The Great Resistance

by Stuart Winchester

1) INTRODUCTION

Jürgen Habermas' exchanges with Castoriadis were reported at the time to be unusually belligerent. Anthony Elliott described as them as 'odd', 'perplexing' and 'curious', while Joel Whitebook goes so far as to call them 'eccentric'. And yet Habermas and Castoriadis could have been comrades. As Whitebook put it, they stood together "on the same side of the theoretical barricades" (Whitebook 1996: 166). Each opposed the contextual relativism which they both considered to be characteristic of post-modern, post-structural and neo-conservative ‘end of philosophy’ thinking. With these adversaries in common, why was the Habermas/Castoriadis exchange so fierce as to be thought eccentric?

In his *Excursus on Cornelius Castoriadis* (in *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*) (Habermas 1991: 327-335), Jürgen Habermas concludes that:

"Castoriadis cannot provide us with a figure for the mediation between the individual and society... Intrapsychic conflicts are not internally linked with social ones; instead, psyche and society stand in a sort of metaphysical opposition to one another," (ibid: pp 334).

But Habermas makes this contention without mentioning Castoriadis' theory of sublimation. For me, Castoriadis' sublimation is precisely the mediating figure that Habermas claims is absent from his scheme. Habermas describes Castoriadis’ notion of psyche and society as split apart in a metaphysical opposition. And yet Castoriadis’ sublimation is just the opposite; a sort of ‘metaphysical interface’ which connects the individual with society. So why would Habermas argue that there is no psycho-social mediating figure in Castoriadis’ scheme, and yet omit any mention of sublimation?

It is a significant omission. I suggest it points to the critical factor dividing
Castoriadis and Habermas, and governing their differing responses to postmodernism. In order to elucidate sublimation, Castoriadis must engage with the irrational, or more preferably ‘a-rational’ features of the psyche. If Habermas had taken on sublimation, he too would have had to engage with the a-rational. Furthermore, taking on sublimation also compels a response to Castoriadis’ conceptions of the imagination and the monadic core, each of which deals with a-rational material. Habermas seems barely to recognise any of this at all. He acknowledges the existence of an a-rational domain only as something ‘problematic’. Far from engaging with this material, Habermas excludes it absolutely. What his critique of Castoriadis reveals then is the absoluteness of Habermas’ exclusion of the a-rational.

I will begin by briefly summarising my reading of Castoriadis’ notion of sublimation as reciprocal constitution. I will then attempt to show how Habermas’ absolute exclusion of a-rational material renders his reading of Castoriadis false, and leads him to respond differently to the postmodern turn. I will conclude that Habermas’ exclusions conform to a great resistance of the chaotic void of the a-rational, shared not only by post-modernist and neo-liberal thinkers, but also by both Marx and Freud. In this way, I argue that exploring ideas concerning reality, society and the constitution of the subject, compels towards a synthesis of the rational and the a-rational and requires sufficient account to be given for both, if all of reality is to be considered.

2) CASTORIADIS’ SUBLIMATION

Sublimation is classically often thought of as resulting in a 'de-sexualisation' of the drives. But for Castoriadis, this is "neither simply nor necessarily" the case (Castoriadis 2005: 312). Sublimation, he says, involves a conversion of aim and of object, since the object must, of necessity:

"...be taken by the psyche in another mode of being and in other relations – thus it is henceforth another object, because it has another signification..."
In order to alter the aim of the drive, the psyche's only option is to modify the drive's object into something else; for example, 'mother as sexual object' becomes 'tender mother object'. This signification is obtained by the psyche through a network of relations which socially institute the meaning 'tender mother' as an object. Multiple meanings of 'mother' form successive layers which coexist for the subject in Castoriadis' rich "magma" of public language. Castoriadis can thus claim that drives are not entirely repressed, but "subsist, 'normally', only as mostly unconscious," (Ibid.: 314). Nothing is entirely abandoned; the individual accumulates a history of meanings comprising determinable and indeterminable layers.

This acquisition and modification of meaning progresses through three distinguishable relations to pleasure, each mediated by representation. In the original "proto-pleasure of the psychical monad" (Ibid.), representation is indistinct from pleasure. The subsequent emergence of a differentiated representation of the body compels the body's primacy as the site of a more restricted sense of eroticism. Finally, the pleasurable interpretation, creation and modification of meaning become central. The social individual, says Castoriadis:

"...can and must be able to find pleasure in modifying the 'state of affairs' outside of himself or in the perception of such a 'state of affairs' ...whatever components of the earlier stages may continue to be present..." (Castoriadis 2005: 314-5).

