis. From his magnum opus *The Imaginary Institution of Society* till the latest issues of *The Crossroads of the Labyrinth*, the

evolution of his thought encompassed a variety of philosophical, political and epistemological subjects, much of the content of which we are still to apprehend in depth.

Castoriadis is best recognized to the general public for his project of individual and collective autonomy, which epitomizes his conceptualization of socialism. Castoriadis defines socialism as the collective self-management of economy and society *in toto* on the basis of a direct democracy that introduces a positive freedom in contrast to reflexive or negative freedom[2]. Freedom is neither an autonomy deriving from a moral imperative (Kant) nor the unobstructed exercise of some basic liberal rights, but the equality of all in the creation of the law governing society. Freedom is the precondition of the individual and collective autonomy, for it permits the participation of all citizens in the formation of the law. "What is at issue is not inner freedom, but *effective, social, concrete* freedom, namely, to mention one primary feature, the largest possible space for movement and activity the institution of society can ensure for the individual. This freedom can exist only as dimension and mode of the institution of society […] A free society is a society in which power is actually exercised by the collectivity, but a collectivity in which all effectively participate in equality. And this equality of effective participation, as goal to attain, must not remain a purely formal rule; it must be insured, as much as possible, by actual institutions"[3]. Socialism consists, thus, in the self-institutionalization of society on the basis of a direct democracy introducing a positive notion of freedom as the precondition of individual and collective autonomy.

Castoriadis locates the first traces of autonomy in the birth of ancient Greek philosophy and democracy. Autonomy manifested anew in western European modernity with the emergence of the social movements of the Renaissance, the Reformation, the Enlightment and the English and French revolution[4]. Castoriadis relates also the notion of autonomy to Marxism and the correlated movements of workers, women, and students in the 19th and 20th century, opposing the bureaucracy of capitalism. However, Castoriadis disengages later from Marxism by developing his own project of individual and collective autonomy, thus opposing both Marxism and capitalism.

Castoriadis's relation to Marx has long been examined in a series of works[5]. I will just dwell here on some basic points. Castoriadis argues that Marx was sedated by the dream of positivism to discover the eternal laws of nature and society in terms of "the rational mastery of the unlimited expansion of technology and economy on nature and society"[6]. Marx attempted to become the Newton of history by developing a "final" theory of historical materialism based on technological determinism. Marx reversed the Absolute Spirit of his teacher Hegel into the matter of nature, which takes the form of the productive forces of human species, as they evolve in techno science and industry. Marx was equally sedated by the economism of capitalism in placing the economy into the center of politics and adopting capitalism's model of homo economics. Finally, Castoriadis argues that the work of later Marx took dominance over the revolutionary element of younger Marx. In the so-called socialist states of former Eastern Bloc regimes, Marx's project was transformed into the political dogma of Leninist-Stalinist Marxism.

Castoriadis holds that the basic contradiction of capitalism is not the one between capitalists and the proletariat, but between directors and executants. The fundamental flaw of capitalism lies in the fact that workers are obliged to participate in the production insofar as they do not interfere with the planning process. This results in an enormous waste due to untapped capacities and a constant class struggle[7]. The contradiction between directors and executants expands from economy into society as a whole. People experience their lives as something alien, inasmuch as they cannot participate in the decision-making of their own lives. People are treated as mere objects, while they ought to be the sole subjects of their lives, fulfilling their aspirations to the best of their needs and abilities. Thus, the solution to this contradiction is not the abolition of private property, the nationalization of production and the planning of economy by the State, which according to Castoriadis re-establishes a new inequality between the state and the workers, but the management of economy and society *in toto* by citizens themselves[8]. Socialism is not the teleological endpoint of history epitomized by a "scientific" political theory represented by a party of supermen, but the un leasing of the free creative activity of the masses. Naturally, the question of how the latter version of socialism could be realized arises immediately.

