Chapter Four
The Living Body

I The Life of the Body

For much of Western philosophy, and especially following Descartes, the question of the relationship between the psyche (the ‘soul’ or ‘mind’) and the body has centered on the problem of identifying and explaining the connection between the two. Castoriadis’ analysis of the ‘for-itself’ suggests the need for a radical reformulation of this question. Parts of Castoriadis’ own writings betray the need for just such a reformulation. For example, on first taking up the concept of anaclasis, or ‘leaning on’, in The Imaginary Institution of Society, Castoriadis observes that in order to account for the psychical representation of biological drives an “initial bridge must be postulated between the ‘soul’ and the ‘body’”.¹ Based on his own (later) account of the living being, however, we are forced to point out that as soon as there are drives there must already be representation, so that even if we were to satisfactorily resolve what Castoriadis calls “the mysteries of the

¹ Castoriadis, The Imaginary Institution of Society, p. 282.
‘bonding’ between the soul and the body”\textsuperscript{2} at the level of the human psyche, this would only leave us to face the same mysteries at a more fundamental level. Even if we felt we possessed a satisfactory answer to the question of how biological drives come to be for the human psyche (that is, the human ‘mind’), this would still leave us with the task of explaining how they come to be in the first place, for the body or for the human organism qua living being. Here the notion of a ‘bond’ or ‘bridge’ between two distinct entities is clearly inappropriate. What, in its being-for-itself, does the body qua living being need to ‘bond’ with? Only, perhaps, itself; but what sort of ‘bonding’ is this? It is certainly not that which might join together two distinct and essentially separate entities. If the notion of a ‘bond’ is inadequate at this level, perhaps it is no more adequate at the level of the relationship between mind and body.

“Perhaps no one will ever be able to add anything to what Aristotle said about the psyche as existing only as ‘form’ or ‘entelechy’ of the body…”\textsuperscript{3} On the strength of this recommendation, if for no other reason, it would seem worthwhile for us to inquire what Aristotle might have meant by such an assertion and what its implications might be. In fact, Aristotle’s concerns in investigating the nature of the psyche are closer to ours in this context than are those of many modern thinkers, for Aristotle’s subject matter is the problem of the living being generally rather than the human mind in its specificity.

Hugh Lawson-Tancred suggests that the literal meaning of entelechy (entelecheia) is “something like ‘intrinsic possession of an end’.”\textsuperscript{4} This roughly corresponds to Castoriadis’ notion of self-finality. To appreciate its full significance, however, one needs to understand how this concept of entelechy relates to Aristotle’s notion of ‘form’ and, in turn, the fundamental distinction between ‘form’ and ‘matter’ with which Aristotle operates.

The kernel of Aristotle’s view of the psyche is expressed in the following proposition: “It must then be the case that soul is substance [ousia] as the form [eidos] of a natural body which potentially has life, and since this substance

\textsuperscript{2} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{3} Castoriadis, \textit{The Imaginary Institution of Society}, p. 300.

\textsuperscript{4} Aristotle, \textit{De Anima}, p. 119.