Representation is mediated by the network of things and social individuals into which the subject fits. This includes representation of the subject as a self, 'always' an image 'for' itself. This self representation is in turn mediated by the radical imaginary of the subject, "as he imagines he is giving to the others," (Ibid.). Thus a 'Social-Imaginary' signifies the meanings of the subject, mediated in turn by the individual's own imagination which may modify such signification. In the finally matured state, the socialised psyche's intention has become the creative modification of the real.

The Radical-Imaginary of the individual coalesces with the Social-Imaginary in an ongoing and continuous reproduction of meaning. This process is made possible
by sublimation, which permits modification of aim and object such that:

"The radical imaginary [of the individual Subject] deploys itself as society and as history: as the social-historical. This it does and can only do as the instituting and the instituted." (Castoriadis 1991b: 143).

The deployment of subjects, as selves embodying thought and meaning, is society as 'instituted' and 'instituting'. As Lois McNay clarifies (McNay, 2000: 144) this society is always attempting to present itself as pre-given or instituted, and thereby to obtain a determining or instituting effect upon its subjects. Consequently, there is a constant relation in tension between society and subjects as "collectively articulated self-altering". As the psyche is modified, both in its aim and its apprehension of an object, so is an object modified in meaning and relation. In consequence of and through this process, both structure and agent participate in a mutual constitution of 'self', and of 'reality', which I call reciprocal constitution.

3) FIRST RESISTANCE: CONSCIOUSNESS

Castoriadis' subjectivity then, mediated and articulated via sublimation, has subjects retaining intact a never fully repressed sexual impulse, a rich magma of manipulable meaning multi-layered into every signified object; an insistence, in short, upon an ever-present, ever-active monadic core, intent on modifying itself and social 'reality', as it too is modified. Anthony Elliott says this represents a theoretical threat for Habermas, who finds Castoriadis' account, whether:

"...psychic or social, unsatisfactory, since it is at odds with his own emphasis on the primacy of language in the constitution and conditioning of the psyche and the socially institutionalised world," (Elliott 2002: 147).

For Castoriadis the unconscious is an originary "representative / affective / intentional flux," (Castoriadis 2005: 274). Like Freud, he traces this out of its isolation, towards connection with a heterogeneous outside. For Habermas conversely, everything:

"...begins with the fact of communication and asks how it can become deformed into the privatized unconscious. For him the unconscious is a derivative phenomenon." (Whitebook 1996: 179).
Thus, what most obviously appears to partition Castoriadis and Habermas are their differing conceptions of the unconscious in particular and, arguably, consciousness by implication.

Habermas finds an impetus for his ‘derivative’ consciousness in Freud, who writes that its acquisition:

"...is the work of the function of speech, which brings material in the ego into a firm connection with mnemic residues of visual, but more particularly of auditory, perceptions. Thenceforward the perceptual periphery of the cortical layer can be excited to a much greater extent from inside as well, internal events such as passages of ideas and thought-processes can become conscious..." (Freud in Habermas 1987: 238).

There is some ambiguity here. Freud’s understanding of how an ego acquires consciousness turns on one’s interpretation of ‘speech:’ an act of subject, or other, or both? Habermas converts, without explanation, 'speech' into 'language', losing the verb and any suggestion of interior agency. He then concludes, without arguing his shift in meaning, that the function of language lies in 'stabilising' the:

"...processes of consciousness in such a way that the 'internal' is fastened to symbols and obtains 'external' existence," (Ibid.: 239).

For Freud the ego 'acquires' consciousness, for Habermas the internal 'is fastened to' symbols. Freud prizes the agency of a hominised subject now articulating pre-lingual ideas and thoughts in language. For Habermas, the central idea of consciousness is to obtain an 'external existence.' Habermas’ derivative consciousness is thus founded on a reading of Freud which excludes any interiority without any real explanation.

According to Joel Whitebook, Habermas next "rejects one of the most fundamental tenets of Freud's metapsychology," (Whitebook 1996: 180): the distinction between word-representations and thing-representations.

