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Multiculturalism, Catholicism and Us

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Abstract

Taylor addresses *A Secular Age* to an 'us' identified with the West. In this way the book is particularised and entered into a conversation. It is a prime example of the multiculturalism Taylor acclaims. However the paper argues that the commitment to multiculturalism forces *A Secular Age* to downplay the importance of Catholicism as an institution. It is contended that the book is a great work of catholicity (small 'c') but in need of more Catholicism (capital 'C').

Keywords

Catholicism; immanence; modernity; multiculturalism; pluralism

One does not read *A Secular Age*; one is forced to enter into a *relationship* with it. It is necessary to spend a lot of time with the book because it is so long, written in a style veering from the almost colloquial to the utterly uncompromising. As an object it is heavy and literally imprints itself on the body of the reader. Fingers frequently need a rest, hands become sore. This might seem to be a trivial point, but at least since Italo Calvino's lighter but equally profound *If on a Winter's Night a Traveller* (1982) we have been aware of the embodied dimensions of the encounter with a text.[1] Calvino wanted his readers to settle down in a comfy chair and relax but Taylor prevents his readers from being comfortable, and perhaps this is no accident. Perhaps the book had to be as challenging to read as it is, as unwieldy actually to hold, because otherwise it would have fitted too easily into the quotidian and thus become absorbed into it. (It is indeed worth noting that the massive length of the text was a *choice* by Taylor and his publishers; *A Secular Age* includes virtually the entirety of the earlier book *Modern Social Imaginaries*).[2]

[1] Italo Calvino, *If on a Winter's Night a Traveller*, trans. W. Weaver (London: Picador, 1982).

[2] Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).

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Taylor evidently wants to put a question mark against what is taken for granted; he wants us to think differently about some of the conceptual categories with which we too easily make sense of the world (most notably the concept of 'secularisation'), and moreover he wants us to think differently about ourselves. Calvino did this by luring his readers into a false sense of security, and Taylor tries to do it by unleashing the intellectual equivalent of an artillery barrage. The exceptionally loose structure of *A Secular Age* means that bombs seem to arrive from all directions, often at once, and it is hard to predict which are dud, which are lethal. Taylor is not out to seduce his readers, he is out to unsettle comfortable imaginaries of how things do, and ought to, happen.

A Secular Age is unsettling because it refutes the very universalising pretension its bulk evidently intimates. After all, Taylor's book is not the only one in existence. It exists in the context of a tradition establishing expectations on the part of readers about the sweep of texts of such length. Surely a book of 852 pages plus index ought to have universal ambition? Well, no. Just as the weight of the book as an object impresses itself into the body of the particular reader, so the contents of the book are particular too. Taylor is quite explicit about this. At the beginning he says he is concerned only, 'with the West, or the North Atlantic world; or in other terms, I shall be dealing with the civilization whose principal roots lie in what used to be called "Latin Christendom"' (21). The analytical point underpins the addressees of the book. Taylor is obviously aware that the book can and will likely be read anywhere in the world, but the mode of address serves to make some readers internal to the text, others external. The very first sentences of the book identify the readers for whom Taylor is primarily writing. He asks what it means to say we live in a secular age, and continues: 'I mean the "we" who live in the West, or perhaps North-west, or otherwise put, the North Atlantic world' (1). This is an odd way of specifying the addressees of the book since the geography seems to exclude the inhabitants of rim-Australia who most commentators would happily identify as 'Western' even if they do not live in the West. Yet the point remains; *A Secular Age* is addressed to 'us', to a distinctive community of the 'we', and thus it is not primarily addressed to others who are either by tradition or perhaps even geography outside of its boundaries. Despite its size, Taylor's book makes no claims towards universality.