For Castoriadis, the basic principle of socialism is direct democracy, established first and foremost at the level of production, and applying furthermore into all spheres of society accordingly. Direct democracy operates through councils at each enterprise, in which all workers participate equally by means of transparent information. On conditions of global interdependence and decentralization of economy, the councils of workers from the base of an

assembly of all councils represented by a central government. Both the councils and the government are composed of revocable delegates, who guarantee the implementation of decisions made at the base of each enterprise. Analogous types of councils form the center of the concentric spheres of society, beginning from the workplace and expanding equally into all spheres[9].

Socialism presupposes the abolition of the capitalist division of labour by means of the horizontal cooperation of experts and workers, the rotation of tasks, and, finally, the mutual control of work by workers themselves. Additionally, technology could be humanized in order to turn robotization of work into poetry. Work should not be a chore, an activity of misery, boredom and alienation, but the outcome of creation, self-fulfillment and cooperation. Workers should be the masters of machines, not their slaves. The humanization of technology could contribute, thus, in turning the working day into meaningful and joyful activity. Castoriadis notes that the real problem of society consists in abolishing the distinction between production and leisure by granting the individuals the autonomy necessary to define their lives freely. "The problem is to make all time a time of liberty and to allow concrete freedom to embody itself in creative activity. The problem is to put poetry into work. (Strictly speaking, poetry means creation.) Production is not something negative that has to be limited as much as possible for mankind to fulfill itself in its leisure. The instauration of autonomy is also – and in the first place – the instauration of autonomy in work"[10]. The reduction of the working day would follow the redistribution of the social product by the abolition of the hierarchy of salaries, wages and incomes[11], and the subsequent establishment of a truly democratic market based on the sovereignty of the consumer.

Finally, information technology could support an overall planning of economy, as computers can store and update all data necessary for decisions concerning management, investment, consumption, production, and so on[12]. On the basis of data available to all in full transparency, discussions would be held at the assemblies of each enterprise, proposals would be submitted, and decisions would be taken in terms of majority vote[13]. Castoriadis yet emphasizes that no plan, however perfect it might seem, can be a panacea for all problems. No technical rationality can replace human imagination. The plan will be susceptible to constant revision in accordance with the ever-changing human needs[14].

In his later writings, Castoriadis will supplement the project of individual and collective autonomy with his logic-ontology of Magmas, the traces of which had already appeared on the journal *Socialisme ou Barbarie*[15]. As already mentioned, the project of individual and collective autonomy consists in the self-institutionalization of society on the basis of direct democracy. Castoriadis chooses the term "self-institutionalization" instead of "grassroots democracy" because of the meaning he attributes to the notion of the institution. In Castoriadis's work – the most representative sample of which is *The Imaginary Institution of Society* –, Being is Chaos or Abyss characterized by two essential attributes: in determinacy and creation[16]. "Chaos with irregular stratification: meaning that it includes partial «organizations», specific each time for the various strata we discover (discover / establish, discover / create) within Being"[17]. Being is a non-ensemblistic diversity/multiplicity characterised by the logic-ontology of Magmas. "A magma is that from which one can extract (or in which one can construct) an indefinite number of ensemblistic organizations but which can never be reconstituted (ideally) by a (finite or infinite) ensemblistic composition of these organizations"[18]. Being as Magma consists of three intertwined strata: *physis,* the psyche andthe social-historical. *Physis* splits into the non-living being (inorganic nature) and the living being (organic nature). Castoriadis draws on the notion of the biological autonomy of Varelato demonstrate that the living being consists in the elementary imaginary (*élémentaire imaginaire)*, which unfolds in the forms of intentionality, affect and representation[19]. The elementary imaginary evolves furthermore into the radical imaginary of the human psyche. Castoriadis builds on Freud's notion of representation to demonstrate that the radical imaginary, that is, the free representational / affective / intentional flux of the human psyche, transforms into the social imaginary, which crystallizes into the magma of the imaginary significations of the anonymous collective, that is, the social-historical. The social-historical in its turn evolves into the form of the institution.

