The Creativity of Social Action and the Social Imaginaries Field: Cornelius Castoriadis and Paul Ricoeur in Dialogue.

by

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Contents

Abstract

This thesis focusses on action as it relates to social imaginaries. In order to develop the notion of action within the social imaginaries framework, this research draws on two of the field's four main theorists: Cornelius Castoriadis and Paul Ricoeur. According to Castoriadis and Ricoeur, action is creative and brings into the world novel forms of social reality. Correspondingly, through a social imaginaries lens, society, is also understood as creative and self-creating. The premise that action is creative is in line with recent debates in sociology on the creativity of action (Joas 1996; Elliott and Turner 2012). This thesis takes Castoriadis's and Ricoeur's key contributions and critically reconstructs their selected works to gain a better understanding of the connection between social imaginaries, creativity, and action. This project will help strengthen the social imaginaries framework and our understanding of the particular types of action within it. The research employs a critical hermeneutic methodology to reconstruct each theorist's specific understanding of action and its creativity within a social imaginaries framework.

Declaration

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university; and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

George Sarantoulias, 7th May 2019

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Introduction

This thesis elucidates the creativity of social action through Cornelius Castoriadis's and Paul Ricoeur's distinct articulations of what constitutes social imaginaries. The research combines two fields of thought—the creativity of action thesis and the social imaginaries field. My interest derived from engaging with the *problématique* of the theorisation of action in the social sciences identified by Hans Joas in *The Creativity of Action* [1996 (1992)]. In *The Creativity of Action*, Joas directs his critique towards the foundational work on a general theory of action outlined by Talcott Parsons in *The Structure of Social Action* (1937). Specifically, Joas critiques Parsons for laying out a theory which directed all subsequent social theories pertaining to action to place it within utilitarian-normative or rational-non-rational conceptual frameworks (Mouzelis 1998, p. 491). Joas argued that these frameworks were inadequate for explaining important aspects of action. The restrictive models of action interpreted through the lens of rationality and normativity did not capture that which is most distinctive about human action; namely, 'creativity'. It is important to state that Joas is not attempting to add another type of action like 'creative action' for instance. His work is rather directed to show that creativity is a fundamental part of all types of action. Craig Browne argued that for Joas:

> [C]reativity should not be regarded as only an alternative type of social action to that of the dominant models of normative and instrumental action. Rather creativity is a capacity that is at the root of each of these types of action. (Browne 2009, p. 33)

Mouzelis (1998, p. 491) tells us that creativity for Joas 'underlies and goes beyond the notions of the rational and the normative'. It is important to note that Joas is not only referring to the creativity of the artistic endeavour such as poetry, painting, music, etc. Rather, he uses the notion of creativity as that which encompasses all human action. Joas is referring to a sort of quality which is characteristic and fundamental of all types of human

action. Joas (1996 [1992]) supports his theoretical reconstruction of the models of action by looking at the concepts of *situation*, *corporeality*, and *sociality*.

It is important to clearly understand what 'creativity' Joas is referring to, since he is not referring to that which is characteristic of the artistic genius. Joas is referring to the ability of a human being to invent a solution which will solve a specific problem encountered. It is clear that the phenomenon of creative problem solving is not rare. Creativity in the form of problem-solving is a fundamental quality which characterises all humans and all their actions. It is also important to note that not all problems or situations need highly creative solutions. However, that does not mean that the element of creativity is not evident even in the simplest solution to a problem. Clearly, the notion of creativity referred to by Joas is an everyday phenomenon of human activity. As such, Arnason justifiably argues that 'there is an anthropological perspective behind Joas's project' (1996, p. 105).

Joas primarily poses the question: why has sociology, and its constructed models of action, failed to include creativity as a dimension for understanding action? Joas's answer to this question is the theme engaged with in the first part of *The Creativity of Action* (1996 [1992]). Joas argued that the direction taken by Parsons heavily influenced the theoretical work that followed regarding human action in sociology. Parsons's belief that social action and social reality can be illuminated and understood by examining the normative foundations of social order hindered his ability to acknowledge the significance of creativity (Joas 1996 [1992], pp. 7-18). Moreover, due to the fact that Parsons was overly concerned with rational and normative notions, as well as a critique of utilitarianism, he was unable to recognise instances of the notion of creativity in the classic social theories from theorists such as Pareto, Marshall, Durkheim, Weber, Simmel, and Tönnies (Joas 1996, pp. 7-69; Layder 1997, p. 118; Mouzelis 1998, p. 491; Kilpinen 1998, p. 74). Joas argues that Parsons's direction hindered his initial goal of a convergence of classical social theories. An

example of this lies in the underlying notion of creativity in Weber's theory of *charisma* and Durkheim's theory of the *sacred* (Joas 1996, pp. 44-65; Layder 1997, p. 118). In light of the *problématique* of the theorisation of social action within the sociological tradition and the inclusion of creativity as a fundamentally important dimension of human doing, my thesis aims to elucidate the notion of creativity and its connection to social imaginaries as it emerges in the works of Castoriadis and Ricoeur.

This project uses the work of Castoriadis and Ricoeur since in their work they both offer a theory of action that is centred around the notion of creativity. The premise that action is creative is in line with recent debates in sociology and the creativity of action thesis as discussed above (Joas 1990a, 1990b, 1996; Domingues 2000). A clarification of Castoriadis's and Ricoeur's understanding of 'action' through the 'social imaginaries' perspective, will serve as a preliminary step towards a general theory of 'social action' which emphasises its creative aspect.

The rationale for this thesis is twofold. First, by elucidating the way in which Castoriadis and Ricoeur understand *social imaginaries* and the *creativity of action*, this research strengthens the overall *social imaginaries* approach. Second, the research is aimed at creating a better understanding of the creative dimension of action. A focus on action will deepen our understanding of social imaginaries. This is because it enables us to think of social imaginaries as something that influences everyday human activities and practices, and not just as a way of imagining, or representing, ourselves. Conversely, it will also expand our understanding of the creativity of action because the research demonstrates the way that action is embedded into contexts of meaning, power, and institution. The notions of meaning, power, and institution, and their connection to action will be explored throughout this thesis. An elucidation of Castoriadis's and Ricoeur's distinct understandings of meaning, power, institution, and the type of action that is at their

foundation will bring to the surface their distinct notions of creativity. Overall, this research has two aims, first, to elucidate the action dimension of social imaginaries. And, second, to elucidate how Castoriadis and Ricoeur understand the notion of action and its creativity.

There are two questions which animate my research. First, how do Castoriadis and Ricoeur understand social action, its creativity, and its relation to social imaginaries? And, second, what can a discussion between Castoriadis and Ricoeur tell us about the action dimension of social imaginaries?

But why does my research choose Castoriadis and Ricoeur? There are three main reasons for choosing to focus on Castoriadis and Ricoeur, rather than on Taylor, or Lefort. First, both Castoriadis's and Ricoeur's key articulations on social imaginaries emerge in 1975. Second, in contradistinction to Taylor, they both share common ground by drawing on debates on the creative imagination. Third, unlike Taylor, Castoriadis and Ricoeur have a conception of action as being explicitly creative and this is in line with recent debates in sociology on the creativity of action.

This research identifies a gap in the secondary literature which is a consequence of the marginalisation of the three notions of institution, power, and action. This thesis adds to the systematic work needed to draw the connection of action to the social imaginaries framework. This research can be seen as a contribution to social theory and the debates on the creativity of action. The field of the creativity of action is an emerging and important field. For both Castoriadis and Ricoeur, humans are born into a world that is already characteristic of an articulation of meaning, power, and institutions. On the one hand, for Castoriadis specifically, humans are born into a world endowed by the creative force of the radical imaginary and social imaginary significations that underly and explain the reason for an institution's existence. That is, the institutions brought forth by the radical imaginary,

along with 'the social imaginary significations borne by' them 'and animating' them, 'create a world' (Castoriadis 1991a [1988], p. 146). On the other hand, for Ricoeur, humans are born into a world that has already been interpreted. On this, Richard Kearney (2004, p. 16) argues that for Ricoeur 'we exist in a historical horizon of language whose meanings precede our own subjective creations'. Ricoeur asserts that *praxis* is the most elementary form of being-in-the-world. My research starts with elucidating the social imaginaries and not with the creativity of action debate because action is always in-the-world. The phenomenological insight places implications on our understanding of actors in the world, of action on the world, to the world. The cultural background, the cultural context in which action takes place and which, Ricoeur would say, mediates it.

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Cornelius Castoriadis was born in Constantinople in 1922 (Curtis 1992, p. 46). Castoriadis 'studied economics, politics, and law at the University of Athens' (Curtis 1992, p. 46) and was an anti-fascist activist and member of the Greek Communist Youth. In 1942 he joined the Trotskyists and was subsequently threatened by death from Stalinists and fascists. In 1945, along with some of the other young intellectuals of the time, Castoriadis was sent to France with a scholarship from the French government. Castoriadis and Lefort founded the legendary journal *Socialisme ou Barbarie*. The journal 'became a new source for the non-communist New Left' and inspired the student revolutions in May of 1968 (Curtis 1992, p. 46).

In Castoriadis's earlier work (1964-65) on social imaginary significations, which is more phenomenological, 'action' and 'social doing' are prominent themes. Antithetically, in the second part of *The Imaginary Institution of Society*, which is thought to be a different and distinct period and is thought to be more ontological, Castoriadis begins elucidating the

creative imagination. In this period, for Castoriadis 'action' and 'social doing' were consigned to *teukhein* and technique.

Arguably, an understanding of 'action' and 'social doing' are present in both the early and later stages of his work. Castoriadis's elucidations of the ontological condition of social imaginary significations are emphasised the most. My project brings 'action' and 'social doing' to the forefront. Although 'social doing' was important for Castoriadis, he pursued and developed an anthropology of the creative imagination. Consequently, 'action' and 'social doing' were marginalised and received less attention in his later works (post-1975).

Castoriadis begins his project in *The Imaginary Institution of Society* (1987[1975]) by elaborating 'the ontological preconditions of autonomy, but it metamorphoses along the way into an ontology of the social-historical' (Adams 2011, p. 2). A hermeneutic reconstruction is sensitive to changes in period. For example, in the early Castoriadis (1964-65) 'action', 'social doing', and *praxis*—the action intrinsic to an autonomous society—are emphasised. I will be analysing a selection of texts from Castoriadis's *oeuvre*, beginning in 1964 and ending in 1991, which consider the notion of 'action' and social imaginaries. That is to say, I will be looking for instances where he discusses 'action' and 'doing' even if they are fleeting. Ultimately, I will be looking for potential changes in his definitions of 'action' and 'doing' over the different periods. Moreover, my research will be looking at the different types of 'action' identified by Castoriadis and how they relate to history, creativity, and social imaginary significations.

Jean Paul Gustave Ricoeur was born in Valence, France in 1913 and passed away in 2005. Best known for his significant contributions to, hermeneutics and phenomenology, Ricoeur (1981a) saw the social sciences as being very important and particularly in regard to

the notions of action and creativity. As a phenomenologist, Ricoeur starts with the understanding that outside of individual consciousness there is a 'world' already there. That is, there is a unique cultural articulation of the 'world' in which individuals are born into—a culture. Deriving from his background in hermeneutics, for Ricoeur, all understanding is grounded in the processes of interpretation. As such, Ricoeur's understanding of action stresses its interpretative aspect. Ricoeur is concerned with society's interpretive and indirect aspect. For Ricoeur, the interpretation of symbols, narratives, and more generally cultural texts, leads to the mediation of social action. Moreover, 'to interpret is to explicate a sort of being-in-the-world which unfolds in front of the text' (Ricoeur 1981, p. 140).

The reasons for choosing Ricoeur for my research relate to, first, his theoretical corpus emphasised ideological and utopian imaginaries as the notions which integrate and also transform the social world. Second, his theory of cultural imagination incorporates an understanding of action as creative. Third, Ricoeur's *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia* (1986) engages with sociologists like Karl Marx, Max Weber, Karl Manheim, Jürgen Habermas, French Marxist philosopher Louis Althusser, and the cultural anthropologist Clifford Geertz. By engaging with these authors Ricoeur creates a rich resource for sociologists.

Ricoeur developed his theory of socio-cultural imagination by placing 'the two phenomena of ideology and utopia within a single conceptual framework' (1976, p. 17). Ricoeur's interest in the social imaginary derives from his engagement with the productive and reproductive. Ricoeur understood the social imaginary consisting of two poles—i.e. ideology and utopia. According to Adams et al. (2015, pp. 22-3), '[t]he ideological imagination reproduces an image that society has of itself (usually a founding image/myth), whilst the utopian imagination produces alternative images of society that put ideological images into question'. For Ricoeur, ideology, beyond its negative function of distorting

reality, has a positive function, it can be the source of integration and as such, has the capacity to bind society together. The second pole of Ricoeur's socio-cultural imaginary is utopia; the no-place, which provides the distance required for the critique of ideology. Although utopia has both negative and positive functions—similar to ideology—its socio-political function of critiquing ideology, 'shattering' the *status quo*, and bringing forth new forms of reality, is evidence of the productive/creative aspect of the social imaginary.

For Ricoeur, action is mediated through the interpretation of the symbols which make up a culture's specific articulation of the world. Ricoeur focussed on the intersubjective dimension and left the collective dimension unexplored. This can be seen as a limitation; however, my research will develop that collective dimension by exploring the concept of the institution in Ricoeur's work. For Ricoeur, action is the primary human condition; practical life is made sense of through the social imaginary; and practical reason is the domain of 'social action'.

Let us turn to a discussion of the two fields my thesis brings together: *social imaginaries* and *creativity of action* field. *Social imaginaries* is a burgeoning field which puts forward a framework for understanding and critiquing social life. *Social imaginaries* can be traced to Durkheim's theory of *collective conscience* and Lacan's focus on the imaginary realms in his psychoanalytic theory. Moreover, *social imaginaries* regard society as creative and self-creating. The field is diverse and heterogeneous (Adams et al. 2015, p. 18). Nonetheless, four theoretical contributions have been identified as being crucial for the field. They are those by, first, Cornelius Castoriadis's *The Imaginary Institution of Society* (1987 [1975]), second, Paul Ricoeur's *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia* (1986[1975]), third, Claude Lefort's *The Political Forms of Modern Society: Bureaucracy, Democracy, Totalitarianism* (1986), and fourth, Charles Taylor's *Modern Social Imaginaries* (2004). These four theoretical contributions, respectively, gave rise to extensive bodies of secondary

literature. Some of the theorists influenced by the work of Castoriadis are Johann P. Arnason, Alice Pechriggl, Suzi Adams, and Craig Browne. Theorists that were influenced by Ricoeur's work are George Taylor and Richard Kearney. Theorists that were influenced by Taylor's work are Craig Calhoun, Dilip Gaonkar, Benjamin Lee, and Michael Warner. Finally, theorists that were influenced by Lefort's work are Marcel Gauchet and Natalie Doyle.

Social imaginaries are generally elucidated by Castoriadis, Ricoeur, Lefort, and Taylor as incorporating the concepts of institution, power, and action. However, much of the secondary literature tends to reduce social imaginaries interplay of cultural meaning, and, or, collective imaginings (Anderson 1991[1983]). This direction in the secondary literature has marginalised the notions of institution, power, and action. Due to the emphasis given by the secondary literature on cultural meaning, and, or, collective imaginings, there is an identifiable gap in the systematic elucidation of the social imaginaries framework that this present project will cover.

The constellation of meanings held by a society makes up their social imaginaries. The *sui generis* social imaginaries of a society resemble a symbolic network—like a matrix—which consists of unique sets of rules and possibilities for 'action'. That which Castoriadis calls an institution is similar to the rules governing a matrix. For Castoriadis (1997, p. 6), institutions are understood in their 'broadest and most radical sense'. In this way, institutions can be 'norms, values, language, tools, procedures, and methods of dealing with things and doing things' (Castoriadis 1997, p. 6). Furthermore, for Castoriadis (1997, p. 6), a society's individuals are also seen as being part of the total institution of society, 'both in general and in the particular type and form' attributed by them by the society.

Charles Taylor (2004, p. 23) argues that social imaginaries are 'the ways people imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between them and their fellows, the expectations that are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie these expectations'. For Ricoeur (1991), the social imaginary consists of the narratives held by a society. Social reality, in a practical sense, is mediated by the narratives held by the society. For Ricoeur, the imagination has the capacity to develop 'practical possibilities' for action in the world. Ricoeur understood the imagination's function as the 'practical power to innovate, rather than the psychological function of reproducing perceptions' (Foessel 2014, p. 513). In Castoriadis's work, social imaginary significations are understood ontologically. For Castoriadis, society and history are notions that are inextricably connected and are evidence of the creative process. The social imaginary significations that are held by a society—embodied in their institutions— are catalysts of the creative process that characterise social-historical being. Overall, the social imaginaries framework can account for action, power, and culture. These are three key elements that any adequate social theory must take account of.

The body of sociological knowledge which my research draws on takes creativity as being inextricably connected to social action (Joas 1990a, 1990b, 1993, 1994, 1996[1992], 2000; Camic 1998; McGowan 1998; Domingues 1997, 2000; Joas and Beckert 2001, 2002; Dalton 2004; Joas and Kilpinen 2006; Joas and Knöbl 2009).

Johann P. Arnason (1996, p. 105) argues that sociology does not need to concentrate on 'paradigmatically or exceptionally creative types of action' so that the creative aspect of action is emphasised. Creativity ought to be understood 'as an analytical dimension of all human action' (Joas 1996, p. 116; Arnason 1996, p. 105). *Social imaginaries* offer a critique of the dominant theoretical orientations that have been widespread in sociology because 'action' is understood as being creative and self-creating.

By contrasting the ontological presuppositions of the functionalist view of action with those implied by the theories that emphasise the creative dimension of action, I aim to bring out their main differences. For functionalism, the social world consists of functional structures and institutions which serve specific ends. Functionalism assesses social phenomena on the basis of their specific ends, their consequences (or *telos*). Functionalist research describes and analyses the underlying structural patterns that occur in the social world but neglects to emphasise the role of agency in these phenomena. The functionalist and structuralist thinking does not acknowledge the ability of agency, the subject, to bring into the world new forms of action. The theories that emphasise the creative dimension of action emphasise the world-making dimension of agency. As such, for the theories that employ the creative dimension of action, subjects are responsible for the authorship of their lives. This is not to say that the structures and institutions of society do not bring about social reality but that ultimately agency has the capacity to destroy and create them.

As we have seen, the key difference between the functionalist paradigm and social imaginaries—and theories that emphasise the creativity of action—is that forms of 'social action' and institutions are ultimately the product of agency. Novel forms of action arise through agency's ability to creatively address situations which emerge and are not only a product of a reproductive imagination. Domingues (2000, pp. 467-9) argues that although the focus of classical and contemporary social theories was not explicitly on creativity there is evidence of it.

From Domingues to Joas the creative aspect of action has been demonstrated. Just to reiterate, my research draws on this body of literature but is not geared towards proving that action is creative. The evidence provided earlier allows my research to begin from the premise that action is creative. My research will explore creativity, the creativity of action, and the concept that society is intrinsically creative through a social imaginaries framework.

The reason for this is that *social imaginaries* can account for action, power, and culture. These are three key elements of any adequate social theory.

An important contribution to the theory on the *social imaginary* comes from Richard Kearney who was one of Ricoeur's students and who draws and is influenced by his mentor. In his book *The Poetics of Imagining* (1998), Kearney adds to the defence of the theory of *social imaginaries* (Rundell 2003, p. 98). Kearney sees imaginings, more specifically under the title narrative imagination, as a specific mode of being-in-the-world (1998, p.9). Although Kearney's focus is not explicitly on action, the links can be drawn. Another important contribution to the elucidation of *social imaginaries* is made by Suzi Adams. In the essay 'Interpreting Creation: Castoriadis and the Birth of Autonomy' (2005), Adams critiques Castoriadis's notion that ontological creation is brought forth *ex-nihilo*. Adams argues that for Castoriadis the interpretative context is rejected. Adams's contribution to the *social imaginaries* framework, specifically with this essay, is not directed at action per se, however, the emphasis on the interpretative aspect of ontological creation is directly linked to how novel forms of actions are brought forth.

Building upon these scholarly contributions my project explicitly deals with the action dimension of the social imaginaries framework. My research includes in its investigation the recently published dialogue between Castoriadis and Ricoeur—'Dialogue on History and the Social Imaginary: Paul Ricoeur and Cornelius Castoriadis' (Ricoeur and Castoriadis 2017). Although this dialogue explicitly deals with questions of their different approaches to *social imaginaries* and *creation as historical novelty*, rather than a discussion on their particular theories on social action, there is an implicit discussion on the praxeological dimension of action in the background.

In this part, I discuss a number of interdisciplinary applications of the *social imaginaries* theoretical perspective to show how it is widely used as a conceptual tool for the analysis of the social world. The importance of the *social imaginaries* schema has been recognised in heterogeneous academic fields. The *social imaginaries* framework has been applied to various academic studies from diverse disciplines. Some of the various applications of the *social imaginaries* framework arise within areas such as: ethnographic studies (Mitsui 2016; Alves 2016), geography (Yoon 2016), historical and medical anthropology (Salazar 2013; Heckert 2016), medicine (Bulcock 2013), international studies (Akrivoulis 2015), intercultural arts research (Harris 2016), homelessness (Ruddick 2014), computer games (Kirkpatrick 2013), cultural studies on drugs and gender (Mountian 2012), and history (Maza 2009).

The *social imaginaries* framework has also been used in feminist theories that deal with the corporeal aspects of the body. In phenomenology, the focus on the body and embodiment was taken up by Maurice Merleau-Ponty. However, Merleau-Ponty did not look at the female body specifically. Simone DeBeauvoir in *The Second Sex* (1984[1949]) places the body and its lived experience at the forefront of her theoretical articulations. This direction paved the way for other feminist theorists to explore theories of embodiment for the female body was largely not represented. Some of the feminist theorists who dealt with embodiment, corporeality, and the use of the imaginary as a conceptual tool for analysis are Elizabeth Grosz (1994), Moira Gatens (1996), Gail Weiss (1999), and Alice Pechriggl (2005).

Adams et al. (2015, p. 16) argue that social imaginaries offer 'a qualitative shift in the way that social, cultural and political phenomena are understood and problematised'. Social imaginaries elucidate the cultural meanings that form societies and civilisational complexes. Further, social imaginaries are understood as cultural projects of power and

social doing instituted—and instituting. As such, *social imaginaries* can be seen as a way of elucidating the multiple forms of social reality.

The idea of *social imaginaries* is rooted in Émile Durkheim's (1976 [1912]) *collective representations* (Adams et al. 2015, p. 18). Furthermore, *social imaginaries* draw from Benedict Anderson's (1991[1983]) 'neo-Durkhemian approach' to nationalism and his concept of 'imagined communities' (Adams et al. 2015, p. 18). *Social imaginaries* are inextricably connected to culture and bring forth cultural interpretations of the world. *Social imaginaries* are given their form 'in the dense sphere of common practice' and are always changing; they are in a process of transformation through a dialectic process (Taylor 2002, p. 106). As such, *social imaginaries* should not be understood as immobile entities (Taylor 2002, p. 106). Furthermore, social imaginaries should not be understood as theories or ideologies, rather they should be taken as 'backgrounds', which permit the operation of social life (Taylor 2004, pp. 23-6). A society's cultural articulation of the world encompasses and gives meaning to both their metaphysical and pragmatic realities. This articulation of the world is rooted in a society's social imaginaries which are embodied in their institutions as well as their myths and narratives. Social imaginaries offer explanations regarding cosmogony, identity, solidarity, and cultural projects for the future.

Through the social imaginaries perspective, social reality is conceptualised through images, stories, and legends (Taylor 2002). Everyday people understand their world in a similar fashion. However, social theory, employs the use of abstract theoretical terms, to conceptualise the 'world'. As such, social theory is alienating and unapproachable by individuals other than specialists. For Taylor (2002, p.106) the contributions made by social theory are ultimately incorporated into a society's social imaginaries. However, since social theory aims to explain and problematise social phenomena with the goal of altering social

reality, then, it is of paramount importance for its *raison d'être* that is comprehended by everyone and not only specialists.

