

Akbar Ganji in Conversation with Charles Taylor

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Charles Taylor: It is good to finally meet you.

Akbar Ganji (AG): Thank you. I was eager to meet you for a very long time. It's a true honor to be in your presence. I have many, many questions in several areas; modernity, secularism and religion, and a few other issues. These questions may not come in any particular order. Let's start with religion. Your book *Varieties of Religion Today* combines discussions of philosophy of religion and sociology of religion. Do you agree with this? Do you agree that this book combines these two different forms of discourse? If it is so, which one of these two discourses is dominant? Is it philosophy of religion or sociology of religion?

Charles Taylor (CT): I think it's neither and I think we have to add a third discourse, which is history. And I think that in the end there's a single discourse, which is the only adequate one. Just as sociology without history can't really get to the really important issues, so at the same time, if you don't have a deep consideration of the philosophical issues, you can't do good historical sociology. I mean, for instance, if you want to talk about religion, the development of religion, and let me say in parenthesis that I'm just claiming in that book (*Varieties of Religion Today*) and in my big book (*A Secular Age*) to be talking about religion in the West as it has developed in the last 500 years. And so if you look at that, then you have to, if you are trying to develop a theory of the development of secularization, which means many things. But the two things it does

mean is a change in the position of religion in society is a change in the position of religion in society and also it means, to some degree, sometimes, a retreat of religion of belief and practice. Now people sometimes confuse these two and it makes for confusion about what we mean by it. Now both these kinds of secularization have happened in the West. The first, the change of the position of religion has been general in the West. But the second, the retreat of religion has happened very, very differently. I mean virtually not at all in the United States. But in Sweden or East Germany very significant retreat has occurred and everything in between. Now you can't come to grips with this kind of movement without a certain understanding of human motivation, of what is the human motivation in religion. What motivates human beings in their religious life? Now I think that this motivation is very different in different times and periods. And we might miss this point because a lot of very powerful religions today, Islam, Christianity etc., are very close to each other in many respects in their driving motivations. But if you look more widely at Hinduism, Buddhism, earlier forms of religion, you realize that there is just an immense difference. So that's why I say that you can't write a general history of secularization. Even writing one about the whole West is maybe too ambitious. But the philosophical element is essential if you take the mainline secularization theory of let's say, a post-war sociology. People like Peter Berger in his earlier writings, or today, someone like Steve Bruce is still continuing, they have a very simple story that the more modernity progresses -- you know, things like industrialization, the development of the modern state, social mobility and all these markers -- the more they develop, the more religion declines. Now this assumes, they never discuss it, but this assumes that the motivation to religious life in human beings is very shallow and not very profound, so

that religious life is tied to certain sociological forms that existed earlier. And when these sociological forms are destabilized by modernity, religion disappears as well. But I disagree with that. That's the philosophical point that needs to be at the core of your historical and sociological study. If you have a different view, you'll have a very different theory of the whole development [of secularization]. And I mean to talk about how I see this movement in the West, the mainline theory -- I mean the theory I'm attacking -- thinks there is a linear movement of secularization as modernity advances. As one progresses the other progresses. A simple functional relationship. Now according to my underlying theory, you'd expect something different. You would expect that certain developments of modernity would in fact destabilize earlier forms of religious life. I mean, for instance, the idea of a monarchy embedded in the cosmos connected to God, the kind of picture of the French monarchy, that's not going to survive certain changes in society that come with modernity. But if the human relation to religion and to God is not as shallow as the mainstream theory thinks, then what would happen in many cases is religion would be recomposed in new forms that meet the new situation. And that is in fact what I would argue has happened in the West. So this is a much more adequate theory to understand this historical and sociological reality, but what it required is a deep understanding of the place of religion in human life. So I would claim that there's a single discourse and it's made up of elements that look as though they are drawn from three disciplines, but in fact they cohere together as a single discourse. The three discourses would be philosophy, history and sociology. You can't do sociology without history, history without sociology, and you can't do either without a proper philosophical

understanding of human motivation. So the whole thing hangs together from those three sources.

AG: Secularism so far has had several meanings and the meanings are the following: One of them is the decline of religion that you just mentioned. What Peter Berger and others predicted in the 1960s. They were influenced by Weber, that modern religion will demystify the world. And this finally leads to the decline of religion that you just criticized. The second one is that religion will leave the public sphere and become a private matter, so that religion has not disappeared but has only withdrawn to the private sphere. It is my relation with my God. But there's a third meaning. And the third one is the separation of the two institutions of state and religion. I know that you don't agree with the first meaning and I know that you have been debating the second meaning with Habermas. That we'll discuss later. But the third meaning -- at any rate, it is the separation of religion and state as two institutions is one of the preconditions of democracy. Do you disagree with this third meaning of secularism as separation of religion and state?

CT: No, but it's a different kind of concept because it's a normative concept. You see, the first two concepts are supposedly descriptive of what's been happening in the world. And incidentally, on the second I would like to make some adjustments but we'll come back to it. So the third meaning is a normative issue: do we need to have, in that sense, a neutral state or laic state or a secular state in order to have democratic society? Well certainly certain kinds of modern democracy, namely ones very diverse in people's religious and philosophical views, these societies function much better with a state which is neutral or equidistant or however you want to describe it. So that norm fits that. But

historically there have been other kinds of democracy. I mean the early American Republic, it was neutral between dominations, but it was very strongly marked by a Christian deist understanding of society. Now there's a great danger in this, which we saw developing in the United States after a while, that as different populations enter, for instance, at first it was very Protestant, so when Catholic populations entered, like from Ireland and so on, at the beginning they were severely discriminated against. And what you have in America is a very happy evolution, in a sense, in which this understanding was gradually extended to Catholics, Jews, all theists, then beyond -- with some struggles are still going -- but in general, in principle, seeking to embrace everyone. So in that way, it is plain that for a modern democracy in modern conditions of movements of population, which are virtually unavoidable, therefore of increasing diversity of each society, it's really obviously much better to have that kind of regime where the state is neutral. But I think people make a mistake when they think that it's utterly impossible to have a democracy at all in a condition where this kind of neutrality isn't met. And so I mean the problem arises in many Muslim societies, right? Can you define the state as totally separate from Islam? And it may be difficult to get a consensus for that. But then what's needed is a kind of understanding of the necessity of a self-limiting state in the religious domain. We have had a precedent in the United States with this idea because when the United States was really a Christian state, the state wasn't considered to have an important role in religious life. That was left to the churches. So there was a self-limiting state, although it was a Christian state, it was a self-limiting state. And this is what I think would be an essential condition of the development of democracy in the Muslim world. Sometimes this comes easiest when you already have a conflict. I mean

take the Turkish case. You have this state that was secular but not neutral under Atatürk, because it was a militant secular state trying to drive religion back. And then you have the slow development of parties which are Islamic in orientation, until you get to the present ruling party (the AK Party), which has developed a notion of Islamic democracy where the government is self-limiting in that respect. It's not going to try to intervene and persecute Alevis or any other minority group. And by playing the rules of the democratic game, it has forced the secularist Kemalists to retreat to the point where they are going to respect the right of government to be held by the Islamist party. So you get these two ideologies, we hope, that come to a kind of equilibrium understanding in which both accept that the state is self-limiting. It will neither impose secularism nor will it impose any particular brand of Islam. And of course there are these important minorities in Turkey. I mean there are the Alevis so it would be catastrophic if Sunni Islam was imposed on them. And thus we've arrived at this idea of a self-limiting state. Now it's easier when you have two powers grabbing for the state and where there is a balance of power. It would be harder in the Iranian case, I imagine, where you have this very, very strong Shia majority. But it's not impossible that the very bad experience of being ruled by an Islamic non-self-limiting state, in which you now live under in Iran, might have induced people to think that maybe there's another way.

AG: I don't think the third argument is 100% normative, because it has areas in which are not normative. You state that we should have a historical point of view, but when we look at history we realize that in all of these historical cases, all of the democratic states are secular in that religion and state are separated. Empirically speaking, when we look at democracies we see in all of these cases there is a

separation of religion and state. This could have three meanings. Number one is that the state does not derive its legitimacy from religion. The second one is that the state does not implement religious law. The third one is that clergy do not have a particular right or not even a particular right to rule. All democratic states share these three attributes. I don't say that wherever there's secularism there is democracy. I say exactly the reverse of that: wherever there is democracy there is also secularism in these aforementioned three meanings.

CT: Not quite. Which is very interesting because I think we're not too far apart because some of the things you're describing are what I call a self-limiting state. But take Argentina today. Now in order to be president of Argentina you have to be a Roman Catholic. And actually a Muslim was elected president but he converted, Carlos Menem. I think you're right. In the long-run this religious provision will be eventually voided. So you have these historic links between religion and the state, as you had in early America where, as I said, it was a Christian state and part of its self-justification was that it was following the will of God. So you see this first point about the state being founded in religion is not always absent. But now you have this issue of the state applying religious law, which of course also existed in the early Puritan beginnings of the American colonies, in Boston for example, but that has become more and more rare. And the other is a special role for clergy. Now I could quibble and say that there are bishops in the British House of Lords but this is not -- this is one of these vestigial leftovers from history that does not affect democracy today. But that's a very interesting thing you are raising because from out of a different experience you're forcing us to rethink this concept of secular, you see, because in the West a lot of these things ran together and

you're splitting them up into three different categories. One of the things that I think can continue and has continued is the idea of some link between the state and religion. You see, even the United Kingdom, until about 50 years ago, it was generally understood that somehow this was linked to the Anglican church, the Christian religion, and that exists vestigially today in the fact that the queen will be crowned and so on. But it's become more and more vestigial. So that first thing (i.e. the state legitimacy derived from religion) lingered on a very long time in Western democracy. But these other two things (i.e. the state implementation of religious law and the role of the clergy), which are part of what I call a self-limiting state -- a self-limitation in the realm of religion and state -- they go back farther because they were essential parts of the process of the growth of Western democracy, which happened in a context of tremendous conflict. First of all, conflicts between Catholics and Protestants, then conflict between lay ideologies in the Catholic Church, etc. So in all these cases you had the legacy of what was a self-limiting state, even if it remained, as it were, under the umbrella of a certain religion, it was understood that the civil power should not intervene and start applying religious law else it would lead to conflict.

AG: Since you have stated that that first principle lingers on as the other two have waned, what examples could you give in which a modern democratic state derives its legitimacy from divine sources such as from God? As we see in Iran, the government states that God has granted the power to rule to the supreme Islamic Jurist and that the state is legitimate because God has allowed this Islamic Jurist to rule. It does not derive its legitimacy from the vote of people. By contrast, all of the democratic states are saying that they derive their legitimacy from the people's vote.

Different shades of social contract theories exist in all democratic theories. Ranging from Locke to Rawls, all of these are based on social contract theories. That is we human beings create the government. The state is our creation and is legitimate as long as it remains our servant. But religious government has nothing to do with the people's vote because it derives its legitimacy from God. In this sense it is not a democratic state as it derives its legitimacy from God.