Taylor's frequent references to 'us' and 'we', and his remorseless identification of himself as 'I', are considerably more than obtrusive stylistic tics. Equally, they are *more* than invitations to a relationship. Although they *are* invitations, these modes of address also hover around a power relationship the book evidently finds uncomfortable but rather consolidates due to its refusal to compromise. First of

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all, when Taylor talks *to* 'us' and 'we' he is assuming the right and ability so to speak, without however explicating the basis upon which the right ostensibly rests (presumably it is implicit to the ability to publish a big book, with all the cultural capital the ability implies). Second, when Taylor attributes sensibilities and meanings to 'us' he is also establishing a right and ability to speak *of* those he addresses. Third, and here the power relationship is at its starkest, when Taylor talks about 'us' he is actually imposing an identity on his reader, positioning the reader as a *creation* of the text as opposed to being an interpreter who is involved in making the meaning of the text for her or himself. The text wants to unsettle the taken for granted, but with his references to 'us' Taylor actually – and I think largely accidentally – makes illegitimate any refusal by the Western individual to be included within the 'us'.

The references to the first and third persons (Taylor rarely if ever talks to or about the second person 'you') are of the essence of the stakes of the book. Such at least is the premise upon which this paper is based. What I want to do is think outside and around the text of *A Secular Age*, and I want to put it into a sociological context by thinking about the status of the third person to whom Taylor addresses himself. During my relationship with Taylor's book I have become increasingly convinced that *what* he argues is perversely of considerably less purchase than *how* he argues it;[3] what Taylor says to 'us' is less important than the fact that he explicitly says it to 'us'. *A Secular Age* is rhetorical, probably more by accident than design. What Taylor is trying to do, I think, is consolidate for the reader, and yet at the same time contextualise and unsettle, his or her imaginations of his or her place in the world. This is why Taylor needs to position the reader within the 'us' of his narrative; without the positioning the rhetoric doesn't work. Taylor's 'we' is proposed as a place to stand which is able to cope with the circularity of 'exclusive humanism' and yet by particularising it he is also gesturing towards something other than the self-evidence of 'us'. Taylor's 'us' is the community he wants to address through his creation of it, the group he implicitly assumes an ability to speak to and for, and finally the specificity he wishes will recognise others. In this way, the mode of address of *A Secular Age*, the location of its full purchase, is explicitly *catholic*, at least in the

[3] Let me put my point more assertively. *A Secular Age* discovers that the processes and implications of secularisation are massively more complex and multifaceted than philosophical narratives have tended to suggest. This is something sociologists have long known. For the most part the book is one more proof of the point that philosophy is – with one or two notable exceptions including Taylor himself in *Modern Social Imaginaries* and thereforeadmittedly with the exception of a chunk of *A Secular Age* – remarkably naïve sociologically just as, let me hasten to add, sociology is invariably banal philosophically.

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way Taylor understands in his writings the meaning of catholic and catholicity.[4]

This paper has two substantive parts. In the first I explore how Taylor's refutation of a universal 'us' connects with his arguments on multiculturalism. In the second part of the paper I follow through on the theme of multiculturalism and link it to the understanding of catholicity which runs through Taylor's writings. I want to stress this last point, because in his writings Taylor understands catholicity in terms of ethics and the personal authenticity of a sense of 'fullness'. In his writings, although presumably not in his own religious practice (which is besides the point to this discussion) Taylor's Catholicism is extraordinarily *un-churched*.

Multiculturalism

When Taylor talks about 'us' and identifies it with the heirs and spaces of 'Latin Christendom', his remarks inevitably recall a problem which Max Weber confronted a century or so earlier. Weber wondered why 'in Western civilization, and in Western civilization only, cultural phenomena have appeared which (as we like to think) lie in a line of development having *universal* significance and value'.[5] Weber traced his answer back to the emergence of distinctive and peculiar forms of rationality in the West, enabling it to pull the rest of the world under its control. Two points follow from the contention. First, there is a kind of Occidentalism, in which the West is identified as the source of all action in the world. Second, there is a measure of intellectual confidence since if all flows from the West, then to be in the West and to analyse it is tantamount to standing at the well-spring of history. And so the Western intellectual can assume that she or he is capable of writing for all of us since all of us have been shaped to one degree or another by the West. Indeed, the West is the precondition of this 'us'.