In the pursuit of further clarifying what is meant by social imaginaries, I discuss them through the notion of culture. For my purpose, I take culture to be a *sui generis* articulation of the world. A society's cultural articulation of the world—i.e. the meaning they have entrenched the world with—is embodied in their instituted practices, political configurations, laws, beliefs, values, and art. The term culture refers to something which is in a state of growth. This development is influenced—but not limited—by the environment that it is within. What influences a culture's development are the social imaginaries that are embedded in it. A society's *sui generis* social imaginaries place it on a trajectory—a cultural project.

Methodology

My research employs a hermeneutic methodology. Traditionally, hermeneutics is employed as the method for textual analysis and interpretation (Grondin 1997, 2005; Schmidt 2006). Primarily, the discipline of hermeneutics was regarded as outlining the technical 'rules governing the discipline of interpretation' (Grondin 1997, p. 1). However, the work of Heidegger (1962[1927]), Gadamer (1989), and Ricoeur (1981a) extended hermeneutics beyond the technical process to incorporate the notion of understanding. Interpretation and understanding come forth 'from the text itself'; the interpreter is then directed to the text's 'proper meaning' (Osborne 1991, p. 415). This dynamic encounter between the text and the interpreter establishes a movement which is what is meant by the term hermeneutic circle. My methodology follows Ricoeurian hermeneutic insights. Ricoeur's understanding of hermeneutics is situated in a dialectic process (Westphal 2011, pp. 43-62). That is to say that the hermeneutic process is similar to a dialogue, or, a

discourse, between the interpreter and the text. Ricoeur dichotomises the hermeneutic process into 'structural explanation' and 'understanding'. Ricoeur argued that 'hermeneutics is the theory of the operations of understanding in the relation to the interpretation of texts' (1981a, p. 43). His specific understanding of the hermeneutic method involves an 'open dialectic' of distance and belonging. The idea of distance and belonging are two poles of the hermeneutic circle. The researcher enters the hermeneutic circle (Westphal 2011, p.46) when s/he takes the text as the object of study, as opposed to the author's meaning, and tries to understand its different layers of meaning. The layers of meaning that were invisible can be brought to the surface with the hermeneutic circles' basic aspects of belonging and distancing (Westphal 2011, p. 54). For Ricoeur, the two notions are not opposed to each other as separate aspects of the hermeneutic circle. Within this dialectic the concepts are 'complementary', 'interpenetrating', and 'mediated' by each other (Westphal 2011, p.54). In belonging, the researcher is emerged in the textual analysis and tries to make sense of the text through their prior understandings. In the concept of distancing the researcher attempts to step away from the single object of analysis (the text). By doing this, the researcher attempts to see the same text as being part of a whole (the overall *oeuvre*). This enables the researcher to critically, and objectively, analyse the text. By moving through the particular and the universal in a cyclical trajectory, the researcher is able to draw meaning from areas that might not have initially been acknowledged as fecund.

For this research project, I will be looking at Castoriadis's and Ricoeur's selected texts as the focus of analysis. By entering the hermeneutic circle, each author's text is examined in light of the specific period in which both thinkers engaged with the social imaginaries and social action. Following Ricoeur, through this cyclical movement, layers of meaning that are within the text itself can emerge and new understandings can be brought forth. I am not interested in the author's motivation or intentions. Rather, I take the text itself

as an object and I am placing it in the author's *oeuvre* as a whole. By placing the text within the overall *oeuvre* its position can further help the researcher reconstruct certain ideas or meanings that were left underdeveloped by the author.

An essential element of the reconstruction process is periodisation. Both Castoriadis and Ricoeur dealt with action at some point in their intellectual trajectory. However, action was marginalised and both theorists focused on different aspects of the *social imaginary*. Also, for both Castoriadis and Ricoeur, their approaches to action changed over time. My research will be using a critical reconstructive approach. That means that I will be developing the underlying meanings hidden in the text further. Hermeneutics is concerned with deciphering different layers of meaning. It assumes there is more than a surface reading. A surface reading of both Castoriadis and Ricoeur attests to their work on social action. However, the concept of action is much more nuanced than that, for their different understandings change over time. By looking at the different ways they talk about 'action' over time, one can see how the notion changes. The overall goal of the textual analysis is to see more implicit and partial meanings that might not be obvious in the first reading. The periodisation and the reconstructive approach will help my research develop a fuller notion of both theorists' account of action in its various forms.

My research will be analysing primary texts where Castoriadis and Ricoeur started developing their understanding of action. For my research on Castoriadis, I have chosen texts that were written between 1964 and 1991. The Castoriadian texts analysed will be in the French, Greek, and English languages. For my research on Ricoeur, I will also be looking at texts that were written from 1973 to 1977. Ricoeur's texts that will be included in the research will be in both the English and French languages. The texts published in 1991 are the upper limit for both theorists because thereafter their respective focus on action shifted from their initial emphasis on it.

My research confronts two main limitations. The first limitation is due to the size of a research-only master's thesis. The limitations placed by the size of the research project do not allow me to properly explore, first, the power dimension of action, and second, the work of Taylor and Lefort is not given its due emphasis. The second limitation is methodological. The process referred to as the hermeneutic circle is comprised of two stages which are within a dialectic process. These two stages are belonging and distancing. The limitations that arise in the primary stages of encountering a text relate to the process of belonging. When an interpreter first encounters a text s/he reads it from a specific position which can produce false meanings. This can be his/her belonging to a 'world'. An example of this could be the case where a word is used by an author as a term which means more than what its etymological parameters allow. The way to overcome this limitation is to actively enter into the hermeneutic circle's process of distancing. This enables the researcher to reassess the prejudices that might arise from being unaware of the text's position in the author's *oeuvre*.

In the first chapter, I look at Castoriadis and flesh out the meaning of 'social action' for him. Castoriadis's elucidations emphasise *social imaginary significations* as that which brings forth novel forms of social action. Furthermore, this chapter explores what 'creation' and 'creativity of action' entail for Castoriadis within a social imaginaries framework. Finally, the chapter explores the different types of historical and ahistorical action, whilst emphasising the social and imaginary dimensions of *praxis* as socio-political doing.

The second substantive chapter is devoted to my second interlocutor, that is Ricoeur. The chapter will focus on his social and cultural imagination as it developed in his work during the 1970s and 1980s. In this chapter, I elucidate Ricoeur's hermeneutic understanding of 'social action' by looking at ideology and utopia—i.e. the two ends of the socio-cultural imagination.

My thesis at this point takes a small detour, an excursus on a recently published dialogue between Castoriadis and Ricoeur. This exchange constitutes their only known direct encounter, in which they specifically discuss the social imaginary's role in bringing forth new 'forms' and the continuity of meaning in the social-historical realm. Although there is no explicitly sustained discussion on action in the dialogue the excursus acts like a platform from which my last chapter can commence. In my final chapter, I bring both thinkers into a dialogue in which I flesh out further their convergences and divergences on what 'social action' is and how it is linked to the *social imaginaries* concept. In this final discussion, I will juxtapose their understanding of *social imaginaries* articulated as *social imaginary significations* for Castoriadis and *ideology* and *utopia* for Ricoeur.

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1. Castoriadis: The Creativity of Social Doing and Social Imaginary Significations

What is essential in human activities can be grasped neither as reflex nor as technique.

Castoriadis 1987 [1975], p. 73

Cornelius Castoriadis was best known as a philosopher who emphasised the imagination's role in the creation of social institutions and for his project of autonomy. At the heart of Castoriadis's *oeuvre* is the association of creativity as a human quality, a mode of being informed by the *radical imaginary*. For Castoriadis, true creation, *ex-nihilo*, belongs to *social-historical being*.[1] Ontological creation is the bringing forth of new *forms*, *eide* (plural for εἶδος) into the *world*. The *world* for that matter is also a creation of the *social-historical*. The creation of new forms relates to but is not reduced to action in the world.

This chapter looks at how Castoriadis's understanding of the creativity of social action is framed by his elucidation of *social imaginary significations*. It focusses on the creative types of action identified by Castoriadis that aim to transform the world—i.e. technique and *praxis*. The chapter will focus on the collective aspects of human creation embodied by *social imaginary significations* which animate the various institutions of a society. Institutions are seen in the broadest sense as a society's *nomoi*, that is enduring customs, norms, and conventions, that order and articulate a *world* and are a glimpse into the radical imaginary of the society that brought them forth. More specifically, this chapter elucidates Castoriadis's understanding of *socio-political doing/action*, or *praxis*, through his notion of *social imaginary significations* and will show the creative aspects of this type of action in general and for political doing more specifically.

The chapter will focus on the Castoriadian texts that precede his ontological turn (Adams 2011) because his emphasis is on the different types of *human doing* and not emphatically on the *imagination*. In the early Castoriadis (1964-65), that is, during the time he wrote the first part of *The Imaginary Institution of Society* (1987 [1975]), *action*, *social doing*, and *praxis* (the action intrinsic to an autonomous society) are emphasised. Adams (2011) argues that this period is phenomenological. Antithetically, Castoriadis's anthropology of the *creative imagination*, formulated in the second part of *The Imaginary Institution of Society* (1987 [1975]) and which is thought to be written in a different and distinct period, is more ontological (Adams 2011). During this period of Castoriadis's work 'social doing' and 'action' are consigned to *technique*. The texts from Castoriadis's *oeuvre* which this chapter will focus on are those written between 1964 and 1991. The selection of this period is in line with the directions taken in the *Imaginary Institution of Society* (1987 [1975]) i.e. the early Castoriadis considered the notion of action more centrally.

The introductory section consists of, first, a small biographic note on Castoriadis, and second, a review of some of the key theorists that have been inspired by Castoriadis's elucidations on action. In the 1964-65 section of *The Imaginary Institution of Society*, Castoriadis identified three types of action specific to the world of human doing i.e. *reflex*, *technique*, and *socio-political doing* as *praxis*. The chapter will focus on two of the three types of action. Due to their historical dimensions, I argue that both *technique* and *socio-political doing* as *praxis* can be linked to creativity in the social-historical field. The reason for focusing on these aspects of *human doing* is to flesh out the notion of a *creativity of action* and its interconnectedness with *social imaginary significations* as they manifest through *technique* and *praxis*. Due to the fact that reflex actions are not governed by social norms or conventions, they are not explicitly examined in this research.

In the first four sections of this chapter, I provide the reader with an elucidation of Castoriadis's philosophy while in the next three sections I turn to the different types of creative action identified by him. The remainder of the chapter is organised around seven sections. The first section elucidates Castoriadis's understanding of creation in the social-historical field as it manifests through institutions and social imaginary significations that animate them. The second section takes up Castoriadis's theory of modernity as it is bifurcated by two opposing *social imaginary significations* (i.e. *the pursuit of rational mastery* and *the project of autonomy*) which are characteristic of different types of action (i.e. *technique* and *praxis*). In the third section, I focus on one of Castoriadis's proto-institutions (i.e. *teukhein*) and elucidate how it leans on the specific *ensemblist-identitary* logic (or *ensidic*) that is instituted *sui generis* by a society. The fourth section looks at Castoriadis's understanding of institutions and elucidates the notions of *instituted* and *instituting* and asks whether *doing* features in them. In this section, I also discuss *ground power*, *movement* as it manifests in *anonymous*, or *trans-subjective*, *doing*, as well as social practices as forms of instituted doing.

In the fifth section, I define *technique* and discuss it as historical doing that alters the world. Here, I will make explicit that technique as a type of doing is based on an exhaustive knowledge of its domain and is characteristic of a teleological framework. Technique will be elucidated as the type of action specific to *the pursuit of rational mastery* and as I will argue it is also creative. In the sixth section, I take up the action characteristic of *the project of autonomy*. Here, I define what *praxis* is and link it to socio-political doing. Moreover, due to its capacity to alter the world, I emphasise its creative historical dimension. This section will make explicit that *praxis* (in contradistinction to *technique*) is based on the lucid understanding that knowledge of the socio-political domain is always fragmented. This chapter's final section advances a discussion about the creativity inherent in both *technique*

and *praxis*. Although *praxis* is the type of action associated with creativity, I will argue that even if *technique* is always based within a teleological framework and a methodology that can never be altered it is essentially creative.

Castoriadis can be situated in 'French phenomenological strands that take a hermeneutical or an ontological turn' (Adams 2011, p. 2). More precisely, Castoriadis finds inspiration from the works of Paul Ricoeur and Maurice Merleau-Ponty respectively (Adams 2011, p. 2). The phenomenological insight that humans are always within a world and Merleau-Ponty's understanding that due to the fact the human condition always occurs within a *world* it is always bound by the necessity to construct meaning, inspired Castoriadis to put into question the imaginary dimensions of the world and to articulate his theory of creation within the socio-historical domain. Castoriadis's work went against the dominant social theoretical perspectives of his time and is considered 'one of the most sophisticated alternatives to the deterministic elements implicit in structuralist and poststructuralist thought' (Elliott 2002, p. 146).

Castoriadis's *magnum opus*, *The Imaginary Institution of Society* (1987 [1975]), gave rise to extensive bodies of secondary literature. Some of the theorists influenced by the work of Castoriadis, which are important for this chapter's specific direction, are Johann P. Arnason, Craig Browne, Hans Joas, Suzi Adams, Angelos Mouzakitis, and Jeff Klooger.

Johann P. Arnason's work (1989a, 1989b, 2014a, 2014b, 2014c) has been influenced by Castoriadis's theories on *social imaginary significations*, the *social-historical*, institutions, and modernity. Arnason's interest in macro-theoretical approaches led him to utilise Castoriadis's notion that societies and their specific articulations of the world gave rise to the *multiple modernities* thesis. Arnason focusses on the latent consequences that are brought into the world by each civilisation's *social imaginary significations* and their inter-

civilisational encounters. Arnason's project aims to analyse, by comparison, configurations of human interaction within civilisational complexes. Arnason's focus on civilisational complexes can only put forth a theory of action from the macro perspective. This is because these complexes are macro-cultural units which encompass, potentially, multiple societies across historical time and geographical space. This chapter tries to bridge the macro-perspectives of a theory of action to an elucidation of the micro so that a fuller and more complete analysis of action can be put forth.

Another theorist that is of interest for opening up the political dimension of Castoriadis work is Craig Browne. Browne's interest in Castoriadis's philosophy centres around the democratic ethos and the processes of democratisation that are fostered in modern capitalism. Browne is mainly interested in the creative aspect of democracy and its link to pragmatism. This is evident when Browne (2014) compares Castoriadis's understanding of creative democracy with that of thinkers such as John Dewey, George H. Mead, and Claude Lefort. For Browne, Castoriadis's thought is aligned with the aforementioned thinkers because they all attempted to understand the *creativity of action* inherent in democracies. Browne, however, does not focus on extrapolating a Castoriadian theory of social action proper. This chapter incorporates Browne's insights on the processes of democratisation but uses them in a way so that a theory of social action can be elucidated.

Hans Joas, by way of a constructive critique, founded his thesis on the creative aspect of human action. Joas's emphasises the importance of creativity when discussing human being (Joas 1996, p. 116). Similarly, Castoriadis's *oeuvre* leans on an understanding of society as creative and self-creating. Societies do not merely reproduce social institutions by way of *mimesis*—i.e. imitation. Rather, societies are in a continuous process of creativity bringing forth novel forms of action. These novel forms of action, for Joas, are linked to the

concept of the institution. Joas (1993, p.160) emphasises that '[c]reative action refers to the creation of institutions and to the world as a sphere of possibility of action'.

Suzi Adams's enduring engagement in a dialectic with Castoriadis's *oeuvre* has exposed multiple dimensions of the complex under determined human condition as it is manifested in its trans-subjective aspect. In *Castoriadis's Ontology: Being and Creation* (2011) Adams articulated one of the most systematic works on the different shifts which occurred in Castoriadis thinking and direction while he wrote *The Imaginary Institution of Society*. In regard to social action, Adams (2012) reactivates Aristotelian notions of *movement*[2] and its opening to a theory of the trans-subjective nature of social action. Adams tells us that Castoriadis's 'shift towards ontology and a systematic elucidation of the social historical' steered his work away from his initial emphasis on social doing as *praxis* and its immediate role in facilitating the project of autonomy.

Another important contribution to the elucidation of Castoriadis's work comes from Angelos Mouzakitis. Mouzakitis looked at the concepts of time and historicity in Heidegger, Gadamer, and Castoriadis (2008). Mouzakitis's research on Castoriadis centres around social ontology and social change. He has contributed a number of different chapters to anthologies devoted to Castoriadis thought (Mouzakitis 2007; 2010; 2013; 2014a; 2014b). Mouzakitis draws links between Heidegger and Castoriadis by showing that the notion of *authenticity* in Heidegger is similar to the notion of *autonomy* in Castoriadis. Overall, Mouzakitis's work on Castoriadis emphasises the importance of history for his overall *oeuvre*.

Finally, another important contribution is that of Jeff Klooger (2009). In *Castoriadis: Psyche, Society, Autonomy* (2009) Klooger focussed on a number of Castoriadis's ideas. Klooger (2009) critically reflects on Castoriadis's philosophy and puts forth an elucidation

on, first, the differences between autonomy and heteronomy, second, the idea of self-creation, and third, the notion of determination within Castoriadis's understanding of the indeterminacy of the world. Klooger (2009) juxtaposes Shmuel Eisenstadt's insights on axial age civilisations and Castoriadis's understanding of heteronomous societies and their lack of self-reflexivity. Another significant theme Klooger develops is the determining aspect of *legein* and *teukhein*. With this, he means that any aspect of doing or instituting brings forth a partial determination that can always rupture open once again. Overall, Klooger's interest and research on Castoriadis mature philosophical project emphasised the significance of self-creation and autonomy but has not focussed on a theory of action per se.

In this section, I looked at some of the key theorists that have engaged with Castoriadis's *oeuvre*. It is noteworthy that the secondary literature examined has not focussed explicitly on the link of action to *social imaginaries significations*. In the following section, I take the preliminary steps for the elucidation of action in relation to *social imaginary significations*. To do this, I turn to the links between institution and social imaginary significations for they are instances of creation in the social-historical field.

1.1 Creation in the Social-Historical Field: Institutions and Social Imaginary Significations

In the introductory section, I put forth a brief overview of the chapter's structure, a biographical note on Castoriadis, and an overview of some of the key theorists that have been significant for advancing and developing Castoriadis's thought. The purpose of the present section is to explain Castoriadis's theory of institutions and *social imaginary significations*. For this task, first, I discuss what creation entails for Castoriadis, and second, I focus on the institutionalisation process and the *ex nihilo* creation of meaning in the social-historical field. Moreover, this section elucidates Castoriadis's underlying influences by the classical social theorists Émile Durkheim and Max Weber.

For Castoriadis (1991a, pp. 146-7), *human doing*, which creates the institutions 'and the imaginary significations borne by it and animating it', brings a *world* into being that is not reducible to any logical or rational foundations. For Castoriadis (1997, p. 3), 'being is abyss' and creation was brought forth from chaos (χάος). The reactivation of *chaos* as a concept relating to the ontological novelty of human creation exposes Castoriadis's anti-functionalist and anti-structuralist foundations (Joas and Knöbl 2009). It is on this foundation that Castoriadis argues for creation *ex nihilo*. That is, the emergence of novel forms (i.e. *eide*) is *ex nihilo* (i.e. 'out of nothing') for they 'are neither reducible to, nor producible from their antecedents' (Adams 2017b, p. 112). Arnason (2014, p. 33) argues that for Castoriadis history is characterised by the 'emergence of new forms'; it is the 'self-unfolding of society'. As such, Castoriadis's critique of functionalism becomes transparent. This is mainly due to Castoriadis's philosophy of indeterminacy; *meaning* is not a-historical like how structuralism would have it; it is historical and unique to the society. The unique historicity of meaning shows the creative aspect of the social imaginary.

Social doing is embedded in Castoriadis's work on *social imaginary significations*. Arguably, a *theory of action* always featured in Castoriadis's *oeuvre*. However, his articulations on an ontology of *social imaginary significations* receives the most attention. Although *social doing* was important, Castoriadis, was more concerned with putting forth an anthropology of the *creative imagination*. Consequently, 'action' and 'social doing' were put to the side and received less attention in his post-1975works. Castoriadis's project in *The Imaginary Institution of Society* (1987[1975]) commences through 'an elaboration of the ontological preconditions of autonomy, but it metamorphoses along the way into an ontology of the social-historical' (Adams 2011, p. 2).

For Castoriadis, history cannot be thought of outside of the *world* of *human doing*; historical creation is the product of *human doing* by way of *instituting* (Castoriadis 1987

[1975], p.72). Furthermore, history is 'inconceivable outside of the *productive* or *creative imagination*' or what Castoriadis calls the *radical imaginary* (1987 [1975], p. 146). The creativity of the *radical imaginary* is revealed 'in both *historical doing* and in the constitution, before any explicit rationality, of a universe of *significations*' (Castoriadis 1987 [1975], p. 146). This is a creation that is *sui generis,* and which could never be recreated by any *ensemblist-identitary* reasoning. History is seen here as a society's self-creation, *auto-création* (Poirier 2004, pp. 84-5), an *imaginary creation* that 'cannot be accounted for by reality' or 'by rationality' and can 'be seen in the practice and the doing of the society considered as a meaning that organises human behaviour and social relations' (Castoriadis 1987[1975], p. 141). The emphasis of meaning driving action echoes Weber's *verstehende Soziologie*. However, Castoriadis (1990) goes beyond Weber and places the creation of meaning within the social.

Based on the premise that *society* and *history* are one and the same and could not be thought of as separate, Castoriadis (1987[1975], p. 108) uses the *social-historical* as a term that signifies this connection. For Castoriadis history involves social change in the form of *radical creation*; the bringing forth of a new *eidos*. The ancient Greek city-states, or poleis, are an example of a radical historical discontinuity, a rupture from the mode of heteronomy that had dominated human societies. The rupture cannot be explained through a teleological framework, or in terms that argue for determinate causes being the catalytic force that brought forth the new eidos *ex nihilo*.

For Castoriadis (1991b, p. 35) the *sui generis* phenomenon of the creation and destruction of a society's form is ontologically more important than that of a solar system. According to Castoriadis's example, solar systems come to be due to the right environmental forces being aligned in a way that they produce it. This bringing forth, or coming to being, of a solar system is always due to the right circumstances being present

and combined in a specific way. What Castoriadis (1991b, p. 35) argued was that natural phenomena are a-historical; in contradistinction, the forms of social groupings and the *nomoi* instituted by them are historical and could never be reproduced wholly. That is, societies are historical for they are unique forms/eide in time.[3] This argument becomes clearer when one acknowledges Castoriadis's thesis that society *is* history unfolding (1997, p. 13). To flesh this out even further, the Athenian democratic ethos could never be reproduced for it was specific to the people that lived in that area at that time. Some examples of social-historical creation presented by Castoriadis are the Greek polis, Western capitalism, the Russian totalitarian bureaucracy, as well as the creation of a new social imaginary signification, that of the unlimited expansion of rational mastery (1997, p. 15).

For Castoriadis, every society organises 'the production of its material life and its reproduction as a society' and the way they do this is not dictated by natural laws or by rational considerations' (1987 [1975], p. 145). An ordering of the world, for Castoriadis, entails meanings being attached to it. This organisation, however, allows a society to grasp the total world 'in a way that is determined practically, affectively and mentally' so that it becomes meaningful. It is within this imaginary creation of meaning where one makes sense of 'what does or does not possess value…and what should or should not be done' (Castoriadis 1987 [1975], pp. 145-6).

Arnason (2014, pp. 32-3) argues that Castoriadis recognised that there is 'functional component' to human societies. However, according to Arnason (2014, pp. 32-3), Castoriadis argued that societies 'are not reducible to systems with given needs'. On this point, Arnason (2014, p. 32) argues that this is because 'cultural definitions always enter into the making of societal needs'; before they are embodied in institutions, they are interpreted through symbolic networks of meaning. As mentioned earlier, at the heart of

Castoriadis's philosophy is the concept of the institution and at the core of the process of institutionalisation is creative action.

