But not only 'more general'. He also insists, thirdly, that the way in which the debate is undertaken is crucial. Similarly to Habermas, who pleads for mutual understanding between secular moderns and faith-oriented believers, Taylor's work is thoroughly irenic in spirit. The social imaginary informing his theory and theory assessment is one that cares deeply about relationality and about making space for the Other. Indeed, what he does not state explicitly comes out resoundingly in his practice - writing - namely that recognition and respect are of the essence. The believer who dares to enter the social science *agora* guided by a Christian social imaginary would do well to follow Taylor's example of *agape*.

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Charles Taylor replies:

Several very interesting ideas emerge for social science from David Lyon's paper. One touches on the nature of the 'religious'. Is there still an 'implicit religion' in many contemporary social practices and institutions? Lyon mentions modern nationalism, the formation and reproduction of national identities, and their often frightening ascendancy over those who live by them. For anyone who operates with a simple binary, between faith nourished by (often bodily) practices and narratives, on one hand, and cool secular reason generating moral principles and instrumental scenarios, on the other, the importance of nationalism today can only encourage the Bruno Latour-like idea that 'we have never been secular'. This may be one of the facts about our world which has been nourishing the idea that we live in a post-secular world.

But it is not just nationalism. Our lives are shot through with rituals, which connect us in some or other way with the immemorial past of the human species. Some of these are self-consciously designed to separate us from this, mostly religious, past; but it remains a puzzling question how much they succeed in this attempt.

Rituals have a performative dimension. 'I pronounce you man and wife' *makes* a couple married. They *effect* an order of things, or alter our relation to an order we belong to. But what is the nature of the order which is implied here. When it comes to the Mass, it is clear

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that this goes beyond the immanent frame. But what about weddings? Or whatever is effected when the chair says 'I call this meeting to order'? A standard 'secularist' view is that the order that these performatives effect or change our relation to can be defined in purely legal terms. This seems to work for 'I call this meeting to order'. Very serious consequences might follow if these words were never said: for instance, what claim to be the decisions taken could be invalidated on the grounds that there was no legally constituted meeting of the body in question. Obviously important legal consequences also follow from a valid wedding. But is that all?

Plainly for lots of people it isn't. All you need for the legal consequences is a few minutes in a registry office, but many people feel that this important step has to be marked, one should say 'solemnized' in some more meaningful way. Hence the difficulty for many 'secular' people in detaching themselves from traditional religious ceremonies for the important 'rites of passage'. Marriage is one such example, but perhaps even more important are funeral services or masses. And even where the decision is taken to stay away from church, another ceremony is devised which can really mark the deeper significance of the occasion. But what is this deeper significance? No doubt it varies from group to group, even from person to person. But it points to something beyond everyday life. This, outside the religious context, no longer has a canonical meaning, but remains a kind of pointing beyond. The boundary here between religious and non-religious cannot be clearly drawn, and perhaps never will be.

The second important idea that I'd like to mention is Lyon's view of 'a non-foundational, post-empirical social science' (page 658). This would be one which in a sense starts from social imaginaries, that is, shared understandings of a shared social world, anchored in affect, bodily practices and narratives. To say that one 'starts with' imaginaries is not to say that one ends there. The understanding of the world they incorporate can be challenged, and it can perhaps also be further explained in terms of features of the world and of history which fall outside it. But the imaginary is an unavoidable starting point. One cannot just move straight to some canonical account in a pre-constituted philosophical anthropology, be this Marxist, Durkheimian, liberal-individualist or whatever.

Respecting this starting point, social science would approach the best achievements of interpretive anthropology. It would, like this anthropology, force us to learn about and articulate the very different understandings which are afoot in our world, rather than proceeding immediately to an explanation of the differences in terms of some theory of 'the role of religion', or 'the place of ideology'. This model of social science would be very worthwhile working out.

The two points I have abstracted from Lyon's rich paper are obviously linked, since the social science he proposes would have as one

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of its major tasks to articulate the rituals which shape our lives in all their richness and complexity (and also often, ambiguity).

It would also be a genuine pluralist social science, since it would be impossible to marginalize any widely held understanding of our world in the name of some reductive explanation adopted a priori. This, of course, was the fate of religious accounts of the world during much of 20th Century social science. If being 'post-secular' means putting this era behind us, then let's by all means go post-secular.

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