

felt nostalgia for the "primitive" community of ancient Israel and idealized it. This ennobled image, in turn, affected even his interpretation of the aborigines of Australia. Strenski declares, to the contrary, that Durkheim was far less preoccupied with ancient Judaism than with the tangible Judaism of his time. Nineteenth-century Judaism was also a concern of a movement of Jewish intellectuals who hoped to develop an empirical "science of Judaism." This endeavor would abstain from apologetics, but would at the same time promote objectivity, which implied the discrediting of anti-Semitic distortions in the writings of certain biblical scholars who minimized the historic contribution of Judaism to Western civilization. The science of Judaism project began in Germany, but was later brought to France as well. Durkheim and his colleagues felt a community of interest with it, and took positions in response to anti-Semitic authors which were identical to those of taken by members of the science of Judaism group.

There are good things to be said about how Strenski presents his material. He is downright affable toward the poor essentialists whom he skewers. However, his book is awkwardly written, the early chapters being especially hard slogging. This is unfortunate, because Strenski, writing with sociologists in mind, offers something that should be of interest to many of them: a detailed account of the social process through which some of Durkheim's fundamental ideas came to be.

The Castoriadis Reader, edited by **David Ames Curtis**. Oxford & Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1997. 470 pp. \$24.95 paper. ISBN 1-55786-703-8.

KEVIN ANDERSON
Northern Illinois University

The death of Cornelius Castoriadis in December 1997 evoked respectful front-page coverage in France's leading newspapers. Writing in *Le Monde* (30 Dec. 1997), the well-known sociologist Edgar Morin eulogized his friend, singling out Castoriadis's concept of autonomy, in which the latter stressed moments in history when society carved out autonomy from the state. For Castoriadis, these included Athenian democracy, the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, and the modern workers' movement. Contrasting the ideas of Castoriadis to

antihumanist trends in contemporary theory such as structuralism and poststructuralism, Morin wrote: "As against the dominant conceptions, for which the imaginary is nothing but illusion or superstructure, Castoriadis reintroduces it at the root of our human reality, just as, as against those conceptions unable to conceive the notion of a subject, Castoriadis recovers the constituents of the subject . . . and he underlines the radical importance of the emergence of the autonomous subject in Athenian democracy some 2500 years ago."

Born in 1922, Castoriadis began his intellectual and political career in Greece, where he developed Trotskyist sympathies. After emigrating to France, he and Claude Lefort founded *Socialisme ou Barbarie* (1949-64), a journal of the anti-Stalinist left. Before its founding, they had come into contact with the unorthodox American Marxists Raya Dunayevskaya and C. L. R. James, who had worked out similar positions on many issues. Joined a few years later by Jean François Lyotard, the journal advocated direct democracy in the form of workers councils, while sharply attacking Russian totalitarianism, Western capitalism, and the labor bureaucracy.

During the 1950s, Castoriadis and his group suffered withering attacks from Jean-Paul Sartre and other leftist intellectuals who leaned toward the Soviet Union. After the 1956 Hungarian Revolution shook the Western left, Castoriadis began to forge links with Morin and the *Arguments* group, who had broken with the Communist Party. By 1968, the writings of Castoriadis exerted an important influence on student leaders such as Daniel Cohn-Bendit. In this period, however, at the very time when many younger intellectuals were moving toward Marxism, Castoriadis had begun to move away from Marxism.

Already in the 1960s, several of Castoriadis's pamphlets on workers' autonomy, spontaneism, and Russian totalitarianism had been translated into English and exercised some influence on the New Left. A second attempt to introduce him to the English-speaking world took place in the early 1980s, when several articles by Castoriadis appeared in critical theory journals. In one of these, "The Crisis of Western Societies," he argued that Brezhnev's Russia was embarked upon a successful strategy of world conquest, adding that the United States (under Reagan!) and other Western countries, although

“mortally threatened,” were “incapable of reacting to the threat” (*Telos* 53 [1982]:17). At a time when the Western left was supporting the nuclear freeze movement and the Sandinistas, such arguments fell flat. In the past decade, in a third effort to introduce Castoriadis to English readers, David Ames Curtis and other translators and editors have published some half-dozen volumes of his writings with university presses.

The present volume offers a fairly good introduction to Castoriadis’s work, although with less emphasis than many would prefer on his pre-1965 writings, usually judged to be his most important. Several selections illustrate his life-long concern with and analysis of workers’ democracy from below. Some, although not very much, of his critique of Stalinism is also included in this volume. In other selections he develops a penetrating if somewhat dismissive (even his friend Morin describes his work as “excessively polemical”) critique of structuralism, while also arguing for his own version of critical social psychology.

Especially in Castoriadis’s writings after 1970, the influence of Aristotle and other ancient Greek thinkers, rather than Marx, comes to the fore. Few, if any, leftist thinkers today would present ancient Greek thought so affirmatively, while attacking “various (feminist, Black, etc.) movements that condemn the totality of the Greco-European legacy as being the product of ‘dead white males’” (p. 339). Such an attitude is not entirely without merit, given the one-sidedness of many current discussions of these issues. However, it is telling that Castoriadis devotes almost no space to race, gender, or colonialism, while concentrating on the issues of class and power. Thus, while he stresses the 1956 Hungarian Revolution and its workers councils, he fails to take up African liberation movements during the same period as examples of his central category, “the project of autonomy.”

Overall, the translation and editing are good, although I had a problem with the way in which some French words such as *scission* (split) were simply reproduced in English, rather than translated. I also wished for editor’s notes giving sources for the texts from Marx, Aristotle, Kant, and other thinkers Castoriadis cites. At other times, although never without acknowledgment, texts have been trimmed, possibly to avoid placing the author in a negative light. This is the case with the 1982 material cited above on the

Soviet threat, which has been eliminated from this edition’s version of “The Crisis of Western Societies.”

Essays on Religion, by **Georg Simmel**. Edited and translated by Horst Jürgen Helle, with Ludwig Nieder. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997. 223 pp. \$27.50 cloth. ISBN: 0-300-06110-2.

FRED KNISS
Loyola University, Chicago
fkniiss@luc.edu

If we wish to know what the founders of our discipline had to say about religion, most of us turn immediately to Weber and Durkheim and secondarily perhaps to Marx and Comte. With the publication of this volume, English-speaking sociologists will now need to add Georg Simmel to their short list of seminal sociological theorists of religion. Horst Jürgen Helle, in collaboration with the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, has made a major contribution to Anglophone sociology by carefully translating everything Simmel wrote about religion and arranging the pieces in a single thematically coherent volume.

Taken as a whole, Simmel’s writings on religion offer a perspective that contrasts with the other classical theorists in some helpful ways. Essentially, what Simmel offers is not so much a sociology of *religion* as a sociology of *religiosity*. Religiosity is a particular mode of human existence, “a unified and fundamental state of the soul” (p. 125), a way of perceiving and experiencing all of reality. Thus, it parallels art and science, rather than conflicting with them. Simmel sees the various religious forms and the myriad contents they can embody and sustain as projections of this fundamental mode of existence. Religiosity produces religion rather than the other way around.

Like Durkheim, Simmel sees the origins of religion (or, more accurately, the religious mode of existence) in social relations. But where Durkheim’s fundamental social unit was the clan, Simmel begins at a more micro level. Religious faith is an expansion and abstraction of the faith that we must exercise in every interchange with another human being. Faith is what makes social relations possible. For religious people, this fundamental affective connection is