"In Freud the point is thoroughly unambiguous: the unconscious is characterized by the primary process and thing-representations; the pre-conscious and conscious, by the secondary process and word-representations. Indeed, the border between the unconscious and the preconscious is traversed by the addition of word-cathexes to thing-cathexes and is, therefore, at the same time, the border between the prelinguistic and the linguistic." (Ibid.).
In Whitebook’s view, Habermas obeys a *Bilderverbot*, or prohibition of images. Any conception of a pre-linguistic, non-linguistic unconscious, consisting in a stream of a-rational pictorial representations, is excluded. Habermas now offers us a justification:

"...the distinction between word-representations and asymbolic ideas is problematic, and the assumption of a non-linguistic sub-stratum, in which these ideas severed from language are 'carried out,' is unsatisfactory... it is not clear according to what rules (other than grammatical rules) unconscious ideas could be connected with verbal residues." (Ibid.).

What, for Habermas, is 'problematic' and 'unsatisfactory' about the distinction between word-representations and thing-representations seems to be the absence of rules, structure and order. As with Castoriadis’ sublimation, Habermas’ chooses not to theorise some relation between rational and a-rational domains. Nor does he argue how or why a-rational content might legitimately be excluded. He simply excludes it.

In so doing, he not only denies the existence of a scenic, a-rational interior, but also obviates Freud’s attempt to chart the "frontier (Grenze) between soma and psyche... between the image and the word..." (Freud in Whitebook 1996: 186). Engagement within this 'frontier territory' is essential if a full critique of Castoriadis’ conception of sublimation is to be enabled. And yet this space is unavailable, since for Habermas, the word-image distinctions do not exist. His unconscious seems remote, isolated; what Anthony Elliott describes as a "privatized and distorted realm of signification that has been split-off or excommunicated from public, intersubjective communication," (Elliott 2002: 147).

For Habermas, symbolic structures are not created ‘ex-nihilo’ as Castoriadis has it, but are "corrupted by the impact of internal conditions" (Habermas 1987: 217). Castoriadis’ subjective motivation, arising internally from a sublimated monadic impulse, compromises this. Instead, an alternative interior is reasoned in which:

"...ego stands within an interpersonal relationship that allows him to relate to himself as a participant in an interaction from the perspective of an alter... interaction participants then no longer appear as originators who master situations with the help of accountable actions, but as the products of the traditions in which they stand, of the solidary groups to which they belong, and of the socialization processes within which they grow up."
(Habermas 1991: 297).
The subject relates to herself from the perspective of other. Interior consciousness is replaced by a subordination toward externalised communicative action. Subjects can only be disconnected from their own interiority. We are not 'originators' but 'products'.

In order to maintain this position, in his own words, Habermas "screens out the psychodynamics," (Habermas in Thompson 1984: 289). For example, he "disregards the psyche's ...inherent tendency to 'work in a backward direction,' [i.e. in instances of regression] which is to say, the tendency to resist integration into the intersubjective net," (Ibid.: 194-5). Habermas simply feels able to "ignore" (Ibid.: 186) the idea of a resistant tendency toward regression in order that he can posit the notion of a derivative consciousness:

"Conscious motivations present in the public use of language are transformed into unconscious, as it were delinguisticized, motives." (Habermas, 1987: 224).

For Habermas then, the conscious is made unconscious. But to achieve this position[2], he disregards, ignores or excludes the non-rational or dismisses its lack of 'rules' as 'problematic'. His concept of individuation, as Whitebook puts it, "remains on the surface," (Whitebook 1996: 194).

Castoriadis has no such difficulty in according significance to the a-rational interior of the imagination. It is his elucidation of this which unlocks his ideas. His is a constant, dynamic unconscious in which he says, "Actions, reaction, affects are always constructed in and through the subject's imagination," (Castoriadis 2005: 307). In getting to grips with it, he sees the unpredictable monadic core, with its pre-lingual, non-lingual history and content, as a threat to the 'sanity' of a rationalist world. He sums up this position in a key phrase:

"The world qua "presocial world" – a limit for any thought – though in itself signifying nothing, is always there as inexhaustible provision of alterity and as the always imminent risk of lacerations of the web of significations with which society has lined it. The a-meaning of the world is always a possible threat for the meaning of society. Thus the ever-
present risk that the social edifice of significations will totter." (Castoriadis 1991b: 152).

It is 'a-meaning,' the non-rational, which threatens to disintegrate 'validated' rationality as truth. It is this disintegrating potential of the a-rational, its implication as chaos, the void, which Habermas excludes during this exchange. Castoriadis however, crosses the Rubicon and continuously re-confronts rationality with its counterpart until he formulates their relation through his theory of sublimation.