With Taylor the sensibility is very different indeed. There is no Weberian confidence in the ability to speak of a universal 'us'. For him Weber's grandiose contention has become very questionable indeed, just as for Max Weber Taylor's specificity would likely have been little else than a failure of nerve. Why the difference?

[4] These points make it necessary for me to clarify the mode of address of this paper. I have written in the first person in order to highlight how the paper expresses the relationship *I* built with *A Secular Age*. I am offering one reading, by one reader, as a contribution to a debate.

[5] Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans, T. Parsons, second edition (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1976), p. 13.

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Simply and briefly, the position of the West in relation to the rest has changed dramatically since Weber was writing. Contemporary analysts tend to approach the change through the prism of globalisation, as if some new era has dawned, but the processes presently pulled within the rubric of globalisation have long been known. For example, in the aftermath of the Second World War Karl Jaspers was already remarking: 'Europe has shrunk. The industrial centre of gravity brings the great continents of America and Asia to supremacy. . .What was once a colony is becoming the master of Europe. The two great new and last structures of the West, America and Russia, are becoming the masters of the world'.[6] Jaspers identified the shift as one of the causes of secularisation. Because Europe has shrunk, he argued, it is now necessary to accept the existence of other 'spiritual worlds' and this causes 'the weakening of the. . .absolute certainty of Christianity, formerly taken for granted. . .European self-consciousness is not the old one. Europe is only one cultural form among others'.[7] Admittedly, Taylor would not identify Christianity with Europe and with the West with the ease of Jaspers, but nevertheless the point is made. When Jaspers talks about Europe he is talking about the same imaginary as Taylor with his reference to 'Latin Christendom'. Weber of course was writing when the dominance of America was only beginning to flicker on the horizon of the future, but before the emergence of Russia in the guise of the Soviet Union. There was little or nothing to unsettle Weber's confidence and certainty. But Taylor knows about the shrinkage of Europe after 1945 and, moreover, about the acceleration of the shrinkage beyond what Jaspers might have foreseen. Taylor's conditions of existence simply do not permit the collapse of the entire world under the imaginary of the West.

When Jaspers confronted the collapse of the old certainties, his response was rather hopeful. He was sure the weakening of the universality of Christianity deprived Europeans of a firm place to stand, yet in the morass there was cause for hope: 'when for the lack of firm ground we become dizzy – and the extreme seems still to lie ahead of us – then it is true that when everything goes under, God remains. It is enough that there is transcendence'.[8] Taylor is much more sanguine and indeed this-worldly about the implications of the end of Europe. Jaspers couldn't see beyond Europe, yet Taylor can. This is because he has come to see what has gone by the name of Europe as being little more than 'a province of the multiform world we hope (a little against hope) will emerge in order and peace. Then

[6] Karl Jaspers, *The European Spirit*, trans. R.G. Smith (London: SCM Press, 1948), p. 45.
[7] Ibid., p. 47.
[8] Ibid., 64.

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the real positive work, of building mutual understanding, can begin'. Mutual understanding is about, 'growing closer to each other, and learning from each other. . .differences matter' (196).