CT: In one sense yes but not in another sense. For example, consider John Locke. Locke believes that we should follow the natural law and the natural law dictates that the only legitimate authority is created by a social contract. But, where does natural law come from? He is very clear. God has created human beings in the state of nature where natural law holds. It is God's will, according to Locke, that we have a social contract. So you get the founders of the American Republic who wrote a "Declaration of Independence" in which they said that "We hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed, by their CREATOR, with certain unalienable Rights." So there are two ways in which legitimate democratic rule can derive from God. One is that the actual formula of democratic rule is God-given. And the other is that certain people, certain clergy, have a mandate directly from God to order the society. And in a certain sense, Western history is a struggle between these two understandings of God-derived authority.

AG: I don't accept that second one. The one that you mentioned in which God has created national order and then we derive democratic society from reading that national order is just a nominalism. You just call it divine, it is not really divine.

CT: When we talk about Locke?

AG: Richard Rorty says that the aim of religion is secularization. He says God has ordained secularism. We can say government derives its legitimacy from the people and God accepts this. We have rights and God accepts these rights. I don't disagree with this at all. Do you know what this is like? The God of the Abrahamic religions is a personal one.

CT: Yes.

AG: The god of other religions is impersonal.

CT: Yes.

AG: Then we have to ask a Buddhist what is his God. It is the whole universe's God. Then god becomes just another name for the world. This is just naming something, something else. It's a god that doesn't speak, doesn't contact us, does not inspire us, doesn't send prophets, and doesn't react in any way to our actions. This is just naming it as such. The government that we discovered is marked by the claim that their government directly derives its legitimacy and its marching orders from God. I rule over you because God has directly endowed me with this right. In modern times we can't accept God has given no one the right to rule. When we people allow somebody to rule us, that person will rule us. Now you name this something else. You say God also accepts this. Then you say in this sense government derives its legitimacy from religion. All that you're saying is that democratic systems do not derive their legitimacy from religion, but from people's votes. If you said God also wants this, I have no arguments against this. In that case, God is following us.

CT: Yes. Many, many distinctions need to be made. The first point about God being the same as the Impersonal Order. That's very much Spinoza. It's not Locke.

AG: I was referring to Buddhists.

CT: I know, but its closest representative -- is Spinoza; and Locke and Spinoza are very different here. You see, I mean, I agree with you ...

AG: This is like simply saying ... we gave the name of God to the world but here in this case we call our choice God's acceptance.

CT: Well, that was also a theory in the West much earlier but it's not the same theory as Locke. In the high Middle Ages in Europe, the theory was that we should obey the king because God has in general blessed earthly power as necessary for our wellbeing. So whoever ends up being the legitimate power; it can be a king, it can be a Republican government, you ought to obey them. Now Locke is something very different. There is a certain regime which is the right regime willed by God. And that's what the early American Republic thought. They thought that American democracy was the only Godly regime.

AG: What does God want?

CT: God wants this order, a certain order in which natural right is respected.

AG: How do we know this?

CT: If it's in Locke's case it was differently derived at. Some theorists got it out of the Bible. Locke had a very simple argument that if you look at human beings you can see that God designed them to preserve themselves, and that therefore we should never take life, even our own life. There's an interdiction on suicide and then he proceed to derive it all from here.

AG: Locke doesn't concern me.

CT: I'm not a Locke fan either.

AG: How do we know what God wants, insofar as the state is concerned? How are we going to find out what God wants?

CT: Well I think that is a much more complicated question because I think we have a certain sense of what God wants from us human beings, and then we have the very concrete particular situation in which we find ourselves, and we have to somehow make a judgment of how the first fits into the second. I don't think that we can easily make absolutely general judgments without looking at a particular situation. If you are asking me directly, I am a Christian. I'm a Catholic Christian. I have a certain conception of what God wants human beings to become and where they are now and what the next best move would be to get there. And then I put this together with a very particular judgment of where I am now in the situation and so on. And so you ask me, should we go in this direction or that direction, and I'll say this direction. But I have to admit that I could be wrong about this. While being right about what God wants, I could be wrong about this issue. So there's no way that I could say with certainty, this direction is what God is telling me to do unambiguously. I couldn't say that. Locke thought he could. The founders of the American Republic thought they could, but I don't think you can, because I think we live in these very special, particular, unrepeatable situations and we have to judge well what God wants us to do.

Nader Hashemi: I think his question was about the state, the political state. How do we know what type of political state God wants from us?

CT: I think you can make a general argument that, other things being equal when it's possible, a democratic state is superior in terms of doing what God wants because you have in its ideal form -- I mean, we never live up to this ideal but I'm referring to minimum exploitation, minimum use of violence, minimum coercion of people, maximum possibility of people developing their lives as they see fit and therefore, this political regime is where these things are most possible while not crushing some other important demand, this democratic regime is obviously superior in general.

Ahmad Sadri: And therefore it is superior and is divine?

CT: In a certain sense according to the will of God, yes, but you see, unlike Locke and unlike a lot of other people, I'm very wary of saying this is divine because I realize that I'm only saying this not just because I share the Christian revelation, but because I have a particular judgment about how these regimes work. I mean, if you show me that democracy produces other terrible things which I'm not noticing at the moment then I may have to change my mind, and I'm recognizing that. So if anybody; clergy, laity, the *ulema* (clergy) or the supreme Islamic jurist (*vali faqih*) say God's will is this, I say to them: you should have a little bit more humility, gentlemen or ladies, you know, nobody can say they know God's will with absolute certainty. What they can say is, as far as we can see, this seems to accord to the will of God. I mean that's why something like the present Iranian Constitution I find totally perverse from a theistic point of view. I mean I think this goes so much against how I understand God. Now I am speaking as a Christian but, who do these people think they are? They are just human beings like the rest of us who share revelation.

AG: Well, a fundamentalist's response to this would be that God has decreed that we should rule. I mean in all religions we have fundamentalists. They actually believe that God prefers the violent aspect of faith. How do we know that you are right or the fundamentalist person is right?

CT: Well, you know, that's a very interesting question, how do you know?

AG: But I'm, of course, not going to discuss Rawls now. It's a later discussion. I'm pushing the argument toward the Rawlsian solution whose political liberalism that separates -- the moral and religious teachings from the state and metaphysical realm; I'm going in that direction. Because in this case there are many people who can have claims to know or intuit God's will. Muslims, Christians or Jews, Catholics, Protestants, Shiites and Sunnis and Bahais, everybody says that God has inspired us. It creates a problem.

CT: Yes, but Rawls...I mean I don't disagree with you about Rawls having a good idea here. But Rawls isn't the answer to this problem.

AG: I know it's not the result of this situation we are discussing but I'm claiming that there is no way for us to understand what God wants. Many people claim that God has given us a mission. Bush says God told me to invade Iraq. Mr. Khamenie attributes his actions to God also, and Bin Laden says the same thing. There is no way that we can know what God wants. And since we are confronted with different solutions, the best thing is to separate this from the sphere of state, in the sense that they should not give their religion to the state.

CT: Yes, that's a very good solution to the problem of religious pluralism. But Rawls assumes or wants to take for granted that there are these different religious believers who

disagree with bin Laden, Khomeini and so on. Because they see their religious life as living in a state of peace and cooperation and mutual respect with others. And they have very strong religious grounds to be like that, act like that, and therefore; they're willing to accept this kind of political regime. So we really require that there be, in order to have a Rawlsian state, we require that there be a large number of Christians and Muslims and Buddhists and Hindus and Jews and so on who understand their religious obligations or their religious life as met by living in this kind of condition of mutual respect. So we can't, as it were, finesse the religious problem. Do you see what I mean? I mean we have to -- we who believe in this idea have to convince others -- I have to convince other Catholics and you have to convince other Muslims and so on that we need to respect the same rules in order to have this kind of regime. It's the best kind of regime we can get today because we live in a state of diversity and we have to get rules that we can all accept from different perspectives.

AG: But as you said earlier, when there is a situation where everybody agrees with everyone, is there one interpretation? In that sense you can have a democracy and a kind of religious interpretation of coexistence. But when we have different religious beliefs, the Rawlsian solution comes in?

CT: Absolutely. I mean you can even put it this way. It's very interesting that there's a legal scholar here, Andrew Koppleman. Andrew has done a wonderful thing in which he writes about a judge in 1825 in the United States called Storey. And he repeats a kind of Rawlsian idea but within a narrower focus. He says, look, we're all sorts of different Christian denominations in America, so we couldn't justify founding a court judgment on Anglicanism or Presbyterianism or some other denomination, but we're all Christian. So

he argues we could draw on some general Christian understanding in order to make a certain judgment in the court, and he went on and did that. See, there you had a Rawlsian overlapping consensus but within this very narrow limit of all being Christians. What we've done in a certain sense historically is we just moved the borders, the boundaries, of that overlapping consensus out to include, as a matter of fact, every possible position. Every possible position which is willing to work within such a system of overlapping consensus, because that cannot accommodate people who think like Ataturk, that secularism should be enforced. It can't accommodate people who think like certain Catholics in the Basque provinces (of Spain) that Catholicism should be enforced, it cannot accommodate people who think that Islam has to be enforced, etc. These people cannot be part of the consensus. But what you have is a consensus which is nourished by versions of all these different views, which tell people, this is the way to live. I mean I owe it to God to live with these other people, who don't believe in God, in a condition of mutual respect. And that's an essential underpinning of this kind of regime.

AG: Let us advance beyond secularization and go to other questions. Let us talk about your book *Varieties of Religion Today*. You say in this book that William James has missed the correct description of humanity today only in three respects. In everything else, William James is right. My question is, what has William James to contribute to the situation of religion today?

CT: I think that he has contributed to the understanding of religion today in the West. I really must stress that. That William James, partly because of him, he was just a very insightful man, but partly because he was living in the States, where already certain features of religion in other Western societies were being pioneered. And the feature of

religion today in the West that James understood so well was its fracturing into a number of different affinity groups of quite different kinds, where people are following their own spiritual intuitions very strongly. See, the West has gone through this massive evolution in which at the beginning, let's say 1500, everybody lived in a single -- I'm talking about Western Christendom or Latin Christendom -- everybody lived in a big Catholic church. Every society was a Catholic society. Belonging to the state, belonging to the church, you know, they were the same thing really or the same two organizations growing out of the same population. And we've passed through a series of intermediate phases and we've come to an era in which religious life is more and more -- if you like centered on, powered by, the particular spiritual search and needs of groups and individuals. And there is no more the notion that belonging to the state and belonging to a church are linked. Not absolutely but let's say that kind of joint belonging has very much dwindled and more and more religious life is led in ways that don't connect to the whole society but rather it connects you to other people with the same affinity. That is the major feature of religious life today in the West. I want to stress that qualifier.

AG: That actually what has changed is that individuals no longer are part of these totalities?

