VIOLENCE, CRUELTY, POWER: REFLECTIONS ON HETERONOMY

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ABSTRACT: There is an opening in Castoriadis' work for a notion of cruelty, and it emerges in the way in which he develops his idea of heteronomy, as a human world that is blinded or deflected away from human self-creation. This essay is an attempt to locate cruelty constitutively or ontologically in a post-metaphysical register, as an act of creativity that can be given *form* as a very particular act of singularity, that is, without regard for the other. Acts of human cruelty are acts of imaginary, creative activity among others that themselves are *form*, that is, expressed in physically embodied, objectivated, linguistic or symbolic form, and often become highly stylized, and when socially instituted, have their own spatial and temporal dimensions. In this way, it is distinct from relations of power.
KEYWORDS: Castoriadis; Violence; Cruelty; Power; Heteronomy

HETERONOMY AND CRUELTY

There is an opening in Castoriadis' work for a notion of cruelty, and it emerges in the way in which he develops his idea of heteronomy. Castoriadis formulates heteronomy as a human world that is blind or deaf to, or deflected away from an acknowledgement of the ontological dimension of human self-creation and the condition of self-responsibility and self-limitation that comes with this acknowledgement.[1] In Castoriadis' terms, the category of heteronomy works in two ways. The first is that the human world is

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[1]. See Castoriadis, 'Institution of Society and Religion', in *World in Fragments Writings on Politics, Society, Psychoanalysis and the Imagination*, edited and translated by David Ames Curtis, 1997, Stanford, Stanford University Press, pp. 311-330, and 'Aeschylean Anthropogony and Sophoclean Self-Creation as Anthropos' in *Agon, Logos, Polis The Greek Achievement and its Aftermath*, edited by Johann P. Arnason and Peter Murphy, 2001, Stuttgart, Franz Steiner Verlag, pp. 138-154. The latter essay has also been re-translated and re-published in *Figures of the Thinkable*. The Greek reference points are deliberate here. Oedipus is blind whilst sighted and in an act of tragic acknowledgement blinds himself. Notwithstanding its pre-Sophoclean context Ulysses stops his sailors' ears with wax, but not his own. Instead he is tied to the mast in order to listen to the seductive sounds of the sirens. He is temporarily maddened by their singing. Adorno and Horkheimer read Homer's narrative of Ulysses as one that belongs to the development of technical mastery or instrumentalisation. There is room for an agreement between Adorno and Castoriadis here. From a modified Castoriadian perspective, Homer's mythological narrative could be seen as transposable into a version of modern heteronomy which can, as we will see, lead to imaginable cruelties.

objectified in terms of the gods, and, although he does not say as much, within this, the world is split between good and evil. On the other side, when the gods 'fall to earth' so to speak, goodness and evil become recognized for what they are—human self-creations. It is here that cruelty can enter as a category for a reflection concerning the nature of heteronomous creations, irrespective of whether they are attributed to the gods or are acknowledged as self-creations. In both cases, it is suggested here that as a dimension of heteronomy, the specificity of cruelty is that it is a mode of one-sidedness, of an interaction without regard for and recognition of, the other. It is thus a created 'interaction' with neither the possibilities of power or autonomy.[2] Both power and autonomy imply the recognized co-existence of others, even though like power and autonomy, cruelty is a second order imaginary creation and has the possibility of being instituted.

In conventional sociology and social theory it is more usual to talk about violence rather than cruelty. There is often also the assumption of an internal connection between power, force and violence. When one speaks of violence, the commonsensical understanding is to link it to physical aggression and brute force that often becomes synonymous with the pursuit and exercise of power.[3] Moreover, and even when power is not necessarily at stake, violence is assumed to occur on a scale from erratic outbursts of anger, to calculated strategies and manoeuvres, to the development of specialised techniques and tools, including war, weaponry and torture. In this context too, and especially when it moves from the erratic to the calculative, violent acts occur in the context of cultural points of reference that may ensure that particular forms of violence can be understood by participants and observers on both sides—injury and death on the battlefield, torture, capital punishments, rape, malicious talk, vilification or slander, and cruel jokes, if one includes verbalised forms of violence.

However, I wish to change tack away from conceptualising the way violence might be *expressed* in its assumed relation with power, to conceptualising what it might *be* in its own terms—in other words to considering what violence might be as a form of human action amongst the myriad number of other human actions. In other words, I want to suggest that violence, or more specifically cruelty—as it is more than physical violence—is not only a form of social action that has its referent external to itself as a form of mutually understood social action portrayed as force, but that it is also a human act that both carries its creation internal to itself, and is singular and heteronomous. This essay, then, works, not on 'the wild side', but on the side of the negative or the misanthropic and explores, even momentarily an aspect that is available to all of us. This exploration is not necessarily an attempt, as Judith Shklar would say, 'of putting cruelty first' but

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2. There is an unexpected possibility for dialogue between the works of Castoriadis and Foucault here. For Foucault, power is a relation of freedom, whilst for Castoriadis is it a relational precondition of autonomy or autonomization. It can be argued that the first part of Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* is an examination of cruelty as the singularity of royal sovereignty, rather than simply the violence and torture of 'royal punishment'. As Foucault makes clear the crime was a crime against the single body of the absolutist crown. See also 'The subject and power'.

3. See for example, *Power in Societies*, edited by Marvin E. Olsen, 1970, New York, The Macmillan Company.

of acknowledging it and inquiring how it might be mobilised out of an 'economy' of imaginings—of exploring what we are often capable of.[4] In other words, this exploration begins from the complexity of the human soul, and a dimension of it that may prompt and even foster forms of reflexive singularity and closure, which not so much resists but works against an acknowledgement of an other.