I want to spend a little time unpacking the quotations from Taylor. What he means by 'Europe' has become a little unclear now. On the one hand he identifies differences within the West (substantively between France and the United States), opening up space for distinctions within the 'West' and yet on the other he seems easily to identify Europe as the West.[9] Either then Taylor is wanting to dismantle the unity of the West and thus create differences within the 'us' in order to give his analysis points of leverage (as opposed to general assent or repudiation) or he is slipping between designations of the compass of 'us' whilst all the time keeping the same referent. Be this as it may, nevertheless Taylor definitely *provincialises* (his word) Europe in a way Max Weber and indeed Karl Jaspers never would or could. Yet precisely at this moment another relationship of power comes into view. If Europe is provincial then so by extension must be its imaginary. This is what Jaspers had glimpsed sixty years or so previously. However, if as Taylor asserts 'we' want to assist in the emergence of a 'multiform' world, then the 'we' to and for whom he is here talking must be capable of standing outside and beyond the provincial. 'We' are consequently identified as cosmopolitan, and the way 'we' live becomes an anticipation of the very world 'we' hope to see emerge. This world will be one in which mutual understanding will be possible because there will be order and peace as opposed to the narrow-mindedness of what Taylor has elsewhere called 'block thinking'. 'Block thinking fuses a varied reality into one indissoluble unity' he has said.[10] What happens is all social and cultural actions by a specific group are traced back to an identical set of core meanings, and then everyone in the group is taken to subscribe equally to those meanings; 'they' are thought of as a homogeneous block. An example of 'block thinking' ironically is the collapse of all of 'Latin Christendom' into the West and, thereby the identification of 'Latin Christendom' as the root of the West. By this definition it is 'block thinking' to identify everyone in the West as the same and as sharing common commitments. What Taylor wants instead is, 'real connection to the multi-faceted discourse that is actually taking place on the other side'. Yet there is a question which, in the way it is posed, uncovers once again the power relationships deep within Taylor's argument. If 'real connection' is what is needed, 'the real question, then, is this: where are the crossover figures who can provide that

[9] *Modern Social Imaginaries*, op. cit., p. 196.

[10] Charles Taylor, 'The collapse of tolerance', *The Guardian*, online 'Comment is Free', 17 September, http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2007/sep/17/thecollapseoftolerance.

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urgently needed connection?'[11] Even to ask the question is however in significant measure also to answer it.

Whether or not Taylor necessarily identifies himself as a cosmopolitan 'crossover figure' who can connect what is otherwise disconnected, clearly his provincialisation of the Western 'us' is validated on the grounds of a commitment to *multiculturalism*. This is in fact what his word 'multiform' actually involves.

I want briefly to summarise Taylor's discussion of multiculturalism. It begins with the empirical observation that thanks to migration, no culture can any longer claim to be isolated or privileged in any way. Indeed, all cultures have been more or less provincialised. However, provincialisation is met with strategies of resistance; for example, migrants are encouraged in one way or another to assimilate to the host culture on the grounds that the former is in some way privileged. In an interview Taylor said: 'Of course, voluntary and successful integration is the ideal. People who learn the language and get the jobs. But if that fails to happen, then a certain kind of discourse sometimes follows that doesn't help; heavy sermons which give newcomers the impression that they're being told: "Look, we really don't want to have you guys here at all"'.[12] The migrant culture is consequently denied recognition, and according to Taylor this causes pain and suffering to the subjects of the non-recognised culture; it is tantamount to a denial of the authenticity of their existence. Yet he believes recognition is a basic and irreducible human need, and so without the equal recognition of cultures, there cannot be a healthy polity: 'equal recognition is not just the appropriate mode for a healthy democratic society. Its refusal can inflict damage on those who are denied it . . .the projection of an inferior or demeaning image on another can actually distort and oppress, to the extent that the image is internalized'.[13] Taylor consequently advocates a politics which recognises differences rather than which imposes a universal meaning. For Taylor a politics of difference, 'asks that we give acknowledgement and status to something that is not universally shared. Or, otherwise put, we give due acknowledgement only to what is universally present – everyone has an identity – through recognizing what is peculiar to each. The universal demand powers an acknowledgement of specificity'.[14]

Taylor's take on multiculturalism is heavily influenced by his Canadian roots. According to his version of the story, Canadian politics

[11] Ibid.