The institution develops in two forms: *the instituting* and *the instituted*[20]*. The instituted* is based on *the instituting* capacity of the social imaginary. As such, *the instituted* is a creation of the anonymous collective, producing a radical ground-power, or primordial power, necessary for the self-preservation and self-perpetuation of human species. Primordial power constitutes an explicit power, termed *the political,* which manifests itself in law, tradition,

language, religion, technique, and so on. Yet *the instituting* transcends *the instituted,* as it refers to the autonomy of the anonymous collective to transform *the political.* Whereas societies have been mostly developed on conditions of instituted heteronomy, with the essential constituent of it being the representation of an extra-social source of nomos (be it the myth, the tradition, the religion, etc.), autonomy refers to the state of *politics* as the potentiality of questioning *the political.*

Castoriadis's logic-ontology of magmas sustains, thus, an anti-foundationalist philosophy that develops in contrast to the deterministic dimension of inherited thought, penetrating the mathematical determinism of Plato, the rationalism of Aristotle, the Absolute Spirit of Hegel, the Universal Reason of Kant and the historical materialism of Marx. There can be no teleological vision of history, captured by a transcendental or collective Subject. The logic ontology of magmas develops in contrast to the rationalism and scientism of positivism, on the one hand, and the nihilism and relativitism of postmodern thought, on the other hand. As such, it serves as the philosophical precondition of a theory of democracy, since there is no foundation of being, no a priori set of laws predetermining nature and society, except the freedom of the anonymous collective to decide autonomously on the laws of society. We should not, though, consider Castoriadis espousing anarchism. Despite his being an anti-capitalist and anti-statist, he raised his objections to anarchism on several occasions. For instance, in an interview with anarchists he argues that there can be no society without a minimum degree of power and rules. He claims that it is up to each society itself to decide on the degree and the content of both its power and rules[21].

Castoriadis's theory of direct democracy develops in contrast to representative and liberal-procedural democracy, which both conceal the rational mastery of capitalism under the veil of neutrality and legality. Castoriadis does not dismiss procedures, but he incorporates them into the social imaginary of the anonymous collective, given that there are no neutral procedures. The essential problem of democracy is the combination of some common rules with the most possible diversity of cultural creation and lifestyles[22]. In this sense, Castoriadis's project integrates the protection of the private sphere of the individual, that is, negative freedom, into the public sphere of the *demos*, that is, positive freedom. Autonomy is relational and inter subjective inasmuch as it is based on the interaction of the individual with the collectivity or, in other words, of the radical with the social imaginary. Whereas the individual is a static fabrication of the social imaginary, the subject is the instituting power of the radical imaginary, flowing within the intertwined strata of the unconscious, the living being (body) and the social-historical[23]. As such, the subject in Castoriadis differs both from the essentialist approach of the philosophy of consciousness and the "death" or the deconstruction of the subject in postmodern thought. The subject is neither a transcendental substance nor is it "dissolved" into the power relations of society. The subject differs also both from the individualistic conception of liberalism and the collective conception of marxism. The subject is neither an *a priori* individual separated from society nor a *tabularasa* formed by society. The subject consists in the instituting power of the radical imaginary, which breaks up the monadic core of the unconscious by transforming into the conscious Ego of the individual who transcends the organic pleasure of the living being (body) into the representational pleasure of an autonomous reflection, unfolding into the magma of the imaginary significations of the anonymous collective. In the flux of this autonomous reflection, the instituting power of the radical imaginary challenges constantly the instituted power of the social-historical. In other words, the *politics* of individual and collective autonomy challenges constantly the *political.*

However, a common line of criticism developed, among others, by Jürgen Habermas[24], Axel Honneth[25] and Hugues Poltier[26]boils down to the argument that Castoriadis's political philosophy cannot provide with a normative foundation of autonomy, thus resulting in relativism and skepticism. Castoriadis claims, instead, that there can be no foundation of autonomy on his account, since his philosophical approach is anti foundational and non-reductionist. Autonomy cannot be founded on any rational criterion other that the social-historical creation of Athenian democracy and its revival in the Western Europe of modernity[27]. Philosophy and, most importantly, ontology can elucidate only on the go and *adhoc* the flow of the social-historical. Yet, Agnes Heller points out that even if we freely choose the Hellenic-West tradition of autonomy, as Castoriadis does, why doesn't this free choice reflect the reversed mastery of one interpretation of freedom over another? Heller wonders thus how direct democracy can be secured against turning into a fascist regime[28]. Castoriadis claims that he does not render the Hellenic-Western tradition superior to all others, but he highlights one dimension of this tradition – that is,

autonomy and democracy –in contrast to every totalitarianism that abolishes autonomy and democracy[29]. The only rational criterion of autonomy is the abolition of heteronomy *per se*, meaning the inalienable right of people to choose by and for themselves. Therefore, political decisions cannot but be based on our political will and responsibility[30]. This model of decisionism translates into a democracy that can revise and correct its mistakes, since there are no absolute grounds for the validity of our decisions.