IMAGINARY CREATION AND RELATIONAL FORMS

A starting point for such a position can be taken from Castoriadis' notion of the radical imaginary. In his terms, the radical imaginary is the source of the ontological indeterminacy of the human condition, an indeterminacy that is non-functional, that is, not geared to the functionality of life, and indeterminate in terms of its creations. In other words, and in terms slightly different to his, the radical imaginary is of first order ontological primacy, autonomous in the sense that it is indeterminately open to forms that are created out of this activity. These forms indicate the need for meaning, and as such we are meaning creating creatures.

For Castoriadis, the subject is not one of and by either language or intersubjectivity-he/she is an ontological creation, the ontology of which originates from the imagination. In Castoriadis' view, the creative, rather than associative, dimension of the imagination is the constitutive and defining characteristic of the human animal. More specifically, the subject is constituted through two imaginaries which, in terms of their deployment, co-exist and compete within any social subject, and yet are irreducible to one another. These imaginaries are the radical imaginary of the psyche, and the social instituting and instituted imaginary of society that attempts to make/fabricate a social individual who inhabits a particular place, time, and social formation.[5]

Three issues emerge here which bear upon our topic—the creative power of the imagination; the space between imagining and speaking/acting/symbolizing; the ruptural sense of creativity which points to the non-determinable relation between self and other; and a space which opens the possibility of a reflexive relation between self and other.[6]

In the light of the first issue, the power of an imaginary world to create that which

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4. See Judith Shklar's excellent *Ordinary Vices*, 1984, Cambridge, Mass, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press and Michel de Montaigne 'On Cruelty', in *The Complete Essays*, translated and edited with an Introduction and Notes by M.A. Screech, 2003, London, Penguin, pp. 472-488. Richard Rorty also explores this dimension his chapters on Nabakov and Orwell under the heading of 'Cruelty and Solidarity' in *Contingency, irony and solidarity*, 1989, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, pp. 141-198. See also Joel Whitebook, *Perversion and Utopia: A Study in Psychoanalysis and Critical Theory*, Cambridge, Mass, The MIT Press, 1995; ' Mutual Recognition and the Work of the Negative', in *Pluralism and the Pragmatic Turn: The Transformation of Critical Theory, essays in Honour of Thomas McCarthy*, eds. William Rehg and James Bohman, Cambridge, The MIT Press, 2001. I will not discuss Castoriadis' response to Whitebook in this context. See Cornelius Castoriadis, 'Done and to be Done', *The Castoriadis Reader*, 1997, London, Blackwell, pp. 364 ff.

5. See Cornelius Castoriadis, *The Imaginary Institution of Society*, translated by Kathleen Blamey, 1987, Cambridge Polity Press.

6. See John Rundell, 'The Hermeneutic Imagination and Imaginary Creation: Ourselves, Others and Autonomy', *Divinatio*, Volume 8, Autumn-Winter, 1998, pp. 87-110.

was otherwise not present indicates the imagination's irreducibility to a category of either functional schematization (in Kant's cognitive scheme), or functional psychological organization. As Castoriadis wittily states, 'animals are certainly more `logical' or `rational' than humans; they never do something wrongly or in vain'.[7] In *The Imaginary Institution of Society* Castoriadis refers to humankind as 'the mad animal', rather than the rational or sick one.[8] Notwithstanding the way in which this characterization can mislead the reader away from its basic insight, Castoriadis is at pains to emphasize and draw out the dysfunctionality of the human animal, which is grounded, for him, in the creative flux of its imagination, which at this level, is conceptualised by him as an autistic enclosure.[9]

The second and third issues emerge here, too. For Castoriadis, there is a constitutive gap between the dysfunctionality of the imagination and the forms through which it is represented, as well as the ways through which it takes institutional shape. It is in this space between the imaginings and their (unstable and re-interpretable) symbolic and institutional forms that new forms emerge and take shape. According to Castoriadis, 'something is new when it is in a position of a form neither producible or deducible from other forms ... [It] is created *ex nihilo* as such ... That does not mean that it is created *in nihilo* or *cum nihilo* ... [Humans] create the world of meaning and signification, or institution upon certain conditions ... But there is no way we can derive either this level of being—the social historical—or its particular contents in each case from these conditions ... Creation entails only that the determinations over what there is are never closed in a manner forbidding the emergence of other determinations.'[10]

Thus, these creations are other than what was there before, separate and undetermined by them, yet leaning on but not reducible to a pre-existing context. Thus, irrespective of what appears to be an ontology of the subject, Castoriadis' reworking of the imaginary dimension entails that it is simultaneously one that concerns the multiplicity and hence the relation of these imaginary creations. Thus, according to Castoriadis, there is 'a heterogeneous multiplicity of co-existing alterities' which emerge from or in *poietic* imaginary space, 'space unfolding with and through the emergence of forms'.[11] We are the animal for which nothing is taken-for-granted. We can create and give form to anything. To put it bluntly, we make it up as we go along—meaning, societies, subjectivity, relationality, histories, time, and the plurality of co-existent forms.

As already mentioned, in Castoriadis's formulation there are two sets of meaning or imaginary significations that are constitutive of human existence. One is meaning that a psyche or radical imaginary creates in its own present, and a meaning that is created out of social contexts and figurations, which may disrupt, alter, open and even challenge, the radical imaginary. Likewise, the creations of the radical imaginary may also disrupt,

7.· Castoriadis, 'Radical imagination and the social instituting imaginary' in *Rethinking Imagination Culture and Creativity*, edited by Gillian Robinson and John Rundell, 1994, London, Routledge, p. 137.

8.· *The Imaginary Institution of Society*, p. 199.

9. Ibid, pp. 294-300.

10.· Castoriadis, 'Time and Creation', in *World in Fragments*, p. 392-394.