The category of the institution has been of seminal importance for both sociology and anthropology (Joas 1993, p.160). The most important development of the concept of the institution being a creative process is found in Durkheim's theory of religion (Joas 1993, p.160). Parsons, however, failed to acknowledge the creativity inherent in Durkheim's formulation of the institutionalisation process and conceived it as 'the realisation of pre-existing values than as the creation of new values' (Joas 1993, p.160). Castoriadis's work, antithetically, looks at Durkheim's (1976 [1912]) later work as a source for discussing the institution's non-functionalist dimension (Joas 1993, p. 160).

What exactly does Castoriadis mean by the term *institution* and what is its link to *social imaginary significations*? Castoriadis (1997, p. 6) uses the term institution in the 'broadest and most radical sense: norms, values, language, tools, procedures and methods of dealing with things and doing things' as well as 'the individual itself both in general and in the particular type and form (and their differentiations e.g. man/woman) given to it by the society considered'. The institution and 'the whole complex of its particular institutions' or what Castoriadis calls the 'institution of a society as a whole' is that which 'holds a society together' (1997, p. 6). The specific institutions of a society are endowed with meaning. Moreover, this meaning is an 'original investment by society of the world and itself' that is not reducible to functional reasons (Castoriadis (1987[1975], p. 128).

For Castoriadis (1997, p. 7), there is a 'complex web of meanings' he calls the 'magma' of *social imaginary significations* which 'permeate, orient, and direct the whole life of the society considered'. Castoriadis says that magma is 'the mode of being of what gives itself before the identitary or ensemblist logic is imposed' (1987[1975], p. 343). For

Castoriadis in magma there is always a specific social imaginary which could never be reproduced, and which is continually in a process of creation and transformation through *teukhein* (doing/organising) and *legein* (saying/representing). I return to these concepts in more detail below.

The magma of social imaginary significations is embodied in a society's institutions and animates them (Castoriadis 1997, p. 7). Just like the concept of the institution, social imaginary significations are taken in their broadest sense. Castoriadis's elucidation of social imaginary significations has a sociological background and can be seen as 'a radicalization of Durkheim's collective representations' (Adams 2012, p. 31). Additionally, in agreement with Durkheim's understanding that all societies are *sui generis*, Castoriadis would also hold that '*social reality is constituted by the non-subjective as its primary substratum*' (Adams 2012, p. 31).

For Castoriadis (1997, p. 7) *social imaginary significations* are: 'spirits, gods, God; polis, citizen, nation, state, party; commodity, money, capital, interest rate; taboo, virtue, sin; and so forth'. Adams (2012, p. 31) explains that '[s]ocial imaginary significations are to be understood as complexes or figurations of latent meaning that make "social reality" conceivable in the first place'. Although Castoriadis argues for the *ex nihilo* creation of *social imaginary significations*, Arnason takes a 'hermeneutical and culturological' approach and 'reconfigures "imaginary significations" to "interpretative patterns"' (Adams 2012, p. 31; see Arnason 1989). Arnason (1989, p. 334) argues that *social imaginary significations* should be conceived of as cultural orientations or 'multiform complexes of meaning' which 'can give rise to more determinate patterns and at the same time remain open to other interpretations'. As we can see above, Arnason emphasises 'the hermeneutical dimension of social-historical creation' (Adams 2012, p. 31).

Beyond the organisation of the world and its investment with meaning, social imaginary significations answer certain fundamental questions for each society. Castoriadis lists the following questions which each society needs to answer:

> Who are we as a collective? What are we for one another? Where and in what are we? What do we want; what do we desire; what are we lacking?'. Each society needs to 'define its identity, its articulation, the world, its relations to the world and to the objects it contains, its needs and its desires. (Castoriadis 1987 [1975], pp. 146-7)

Castoriadis (1987 [1975], p. 147) argues that *social imaginary significations* answer the above questions because neither reality nor rationality can. Furthermore, Castoriadis (1987 [1975], p.147) posits that it is in the activity of a society, in its social doing, that one finds the embodied meaning answered by *social imaginary significations*. This is one of the reasons why a provisional theoretical schema of action and doing should consider *social imaginary significations*.

Social imaginary significations 'deploy themselves always along two, indissociable dimensions: the ensemblist identitary (set-theoretical, logical) dimension and the strictly or properly imaginary dimension' (Castoriadis 1997, p. 11). The two dimensions of social imaginary significations constitute the *world* created by each society within which it includes itself in a unique organisation (Castoriadis 1997, p. 9). This organisation determines what is real and meaningful. Here, one can detect a tension between the two indissociable dimensions. The ensemblist identitary dimension of social imaginary significations is characteristic of determination while for the second dimension of the imaginary 'existence *is* signification'.

Castoriadis's elucidation of *social imaginary significations* and the *radical imaginary*'s creative dimension, consists of 'a tripartite typology of significations' corresponding 'to the perceived, to the rational or the imaginary' (Castoriadis 1987 [1975], p. 139; Arnason 2014, p. 33). Arnason's (2014, p. 33) hermeneutic reconstruction of

Castoriadis's typology of significations identified its Kantian roots as well as the imagination's significance to perception and rationality. For Castoriadis, social-historical being is inextricably connected to the imaginary. Even though the imaginary 'is to be distinguished from the components based on perception…or rationality', its incessant 'interaction with these two aspects…as the modus operandi of the imaginary source' and the creation of *social imaginary significations* emphasise the imagination's role in creating symbolic networks (Arnason 2014, p. 33).

In this section, I have looked at how Castoriadis understands creation in the social-historical field, the role *social imaginary significations* play, and how they are embodied in the institutions of a society. In the next section, I move on to Castoriadis's theory of modernity and see how social imaginary significations are used to show two opposing orientations embedded in it.

1.2 Modernity's Dual Institution: Autonomy and Heteronomy

In the previous section, the focus was on Castoriadis's theory of institutions and *social imaginary significations*. The emphasis was placed on Castoriadis's thesis that institutions and *social imaginary significations* are creations *ex nihilo* and are *sui generis* to the societies from which they emerge, thus, alluding to a specific creativity in the social-historical field. In this section, Castoriadis's theory of modernity and the institution of two central *social imaginary significations* (i.e. the infinite pursuit of rational mastery and autonomy) which are characteristic of two conflicting types of action and projects is elucidated. Moreover, this section will discuss the two types of societies that Castoriadis identifies (i.e. autonomous and heteronomous) and will question how these two forms manifest on an individual and a collective level. I will end this chapter with a discussion of the three types of action

identified by Castoriadis and will justify why I will elucidate the two types of action that can be called social-historical and thus also creative.

Castoriadis's theory of modernity is founded upon the understanding that there are two opposing and clashing social imaginary significations which are characteristic of different types of action and different projects.[4] For Castoriadis, the western modernity is the product of the conflicting of these two dominant *social imaginary significations*. The two *social imaginary significations* clash with each other and are characterised as a 'field of tensions' (Arnason 1989, p. 232). They are, first, the infinite pursuit of pseudo-rational mastery, and second, the project of autonomy. Arnason (1989, p. 323) refers to the imaginary constitution of modernity as being characteristic of the "'dual institution" i.e. the instable coexistence and permanent mutual contestation of capitalism and autonomy' which is a critique of the single focussed approaches to modernity like Habermas's notion of the unfinished project of enlightenment

The two *social imaginary significations* characteristic of modernity are associated with two different types of actions and two distinct projects. On one hand, the pursuit of rational mastery is associated with technique and its project is to subdue and master the world through an ensemblist-identitary logic. On the other hand, the project of autonomy is linked with *praxis* and is aimed at making explicit that the world is made up of human-made institutions that should be critiqued and changed if they hinder the autonomy of an individual or a collective.

For Castoriadis, societies are always in a process of self-creation and self-institution but not always lucid of the fact. Although every society is self-creating, on Castoriadis's account, heteronomous societies are incapable of questioning their own institutions (Castoriadis 1989). Societies defined as heteronomous consider their institutions to be given

extra-socially. Castoriadis argued that heteronomous societies were not aware that they can institute the norms they live by.

Antithetically, autonomous societies are lucid of their power to institute new norms by way of calling into question that which is instituted. An autonomous society, as all societies aim towards, wants to project itself into the future and secure its re-institution, its preservation, and the autonomy of its citizens. However, there is no set way this can be achieved, as such, a 'theory cannot be given beforehand because it constantly emerges out of the activity itself' (Castoriadis 1987[1975], p. 76). Castoriadis (1991e, p. 136) defines an autonomous society as 'a society capable of explicitly self-instituting itself, capable therefore of putting into question its already given institutions, its already established representation of the world'.

Autonomy was central for Castoriadis's overall politico-philosophical project. There are two roots to this word; *auto-* meaning self, and *nomos* meaning law. Autonomy means giving oneself laws. However, autonomy has two dimensions, on the one hand, it can be seen as the act of an individual and on the other, it can be seen as a collective process. These two dimensions are interrelated because an autonomous society is comprised of autonomous subjects which all have equal access to political power. The pragmatic connection between individual and collective autonomy, according to Castoriadis (1991a, pp. 169-70), is politics. Castoriadis distinguishes the terms politics—*la politique*—and political—*le politique*. He uses the term political in relation to the instituted means of governance in a society while politics refers to the creative capacity of society to institute new laws and critique existing ones. The distinction between the notions of *le politique* and *la politique* will be revisited later in the chapter.

Both autonomous and heteronomous societies are characteristic of specific types of action. For Castoriadis, there are three types of human doing. The types of action are distinguished based on the projects and knowledge they lean on. To flesh out the connection of action to knowledge, Castoriadis presents the two extremes (1987[1975], p. 72) of *knowledge-driven action* to action which is unrelated to knowledge. As mentioned earlier, the world of human doing is what brings forth the historical world (Castoriadis 1987[1975], p. 72). A such, moments of creativity are always related to knowledge. The two extreme types of action can be dichotomised into historical and a-historical action. On the one hand, *praxis* and technique are both historical and as such, I would argue they need to be understood as creative. On the other hand, reflex action is a-historical and is not linked with creativity.

Let us, first, look briefly at the a-historical and non-creative type of action. The first type of action identified by Castoriadis was reflex action (1987[1975], p. 72). This type of action is of lesser importance for my specific project and is not associated with knowledge. It follows, that since this type of action is not related to knowledge it is a-historical. Reflex action relates to the type of action that occurs because of a stimulus. A simple example that illustrates this dimension of action is that of the medical practitioner assessing a patient's nerves. The medical professional uses a specific type of hammer and lightly hits the nerve underneath the patient's kneecap which results in the unconscious movement of the entire leg. Biological functions of the human body, like reflexive, do not try to alter and transform the world (Castoriadis 1987[1975], p. 380). As such, Castoriadis argues, that shedding light on these types of non-conscious activities is not fruitful for they cannot elucidate 'the problem of the relations of knowing and doing in history' (Castoriadis 1987[1975], p. 380).

The second and third types of action—i.e. technique and *praxis*—are historical and can be regarded as creative. For Castoriadis (1987[1975], p. 76), *praxis* and the 'clarification

and transformation of reality progress together…each conditioning the other'. In the following sections, I will elucidate the type of action Castoriadis called technique and will focus on its historical dimension. In the section on technique, I will show that although it is not associated with creativity it is essentially a mode of doing that is creative. In the final section, I will move to discussing the third type of action which is also historical and is closely related to the creativity of action—i.e. *praxis*. However, first I will discuss the notion of *Teukhein* as Castoriadis understands it.

1.3 *Teukhein*

In the previous section, we looked at Castoriadis's theory of modernity. We saw that modernity deploys itself through two conflicting social imaginary significations—the pursuit of rational mastery and autonomy—which relate to heteronomy and autonomy. I also briefly discussed the two types of action associated with each social imaginary signification—technique, and *praxis* respectively. Now we turn to one of the two proto-institutions—*teukhein*.

The creation of *social imaginary significations* in the social-historical always brings forth radical otherness (the novel form) and it always happens alongside instituted *ensemblist-identitary* logic. For Castoriadis, *ensemblist-identitary* action, which he later called *ensidic* (Klooger 2014, p. 107), is deployed through the *legein* and *teukhein* specific to a society.[5]

Legein and *teukhein* are interlinked and both are the product of the instituted imaginary:

> The instrumental institution of *legein* is the institution of the identitary-ensemblist conditions for social representing/saying. The instrumental institution of *teukhein* is the institution of the identitary-ensemblist conditions for social doing. The two institutions mutually imply one another, they intrinsically inhere in one another, and each is impossible without the other. (Castoriadis 1987 [1975], p. 370)

Both proto-institutions, *legein* and *teukhein* lean on the specific *ensemblist-identitary* logic that is instituted *sui generis* by a social group. For Castoriadis *legein* and *teukhein* are vital to the institution of the social-historical. The social-historical is not the product of pre-existing causal forces, it is the unique creation of a *world* which comes into being through the instituted ways of social doing (*teukhein*) and social representing/saying (*legein*). In Arnason's (2015, p. 55) introduction to Castoriadis's posthumously published article 'The Imaginary as Such' states that representing (*legein*) and doing (*teukhein*) are the basic components of social-historical being and are active on both 'collective and individual levels'. Castoriadis (2015, p. 61) argued that the 'elements through which the social-historical exists in collective or individual forms are directly given as belonging to the inextricably interconnected realms' of *legein* and *teukhein* and could never be reduced 'natural or logical determinations.

> [E]very society defines and develops an image of the natural world, of the universe in which it lives, attempting in every instance to make of it a signifying whole, in which a place has to be made not only for the natural objects and beings important for the life of the collectivity, but also for the collectivity itself, establishing, finally, a certain 'world-order'. (Castoriadis 1987 [1975], p. 149)

The logic Castoriadis is referring to 'is the basis of the logical operations involved in the production and manipulation of ensembles or sets' (Klooger 2014, p. 107). The types of human doing that can be categorised as being brought forth by the processes of *ensidic* logic are based on an exhaustive and creative account of the *world*. *Ensemblist-identitary* logic presumes 'the fully determinable identity of both ensembles and their components' (Klooger 2014, p. 107). Castoriadis puts forth a term that signifies the actions specific to *teukhein*. *Teukhein* is the process of 'assembling-adjusting-fabricating-constructing' (Castoriadis 1987[1975], p. 260). This process is linked to, as we saw above, to the ensidic (ensemblistic-

identitary) dimension of the social-historical, and as such, it is related to a social doing that has a functional-instrumental dimension and as such, is aimed at a specific *telos*.

Castoriadis tells us that '*legein* and *teukhein* refer to one another and circularly imply one another' (1987[1975], p. 260). Although this section focused on *teukhein*, it is interesting to note that *legein* which is the process of saying, representing, and ascribing signitive meaning to the world, can also be a source for action and social doing. In the next section, I move to the concepts of instituting and instituted imaginaries.

1.4 Instituting and Instituted Imaginaries

In the previous section, the chapter turned to the proto-institutions of *legein* and *teukhein* but focused on the latter, namely *teukhein*. We saw that *teukhein* leaning on ensidic logic is the background on which the social imaginary can creatively institute novel forms. Leading on from this idea that *teukhein* is a proto-institution already given in every society and with which the social imaginary has to take into consideration and also critique, we move onto the forms and institutions that are already in the world. In this section, I discuss the instituted and the instituting. Thereafter, I will pose two questions, first, what does the instituted and the instituting entail for Castoriadis? And, second, how does doing fit into the notions of instituted and instituting? My next step in this section is to discuss the notion of ground power and its relation to the institution. My final steps in this section will be, first, to discuss movement as anonymous, or trans-subjective, doing, and, second, social practices as forms of instituted doing.

Castoriadis (1987[1975], p. 108) argues that the social-historical realm consists of 'the union *and* the tension of instituting society and of instituted society, of history made and of history in the making'. In previous sections of this chapter, I have outlined that Castoriadis does not think that forms already in the world can determine the creation of novel forms; his

theory argues for the *ex nihilo* creation of forms. However, the creative aspect of Castoriadis's philosophy of the imagination is associated with the critique of the forms that are already in the world i.e. the forms which are already instituted and an instituted social imaginary. The creativity of the instituting imaginary is realised by the creation of new institutions in the social-historical field. However, the instituting imaginary has already been the force which endowed the social-historical field with institutions and a way of seeing them i.e. an instituted imaginary. The new forms of institutions come from a dialectic process that occurs from the instituted and instituting imaginaries clashing and the need of the society to continually refine its self-definition (Bottici 2011).

So that the notions of *instituted* and *instituting* are elucidated further I will pose two questions. First, what does the dichotomy of *instituted* and the *instituting* entail for Castoriadis and, second, how does doing fit into the notions? To answer the first question, I turn to the notion of *primordial* or *ground power*. Castoriadis (1991a, p. 146) argues that the 'institution, and the imaginary significations borne by it and animating it, create a world'. This *sui generis* world 'is established in and through the articulation it performs between a "natural" and "supranatural"—more generally, an "extra-social"—world and a "human" world in a narrow sense' (Castoriadis 1991a, p. 146). The articulations of the 'natural' and the 'supranatural' come in an 'extraordinary variety of forms' (Castoriadis 1991a, p. 146) and are evidence of the creativity of society as form—eidos.

The idea of the *instituted* is centred around the specific articulations each society creates and which constitutes the 'being-thus of *the* world' (Castoriadis 1991a, p. 147). Society 'deploys itself as creation of its own space and its own time' and it does this 'through a multiplicity of particular organising and organised forms' (Castoriadis 1991, p. 147). This total creation of a world endowed with meaning becomes the reality of the individuals composing the society by way of socialisation. Castoriadis (1991a, p. 149) states

that the whole complex of institutions that make up a society—the instituted—must be internalised so that the society can make 'a social individual out of the little screaming monster'.

For Castoriadis (1991a, p. 149), the idea of an individual that has internalised the institutions of a society is linked to the notion of *power*. For Castoriadis, every society has an instituted notion of *explicit power* which can be understood as *the political*—the specific configuration of authoritative power governing a society. The various forms of *explicit power* created by each society are part of the instituting imaginary and they govern the political domain. However, *explicit power* rests on another aspect of the instituting imaginary that comes from the instituted imaginary and although it is a social-historical creation it operates on the level of the psyche. Castoriadis (1991a, p.150) argues that 'before any explicit power and, even more, before any "domination," the institution of society wields over the individuals it produces a *radical ground power*'. For Castoriadis (1991a, p. 150), *radical ground power*, or *primordial power*, is seen as the 'manifestation of the instituting power of the radical imaginary…carried out by the instituted society'.

The *instituted imaginary* and its 'instituting ground-power' realised through institutions, in the extreme sense, 'shape individuals in such a fashion that they are bound to reproduce eternally the regime which has produced them' (Castoriadis 1991a, p. 151). Here, Castoriadis is alluding to the power of the instituted institutions to ensure their finality—i.e. their preservation. However, if this was the case—that the radical ground power ensures the preservation of all its institutions—then 'there would be no history' (Castoriadis 1991a, p. 151). On this, Castoriadis (1991a, p.151) argues that '[i]nstituted society never succeeds in wielding its ground-power in an absolute fashion'. Moreover, the 'ground-power of instituted society and of tradition is…sooner or later, bound to fail' (Castoriadis 1991a, p.151).

The notion of ground-power can be seen as we saw above as the instituting power of the radical imaginary. However, this ground-power 'is not locatable' and 'is never the power of an individual or a nameable instance' (Castoriadis 1991a, p. 150). It is the power 'carried out by the instituted society, but in the background stands the instituting society' and as such, the instituting society 'always works from starting from something already instituted and on the basis of what is already there' (Castoriadis 1991a, p. 150). Here one can problematise the idea pertaining to the *ex nihilo* creation of novel forms. If the instituting imaginary begins always from that which is already there, then the creation of forms is from something to something rather than the Castoriadian thesis which would have forms not being determined by what is already given. This line of thought has been taken up by hermeneutic-phenomenological approaches which take the world as already there endowed with meaning and look at the instituting imaginary, at the trans-subjective, anonymous, level manifested in cultural movement (Adams 2012).

The notion of 'doing' is located in both the instituting as well as the instituted aspects of the social imaginary. On the one hand, doing fits into the notion of the instituted. The instituted refers to that which is already there such as institutions and collective rituals. To be socialised into a society, as we saw above, is to internalise the complex articulation of the world and the endowed with meaning institutions that the society has created (Castoriadis 1991a, pp. 148-50). This means that for an individual to be socialised is to accept, and participate in, the various instituted social practices held by the given society—e.g. elections, rituals, council meetings. This line of thought was taken up by Charles Taylor (2004, p. 23) who defined the social imaginary as the 'common understanding that makes possible common practices and a widely shared sense of legitimacy'. The 'doing' here is closer to *technique* for it is following a sort of instruction manual given by the instituted imaginary. On the other hand, doing also fits into the instituting but here *doing* is far from

that of *technique* for it does not align itself with instituted ways of doing. The doing of the instituting society is closer to *praxis*. Its aim is to alter the social-historical field and institute novel forms—new institutions. In the following two sections I will focus on elucidating the two types of action that are social-historical—i.e. *technique* and *praxis*.

1.5 Technique

Technique is a type of action that is an *historical creation*. It is founded upon teleological frameworks and as such is directly related to, and relies on, an exhaustive account of knowledge of its domain. By saying that this type of activity is based on a 'practically exhaustive' knowledge of its field, Castoriadis means 'that any question relevant for practice and arising out of this domain would be decidable' (1987[1975], p. 72). Castoriadis calls the type of action which is purely rational as *technique*, that is a means/end schema—i.e. a particular type of rationality that is still based on social imaginary significations and in modernity is the project of rational mastery. This type of action transforms this world. However, this transformation is based in and around a specific project that has been the cause of social and environmental problems. The mode of action described as technique is founded on the pursuit of rational mastery.

Within technique, there is always a fundamental *telos*, a clear end, or goal in view. This end is the catalyst for technical action driven by ensidic logic. It is for *technique's* leaning on the ensidic logic that Castoriadis (1984[1973], p. 235) states that it is 'separated from creation'. However, he also acknowledges that technique is the mode making/doing—faire—that brings into the world 'absolute creations' (Castoriadis 1984[1973], p. 239). This is because *technique* brings into this world something that is, 'in relation to nature, "arbitrary"', that is, it 'creates "what nature is incapable of accomplishing" (Castoriadis 1984[1973], p. 239). An example of this can be the project of constructing a bridge. Let us

imagine a society that has, thus far, been able to protect, feed, and re-institute itself. However, let us say that the society experienced an environmental problem like an extreme drought that did not allow any of their crops to grow and has significantly reduced their access to drinking water. Furthermore, as a result of the scarcity, the animals that the society hunt have retreated into areas of the forest that are not as dry. In this hypothetical case, there are clear goals that need to be reached so that the society can be able to survive. Near this society, there is a river which if crossed could solve the society's three problems (food, water, and survival).

To successfully ensure the society's survival, the social group needs to construct a plan which will secure access to food and water. For the society to secure the goals that ensure its preservation, it must bring forth a plan that combines the knowledge (ensemblist-identitary logic)—i.e. a social-historical creation—they have of the world with human creativity and problem solving. *Technique* relates to this as it is the unfolding of a rationality specific to the society—that is 'the creation by each society of what is, for it, the real-rational' (Castoriadis 1984[1973], p. 240). In this imaginary scenario, the solution to the society's problems can be attained through the construction of a bridge. The society needs to reach the side of the river that was not affected by the draught so that it may secure its survival. As such, the project initiated with ensidic logic, always has a clear end, or *telos*, in view and is exhaustive of the knowledge relating to technical mastery. Here, the *telos* for the society featured in the example is the securing of food and water. A teleological framework implies an end, a *telos*, that is attained through specific means, or tools. In the example, the means to attain the end is the bridge which will allow the society to resettle on the river's other side where the draught has not affected the natural resources that the society requires for its preservation. However, the type of human action that can bring forth the form of a

'bridge' relies on an exhaustive account of building 'bridges'. An exhaustive account of the world occurs through the processes of *ensemblist-identitary* logic.