Finally, Andreas Kalyvas rightly argues that Castoriadis alludes to a conflictual model of politics, which differs from the Schmitte an conflict between friend and enemy, in that the central imaginary significations that formulate the *eidos* of a particular society derive from various historical and political struggles[31]. The project of individual and collective autonomy is not the static manifestation of the omnipotent will of sovereign people, but the constant struggle of instituting power with instituted power.

3. FOUCAULT'S "DIALECTICS" OF POWER AND RESISTANCE

Foucault's work developed within and beyond the philosophical currents of Marxism, phenomenology, hermeneutics and structuralism. Hubert Dreyfus and Paul Rabi now argue that Foucault manages to criticize and utilize – in a highly original way- the two dominant models available for the study of the human beings, that is, structuralism and hermeneutics[32].

Caroline Williams states that "it is certainly between a certain phenomenology and a carefully interpreted notion of structure that Foucault's work can be situated, where due attention is given to the significance of the *between*"[33]. David Couzens Hoy mentions that Foucault's work is a form of critical theory[34]. As such, Foucault shares with Castoriadis certain ambivalence with regards to Marxism. Like Castoriadis, he joined the French Communist Party in 1950, but he left it in 1951. Foucault was rather interested in his youth in the study of psychopathology, which reflected his first works of *The History of Madness* and *The Birth of the Clinic*. But Foucault was interested neither in the study of psychology *per se*nor in the philosophical restoration of any form of psychiatry. Foucault's main goal at the time was to unveil the modern positivist "construction" of Unreason by bourgeois morality. "What we call psychiatric practice is a certain moral tactic contemporary with the end of the eighteenth century, preserved in the rites of asylum life and covered over by the myths of positivism"[35].

In *The Order of Things* and *The Archaeology of Knowledge,* Foucault introduces the semi-structuralist epistemology of archaeology, supposed to reveal the normative foundations of Reason, which pre-formulate any given discursive trans-formation of knowledge in terms of rule-governed systems[36]. In his later work, he abandons archaeology for the sake of a genealogy set against a positivist historiography, inasmuch as it functions as a counter-history aiming to bring into light the dialectic of continuity and discontinuity that breaks up the alleged linear continuity of the systems of thought[37]. He gives up the claim that discourse has some sort of priority over non-discursive practices and focuses on the dialectic of discursive and non-discursive practices through a kind of interpretive analytics of power in modernity[38].

Foucault claims that what he finally produced was a history of power: "If I look today at my past, I recall having thought that I was working essentially on a 'genealogical' history of knowledge. But the true motivating force was really this problem of power. Ultimately I had done nothing but attempt to trace the way in which certain institutions, in the name of 'reason' or 'normality', had ended up exercising their power on groups of individuals, in relation to established ways of behavior, of being, of acting or speaking, by labelling them as anomalies, madness, etc. In the end, I had only produced a history of power"[39]. So, Foucault claims that his goal eventually was to write "a history of the present" or, in other words, a critique of our historical era from the philosophical standpoint of how human beings are made subjects throughout modern history[40]. And, for him, this is basically a process of power. But what is power on Foucault's account?

From Descartes to Husserl and from the Monarchy of the Middle Ages to the democratic State of modernity, power, Foucault argues, has been conceived in the form of the Subject either in its philosophical or its juridical-political type[41]. In particular, Foucault illustrates in *Discipline and Punish* how the emergence of the bourgeoisie in the eighteenth century, combined with the concomitant development of the social sciences, gave rise to a disciplinary power, aiming at the normalization of the difference inherent to human multiplicity through the scientific taxonomy

of the body in time and space[42]. Penal reform became the central axis of disciplinary power as the latter applied to prison, factory, school, hospital and barracks. "The perpetual penalty that traverses all points and supervises every instant in the disciplinary institutions compares, differentiates, hierarchizes, homogenizes, excludes. In short, it normalizes"[43]. The ideal form of this power would be the Panopticon of Bentham, that is, an architectural model of surveillance, aiming at the automatic functioning of power through the creation of self-monitoring subjects.