11.· 'Time and Creation', p. 396.

alter, open, and even challenge social imaginaries. The primary tension here, then, is between two meaning constituted and saturated sites—a defunctionalized psyche and a functionalising social frame, which itself is constituted as a social imaginary horizon. Castoriadis constructs a trenchantly anti-functionalist image of the human subject, and his or her relation with the social-historical world into which he or she is thrown. To return to the topic of the relation between self and other, each side undergoes both a radicalization and relativization. Each is in a fundamental or ontological way, incomplete, never finished. In Castoriadis' view, the emergence of new forms and constellations which may or may not be benign is an activity of the permanent 'othering' of any self of its self, as well as of others. This implies there are always contexts of interaction, unsociability or sociability from particular imaginary horizons.

However, Castoriadis' emphasis on the creative imagination comes at the cost of an under-theorized elaboration of what these forms might be and the nature and condition of their intersubjectivity or relationality. To be sure, he addresses this issue under his more generalisable terms of heteronomy and second-order autonomy. However, there is a necessary and irresolvable and thus productive three-fold tension in his work between, first, autistically conceived radical imaginary creation *and* form, in other words what meaning is given form as distinct from what has been created; second, the radical imaginary and forms of intersubjectivity (or relations between subjects qua subjects qua others); and, third, the autism of the radical imaginary, forms of relationality, and social imaginaries.[12]

These three dimensions entail that neither social life ('society') nor an individual one is a totality. Nor do they dovetail in totalizing and one-sidedly subsuming ways. Nor is inter-subjectivity an assumed or taken-for-granted starting point. The un-fitness for life makes subjectivity and intersubjectivity problematic, less than straightforward. What is often viewed as intersubjectivity is simply interaction between human beings across spaces in figurational fields. To be sure, there are social connections, and these connections can occur in unmediated or mediated ways that are not grounded in the real or de facto recognition of the other *qua* other. Intersubjectivity—if it occurs at all—is less than straightforward and more complex, often a small miracle. There are always interactions, less often than not, intersubjectivity.[13]

Nonetheless, intersubjectivity can occur where both sides recognize each other as subjects. In the spirit of Hegel's early work on love, for example, intersubjectivity is the entry of the other as an opening of life beyond an enclosed state.[14] In this context, an

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12. I have discussed this tension in 'Imaginary turns in Critical Theory: Imagining Subjects in Tension', in *Critical Theory After Habermas*, edited by Dieter Freundlieb, Wayne Hudson and John Rundell, 2004, Leiden, Brill, pp. 307-344. I have discussed the problem of relational forms in this essay.

13. Rather than language, music in its polyvocality, independent and interdependent harmonies and dissonances, may be the paradigm for intersubjectivity. See John Rundell, 'Music as a Space of Possibilities' in *Philosophical and cultural Theories of Music*, edited by Eduardo De La Fuente and Peter Murphy, 2010, Leiden, Brill, pp. 129-150.

14. See G.W.F. Hegel, *System of ethical Life and First Philosophy of Spirit*, edited and translated by H.S. Harris and T.M. Knox, 1979, Albany, State University of New York Press, and *Hegel and the Human Spirit*, a translation of the Jena Lectures on the Philosophy of Spirit (1805-1806), with a commentary by Leo Rauch,

individual life *can* be a life full of sufferings, joys, regrets and reflections that can be integrated in to a human-life-as-a-whole with others. This might be termed the non-political condition of autonomy, which also has *inter*-subjectivity as one of its ends. It is autonomy, constituted and interpreted *against* both radical and social imaginaries.

TOWARDS AN IMAGINARY OF CRUELTY

It is from the vantage point of this three-fold tension that a distinction between cruelty and power can be invoked and looked at. From the vantage point of indetermination and the question of form, cruel acts are imaginary creations in both dimensions of the psyche and the social imaginary in which meaning and representation are intrinsic to them. However, it must be stressed that I am *not* equating the autism of radical imaginary with cruelty. Nor am I equating the creation of all forms of human sociality with a negative anthropology. Rather, I am suggesting that among all of the indeterminate imaginary creations that humans give form to, cruelty is a specific one, and is different to love and care, friendliness and magnanimity, and power.[15] The dimensions of imaginary creativity and form, though, differentiate the human acts of cruelty that are created from animalic ones of the chase and the kill. The term cruelty is deployed in order to capture this difference. In other words, cruelty is the imaginary horizon, not so much of the meaning constitutiveness and saturadeness of human violence, but more so of the form of singularity, of the interactions of non-relationality. Here, there is no master-slave dialectic, no dialectics of recognition so famously posited by Hegel in his *Phenomenology of Spirit*, and so masterfully reinterpreted as violence by Kojeve.[16]

In addition to this, this term is an attempt to introduce the problem of doing evil, and not simply violence, into the lexicon of human action without making cruelty an immediate moral category, or viewing it from either functionalised psychological or sociological perspectives, that is, of viewing evil-doing in moralistic or pathological terms. It is a way of 'tarrying with the negative', to put it in another language, of making

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1983, Detroit, Wayne State University Press.

15. I have discussed the imaginary creation of love from a Castoriadian perspective. One can imagine heteronomously and create great beauty, even in the midst of deferring this creation to a god or to magic; one can create something of equal beauty from an act of self-acknowledgement. The important aspect of the erotic imaginary and the creation of love, irrespective of whether it is created heteronomously or autonomously, is that it ruptures enclosure and establishes a relation with an other outside or beyond oneself—a relation that may or may not be reciprocated. Love is the paradigm for the surprise and uniqueness of intersubjectivity, for in love ones 'falls' towards an other in all of her/his singularity and uniqueness. See John Rundell, 'The Erotic Imaginary, Autonomy and Modernity' in *Modern Privacy Shifting Boundaries, New Forms*, edited by Harry Blatterer, Pauline Johnson, and Maria R. Markus, 2010, New York, Palgrave, pp. 102-116. On friendship also see my 'Territoriality, Cosmopolitanism and Symmetrical Reciprocity' in *Blurred Boundaries: Migration, Ethnicity, Citizenship*, edited by Rainer Bauböck, 1998, Aldershot, Ashgate, pp. 321-340, where I lean on the Agnes Heller's formulation of symmetrical reciprocity. See her 'The Beauty of Friendship' in *South Atlantic Quarterly*, Winter 1998, Volume 97, Number 1, pp. 5-22.