The creativity of anthropos, in as much as one could talk of a nature specific to human beings, to solve problems so that it might ensure survival has been a phenomenon that is noticed throughout history. For example, this phenomenon is evident when humans are able to bring forth a tool which drastically changes the quality of their life. The invention of the wheel, for instance, was a monumental and historical moment of creativity. It is clear, that if one wanted to create a list of all of the invaluable creative moments of human *techne* then this list would be endless. As my interest lies in the analysis of action through the *social imaginaries* perspective, which understands human action as inherently self-creating, it is important to flesh out further the idea that *technique* brings changes into this world even if it is limited in using what is already in hand and the knowledge already accrued. Moreover, it relies on the specific meaning the society places on the world by way of self-institution, even if this is hidden in heteronomous societies.

To understand more fully the creative nature of *techne*, Castoriadis turns to an historical account of the term in the section 'Koinonia' (1984, pp. 229-59) from *Crossroads in the Labyrinth* (1984 [1978]). A recount of the different meanings attributed to *techne* is not within this chapter's scope, however, it is important to point out that the modern conception of technique is based on the 'constellation of meanings found in the Greek term' (Castoriadis 1984 [1978], p. 234). Castoriadis argues (1984 [1978], p. 235) that 'for the contemporary period, technique, or techniques, consist simultaneously in the power of producing, by acting in an appropriate way and beginning with the already existing elements'. As we can see Castoriadis is referring to the specific limitations technical activity presents in a finite world. The things technique can use are those things that are already available in the environment where the action is manifested.

Technique is a human institution that leans on one of the two central *social imaginary significations* of modernity—but is not a unique characteristic of modernity for *technique* exists in all societies[6]—namely *the pursuit of rational mastery*, and as such should be regulated by thoughtful reflection of its purpose. However, Castoriadis argues that in contemporary times the notion of *technique* is perceived as an autonomous beast that will not stop for the project it leans on wants to unfold itself infinitely. This point is made clear by Castoriadis:

> Those who recognise that the movement of contemporary technology possesses considerable inertia, that to divert or stop it will require something more than a slight effort, and that it has a weighty material existence in social life, tend to make technique into an absolutely autonomous factor, instead of seeing it as an expression of the overall orientation of contemporary society. (Castoriadis 1984 [1978], p. 238)

Here we see the point that the underlying s*ocial imaginary significations* are what define the project of *technique* as an irrational domination of a finite plane. In this sense, the pursuit of rational mastery is reconfigured by Castoriadis as being pseudo-rational. What technique brings forth is a transformation of the world which is a form of creativity 'in so far as it is the unfolding of rationality' (Castoriadis 1984 [1978], p. 237).

Castoriadis's elucidation of technique brought to the surface its teleological dimension (Castoriadis 1987 [1975], pp. 72-3). Technical action is directed toward an end by way of specific rational means. Moreover, the end is fixed and known before action is initiated toward it. Furthermore, this type of action is only possible when all the stages of a process are known. An example that can help clarify some of these points is needed. If a society needs to use the resources that are on the other side of a river to where they are located, they might consider different ways of accomplishing that goal. For the society to secure the resources (i.e. the *end*) it must decide on a plan to construct a bridge or a boat, or even to explore north and south of the river for possible crossings. To take this example further, the fact that there are *things* that carry the signification of being 'resources', and not

something else, is again a human creation relegated by the society's *radical imaginary*; 'an original investment by society of the world and itself with meaning' (Castoriadis 1987[1975], p. 128). The point here is that the 'total world' order and the *end* society's desire to accomplish are known in advance. As such, each society uses the *sui generis* instituted *ensemblist-identitary* logic i.e. the means available to them to achieve it. The availability of means to achieve ends for each society is radically different. After looking at the type of action that is based on the means to end schema—i.e. *technique*—I will now turn to an action that is not based on the same logic—i.e. *praxis*.

1.6 *Praxis*

In what follows I will flesh out what the notion of *praxis* was for Castoriadis's thought. First, it is important to say that Castoriadis's notion of *praxis* does not align directly with the Marxist understanding of the concept but has clear connections to it in regard to its direction i.e. the alleviation of alienation and the revolutionary project. *Praxis* cannot be considered within teleological frameworks. The incapacity for *praxis*, seen as *thoughtful socio-political doing*, to be placed within a teleological framework leads to the understanding that knowledge is always limited, fragmented, and provisional.

For Castoriadis, *praxis* is the type of action characteristic of an autonomous society. *Praxis*, as a mode of action, is distinct and separate from the non-conscious biological or reflex-somatic action that occurs either as a *coming to be* or from a stimulus. And it is also different to the action specific to *technique* which requires absolute knowledge of the domain it wants to master. In *praxis,* the actor is always conscious of their incapacity to have absolute knowledge of the world. Castoriadis defines *praxis*:

> We term *praxis* that doing in which the others or others are intended as autonomous being considered as the essential agents of the development of their own autonomy. True politics, true pedagogy, true medicine, to the extent that these have ever existed, belong to *praxis*. (Castoriadis 1987[1975], p. 75)

As we can see here, Castoriadis sets out what the project of *praxis* is. Castoriadis regards *praxis* as that action that intends to bring about autonomy in one-self and others. Adams argues (2014, p. 5) that Castoriadis's developed 'a positive account of autonomy by drawing on both Aristotelian and Marxian approaches to *praxis* as a creative and collective activity' (Adams 2014, p. 5). For Castoriadis, the social doing of *praxis* cannot fit into a theory of action that is confined by the means-end schemata. The knowledge required by a means-end schema that could be specific to a technical task is exhaustive. However, the project lying within revolutionary *praxis* is that of an autonomous society. For Castoriadis, an autonomous society is consciously changing due to the ongoing process of lucid reflection and critique on its institutions. For Castoriadis, all societies, both heteronomous and autonomous, are always in a process of change. Ontologically speaking, they are historical creations. However, the difference between an heteronomous and an autonomous society is the fact that the former is not aware of its power to bring about that change while the latter is conscious of the fact and embraces the responsibility of deciding what the new institutions will be.

An autonomous society is composed of autonomous subjects which self-reflect on the institutions that they have been socialised into. The purpose of the self-reflection is aimed at, as we saw above, the critique of institutions and the possibility of change. An autonomous society 'not only knows explicitly that it has created its own laws but has instituted itself so as to free its radical imaginary and enable itself to alter its institutions through collective, self-reflective, and deliberate activity' (Castoriadis 1997, p. 132).

Castoriadis refers to *paideia* as the type of education which teaches subjects the ethos of an autonomous society (Castoriadis 1997, p. 129). Ingerid Straume (2012, 2013, 2014a, 2014b, 2015) has explored the notion of paideia in Castoriadis work to elucidate modern

pedagogy as well as democracy. *Paideia* teaches *praxis* and brings to the surface the intersubjective and political dimension. Castoriadis in discussing paideia says:

> Only the education (*paideia*) of the citizens as citizens can give valuable, substantive content to the 'public space.' This *paideia* is not primarily a matter of books and academic credits. First and foremost, it involves becoming conscious that the polis is also oneself and that its fate also depends upon one's mind, behaviour, and decisions; in other words, it is participation in political life. (Castoriadis 1991d, p. 113)

Praxis for Castoriadis is the ongoing action of problematising and critiquing the social institutions of a society and intends the transformation of the world towards an autonomous society. However, one might say that the end of *praxis* is, in fact, the bringing forth of an autonomous society. For Castoriadis, an autonomous society is anything but an end because it is always adapting and changing. That which must remain constant is that individual and collective autonomy is preserved. Castoriadis argues (1987 [1974], p. 74) that '[i]n *praxis*, there is something to be done, but what is to be done is something specific: it is precisely the development of autonomy of the other or of others'. With the above quote, Castoriadis shows the intersubjective and political aspects of *praxis* which I will focus on next.

Even though Castoriadis is adamant in his position of critiquing the a-historical structuralist thesis he argues that every society institutes a political power/state (the political) (1991a [1988], pp. 147, 158). What is of interest to my project is the notion of *explicit power* and *radical ground power* which is characteristic of autonomous societies (politics/ *la politique*) because the action it brings forth is a paragon of creativity. This type of doing is collective and it was elucidated by Castoriadis with the term *la politique* or 'politics' (1991a [1988], pp. 158-61). Castoriadis makes a distinction between 'the political'—*le politique*— and 'politics'—*la politiqu*e. On the one hand, 'the political' refers to 'a dimension of society pertaining to *explicit power*, that is, to the existence of *instances capable of formulating explicitly sanctionable injunctions*' (Castoriadis 1991a [1988], p. 156). Every society institutes 'the political'—*le politique*—that is, a type of *explicit power* that is based on 'the

necessity to decide what is and is not to be done with respect to the more or less explicit ends which are the objects of the push and drive of the society considered' (Castoriadis 1991a [1988], p. 155). On the other hand, with the term 'politics' Castoriadis refers to the 'explicit putting into question of the established institution of society' (1991a [1988], p. 159). The latter is a mode of *praxis*, that is, 'politics' is aimed at problematising and questioning the instituted and transforming it or destroying it completely so that the new institution may enter. As we have seen, for Castoriadis, *socio-political doing as praxis* is the act of problematising and critiquing. The creativity of action characteristic or *praxis* lies within the process of institutionalisation.

Castoriadis (1991a, p. 160) goes on to define politics 'as the explicit collective activity which aims at being lucid (reflective and deliberate) and whose object is the institution of society as such'; this can be as dramatic as a revolution. For Castoriadis (1991a, p. 160) the 'creation of politics takes place when the established institution of society is put into question…that is to say, when another relation, previously unknown, is created between the instituted and the instituting'. New institutions enter into the social world which is already endowed with those already instituted; Adams (2005) describes this process as being characteristic of a tension between the instituting and the instituted and where the instituting needs to consider the already instituted. On this Castoriadis posits:

> The institution of society by instituting society leans on the first natural stratum of the given – and is always found (down to an unfathomable point of origin) in a relation of reception/alteration with what had already been instituted. (1987 [1975], p. 369)

Here we see that the creativity of action not only occurs within the collective activity of questioning the instituted but is also directly intertwined and brought forth by the social imaginary and that which is already instituted. The link between creative political action and the social imaginary has been emphasised, however, their relation is palindromic. What I

mean here is that it is by seeing the actions specific to a society one can acknowledge and understand *social imaginary significations* that they hold.

Thus far we have looked at the *socio-political doing of praxis* and the functional-instrumental dimension of *technique*. Both of these types of social doing have the capacity to transform the world and as such bring forth new forms of social existence. In the next section, I will focus explicitly on the historic and as such creative aspects of *praxis* and *technique*.

1.7 Historical Doing: Creativity of Action and the Transformation of the World through *Praxis* and Technique

Praxis, as does *technique*, intends the transformation of the world and is historically unique; as such they are both inherently creative. Unlike *technique*, which leans on the pursuit of the (pseudo) *rational mastery* of nature, the action labelled as *praxis* leans on the second central *social imaginary signification* characteristic of modernity and the contemporary occidental world, namely *the political project of autonomy*. Socio-political doing as *praxis* is not similar to *technique* in the sense that it cannot be reduced to a coherent theoretical or teleological framework. *Praxis*, unlike *technique* which is based on exhaustive knowledge and is grounded in a teleological framework, is non-technical action characteristic of fragmentary knowledge which 'bears its end within itself' (Joas 1993, pp.157-56).

On one hand, Castoriadis views *technique* as the application of a set theoretical framework geared towards an end, and on the other hand, he relays *praxis* to an action that bears its end in the activity and is open to a creativity of action. The term Castoriadis used for the type of 'theoretical activity in which he engages in' was *elucidation* (Bernstein 1989, p. 114). One of the elements of *praxis* as socio-political doing is aimed at making the

society's 'self' lucid to itself. Castoriadis chose to use elucidation as a term linked to *praxis* because 'it seeks lucidity about our situation', it does not possess a 'grounding origin nor a determinate *telos*' and it clarifies 'from *within* history an understanding of what "being within" means' (Bernstein 1989, p. 114).

To flesh out the notion of *praxis* further I will focus on how the Castoriadian theory of indeterminacy factors into its core project. Castoriadis argues that thus far the west has created a philosophy of determination. This means that Castoriadis sees the *ensidic* logic, discussed earlier in the chapter as the *modus operandi* of philosophical inquiry. The idea that something is determined as something presents problems when that something is a being-for-itself and not a being-in-itself. To say that this rock is comprised of x, y, or z is to make a technical assertion by way of the *ensemblist-identitary* logic that *praxis* tries to go beyond.

Castoriadis points to some examples of *praxis* to flesh out his point. The first example he gives is that of the medical practitioner who cannot give a full account of the procedures he will take to assist a patient for the plan that is initiated might be subjected to alteration since new information has arisen. The second example Castoriadis uses is that of education (1987[1975], p. 75). The child, who is a future citizen, potentially a future scientist, or a future philosopher cannot be determined at that stage. The potentialities within the child are endless.[7]

The notion of *praxis* is linked with intersubjectivity because it is an activity which is aimed at ensuring the autonomy of others. Castoriadis (1991c, p. 76) says that praxis takes on 'an intersubjective form in the precise sense of unfolding in a concrete relation to determinate beings *intended as such*'. *Praxis* must be able to see beyond the determinations laid out by the instituted imaginary. *Praxis* must also go beyond its intersubjective form. Furthermore, *praxis,* is

also the action characteristic of politics (*la politique*) which is the activity that aims at the transformation of society's institutions.

Castoriadis always found inspiration from juxtaposing the ancient Greek polis and their idea of politics with the modern forms of the notions characteristic of occidental capitalist societies. Castoriadis reminds us that for the ancient Greeks the domain of specialisation was relegated to *techne*. This means that *techne* for the ancient Greeks related to a vocation, a craft, or an art. In concrete terms, one could say that a master builder uses the instituted technique to build something. That is, the builder knows how to build a good and sturdy bridge because s/he is aware of what a good and sturdy bridge looks like and how it is constructed. Antithetically, in the realm of politics, the idea of a *technique*, or a political episteme as advocated by Plato, comes up against some strong criticisms.[8]

Arnason (2014, p. 34) argues that Castoriadis's work constitutes an important critique of the normative and rationalist perspectives when one acknowledges the importance of the social imaginary as being that which shapes 'patterns of perception as well as frameworks and horizons of rationalisation'. Historical evidence of diverse civilisations and their *sui generis* cosmologies are proof of this creativity and their inability to be reduced to a functional or rational foundation.

The creativity of action specific to humans manifests in both *praxis* as socio-political doing, as well as in *technique*. In *praxis*, the creativity that emerges is the product of an autonomous society which governs itself and puts into question its every institution and is lucidly aware of the need to change an institution if it hinders someone's capacity to be autonomous. It is important to also emphasise that *social imaginary significations* of this type of society are always subject to critique and alteration if need be. In this situation, we

see a creativity in the social realm which is historical, and which always moves forward aware that their knowledge of the world is fragmented and incomplete.

The creativity of action specific to *technique* is one which transforms the world and can, on one hand, make it 'better'. For instance, through the specific transformation, one could help the project of autonomy and the ethos of *praxis*. But on the other hand, technique acts in a means to end schema and can be detrimentally contrary to the project of autonomy. For instance, the Gulag, the Nazi camps, the A-bomb are all historical creations brought forth by human creativity, but which do not regard humans as ends in themselves as *praxis* does.

There is a type of creativity that is specific to each society's radical imaginary. As Castoriadis says (1991a, p. 146) the institution and social imaginary significations that derive from it and which animate it create a world. This world is the place in which action takes place and the social imaginaries are that which make that action meaningful or meaningless. That which every society does is an articulation of what constitutes the natural and what the supranatural. As I have mentioned earlier in the chapter, society deploys itself through organising and organised forms (Castoriadis 1991a, p. 147) and each time these forms articulate a world that is directly the work of the given society.

The form of the society is a total creation in the ontological sense. But how is action understood within this understanding of society as being a historical creation? The form of the society and specifically the instituted imaginary and its ground power fabricates a social agent through the process of socialisation (Castoriadis 1991a, p.151). The social agents embrace the meaning endowed in the institutions their society upholds and action is determined by them. This is, however, true for heteronomous societies but is fundamentally different in autonomous ones. Autonomous societies would still embrace the meanings

endowed within the institutions but would be lucidly aware of their capacity to alter them if it hindered the autonomy of someone.

When one contrasts Athenian society (specifically Pericles's Golden Age) with ancient Judaic society it becomes evident that there is a variable, an ingrained social imaginary meaning, that allows for the questioning and critiquing of social institutions such as laws.[9] The Athenian social imaginary held within it the importance of democracy. Athenians were aware that the laws derived from their own deliberations on social problems. This awareness allowed them to critique, self-reflect, and alter laws that were no longer needed or were not addressing a social problem's true nature. On the contrary, the example of the heteronomous society Castoriadis (1987 [1975], p. 118) gives us, Judaic society claims that Moses received the laws by God, an extra-social entity. For the society which does not have a culture of indeterminacy could not even fathom critiquing the laws for they were never their own. In this sense culture for the Athenians is that which grows out of the pre-existing social imaginary that suggests that humans are responsible for human affairs and that laws, values, and customs, need to be open to critique and change. When an institution needs to be changed we enter the field of politics. Castoriadis (1991a, p. 154-5) tells us that each society decides what needs to be made and to be done and each society organises itself and deploys itself through its particular forms of *power*.

The project of autonomy is anchored within politics because it is the process by which a collective can lucidly and critically reflect on their social institutions and if need be alter them. Even heteronomous societies can become autonomous through politics. Castoriadis (1987[1975], p. 373) argued that *thoughtful doing*, 'social doing—and so also politics, in the most profound sense of the term' can overturn 'self-alienation or heteronomy' if the society in question 'not only knows itself, but *makes itself* as explicitly self-instituting'. The notion of autonomy, that is the elucidation of the laws of a society and their

subsequent alteration, or even the bringing forth of a new law, holds within it the act of creation. This creation is seen in institutions that are the total creation of a specific social imaginary deploying itself through history (Castoriadis 1987[1975], p. 373).

This chapter focussed on Castoriadis and the *creativity of social doing* as it is understood through *social imaginary significations*. To explore the creative aspects of *praxis* and social doing the chapter looked at the different types of action Castoriadis identifies. For Castoriadis, there are three types of action: biological or reflex-somatic, technical, trans-subjective doing as movement, and socio-political doing as *praxis*. The first dichotomy that can be drawn is between action that is historical and ahistorical. The former is action specific to human rationality unfolding itself and transforming the world; the latter is an action that happens either due to its biological codification or through a stimulus. The degree of knowledge that can be obtained creates another schism amongst the three types of action. The first type of action labelled as biological or reflexive is nonconscious and is not associated with any degree of knowledge; it just happens. The second type of action, technique, is creative and transformative. Technique transforms the world in both its natural and social dimensions. This type of action, along with language, is linked to every society's proto-institutions *legein* and *teukhein*. It is the making and doing that each society must do to ensure its survival. It relies on absolute knowledge of the domains it projects itself on. This type of action is one which there is a clear end in view, a *telos* that is determined and decided on. The third type of action that in my opinion uncovers even further a concrete dimension of the human condition; its socio-historical and political aspect. The end or the *telos* of *praxis* is the autonomy of one-self and that of others; as such, that *praxis's* end is already in its initiation. This type of action differs from the other two as its relation to knowledge is lucidly fragmentary and always provisional.

To explore the notion of creative action and its connection to *social imaginary significations* the chapter also focussed on Castoriadis's understanding of the *instituted* and *instituting imaginaries*. By looking at the concept of the institution and the institutionalisation process which endows the world with meaning this chapter drew a direct link with two classical sociologists: Durkheim and Weber. The link with Durkheim is explicit since his work on institutions is well known. However, the link to Weber derives from an understanding that institutions are endowed with meaning and can be the catalysts to meaningful action. This chapter elucidated the links between *social imaginary significations* and institutions so that the process of institutionalisation is brought to the fore as being inherently creative. However, I have also tried to explicitly show that the instituted *social imaginary significations* can inhibit the creativity of action. *Social imaginary significations* order the world and answer fundamental questions about what is real and what is not, what is sacred and what is mundane, what is natural and what is supranatural, what is noise and what is information, what is to be made and what should be done. As such *social imaginary significations* can be both enforcing and restricting creativity. This chapter ended with a discussion of politics as a type of collective activity which is aimed at problematising and questioning the already instituted and transforming it or destroying it and creating something new in its place. Continuing on from this chapter, I turn to my second key interlocutor—Paul Ricoeur. In the chapter on Ricoeur, I will examine how the creativity of action can be understood through his theory of socio-cultural imagination and its two poles of ideology and utopia.

2. Ricoeur's Cultural Imaginary: Ideology and Utopia.

The tremendous strength of the imaginary's capacity to preserve, destroy, or create the symbolic structures of a social order was highlighted by philosopher Paul Ricoeur (1913-2005). Ricoeur was a French philosopher best known for—but not limited to—his work in the fields of phenomenology and hermeneutics. Ricoeur's work on social imaginaries is understood as a cornerstone for the field (Adams et al. 2015, p. 16). The purpose of this chapter is to elucidate how the creativity of social action is understood in Ricoeur's theory of socio-cultural imagination. More specifically, this chapter investigates Ricoeur's understanding of social action and its creative aspect within a social imaginaries framework. This will be attained through focussing on Ricoeur's concepts of *ideology* and *utopia* for, within his framework, they comprise the two poles of the cultural imaginary and mediate any social action.

This chapter is organised around five sections. The first section provides the reader with a brief biographical account of Paul Ricoeur's life. The second section puts forth the periods selected for the research sample and the reasons why they were selected. The third section looks at the secondary literature which deals with Ricoeur's understanding of ideology and utopia. The goal of the literature review is to ask if social action and its creativity is problematised. This introductory section is aimed at contextualising this research aim. The second section's purpose is to show how the notions of ideology and utopia have been thought of by Karl Manheim (1954). This is important because Manheim (1954) was the first to use the two notions in a single framework. This also sets the scene by showing that the notions of ideology and utopia are seen as being negative which is the opposite of what Ricoeur did. In the third section, the chapter focusses on Ricoeur's understanding of ideology and its connection to the reproductive imagination. The purpose

of this section is to show how Ricoeur discussed *ideology* in the *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia* (1986 [1975]) and to elucidate how he conceived its relation to social action. Thereafter, in the fourth section, the chapter turns to the idea of *utopia*. This section's aim is to elucidate Ricoeur's view of *utopia* and its relation to *fiction*, *metaphor*, and the *productive imagination*.

In the fifth section a discussion is developed in which Ricoeur's understanding of ideology and utopia and their relation to social action and creativity is critically assessed. In this section, I will note that, on one hand, Ricoeur discusses action in ideology but does not refer to the creativity in it. On the other hand, he discusses creativity regarding utopia but neglects the phenomenon of action. This section will tease out this tension. The section will conclude by discussing Ricoeur's clashing of two hermeneutic theories and a discussion on why in his 1983 essay both notions are linked to the reproductive imagination.

Ricoeur's life did not lack turbulent experiences. Both of Ricoeur's parents passed away early on, leaving him and his older sister, Alice, in the care of their grandparents and their father's sister, Adèle (Reagan 1996, p. 4). Florentine Favre, Ricoeur's mother, passed away when he was only seven months old and his father, Jules Ricoeur, was mobilised for World War 1 and declared missing in action on the 26th of September 1915–his remains were found soon after (Reagan 1996, p. 4). Ricoeur's family was devoutly Protestant and as such he 'was raised in a strict atmosphere of reading, Bible study, and going to church' (Reagan 1996, p. 4). The religious element of his primary socialisation remained a constant source of inspiration for Ricoeur and has inspired many theological debates up until this day. In 1939 Ricoeur was mobilised for World War 2; his regiment was the 47th Infantry 'on the north coast of Brittany' (Reagan 1996, p. 7).