In *The History of Sexuality* Foucault describes how the disciplinary power transforms into bio power in the nineteenth century[44]. Power now expands from the normalization of the individual body to the normalization of the population. The crucial variable of power becomes now sexuality. Sex becomes a subject of scientific investigation conducted by social welfare programs, which interlink power, knowledge, truth and pleasure[45]. Scientific discourse on sex produces now a whole disciplinary grid in the name of public hygiene. Normalization consists in the pathologization of sex and the subsequent eradication of incest and other perversions, the regulation of the prostitution, the treatment of venereal diseases[46], the control of the birth and death rate, of life expectancy, of fertility, and of health in general[47]. Bio power does not aim solely at the construction of an economically useful and politically conservative sexuality, but, first and foremost, at the scientific examination of sexuality *per se*[48]. As Foucault states: "The primary concern was not repression of the sex of the classes to be exploited, but rather the body, the vigor, longevity, progeniture and descent of the classes that 'ruled' "[49].

In *Society Must Be Defended* Foucault demonstrates how bio power combines the liberal governmental reason with a State racism, thus expanding into a global market in the form of a European colonialism culminating in the world wars of the Nazi State. In contrast to both liberal colonialism and fascism, the bio power of the socialist State functions in a reversed racist fashion by eliminating the enemies of the class. Whereas the Nazi State was killing in the name of the race, the socialist State was killing in the name of the class. Therefore, Nazism and Socialism are the two extremes of bio power in 21st century. In sum, in Foucault, bio power is a new kind of power accompanying the rise of the bourgeoisie and the corresponding capitalism at the end of the eighteenth century. As Dreyfus and Rabi now put it: "Bio-power is the increasing ordering in all realms under the guise of improving the welfare of the individual and the population"[50]. The main axis of bio power is the norm imposed on madness, criminality, education and sexuality. The norm is imprinted on the individual body and the population through the manufacturing of the Subject by the social sciences and the corresponding institutions of the hospital, the prison, the workshop, the school and the barracks.

In contrast to the bio power developing in terms of an individual or collective Subject epitomized by the institutionalization of the State, Foucault's own account of power can be placed within and beyond the postmodern critique of modernity, rationality and humanism. Like Castoriadis, Foucault rejects the idea that there is a teleological progress of history, centered on a transcendental Subject or consciousness – collective or not –, which reflects a Universal Reason. He holds that in order to understand power we have to abandon the belief that under the surface of chance lies an *a priori* rationality revolving around the essences of "right" and "good", which crystallize into a juridical-political or philosophical Subject (Plato, Aristotle)[51]. We have to abandon the notion of a Cartesian Subject penetrating the modern philosophy, from the constituent Subject of Kant up until the phenomenological Subject of Husserl, wherein power identifies with the man becoming the subject and the object of knowledge. We have to abandon also the individual Subject of English empiricism (Hobbes, Locke, Hume) or the collective Subject of Hegel and Marx, wherein power is considered as a subjective will or a collective right respectively, represented by a State apparatus. We have to disengage from the model of the sovereignty (Hobbes, Machiavelli) that considers the individual a Subject having natural rights or primitive power on the basis of which the ideal State and the Law are born as the absolute manifestations of power. In short, we have to abandon any positivistic notion of history linked to the evolution of the human in the form of an individual or collective Subject who becomes the master of the State, the Law, and the Science of nature[52].