16. See G.W.F. Hegel *Phenomenology of Spirit*, translated by A.V. Miller, 1979, Oxford, Oxford University Press, especially 'Independence and Dependence of Self-Consciousness: Lordship and Bondage', paragraphs 178-195; A. Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, 1980, Ithaca, Cornell university Press.

it part of what we imagine and create, of what we are and what we do. It is an attempt to locate cruelty constitutively or ontologically in a post-metaphysical register—here in relation to the work of the imagination as a 'transcendental' 'X', as an act of creativity *ex nihilo*, but one that is given *form* as a very particular act or set of actions. Acts of human cruelty are acts of imaginary, creative activity among others that themselves are *form*, that is, expressed in physically embodied, objectivated, linguistic or symbolic form, and often become highly stylized, and when socially instituted, have their own spatial and temporal dimensions.

These actions no longer have a dimension of enclosure in the sense of *autistic* imaginary creation, but rather of a *singularity* created by the subject in the context of the meaning that is given to them, and the *non-relationality* to which they are oriented. Cruelty from the perspective of creative imaginary form is neither a natural substrate, nor part of Nature, an outburst of non-signifying biologically derived energy (for example in the wake of Freud's slippery early conceptualisation of the instincts and his later concept of *Thanatos*), nor a response to an emotional intensity or perceived threat. [17] To repeat, it is constituted as a specific horizon of meaning that is created immanently by the radical imaginary and takes shape as a very specific form.

In this context a distinction can be made between cruelty and power in a similar way that Hannah Arendt does between violence and power in work on violence, although from a different anthropological background.[18] Cruelty at its most anthropological is a singularity based on the denial of the other *qua* subject and the creation of a distinction between I and Thou based on this denial. The singularity creates the distinction, and enables a 'buffered boundary' (Charles Taylor) to be created in the context of this type of interaction. Nothing from the side of 'the other' affects the cruelly imagining subject. It is a non-relationship, the result of which is an ontological occlusion, blindness or deafness to the other. In this regard, cruelty need not be equated with coldness. Cruelty can be both hot and cold depending on what might be termed the degree of imaginary excitement or reflective rational control. In its state of either excitement or reflective rational control cruelty emits a callous indifference and a lack of empathy. The other is not simply excluded. He or she does not even exist.[19]

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17. See for example, Joel Whitebook, 'First Nature and Second Nature in Hegel and Psychoanalysis' *Constellations*, Volume 15, no. 3, 2008; Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, translated by Joan Riviere, revised and newly edited by James Strachey, 1973, London, The Hogarth Press, and 'Why War' in *Sigmund Freud Civilization, Society and Religion*, edited by Albert Dickson, 1985, London, Penguin, pp. 349-362. Norbert Elias' work de-emphasises Freud's instinctual theory and argues that it is figurational conflicts that trigger aggression and violence, and these are aspects of social structures that are increasing 'pacified'. See Norbert Elias, 'Violence and Civilization' in *Civil Society and the State*, edited by John Keane, 1988, London, Verso, pp. 177-198.

18. Hannah Arendt, 'On Violence', in *Crises of the Republic*, 1972, London, Penguin, pp. 83-163.

19. Charles Taylor deploys the notion of the 'buffered self' in his *A Secular Age* to denote boundary formation and maintenance, which he equates with secularization. I am deploying it here in an anthropological register. The 'friend'/'foe' distinction, so theorised by Carl Schmidt, belongs to this lexicon. The point here is to concentrate on the *creation* of the distinction, a creation that exists prior to the distinction itself. Ètienne Balibar also tackles this problem of the creation of cruelties in his 'Violence, Ideality and Cruelty', *New*

Power, alternatively, is a blurred or 'porous' relation and is constituted through the minimal recognition of the other *qua* other as existing as a separate and external entity to alter, that is a subject, whether this subject is another human, an animal or living being. Cruelty denotes a world-forming relation of the subject to its world as a creatively *formed* singularity, a singularity that is, to be sure, often pre-occupied with its own creations, no matter how grand or trivial, but as importantly without recognition or recourse to other creations or other beings around it. In these terms then, and at its most primary, cruelty denotes two aspects: a creativity that has a particular *form*, the source of which is internal, and a singularity without reference to others. Furthermore, it is viewed here as a human act and as an act separate from other human *forms* of relationality such as love, friendship, or power, which in some way or another recognise the other as an other. In this sense, the notion of cruelty that is being deployed here is an anthropological repositioning of the problem of domination. Cruelty is not synonymous with domination, although it is internal to the way domination operates as a social form that resists relationality, that is, is impositional rather than power constituted.[20] The form of relationality or sociability, including unsociability, that *this* particular discussion is concerned with is power. In other words, I will leave to one side a discussion of love and friendship.

Cruelty belongs to the lexicon of our own anthropology—it is one of a number of *second order* imaginaries—to use a different formulation—through which 'little evils' are constituted. Yet, this category of cruelty as a second order anthropological or human self-image is different to its institutionalization or organization as a societal mode of being and acting. Nonetheless second order cruelty has a hermeneutic-cultural dimension that makes it understandable at least *for* others. Here it becomes a *social* imaginary sedimented and possibly expanded through its institutionalisation by the practitioners of cruelty, or limited by other imaginaries. Cruelty, as a second-order imaginary, and cruelty as socially instituted one may or may not dovetail, and there is no assumption of continuity between the two dimensions, rather there is a marked indetermination.