[12] Charles Taylor, 'Charles Taylor Interviewed', *Prospect*, no. 143, 2008, Web Exclusive, http://www.prospect-magazine.co.uk/article_details.php?id=10030.

[13] Charles Taylor, *Multiculturalism*, Expanded Edition: Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 36.

[14] Ibid., p. 39.

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and civic life has long been guided by a strong liberal ideal of the integration of different migrant cultures. But for the integration to succeed it was necessary to deny the purchase of any single universal definition of what it meant and involved to be Canadian. Canadian multiculturalism is presented by Taylor as being precisely based on a politics of recognition which opened up the possibility of a kind of unity in diversity. He has said of the Canadian situation: 'One, it was a necessary move to articulate this break with the idea that there was a kind of normative Anglo-Canadian. The second thing was—and this is what people are always hammering at the nationalists in Quebec—to go against the idea of two cultures in Canada'.[15]

Now it is possible to see exactly what Taylor is trying to get at when he talks about 'us'. He is trying to respect difference and, more importantly, not do any harm to the diversity of his readers. Taylor accepts the universality of human identity, but he also wants to accept the peculiarities of each. There is no universal except the need to recognise difference. From all of this Taylor's 'us' stands as an attempt to come to the diversity of readers, and to recognise them. His 'us' is intended to be liberal, universal, multiform, all at the same time. Yet *A Secular Age* pulls the rug out from beneath its ambition to be like Canada because it restricts the extent of the 'us' to which it is addressed. In so doing the universal demand which Taylor takes so seriously is subordinated to specificity. The 'us' to which the book is addressed might not be privileged (although the power relationships moving around the text suggest one or two pressing question marks against such a claim), but it is most certainly inward looking. It presupposes a 'them' just as Canadian multiculturalism presupposes 'Canada' and, therefore, more or less sidelines the 'not Canada'. In short, Taylor's multicultural commitments run against his need to send his arguments to a specific addressee.

Catholicism

What Taylor needs is a kind of super-universal which can be the site and the principle of a politics of recognition. Furthermore, he also needs to be able to find 'crossover figures' if it is going to be possible to achieve the mutual recognition of multicultural differences and thereby avoid the trap of 'block thinking'. After all, and as Taylor knows full well because it is one of the lessons of recent British 'celebrations' of multiculturalism, if specificities are left alone, then communication between them becomes increasingly difficult because there are no common languages. There has to be a universal power to

[15] Taylor, *Prospect* interview, op. cit.

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underpin the 'universal demand' for the 'acknowledgement of specificity' if the acknowledgement is going to be mutual and multiform, not just one way. There have to be places in which 'real connection' is going to be possible and promoted.

For Taylor, catholicity is the site of the real connection. Put another way, Taylor sees catholicity as the practice of and for a multicultural politics of recognition. Catholicity is the generator of crossover figures. The argument is made very clearly in the lecture on 'A Catholic Modernity?' which Taylor gave when he received the University of Dayton's Marianist Award in 1996. Although the text of this lecture has been published independently by Taylor[16] and it reappears in very slightly modified slices in *A Secular Age* (370–374), reference in this essay will be drawn from the version in Heft.[17]

He starts with a clarification of the title of the lecture. Taylor avoids the phrase 'modern Catholicism' because he does not want to offer some new Catholicism; rather his concern is to outline a catholicity fit for the modern age, and thereby one capable of playing a part in the construction of a modernity which recognises the multiforms of what it means to be human. This does not require anything new. Instead, Taylor suggests, a 'Catholic Modernity' can be pictured if there is clarity about what the word 'catholic' actually means.[18] For Taylor catholicity emphatically does not mean evangelisation or the spreading of a single message. He goes as far as to identify such an interpretation of catholicism as incompatible with the implication of the roots of the word: 'I want to take the original *kathalou* in two related senses, comprising both universality and wholeness; one might say: universality through wholeness'.[19] This is a definition fitting easily with Taylor's political and ethical commitment; at the risk of making a dreadful but not at all innocent or accidental pun, this meaning of catholicism might be called tailor-made to his case for multiculturalism.