CT: They may belong to a large totality. They may be Catholic as I am, a very large totality. But they don't see that longing as connected to their belonging to the state that they are in; which, you know, people in Poland still do or still did very recently. It's not everywhere. People at a certain point in the United States thought that Protestant Christianity was part of what it was to be an American. People in Britain thought that Protestant Christianity was part of what it was to be British. People in Spain thought that

Catholicism, etc., etc. You see, there are these ways of living your religious life by connecting to very large scale national identities. And we have moved away from that. This description is exaggerated because there's a lot of that still left. But the West has slid from a world in which everybody belonged to a state church or a church aspiring to be a state church. You know, churches struggle with others movements to take over the state or whatever. The move from that [a connection to state power] to a spiritual life in which a lot of what they're living is unconnected to the larger political society marks a shift. So it might be a large international church, like in my case, but it no longer connects in the same way to the political structure.

AG: You have said in this book that we live in a post-Durkheimian world. And it has several attributes. The first one is that religious affiliations have nothing to do with our national identity. The second one is that the varieties of religious convictions have fractured and multiplied. The third one is that the religious life of a person depends on his own religious experience. It doesn't depend on the church or a clerical order. The fourth one is that religious convictions are not transmitted from one generation to the next generation, but each generation has its own religious convictions that may be different from the convictions of their fathers and mothers. My question is how are these four related to one another and what is specific about this post-Durkheimian world that William James could not have understood or did not understand?

CT: Well he understood lots but I think it's the third one that I don't quite agree with the formulation. See, a lot of religious life now is driven or determined by people's sense of their own spiritual affinities. But the spiritual affinity can be with a larger church, a

larger church or a clergy. That's my case. Or it can be with a very small organization of friends, or it can be with a meditation group. So in other words, people don't say anymore -- I mean people never said this but in a sense unconsciously -- I'm a Pole so I've got to be a Catholic. They are spiritually moved by something. It can be the Dali Lama, it can be Pope John Paul etc. They move into that. This kind of following your own religious instinct has been totally legitimated in Western society. I would say that the big change occurred in the 1960s or there about, in which what was previously an elite ethic of authenticity, everybody following their own sense, became a mass cultural phenomenon. You can't exaggerate this development and it's a big change, almost a cataclysmic cultural change. But you see, that's again something in the West. It certainly influences a small stratum of highly educated and mobile people working in the globalized economy, even if they come from India or, you know, they're to some extent influenced by that. But as a mass phenomenon, it's a Western phenomenon.

AG: The question is, are these four different attributes related to one another?

CT: Yes, in a certain sense. The key is, the importance of my own religious affinity because that will mean post-Durkheimian, that will mean I won't be connecting myself. I mean that both mean that I won't be connecting my religious allegiance and my political allegiance. It means that the number of options will multiply. It means that the idea that I ought to follow my father and mother because they were religious doesn't necessarily follow. So these things are all, you know, they hold together. They're kind of facets of a single cultural shift.

AG: You answered that one of the attributes of what has happened is that the varieties of our religious belief have multiplied.

CT: Yes.

AG: Now my question is this; can we find among these varieties a distinction between what is good and what is better or what is bad and what is worse? And if we can make this evaluation, on what criteria can we make such judgment?

CT: I will make it certainly, but I make it on a criterion that makes sense to me. But we will not agree. To give you an example, I am a very orthodox Catholic Christian, and I think that we have to grow to the point of opening ourselves to God and seeing that we are simply made by God, we emanate from God. We have to go beyond a very focused sense of ourselves and being totally self-sufficient. A lot of the culture of authenticity is telling us to liberate ourselves, to assert ourselves, to free ourselves and so on. Now for me there is missing an immensely important dimension of reality. But the people who are into that culture of authenticity are not going to believe me. So we have to live together and we have to find a way to coexist.

AG: You believe that today's spirituality is superior to the spirituality of before because you account for attributes to the spirituality of the past. It is associated with hypocrisy. It's associated with boredom. It is associated with a kind of rebellion against existing religious forms, and the confusion between belief and power. And you count two problems with modern spirituality. You say it's shallow and it doesn't make any demands of you and doesn't require any asceticism. What do you mean by shallowness of today's spirituality and what do you mean by the fact that by the assertion that today's spirituality is it easy and doesn't make any demands?

CT: I think these formulations don't get me quite right. I would say a lot of today's spirituality is shallow. I mean Mother Theresa isn't shallow. So I mean I could put it this way: that in an earlier dispensation there was the imposition of a very powerful religion with a very deep aspiration to spirituality. It made a demand of very great dedication and devotion. Now lots of people made it up by more or less conforming outwardly and not being dedicated to it inwardly. And there was a certain amount of hypocrisy involved and pretending. Now all the people that would have been more hypocritical in the past can practice a very much less demanding spirituality. But I wouldn't say that everything -- I mean the spirituality of today is superior to that of yesteryear, or the other way around. There will always be people with a deeper, more devoted faith and people with less deep faith. But these manifest themselves very differently. I mean maybe it belongs to the religious development of mankind that we can come to an era where really, in the phrase of the Qur'an, "there is no compulsion in religion." That is something that we had to come to. I mean in Christian terms I see it of where we had to come to that.

AG: You have said that the post-Durkheimian identities are very important in the modern world. And you have given the examples of Irish and Polish post-Durkheimian identities.

CT: These are really neo-Durkheimian identities.

AG: I don't understand what you mean by neo-Durkheimian. Please explain the term neo-Durkheimian. And please tell us why the neo-Durkheimian identities have become so important today.

CT: See, this was an attempt to find an ideal typical -- a language of ideal types which would capture the evolution, the big, big evolution in Western society between an earlier

understanding of society as Christendom and a later one. The earlier one, a paradigm case, was the ancient regime of the French monarchy, for instance. Here you have an idea of the king as kind of sacred figure of the order of things, of the social order as being cosmically grounded and a number of other features of that kind. And this understanding was very much destabilized and rendered impossible by the development of modern equality, mobility, sense of individualism. And so what arose from this destabilization was a new way of linking the society to God. These modern societies are all societies where people had been mobilized around a certain idea of themselves. A society that's mobilized has to have an idea. What are we mobilized around? For instance, a paradigm case in the modern world is nations. We are Canadian, we are French, etc. Now, a number of these modern mobilized societies have a religious marker. And the United States, again, was the first good case of this. This was a society mobilized around the design that God created human beings. Then early British nationalism was mobilized around the Protestant identity against Spain and France. Then you have Catholic cases like Poland and Ireland, where the sense of mobilizing for independence or mobilizing for freeing the society from the foreign invader was around the sense of being Catholic. Now I call this a Durkheimian identity because it weaves together political and religious allegiance. But, it's neo-Durkheimian because this weaving together is done in the context of modern mobilized societies, not like what I call paleo-Durkheimian, like the traditional French monarchy. And the fact is that that is very important today. There's a great deal of mobilization. I mean take Islamism is an attempt to make mass mobilization around a certain version of Islam and to make that the foundation of political life, overthrowing an existing regime. And wherever this has taken on, it has profoundly

modified the religious life. Because modern identity mobilization enters a kind of space where there are new kinds of considerations that are of importance, considerations of defeating a possibly enemy or liberating yourself from an enemy, or defending yourself from dangerous threat from an enemy, considerations of pride and dignity for another identity which has potentially humiliated you. If you listen to the language of national and other mobilization in the world, it's full of this. So another set of considerations become primary; pride, power, resistance against the enemy, and you could argue -- I would certainly argue -- that this leads to a de-centering of religious faith from what it should be. I mean take for example the kind of right wing Protestant Christian American identity. A certain identity not shared by all Americans, but certain identity being American, which is shared by these people. Now you could argue, and I know a number of my Protestant friends very strongly argue that this has de-centered their religious faith because now they have it heavily invested in pride in America, American power. And Bush is a perfect example of this. So it could be argued -- from a Christian point of view I would argue that this is a deviation from religion and Abdolkarim Soroush has a wonderful line when he says: "We don't want an Islam of identity, we want an Islam of truth." And I think that says it very, very well. That when you get the kind of thing that you hear from Ahmadinejad today and it's all mobilized around the community and power. And then, you see, we are now, facing the danger of a clash of civilizations, which is not yet here, but we're in danger of having mobilization and counter mobilization. And in the West there is developing a very mindless Islamophobia which is feeding off the mobilization from Islamism and then identifying all Muslims with that kind of Islamism. This is creating terrible rifts within Western societies between Muslim

minorities in certain cases and then this is reflected in the international media and international relations. And so this has become a very dangerous phenomenon that we have to fight against strongly.

AG: How do you account for Christian, Jewish and Muslim fundamentalism?

CT: I suppose there are different causes but one thing is relatively the same – it crops up again and again. I was saying earlier in my general theory of secularization that modern developments destabilize early forms of religion and that religion has to be recomposed, reformed. Well now there is a certain way of carrying out this reform which is based on a sense of threat. Somebody is depriving us of our traditional religion so we have to rally. And one way of rallying is to say, well, we'll reach back to the origins and we'll reproduce this kind of salafist movement. And then there is a terrible pathos here because they never do reproduce it because you can't. I mean, for instance, take Protestant fundamentalism in this country. The first movement to take on the name and which gave this name wide currency was a Protestant movement that went back very strongly to the Protestant idea that the Bible was the ultimate source of truth. But then they found the challenge was from various kinds of modern science to the Bible, the Bible's account of creation, etc. So the response was to claim that the Bible was all literally true. But this was something new in Christian history, because it required, having made very clearly the distinction between literal truth, literal scientific truth, and metaphorical truth. Now this distinction was only made totally sharp with the arrival of modern Western science.

AG: The difference was obliterated when?

CT: It was only made totally clear in the way it is now, literal truth and images or metaphors and so on. The idea here is that these are two totally different kinds of discourse. In other words, the idea that there is this very difference discourse which is literal scientific and another discourse which is mythical image discourse and that one is much superior to the other. That is an idea of modern scientific culture. And so the response, the defense response, of this kind of process was to say we are speaking also the language of literal scientific truth.

Danny Postel: Could I just add one little amendment to that which is even sometimes when Protestant fundamentalists or any fundamentalists actually is opposing science. So for example, when creationists say -- this is before intelligent design -- when creationists say no, Darwinians are wrong about the origins of life. They oppose modern science in specific claims that modern science makes, but they've accepted, whether they realize it or not, the epistemological validity and legitimacy and authority of the scientific way of looking at the world insofar as they insist on the literal truth, rather than backing off and simply saying this is a different kind of knowledge. They're actually reproducing and legitimizing, participating in the specifically modern scientific episteme.

CT: Yeah. And that's why they taught creation science, you see. You said it much better than me.

AG: So you do not contend that all of the contents of religious text have objective literal truth.

CT: Well, not if you are opposing literal truth to the truth that you can carry in images. See, if you oppose that, then of course they don't all have literal truth. They have another kind of truth.

AG: So for instance, the resurrection of Jesus Christ didn't actually happen, that Jesus arose from the dead?

CT: Yes. I mean I think that He did but it means something very different because it also means that He is living fully in another kind of time. So if you try to understand it without understanding the notion of another kind of time which can gather times together, right? Times that are now separate from each other can be gathered together. If you see resurrection outside of that transformation in our whole relation to time, then you always distort it. To take another Bible story, it's not like Lazarus rising from the dead, which was simply coming back from dead to be alive again and then dying later on. It's another kind of thing. So you have to put it in the context of a quite different understanding of time.