On the 7th of June 1940, Ricoeur 'became a prisoner of war and would remain one for almost five full years' (Reagan 1996, p. 8). In those five years, Ricoeur's passion for philosophy was not silenced; he was able to read the complete works of the German existentialist philosopher Carl Jaspers and commenced a translation of Edmund Husserl's *Ideen I* (Reagan 1996, pp. 9-10). The translation of Husserl's *Ideen I* was completed during Ricoeur's stay at Le Chambon (1945-48) and accompanied by 'an elaborate introduction and running commentary' was published in 1950 and 'constituted his minor thesis for his *Doctorat d' Etat* (Doctorate of the State)' (Reagan 1996, pp. 15-6). Ricoeur's major thesis for the *Doctorat d' Etat* was *Le Volontaire et l'involontaire* (translated into English in 1966 as *Freedom and Nature: The Voluntary and the Involuntary*) (Reagan 1996, p. 17).

2.1 Paul Ricoeur's Lectures on Ideology and Utopia

Ricoeur's notion of the imagination can be detected in the background of most of his corpus, however, there are only 'scattered references to this topic and no comprehensive development on this subject so apparently central to his thinking' (Taylor 2006, p. 93). Ricoeur only explicitly wrote about it in the 1970s and early 1980s. Within this ten-year period Ricoeur published a cluster of essays on the ideology and utopia. The most systematic development of the imagination and socio-cultural imagination is identified in the *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia* (1986 [1975]). George H. Taylor argues (2006, p. 93) that during this time the notion of the imagination is at the centre of Ricoeur's thinking and he was in the process of 'crystallizing his thoughts on poetics (and so fulfilling in a recast way the third part of his Philosophy of the Will)'. Taylor (1986, p. xi) also argues that 'the larger project to which' Ricoeur's 'lectures belong is best characterized not simply as philosophic but as philosophical anthropological'. It is within this period that Ricoeur elucidated the concept of the social imaginary which 'has been pivotal for the emergence of the social imaginaries field' (Adams and Krummel 2015, p. 8). As such, the parameters set for my

research begin in the decade Ricoeur's 1971 essay "The Model of the Text: Meaningful Action Considered as a Text" is published. My sampling concludes at my upper limit with Ricoeur's response to John B. Thompson 'A response by Paul Ricoeur' in *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences: Essays on language, action and interpretation* (1981a, pp. xlii-l).

This research identifies the *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia* (1986 [1975]) as the most important text for the elucidation of Ricoeur's social imaginaries theory. However, there is also a cluster of essays that were published during the same period which are of importance for this research. The articles Ricoeur wrote on ideology and utopia are important primary sources which have been used for my elucidation of action through a social imaginaries lens. The essays considered have been categorised into two groups. First, those which I drew for primarily an understanding of ideology are: "Hermeneutics and the Critique of Ideology" (1981[1973]); "Science and Ideology" (1974); "Can There Be a Scientific Concept of Ideology?" (1978a [1974-75]); and "Ideology and Utopia as Cultural Imagination" (1979). The essays which informed my understanding of utopia are: "Imagination in Discourse and Action" (1978b); and "The Function of Fiction in Shaping Reality" (1979).[10]

Ricoeur wrote a great deal on contemporary issues. In the introduction to *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*, which consists of a series of lectures given by Ricoeur at the University of Chicago in the fall of 1975, Taylor (1986, p. ix) argues that the philosopher was 'very much engaged…in the social, cultural, and political life of his day'. The *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia* can be understood in light of Ricoeur's larger project of elucidating a *philosophical anthropology*. Taylor argues (1986 [1975], p. xi) that for Ricoeur the term *philosophical anthropology* 'is not a subcategory of a social science discipline, but the study of *anthropos*–humanity–from a philosophical perspective'. Adams (2015, p. 130) argues that the philosophical anthropology developed in *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia* is oriented

towards an elucidation of the socio-cultural and political aspects of the imagination.[11] As such, Ricoeur was interested in understanding the inherent structures that govern the social aspects of the human condition.

There have been various uses of Ricoeur's ideology and utopia concept. However, the direction in the secondary literature has not been one which aims at understanding how action features in the two poles of the cultural imagination. Marianne Moyaert's (2011) essay focusses on the need to incorporate minorities into a reframed social order in multiculturalist societies. For this Moyaert uses the work of Honneth and Ricoeur. Although the research focus is not similar to my thesis, Moyaert discusses the creative and transformative aspect of Ricoeur's notions of ideology and utopia. As such there is an understanding of action as creative. However, the focus of the paper is not to show how social action in the context of ideology and utopia is creative.

Timo Helenius's (2015) essay looks at the way in which the poetics of human action relate to Ricoeur's cultural imaginary. Helenius agrees with Ricoeur's critique of 'creation *ex nihilo*' and focusses on 'the ways in which the cultural imagination operates in a dialectic of innovation and sedimentation as part of an overall "disjointed continuity" with the civilizational traditions that inform western currents of history' (Adams and Krummel 2015, p. 9). Although Helenius is looking at the poetics of human action he does this from the cultural paradigm and does not explicitly discuss the creativity of social action. Instead, Helenius focuses on the situated subject being within a process of receptivity and productivity.

Jean Luc Amalric's (2014, 2017) essays are of interest to my project as they have helped me conceptualise it.[12] Amalric (2014) discusses Ricoeur's social imaginaries framework by looking at 'imaginative practices' and the possibility of a foundational event.

Both the possibility of a foundational event and the idea of imaginative practices are situated in an understanding that human action is creative. However, Amalric does not explicitly focus on the creativity of action. Amalric's (2017) essay entitled 'Ricoeur and Castoriadis: The Productive Imagination between Mediation and Origin' in *Ricoeur and Castoriadis in Discussion: On Human Creation, Historical Novelty, and the Social Imaginary* (2017) discusses the creative/ productive aspect of Ricoeur's social imaginaries but does this by way of a philosophical encounter with Castoriadis. As such Amalric's project in that paper is to show the similarities and differences of the two interlocutors rather than flesh out how social action is creative/productive. We can see that Ricoeur's work on the imagination has been a source of inspiration for the development of various projects.

Let us move on now to understanding Ricoeur's importance for the social sciences and the elucidation of everyday life. The scholarly inquiry of everyday life is undertaken by the social sciences. Ricoeur's major contribution to the social sciences is his thesis that action can be interpreted in the same way a text is. Ricoeur (1981[1971]) argued that the interpretative methodology, used to understand and explain a text, must also be applied to the various meanings which comprise a culture. Ricoeur (1981, p. 43) held that 'hermeneutics is the theory of the operations of understanding in the relation to the interpretation of texts'. Ricoeur (1981[1971]) argued that 'texts differ from the abstract structures of language in that they are created to do something' (Hodder 1998, pp. 111-2). The important point here is that Ricoeur 'never forgets that behind the texts and the works of literature there are human beings who act and suffer and that the texts themselves, as discourse, are actions' (Jervolino 1995, p. 71). There are two points worth noting here, first, an action has a symbolic dimension which is subject to interpretations and as such can be thought of in terms of being a mode of communication. Second, Ricoeur's interpretative methodology is similar to the Weberian *Verstehen Sociology.*

Due to Ricoeur's immersion in hermeneutics, he understood that all texts and symbols are subject to interpretation. Ricoeur's understanding of action emphasised its symbolic dimension. As such, in Ricoeur's work, the interpretative dimension is of paramount importance when trying to understand action. The symbols, narratives, and in the broad sense all cultural texts that are held by a society can mediate action. In the essay 'The Symbolic Structure of Action' (2013[1977]), inspired by Clifford Geertz's (1964) project 'to describe "human behaviour as seen as symbolic action"', Ricoeur argued that 'action is not, properly speaking, symbolic, since it is real, but that it is structured by symbols' (2016[1977], p.176 n). Ricoeur's point was to show that action should be thought of as something real that happens in the world and that alters it in a very real sense. Ricoeur (2016[1977], p.176) argues 'that there is no human action unless it has already been articulated, mediated, and interpreted by symbols'.

For Ricoeur (1981) engaging the creative dimension of action through the social sciences was very important. Drawing from his background in phenomenology, Ricoeur acknowledges the human condition as being-with-others; he understands that individuals are born into a *sui generis* culture. A society's practices are evidence of their social imaginary making sense of the world. The imagination, according to Ricoeur (1991 [1986], pp. 177-8), is 'the general function of developing practical possibilities' for action in the world. Foessel (2014, p. 513) argues that Ricoeur understands the function of the imagination as being innovative rather than reproductive. Ricoeur's emphasis on the importance of the role of the imagination for socio-political action is evinced in his essay "From Text to Action" (1991 [1986]). Ricoeur (1991 [1986], p. 173) argues that the 'imagination is diffused in all directions, reviving former experiences, awakening dormant memories, irrigating adjacent sensorial fields'. Kearney's (2004, p. 75) elucidation of Ricoeur's understanding of the social imaginary states:

> The social imaginary…comprises the interplay of ideals, images, ideologies and utopias informing our political unconscious […] a politics of imagination operates in our everyday lives, often anonymously, to produce collective narratives–stories we tell ourselves in order to explain ourselves to ourselves and to others.

Ricoeur's understanding of the socio-cultural imaginary is comprised of two poles: ideology and utopia. In the following section, the chapter turns to the work of Karl Mannheim and his understanding of the notions of ideology and utopia.

2.2 Mannheim's Ideology and Utopia and his Importance for Ricoeur

In this section, the chapter turns to the work of Karl Mannheim (1893-1947) who was the first to use the two notions of ideology and utopia in a single framework. Mannheim's understanding of ideology and utopia differs from that of Ricoeur. It is, however, an important reference point because Mannheim links the two notions with action in the world and perceives them as constitutive of everyday life. Although ideology and utopia are placed by Mannheim within a single framework and constitute everyday life they are characterised as non-congruent with reality.

Mannheim was the first to bring the two concepts of ideology and utopia into a conceptual framework. His work around the notions of ideology and utopia lead to the development of the *sociology of knowledge*. The key idea that drives this field of sociological inquiry is that knowledge is socially constructed. Mannheim (1954 [1929], p. 237) stated that the sociology of knowledge 'as theory seeks to analyse the relationship between knowledge and existence' and 'as historical-sociological research it seeks to trace the forms which this relationship has taken in the intellectual development of mankind'.

The main hypothesis driving the *sociology of knowledge*, as Mannheim regarded it, is that individuals will perceive and interpret the world based on the meanings accompanied by the ideologies they subscribe to. Such ideologies derive from individuals' cultural backgrounds, social positions, and interests. This entails that the social construction of

meanings, 'whether they be true or false, play an indispensable role', socialises 'events for a group' (Mannheim 1954 [1929], p. 19).

For Mannheim (1954 [1929], p. 26) knowledge is the product of 'a co-operative process of group life, in which everyone unfolds his knowledge within the framework of a common fate, a common activity, and the overcoming of common difficulties'. This means that the act of thinking, and as an extension of rationality, is a product of socialisation and social interactions. In the following quote, Mannheim points out the social construction of thinking and acting.

> It is not men in general who think, but men in certain groups who have developed a particular style of thinking in an endless series of responses to certain typical situations characterizing their common position. Men do not confront the objects of the world from the abstract levels of a contemplating mind as such, nor do they do so exclusively as solitary beings. On the contrary, they act with and against one another in diversely organized groups, and while doing so they think with and against each other. (Mannheim 1954 [1929], p. 3)

There are two interesting points that I would like to focus on from the above quote. First, one can identify that a 'series of responses to certain typical situations' continually constructs a group's way of thinking. This construction of thought, as Mannheim argues, is developed by a group's response to an event which brings in the element of history into the equation. The second point of interest is that Mannheim is alluding to the social construction of the singular mind and by extension the imagination. It is only because of participation in the social that objects outside of individual consciousness are understood and become meaningful (Mannheim 1954 [1929], p.19).

Thinking, imagining, and rationalising are activities that cannot be separated from the social, moreover, they enforce an individual's belonging to a group. On this, Mannheim (1954 [1929], p.19) states:

> We belong to a group not only because we are born into it, not merely because we profess to belong to it, nor finally because we give it our loyalty and allegiance, but

primarily because we see the world and certain things in the world the way it does (i.e. in terms of the meanings of the group in question).

A society may be comprised of many groups and as such there would be many ways of thinking, or ideologies, about the world depending on the group's social status or interest. This line of thought brings Mannheim in close proximity to Marx's understanding that the ruling class instates the leading ideology of a society which could also be the cause of false consciousness. However, Mannheim differs to Marx by arguing that ideologies can transcend class structures. Mannheim understood that there was not one type of ideology. As such he distinguishes two types of ideologies: particular and total (Mannheim 1954 [1929], p.49). One of the big distinctions between particular and total ideologies is that particular ideologies are not shared on a large scale like total ideologies are. Mannheim (1954 [1929], p. 49-50) defines total ideologies as:

> The ideology of an age or of a concrete historic-social group (class), when we are concerned with the characteristics and composition of the total structure of the mind of this or of this group.

Mannheim's conception of ideology in its particular form relates more closely to the distortion that occurs due to interest and is closely linked to a psychological state. It is the second conception of ideology that interests me more profoundly due to its social and collective foundation. We have thus far looked at Mannheim's understanding of the social construction of knowledge (i.e. thinking) and have focussed on the notion of ideology in its particular and total forms. Now let us move onto Mannheim's notion of utopia. In a similar way to Ricoeur, Mannheim sees utopian thinking as a type of acting which wants to alter the *status quo*. However, as we shall see later Ricoeur sees in utopia a more positive socio-political project. For Mannheim, utopia challenges the *status quo* but it ultimately perpetuates false consciousness. Mannheim's (1954 [1929], p. 36) understanding of utopian thinking is quite negative as we see from the following quote:

> The concept of Utopian thinking reflects the opposite discovery of the political struggle, namely that certain oppressed groups are intellectually so strongly interested in the destruction and transformation of a given condition of society that they unwittingly see only those elements in the situation, which tend to negate it. Their thinking is incapable of correctly diagnosing an existing condition of society. They are not at all concerned with what really exists; rather in their thinking they already seek to change the situation that exists.… the collective unconscious guided by wishful representation and the will to action, hides certain aspects of reality. It turns its back on everything which would shake its belief or paralyze its desire to change things.

What is strikingly important and directly different to Ricoeur's conception of the notion, and evinced in the above quote, is that Mannheim does not attribute a critical capacity to utopian thinking.

Although, ideological thinking conceals 'the present by attempting to comprehend it in terms of the past' and utopian thinking transcends 'the present and is oriented towards the future' (Mannheim 1954 [1929], n. 2, p. 85) both notions, beyond their integrative aspects, are seen negatively. Ricoeur acknowledges his contribution and attempts to go beyond the paradox of ideology put forth by him. The paradox of ideology is that any critique of ideology is inherently a product of that same ideology. Ricoeur will go beyond this paradox and show that a genuine *critique of ideology* can be brought forth. Genuine *ideology critique* derives from the second pole of his social imaginary framework, namely *utopia*. Before I discuss the utopian imaginary and its critical function in Ricoeur, I will focus on the concept of *ideology* and its history in everyday life and in the social sciences more specifically. After looking at the history of ideology in the social sciences I will return to a discussion on how Ricoeur understood it.

2.3 Ideology and the Social Imaginary

The concept of ideology is made up of the two Greek words –ἰδέα and λόγος. This section will briefly outline the historical uses and connotations of the concept. The French philosopher Destutt de Tracy (1754–1836), inspired by the European Enlightenment, first

used the concept to denote the development of 'a new discipline which would be concerned with the systematic analysis of ideas and sensations' (Thompson 2001, pp. 7170-1). For Destutt de Tracy the objective sought by this new discipline was the science of ideas (Thompson 2001, p. 7171). His project of instituting this new discipline drew from undercurrents of the Enlightenment, such as the importance of progress and human beings' capacity 'to understand and control the world through systematic, scientific analysis' (Thompson 2001, p. 7171). Destutt de Tracy believed the concept of ideology would assist humanity's capacity to 'regulate social and political life' to be geared towards 'the needs and aspirations of human beings' while also allowing 'us to understand human nature' (Thompson 2001, p. 7171).

The term ideology started shifting from Destutt de Tracy's initial conceptualisation during the time of the French Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte. Thompson (2001, p. 1771) tells us that during the time that Napoleon was losing power and control of both his domestic and international projects he started ridiculing Destutt de Tracy and his followers, whom he described as 'idéologues', for believing in 'an abstract, metaphysical doctrine which was divorced from the realities of political power'. Napoleon believed that ideology was the source of France's problems, 'since it sought to base laws on the abstract analysis of ideas rather than on the lessons of history' (Thompson 2001, p. 7171). The socio-historical consequence of Napoleon's attack on the 'idéologues' was that the notion of ideology started adopting increasingly negative connotations. As Thompson (2001, p.7171) tells us, ideology ceased to be associated with Destutt de Tracy's initial formulation of a science of ideas. Instead, the term started referring 'to the ideas themselves, and especially to ideas which were alleged to be erroneous, misleading, and divorced from the practical realities of social and political life' (Thompson 2001, p.7171). Both contrasting views on ideology, spearheaded by Destutt de Tracy and Napoleon, are evident in the later development of the

concept during the 1840s and 1850s. This opposition on what the term ideology connotes is embodied in criticisms put forth to the 'Young Hegelians' by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels.

Marx and Engels viewed ideology in a similar fashion to Napoleon but took the term's connotation further and it is with their work that the concept 'constitutes a significant chapter of social sciences in general and sociology in particular' (Dubois 2001, p. 7177). Although Marx took up Napoleon's sense of the word, he follows Destutt de Tracy by altering the concept 'by incorporating it into a theoretical framework and political programme which were deeply indebted to the spirit of Enlightenment' (Thompson 1990, p. 33). Marx used the concept of ideology in multiple ways which created a certain ambiguity to it. There are three distinct ways the term is conceived by Marx: the *polemical*, *epiphenomenal*, and *latent* conceptions (Thompson 1990, pp. 33-44). These three conceptions of ideology assume different angles; however, they are all based on the idea that the world is in a way distorted to serve those that have power by preserving the *status quo*. It is important to emphasise that Ricoeur's *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia* (1986 [1975]) commence through the elucidations of these three conceptions. However, this characterisation of 'ideology as distortion defines ideology at a surface level' (Taylor 1986, p. xiii). Ricoeur aimed with his lectures to 'uncover the concept's meaning at progressively deeper levels' (Taylor 1986, p. xiii).

The pole of ideology in Ricoeur's notion of the social imaginary, although it has creative dimensions, 'appears to be more closely linked to the "bound" nature of "symbols" – and the reproductive imagination' (Adams 2015, p. 144). The social action that is evident in the ideological dimension is imitative and reproductive. As such, the social action characteristic to ideology is to preserve and legitimise the existing social order. It is,

however, also creative for individuals attempt to interpret the world they live in and act out that which is meaningful in their society.

The ideological imaginary embeds the world with the meaning required so that an action can be meaningful. As we saw earlier the social and cultural imagination is a symbolic structure that is at base created by the ideology of the society at hand. Here the ideological imaginary is the underlying cause which will affect a society's ontological understandings as well as their epistemological directions. In his discussion on the dissimulating function of ideology, Kearney (2004, p. 79) argues that '[w]e think *from* ideology rather than *about* it'. Here, we must realise the depth of this claim. When a subject encounters a phenomenon they understand it as being something, an occurrence, through the ideology that they are already enveloped in. This means that the phenomenon itself has already been embedded with meaning before it was even observed. The power of the ideological imagination would consume it within its frameworks and make it something that has been embedded with meaning. This last action specific to the ideological imaginary, that is of embedding something alien with meaning and as such understanding it and making it a part of the world view it wants to expand is essentially creative.

Ricoeur attributes to ideology one negative and two positive functions (Sargent 2008, p. 267). In the following part of this chapter, I will look closer at ideology's functions. I will start with ideology's negative function—dissimulation—and move on to its two positive functions—integration and legitimation.

Dissimulation

The integrative function of ideology, as Ricoeur (1978, p. 45) argues, 'has no negative connotation'. However, the stories a society tells itself about itself, which justify and rationalise its modes of practice, might be that which in fact distort reality. Although 'the *mediating* role of ideology is more primitive than any *distorting* function' (Ricoeur

1978a, p. 46) the distance to the foundational act and its subsequent interpretation by its members might be altered. This is what Ricoeur flags as the first negative qualification that is epiphenomenal to the integrative function of ideology. Here, Ricoeur (1978a, p. 46) says that a shift occurs 'from conviction to rationalisation' which results from the 'growing gap of the past and present' which ideology tries to close. Ricoeur argues:

> [I]deology is and answer to temporal distance; as such it is a permanent trait of social motivation; ideology does not merely reflect some underlying forces it belongs to the symbolic constitution of the group; it links project to memory; it has a "generative" character as regards enterprises, institutions towards which it has an apologetic role. Ideology is an argumentative device which tends to prove to the members of a group that they are right to be what they are. (Ricoeur 1978, p. 46)

In this passage we see that the rationalising and justifying aspect of ideology is embedded in all aspects and practices of a social reality—in fact, it creates it and legitimises it.

The rationalisations and justifications a society uses to defend its actions in the world 'appear simplifying and schematical' and constitute 'a kind of *code*' which is used, not only for the group to understand itself, but to explain the world to the society as well (Ricoeur 1978a, p. 46). An example of this, as I see it, could be the anthropocentric view of our civilisation, or even looking further back into history the geocentric explanation of the universe. This line of thought could have been traced to the Christian thesis that humans are the beloved creatures of the demiurge and everything else in the world merely exists to satisfy human needs.

Integration

Taylor (1986, p. xxvii) argues that 'social action is mediated symbolically, ideology cannot be avoided, but the effort is to promote ideology at its integrative — and not distortive — level'. One of Ricoeur's key contributions to the study of ideology was to show that beyond its negative function of distorting reality it also creates social solidarity. The action in ideology is based on the reproductive imagination. However, as we saw in the previous paragraph it also has productive and creative aspects to it similar to any

reproduction process that is not created by a mechanism. The reproduction of a form in a factory is identical but the reproduction of a form from a human being is never perfectly the same. If an artist attempts to recreate an artefact by memory, they will not stay true to the initial form for they will have perceived it from their unique perspective.[13] The reproductive imaginary is not only imitative. As I will argue, all reproduction is essentially creative and reproductive.

Ricoeur (1978a, p. 44) commences his analysis of ideology by claiming that the basic meaning of the word 'should not be the Marxist one' which reduces it to 'a distortion of reality under the influence of covert class interests'. Ricoeur's *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia* (1986 [1975]) begin with an elucidation of the two concepts embraced by Marxism. These two concepts relate to ideology's distinction to, first, *praxis*, and second, science. In the first case, according to Ricoeur (1986 [1975], p. 4) for the early Marx ideology is that which distorts reality by inverting the real like in the 'inverted image found in a camera or in the retina'; as such ideology's 'first function is its production of an inverted image'. Marx's inspiration is based on Feuerbach's, discussion of religion as 'an inverted reflection of reality' (Ricoeur 1986 [1975], p. 4). In this first case, ideology is in contradiction to *praxis*. In the second case, since science is that which shows the real world and clears away the distortion implemented by religion, ideology is contrary to science. Ricoeur, however, points out that both *praxis* and science cannot be separated from their ideological structures. In fact, the major mistake of Marxism, according to Ricoeur, is the separation of superstructure and infrastructure.

To avoid this pejorative understanding of ideology, Ricoeur includes in its hermeneutic a positive function. For the elucidation of ideology's positive aspects, Ricoeur (1978a, p. 45) starts his analysis from the work of Max Weber. This primary direction allowed Ricoeur to broaden the concept of ideology, and not be confined by its Marxist

interpretations. Ricoeur (1978a, p. 45) argues that Weber's 'description of the conditions of *social integration*…considers the phenomenon of *social relationships* more comprehensive than that of conflict and domination'.

Ricoeur's understanding of social action within a social imaginaries framework takes on the very real and practical socio-political function of innovation (Foessel 2014, p. 513). Ricoeur's approach to the social imaginaries field is that he links language—as conversation—to the symbolic mediation of social action, without which social action—as meaningful in the Weberian formulation of the term—could not be possible. In this sense of the term, the social imaginary is comprised of 'an ensemble of stories that mediate human reality' (Langdridge 2006, p. 645). In accordance with this claim, 'there is no "pure" action, no action that can be described independently of the language that expresses it and the concrete modes of its effectuation' (Foessel 2014, p. 514). The social imaginary, according to Ricoeur, has the power to create new meanings and symbolic orders that bring forth new forms of social action. The claim that language qua symbolic order is that which mediates social action can be seen in Ricoeur's final lecture on Geertz. Ricoeur (1986 [1975], p. 256) argues that Geertz showed that 'action is symbolic just like language'.

