Cornelius Castoriadis (1922-1997), a thinker as encyclopedic as he was innovative, sought, with both endless curiosity and a constant eye toward pertinence, to elucidate the problems and potentials of the vast array of human creation in order break through and go beyond inherited thought. His longtime engagement with politics, beginning at the age of 15 in opposition to the Italian Fascist-inspired Metaxas dictatorship in Greece and soon, too, against the Greek Communist Party, led to his cofounding in France of “Socialisme ou Barbarie”, first a Trotskyist tendency (1946-1948) and then an independent journal and group (1948-1967) known for its critique of bureaucratic capitalism in both its Eastern total and totalitarian form (Russia and its satellites) and in its Western fragmented form as well as for its profound influence on the May ’68 student-worker rebellion. In furtherance of the project of autonomy and of the institution of self-governing collectivities he championed there and thereafter, his work which explored the creative power of the psyche radical imagination along with the instituting power of the social imaginary to effect change in the social-historical domain, he laid claim to have discovered ranged from physics to biology, from social thought to law to political economy, and from political thought to psychoanalysis, passing by way of linguistics and mathematics. Doing so, he concluded, as early as 1964, that, in order to remain a revolutionary in thought and action, one could no longer remain a Marxist and he fiercely stood up against intellectual fashions in vogue during the 1960s and 1970s, including Structuralism, Poststructuralism, and Postmodernism. The direct democracy he advocated from the outset in both the workplace and society set him at odds not only with all command structures separating directors from executants but also with the representative institutions of today’s liberal oligarchies. This radical
democracy came to draw new inspiration in his work from the germ of autonomy that sprouted in the Greek *poleis* of the 8th to 5th centuries BCE with the cobirth of those nonidentical twins, philosophy and politics. In particular, education conceived in its broadest sense as *paideia* the formation of the individual via the socialization of the psyche in the context of a self-governing *polis* increasingly became a major theme, though he had already, in “Socialisme ou Barbarie” second issue (1949), critically destroyed the economic justification for all educational systems employing and reproducing hierarchy. Education can take but two paths: pure training for adaptation to an inegalitarian, heteronomous society or empowerment of the subject to engage with her own potential for autonomous development and self-education in order to foster critical reflection on and involvement in a society capable of calling itself into question and of changing itself through effectively equal and actively informed participation. Though known and translated throughout the world, in Italy Castoriadis’s work has enjoyed only a sporadic and fragmentary reception, linked, above all, to the 1995 translation (Bollati Boringhieri; now, unfortunately, out of print) of his 1975 *magnum opus*, *The Imaginary Institution of Society*. The present issue of “Paideutika”, dedicated to his work, is developed around three fundamental themes: (1) political thought and education; (2) psychoanalysis and education; (3) practice of autonomy and social implications of educational action. Included are: the Italian translation of a previously unpublished talk by Castoriadis, an overall view of the coherency of his work, from the “socialism or barbarism” theme to the contemporary rising tide of insignificance; a reflection on the circle of creation in education, a report on an experiment in popular education around Castoriadis’ work in Latin America; a comparison between Castoriadis’ work and Hannah Arendt.