AG: So in other words, do you believe that actually Lazarus was brought back to death in the literal truth of it?

CT: I mean certainly the story would imply that Lazarus was taken for dead and came out. I don't know whether he was actually clinically dead or not.

AG: What about the Virgin birth? Was it a gynecological truth or was a metaphoric one?

CT: These cases are very hard to judge. They're obviously cases that are actually central to the faith, like resurrection, other cases that are not. Who knows about these cases? But something like resurrection I think you have to understand it, both in the Muslim religion as well, that it is central to Islam and central to certain variance of Judaism too.

AG: We Muslims believe in a complete transcendental God and God is completely free from any physical attributes. But that you consider Jesus to be God is a position the Qur'an completely rejects. And now we have two different conceptions of one phenomenon. A completely transcendental God on one hand and a God who becomes man in the Messiah. Is this a symbolic event or a real one?

CT: Yeah. For Christians it's real, that we really have two natures in one person.

AG: And can you rationally defend this position based on rational arguments?

CT: Well that sounds as though you understand very clearly what the rational entailments are of God. Now you can certainly understand the rational entailments of a particular conception of God and there's a conception of God which is both Jewish and Muslim where the rational entailments are such that this couldn't be otherwise. But a Christian question to you would be, is your conception of God really correct? And this is where we disagree. See, I mean for instance, you started off saying, well God is something beyond the physical. God is certainly, in a certain sense, beyond being. But if you start saying well there's physical being and there's more than beyond physical being and so on. Then you're talking about a certain metaphysical view of different kinds of being. God can't be identified with either of those. So really, we're dealing with very, very deep matters that none of us properly understand about the nature of God. Whoever speaks of rationality here is already assuming certain fundamental definitions in terms of which the notion of rationality plays out. But one can challenge these. It's not irrational to challenge them.

AG: You are a religious man and some say you are deeply religious. How do you reconcile religious belief and rationality? Let me give two different concepts of religion and rationality. In rationality we say if a is b, and b is c therefore a is c. This is syllogistic reasoning.

CT: That's right.

AG: How does religion look at this? We take religiosity as a form of following a text, the Qur'an, the Bible and the Torah or following slavishly people; such as Moses, Jesus, Mohamed, and the Imams in the Shia tradition of Islam. In the first one we have an autonomous syllogistic reason. The second one is slavishly following people or texts. If you ask me why do I say this, because Qur'an says that or because Mohammed said this etc. But in rationality, we are led by reason. Do you think we can reconcile these two different modes of thinking?

CT: Reconcile? Of course. I mean because, you see, you started defining. If you define, you've already lost the argument if you're defining reason, semi-syllogistic reasoning. Where do the premises come from? And the premises can't come from further syllogistic reasoning. Understanding rationality properly requires that you see it as including but not exclusively made up by deductive reasoning, syllogistic reasoning. It includes but is not exhausted by syllogistic reasoning. So the premises have to come from somewhere and we have insights and we try to formulate these insights, put them into words, and get them clear, and then we can start making deductions. So there's another function of reason. The function of what I call articulating very deep insights, bringing them up to words, putting them in words. I mean Plato knew this because the Greek term logos includes this element of formulation, of formulating. So you can't

define reason just as syllogistic reasoning because you wouldn't get anywhere with syllogistic reasoning. It needs premises. And where do the premises come from? And some of them come from God, perhaps. So that's not slavishly following.

AG: Can religion be completely rationalized?

CT: No, because that means that we could totally articulate everything about God, and that's so far beyond us. So we can only, to some minor degree, get a rational grasp of God.

AG: So how can we accept religion whose entirety cannot be fit within rationality? I'm not saying religion is against rationality but there are elements in this camp that are not rational. How can we accept something that has non-rational elements in it?

CT: It seems to me to be very evident that if you wait around until you have a view of the world of which you understand everything before you act, you're gonna be in a state of paralysis for the rest of your life. I mean we're never going to understand the depths of human existence, of the cosmos, etc.

AG: Do you think that Heidegger, who did not believe in God, did not understand existence?

CT: I'm not sure if either of those are true. I mean I'm not sure he didn't believe in God. He had a very strong conception, but he didn't have my conception of God, and he certainly didn't think you could totally understand God. I mean his whole point was that there's something radically incomplete about our understanding, getting some things clear, made other things covered up or made difficult.

AG: He has two questions about today's man. What has happened to the contemporary man? What has he been turned into? And the second is, what

should come of today's man? What ought he to turn into? The first concerns the actual situation of man. The second one is the idealistic goal of human development.

What is the telos of man?

CT: I don't know if I can answer the first question as it is because it seems to me we've become lots of different things, you see, in the modern world. I mean I'm struggling for a way of coming to grips with this. Certainly we live in a set of very fixed orders; legal order, ethical order, political order, a sense of total order in the cosmos. And these orders, of course, exclude a lot of -- they make it hard to see -- a lot of features of our reality. In particular, they make it hard to see the potentialities and powers of personal relations to transform the situation between human beings. Now Weber is a very good index because Weber has tracked one part of modernization, which is the continuing rationalization. And part of rationalization is understanding things in terms of universal rules, regular rules etc. Now Weber had a fairly good theological formation in that he knew people like Harnack, who was one of the great theologians of the 19th century, and he saw that -- I think you were right about this earlier -- the whole basis of the New Testament is -- and indeed I think our three religions; Judaism, Islam and Christianity, I believe are based on the idea of a primacy of what you might call a personal relation to; God revealing Himself, God calling Abraham and so on. And the New Testament is based on that too. And so Harnack picked up on this and picked up on the importance of this Greek word for gift, gift of grace, *kharisma*. And so Weber picks up on that, too, and sees well, you know, there's something missing when you understand everything simply in terms of legal orders, and other orders. There is this power that can erupt into a situation of charisma and alter it. And then we've taken over that and

banalized the term in our politics. But it shows how much we are thinking always in terms of regular order. So we're surprised by people like Mandela or, you know, Gandhi or Martin Luther King. We're always surprised by them because they saw something more than that. They saw potentiality of shifting the order by some kind of act. Gandhi or King, you know, via non-violent resistance or the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Mandela. And that's one of the things we miss.

AG: So the connection of this to the question of what is a human being and what should he be, how do we connect this?

CT: In the present situation we have realized to a tremendous degree one of our potentialities, which is to erect systems of rules and explanation. And we have crushed and inhibited and made difficult to operate another aspect of our potential, which is the potential for transforming and being transformed by certain relations that connect; friendship, love, forgiveness and so on. And that has kind of atrophied to a great degree in the modern world. So the fullness of human beings requires that we work on breaking that open again. And that's what I think our great spiritual leaders, really great spiritual leaders today do understand.

AG: How do you explain the new religious movements? How are they founded? How did they spread? How did they develop?

CT: Very differently. I mean one of the most obviously important of these movements is Pentecostal Protestantism. And that's something that nobody foresaw or could foresee. And you can see retrospectively why it happened here. I mean you think of all these movements that are occurring and have occurred. I mean within Islam there are all these various *tariqats* or, you know, the various kinds that have been spread in Africa. They

have a different kind of dynamism but they're still very important. I mean a successful secular democracy, if you like, like Senegal, which is half Christian, half Muslim, it's partly because of this tradition, I'm told by my colleague here at Northwestern, Souleyman Bachir Diagne, certain sufi *tariqats* have been very powerful in that society. What is in common in Falun Gong in China and Pentecostal Christianity and these kinds of new developments of *tariqats* in Muslim Africa, I don't have the faintest idea of how you could generalize it because there's such a different concept. And then there are new developments of Bakhti religion in Hinduism. I mean come back in 2050 and maybe I'll have figured out some kind of common thread. But at the moment, I'm just totally perplexed.

AG: You said that our reaction to authentic intuitions, it is possible that these would turn into formal and superficial rituals. What do you mean by that?

CT: Well I suppose I measure death as against superficiality by a double criterion. On the one hand -- and this is again from my point of view -- how much they understand the depth of emotions and motivations in human beings. And the second one is how much they allow for openness to a very profound and far reaching transformation of human life. And these two are connected. So it's these two criteria together that give me a sense.

AG: You have talked in some of your works about a recycling and reinterpreting traditions, reconstruction. You have put that in front of a new social imaginary. What is the meaning of reinterpretation of tradition? Is this an alternative as opposed or in contradistinction to modernity?

CT: Well no, just that modernity reposes and makes the necessity for such reinterpretation. I mean reinterpretation becomes necessary when you put people in a

quite new situation and then they have new questions. And they scour the traditional text perhaps but nobody quite asked that question before. The answers aren't there. So you have to think again, what is the spirit of this whole tradition? And then see what it means today. And then the other way of dealing with this is the fundamentalist one: to imagine that the answers are all there. And that's equally changing things because they don't take the phrases in their original context anymore. They take them out of context.

AG: You have said that there are two possible theories of modernity. The first is the historical approach and the other is the ahistorical approach. And you consider Habermas to be ahistorical and then end up probably in the historical approach.

CT: I did say -- I mean -- I said cultural and acultural. It might have been translated as you know it because it's not that far away.

AG: What's the difference between the two? And who are the theoreticians of this division?

CT: The acultural theory is a theory that thinks that what we think of as the developments of modernity, like economic growth and urbanization—that they come about independently of the culture from which they grow but they alter the culture. So if that's true then, we would expect the process of modernization to be similar everywhere and to produce similar cultural changes. I mean individualism and instrumental reason and these kinds of things. The cultural theory is relative in that changes come about that are very similar to the changes that happened in the West and which we call modernity: changes to do with market economy, with a modern stage and so on. But they have to draw on the cultural resources of the tradition and; therefore, when you get similar development in Japan as you get in Europe -- it's somewhat different because it's drawn

on the samurai traditions there and so on -- and what ends up happening is something that has quite a lot of overlap with the European case and has some of the same functional validity, but it develops in a different way because it's coming out of a different culture. In other words, I think that we need a historical account of Western modernity in the particular cultural terms and then another account of Japanese and Chinese. When I was thinking of Habermas I was thinking of the theory of communicative action, which makes the key to modernity the splitting of these three domains of reason, these three spheres of reason, as though that were a kind of universally applicable process, which will apply everywhere as against one particular reading of the Western process. I don't even think it's the Western process and correct me, but it's one particular reading.

AG: And you use multiple modernities in the same sense?

CT: That's right. There are many kinds.

AG: So you intend that modernity doesn't necessarily mean Westernization?

CT: No.

AG: So there is something that can have different aspects or appear in different forms? So what is the modernity that takes different forms?

CT: It's a series of changes of institutions and practices and, in a sense, we draw that list up from a sense of what will allow a society to participate with success in the global economy and global political scene. So this today would include a kind of Weberian bureaucratic state, of some kind of market economy and the development of successful entrepreneurship. And, for instance, the rule of law and some people include democracy. I don't know if that's true. So in other words, what society needs in order not to be just exploited or marginalized in the world economy.