4) SECOND RESISTANCE: PHILOSOPHY

For Castoriadis, philosophy and democracy both "express the refusal of heteronomy" (Castoriadis, 1991a: 20), by "maintaining an open debate and a critical spirit," (Ibid.: 23). Conversely, 'end of philosophy' proclamations typical of post-structuralist thought contribute to a "waning of conflict and critique, the spreading of amnesia and irrelevance, the growing inability to put into question the present and the existing institutions," and are cyclical rather than anything new (Ibid.: 14). He charges a recurrent "onto-theo-logo-phallocentric 'closure of Greco-Western metaphysics'" (Castoriadis, 1997: 110), with covering over public, democratic-philosophical criticism, and reducing thinking simply to commentary and interpretation; "With the fall of democracy... philosophy becomes rigidified," he said (Castoriadis, 1991a: 22).

For Castoriadis, the quality and direction of the debate is itself an illustration of the amnesic tendency towards 'closure' inhering in his theory of consciousness.

"Closure means that what is thought cannot be put into question in its essential features. ...questions always remain limited in import and cannot go beyond (dépasser), or even attain, or intend, that which for society, for the tribe, are what we might metaphorically call the axioms of its social institution, its rules of inference and its criteria for making deductions." (Castoriadis in Elliott et al 1995: 30).

For Castoriadis then, 'end of philosophy' thinking aims at preserving the supposed 'sanity' of rationality by delimiting the 'what,' the 'putting into question' that changes society and in effect constitutes democracy. For him, what post-modernism, post-
structuralism and neo-liberalism express in common is an inhibition of debate which threatens democratic societies. They share in articulating a great resistance to the threat of disrupted meaning which resides within the a-rational void.

Habermas, in stark contradiction, sees the same ‘end of philosophy’ arguments not as a refusal of the a-rational, but rather as an assault on rationality. "Rebuking such thinkers as Heidegger, Foucault and Derrida for rejecting the project of modernity as discredited," (Elliott 2002: 144), his accusation, says Elliott, is that:

"...neoconservatism and aesthetically inspired anarchism, in the name of a farewell to modernity, are merely trying to revolt against it once again. ...merely cloaking their complicity with the venerable tradition of counter-Enlightenment in the garb of post-Enlightenment" (Habermas 1991: 5).

Discourses concerning the "radical critique of reason" give "no account of their own position" and "raise validity claims only to renounce them," (Ibid.: 336), ultimately escaping into the ‘esoteric,’ resisting scientific analysis. Castoriadis' search for the 'what' that changes society had led him to engage with the a-rationality of sublimation and of the Radical and Social Imaginaries. But Habermas' defence of modernity as rational Enlightenment compels him to view the a-rational not as a source of change but precisely as a threat to meaning. In this way, Habermas opposes the same forces ranged in discourse as does Castoriadis, but he shares in expressing the same great resistance to the chaotic void of a-rationality.

Habermas’ tackling of some of the issues raised by ‘end of philosophy’ thinkers is thus characterised by the same evasion of a-rationally infused domains which underpinned his formulation of consciousness. Despite his opposition to the figures of the ‘counter-Enlightenment,’ his defence of modernity is constructed around the same ‘linguistic turn’ that propelled their thinking away "from philosophy of consciousness and 'subject centred reason' to the philosophy of intersubjectivity and communicative rationality," (Whitebook, 1996: 166). In this hybrid position, his task becomes one of rationalising the various spheres of communication. He conceives the notion of validity claims in speech acts which establish relations between speakers
and ‘worlds’ in order to reach understanding. This provides a structure for the reappraisal of rationality. His Theory of Argumentation similarly describes modes of discourse which characterise the way in which these actions are performed. By distinguishing between form and content, Habermas tries to:

"...reconstruct the logic of development of world-views and thereby clarify the sense in which the rationality that gained expression in the west can lay claim to universality," (Thompson 1984: 287).

Habermas concludes that a "progressive demarcation" of objective and social reality decentres any subjective understanding of the world, increasing the dependence on and need for rationality within communicative action. This situation drives the increasingly complex and demarcated systems to reflect the same process back, inhibiting any wider understanding and increasing dependency upon a profusion of expert systems which continue to uncouple. This generates a process which:

"...assumes the socio-pathological form of an inner colonization in so far as critical disequilibria in material reproduction... can be avoided only at the cost of disturbances in the symbolic reproduction of the life-world." (Habermas in Thompson 1984: 291).