Power is not produced by the master who speaks the truth and censors the slave(Hegel) and the workman (Marx); who delimits and forbids for the sake of the family (Freud, Reich)[53]. Power is not conceived in the form of a great absolute Subject, which pronounces the interdict: the Sovereignty of the Father, the Monarch or the general will, which applies on the basis of a renunciation of natural rights, a Social Contract, or a love of the master. Power is not thus merely a function of the State and the Law. Power does not simply work in terms of taboo, silence, and

censorship, or in terms of prohibition and repression, as it is supposed to occur with sexuality and criminality respectively. Whereas it is true that the State was at times the essential bearer of disciplinary mechanisms, power is not centered on a State apparatus and its institutions[54]. The State cannot occupy the whole field of actual power networks that invest the body, the sexuality, the family, the relations of production, and so on. Moreover, power does not represent a commodity value or the relations of production, as implied by the economistic conceptualization of liberalism and Marxism[55]. Power is neither an economic domination of one class by another nor a competition applied to a free market. The economic processes and the reproduction of the relations of production is not the only function served by power. "The systems of domination and the circuits of exploitation certainly interact, intersect and support each other, but they do not coincide"[56]. Power is not of course independent of the economic processes and the relations of production. Yet, power is not the monopoly of a State superstructure serving solely the interests of the elite. The Law of the State is not merely a means for the domination of one class over another. The Law is not power itself, but just an instrument of power situated among numerous non-juridical power relations[57].

In contrast to the above misconceptions of power, Foucault develops in his early work a Nietzsche an version of power, according to which history is a perpetual struggle of various tactics of domination; a matrix of contending wills to power, the constant friction of which penetrates again and again the social body in the form of a chaotic order.[58]Foucault conceives of power as a global strategy employing local tactics of domination on the basis of a relentless struggle of anonymous actors[59]. Power, however, is not the domination of one individual over another, of one group over another, of one class over another; is not an attribute in possession of some with the others being subject to it[60]. Power "comes from below". It is intentional and productive, but impersonal and non-subjective inasmuch as it expresses a variety of anonymous aims and objectives[61]. Power is relational, decentralized, multidirectional and mobile. But power is also transitionary. Power comes always with resistance. Power produces resistance as anti-power, resulting in a relentless struggle of anonymous bodies, desires, thoughts, forces, energies, and so on. "Just as the network of power relations ends by forming a dense web that passes through apparatuses and institutions, without being exactly localized in them, so too the swarm of points of resistance traverses social stratifications and individual unities"[62]. Power is not an *a priori* fundamental essence of nature and history; it is not a substance with an internal rationality; it is not something positive or negative, "good" or "bad". Power is multi polar. That's why to understand power relations we have to examine the antagonism of strategies, as they develop for example in the multiple conceptualization of sanity and insanity, legitimacy and illegitimacy, morality and immorality, normality and abnormality, etc.[63].

Foucault, yet, insisted too much in his early writings (early 1970s) on analyzing power in terms of techniques of domination. He, thus, shifts in the late 1970s from his conception of power as domination into the conception of power as governmentality, which refers to a mode of action upon other actions. "To govern, in this sense, is to structure the possible field of action of others"[64]. The precondition and the permanent support of governmentality is freedom or, in other words, agonism. "Rather than speaking of an essential freedom, it would be better to speak of an 'agonism' – of a relationship which is at the same time reciprocal incitation and struggle, less of a face to face confrontation which paralyzes both sides than a permanent provocation"[65]. Domination and government are both types of power on a scale of flexibility inherent to the freedom of power and resistance. In this sense, power is an open-ended strategic game[66].

Power will be supplemented in the work of Foucault by the "return of the Subject" in the 1980s. Foucault now speaks of power in terms of the care of the self[67]. Power as governmentality is based on the freedom to act on the relationship of the self to itself and to others[68]. Government now incorporates also self-government. But what is the self? The self creates itself as subject through the interplay of the forces of power, unfolding on the basis of bodily functions, drives, etc.[69]. The self-creation is itself a power relation embodied in the whole process of subjectivation, that is, the creation of the subject within the system of social networks. The subject as such is prior to the creation of the individual, who is a fictitious atom of an "ideological" representation of society, fabricated by the technologies of power identified by Foucault as disciplines[70]. "There are two meanings of the word 'subject': subject to someone else by control and dependence; and tied to his own identity by a conscience of self-knowledge. Both meanings suggest a form of power which subjugates and makes subject to"[71]. In support of the second meaning, Foucault defines Ethics as the conscious practice of freedom by means of truth derived from acquired knowledge[72]. Parrhesia

