I began chapter four with a discussion of the ontological plurality inherent in the social-historical. To put this another way, this means that the social-historical world is composed of an indefinite plurality of societies, and societies contain an indefinite plurality of subjects (Castoriadis 1991: 152, 168). I also alluded to another dimension of this plurality—the multitude of social spheres, orders, institutions and fields into which each society is divided. This division is particular to, and thus characteristic of any given society. Castoriadis opens a discussion of this towards the end of *The Imaginary Institution of Society* (1987) but as we have seen, does not fully incorporate it in his ensuing analyses of the modern social-historical constellation. I suggest that Taylor’s approach to the tensions between different life orders, or fields—i.e., economics, politics, family, etc—and their competing value claims and ‘logics’ complements and enriches Castoriadis’ ontology of institutions. I have also discussed, from Castoriadis’ perspective, the unavoidable tension between openness and closure that permeates all of these fields. The psyche and society (and every philosophy, politics, social institution, etc) tend towards closure, and must tend towards closure, for they must create or assume a form, and a form is intrinsically a type of closure, even where it is an open form.

Accepting this paradox is necessary for understanding the tension between unity and plurality in the project of autonomy. In one way, then, we might contend that the project of autonomy is a conscious and explicit attempt to recognize and advance the plurality inherent in society which is inherently driven towards unity. That is, as society must socialize its members in accordance with its nomos (in the broadest sense), the tendency towards homogeneity, uniformity, conformity—i.e., unity and closure—is ineliminable; but not irresistible. At the level of the social individual, too, the necessity of forming one’s self as a self—and as a

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1 Arguably Taylor’s *Modern Social Imaginaries* (2004) would better complement Castoriadis’ ontology if it had explicitly engaged with Castoriadis’ work.
coherent self—generates a compelling tendency towards forming oneself in accordance with the nomos of others, and demanding that others form themselves in accordance with one’s nomos (see Castoriadis 1997d: 24 ff. on othering and self-affirmation).

At the same time, however, the creativity of the radical imaginary generates \textit{difference}, heterogeneity, plurality. It might be seen as a drive away from unity, a drive for difference, a need to differentiate oneself as isolated and independent ego. Hence, the tension between openness and closure overlaps with tensions between conformity and differentiation, and between unity and plurality. The plurality of the social-historical is not merely \textit{de facto}; it is intrinsic, because the social-historical is not determined, but is continuously created by an indefinite plurality of creative beings perpetually pulling both towards and away from one another.

Castoriadis’ project of autonomy aims to create a society in which individuals can clearly and lucidly express themselves, determining their own orientation to the world (albeit always within the limits of an autonomously oriented society), creating meaning in their lives, and can effectively participate in all forms of instituting power in society (1991: 134, 173).\textsuperscript{2} The universalism of Castoriadis’ project is evident in many places, but perhaps nowhere more clearly than in his citation of Luxemburg’s famous claim that the freedom we seek is ‘above all freedom for those who think otherwise’ (1997d: 78), or in the observation that ‘the greatest contribution of modern times is that we want democracy for all’ (1997d: 106). Yet this universal inclusivism is occasionally contradicted, as when his treatment of particular life-fields or existing social institutions indicates that they are intrinsically incompatible with the project of autonomy—which has the logical consequences of necessarily excluding or eliminating such modes of being in order to advance the project of autonomy.

This is nowhere clearer than in Castoriadis’ attitude to religion, which, like capitalism, he sees as anathema to the project of autonomy. Paralleling his weakness on varieties of capitalism, Castoriadis dismisses religious expression and experience as irrelevant or antithetical to the project of autonomy. After briefly outlining Castoriadis’ position I turn to Taylor’s more considered and nuanced analysis of the varieties of religious

\textsuperscript{2} Parts of this chapter have been previously published in revised form in Smith, 2007.