AG: Is secularism a part of this?

CT: I don't see that. Well, unless you let me define secularism. If I can define it by this notion of the changing of position of religion, then maybe it is part of what is needed. But in any other sense it isn't. So I would say that probably in the long run, secularism in the sense of religious neutrality. But secularism in the sense of decline of religion, not at all.

AG: No, in the sense of separation of the institutions of religion and state.

CT: Well yes. Go back to our earlier discussion. If we make finer distinctions as you were making earlier, I think we can say some of these yes, some of these no. In other words, it's conceivable that in some societies there'll be a sense of a religious definition of the society. But in the sense of intrusive application of religious law by the state, no.

AG: In other words, a state that imposes religious laws does not belong to modernity.

CT: It's going to fare very ill, fare very, very badly.

AG: And would you say the same thing about the state in which the clergy allocates to itself the exclusive right or a particular kind of right? Would you say the same thing about such a state, where the clergy has particular rights?

CT: It's going to perform very badly. Very badly in the context of a modern society.

AG: Well you have talked about Catholic modernity in your writings. What is Catholic modernity?

CT: The thing is that's really another use of the word "modernity." It's not that it's a particular form of modernity. It is how Catholics should understand their roles and position within modernity. And there it was an attempt to, in a certain sense, to relativize

modernity. With the fundamental notion that Christianity is something -- and you could say this of Islam as well -- Christianity is a religion which has lived in a host of different cultures and will live in more cultures and always has to find a way of recreating an authentic version of itself within these cultures. And the idea was that we Catholics look on our relation to Western modernity in that light. This is one culture among many which humans have had and will have, and we have to fight away from the tendency which we have to think of this, or the version that's been created in modernity, as vastly superior to everything else in history. Or also, greatly inferior because we've lost -- you know, some people think we've lost the age of faith in the middle ages. That instead of looking at it as absolute, as one or the other, we look at it as having to function and recreate the faith in a different way in this civilization, but which is not necessarily superior to the way in which it operated in other parts. And we have to have had the sense of belonging to the transnational and transtemporal.

AG: Can you imagine Islamic modernity?

CT: Of course. I mean I can imagine several because there are very different Islamic societies. I mean it would be one that was in real dialogue and interchange with the modernity in which it set, in India or in Europe. Unless we ruin the situation, which we're capable of doing, we will see develop in the west a Western Islam, which is working its sense of what Islam is in this Western context. And I already know several people that are engaged in that, whether they define it that way or not, they're engaged in that project. I mean we could wreck this enterprise. If the terrible conflict that I described earlier in which you have Muslims from outside the West who are dying to attack the West and Westerners who reply with this mindless anti-Islamic thing we have

been seeing recently, we could crush the space in which this kind of European or Western Islam could grow. But it's to be hoped that an Islamic modernity will happen, because that's the normal development.

AG: You have said in some of your works that modernity has three ideals: individuality, instrumental reason and secularism. You have said that these three have created three weaknesses: decline of spirituality, alienation, social disorganization; that threatens human dignity. Is there an exit?

CT: Yes. I mean I don't remember saying quite this. I remember the first two. I mean I think that certain kinds of individualism, certain overstress in instrumental reason -- but I mean this is a challenge that the age offers. And we may rise to the challenge. I mean and this connects actually to what we were talking about earlier about somehow managing to release the potentiality of the transformation.

AG: Can we say that in your view the most devastating critique of modernity is that it has forgotten the human agency or the moral agency of human beings?

CT: In one sense but not in other senses. See, we're very strong on the idea of human agency in the sense that we now think everything is up to us. And we're wrecking the world but we can make Rawlsian changes. And we're very strong in the sense of moral agency in that we think we ought to act in order to change the world. But I think that there are some elements of personal agency which we consistently underplay, under stress. And they're precisely the kind that aren't programmable, that aren't controllable. So again, the kind of agency that Gandhi had [inaudible]. Another kind of thing than the kind you can program. It's something that erupts.

AG: My next question is about the book *Sources of The Self*. It's a complicated question. In that book you are criticizing the radical enlightenment, such as John Locke. You contend there that radical enlightenment transforms human self – reduces it to an atomized individual that follows only his personal thoughts and appetites and confuses the true self with one's appetites. If we put aside actions and appetites, what is left in the self, in your view?

CT: A lot; aspirations, spiritual hungers, a search for meaning, a craving to feel that you are in the right, you're good, you're fundamentally worthy and in the right. I mean one could go on and on.

AG: In modernity you seem to approve of three things in the above mentioned book. The first one is the interiority of man. You trace the genealogy of this idea to three people; Saint Augustine, Montesquieu, and Descarte. The second one, the confirming of ordinary life and the confirmation of individual as an agent that is participating in their ordinary life. And you have traced this back to the religious reformation movement. The third one is the voice of nature in one's own being, that goes back to the romantics. Do you consider these three to be related in some kind of a causal fashion or do you think some of these produce others?

CT: No. I mean I think that they have mutually affected each other because they've been happening. But they do have separate roots. You can imagine them rising separately from each other. In certain forms they've grown apart. So they are like threads woven in and out of cloth.

AG: Would it be correct to describe you as not a critic of modernity but of radical enlightenment?

CT: Yes. As I described the radical enlightenment, which is really this idea that we can understand people simply in terms of their appetites and their individual appetites. And I mean even individual appetites, you know, appetites on an individual level that you can understand them in those terms. The thing is that I don't think that -- I'm not saying that this is a bad norm, because -- it is a bad norm but that's not the most important thing. Nobody could live like that. Nobody lives by appetites alone. We all have some sense of standard, some sense of dignity, and so on. We're all moved by the need for meaning and so on. So what's wrong with that is it's a way of reading, of explaining human life, which is radically reductive and inadequate. There are always people like Bentham and others who think like that. They have a totally inadequate reading.

AG: Alasdair McIntyre and Michael Sandel, their view of liberalism is different from the way you view it. You have discussed many, many aspects of liberalism and consider the rest of them to be in error. Which one of the liberal ideas do you consider to be in error?

CT: Well I consider that what some people call liberalism, which is the kind of Rawlsian formulation, is again radically inadequate because it leaves out so much. The great liberal thinkers that I admire, that I follow, are people like Tocqueville, John Stuart Mill. I mean with people like John Stuart Mill, these are two examples of great liberal thinkers, because they didn't have this terribly narrow interpretative scheme. I mean for one thing, Rawls and those people are just speaking on the normative level. But take someone like Tocqueville and Mill, they have this discourse that straddles different boundaries. So they're speaking both in terms of history, sociology and the normative.

They're trying to see how to realize certain very important goods in human history in their epochs. So it's a much richer discourse on liberalism.

AG: Difference between you and others such as Sandel and McIntyre and Rawls is about the primacy of right over good. Just as Rawls has one interpretation, he rejected utilitarianism and rejects -- to deny utilitarianism will force us to accept the primacy of right over good. But there's a different interpretation in political liberalism. There it says religious pluralism is a reality. Moral, metaphysical and religious pluralism is a reality. This is what forces us to accept primacy of right over good. So to reconcile all these different interpretations in civil society and the consensus that exists in a political order, we have to accept the primacy of right over good. Rawls explains this with two ideas. One is the public reason and the other is overlapping consensus. Rawls rejects comprehensive liberalism to open up space for political liberalism. Do you think he has been successful in this attempt? Do you still disagree with Rawls on the primacy of right over good? Is the most important disagreement between you and Rawls that of primacy of right over reason, or is your most important disagreement with him that of individualism over communitarianism?

CT: Well I think it's all of the above. I mean I think that there's something very right about Rawls, in political liberalism I mean, and that is that we need to have an overlapping consensus on the political regime and keep other elements of our views for our own lives. But that difference, what we have in common, but have for ourselves does not map onto the difference of right and good. There are certain rules of right which are part of my particular religion and there are certain virtues, notions of the good, which are

part of the commonly accepted ethic. For instance, we all, in a democracy, believe that people should participate with the kind of life where you have dedication to the common good and to participate is against sitting home watching television and so on. It's a better way of life. That is a conception of the good. It's an ethical conception which we share. And we also believe that it's better to have a society in which people have a certain sense of solidarity and mutual attachment and so on than a society in which people stagger off in a relationship and insist on their rightful due and so on. So it's the fact that some things can be held in common and other things must be kept out and that a modern pluralist society requires that we negotiate this common area doesn't amount to the prioritizing of our right. You see, it's because Rawls is so Kantian that he starts with the idea that ethics really is a matter of rules. That he ends with that is quite not surprising as it really has nothing to do with the underlying logic of the argument.

AG: And you are a Hegelian?

CT: In relation to Kant, I'm a Hegelian.

AG: What affinity do you find between yourself and Hegel that led you to, as a historian of philosophy, which has led you to write more than anyone else on Hegel?

CT: Well, because I think that Hegel is the first great modern philosopher of history and that if you want to do that kind of stuff, which I did and continue to do, that you have to come to terms with Hegel first and see what you think is right, what you think is wrong. You have to work through it. It's the proper duty. It's like your first degree. You have to get through that first before anything else.

AG: One more question about Rawls. Rawls says justice and right and a few other important concepts are not dependent on metaphysical, moral and religious

assumptions. That they have nothing to do with what is said about human nature. The entire political liberalism Rawls is about this. Is it possible to construct a political philosophy without relying on metaphysics, morality and religion, as Rawls has done?

CT: No. Sure, you can say I'm not going to rely on religion because you're relying on another metaphysical view which is not religious. But you're always making assumptions about human nature and metaphysics in order to arrive at a rule of right.

AG: Given the fact that we have pluralism, that we have reached a point of mutual exhaustion of arguments from all sides, that all metaphysics and all religions have already put forward everything that they had in their box and none of them have been able to bring us to a consensus. Now what principles do you propose that would create the possibility of all of us reaching a consensus to make that the basis of justice?

CT: But there are no principles that can produce a consensus. It's only human beings that can come to a consensus. And we can do that, if we're lucky, if things go well. We can't do that because we have become attached to certain very basic political values which we all justify from out of our own comprehensive use. And then we manage to come to a consensus, but we don't derive a consensus from principles. We come to the consensus because we agree. It's something that we manage to come to. It is not *a priori*.

AG: Through negotiation, basically.

CT: It's negotiation, but the point is as Rawls does see, which is very important, that's it's not just a modus vivendi. We have to come to principles that we all feel committed

to morally. But we feel committed to them morally, each one for quite different reasons. So the area of the consensus is not itself fixed by some super argument.

AG: Now we have a problem. The problem of human rights. Look at what people in the third world are saying. Muslim countries say that there is such a thing as Islamic human rights. Chinese say there's a Chinese human rights. The Asiatics are saying they are Confucian ideas. Russians are saying Russian ideas. Africans are saying African ideas. But then they put us in prison and torture us in the name of those particular values. In other words, when you are sitting here and have all the possible imaginable freedom, at least they don't put you in prison for your views, but you produce theories where you say these human rights are not universal, that some dictators use in the Third World in order to torture us. They say, look, even post-modernists say the same thing. Look, communitarians are also saying these human rights are not universal. Well, we too have our own set of values. Our values allow us to whip you and cut off your hand and stone you, put you in solitary confinement. If you change your religion we will kill you as an apostate, and many other things. How do you view this problem of human rights?