then becomes the power of discourse in which one speaks openly and truthfully about one's opinions and ideas[73]. However, Steven Best and Douglas Kellner are right to argue that Foucault did not clarify the interaction between the constituted and the constituting subject. In other words, he lacks an inter subjective theory to account for the connection between ethics and politics[74]. It is also not clear what Foucault means exactly with the term "power". Is it natural? Is it social? Is it both? In my view, Foucault conceives power as the strategic interaction of the body and the social-historical, developing in terms of self-governance. Power is the strategic self-government of the body within the established social networks. In this sense, power in Foucault seems to resemble the notion of the imaginary of Castoriadis. But, whereas in Castoriadis the imaginary employs the ontological creation of *otherness,* in Foucault, power seems to bear normative traits.

Foucault, yet, does not often reveal his normative preferences[75]. In *The History of Sexuality* he alludes to a different economy of bodies and pleasures for which we can find in his later writings a few hints revolving around the feedback of power and resistance. Foucault considers resistance as the catalyst for both analyzing and introducing a new economy of power relations. Resistance manifests itself on the basis of various struggles activated in the system of social networks. "Generally, it can be said that there are three types of struggles: either against forms of domination (ethnic, social, and religious); against forms of exploitation which separate individuals from what they produce; or against that which ties the individual to himself and submits him to others in this way (struggles against subjection, against forms of subjectivity and submission)"[76]. The main core of these struggles is the right of the individual to be different against all sorts of 'normalization'. Foucault claims that we have to rise up against all forms of power (be it the multinational economies or the bureaucratic States) by creating new forms of subjectivity[77]. He does not exclude any resistance in terms of reform or revolution, as long as we can escape the dilemma of being either for or against[78]. Foucault explicitly argues that we have to reject both the reformist and the revolutionary blackmail, according to which we must provide either with a better solution or an eschatological stance in order to criticize the present. Contrary to unified revolutionary movements built on totalizing theories, he favored a plurality of resistances deploying in the form of decentralized struggles. "Free political action from all unitary and totalizing paranoia. Develop action, thought, and desires by proliferation, juxtaposition, and disjunction, and not by subdivision and pyramidical hierarchization"[79]. Foucault adds elsewhere: "It is possible that the rough outline of future society is supplied by the recent experiences with drugs, sex and communes, others forms of consciousness and other forms of individuality. If scientific socialism emerged from the *Utopias* of the nineteenth century, it is possible that a real socialization will emerge in the twentieth century by *experiences*"[80]. Freedom thus, as the effect and the condition of power, aims at the enlargement of the possibilities for self-determination[81]. In this sense, the observation of Steven Best and Douglas Kellner that perhaps the fundamental guiding motivation of Foucault's work is the respect of differences seems valid[82].

However, as in the case of Castoriadis, it is argued that Foucault cannot account for the normative presuppositions of his own conceptualization of power[83]. If there are no objective grounds for judging the validity of our arguments, then how could Foucault's own conception of power account for any sort of validity? Habermas, in particular, characterizes Foucault as a crypto-normativist, for he cannot invoke a norm (freedom as self-determination or the respect of differences), while criticizing the very notion of the norm[84]. Foucault, however, believes he can speak of power without deploying a theory of power. Mark Kelly and David Hoy argue that, contrary to Nietzsche, power in Foucault is not everything[85]. It is just a name given to a complex strategy or grid of intelligibility. Detached from any transcendental or universal principle of Reason and Truth, power cannot but be perspectival in nature[86]. Denying an absolute truth does not result in denying relative truths, and what actually Foucault advocates is a critical stance between relative truths. In Foucault, there can only be local power and resistance leading to an endless play of differences unfolding in an open space of an ever ending critique[87]. Joel White book is right to argue that Foucault avoided to make explicit his normative assumptions because he was suspect that all forms of normativity are masked forms of normalization and, by extension, power[88]. Foucault himself states: "Do not ask who I am and not ask me to remain the same: leave it to the bureaucrats and our police to see that our papers are in order."[89] The only "norm" Foucault seems to point to is the freedom of difference. Foucault is not a nihilist who rejects morality, but a philosopher who advances refusal, curiosity and innovation as the sole "moral values" of critical thought[90].