TOWARDS A TYPOLOGY OF SECOND ORDER CRUELTIES.

In an insightful, yet largely unfinished essay in terms of its theoretical intuitions, entitled "Three Faces of Cruelty: Toward a Comparative Sociology of Violence" Randall Collins attempted to outline a cultural history of forms of cruelty that opened onto

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Formations, 35, Autumn, 1998, pp. 7-18. The 'friend'/'foe' distinction, so theorised by Carl Schmidt, belongs to this lexicon. Axel Honneth attempts a normative critique of cruelty by drawing on the idea of 'damaged intersubjectivity'. However, the notion of damaged intersubjectivity assumes an openness to the world on the part of subjcts who are constituted, according to Honneth, intersubjectively. Yet, openness is always a possibility rather than an original ontological, intersubjective condition. There is always the possibility that one can be enclosed and unaffected by the other, 'unrecognising' of the other and create damage. This damage-creating is called cruelty and its social imaginaries are cruelties or perhaps 'modes of domination'.

20. See also Martin Saar, Power and Critique', *Journal of Power*, Vol. 3, No 1, 2010, pp. 7-20 as well as Danielle Petherbridge on power in her study of Honneth'a work in *The Critical Theory of Axel Honneth*, forthcoming.

a range of types that portray it in terms of social boundaries (ferocity), in terms of its modern bureaucratisation (its callousness), and, thirdly, in terms of the way it is turned inward (its asceticism).[21]

In drawing on Collins' work but in a way that extends it, and in ideal typical terms, forms of cruelty can be instituted as specific social-historical imaginaries that denote what I will term 'civilizational' cruelty, enchanted cruelty, reflexive cruelty, identity cruelty, and banal cruelty. 'Civilizational' cruelty, enchanted cruelty, identity and banal cruelties are creations that belong to the socio-historical, and as such they do not necessarily dovetail with the idiosyncratic cruel imaginings of the world of the psyche, which can be gathered under the term reflexive cruelty. They may, nonetheless, provide an interpretive context for these particular and often peculiar imaginings. Notwithstanding the different forms that cruelty may take, it should be re-emphasised that it is quite specific in its scope—an imaginary form that may become socially instituted, and is created from one position only, denies recognition to an alter, and cannot let this alter into the world-perception or existence of the subject and or social group who is doing the cruel imagining.

Cruelty in civilizational terms, or 'civilizational' cruelty, where the inverted commas have been deliberately added, refers neither to those forms of aggression, war and violence that occur in the context of the great civilizations, empire and state formations, nor to the Freudian construction of unconscious drives and societal repressions and re-directions. Rather, and in the light of Norbert Elias' work on manners, 'civilizational' cruelty refers to the world of the mundane from the vantage point of the *long dureè*, that is, to the patterns of cruelties that become taken-for-granted within everyday life and belong to its mundane rhythms rather than its sacred rituals. In this context 'civilizational' cruelty may be a borderline form that crosses over from imaginary cruelty to become relational or figurational in Elias' use of the term. Here, 'civilizational' cruelty can take the form of an immediate punch, a beating, or a corporal punishment that occurs as an outburst. It, thus, often takes the form of unplanned fights or tongue-lashings, which erupt and then once expressed fade until the next eruption. These unplanned instances, nonetheless, take their place in the taken-for-granted rhythms of everyday life, but are uni-directional, and deny or destroy the power of the other. They are instances of an unmediated involvement or encasement in the life of one's own imaginary production that takes form in an act which, in that moment, denies the other.[22]

Apart from a moment of eruption, cruelty also has a 'civilizational' sense in the way portrayed by Nietzsche, in his depiction of *ressentiment* cultures, of values transformed

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21. Randall Collins, 'Three Faces of Cruelty: Toward a Comparative Sociology of Violence' in *Sociology Since Mid-Century. Essays in Theory Cumulation*, Academic Press, 1981, pp. 133-160; see p. 137. Richard Kearney does something similar in his *Strangers, Gods and Monsters*, where he draws on the work of René Girard and Julia Kristeva. See Richard Kearney, *Strangers, Gods and Monsters: Ideas of Otherness*, 2002, London, Routledge.

22. In contrast to Elias' approach, though, it is argued here that cruelty exists in spite of civilizational impulses towards internal pacification. It exists alongside and often outside it. The same could be said for the context of shame cultures. Shame provides a limit to cruelties, as well as can often provide a legitimating frame.

inwardly into a displacing form of active cruelties to ourselves, in the midst of often passive cruelties to others. One can hold fast to cruelty, define and refine its meaning and its scope. It can be given enduring existence in time. As Nietzsche so tellingly portrayed in his *Genealogy of Morals* 'civilizational' cruelty is internalized, recreated, reinterpreted and projected onto oneself or others. Nietzsche also draws our attention to the way in which cognition itself can become a form of cruelty—not the act of rationality, but the absolute control of interpretations that frame and construct the forms of reasoning themselves. These 'civilisational' and interpreting cruelties might also be termed, following Judith Shklar's work 'ordinary vices' and include dishonesty and lying, betrayal, hypocrisy and snobbery. [23]

Enchanted cruelty or the cruelty of the sacred is constituted when cruelty is made socially significant as part of a social value that becomes a collective representation or instituted social imaginary for, and of, a society, no matter how small or large. Historically, it becomes the domain of priests and warriors. Its most explicit form is ritualistic sacrifice, the social space of which is the `state-temple', and its temporal horizon of cosmological or infinite time. It also includes cultures of revenge and forms of retributive justice that link retribution to an absolute. Enchanted cruelty is a social form or world apart from that of war or sport, both of which assume figurations of opposing combatants with rules, rights and obligations. After, or in the midst of war or sport, enchanted cruelty and sacrifice can take hold, and it may even legitimate the call for each, around which they both can cohere. Enchanted cruelties are extra-mundane and transcendent in Charles Taylor's use of the term, and their social-historical creations and understandings are thus often couched in terms of the interdictions of the magical and the sacred, of Gods and extra-social warrants that legitimate cruel excesses and require vitiation and appeasements. Here the gods are cruel. There is no porosity, in Taylor's terms, only the distinction between the Divine and the human worlds, a distinction that is governed and policed by the Gods.[24]