Praxis is not separate to ideology in its integrative, or identity making, aspect as it were in its distortive facet in the Marxian formulations. Moreover, social action is directed by the meaning that is already coded in the symbolic order embodied in language. Ricoeur's hermeneutic and interpretative methodology used for language was extended to his understanding of social action. The meaning associated to social action is laid out by the social imaginary of a culture and is interpreted by its constituents. Ricoeur (1986 [1975], p. 257) puts forth an example which articulates how social action would be meaningless without a prior understanding of the social imaginary that it is a part of:

> If we enter into a ceremony but do not know the rules of the ritual, then all the movements are senseless. To understand is to pair what we see with the rules of the ritual. (Ricoeur 1986 [1975], p. 257)

For Ricoeur, one of the main aspects of ideology is its integrative capacity. Ideology is seen here through its positive function; that is, its capacity to bring a society together and create a sense of solidarity through a common 'set of images whereby it can represent itself to itself and to others' (Kearney 2004, p. 78). On this integrative function Ricoeur (1978a, p. 45) focused on Weber's concept of 'meaningful action':

> It is at the level of such meaningful, other-oriented and socially integrated action that the phenomenon of ideology receives its primary function. It expresses the necessity for any social group to make and to give itself an image, to "represent" itself, in the theatrical sense of the word.

Here Ricoeur's use of Weber's concept is of sociological importance. Ideology is that which makes actions meaningful for a society. This type of action is always intersubjective in the same way that language is. For Ricoeur, all societies invoke 'a tradition of mythic idealizations' (Kearney 2004, p. 78) which constitute a matrix of meanings that are fundamental to the self-identity of their members.

The members of a given society find their identity in the founding moment of the society and to keep this alive, as we see in the above quote by Ricoeur, they re-enact it in a theatrical sense so that the founding moment keeps binding its members. What is of importance here is that although ideology can conceal the gap between what is and what ought to be, by excusing and justifying the actions of a collective, it also acts as the fundamental glue that creates solidarity and identity. Ricoeur (1974, p. 225) argued that the role of ideology is to 'perpetuate the initial energy beyond the period of effervescence'. The integrative aspect of ideology which as we saw above is preserved through, traditions and myths of cosmogonies, or anthropogonies, a link to a historical moment 'to some inaugural act that founded it and can be repeated over time in order to preserve a sense of social integration' (Kearney 2004, p. 78).

The *code* character, as Ricoeur calls it, is manifested into various -isms which purport to conceptualise the true nature of the world. The truth of the social reality is hidden since the practices of a society are justified and rationalised. In this case, the product of justification and rationalisation is the legitimation of authority. In other words, both the integrative and dissimulating functions of the ideological imaginary come together to create, the third function of ideology, legitimation. Ricoeur (1976a, p. 22) poses the question following questions:

> Is it not the case that any authority always claims more than what we can offer in terms of belief? If this is the case, then could we not say that the main function of a system of ideology is to reinforce the belief in the legitimacy of the given systems of authority in such a way that it meets the claim to legitimacy?

Ideology as we have seen above legitimises the possibility of authority. In this case, Ricoeur finds Weber more fruitful than Marx, since his theory of the 'disenchantment of the world' and his theory of authority are a prime example of the legitimation of legal-rational authority and is in line with our civilisations code-character. Prior to the scientific revolution and the period of the Enlightenment, the traditional authority of a king who descended from a divine source was enough for its legitimation.

This section focused on Ricoeur's first pole of the socio-cultural imaginary—i.e. ideology. The section began by discussing the historical approaches to the concept of ideology in the social sciences which were mainly negative and concerned with the way ideology distorts the world. Ricoeur's approach to ideology constructed a positive account of its socialising and integrating role. In the next section, the second pole of the socio-cultural imaginary—i.e. utopia—is elucidated.

2.4 Utopia and the Social Imaginary

The next concept that needs to be looked at is that of utopia and its connection to the socio-cultural imaginary and creativity. Although the concept of a utopian imaginary was not pursued by Ricoeur as systematically as the ideological imaginary, it is an important pole of the socio-cultural imaginary due to its critical and productive dimensions. The term 'utopia' 'refers to fictions or essays which purport to describe an ideal and feasible community at some, generally undefined, future date' (Cazes 2001, p. 16123). Thomas More (1478–1535) published *Utopia* in 1516 which gave rise to the literary genre of Utopian (and Dystopian) fiction.

Utopia as a neologism has its roots in Greek language οὐ (not) and τόπος (place) and is a play on words: no-land, no-where, it can also be loosely translated to 'where is such a place?', while it should not be confused with eu-topia which means the 'good' land, the ideal state, etc. Predominantly, the use of the term 'utopia' is restricted to its descriptive aspect, 'namely the detailed narrative portrayals of ideal communities' (Cazes 2001, p. 16124). In this descriptive narration of a state that does not exist the term can 'be stretched to include also the blueprints which reflect utopian tendencies, namely any systematic exposition of the underlying principles of such communities' (Cazes 2001, p. 16124). This is the mono-dimensional way of understanding the term which reduces the concept to a literary genre and not acknowledging it as a critique of what is or as a fundamental aspect of the social imagination.

Unlike the pole of ideology, where action is emphasised by Ricoeur, the pole of utopia is interestingly lacking an explicit theory of action. In Ricoeur's *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia* (1986[1975]), there are only three lectures on the topic of utopia, and they do not flesh out a theory of action. I argue that a theory of action can benefit from the notion of

utopia. If the utopian imaginary is that which critiques and destructs the *status quo* then the action specific to it is revolutionary.

Just like a society's ideology, each culture has a unique way of articulating what they may see as a utopia. Moreover, as I will show later with my elucidation of the interconnectedness of ideology and utopia as they function as poles of the social imagination, the symbolic structure of representations of a society also influences a culture's capacity to dream of a new *status quo*. Utopia in Ricoeur's use of the term is a concept which is part of a socio-political project aimed at the critique of ideology. Utopia asks: '...how might it become and be otherwise, and how should it be?' (Levitas 2013, p. 66). It is this socio-political project of posing the question of what could be different that is at the core of this quote attributed to utopian aspect of the imagination by Ricoeur (1986 [1975], p. 16). Imagination as such, from its utopian pole, is essential for the critique of the nature of social life. Utopia critiques the dissimulation and the domination that occur in society. It questions 'what is family, what is consumption, what is authority, what is religion, and so on' (Ricoeur 1986 [1975], p. 16).

The concept of utopia is closely bound to that of ideology. Ricoeur elucidated the concept of utopia in a similar fashion to that of ideology—i.e. looking at both its negative and positive aspects. For Ricoeur, the main difference between ideology and utopia is that the former is reproductive imagination while the latter is 'the fiction that exemplifies productive imagination' (Taylor 2006, p. 94). Taylor (2006, pp. 94-5) notes that in the *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia* (1986 [1975]) Ricoeur is trying to develop 'a theory of productive imagination as opposed to one of reproductive imagination'. Taylor (2006, pp. 94-5) also points out that for Ricoeur there are four domains of productive imagination. The domains where the productive imagination emerges are, first, the social and cultural

imagination, second, the epistemological imagination, third, the poetic imagination, and the 'fourth domain is that of religious symbols' (Taylor 2006, p. 95).

For Ricoeur utopia functions on three levels. In addition, similar to ideology, utopia is characterised by one negative and two positives functions (Sargent 2008, p. 267). In the first level, which is also its negative function, utopia leads to fantasy and escapism—which can derive from ideological distortion. Let us move on to the two positive functions of utopia. Ricoeur (1986 [1975], p. 310) states, utopia has the ability to envision 'an alternate form of power', it is an 'exploration of the possible'. The second level, which has a political dimension to it, is the first of its positive functions can be the distance required for the critique of society, ideology, and the legitimacy of power—i.e. the 'shattering' of the *status quo*. The third level has a social dimension to it in which utopia is the exploration of the possible.

> The development of new, alternative perspectives define utopia's most basic function. May we not say then that imagination itself—through its utopian function—has a *constitutive* role in helping us to *rethink* the nature of our social life? (Ricoeur 1986 [1975], p. 16)

For Ricoeur, the notion of utopia encompasses a view of *social action* which emphasises its capacity to put forth alternatives, *from nowhere*, of what may be realised; a projection of an unrealised social reality that disrupts that which ideology tends to preserve and legitimise. Ricoeur (1986 [1975], p. 273) argues that a utopia is 'always in the process of being realized' while ideology 'does not have the problem of being realized, because it is the legitimation of what is'. The social action characteristic of the utopian imaginary—in its non-pathologic form—is *productive/creative*. The utopian imaginary questions from a distance the existing symbolic order and puts forth new possible alternatives of ways of living. Ricoeur (1986 [1975], p. 16) argues that the utopian imaginary produces 'variations on the topics of society, power, government, family, religion'.

> Is not utopia—this leap outside—the way in which we radically rethink what is family, what is consumption, what is authority, what is religion, and so on? Does not the fantasy of an alternative society and its exteriorization 'nowhere' work as one of the most formidable contestations of what is? (Ricoeur 1986 [1975], p. 16)

In antithesis to the preservative and legitimising aspect of the integrative nature of ideology and the social action pertaining to such projects, the utopian dimension of the social imaginary shatters the existing symbolic order (Ricoeur 1986 [1975], p. 273). Kearney (2004, pp. 84-5) takes up the concept of utopia and links it to a *hermeneutics of invention*. Kearney (2004, pp. 84-5) starts his elucidation of utopia by looking at the first function of a critical hermeneutics of everyday life that operates '*within* the social imaginary'—i.e. the process of demystification, the critique of ideology. According to Kearney (2004, pp. 84-5), there is a second step that needs to be taken after the 'concealed meaning behind the apparent meaning has removed the masks of falsehood'. This second step 'seeks to discriminate between falsifying and emancipating modes of symbolization' and 'labours to identify genuine symbols of liberation' (Kearney 2004, p. 85). This step 'is the second function of hermeneutic understanding—the utopian function—which Ricoeur sees as indispensable for a proper appreciation of our social imaginary' (Kearny 2004, p. 85).

The significance of the concept of utopia for social and political theory has been recently taken up by Taylor (2017b). Taylor (2017b, p. 41) situates Ricoeur's elucidation of utopia 'within the broader field of his work on the symbolic structure of action and social imagination'. Taylor (2017b, p. 41) responds positively to the question of 'whether we can make much of his elaboration of utopia when his main discussion of the topic takes up only about 45 pages in his *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*'. Taylor (2017b, p. 41) emphasises that Ricoeur's argument was that 'utopia and the imagination should be subjects of attention within social science and not simply within literary theory'. Taylor (2017b, p. 42) makes a distinction between the two positive functions of utopia and develops them further.

> Ricoeur develops two not necessarily exclusive aspects of the utopia in its positive sense. First, it acts as an imaginative variation on existing reality, and second, it can act to 'shatter' and hence recast existing reality. (Taylor 2017b, p. 42)

Taylor's distinction of utopia as an imaginative variation—which Ricoeur draws from Husserl—and utopia as a force that can 'shatter' reality reveals the reproductive imagination inherent in the former and the productive and creative imagination in the latter.

The socio-political importance of utopia was also taken up recently by Roger W.H. Savage (2017). Savage (2017, pp. 191, 204) discusses how 'literary fictions open spaces for reworking reality', and thereafter, connects the 'capacity of literary fictions, musical compositions, theatrical productions, and works of art to augment that practical field of our experiences' with the capacity of utopia to fuel social movements and offer novel ways of being. Savage ends his elucidation of the socio-political power of utopia by looking at dystopian literature and its capacity to question a society's trajectory.

> The power of imagination at work in these dystopic fictions is a testament to the role played by fiction with respect to the practical field of our experiences. For dystopic fictions, as much as utopian ones, revalue the field of action by illuminating the everyday world with their defamiliarizing light. (Savage 2017, p. 205)

I argue that action is driven by a certain ideological thrust which is inspired by an underlying utopia. However, the utopia projected might be one which is a product of a distorted view of reality and as such is, as Ricoeur would call it, pathological. The utopian action that this section discusses is that which goes beyond the pathological formulation; it constructs multiple reconfigurations of the symbolic order that prevails. Ricoeur (1986 [1975], p. 1) argues that '[o]ften a utopian vision is treated as a kind of schizophrenic attitude toward society, both a way of escaping the logic of action through a construct outside history and a form of protection against any kind of verification by concrete action'. This pathological form of utopia is equated to an escapism which as I see it is a part of the distortion of reality put forth by an ideology.

The utopian imaginary is creative and the social action that relates to it is one which is not bound by the pre-existing symbolic order. The social action characteristic of this would be related to socio-political projects of revolution and institution of novel forms; a re-evaluation of what is and projection of what needs to be done. Although Ricoeur spends less time in his *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia* (1986 [1975]) discussing utopia, it is arguably more important than ideology (Sargent 2008, p. 270). It is more fruitful for a socio-political project to not think of utopia through its negative function of fantasy which leads to escapism. The positive function of the utopian pole, characteristic of Ricoeur's social imaginary, which I would like to emphasise, is its critical and destructive capacity.

Social action, that is, meaningful action, needs to be guided by an ability to evaluate rather than rationalise on the basis of what is already accepted. The utopian pole of the cultural imagination is treated as a danger because it critiques the very core of our social rationalisations and justifications; it is imperative for socio-political projects. Utopia brings into the world the possibility of *poiesis*, in juxtaposition to the *reproduction* that is brought forth by ideology. That is to say that the utopian pole of the social imaginaries framework allows for a creativity of action, a bringing forth and way of acting in the world based on a reinterpretation of what is. As Taylor (1986, p. xxi) argues, Ricoeur was able to accomplish that which Mannheim was not—he incorporated into his theory an understanding that the 'death of utopia would be the death of society'. This because the utopian imaginary establishes a project, prospective goals, that a society aims to accomplish.

2.5 Socio-cultural imaginary and creativity

Ricoeur saw in the imagination a power for acting and altering the world, it is this creative aspect that this chapter teases out of his theory of socio-cultural imagination. The imagination however does not only innovate and create the new it also has the capacity to

preserve that which has been handed down from previous generations. For Ricoeur, action is enabled by the imagination and the possibility of critique opens up through it. Ricoeur goes as far to argue that without imagination there is no action 'from the viewpoint of projects, from that of motivation, and from that of the very capacity to act' (Ricoeur 1978b, p. 12). Without the ideological background specific to a society everything would be inconceivable and meaningless.

The social imaginary framework put forth by Ricoeur is founded on an understanding that there is an element of interpretation that occurs in everyday life. That is to say that a primary characteristic of the human condition is the interpretation of the symbolic structure that governs the social world. Ricoeur holds that new forms are brought into the world but does not use the term 'creation' to express this. For Ricoeur, the term 'creation' refers to a bringing forth of forms that is completely new and not related to anything that is already in the world. He reserves this term for conversation in theology. In the 1985 dialogue with Castoriadis on *Le Bon Plaisir*, aired on the radio station *France Culture*, Ricoeur discusses his reasons for preferring to use the term 'production' rather than 'creation' (Michel 2017, p. xxxv). Ricoeur's intention by the utilisation of the term 'production' is to emphasise that new human productions do not proceed from something non-existent but are always inscribed in a dialectic between innovation and sedimentation' (Michel 2017, p. xxxv).

For Ricoeur there is always a pre-existing order, a symbolic network of meanings, which is, in turn, interpreted and reconfigured. The novel human production and the creativity inherent in it is the product of the hermeneutic characteristic of the human condition. According to Amalric (2017, p. 84), Ricoeur holds the imagination as being 'a *production of new configurations*'. However, the productions of new configurations do not occur in a vacuum. The social world is made up of forms that are already configured.

Amalric argues (2017, p. 84) that novel configurations 'lie on a "prefiguration", a "pre-structuration", or a "pre-institution" which regulates which energises any imaginative production'.

The question that arises is whether creativity is an explicit or implicit feature of ideology and utopia. The dialectic between innovation and sedimentation implicitly implies a type of novel production which is the outcome of human creativity. Further, the interpretative aspect of the human condition is always productive. In this section, I will flesh out the implicit and explicit features of creativity in the concepts of ideology and utopia. First, the forms of action in ideology are implicitly creative. I argue this because the type of imagination used is reproductive, however, every social agent is reconfiguring the preconfigured and as much as there is a reproductive element the reconfiguration is innovative. Second, the notion of utopia is explicitly creative. As discussed earlier, the imagination characteristic to utopia is productive. However, utopian action can also be part of the sedimented pre-configuration of the social world and in that case, it employs a reproductive imagination which on first glance is not creative but imitative.

If all human actions are articulated, mediated, and interpreted through a social imaginary (Ricoeur 2016 [1977], p. 176), then the dialectic of ideology and utopia is always at play in them. This might be at both the conscious and subconscious levels. In this section, I discuss how an ideology is always geared towards doing something in the world and that it is always geared towards a future that is not yet, a utopia or even a dystopia. The functions of ideology, as we have seen can be both negative and positive. These functions may be the preservation of the *status quo*, the legitimation of the powers that be, the integration of its members into a unity based on a common history or myth, and the establishing of a common project.[14] If ideology governs unconsciously an agent's actions, then to some extent all of its

aforementioned functions, as well as, its utopian project are always part of the structure of action.

Ricoeur argues (1981[1974], p. 240) that 'coupled in a complex way' with the concept of ideology, utopia is at times 'one of its species' and 'sometimes of an opposed genre'. The reason for this lies in Ricoeur's understanding that every ideology is geared towards a specific project—a trajectory towards a place that is not yet realised—a utopia. As such, we see that when he elaborates on utopia being of the same species as that of ideology he refers to that project inherent in the ideology. In this sense, utopia is not disruptive of ideology it works with it and it justifies it. The hidden danger, in this case, is that this utopia might be 'schizophrenic' which would mean that the project defended is either irrational or that it leads to dystopia. Ricoeur argues:

> For besides the authentic utopia of critical rupture there can also exist a dangerously schizophrenic utopian discourse which projects a static future cut off from the present and the past, a mere alibi for the consolidation of the repressive powers that be...In short, ideology as a symbolic confirmation of the past, and utopia as a symbolic opening towards the future, are complementary; if cut off from each other, they can lead to forms of political pathology. (Ricoeur 1984, p. 30)

What interests me here is that, arguably, an ideology also has its own utopia; here I must emphasise that the common project established by an ideology is its own utopia. For example, one might say that the project of any proselytising religion is to proselytise everyone and bring about a world unity where everyone is bound by the same faith. I argue that, in a way, the utopia of such a religion would be to accomplish this feat. This means that all of the meaningful actions taken by the members of an ideology, in this example the proselytisers, are geared towards fulfilling the project and reaching their utopia. This shows that there is much room for discussing the social action specific to utopia. However, it is interesting to note that in the *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia* (1986[1975]) Ricoeur does

not advance a detailed description of what constitutes the action specific to utopia. In fact, it is important to point out that there is an absence of action when he discusses utopia.

Ricoeur's understanding of the ideology and utopia dichotomy puts forth a theory of action which is based on an intersubjective level. This is the everyday world where interactions occur and are understood as meaningful. Both ideology and utopia create a framework within which action can occur. We must however make explicit the distinction with the overarching role of ideology and that of utopia.

It is in Ricoeur's theory of the ideological imaginary where one finds a concise theory of action. The blueprint of ideology is that of a symbolic matrix which makes the world meaningful. It allows for the society to integrate and feel as one. In similarity to language the reader that is attempting to engage with these words needs to be able to understand their meaning so that the whole may be legible. It is in this way that the intersubjective—i.e. social—nature of ideology can also be emphasised. Language is not something that exists on a subjective level, if it was not for its intersubjective function it would be just noises understood by a single subject and would not fulfil the function of communication. In the same way ideology and the action specific to it is anchored outside of the individual and rather is the product of the intersubjective realm.

As we have seen earlier the action specific to the ideological imaginary is intersubjective; this should be seen in its broadest sense, that ideology is the code by which everything is understood, and everything is imagined through. As such, action always has a specific purpose, or meaning attached to it. Just like language conveys a meaning so does action. As Ricoeur argued (1978b) there can be no action without the imagination and if one sees ideology as the culmination of a society's imagination then to understand action one

must understand the meaning ascribed to it in the specific social and historical world it derives from.

The concept of utopia is quite different and can also be a way to understand action. However, this task may be harder than in the case of ideology. Utopia is essentially the critical stance against the ideological framework which by way of critique can rupture that which is and bring forth a new form of society. A theory of action which emphasises its creative aspect must focus more on the pole of utopia for it is within the utopian aspect of the social imaginary that the possibility for creative action manifests explicitly.

In this chapter, I described how social action is understood through Ricoeur's social imaginaries framework. Ricoeur's social imaginaries framework is comprised of the two poles of *ideology* and *utopia*. Each of these poles plays a fundamental role in the possibility of meaningful action. I have argued that it is impossible to think of social action outside of the tension that occurs at all times between the poles of ideology and utopia. On the one hand, through the concept of ideology, social action is based on a society's pre-existing forms of action and practices and can be seen as being characteristic of a type of reproduction. On the other hand, looked at through the pole of utopia, action can be seen as innovative, creative, and critical of the accepted *status quo*. Utopia in this sense is characteristic of *creativity*. It is, however, the case that utopia and ideology are inseparable and, as I have argued, are found within each other.

3. *Excursus*: Dialogue on History and the Social Imaginary

On the 9th of March 1985, Paul Ricoeur invited Cornelius Castoriadis to participate in his radio talk-show: 'Le Bon Plaisir' on *France Culture*. The original dialogue was published in 2016 and was titled *Paul Ricoeur, Cornélius Castoriadis: Dialogue sur l'Histoire et l'Imaginaire Social*. The English translation of the dialogue was published in 2017 alongside a number of supporting contributions by leading Ricoeurian and Castoriadian scholars such as George H. Taylor, Jean-Luc Amalric, Johann Michel, Marcel Gauchet, Johann P. Arnason, and Suzi Adams (Ricoeur and Castoriadis 2017). Castoriadis and Ricoeur engaged in a *tête-à-tête* on the social imaginary's significance when discussing the emergence of new 'forms' (*eide*) in the social-historical domain. The interlocutors were not completely aware of all the material produced by one another on the subjects they discussed and as such the dialogue is characteristic of certain misunderstandings. This dialogue is the only direct encounter between the two great philosophers of creativity and the imagination. Castoriadis's and Ricoeur's encounter provided a glimpse of their philosophical and political projects and exposes the grounds on which they are both united and divided.

Why is an *excursus* on this dialogue relevant for a thesis on the elucidation of 'social action' through a 'social imaginaries' orientation even if the dialogue's focus is not specifically on it? The argument here is that a clarification of whether new historical 'forms' are brought forth by a 'continuity or discontinuity of meaning' can shed light on the workings of 'social action' and the meaning of creativity. Moreover, an examination of Ricoeur's and Castoriadis's distinct approaches to 'creation' can help clarify their understandings of 'social action', 'social imaginaries', and the human condition.

An *excursus* on the 1985 dialogue is invaluable for my current project, even if explicit elucidations on a theory of 'social action' seen through a 'social imaginaries' framework is not present in it; the rationale for this detour is twofold. First, this dialogue is the only direct encounter available between the two thinkers. The publication of the dialogue is accompanied by several supplementary essays from leading Ricoeurian and Castoriadian scholars, was only recently published in English (2017) and, as such, its inclusion in my project offers new scholarship in the domain. Second, the dialogue centres around Castoriadis and Ricoeur's common interest on the social imaginary and its connection to 'meaning'. From this direction, my project benefits from the link between the social imaginary and 'meaning' in two ways.