CT: I think they are universal. That's what we mean by human rights is rights that are universal. The whole point of the adjective "human" here is they are rights that people have as human beings rather than as Iranians or Americans, etc. I mean all of the politically motivated statements about human rights being Chinese, etc, are really incredible humbug. But it's that, you see, even they more or less implicitly confess that because the violations of, really bad violations, they don't admit to. They don't say that they torture. When we had this famous fight in Canada with the Iranian government

about this Canadian citizen – Zahra Kazemi -- I mean she was killed, her skull was broken. They never admitted that. They never said we have Islamic rights. It's not only humbug, this stuff, but they don't even follow through on it [claim exclusive religious or national rights]. I mean what really you see is the underlying assumption of this whole debate is nobody's challenging that you shouldn't torture. They're just challenging that they are torturing. They deny all these things. They don't say that they have a right. Now there are some cases where they do. I mean there are some cases where you have apostasy which brings death in Islam. But I mean no one claims that they're not going against Islamic human rights. They're claiming that human rights ends at this point. In other words, there's a conditionality put on it and the conditionality is something unacceptable for human rights, which are unconditional. Otherwise it isn't a human right. It would be a right of properly practicing Muslims which they would lose by stepping outside. But if it's a human right, it's universal. Now that doesn't get us off the hook for a very important problem, which is the problem of trying to see how human rights can find a very firm footing in very different cultures. And the original human rights came out of a certain philosophical understanding of the human individual on his own and so on. And you can see how the same charter of human rights could be grounded in a quite different way. For instance, I had this interesting discussion in Thailand with certain Buddhists and they recaptured the whole list of human rights but starting from another principle other than the principle of the individual agent. They start from a principle of *Ahimsa* of nonviolence and they derive from that you can't take human life, you can't restrict human freedom. So they have a very different

philosophical foundation. It's a little bit like the overlapping consensus within a society which we have to achieve on the international scene.

AG: Another thing about Hegel is the question of state and civil society. I would like to know your view about state and a civil society. What is a state? What is a civil society?

CT: Well I think that is a distinction we've developed in modern states that -- I mean what underlies the concept civil society there is the idea that society outside the state structure nevertheless operates as a kind of system. There's two ways in which that can be seen to be the case. One is if we consider society as an economy, and that was a big part of the meaning of civil society in Hegel and Marx. And the other is of course what we call a public sphere. That is the assembly of sort of agencies, newspapers, the media, associations and so on, which discuss and exchange ideas and form public opinion. And so we can see that in a modern society you have this distinction between two ways of understanding the society as a whole; understanding it as organized under political authority and understanding it as systemically operating but outside the political authority. But that distinction only makes sense in a modern structure, not in the Greek polis, not in the medieval kingdom, not in the traditional caliphates.

AG: Hegel talked about capitalist economy. Do you mean the same thing?

CT: Yes. That's one of the pillars of civil society, it is independent, so is the public sphere. But I'm talking about the market economy. Yes, it's operating as a system. Because if you have an economy totally controlled by the state, it's not independent; it is part of the state operations.

AG: You used the term public sphere in the way Habermas understands this concept?

CT: Yes. In the sense in which he used the term in that wonderful book of his. That is right. I mean the whole discussion of the public sphere in recent years has developed out of that Habermas book which was translated very many years later into English and triggered an interesting debate. It was written much earlier, in 1962 in German, but it was translated into English later.

AG: In modern civil society the role of NGOs are very prominent.

CT: Yes.

AG: How do you look at NGOs?

CT: They are a very important part of a democratic society. They're a very important part of civil society; they're a very important source of innovation of new kinds of social movements, new kinds of collective action. And they're also very important in another development of the modern world, which is international civil society. In a certain sense, we can speak of something like an international civil society, of which NGOs are a very important part.

AG: How about social movements such as women's movements or worker's movements and ecological movements?

CT: Yes, absolutely. These are a part of those new burgeoning movements.

AG: So what is the role of communitarians such as yourself? Do you accept the label of communitarian?

CT: Only if we define it first. I mean there are two meanings. There's one meaning which you have, for instance, very clearly in the communitarian movement in the United States reflected in the work of Amitai Etzioni. Do you know who I mean?

AG: Yes.

CT: Now the idea of communitarianism is that the whole society should be more like a community as against simply rights holders; people should also accept responsibility. In other words, it's a kind of republicanism. I'm very sympathetic to that. There's another meaning of the word where it refers to sub-state communities defined by culture or religion, etc. And I suppose communitarian in that sense is supposed to mean that you're in favor of those things or something like that. I mean at that point, I just don't see the point of being for or against. It depends what communities, where, what the structure is. Take my country, take Canada. There are three dimensions of diversity in Canada. There is English-French, there are aboriginals, I mean original Indians and people who came afterwards. And then there are different immigrant communities; Poles, etc. And these each require totally different policies. In the case of aboriginals, we have to recognize their original right to sovereignty, and negotiate with them as entities. That is if you like a very communitarian thing. We recognize that. In the case of English-French, we've worked it out in our constitution in terms of the federal system and there's one province which is majority French. In the case of immigrant groups, neither of these forms of political power make any sense. So Canadian multiculturalism involves accepting the diversity of these different cultural streams, trying to get them to interact, trying to get them to integrate. So really the word "communitarian" only applies in a sense of favoring or treating a group as a community. It only applies, really, to the

aboriginals. I think any decent person ought to recognize that. So in a way, the word is very often just a red herring. I mean it doesn't apply except in the Etzioni sense.

AG: Doesn't it facilitate tension between civil society and state, if you consider the whole society as a community?

CT: Not necessarily. It just means, in the only way to use it, that we shouldn't simply define ourselves as rights holders but we also have responsibilities.

AG: But if civil society is defined by separation of interests and desires, demands, many other things, you organize around these elements: women, workers, students, religious people; don't you want to obliterate all these differences and create a community?

CT: Well that doesn't mean you obliterate the differences. A civil society is defined by its autonomy from the state. And civil societies contain individuals but they also contain groups, you know, women, etc.

AG: But it's not mass society. What I'm concerned about is massification of society that you find among fascists. What is to differentiate communitarianism from fascism? That is to obliterate all the differences.

CT: This is the problem; the problem that this word has two meanings. Because in its Etzioni sense, it carries no implication of cultural unity. It just means we accept responsibilities. In the other sense, it talks about cultural differences and talks about cultural groupings. So we must not confuse the two. It's a misfortune that the same word is used for two very different ideas.

AG: Could you say something about the state? What is the state? Both in the sense of the actual existing states, but also as the state should be.

CT: I don't know.

AG: What is your critique of actual existing states? Even democratic states are riddled with problems. What is your critique of these and then what's your ideal? How do you evaluate the existing states?

CT: Well badly, but differently badly. They have different problems but measured against democracy is an ideal. They all fail but they fail in different ways. I mean it's plain that there's such a tremendous distance between the political system and the voters in other cases, if money is controlling an immense amount. In other cases again, there are very deep divisions of a historical kind that prevent people from coming together to face contemporary problems. In other cases, there's very weak sense of identification with the representative institutions. So you can go on and on. There's just a great number. It's like saying what's the ideal human being? Well free from disease. Well what disease? Well some people suffer in different ways. There are many, many diseases. Democracy comes in many forms with many imperfections.

AG: Do you believe in civil disobedience?

CT: In certain cases, yes.

AG: What is civil disobedience? What's your theory of civil disobedience?

CT: I think in some cases that even though it's a democratic decision, the decision is so bad and so much to be resisted. I mean a majority might decide, legally, to enter an unjust war, for instance. And then at that point if people have the courage to lie down in front of the tanks if they roll over them; this is civil disobedience. But it has to be exceptional circumstances because the normal understanding of democracy is that when the decision is taken legitimately and legally, we obey.

AG: What do you think about civil disobedience when their government is not democratic?

CT: Then it's an entirely different issue. At that point there isn't that legitimacy of the government decision, so it becomes another set of considerations. We have to be very prudential here. Are we going to be able to do anything to reach other people? But one of the big reasons to think twice about civil disobedience is if it is a democratic society. Because you're sort of breaking an unspoken contract if you engage in civil disobedience.

AG: Do you consider non-democratic states illegitimate?

CT: I don't feel that they deserve our support and our approbation in the way that democratic states do. But to say they're illegitimate is almost to be ready to call for rebellion against them and that may not be the best thing. It may not lead to something better. Sometimes it can just lead to the disintegration of the state altogether. Right? So there are certain very imperfect states where there are better than no states at all.

AG: What could lead to the disintegration?

CT: Well, rebellion sometimes leads to disintegration. Certain failed states today, a little bit like Somalia come to mind. In a sense there is a worse stage for the population than a more or less authoritarian, rule-governed state. Right? So you can make things much worse.

AG: As a principle, do you reject revolutions?

CT: No.

AG: What I'm saying is that what do you think about revolutions as defined, let's say, by Popper and Arendt and applied to revolutions such as the one in France? They exclude the American Revolution. Revolutions that aim to change the whole

world, the whole society, remake everything. And therefore, since they wanted to change so much, they didn't lead to democracy. Popper rejected revolutions. But he says in open societies he doesn't reject revolutions as a matter of principle. If a system has blocked all the peaceful ways of seeking change, the only path that is left is revolution. In that condition, he considered beheading the king as legitimate. But there is one condition. The only aim of the revolution should be freedom and democratic reform. The question is, do you accept revolutions like the French, the Chinese, the Cuban revolutions, etc? What are your thoughts on those types of revolutions?

CT: I think that they are the kinds of cases where it's not the revolution but the goals and the organized telos of the revolution, which was flawed, as you suggested, so the only thing it could produce was tyranny. And sometimes this is more clear in hindsight than it was in foresight. But now we have another experience to be able to tell a lot of these revolutions, you know, foretell before they happen what they're going produce. I think it's clear that these produce terrible destruction and oppression in human history.

AG: If you reject revolutions, there is nothing else left for us except peaceful resistance and peaceful resistance is nothing but civil disobedience.

CT: I'm not saying I reject revolutions as such, but these kind of totalizing revolutions are a problem.

AG: What kinds of peaceful resistance do you conceive for a society such as ours in Iran?

CT: It's very hard to say because it really does depend on the situation and what's going to happen. I mean there are moments when peaceful civil resistance triggers off a

kind of implosion of the regime. I'm thinking of the Philippines in 1986. I'm thinking of the Velvet Revolutions in Eastern Europe. But the same kind of movement in Tiananmen Square had a very different result. So there's a very high degree of prudence involved. That is the big issue here, what to do in Iran is very difficult to say. I'm hoping at some point that some of the elements that hold the regime together will break apart. There are these revolutionary guards that are a very sinister form of force but then if the army didn't back the regime, the revolutionary guards wouldn't be capable of keeping order alone. If there were a really severe rift among the jurisconsults or the *ulema* things could change because there are a number of other Shia clerics who think this way of applying religion is terribly wrong, including people like Ali Sistani in Iraq and Shariatmadari in the old days for example. So it could be, at some point, the regime will be weakened by one of these rifts or maybe pluralities. And then there could easily be a movement where civil resistance could trigger off the implosion.