Cruelty *qua* radical evil is also constituted once cruelty becomes reflexive and an activity *in and for itself*.[25] Cruelty as radical evil is constitutively different from moral indifference and the a-social autism of the psychic imaginary. This is because reflexive cruelty as radical evil is self-conscious. Reflexive cruelty is beyond reason—its deployment is not only calculative, in the manner portrayed in de Sade's work. It also

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23. See Friedrich Nietzsche, 'On the Genealogy of Morals', in *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, translated and edited with commentaries by Walter Kaufman, 1968, New York, Modern Library, pp. 450-599. See also Judith Shklar, *Ordinary Vices*, 1984, Cambridge, Mass. Belknap Press at Harvard University Press.

24. In his *A Secular Age*, Charles Taylor addresses the older Axial traditions of transcendent religious experience that invoke languages of redemptive cruelty, suffering and the ultimate sacrifice of life itself. See *A Secular Age*, pp. 611, 651-656, 686.

25. See also Hegel in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* at paragraph 776, where evil is interpreted as a singularity, of self-consciousness withdrawn into itself, which cannot negate itself, that is, consider something that might exist outside of itself. See also Slavoj Zizek, 'Kant with (or against) Sade' in *New Formations*, 35, Autumn, 1998, pp. 93-107.

occurs from the vantage point of the self's own self-enclosed and self-referential yet reflexive imaginings, which makes it demonic and specific.

Reflexive cruelty can, though deploy reasoning in its own service. Kant suggests this in his notion of radical evil in *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone* where he constructs an internal relation between reasoning, reflexivity and cruelty, the outcome of which is radical evil. Kant constructs radical evil as a perversion of practical reasoning that makes itself its own transcendentally construed absolute—it becomes a maxim.[26] In other words, one can give reasons for reflexive cruelty, which flips practical reason into instrumentalism. It is open to the formal properties of argumentation, that is, to the logic or strategy of an argument, which gives it a particular coldness.[27] It is here that a continuity between reflexive cruelty and its institutionalization as a social imaginary may occur, although this is quite historically contingent. Radical evil or reflexive cruelty functions as a special case. It may or may not be instituted at the social level as a set of institutionally organizing principles that could be generalized as a social type. In other words, it may continue to belong to the cruel imagining of a subject and thus be quite specific and 'untranslatable' to more general contexts, or it may become instituted as a social imaginary in its own right. In order for this to occur an additional dimension is required, which can be captured under the term identity cruelty.

Identity cruelty is translatable into social imaginaries. Or to put it differently, identity cruelty is a boundary condition between cruelty and power. As a social imaginary, cruelty that can take both pre-modern as well as modern forms through scape-goating in which the other is identified and vilified as the *differend* from the side of the homogenous group, irrespective of whether this group is the tribe, a class, a racial or ethnic group, or a nation-state. It, thus, often joins hands with enchanted cruelty. In the context of modernity identity cruelty takes the form of an enforced, although never completed nor totalising assimilation into, or exclusion from the nation state, in the sense portrayed by Zygmunt Bauman.[28]

Nonetheless, something else needs to occur for *identity* cruelty to create an altogether new form of cruelty. It must become reflexive. In order to achieve this two additional

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26. Immanuel Kant, *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone*, 1960, New York, Harper and Row, especially p. 27 ff. See also Agnes Heller, 'On Evils, Radical Evil and the Demonic', *Critical Horizons*, Volume 12, Issue 1, 2011, pp. 15-28 and Maria Pia Lara, ed., *Rethinking Evil*, 2001, Berkeley, University of California Press.

27. See Agnes Heller's analysis of rationality in her 'Everyday Life, Rationality of Reason, Rationality of Intellect' and her essay on evil and radical evil. This is also a central thread that is woven into Horkheimer and Adorno's argument in their *Dialectic of Enlightenment*—reason becomes cruel and not only instrumentalized. Rorty's study on Nabakov's *Lolita* and *Pale Fire* in *Contingency, Irony, Solidarity* emphasises the cold self-reflexive singularity of reflexive cruelty, a cold singularity that is indifferent to or simply unaware of the sufferings and joys of others (pp. 141-168).

28. See for example, Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust*, 1989, Cambridge, Polity. To be sure, for Bauman, the holocaust is the outcome of a relation that combines balances of power and culture. For him, the holocaust was not a pathological condition, nor a systemic breakdown or disaggregation—it combined resources of power and culture. The more one group was controlled and became predictable, the more power the other group accrued. This accrued power also entailed, that for Bauman, this group could release this power in more uncontrolled and unpredictable ways, in ways that were no longer subjected to limits. However, Bauman's analysis still does not explain the *creation* of the holocaustal imaginary.

dimensions are required—the deployment of a particular cultural vision and an anthropological re-orientation that builds in reflexive cruelty and its perversion of rationality as an enclosing dimension in order to prepare the ground for scape-goating, that is, to prepare the ground for targeting and de-legitimating the group that is to be vilified, excluded and make the other 'not-exist'.