In this way, Habermas is suggesting that a self-sustaining natural process is in play, which alters consciousness through language so as to ensure reproduction of a system that in turn accelerates its hold on individual consciousness. In order to sustain this position, or perhaps vice-versa, his conception of consciousness negates any notion of an a-rational domain within the subject.

5) CONCLUSIONS: THE GREAT RESISTANCE

Among those whom Castoriadis charges with reacting to 'end of philosophy' thinking by 'recycling' traditions’ is "Habermas with his 'communicative ethics'" (Castoriadis, 1997: 110). In this view, Habermas rejects politics for a 'recycled ethics' that has "kinship with withdrawal into the private sphere" (Ibid.) The crux of Castoriadis’ thinking lies in reconciling the rational with the non-rational, the internal with the external, such that he fundamentally contradicts Habermas when he
writes:

"Our acts are not determined, but they do have conditions. These conditions are in no way simply 'external'." (Ibid.: 111).

In resolutely avoiding any engagement with the a-rationally inclusive theory of sublimation, it is as though Habermas critiques the performance of a symphony without considering its creative or emotive inspiration, its imaginary drive, to be relevant. Habermas' aversion to the a-rational content of the interior psyche is consistent throughout both his philosophical discourse and his theory of consciousness and it marks the distinction between the two thinkers.

Clearly, Castoriadis' monadic core "poses a threat to the heart of Habermas's theory," (Whitebook 1996: 166). It would seem that in his *Excursus*, Habermas has an opportunity to engage in robust debate; to outline and dismantle each monadic component. But Habermas does not fulfil "Hegel's requirement of stepping in to the strength of an opponent's position," (Whitebook 1996: 165); he remains on the outside of it; disengaged, detached, disconnected. In this way "Habermas glosses Castoriadis' 'monadic core of the psyche'," (Elliot 2002: 145). Sublimation is unmentioned and in consequence he retains intact his own theory without modification, at the expense of a fully representative interpretation of Castoriadis' work.

Habermas does not argue that the a-rational does not exist, but his avoidance of it is rigid and without any justifying argument. Castoriadis’ theory, and Habermas’ response to it, suggest that a *resistance* to the a-rational seems to go hand-in-hand with a ‘covering over’ of interiority, of human agency located *within* a Subject. In Castoriadis’ view, Habermas’ exclusion of the a-rational seems consistent with those post-modernists and neo-liberals they both sought to oppose. Furthermore it repeats a difficulty with a-rational material in theoretical discourse which, according to Castoriadis, both Marx and Freud had encountered.

For Castoriadis, socialism's scientifically argued central tenets contained half-
hidden mystical 'facts' concerning technique, history and motivation. What Castoriadis saw was the dead hand of Western rationalism, the spectre of economic determinism which failed to account for the illogic of the a-rational.

"Determinism conceals itself behind the distinction between the 'important' and the 'secondary'... In this way, reality is divided into a main stratum, in which causal connections can and must be established before and after the event considered, and a secondary stratum in which these connections do not exist or are not important. ...only conceptually does it intend a unified world, in its application it is, in fact, obliged to postulate an 'undetermined' part of reality." (Castoriadis 2005: 376 n34).

Castoriadis contends that Marx's accounts of technique, history and motivation failed to describe all of reality precisely because they failed sufficiently to account for the indeterminable: the unpredictable, a-rational. He argues that technique is not deterministic, but contingent and expressing the localised, creative objectives of dominant social strata with no guarantee of conformity to any progressive, rational purpose (Castoriadis 2005: 20). History, he says, cannot be extrapolated, as some logical progression, from western bourgeois rationalism and then applied universally. Rather it is the domain in which meanings are embodied (Ibid.: 23), and in which social structures are creatively reconstituted and redeployed differently over time and space (Ibid.: 24). Human motivations, he argues, are not exclusively economic but rather "are social creations, [and] each culture establishes its own values and rears individuals in relation to these," (Ibid.: 25).