AG: There are many, many questions left, but I know you are tired.

CT: Oh, no. It is a very, very interesting conversation.

AG: The next question has to do with the politics of recognition. What do you mean by this exactly? What are its components? How are your views about the politics of recognition different from Nancy Fraser and Axel Honneth?

CT: Well, it's very interesting. I think that it's part of a whole theory of Western modernity, although it's spread beyond the West. That in the last half-century, the issues of recognition and non-recognition have become tremendously important politically. So whereas before, for instance, subordinated or oppressed groups, workers or oppressed nations asked for equality or independence or the vote or liberation from an oppressive

nation, now there is this demand for re-recognition in a sense, and this goes along with the importance of identity. People have a sense that they have a certain identity and that identity has to be respected. And there's sometimes the same kind of struggles. There are subordinate groups but it's as though the center of gravity of the struggle has shifted from being simply, let's say, economic and social power or capacity and so on to being also a struggle for recognition. Identity of recognition is a new factor in the political world. Now some people who belonged to the left before felt that there was some terrible mistake here that people should really be asking for equality, income and power. But other thinkers, I'm thinking of Nancy Fraser now, recognized that in a way this had always been a kind of unnoticed dimension of many of the struggles of trade unions, of subordinated nationalities and so on. This has always been part of it but it had never been thematized. So Nancy's solution to this problem is to say, well, both of these issues are important, both let's say equality, power and so on, on one hand, and recognition of identity on the other. We can't scorn either of them. We have to run them both together. Now, Axel Honneth is something different but very interesting because Axel wanted to sort of explore what this demand for recognition was about and how it was somehow central to human life. So going back to Hegel, he reconstructed the philosophy behind that demand for recognition. He really wanted to see what was behind this, what was the sort of anthropological basis for this demand for recognition. And then he went back and looked at the philosophical tradition of Hegel. Hegel is one but not the only figure. So he wrote this very, very interesting book which reconstructs the philosophical history behind this demand and then looks at why it's important for human beings, how human beings need recognition from others in order to grow and become

AG: How far back did he go?

CT: Well, he went back really to the Hegel period because that's when philosophers began to talk about this. And my point is that as very often happens, philosophers begin to explore and probe back here and then before this becomes part of mass politics, a long period of time elapses. So it's not unlike the problem of identity and authentic identity and so on, very much a theme for people in the Romantic period in Germany, but a mass theme of sort of mass life and culture in the second half of the 20th century. I think of it as a kind of lapse, a lag before it becomes...

AG: Where is the boundary of this recognition? In Iran, we are facing a fundamentalist government. It has two characteristics and these are boundless selfishness and concentrating on one's self. Everything is driven by the state's desire to stay in power. And it believes that everything that it does is inspired by God. It does not recognize anybody else. Do you think that we should recognize it?

CT: Well, no, the whole theory of recognition is not that something abstract like a state needs recognition but human beings need recognition. Now the thing is that although the Iranian state now operates, if you like, on an ideology that gives no place to recognition, in a certain sense it is an ideology that goes back to pre-modern times and doesn't speak of recognition. In fact, the present Iranian government is playing on that kind of sense of grievance from the very lack of recognition. And so what is behind the Ahmadinejad government saying that the world won't allow us to have our nuclear program? Well, there is a concrete demand there to have nuclear power but there also in the rhetoric, I feel, is a sense of grievance that these great powers are not recognizing Iran. They are thinking of Iran as a little below them, as beneath them. So a lot of world

politics now is played out in the register of dignity, offended dignity and non-recognition is a very, very important theme.

AG: So this government is so selfish and so totalitarian it focuses on the politics of identity and it has divided people into two groups: those who are authentic and those who have become alienated. And in the name of identity it represses people. What is your criticism of this, particularly as identity is a very key concept in your assessment?

CT: Absolutely. So identity can be used as a pretext and excuse to repress people, force them into line, declare some of them inauthentic, mobilize people to do the most violent acts. But most identity struggles in actual politics are really very hard-line things but there is nevertheless a real human need that's behind this, as it were, that's being hijacked by these movements -- that it is, indeed, very possible for people who are working out a new definition of their historical identity to be very severely destabilized by reactions to that coming from outside which are very negative and depreciating.

AG: So the first part, people then have an absolute need for this recognition and for identity. Now onto the second part.

CT: People, let's take examples. There are subordinate groups in society, like for instance, African Americans. Like all such groups, every group in the world today, they're in a standing process of redefining their identity as history moves on, as history changes. What's really important? What's central to our identity as African Americans? What's really important? Do we even have one? Are there just different groups? All these questions are always being debated. Now if you have a subordinate group like that, which is struggling with this, in the context of a very powerful other group which has a

certain picture of it and which broadcasts that picture – so if you have this group that is working out its identity and some conflict between different versions, in the context of a very powerful group that has dominated it in the past, whose view of it is very, very powerful – it can't just be simply set aside. And that view that is broadcast by the mainstream media is very often distorting of the minority. And that destabilizes the whole attempt to define self and it can also lead to, I think, very dead-end responses. For instance, the response of separatism. We don't need you. We won't bother with you, etc.

AG: Do the blacks say that?

CT: Yes. But, of course, it's also a pathological move on the part of the majority too. So all these very difficult relations are operating on the level of recognition or mis-recognition or non-recognition. They really make a difference to the subordinate group. I can explain it another way, too. But they make a difference to the subordinate group. And in a certain way, the only really healthy way forward is something like truth and reconciliation. I mean, really facing the past. But this is very hard to learn and very hard to bring off. There's a real human need behind the demand for recognition but it can also be the basis of pathological steps of a violent, separatist kind. But every genuine human need can be taken in a very dangerous and destructive direction. Czarist Russia was a very unjust society in which peasants and workers were oppressed but what was done in order to rectify that was, in the end, horrendous.

AG: Too much emphasis on identity is dangerous. Fundamentalist movements are an example of this overemphasis. In the context of globalization, what definition do you have for identity? We are under pressure from two groups. Those identity seekers, those local domestic identity seekers and the process from globalization

which takes away from the values of people without replacing it with new values. But alternatively, you have between these two factors, globalization and the domestic oppressors. Now start with the definition of identity.

CT: You're absolutely right that there are other issues, important issues, in human life other than the issue of identity. There's justice. There's equality. There is reaching some kind of comity and that we live together both within a society and internationally with some degree of peace. So you can't simply focus on the identity issue and if you do that at the expense of everything else, you'll never get a real peaceful world, peaceful coexistence. And to recur to a discussion we had yesterday, I think in the field of religion, this is particularly true that a great deal of modern religious movements are very strongly playing on the identity chord and the notion that we have been despised and we have been rejected and so on. We were talking about this yesterday, how and when a religious movement becomes so tremendously concerned with itself as a group and its being recognized and not recognized and mobilizing against those that are not recognizing it. They take faith out of its main axis, what should be its main axis, towards God, if you like, in my view. And they bring it into this other axis which in some ways is very alien to the faith. I mean, I was quoting Abdolkarim Soroosh: "we want Islam, not Islam of identity, Islam of truth." So you're absolutely right. Nevertheless, if we're trying to bring about a world in which we coexist in equality and justice and comity, we can't ignore the issues of identity and of non-recognition. They have to be placed in a larger context. That's why I was saying about this country that the way perhaps to address these deep identity issues is in terms of some truth and reconciliation commission as an idea; because, I'm taking the example of South Africa.

AG: Are you referring to the African American situation?

CT: What strikes an outsider coming into America is the degree of incredible denial about what was done to African Americans. People talk about slavery but it's after slavery as well. There was ethnic cleansing in certain parts of the United States. In the late 19th, early 20th century, blacks were forced to move out of whole counties. They were just chased out.

AG: They lynched them.

CT: Yes.

AG: Into the 1940s.

CT: I know. Even lynching was occurring at this time. Lynching is more admitted but this ethnic cleansing is just not talked about. Why truth and reconciliation? Now I'm jumping to the paradigm example of Mandela and Tutu in South Africa because they were trying to put the relationship in the races there in another context, the context of how can we move forward together in a new society based on equality, mutual aid and so on. They were putting it in that context and not in the narrow context of this is what you did to me. And it's only in this broader context that we can come to grips with the issues of identity. But we have to. And sometimes we have to bring up very uncomfortable truths in order to do that.

AG: One part of this process was to forgive and not forget.

CT: Yes. That's right.

AG: In South Africa, it was forgive and not forget. In Spain, it was forgive and forget.

CT: It's much healthier in South Africa. You remember the full truth in order to be able to put it behind you. Otherwise, it festers.

AG: Do you agree with Paul Ricoeur's idea of memory in history?

CT: Yes. I think it's very profound.

AG: So these memories sometimes hurt very much.

CT: Yes.

AG: We have many such horrible memories in Iran that do not allow us to get closer as a community. In the revolution, we faced each other. After revolution, we faced each other and have killed each other and have imprisoned each other. Many, many nasty things have occurred such as the war, such as the cultural revolution, such as the execution of prisoners, such as terrorism. There's a very deep lack of trust. And it does not allow us to get closer to each other. My belief is that we should bring these issues out and discuss them.

CT: I agree.

AG: We need to have a national psychotherapy session. And through the process of discussing these issues, repair them and ameliorate the situation. And I want you to help us move in this direction.

CT: Yes. Definitely. And I think also, let's say the West, in the major powers in the West in relation to Iran, they're very deep memories that the whole Mossadegh intervention was something very shameful. We have to have that out. We, in the West, I'm from a small country but speaking for the big countries of America and Britain, they have to say, "We did something terrible." And the new relationship has to proceed on the basis of really being very frank about what happened in the past. But now people in the

West can't get away from remembering the things that you did to them like the hostages of the American Embassy. True, it shouldn't have happened but this is one side and on the other side, it's totally a one-sided story. We have to get beyond that.

AG: What is your definition of tradition? I want you to explain this in the context of Iran. We are facing a system in Iran that has a fragmented tradition. It has created a montage of tradition that consists of some aspects of the past and some aspects of the modern. In the modern sector, it's very interested in technology, particularly military technology. And it's also manifesting itself in a sort of aggrandizement that you can see in the nuclear issue. I'm calling it as a supremacy seeking based on nuclear imperialism, I guess. I think it would be wrong to call this traditionalist.