But the criticism still resists: Why should we consider power and resistance as the sole critical stance of truth? Why does the freedom of difference reveal itself always in terms of power and resistance and not also in terms of love,

solidarity, recognition, communication or democracy[91]? When Foucault claims that it cannot be any society without power, doesn't he render power an unavoidable part of society? Why can't we conceive a society without power? Richard Lynch argues that power is the necessary but not the sufficient condition of society[92]. But still: Why power is the necessary condition of society? Despite his seemingly anarchistic anti-foundationalism, Foucault was somewhat caught up by the lure of what Castoriadis calls "the determinacy principle"[93], that is, the positivistic dream of philosophy to "discover" an eternal pattern of the social-historical. Nevertheless, despite its being often one-sided, elusive and contradictory, Foucault's work has the unique virtue of revealing concealed aspects of the complex relation of power, truth and knowledge from modernity onwards.

4. CONCLUSION: FROM RESISTANCE TO AUTONOMY

As stated in the beginning and has probably become obvious thus far, Castoriadis's and Foucault's work are characterized by immense differences and striking similarities. Both Castoriadis and Foucault have criticized the rationalization of modernity in different ways. They have shared the goal of bringing about a social change through a conceptualization of power that aims to unleash the most possible freedom and autonomy for all. Also both abstained from any transcendental criterion of social change. Whereas Castoriadis developed the logic-ontology of Magmas, serving as the philosophical presupposition for his project of individual and collective autonomy, Foucault attempted to write the history of power in modernity. Both Castoriadis and Foucault developed an epistemology with the purpose to differentiate itself from structuralism and hermeneutics. Castoriadis's logic-ontology of the Magmas contrasts the ensidic Logic of inherited thought and modern scientism by introducing a social-historical perspectivism based on democratic and ecological deliberation. Foucault's interpretive analytics, on the other hand, introduces a perspectivism based on the "dialectics" of power and resistance. Whereas Foucault's perspectivism is based on the decentralization of the "dialectics" of power and resistance, Castoriadis's perspectivism is localized in the institutionalization of society on the basis of direct democracy. While Castoriadis spirals between ensidic Logic and the Logic of Magmas, Foucault spirals between Reason and "Unreason". While Castoriadis claims that we cannot but make use of the ensidic Logic, Foucault claims in his later writings that it is dangerous to escape Reason in favour of *the un thought* or *the other*[94]. But, whereas, Foucault lacks a coherent theory of inter subjectivity, Castoriadis incorporates psychoanalysis into his ontology in a way that permits him to articulate an inter subjective process whereby the individual subject turns into an agent of individual and collective autonomy.

Both Castoriadis and Foucault consider power in terms of the struggle of the anonymous collective against the instituted power. Whereas Castoriadis bases the instituting power of *politics* on the indeterminacy of an ontological creation constantly challenging the instituted power of *the political*, Foucault develops a sort of an ontological determinism of power and resistance. Both Castoriadis and Foucault developed a criticism of the State, capitalism and Marxism, but, whereas Foucault was an advocate of local resistance, Castoriadis developed a more holistic form of political *praxis*. Whereas Foucault states that power is everywhere, Castoriadis concentrates the struggle between instituting and instituted power on the locus of direct democracy, which becomes the center of the concentric spheres of society. Castoriadis recognized within the decentralization and multi polarity of power relations, what Foucault did not see: the core of the rational mastery of the bureaucracy of the State and capitalism, developing in the form of the division between directors and executants.

What's more, Castoriadis demonstrated a concrete project of overcoming this basic structure of power through the self-management of society. But Castoriadis himself only alluded to the fact that we are all caught up, to a lesser or greater degree, in the sadomasochism of the rational mastery of capitalism, and the only way out is the institutionalization of another society that will render Reason the necessary but not sufficient condition of the creation of the magmatic inter-compatibility of the affect within the diversity of the social imaginaries.

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