Charles Taylor replies:

I want to thank Keith Tester for exploring the (almost inextricable) muddle that besets the thesis of *A Secular Age*. Tester puts the problem in terms of my use(s?) of the word 'we', but it can be put more generally. There is a tension inherent to the whole thesis.

On one hand, I want to maintain – against the whole age in which Weber wrote – that there is not a single process which one can call 'modernization', and understand as including such components as 'secularization', 'rationalization', which is coming about everywhere, only arriving in some regions earlier than others. Rather, I hold to the idea of what have been called 'multiple modernities'. Processes which, indeed, have analogies to each other, are taking place in a number of different civilizational contexts, and as result exhibit important differences from each other. The analogies can often be described in institutional terms: all societies are being pushed towards urbanization, growth economies, modern states with the monopoly of coercion, increasing use of technology. Even where some societies fail to develop these features, it will often be the case that they have lost the earlier forms which these relegate to the past. They may not develop modern forms of production, but often their older economic arrangements have broken down. They may be 'failed states', but their earlier modes of social order no longer function.

The disanalogies can often be grasped in terms of culture and practices. Self-understandings, social imaginaries, modes of sociability, will often be very different. India has political institutions very like Canada: a British Parliamentary system worked out in a federal context. But the dynamic of Indian democracy is very different, and was predicted by no-one when the Indian constitution was written.

So, on the one hand we are living in a world of multiple modernities, and of importantly different cultures. But on the other hand, migration, trade, travel, media globalization, and so on, have produced a situation in which these different areas are far from hermenetically sealed, in which people from every origin are now together in certain industrial democracies, in which elites from one culture may have imbued certain basic ways of thinking and being from another, and the like.

Does this second fact refute the reality of multiple modernities? I don't think so. The main reason is that, inextricably mixed as are all of the world's cultures and religions, nevertheless the social imaginaries of different societies can be very different. By social imaginary I mean a widely shared but not necessarily articulated understanding of what people in a society share in common. The kind of social imaginary which makes possible the practices of democracy in Canada is not the same as that which underlies such practices in India. In certain societies, one can make accusations of witchcraft

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with devastating effect, in others not. One could multiple examples. To characterize the social imaginary of a given society is not to say that every last person shares this understanding; it just means that this understanding is widespread enough to make sense of the common practices that this imaginary sustains.

But these different imaginaries coexist in a world in which they are inextricably mixed. The boundaries cannot be sharply drawn. I spoke of a Canadian social imaginary of democracy, but this is not necessarily shared in the same fashion by Canadian aboriginals. And it is also regionally inflected between, say French speaking and English-speaking Canada. A lot of the things I try to say about the 'Western' social imaginary become much less true in certain countries of Latin America; and this qualifies their application among some minority Hispanic populations in the USA. But nevertheless, all differences between these two continents are not wiped out.

The crucial claim I was trying to make about 'our' social imaginary was that it takes as background a set of pictures of impersonal order, scientific, social and ethical, which could be seen as explanatory in their own terms. To get an idea of the contrast here, think of the way in which for Plato, the way things around us operate and develop can only be understood in terms of the ideas which exist ever-unchanging in another realm. The break with post-Galilean science couldn't be more radical. This understanding constitutes what I call an 'immanent frame', which can however be 'spun' as either open or closed. This is what 'we' share. But it doesn't follow that every last person in every North Atlantic society sees things this way. The claim is rather that the understandings which circulate in our society, generally unchallenged, converge on this kind of take. I hope this claim is compatible with a non-naïve sociology.

On another point, Tester is certainly right that I am some kind of multiculturalist – although I use this word with care because it is used in such a tremendous variety of ways. As Tester implies (page 671), various 'celebrations' of multiculturalism seemed to imply that each should remain in its own cocoon with minimum contact. This is hardly the Canadian variant and nor is it mine.

It is true that I am a multiculturalist and a Catholic. I also see some affinity between these two positions. But that is not to say that I see them as identical. There can be lots of other reasons for endorsing multiculturalism in our contemporary world: this is in fact essential to making a success of a diverse but equal democracy; it will help to reduce greatly violence and conflict in our societies; it promises to open a way to the point where our differences can work for mutual enrichment rather than the poverty which invariably accompanies the rigidification of cultures. And I can think of still other good reasons. But being Catholic makes you see all this in another dimension, with its own kinds of reason. And these reasons have a lot to do with the

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Church, with the sacraments, with a Christian eschatology, as I say in the last chapter of *A Secular Age*.

'What then remains of Catholicism as a Church? What of tradition?' (page 675). But there is more than one tradition. Think of the mutual impoverishment which results from the unfounded and scandalous schism which divides us from the Orthodox. We need to challenge some of the ghettoes we have ended up comfortably inhabiting. But this takes us way beyond multiculturalism.

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