In an essay entitled 'In the Bestiarium—A Contribution to the Cultural Anthropology of "Real Socialism"', Ferenc Feher deployed the term the bestiarium in order to capture the nature of this particular version of this misanthropic anthropology, and it can be drawn on here in order to further elaborate the modern social imaginary of identity cruelty in its combination with reflexive cruelty. In his terms, the idea of the bestiarium refers to 'the ensemble of institutions that perpetrate and perpetuate inhumanity in a given civilisation, [and to] the conglomerate of such men [and women] bred by such customs and institutions'.[29] The bestiarium refers to the content, rather than the form, of the very specific and particular making of the other that takes place from within the self-consciously and reflexive enclosed position of one of the parties. The particular point of reference of one of the interlocutors circles back to become the *absolute* point of reference for the construction of social action, and this enclosure enables the other to be absolutely vilified, thus denying it historical and social specificity. It is not that *anything* can be done to a group once it is vilified and constructed as outsiders—although this is possible. Rather, what is done is interpreted *only* from the perspective of the insiders, and, hence, can even be interpreted as if it is in the outsider's best—or worst—interests.

This enclosed form of self-referentiality entails, then, that the interlocutor's own horizon of understanding does not open to an encounter with the other *qua* other. Here there is no *relationality*, no dialectics in the Hegelian sense of the relation between the master and the slave, only an interaction with content from one side only. It is fundamentalist or more properly absolutely self-referential in its own terms, criteria and functioning. One outcome of this enclosed, yet reflexive form, once it invokes non-reciprocal interactions with others and not only strong and negative versions of them is the holocaustal or exterministic imagination. In this sense, the term bestiarium refers to the human self-images and cultural resources of identity cruelty that are created, and which combine with reflexive cruelty in a way that give meanings to one-sidedly enclosing social forms. In other words, identity cruelty and reflexive cruelty combine to create a new social imaginary that can be articulated, legitimated and instituted, even if they may have existed *separately* in different contexts. The modern invention of the machineries of terror, totalitarianism, and fundamentalism are the ultimate expression

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29. Ferenc Feher, 'In the Bestiarium—A Contribution to the Cultural Anthropology of "Real Socialism"', in Ferenc Feher and Agnes Heller, *Eastern Left, Western Left*, 1986, Cambridge, Polity Press, p. 260. To be sure, Feher deploys this term to refer to the totalitarian logics of Nazism and Stalinism, and the surveillance-disciplining social technologies of welfare capitalism. Nonetheless, given these remarks it can be extended to encompass the historical dynamic of European colonisation, including the Australian one. See John Rundell, 'From Indigenous Civilization to Indigenous Modernities: Sacred Narratives, *terra nullius* and an Australian Bestiarium', in *Rethinking Civilizational Analysis*, edited by Said Arjomand and Edward Tiryakian, Sage Publishers, London 2004, pp. 201-216.

of and pre-occupation with control—control *qua* cruelty.[30]

Banal cruelty includes the `larger evils' of objectifying practices culminating in complete de-subjectivation in which patterns of explicit power are denied. As Arendt suggests in her portrayal of Eichmann and the culture of banal evil, and unlike reflexive cruelty, it is open to routinisation and utter planfulness, what Collins also terms 'callous indifference'.[31] Banal cruelty is a planfulness that becomes sedimented as a social-instituting imaginary through a legal system based on exclusions that become absolute, and makes a loyalty to this system an imperative. Its secular space is the infinitely finite queue, where decisions are equally delayed as made, and time stands still. Today, it is the cruelty visited upon, for example, refugees, and has been theoretically expressed as either bio-politics or the routinisation of the exception.[32] It is also internal to the instrumentalisation of nature, especially the 'technologisation' of the non-human animal for human purposes including consumption, but extending far beyond this. It has also become the home of the other side of hacker culture, that is, the imaginary of malicious software and its indiscriminate distribution in the wake of the techno-industrialization of the sign.

In modernity, both identity cruelty, which finds full voice in the form of the annihilationist or holocaustal imagination by mobilising a complete series of anthropological images and value horizons, and banal cruelty can be generalised and travel to other social sites and countries as a social imaginaries in their own right. Reflexive cruelty, properly, is specific and has to be re-created on each specific occasion. Reflexive cruelty is more open to radical innovation and indetermination than banal cruelty. This is why it can be identified with particular historical figures, who, whilst becoming paradigmatic, do not exhaust the paradigm. Nonetheless, the figures who create their own quite singular cruel creations are specific.

POWER AND POLITICS

The imaginaries of cruelty compete with other imaginary creations which, in contrast to the singularity of the various forms of cruelty, are imaginary forms which are relational in their orientation. To again emphasise, a distinction can be made between cruelties and relational imaginaries. Leaving to one side a discussion of other *relational* imaginaries—

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30. It is certainly the case that the modern state is the social site for the institutionalization of modern identity cruelty and its terroristic practices. The modern state is the site for the creation and control of the apparatuses of control—for example, the bureaucracies of territoriality, armies, and police.

31. See Collins, 'Three Faces of Cruelty' in *Sociology Since Mid-Century*, and Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem A Report on the Banality of Evil*, revised and enlarged edition, 1994, London, Penguin. See Heller's critique of Arendt's formulation of the banality of evil. In 'On Evils, Evil, Radical evil and the Demonic', op. cit., Heller argues correctly that Arendt was mistaken to collapse radical and banal evil together, as it reduces the specificity and demonic character of the former, whilst over-inflating the latter, or moving our attention away from its mundane character in which we can all participate.

32. See Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception*, 2005, Chicago, Chicago University Press; David Ingram, 'Exceptional Justice? A Discourse Ethical Contribution to the Immigrant Question', *Critical Horizons*, Volume 10, Issue 1, 2009, pp. 1-30.

modern or otherwise—such as love and friendship, we can nonetheless, draw out a distinction between cruelty and power.