First, the link of 'meaning' to 'social action' aligns Castoriadis's and Ricoeur's work with the classical sociological tradition of Weber's *Verstehen Sociologie* and positions my project within a wider dialectic within classical sociological tenets. Second, through their distinct philosophical endeavours on the *problématique* of the 'imagination' and its link to 'meaning' both Ricoeur and Castoriadis oppose the structuralist understanding that 'meaning' derived from static structures rather than agency.[15]

The dialogue is characterised by misunderstandings which can be attributed to the fact that the two interlocutors were aware of some but not all of each other's works prior to their encounter. For example, both Castoriadis and Ricoeur delivered seminar series prior to the 1985 dialogue that were unknown to the other. First, Ricoeur delivered two seminal lecture series—the first on the *social imaginary* and the second on the *imagination*—at the university of Chicago in 1975 (Adams 2017a, p. ix) but these were not published in 1985. On the one hand, the first series of lectures, which focussed on ideology and utopia as the two ends of the socio-cultural imaginary, were published a year after the dialogue took

place. On the other hand, the second lecture series, which has yet to be published, takes up the 'philosophical aspects of the imagination' (Adams 2017a, p. ix). Castoriadis also delivered a series of lectures on ancient Greece at the EHESS between 1982-1983 which as Adams (2017, pp. ix-x) argues were 'a significant source for his views in the radio discussion'. Another source for the misunderstandings is that during the time of the dialogue Ricoeur has been engaged in producing *Time and Narrative (Volumes 1-3)* and as such his interest is not on social imaginaries specifically.

There are three main themes emerging from Castoriadis's and Ricoeur's direct encounter. The first key theme of the dialogue is the *possibility of historical novelty*. The second main theme lies in the way each of the thinkers understands the emergence of *historical novelty*. The third theme relates to whether meaning through history is characteristic of *continuity* or *discontinuity*. On the first theme, the interlocutors find a point of unity. However, it is in the second and third themes that Castoriadis and Ricoeur come into conflict.

As mentioned above, the first *problématique* which animates the dialogue is the possibility of novel forms in history: '[i]s it possible to create the new historically?' (Michel 2017, p. xxxiv). Both thinkers emphasise the historical dimension of being and the capacity of the social imaginary to bring forth new forms. Both Castoriadis and Ricoeur regard the 'imagination' and the 'social imaginary'—indicating its social use—as human faculties. Arnason (2017a, p. xxix) argues that there are 'three problematics' upon which both Castoriadis's and Ricoeur's projects converge on—the precedence of meaning, the question of the subject and the critique of foundations'. Furthermore, during a historical period characterised by the discrediting of the imagination's importance by philosophical traditions both Castoriadis and Ricoeur 'fought for *the general rehabilitation of imagination in its*

practical dimension, whether individual or social' (Amalric 2017, pp. 78-9). The imagination, for both Castoriadis and Ricoeur, brings into being novel forms and as such is productive/ creative.

Jean-Luc Amalric argues (2017, pp. 80-1) that Ricoeur had thus far attempted to produce 'a renewal of the theory of imagination through an innovative approach to the practical function of productive imagination' because he saw a clear connection between *praxis* and the *social imaginary* 'which requires a *general theory of imagination* to take as its starting point the *constitutive and originary dimension of the social and cultural imaginary*'. Amalric (2017, p. 81) also argues that Castoriadis's theory of *social imaginary significations* and its relation to the social-historical realm 'starts from an attempt to rethink *praxis* in its irreducible creativity without reducing it to a—foreseeable and necessary— historical development'. Another point of convergence for these two thinkers that can help contextualise the dialogue is their refutation of Hegelian and Marxist historicism (Michel 2017, p. xxxvii) while their shared thesis is the reason why historical innovation is emphasised in the dialogue.

The subject emphasised and discussed in *Dialogue sur l' Histoire et l' Imaginaire Social*, as evinced by its French title, is *history* and the *social imaginary*. From this theme, their theoretical convergence and divergence regarding the bringing forth of new 'forms' becomes explicit. The main tension here, as discussed earlier, is the usage of the word 'creation' by Castoriadis and Ricoeur's preference to substitute it with 'production' when connoting the emergence of new *eide*. To fully understand what the tension between Castoriadis's 'creation' and Ricoeur's 'production' is, another theme is introduced; the next topic discussed is the possibility of a *continuity or discontinuity of meaning through history*. From this theme, one is lead to ask: what is the difference between Ricoeur's and

Castoriadis's notions of a 'productive imaginary'. This theme will be discussed later in the *excursus* where I will compare Castoriadis's and Ricoeur's notions of the 'productive imaginary'.

Castoriadis and Ricoeur problematise the 'continuity', or, 'discontinuity', of 'meaning', in, and through, history. The creation of new 'forms' and how that comes to be is the main dispute between the two thinkers. Castoriadis and Ricoeur acknowledge the social imaginary's ability to bring into being new forms/*eide*. Their divergence regards the term that should be used to denote the bringing forth of novel forms in the world. Castoriadis uses the term 'creation' while Ricoeur prefers that of 'production' (Adams 2017b, p. 112). On the one hand, Castoriadis defends his use of the term 'creation' and the notion of *creation ex nihilo* (Adams 2017b, p. 112). That is, novel 'forms'—brought forth in a *magmatic* way— can be shaped by the social-historical 'forms' that are already instituted but are not reducible to them. On the other hand, Ricoeur 'rejects the possibility of "absolute creation"' on the basis of the argument that novel 'forms' are the product of a process of reconfiguring existing configurations (Adams 2017b, p. 112). Ricoeur argues that forms could never come from the formless and as such rejects Castoriadis's notion of *creation ex nihilo*.

The importance of this dialogue is made explicit in the discussion of the *continuity and discontinuity of meaning* in society and how that can be the reason, or not, for new ways of being and acting emerging in the world. Both Ricoeur and Castoriadis put forth convincing arguments for and against a continuity of 'meaning' in the social-historical domain. It is, however, hard to deny my affinity to Ricoeur's example of the 'basso continuo' (Ricoeur and Castoriadis 2017, p. 7) and what can be inferred through it in hopes of gaining a clearer understanding of 'social action' seen through the 'social imaginaries' thesis. Still, both theorists' convergence is more fruitful than their divergence. That is, in the

background to their arguments there is always a creativity which brings forth the new. New forms of doing, of social relationships, and institutions.

A closer look at certain parts of the dialogue are fruitful to what has been discussed thus far in this excursus. The dialogue commences with a somewhat anecdotal remark by Castoriadis, who argued that in 1968 he had attempted to 'propose a doctoral thesis topic on the imaginary element, which remains as it was then: elementary and imaginary' (Ricoeur and Castoriadis 2017, p. 3).[16] This remark could be seen as Castoriadis's tactic to situate the encounter with Ricoeur within a discussion on that which unites both thinkers: the 'imagination'. Ricoeur seems to enjoy Castoriadis's opening point for he replies with an equally prodding comment in the form of word-play. This prod is a way for Ricoeur to open up the production/creation theme of the dialogue that places these two philosophers on opposite sides of a battlefield.

Ricoeur, firstly, praises his interlocutor for having published 'more than a few elements' (p.3) on the imaginary but one could argue that Ricoeur's next remark proves that he was aware of the chasm between the two and sought to direct Castoriadis to address it. Ricoeur prods Castoriadis to acknowledge the gap between their philosophies by stating that he has 'referred to the "imaginary production of society"' (p.3) multiple times. Ricoeur acknowledges their common interest of 'the imaginary foyer of social relations and of social production' (p.1), however, Ricoeur's replacement of the word 'institution' with 'production' was arguably used to tease out the main tensions and disagreements that arise in their distinct projects. Figuratively, Castoriadis takes the bait and corrects Ricoeur by saying that he uses the term 'institution' rather than 'production' (p.3). From this point, one sees their main divergence arising. Castoriadis uses the term institution to indicate the creative and instituting capacity of the radical imaginary.

Castoriadis argues that for him the word 'production' 'is too closely linked to Marx and Heidegger' (p.3). However, he acknowledged that Ricoeur's use of the term can be traced back to his Kantian lineage (p.3). Castoriadis reminds Ricoeur that Kant refers to the imagination as 'productive' and only 'calls it "creative" once, in passing, in the third *Critique*' (p.3). In response to this statement, Ricoeur chooses to flesh out his use of the word 'production' and to signal that the lineage he is drawing from comes from 'a pre-Marxian moment'. Ricoeur states that he is using Fichte's notion of *produzieren* (p.3). Ricoeur then continues to elucidate why he was drawn to 'the concept of the productive rather than the creative imagination' (p.4). The first point here is that in the use of the word 'creation', Ricoeur attaches 'something infinitely more primordial' (p.4). With this Ricoeur asserts that his use of the term is linked to 'something that would have a relationship with the order of a foundational sacred, whereas on the human scale we are always in an institutional order' (p.4). As such Ricoeur encountered 'a producing that is not a creating' (p.4).

Ricoeur goes on to argue for a pairing of the words 'production' and 'reproduction' (p.4). Ricoeur wants to clearly state his opposition to 'an imagination that only reproduces a copy of something that is already there' (p.4) and emphasise the reason for using the term 'production'. Ricoeur states that his interest in the word 'production' is derivative from his work on 'metaphor on the level of language' (p.4). The term 'production', for Ricoeur, connotes 'essentially a production of new syntheses and new configurations' (p.4) and should not be confined by an understanding of the term as a mimetic activity.

At this point, Ricoeur says that 'production' got him interested in 'metaphor on the level of language: we produce new meanings through the intersection of different semantic fields' (p.4). Ricoeur explains that he now sees 'the production of a story in terms of the

production of narrative configurations by the plot' (p.4). In response, Castoriadis stated that they had 'entered into what, at the same time' united them and divided them the most (p.4). Castoriadis here defends his usage of the word 'creation' by using the example of the Greek *polis* (p.4) by stating that he could not imagine 'the *polis,* the Greek city…or philosophy, which emerges in the 6th century BCE, as mere re-combinations of elements that were already there' (p.4). For Castoriadis, that which institutes 'the *polis* as a *polis,* is a meaning that it creates and through which it creates itself as a *polis*' (p.4). Ricoeur rejects this notion by calling it 'the myth of production' (p.4) and seeks to use an experience that is more tangible: 'production in the order of language' (p.4). Ricoeur argued that production in the order of language is always 'regulated production' and as such in what is produced there is always that which was not intended to be produced. Ricoeur and Castoriadis converged at this point to jointly oppose associationism and Lévi-Strauss's structuralism (pp.4-5). Both thinkers opposed the structuralism for their own purposes. However, that which unites them is a critique of structuralism's inability to attribute new forms to the social imaginary.

Ricoeur discusses his term 'emplotment' to emphasise that even though his approach employs pre-configurations and 'elements' like structuralism, it differs in that the 'elements' are not fixed but 'are reshaped by a lesson learned in an event' (p.5). In the case of the 'static view', there are a combination of fixed 'elements' that are reproduced into 'structures that are discontinuous with each other' (p.5). Ricoeur continues to defend his position, that production is always in accordance to pre-given rules (like language, grammar, syntax, etc.), by saying: 'we do not produce everything that we produce, if only because we already have a language before we can talk' (p.5). In response, Castoriadis states (p. 5):

> And that is precisely why the idea of institution, rather than production, is at the centre of my work. The self-institution of society implies that we are always working within what is already established by changing or amending the rules but also by establishing new ones, by creating them. That is our autonomy.

The next part of the dialogue delves deeper into the idea of radical creation. Ricoeur argues that it is only through breaking with that which is already there—the 'old'—that the 'new' can come into being, and as such, absolute and radical 'novelty is unthinkable' (p. 4). Michel (2017, p. xxxvi) argues that Ricoeur's incapacity to accept that absolute novelty is possible is traced to his affinity with hermeneutics and the argument that understanding stems from a pre-understanding. On this basis, Michel (2017, p. xxxvi) argues that the 'hermeneutic primacy of the *pre-*' does not allow Ricoeur to accept Castoriadis's thesis on historical *creation*. Castoriadis's, however, takes a different position. Castoriadis's *oeuvre* is based around the notions of radical creation. Castoriadis identifies that his view of temporality differs to Ricoeur's because he sees 'the emergence of levels of being' (p. 5). Castoriadis's does not deny the impact of instituted pre-configurations on the creation of 'forms'. At the same time, Castoriadis will not accept Wagner's symphonies could have been predicted.

For Ricoeur, the pre-established state of the world its continuity can be ruptured by an 'event in thought'. The meaning the 'event' carries is spread throughout the social-historical field through 'a dialectic of innovation and sedimentation' (p. 5). Ricoeur states (p. 6):

> There is the sedimentation of research and thoughts, and of the *said*, of what has been said before us. It is on the basis of these things that have already been said that we can say something else. Sometimes we say it better, but we remain in a sort of continuity of saying that is self-correcting and cumulative.

The dialogue continues onto a discussion on the continuity or discontinuity of meaning through the social-historical realm. Ricoeur asked Castoriadis to discuss further the word 'institute':

> It seems to me that, behind all of these ruptures of thought, there is a continual setting which still forms the continuity of human communities. Before the institution, there is a living-together that has a certain continuity, which can be

> instituted, re-instituted, and constituted by ruptures but against the backdrop of a transmitted and received inheritance, which ensures, if I might say, the 'basso continuo'... (p. 7)

For Ricoeur, the pre-established configurations of forms establish a certain continuity—a *basso continuo*—that persists beyond the potential ruptures brought about through an 'event in thought'. This continuous rhythm, established by the inherited order, can produce novel forms but it can also be the cause of unintended ones.

Castoriadis's and Ricoeur's encounter 'is animated by a practical, praxeological, political concern' (Michel 2017, p. xxxvi). Michel (2017, p. xxxvi) argues that the two thinkers are concerned with the concept of *praxis*. Both Castoriadis and Ricoeur associate the idea of *praxis*—social doing—with their particular understanding of how the social imaginary operates.

Both Castoriadis and Ricoeur understand social doing in relation to the social imaginary. Taylor (2017a, p. 42) argues that according to Castoriadis an individual's actions and deliberations inexorably belong 'to history and to society'. This 'belonging' to the society and history does not prevent the creative imaginary from being able to alter the established institutions and create *ex nihilo* novel historical forms—i.e. forms that cannot be reduced to the established pre-configurations. For Ricoeur, the two poles of the social imaginary—ideology and utopia—are in a dialectic process which results in the production of novel forms. For Ricoeur, history progresses through the stages of pre-configuration, configuration, and re-configuration. The forms produced in a re-configuration of the established constitute, for Ricoeur, historical novelty.

Returning to my initial argument, the thesis which both thinkers converge on relates to the power of the social imaginary to animate social action and produce/create the new historically is that which is the most fecund. It is prolific because, first, the creativity of

social action and the power of the social imaginary are not discredited. And second, it becomes clear that to understand social action and its creative dimension both social imaginaries frameworks put forth by Ricoeur and Castoriadis are invaluable and complementary.

This *excursus* focussed on Castoriadis's and Ricoeur's only direct dialogue and made transparent the convergences and divergences that emerge between them. In the next section, I bring the two thinkers together and explore their distinct understanding of what constitutes their unique approaches to social imaginaries and the creativity of action that is inherent in all human doing.

4. Castoriadis and Ricoeur in Dialogue

The purpose of this master's research is to examine how a creativity of action can be understood through a social imaginaries lens. To do so, so far, I looked at what Cornelius Castoriadis and Paul Ricoeur have contributed to the issue. More precisely, I devoted a chapter on each of them which elucidated their respective understandings of what the social imaginaries of a society consist of and how creativity is embedded within them. First, to understand the creativity inherent in social imaginaries I focussed on their distinct approaches to action, and second, to comprehend the significance of social imaginaries in everyday life I emphasised how the social imaginaries held by a society underlie the socio-political actions taken by its constituents. The two chapters devoted to Castoriadis and Ricoeur were followed by an *excursus* which focussed on Castoriadis's and Ricoeur's dialogue—their only direct encounter which took place on a radio show hosted by Ricoeur in 1985. Although the dialogue does not discuss social action explicitly, it is an important source for understanding both Castoriadis's and Ricoeur's positions on it. In this present chapter, I juxtapose Castoriadis's and Ricoeur's theories and bring to the surface their agreements as well as their disagreements. The purpose of this chapter is to discuss and compare Castoriadis's and Ricoeur's approaches to action. This comparison will help elucidate the notion of a creativity of social action from the social imaginaries perspective.

The chapter is organised around four parts. In the first part, I discuss my research rationale and advance an overview of the two fields of thought it combines. Furthermore, I discuss the immediate differences between Castoriadis's and Ricoeur's intellectual trajectories, projects, and their common interest of realising the need to theorise the imagination anew so that its importance for human action is emphasised. In the second part, I take up the *problématique* of creativity in the socio-political domain and focus on their

disagreement on how new forms emerge in the socio-political domain i.e. is it by way of creation *ex nihilo* or by way of *production*. In the third part, I put forth an overview of social imaginaries and focus on Castoriadis's and Ricoeur's differences. In the fourth part, I look at how both thinkers emphasise the role of the imaginary for socio-political action and its praxeological dimensions. This chapter ends with a discussion of the political dimension of social action and the importance of the social imaginaries lens to understand the inner workings of socio-political doing in the world. I discuss this by showing a convergence between the two thinkers, specifically, in what Ricoeur calls the 'constitutive imaginary' and Castoriadis's 'instituting imaginary'.

The rationale for this thesis is twofold. First, by elucidating the social imaginaries' aspect of action, which has been marginalised in the secondary literature, the research will strengthen the overall social imaginaries approach. Second, the research is aimed at creating a better understanding of the creative dimension of action. This will deepen our understanding of social imaginaries. Conversely, it will also expand our understanding of the creativity of action; for it demonstrates the way that action is embedded into contexts of meaning, power, and institution.

Sociological theories on action, as Joas argues (1996, p. 4), are predominantly dichotomised into two models i.e. *rational action* and *normatively oriented action*. Both of these models are characteristic of a teleological framework in which the final ends and the means to reach them are explicitly laid out prior to the action itself. In *The Creativity of Action* (1996) Joas leans on pragmatism to critique the teleological schema embraced in both *rational* and *normatively oriented action* so that he can emphasise the creative aspect of the human condition. The social imaginaries perspective embraced by Castoriadis and Ricoeur articulates action as being inherently creative. Although social imaginaries cannot be reduced to action alone, a clarification of Castoriadis's and Ricoeur's specific articulations

of social imaginaries is paramount to understanding more about the structures of social action.

Castoriadis and Ricoeur are two thinkers that engaged in quite different projects. Their philosophical trajectories led them to areas where 'possible points of contact between them, might seem a far-fetched idea' (Arnason 2017, p. xv). On the one hand, Castoriadis's early engagement with political activism and his revolutionary interpretation of Marxism were only the beginning of a lifelong political and revolutionary project (Arnason 2017, p. xvi). On the other hand, Ricoeur 'pursued a philosophical vocation…and developed his ideas through academic debates' instead of focussing on a particular political project (Arnason 2017, p. xv). Arnason (2017, p. xv) notes that this did not mean that Ricoeur did not engage in 'political issues or avoided political statements', rather, 'his basic philosophical arguments were never constitutively linked to a political project'. Their differences do not stop at the various trajectories their projects took them on. Michel (2017, p. xxxiii) notes that between Castoriadis and Ricoeur '[e]verything seems to be opposite and opposed'. On the one hand, Castoriadis style is very polemic, 'he has a very affirmative style that does not make concessions to his opponents' (Michel 2017, p. xxxiii). On the other hand, Michel (2017, p. xxxiii) describes Ricoeur 'by the art of the detour and the negotiation between opposites, by a type of argumentation that is more aporetic than affirmative'.

Beyond their differences, there are striking convergences which I aim to bring to the surface. One of these convergences is their 'shared diagnosis concerning the occultation-discreditation of imagination in the philosophical tradition, and the necessity to think imagination anew' (Amalric 2017, p. 81). The way in which the two thinkers take on this issue is evidence of their general temperaments and styles of argumentation. Amalric (2017, p. 80) notes that 'Ricoeur's philosophy – unlike Castoriadis's thought – is not conceptualised to appear as a radical break with the whole philosophical tradition'. Rather,

through an aporetic style Ricoeur 'repeatedly evokes "unemployed potentials" of this tradition and the possibility to renew the philosophy of imagination in the light of a *reflexive philosophy of the act* and *towards a renewed ontology of act and power'* (Amalric 2017, p. 80). Nonetheless, as Amalric (2017, p. 81) argues, both philosophers 'lead us, each in his own way, towards a regathering of the practical and productive power of imagination' while emphasising that 'a renewal of the theory of imagination must necessarily proceed as a *central function of imagination in human action* and its foregrounding'.

Another instance of convergence, and at the same time divergence, emerges in their discussion on novel forms emerging in history. Both Castoriadis and Ricoeur agree that the human world is characterised by creativity. This means that new forms emerge in history. However, the point on which Castoriadis and Ricoeur come into a disagreement relates to how the process of creativity emerges. On the one hand, for Castoriadis new forms are not reduced to being the cause of forms that are already there in the world. Angelos Mouzakitis (2014, p. 53) notes that Castoriadis 'formulates the concept creation *ex nihilo* in contradistinction to that of production and in close relation to the creative imagination'. That is, Castoriadis held that new forms emerge *ex nihilo—out of nothing*. For this purpose, when Castoriadis refers to the emergence of new forms in history he uses the term *creation* rather than *production*.

Taylor (2017a, p. 34) argues that for Castoriadis the creative imagination is that which brings forth novel forms in history and has the power to break away from the social imaginary significations that animate a society's institutions. Ricoeur, however, uses the concept of the productive imagination when discussing historical novelty because 'the imagination must always proceed by configurations' of the pre-established order (Taylor 2017a, p. 34).

Castoriadis's understanding of being as indeterminate went against the traditional schools of philosophy. For Castoriadis, thus far, the traditional philosophical and ontological assumptions on being reduce it to a product of the forms that precede it. However, for Castoriadis (1997, p. 3) '[b]eing is abyss, or chaos, or the groundless'. *Being* cannot be reduced to being the product of a system of ensembles. Moreover, social-historical *being* could never be reconstituted by an ensemblistic-identitary logic. Castoriadis (1987 [1975], p. 177) argues that the ensemblistic-identitary logic—or ensidic logic—reduces being to 'an ensemble of distinct and well-defined elements, referring to one another by means of well-determined relations'.

On the other hand, Ricoeur argued that new forms could never come from nothing. They are influenced by the forms that precede them, that is, the bringing forth of novel historical forms are 'inscribed in a dialectic between innovation and sedimentation' (Michel 2017, p. xxxv). This does not mean that Ricoeur does not believe in the appearance of new forms in history rather it 'is the hermeneutic primacy of the *pre-* which prevents' him 'from crossing the Rubicon of historical *creation*' (Michel 2017, p. xxxvi). Furthermore, Michel (2017, p. xxxvi) notes:

> Notably, it is the always prior existence of language, whose pre-existing rules prevent Ricoeur from subscribing to the idea that a new form could arise from some kind of formless chaos. His favourite model is derived from the hermeneutic theory of the text in virtue of which we proceed from interpretations and successive reinterpretations based on an already existing configuration

In this divergence Ricoeur 'conceives the imagination as a production of new configurations' already situated in 'a "prefiguration", a "pre-structuration", or a "pre-institution" which regulates and energises any imaginative production' (Amalric 2017, p. 84).

Although Castoriadis and Ricoeur take different positions on how novel forms come forth they are both concerned with its practical, praxeological, and political dimensions that

are at the core of human action in history (Michel 2017, p. xxxvii). Furthermore, for both Ricoeur and Castoriadis, as noted earlier, human action in history is inconceivable without an elucidation of the central role played by the imagination and the imaginary. As such, I will now move into outlining the role of *social imaginary significations* for Castoriadis and the socio-cultural imaginary with its dual poles of *ideology* and *utopia* for Ricoeur so that further convergences and divergences between the thinkers become more explicit.