Taylor identifies this meaning of catholic as Redemptive and Incarnational. He says: 'Redemption happens through Incarnation, the weaving of God's life into human lives. But these human lives are different, plural, irreducible to each other. Redemption-Incarnation

[16] Charles Taylor, *A Catholic Modernity?* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 13–37.

[17] Page references to Charles Taylor, 'A Catholic Modernity?' are drawn from the version in James Heft, ed., *Believing Scholars: Ten Catholic Intellectuals* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), pp. 10–35.

[18] My shift from capitalised Catholic to small-case catholic is deliberate and intended also to highlight exactly the same slippage in Taylor's lecture. In his writings Taylor pushes Catholicism as a Church – that is to say Catholicism with a capital C and as an institution with sacraments and a magisterium – very far into the background. Taylor's writings pretty much seem to embrace catholicism (small case) without Catholicism (capital C).

[19] 'A Catholic Modernity?', op. cit., p. 11.

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brings reconciliation, a kind of oneness'. However: 'this is the oneness of diverse beings who come to see that they cannot attain wholeness alone, that their complementarity is essential, rather than of beings who come to accept that they are ultimately identical'.[20] Presumably the scriptural justification for this passage comes from two sources: the account in Genesis of God creating humans in the plural (Genesis 1:27–28), and Peter's recognition of the right to Baptism of all people because the Holy Spirit might by God's grace be poured upon all (Acts 10: 44–48). For Taylor to 'go straight for sameness', as he puts it, is nothing less than a repudiation of catholicity (which he here gives a definite small c). The 'good catholic' is she or he who avoids any attempt to make 'good Catholics' because they know that oneness is rooted in complementarity and identity (that is differences meshing together to provide for mutual needs and fulfilment) as opposed to sameness. Taylor identifies a failing of catholicity (small c again) in the pursuit of 'unity bought at the price of suppressing something of the diversity of the humanity that God created: unity of the part masquerading as the whole. Universality without wholeness, and so not true catholicism'.[21]

According to Taylor, catholicity of this sort is analogous with the Trinity of God. Recalling the passage from Genesis, Taylor says: 'Human diversity is part of the way in which we are made in the image of God'.[22] It is an argument for 'unity in difference', moving out from the reality of human diversity in the world, an ethic which promotes the recognition of multicultural differences and, then, moves towards statements about the Trinity. The diversity of the 'human material' (Taylor's phrase) created by God tells us something about God, and therefore to promote human sameness at the expense of diversity is nothing less than to deny the Trinity. Consequently, to be Catholic is fundamentally to be open, to work toward the fullness flowing from catholicity.

The promise of such an acceptance is a *transcendence* of the ultimate form of 'block thinking', the immanent frame with its dominant principle of exclusive humanism. Transcendence is the fullness beyond the material life dominated by social and cultural imaginaries establishing how things do and ought to go one between us.[23] The bulk of *A Secular Age* is dedicated to telling the story of the emergence of the immanent frame, and it is a story about the 'sloughing off' of the transcendent from imaginations of time, space and action; the this-worldly realm stops being imagined as consubstantial with the cosmos itself. The frame is dominant when 'we come to

[20] Ibid.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid.
[23] *Modern Social Imaginaries*, op. cit.

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understand our lives as taking place within a self-sufficient immanent order' (543), and where we understand ourselves as 'buffered' from everything except our own internal desires: 'So the buffered identity of the disciplined individual moves in a constructed social space, where instrumental rationality is a key value, and time is pervasively secular. All of this', Taylor says, 'makes up what I want to call the "immanent frame". There remains to add just one background idea: that this frame constitutes a "natural" order, to be contrasted to a "supernatural" one, an "immanent" world over against a possible "transcendent" one' (542).[24] The meaning of the 'us' implied in those passages is made quite clear by Taylor: 'What I have been describing as the immanent frame is common to all of us in the modern West, or at least that is what I am trying to portray' (543).