In the case of Freud, Castoriadis noticed that "...the ‘reality principle’ - that is the referent of the term ‘reality’ ...is undetermined in Freudian theory and ...has too often been identified... with a ‘natural reality’ assumed to be simple and indubitable." (Castoriadis 2005: 312). This is the indistinct theatre in which Freud’s sublimation makes its entrance, having the last line in the four-part dramatisation of human sexual development. Its emergence rounds off all the phenomena of human psychical development which have occurred, from monad up until this point. Sublimation thus marks no less than the culmination of hominisation; the consolidation of humanity, the beginning of the end of constitution of personality, of self. And yet Castoriadis notices that Freud's script is unfinished. "Sublimation [is] a term which received little
elaboration from Freud, who said that 'we will have to return to it'," (Castoriadis 2005: 264).

Freud's hesitation, his reluctance to take on sublimation seems, once again, related to the difficulties of engaging with the a-rational. Whitebook notes that "Castoriadis's central criticism of Freud is that he devoted 'a large part of his work' to trying to mitigate the radicalness of his breakthrough, which consisted in the 'discovery of the imaginary element in the psyche,'" (Whitebook 1996: 170). Three 'facts,' the trinomial which Freud had initially concluded to be certain, and essential to the psyche's operation – that motivated by pleasure, it operates logically in relation to reality – were each ultimately undermined by the 'phantasmatic, elaborate creations' of the imagination.

"Incompatible with the ‘project for a scientific psychology’... the imagination ultimately had to be put in its place, a place subordinate to that of reason," (Castoriadis 1995: 17).

As Castoriadis would have it, Freud "obstinately" refused to explore it further. In this view, psychoanalysis accords consciousness as a fundamental fact yet, if it ignores that consciousness implies imagination, it nevertheless cannot explain it. (See Elliott et al 1995: 17). As with Marx's determinism, Freud’s apparent hesitation to move into the territory of unreason, of a-rationality, seems to delimit, to close down the development of theory, at least insofar as his conception of sublimation is concerned.

In light of this, Habermas’ exclusion of the non-rational appears to reproduce a consistent pattern in the practice of theory: a Great Resistance to the a-rational which covers over debate and sets limits for the questions which can be considered in theory and in practice. In the case of Habermas, the exclusion is profound. It’s unspoken premise underpins his challenge to Castoriadis, but without making this material evident, his argument is undermined.

This covering over of the void of a-rational imaginary chaos which threatens to engulf us, inevitably becomes the proper concern of psychoanalytic and philosophical thinking. Gourgouris describes how, in opening up the domains of imagination and
sublimation as Castoriadis did, psychoanalysis acquires the characteristics of a philosophical project which compels towards a synthesis of the rational and the a-rational. Approached this way, he argues:

"Psychoanalysis provides a profound philosophical innovation in that it reconceptualizes the classic antinomy/coalescence between the empirical and the transcendent as a ground which is inevitably social (for reality is society, as Freud argued) and which is revealed as such because it is codetermined with (and hence never reducible or superior to) the psychical." (Gourgouris 1997: 32).

In this view, any account of reality, society, or the constitution of the subject cannot exclude, but must incorporate the a-rational, or it does not articulate the entirety of the real.

Bibliography


[1] I have taken to using the term ‘a-rational’ since it avoids the negative connotations of ‘irrational’ while avoiding the trap of becoming the negative ‘other’ of the ‘non-rational’. For me, ‘a-rational’ suggests a condition which is not so much without rationality but independent of, or unaffected by its attributes.

[2] I understand that there are quite a few psychoanalytic positions (e.g. Fairbairn) which share this view. However I would argue that in this instance, Habermas’ position is constructed by an argument which consistently avoids any mention of a-rational material and in so doing, he ‘achieves’ his position by this means.

After a successful career in marketing, Stuart Winchester resigned from the company he built to write creatively and to study Social Theory. He achieved a 1st for his MA thesis “Social Transformation: Castoriadis, Sublimation and the Non-Rational Divide” supervised by Prof. Anthony Elliott (University of Kent UK / Flinders University Adelaide, Australia). He began his PhD in Psychology (Psychosocial Studies) at Birkbeck College, London in January 2008 supervised by Prof. Stephen Frosh. His research interests are multi-disciplinary, spanning politics, sociology, cultural studies and philosophy. He is especially interested in the theorisation of subjectivity and agency and the integration of social theory and psychoanalysis. His PhD research explores Reciprocal Constitution and its political themes. Listed as a sociology tutor for Birkbeck’s Lifelong Learning department, Stuart also continues to work as a marketing consultant, exploring ways to develop new models of public sector management inspired by Castoriadis’ conception of autonomy. He is also developing Community Business: a commercial social enterprise which aims to raise the level of public engagement with the social and environmental impacts of organisations and businesses.