For Castoriadis *social imaginary significations* are at the heart of a society's make up. First, they are an imaginary creation specific to the society and are as such a novel historical form—*eidos*—which emerges ex nihilo and as such is not determined by the various forms of social imaginary significations that are already there. Second, social imaginary significations organise the way in which everyday life is played out. For Castoriadis (1999, p. 7) social imaginary significations embody all the institutions of a society such as, to name a few, religion, political power, economy, morality, man, woman, children, tools, etc. As I have pointed out in the chapter devoted to Castoriadis, social imaginary significations can be understood as the building blocks making up the matrix of social reality. Both Adams (2012, p. 31) and Arnason (1989, p. 334) emphasise the interpretative dimension of social imaginary significations and by doing so they relate them to being essential to the way a society sees the world and at the same time projects itself into the future. Later in this chapter, I will revisit and emphasise this hermeneutical and culturological dimension of social imaginary significations to bring to the surface the idea that embedded in them is, as Arnason (1989, p. 334) argues, cultural orientations, or projects, which aim to bring about 'determinate patterns' of meaning.

For Ricoeur (1986, p. 8) every society is characteristic of a symbolic structure without which 'there is no way to understand how we live, do things and project these activities in ideas, no way to understand how reality can become an idea and how real life

can produce illusions'. This symbolic structure is that which mediates meaning and has an implicitly social, or '*public* character' (Ricoeur 2016, p. 181). Ricoeur (2016, pp. 178-80) distinguishes between behaviour and action by arguing that the latter implies signification and is as such situated within a symbolic structure, while the former is a 'simple movement' which does not mediate any significance. Ricoeur's (2016, p. 176) thesis is that there is no human action unless it has been articulated, mediated, and interpreted by symbols'. As such, Ricoeur (2016, p. 181), through Geertz's work on 'models of synergetic significations', identifies culture as being made up of a structure of symbols and associated meanings which mediate social reality. Ricoeur (2016, p. 181) argues:

> Before being a text…does symbolic mediation have a "texture"? To understand a ritual action is to place it inside a ritual, itself inside a cultic practice, and, bit by bit, in terms of a group of conventions, beliefs, and institutions that form the framework or fabric of a culture. It is the task of analysis to disentangle these structures of signification, to determine their social bases and their impact on other non-semiotic structures.[17]

For Ricoeur (2016, p. 182), the symbolic structure of social reality with its *rules* and *symbolic control* act like codes; they are like '"programs" of behaviour: like genetic codes, they give form, order, meaning, and direction to life'. These codes lie within the socio-cultural imaginary. Ricoeur identifies two poles in the socio-cultural imaginary. The two poles are the ideological imaginary and the utopian imaginary.[18] Each of which plays a significant role in the way a society understands its project. On one hand, the ideological imaginary creates the society's solidarity and justifies its actions in the world. On the other hand, the utopian imaginary is the pole of the socio-cultural imaginary that allows for the critique of the ideological imaginary by projecting new ways of interpreting the society's projects.

For both Castoriadis and Ricoeur, the social imaginaries of a society articulate the *sui generis* projects which are embraced by its constituents and are a justifying and driving force

for action in the world. In this aspect, Castoriadis and Ricoeur converge although they do it in a different way. In what follows I will flesh out the similarities in Castoriadis's social imaginary significations, and specifically the dual project of modernity, with Ricoeur's understanding of ideology and utopia as the two poles of the socio-cultural imaginary. Although I argue that there are striking similarities in the two theories, they are different since Castoriadis is elucidating the particular and Ricoeur is putting forth a universal theory. More precisely, Castoriadis elucidated the constellations of social imaginary significations which characterise the western occidental civilisation and its modernity while Ricoeur's theoretical schema is anchored closer to a philosophical anthropology. First, I will discuss the two central imaginary significations that Castoriadis identifies in relation to the projects that they are embedded in. Second, I will juxtapose Castoriadis's dual project of modernity with Ricoeur's notions of ideology and utopia in order to bring to the surface the areas in which they converge. It is, however, important to note that Castoriadis contested rigorously the notion of utopia.

For Castoriadis, the western occidental modernity is characteristic of two central social imaginary significations i.e. the *pursuit of rational mastery* and the *project of autonomy*. At the core of these two central imaginary significations, there are two distinct projects which are at times in tension with each other but can also be dependent on each other—this dependence will be discussed later in this chapter. For Castoriadis, these *projects* are historical creations and associates with them two distinct types of action—*technique* and *praxis*.[19] Let us now look more closely at the projects that are embedded in the two central social imaginary significations of our civilisation.

The project embedded in the pursuit of *rational mastery* is linked with the domination of nature through the 'nexus of techno-science and capitalism' (Adams 2014, p. 9). This project is linked to an unbridled productivity and development. It is an orientation to

the world that is pseudo-rational since the world is made of finite resources. Nonetheless, the project is at the core of the type of actions that are instituted in the western occidental civilisation. This unlimited project is evident in everyday discourse when people take up the issue of development in regard to the techno-scientific realm. The institution of the unlimited expansion and development has become autonomous and its very function goes unquestioned. This central imaginary signification is a heteronomous institution and is in clear opposition to the project of autonomy which will be discussed next. Karl Smith (2014, p. 20) notes:

> [W]hen 'rationalized systems' or techniques/technologies/etc. become alienated from their creators, when all human endeavour is allocated to the project to the project of unlimited expansion of (pseudo-) rational (pseudo-) mastery, when the pursuit of this project is so deeply embedded/interwoven into the institutional fabric of a society that is not possible to ask why we pursue this project rather than another, then we are dealing with heteronomous society with heteronomous subjects who are alienated from their fundamental creativity.

The project of autonomy takes on a different *problématique* in the world—how do we, and how should we, govern ourselves? In light of this question, Castoriadis sees the project of autonomy as that which aims to maximise political autonomy. The major difference and tension with the pursuit of (pseudo-) rational (pseudo-) mastery is that the project of autonomy is aimed at critiquing and questioning the institutions that a society upholds. As I have elucidated previously in this thesis, the socio-political world is characterised by a type of action Castoriadis calls *praxis*. Castoriadis (1991a, p. 169) argues that '[p]olitics is the reflective and lucid collective activity that aims at the overall institution of society' and is 'a project of autonomy'. Castoriadis argues:

> As a germ, autonomy emerges when explicit and unlimited interrogation explodes on the scene—an interrogation that has bearing not on "facts" but on social imaginary significations and their possible grounding. This is a moment of creation, and it ushers in a new type of society and a new type of individuals. I am speaking intentionally of *germ*, for autonomy, social as well as individual, is a *project*. (Castoriadis 1991a, p.163)

In the above quote, Castoriadis is looking at specifically the explosion of social and individual autonomy in the social-historical field and how that is likened to a *seed* from which further autonomy can grow. What Castoriadis means by *project*, or 'germ', is the driving force that is embedded in social imaginary significations. I argue that in a similar fashion *social imaginary significations* are embedded with a *germ*, or *project*, of their own and are explicitly linked to action. To flesh this argument out further, let us take up the example of social and individual autonomy again.

The social imaginary signification of autonomy both social and individual is upheld by those that live in a society characteristic of self-reflectiveness and an ethos of questioning the institutions that are embodied by them. The social imaginary signification of autonomy, in this case, will factor into all of the actions and institutions brought forth by that society. The above argument can be seen in light of Arnason's (1989, p. 334) hermeneutical and culturological understanding of social imaginary significations. Although Castoriadis did not recognise the benefits of using the term *utopia* and was opposed to the idea, I argue that his disagreement with the term is located more in the direct etymological connotations of the term—i.e. no-place—and did not see it as Ricoeur did; a powerful aspect of the cultural imaginary which can critique existing institutions and produce novel ones. Amalric (2017, p. 87) takes up this argument and states that 'Ricoeur's connection of habits and institutions to an originary and creative cultural nucleus presents a strong analogy with the interplay of the *instituted imaginary* to the *instituting imaginary*, which constitutes the central philosophical gesture of Castoriadis's approach to the social imaginary'. Amalric (2017, p. 87) continues his argument by noting that Ricoeur's (1986, p. 311) use of the term 'constitutive imagination' is meant to 'qualify the more radical meaning of these "imaginative practices" that are ideology and utopia' and by doing this he gives 'the social imaginary a status close to that of the Castoriadian 'instituting imaginary'.

In contradistinction to 'reproductive imagination', Ricoeur identifies 'four domains of the productive imagination' (Taylor 2006, pp. 93-4). The domain which is of importance for this current project is 'the domain of social and cultural imagination' and 'utopia is the fiction that exemplifies productive imagination' (Taylor 2006, pp.93-4). The genre of fiction implied by the term utopia allows for a subject to distance herself from her own reality and by gaining this distance, as if she was on a vantage point or has a panoramic perspective, she is able to self-reflect on the that which she has fled. This example of utopia's role in creating a distance between it and ideology can be consolidated with what Ricoeur called 'emplotment'. The impact of an event (like the distance created by utopia) on a self-reflecting subject can be the cause for a new re-configuration or even new meaning ascribed to existing elements. In contrast, Castoriadis's notion of the creative imaginary employs the term creation because for him it is radical creation, that is, ontological novelty. For Castoriadis, the Greek polis was ontologically speaking more important than the birth of a celestial star. This was because the polis qua polis of the Athenians could never be reproduced by a mere recombination of elements that are there in the world. It is specific to the social-historical domain it emerged in and cannot be attributed to the instituted.

As we have argued so far, for Ricoeur action and imagination are intimately related. Ricoeur (1978, p. 12) argues that 'from the viewpoint of projects, from that of motivation, and from that of the very capacity to act' the imagination plays a key part without which the projects, motivations, and actions would not be possible. Similarly, the socio-cultural imagination, with its two poles i.e. the ideological and utopian imaginaries, is linked with the actions brought forth by a society and the specific projects it tries to accomplish. As we saw earlier the ideological imaginary has the power to legitimise power and rationalises the projects a society tries to accomplish. I would argue that on a universal level an ideological

imaginary is embedded with a specific utopian imaginary. That is, the ideological imaginary already is in a process of achieving a utopian project.

Here we see the similarity with Castoriadis and Ricoeur. On the one hand, Castoriadis looks at the particular historical instance of the dual project of modernity. Just like the social imaginary signification of autonomy projects itself through *praxis* to maximise the social and individual autonomy of everyone so does the pursuit of rational mastery project itself through *technique* to master, rationalise, and dominate the natural world for a specific utopia i.e. the infinite development of the techno-scientific and capitalist worlds. On the other hand, Ricoeur takes a philosophical anthropological perspective and makes a universal claim about how all societies project themselves through their ideological imaginary to bring forth the utopia that embedded in it. Both thinkers converge on the idea that human societies and their social imaginary projects have a socio-political and praxeological dimension.

Castoriadis and Ricoeur both put forth theories on action that are based on the social imaginary, however, their theories emerge in different ways. There are similarities and differences in Ricoeur's concept of ideology as part of the social imaginary and Castoriadis's understanding of *legein* and *teukhein*—i.e. representing and doing. For Ricoeur, the whole theory of ideology—and its dialectic with utopia—can be taken as a theory on action. The ideological imaginary lays down the rules on how things are to be done and legitimises them. Although as we have seen the ideological imaginary is linked closely to the reproductive imagination, it is also a unique instance of human creation which is not based on a natural order of the world but is a human creation—even if the ideological imaginary defends it as being natural. In the same way, Castoriadis (2015, p. 61) regards the unique instances of *legein* and *teukhein* as being constituting elements of social-historical being in both collective and individual forms.

Castoriadis's and Ricoeur's understanding of action are underpinned by their theories on social imaginaries. Both thinkers see action as being informed by the social imaginaries that hold a society together. Without the meaning prescribed to the world by the ideological imaginary—for Ricoeur—and the interconnected proto-institutions of *legein* and *teukhein*—for Castoriadis—human action as creative/productive is not possible. The social imaginaries held by a society are located in its institutions and the agents it is composed of. This leads to the argument that both Ricoeur and Castoriadis perceive action as being mediated in a trans-subjective way. It is as such, important for sociology and theories of action to incorporate what Castoriadis calls the 'anonymous collective'. Adams (2015, p. 139) argues that the trans-subjective 'refers to the level of human sociality that is anonymous, and is the precondition for subject-selves acting meaningfully in intersubjective contexts'. Adams (2012; 2015) has looked at this non-subjective dimension of doing for both Castoriadis—the social doing of the anonymous collective—and for Ricoeur—the move from a hermeneutics of culture to a cultural hermeneutics. An understanding of social-historical being must incorporate an elucidation of the a-subjective modes of action that occur as a result of social imaginaries. As Castoriadis (2015, p. 65) argues, '[a] human reality does not exist before or independently of the imaginary, that is independently from representing and doing'. In fact, if action in the world was not based on a social imaginary, as both Castoriadis and Ricoeur understand it, then it is akin to a 'logical-mechanical automatism' (Castoriadis 2015, p. 62) and as such it would be a-historical.

In this chapter, I discussed Castoriadis's and Ricoeur's convergences and divergences. In additions, I elucidated the implications of the social imaginary for action. First, I put forth an overview of my thesis rationale. Thereafter, I focussed on the intellectual backgrounds and philosophical projects that characterise both thinkers. Their specific temperaments and styles of argumentation were significant in the way these two thinkers are

understood. Both thinkers converge on their dissatisfaction with the dominant philosophical positions on the imagination. Castoriadis polemic style leads him to break from the inherited thought while Ricoeur's aporetic style leads him to explore unexplored potentials in it.

After discussing their joint concerns on the occultation/discreditation of the imagination by dominant philosophical strands I looked at one of their first divergences. This first divergence lies in the possibility of novel forms emerging in history. On the one hand, Castoriadis advocated for the idea of a creation *ex nihilo* in which forms are indeterminable from the forms that precede them. On the other hand, Ricoeur uses the term production to describe the idea that novel forms in history are the product of a dialectic between innovation and sedimentation. Ricoeur's hermeneutic style cannot allow him to imagine forms deriving from nothing; novel historical forms are produced through a process of re-configuration of existing forms.

In the last part of the chapter, I sided with Arnason's (1989, p. 334) understanding of *social imaginary significations* as being *cultural orientations*, or *projects*, which are geared to producing 'determinate patterns' of meaning. I took this hermeneutic and culturological position to show that *social imaginary significations* are embedded with projects which then give rise to action. This argument was then combined with the idea that for Ricoeur the ideological imaginary is also already geared towards a specific utopia. This allowed me to argue that Castoriadis and Ricoeur converge and understand social imaginaries as catalysts, or sources, of meaningful action. My discussion ends with a final convergence between the two philosophers. This convergence is seen in that aspect of the social imaginary that Ricoeur calls the 'constitutive imaginary' and Castoriadis's 'instituting imaginary'.

Conclusion and Prospects

This thesis examined the notion of social action and its creativity as it is articulated by Castoriadis and Ricoeur. My research was animated by two questions. The first question asked how social action, its creativity, and its relation to social imaginaries are understood by Castoriadis and Ricoeur? The second question looked at what a dialogue between Castoriadis and Ricoeur can tell us about the action dimension of social imaginaries. Furthermore, this research emphasised and explored creativity, the creativity of action, and the concept that society is intrinsically creative. This offered a critique of the dominant theoretical orientations which have been widespread in sociology.

This conclusion is structured into two parts. First, I will put forth a discussion on each of the fields my research combines, outline their precursors, and the context in which they emerge. By doing this, I will contextualise my research and its purpose. Second, I will focus on a systematic account of the various steps my research took so that its rationale is explicit. To undertake this task, I will present the structure my thesis followed. In this second part of my conclusion, I will briefly go through the research chapters so that their purpose is explained.

José Maurício Domingues (2000) argued that creativity can be seen as master trend in contemporary sociological theory. The argument put forth by Domingues (2000, pp. 467-9) was that although creativity is not the prime focus of classical and contemporary theorists there is evidence which suggests that it is in the background. Arnason argued (1996, p. 105) that the emergence of a theory of creative action 'is geared to a specific image of society and a corresponding agenda for sociology'. The creative dimension of action should be seen as being inextricably connected to human doing (Joas 1996 [1992], p. 116; Arnason 1996, p. 105). My research drew on the body of literature that came out of the debates problematising

the creativity of action but was not geared towards proving that action is creative. My research began from the premise that action is creative.

Let us move on to the second field of thought my research was based on: the social imaginaries field. But why use a social imaginaries framework? First, the reason is that social imaginaries account for action, power, and culture which are three key elements of any adequate social theory. And second, the social imaginaries field understands action as creative and self-creating. Simply put the concept of social imaginaries explains that which binds and creates solidarity among social groups. Finally, both the literature interrogating the creativity of action and that of social imaginaries are anchored within the sociological tradition. On the one hand, the creativity of action can be traced in Weber's notion of *charisma*, as well as, in Durkheim's concept of the *sacred*. On the other hand, social imaginaries draw from Durkheim's *collective representations* and Anderson's *imagined communities* (Adams et al. 2015, p. 18).

Overall, my research added to the systematic work needed to draw the connection of action's creativity to the social imaginaries framework. This research can be seen as a contribution to the social imaginaries field, sociology, as well as, social theory and the debates on the creativity of action. This is because, just like the creativity of action is marginalised by the secondary literature in the social imaginaries field, the cultural background—the cultural worlds—in which action takes place is missing in the secondary literature pertaining to a creativity of action. In contradistinction, the social imaginaries framework assumes that culture is already in the world. As such, my research started by elucidating each theorist's particular understanding of social imaginaries and not with the creativity of action debate because action, for both Castoriadis and Ricoeur, is always already in-the-world and creative/productive.

The first theorist this thesis elucidated was Castoriadis. In this chapter, I fleshed out what was meant by 'social action' for him. For Castoriadis the social imaginary significations—embodied in social institutions—bring forth novel forms of social action. Furthermore, this chapter explored what 'creation' and 'creativity of action' entailed for Castoriadis within a social imaginaries framework. Finally, the chapter explored the different types of historical and ahistorical action, whilst emphasising both the social and imaginary dimensions of *praxis* as socio-political doing.

The second substantive chapter was devoted to my second interlocutor, that is Ricoeur. The chapter focussed on his socio-cultural imagination drawn from his work in the 1970s and 1980s. Further, I elucidated what is meant by 'social action' for Ricoeur by looking at the dialectic process between the ideological imaginary and the utopian imaginary—i.e. the social and cultural imagination.

After the two substantial chapters dealing with Castoriadis and Ricoeur respectively, my thesis embarked on an *excursus*. The recently published dialogue between Castoriadis and Ricoeur became a valuable source for a discussion on some of the key differences in their understandings of the social imaginary. This dialogue is Castoriadis's and Ricoeur's sole encounter where they explicitly take up social imaginaries, their creative/productive dimension, as well as the possibility of continuity of meaning in the social-historical field. Even though they do not take up the problematic of action, their discussion is underlined by a praxeological dimension, and as such, was an important source for my research.

In my final chapter, I looked at the similarities and differences in Castoriadis's and Ricoeur's social imaginaries as well as their understanding of what the creative dimension of action entails. More precisely, I juxtaposed their understanding of 'social imaginaries', articulated as 'social imaginary significations' for Castoriadis and 'ideology and utopia' for Ricoeur.

Where to from here? The elucidation of the creative dimensions of action, through Castoriadis's and Ricoeur's social imaginaries, can be fruitful for further research. On the one hand, themes such as social change, social cohesion, socialisation processes, education, sociology of deviance—the processes of conformity and non-conformity—, ideology critique, and philosophical anthropology can all benefit from problematising the notion of a creativity of action and social imaginaries. On the other hand, this thesis clearly shows how both Castoriadis and Ricoeur engage with the classical social theorists of the sociological tradition—Marx, Durkheim, and Weber—and should be utilised more prominently in sociology and other tertiary curriculums.[20]

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Notes

[1] The term 'true creation' is used here to indicate a *form* that is, not only, unique to the time and the specific society it was created by but also as something that could never be reproduced.

[2] 'Movement' relates here to the trans-subjective dimension of action.

[3] Castoriadis uses the term 'social-historical' to emphasise the direct relationship of society and history. For Castoriadis (1997, p. 13), 'the social imaginary of the *instituting* society…is the mode of being of the social-historical field, by means of which this field *is*. Society is self-creation deployed as history'.

[4] Mouzakitis (2007, p. 104 n.4) notes that for Castoriadis the 'modern' period is between 1750 and 1950.

[5] *Legein* and *teukhein* come from the Ancient Greek words λέγειν 'to say, speak' and τεύχειν 'to make'.

[6] Castoriadis (1984, p. 231) traces the origin of the term technique to ca. 800 BCE where it was linked to the concepts of construction, fabrication, and production. Thereafter, the term is reconsidered by Aristotle as 'habituated practices of informed doing; the rational application of knowledge to manipulate the world (or parts of it)' (Smith 2014, p. 19).

[7] Here I have used the word 'endless' but it is only a figure of speech. The reason for this is because a society determines what one can or cannot become. That is, it would be pointless to become something that cannot be used by the society. But the point here is that the teacher must allow for the student to explore their potentialities even if they are to some extent determined by the society.

[8] The tension here comes to the surface when one thinks of the political domain as one that is governed by a specific technique (i.e. a specialisation). Castoriadis wants to argue that the domain of politics is one of doxa i.e. opinion. To suggest that politics is a science, relegates its management to specialists, like Plato's philosopher kings and queens who ultimately know how a society should be governed. On the contrary, Castoriadis is inspired by direct participatory democratic values which take into consideration the opinions of all participants. A society and its governance should not be considered within a means/end schema in which all steps are known.

[9] I use this example because of Athens at the time of Pericles is considered according to Castoriadis as being autonomous while the ancient Judaic society was heteronomous.

[10] It is important to point out that in *The Rule of Metaphor* (1977), originally published as *La Métaphore Vive* (1975), Ricoeur shows how metaphor acts as that which brings forth semantic innovation. The power of metaphor and the importance of the imagination's function are revived in the *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia* (1986[1975]) (Taylor 2006, p. 93).

[11] Adams (2015, p. 130) argues that '[t]he question of philosophical anthropology was of enduring concern to Ricoeur, and his later anthropology evinces a change in emphasis from the "fallible" or "culpable" human to the "capable" human'. However, as Adams (2015, p. 130) goes on to emphasise, '[t]he philosophical anthropology at work in the *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*…is different: its focus is the social, cultural and political dimensions of the imagination, and of the human condition, more generally'. Adams's (2015, p. 130) argument is that the 'anthropology that appears in the *Lectures* is better characterized as an anthropology of "real social life"' and, as such, can be seen as an important source for sociological inquiry and the reason why this thesis, which is anchored in the discipline of sociology, considers it as its seminal source for understanding how Ricoeur's social imaginary framework understands action.

[12] Amalric has written extensively on action in Ricoeur's thought from a philosophical perspective. My thesis differs to Amalric's research as it is driven by a sociological background.

[13] Even if the artist tries to recreate the artefact that might be in front of them there is a chance that they will accentuate or emphasise aspects of that artefact that were not intended by the primary artist who created the artefact being reproduced. Each individual recreates a form but also adds a little bit of how they interpreted it. Ultimately, the form of the artefact is bound to change. This is where the creative aspect of the reproductive imaginary lies.

[14] Mouzakitis's (2015) essay takes up the question of history and its relation to narratives. Ricoeur's ideological imaginary conveys to those that hold it a narrative which may be the cause for the distortion of the real but is also the source of integration, identity formation, and legitimation.

[15] Michel (2017, p. xxxvi) argues that Ricoeur was always interested in structural analyses but 'all the while expressed his criticism of an all compassing and rigid structuralism'. Castoriadis was always more polemic to structuralism and always 'expressed distrust and resistance' to its various forms (Michel 2017, p. xxxvi).

[16] Hereafter, the full reference format to the dialogue will be omitted. Page numbers only will be used to indicate the location of the reference in the dialogue. Any other reference will be in its complete in text format.

[17] Here we see Ricoeur applying a structuralist methodology. However, it is important to note that both Ricoeur and Castoriadis opposed general tenets of structuralism. For more information see Hans Joas and Wolfgang Knöbl's (2009, pp. 401-31) lecture on French anti-structuralism.

[18] The two poles of the socio-political imaginary—ideology and utopia—are fleshed out in the chapter devoted to Ricoeur.

[19] In the chapter devoted to Castoriadis I explored in detail the question of which type of action is characteristic of each of the central imaginary significations.

[20] This research was the inspiration for two conference papers presented at *The Australian Sociological Association* (Sarantoulias 2016; 2018).