By way of a few concluding remarks, it is worth making some distinctions, as indeed Castoriadis does, between explicit power, its circulation, and politics.[33] Explicit power is a relational or figurational form that can occur both vertically as well as horizontally. It is a social form that recognises relations between self and other, and is also identified through a body (a chief, a king or queen, a court, a parliament or legislative body) which legislates, executes decisions, settles points of litigation and governs, and occurs in both state and non-state societies. Power is contestatory, this is what makes it relational. As is well known, Max Weber and Norbert Elias in their own way also argue that these forms of explicit power enable physical violence to be monopolized—and in a way that can incorporate some forms of cruelty, for example, both on and off the battlefield in times of war. Moreover, explicit power also holds a monopoly over the forms and cultural patterns of meaning and its referents, and because of this dimension of meaning—that is, its social imaginary—power is also a culturally articulating and imbedding activity. Importantly, though, even explicit power is a form of activity that is relational rather than singular in nature. Its boundaries are always porous in that they are constituted through conflict—either within a stratified or oligarchic structure, or between groups where power circulates throughout the social body.[34] In other words, and following Elias rather than Weber here, power is figurational, and thus conflict belongs to power. Power assumes relations between subjects and hence, for him at least, it is not synonymous with domination, For Elias, especially, power is not a zero-sum game. There are always unequal relations of power.[35]

Explicit power is both more and less than cruelty—less because it often limits the deployment of cruelty, and more because it may have a greater social reach. In this context, domination is a borderline between cruelty and power. For example, there are slave societies that are both cruel and have relations of power, where cruelty is a modality of non-recognition of the other *qua* slave, even if this occurs through peaceful and functional means, that is rule bounded deployment, and thus instituted through legal code. The exception to this borderline may be reflexive and banal cruelties, in which interactions become no longer relational or figurational, but are one-sidedly construed,

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33. It should be noted that whilst Castoriadis places discussions of power within the orbit of his distinction between heteronomy and autonomy, that is in the context of either the occluded or self-institution of power, the discussion here revolves around its form as a social relation irrespective of whether it is instituted heteronomously or autonomously. This emphasis on the relationality of power is done in order to throw the singularity of cruelty into relief. Relationality, nonetheless, implies a sense and space of freedom and autonomy, even if these are minimally created.

34. Castoriadis, 'Power, Politics, Autonomy', in *Philosophy, Politics, Autonomy*, edited by David Ames Curtis, 1991, Oxford, Oxford University Press, pp. 143-174, esp. pp. 154-162. See also Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, edited by Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich, 1978, Berkeley, University of California Press, especially pp. 212-219. See Castoriadis' critique of Weber in 'Power, Politics, Autonomy', op. cit. p. 157.

35. See Norbert Elias, *The Society of Individuals*, edited by Michael Schröter, translated by Edmund Jephcott, 1991, Oxford, Blackwell.

even beyond the law. Enchanted cruelty is usually limited to ritual, and civilizational cruelty, whilst a permanent feature of the everyday, is haphazard and unpredictable in its actions and effects.

Power, thus, is a relation that includes 'embodied' relations of mutual harm, in the case of war with its codes of honour and rules of engagement, and peacefully comported relations of mutual argumentation, in the case of democracy. In other words, there is physicalized harming *power*, for example, war or boxing, and non-physicalized *power*, in the form of exchanges of points of view and argument. Alternatively there is physicalized harming *cruelty*, for example torture, rape or annihilation, and non-physicalized *cruelty* in the form of verbal abuse, where in both instances cruelty is a creation of the hot or cold and indifferent, non-recognition of the other *qua* other.

Viewed from a long historical perspective we have been living in combinations of forms of cruelty and explicit power for most of human history, although reflexive cruelty is forever in our midst. Cruelties, especially 'civilizational' cruelty, decline only because new norms that contest and limit them are created, become topicalized politically, that is, because politics circulates, so to speak. These norms may become instituted, such as anti-slavery laws and the expansion of the vocabularies of rights, and find their way into the habits of everyday life. Limits are put on cruelty, once the language—or more properly social imaginary—of explicit power is opened by questions concerning its modes and dynamics access, rulership, contestation and as importantly, the way it comports our relations with others. Politics, or in Castoriadis' terms, autonomy, is not only a way of being, of making the law.[36] It is also a way of relating to others in the full recognition of their own, to be sure, foibled, autonomous condition. And this is a condition *beyond* politics, of the reflexively and fraughtly created conditions of autonomy and freedom.[37]

Nonetheless, cruelties can appear in the midst of explicit power and politics. The eradication and disappearance of power and politics, whereby neither circulate, entail that *social* imaginaries of cruelty can take their place. When politics disappears, and even explicit power ceases to circulate, cruelties gain creative, interpretive weight and prominence as social imaginaries. They can be created and re-created again and again in the forms of especially enchanted, identity and even banal cruelties that can take shape as tyrannies, fundamentalisms, totalitarianisms, or simply as 'bureaucratic callousness'. These imaginaries are always ones that constitute action as a singularity. Power and politics are relational forms that remain more or less open to all forms of conflict, including interpretative ones, for as long as they exist. In this regard forms of cruelty compete with explicit power, its circulation, and the creation of politics. Without

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36. Castoriadis, 'Power, Politics, Autonomy', pp. 162-174; see also his *On Plato's Statesman*, edited and translated by David Curtis, 2002, Stanford, Stanford University Press.

37. Agnes Heller's work is more alert to the nuanced separateness between politics *qua* autonomy and the vicissitudes of the human condition. It is out of this recognition that she accepts the Aristotelian distinction between the good citizen and the good person. See, for example, her *Beyond Justice*, 1987, Cambridge, Blackwell, *The Time is Out of Joint Shakespeare as Philosopher of History*, 2002, Lanham, Rowman and Littlefield, and *Immortal Comedy The Comic Phenomenon in Art, Literature and Life*, 2005, Lanham, Rowman and Littlefield.

power, its circulation, and especially the creation of democracy, we are subject to a universe of *cruel* singularity, not the universe of differences and the possibility of the multiplicity and dissonance of contingent voices.

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