With that admission, Taylor at once reveals the problems of the immanent frame and, also, the problem of his reading of Catholic as catholic. First of all, if as the immanent frame advocates there is nothing beyond what is present, but if also what is present is natural, then any disturbances to what is imaginatively constructed as natural will unleash profound anxieties and temptations towards the annihilation of the disturbance. For example, if the multicultural diversity of human lives is not analogous with the Trinity, and if therefore the mixing of cultures cannot be imagined as a sign of unity in difference or difference in unity, then it can only possibly be an upsetting of the natural order of things. If it is not annihilated the consequence can only be mayhem. The annihilation can take the form of 'block thinking' or even brute violence. Second, because Taylor pushes the Catholic into the background, he is incapable of identifying any institutions which might be able to play a part in consolidating an ethic of recognition. This problem becomes clear when Taylor very briefly touches upon the questions of rite ands ritual. He puts forward the proposition: 'no widening of the faith without an increase in the variety of devotions and spiritualities and liturgical forms and responses to the Incarnation'.[25] What then remains of Catholicism as a Church? What of tradition? What of the *unity* aspect of diversity, what of the diversity aspect of *unity*? Who then is 'us'?

Conclusion

If there is a hero of *A Secular Age*, he only appears very fleetingly and he is not mentioned in the index. But he does appear in

[24] To a considerable degree, albeit by a different route, Taylor here rediscovers the emergence of the 'secular sphere' that is mapped in John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990).

[25] 'A Catholic Modernity?', op. cit., p. 11.

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Taylor's 'A Catholic Modernity?' lecture. He is Matteo Ricci, the Jesuit who went to China in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Ricci is Taylor's hero because he took the Christian message to China, but attempted to adapt it to the culture he found when he arrived; according to Taylor Ricci respected multiforms, he respected the culture of his hosts (by this argument it might even be said that Ricci was a multiculturalist before his time). Furthermore with his commitment to learning the languages of his hosts and his receptivity to local religious forms, he acted as something like a crossover figure, able to translate one culture to another. Such an account of Ricci is valid but it does miss out something quite important. He was a Jesuit missionary and successfully so; despite the hostility of Dominicans, Franciscans and eventually the Vatican itself, Ricci was Superior General of the Jesuit's China Mission. Ricci might well have respected multiformal culture, he might well have been a crossover figure who could transcend the kinds of 'block thinking' to which he was subject, but he was also in China to do a very definite job. He was a functionary of the Catholic Church, not simply of catholicity.

Because he avoids the Catholic (in his writings at least) in favour of the catholic, Charles Taylor's 'us' cannot move beyond a mode of address, and a mode of address which often accidentally trips up the argument of *A Secular Age*. Certainly he tries to go further when he ties diversity to the Trinity. He seeks to go beyond the immanent frame, he seeks to rest his case ultimately on transcendence: 'being made in the image of God, as a feature of each human being, is not something that can be characterized by this being alone. Our being in the image of God is also our standing among others in the stream of love which is that facet of God's life we try to grasp, very inadequately, in speaking of the Trinity'.[26] In the end this is Taylor's 'us'; the diversity in unity and the unity in diversity of God's love. It is the 'us' of the Trinity. But because *A Secular Age* tends to downplay the importance of institutions, and because the book seems to lack the willingness to state clearly its transcendental commitments (it is noticeable that although the book reprints much of the 'A Catholic Modernity?' lecture it does not reproduce the section I have just quoted) it seems to me that, in the end, analogously with the Trinity itself Taylor's 'us' remains a mystery. *A Secular Age* is a great work of catholicism, but perhaps it needs to be a more explicitly great work of Catholicism too.

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[26] Ibid. p. 33.

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