CT: Oh, yes, absolutely. But, see, tradition is not as simple as people assume. Every tradition, in the literal sense of the Latin word, has been handed on from generation to generation. That's what it means. It's complex. It's many stranded. It's been the consequence of multiple interpretations each time it's passed on. And then you get these claims that people say that we, our version, is the real one that really goes way back. But that's ridiculous. There's no single version that is authentic. And it's always been, is the Arabic word *Ijtihad* [independent reasoning based on changing context]? There's always been interpretation going on the whole time. And there are today un-admitted reinterpretations going on. It appears to me, I don't know very much about Shia Islam, but it appears to me that what Khomeini started in many respects was a new turn. So there's a kind of imposture in this stance that is that you want to have all the authority that

comes from the very beginning without admitting that you're adding your own spin and your own interpretation to it.

AG: You have a Hegelian concept in terms of morality or ethics. So your definition, I think, of ethics means conventional ethics which is in German this word...

CT: You mean *Sittlichkeit*.

AG: Yes. Is it spelled correctly?

CT: Yes. *Sittlichkeit* is spelled correctly. I'm going to put my glasses on. It means "the ethical life of an established community."

AG: This is an ethics that gradually has taken shape throughout history. But in Iran, we have reached the conclusion that we have to critique this based on Kantian reasoning. Conventional ethics doesn't stand for freedom. It doesn't recognize women's freedoms. It is patriarchal. What do you think?

CT: I'm not as Hegelian as you think. I'm really much more an Aristotelian. That, of course, one has to make a critique of what went before. But where I probably disagree with you is that I don't think a critique simply from a Kantian standpoint is adequate. It's like trying to run on one leg instead of two legs because there are certain issues in ethics which have to do with what we owe each other, how we should treat other people and so on. So Kant certainly is a very good philosopher to deal with but he is not the only one. But there are other issues to deal with such as what is a good human life? What is a meaningful human life? What is a noble human life? And so the most important ethical judgments involve drawing from these two types of considerations, weaving them together. The issue of what we owe each other, what is just to do to each other on one

hand and the issue of what's a really good human life. For instance, there's an issue of freedom. I should acknowledge your freedom. I should not restrict your freedom, and vice versa. That is Kant, he is very strong about it. What is it, though, to restrict your freedom? You can't walk this way through my room at the moment. Is that a restriction on your freedom? Well, no, it's trivial. But if I'm saying to you, you can't believe in a certain religion, you can't preach it or you can't say what you really think, then that's a restriction. So any principle of respecting freedom really operates with a background understanding of what's important and what's unimportant in human life. And if you operate on a pure Kantian basis, you are taking for granted a certain background picture of human life without ever being able to discuss it. So I'm going back to Aristotle as well – I think a mixture of Kant and Aristotle, these are the two legs on which we have to walk. Women are severely restricted, so perhaps in some very small way they might be restricted in the house but then when somebody says they can't educate themselves, we see right away this is serious. Why? Because human beings need this kind of freedom.

AG: So you are saying that the first part is small?

CT: No, not at home. That would also be very important because you can't do a whole lot of things. There could be very minor restrictions, they can't go into the men's room or something. Meaning there are restrictions of a kind that exist in every society that can be purely trivial, but we look at the ones, where we really get a sense of we need to critique, is when terribly important human activities are at stake. Yes, and we're operating with this *zithrescheit*? I mean, not necessarily articulated but a very strong sense of what it is. Now that could be critiqued as well. Have we got the right background of

understanding? But in order to do that, we have to bring it up. What are the ends of life?
What's important in life?

AG: So you're saying that the background should always be articulated.

CT: Well, you can't ever articulate a background totally. I'm saying that if we're going to level any critique out of it, we have to articulate bits of it in order to do that. So we have to stop talking Kant talk only and talk, if you like, let me just say, Aristotle talk. But Aristotle talks about the different goods of human life. It's a short hand I have for saying....

AG: Since you are an Aristotelian, what is your take on the feminist movement?

CT: I have a very positive take on the feminist movement. But I'm not buying the actual detail of Aristotle's theory which reflects his situation as a 4th Century BC Greek. It's impossible to agree with much of this. I'm just talking about a way of reflecting on ethics which is trying to establish what Aristotle does in the very beginning of the *Nicomachean Ethics* i.e., to try to establish what you could call the ends of life or the important human goods. It's that kind of reflection.

AG: Is there a difference between men and women?

CT: There's lots of differences between men and women. But ought that to make a difference in whom we educate and who votes and who gets what kind of jobs? I think not. But it should make a difference when it comes to maternity leaves. I think that in very many cases, not all cases, in very many cases, the woman is in a way more viscerally attached to the child. I have a very strong critique of many of the regimes of maternity leave or, even worse, absence of maternity leave that we have in the West. They're far too short. They don't take into account really the rhythm of the growth of a

child and bonding with the parent. We need a much more radical change where we take account of and we make it possible for people to interrupt their careers for several years and still not be completely excluded. That is something very, very important. And it takes account of the reality of human life but also female human life.

AG: Feminists say that the attachments of men and women are different. The identity of men and women are different. And some feminists have moved onto more radical claims and they say that today's sciences are a result of a patriarchal outlook. The female or a woman's outlook, a different philosophy would come about, a different human science would arrive including in the natural sciences as well.

CT: I think that's very different. This is partly true, perhaps, everywhere, but it's vanishingly true in, for example, physics. I mean, it's a vanishing – the difference is almost zero in physics but, of course, it can be very big in history, in sociology and we've seen the proof of that because there have been female historians, sociologists that have brought up a lot of neglected points of view. I mean, it stands to reason in a way that what we call the human sciences would be much more affected by being seen from both standpoints than the sciences of physics and astronomy.

AG: In human sciences, we say sometimes that women have not been recognized because they were not recognized. Another point of view says that men are incapable of this kind of recognition. There are certain things that men can see and women cannot. And vice versa.

CT: I don't put very much credence in that kind of position. Human beings are really dialogical creatures. They're made to talk to each other, learn from each other and it may

be more difficult in some cases than in others. There's no limit in principle. We can learn from each other. What's true is that if you silence all the women or silence all the men, there will be certain points of view that'll never be intruded into the discussion. That's very true. But once they are in the discussion, there isn't a limit in principle on the degree to which they can be understood.

AG: Is there any difference between female identity and male identity?

CT: Probably, but you'll never be able to define it because, you see, cultures vary so much that within each culture you can always find different ways of acting, of humor and so on between men and women. But then you can't take those differences and go to another culture which is totally different. Men and women will always play off against each other and produce certain differences. But they'll be different differences. That's the interesting thing.

AG: Our defense of freedom in Iran is that we are defending the right of the individual against the community. This is how we define our liberalism. And we think that if individuals have freedom that the freedom of the community also follows. We think that next to the individual we do not need the rights of the communities if individuals have rights. We can't say women are free on one hand and then on the other hand allow religious communities to treat their women the way they want to. In Iran, we think the rights of individuals precede the rights of the community.

CT: The rights of individuals supersede the rights of communities insofar as these communities want to crush the rights of individuals. But you haven't gotten rid of the problem of the rights of communities by saying that. Again, take an example from my

own country. You see, we recognize the collective rights of aboriginal societies to a certain degree of self-government. Now, there are limits to that. And one of the limits is, for instance, male/female equality which is enshrined in the Canadian Constitution. So there are limits on the self-government rights but there are still self-government rights. So we have to operate with both a recognition of community and the defense of individual rights and we have somehow to make these two work together.

AG: What if the rights for the community step on the right of the individual?

CT: In this case, we have a hierarchy. That is why the Charter of Rights in Canada is fundamental; so that can't be violated. But nevertheless, can I put it into other terms? Let's imagine a really free Iran, free from this present regime. A question will arise about the potential self-government rights of the Kurdish minority, maybe of the Azeri speaking minority, just to give two examples. And an issue arises about there so one can't just ignore it. Iran is an incredibly diverse society. I would say it's even a multinational society. There's a hegemonic, linguistic group, the Farsi speaking ones but there are also many others. So if you wanted really to work something out that was a real liberal regime in Iran, you have to face this issue.

AG: If Iran became a democracy we could have a federalist government.

CT: Exactly. But that is a recognition of community.

AG: What if the community – is it possible that a community has rights but that those rights violate the rights of the individual? The community has rights; but that community violates the rights of women or the individual rights. This is the same problem in Canada. That the Muslims want to have the Sharia operated in their communities. In your opinion then, they should be given that right. And a

liberal person would say, “No, you cannot use your Sharia because then you will violate the right of the individual.”

CT: No, actually the proposal in Ontario called for arbitration by Imams about marriage questions, but in the end the legislation was withdrawn. But the proposal was the following that, yes, Imams could mediate, but the agreements they mediated had to pass the test of the fundamental rights in the charter. So if one of these agreements did not accord equalities to the woman, it was immediately declared void.

AG: So you believe then we cannot allow communities to disregard human rights.

CT: Basic rights. Basic, individual rights. Exactly. If you like, that’s the kind of Canadian solution. There is a hierarchy of these fundamental rights enshrined in the Charter. It cannot be violated, period.

AG: You are one of those who believe in ethics, you believe in responsibility. What do you mean exactly by responsibility? Is this not one of your critiques of modernity?

CT: Well, it’s a critique of a certain kind of modernity. And it’s a critique of a certain kind -- that you can't have a liberal constitution simply identifying individual rights. Citizenship carries certain responsibilities. These might not be – you can't maybe enforce them in the courts but in a democratic society citizenship carries a certain responsibility. This has to do with things like participation, voting, if necessary going to war and also it has to do with, and this is harder to pin down, solidarity. As citizens, we owe things to each other. Redistributing wealth to citizens who are badly off. And I think that a liberal society that doesn’t respect or recognize that is severely defective.

AG: How do you look at justice then in this country?

CT: I think it's much more complex than Rawls admits. There is no single principle of justice. There are really judgments we make that in certain ways our society is not really just. We have to modify it to make it just. That's what we're always arguing about and trying to do.

AG: There's no single principle of justice?

CT: You can't get a single principle and derive all the issues that you're going to deal with from justice. That's another kind of Kantian chimera, a Kantian dream.

AG: What do you do with justice then?

CT: There are many issues in justice, many ways in which we can discuss or come to agree, discuss how our society is off and then we correct for them. But if you think, for instance, take the health service, in thinking about the different kinds of workers in the health services to the actual health of the patient. Taking account of this, the level at which doctors are paid -- the level at which nurses are paid, it is very unfair to nurses, right? We would move towards greater justice if we could raise the nurses to a higher level. But I'm not looking for some huge principle up here that I can deduce this from. I'm looking contextually. Here you have a real important human need, health. And there are ways of meeting it and we remunerate people for meeting it. And so does the remuneration of different contributions correspond to the real importance that these have for the health of the people concerned? This, in the end, is what it is all about.

AG: As a result, the American system is less just than the European or Canadian.

CT: I think so. [laughter]

AG: And its foreign policies in war – what criticism do you have of the U.S. government?

CT: I think the present government is the worst government that has ever existed in U.S. history. I mean, it's unfortunately led by a very stupid man and this stupid man is being advised by really, very bad people, very unfortunate people. On the one hand, he's being advised by people who are very narrow in their outlook. They're for business. They're for controlling oil. They're for doing whatever big corporations want them to do and that's why they refuse Kyoto. On the other hand, there are really almost insane crusaders who think they can remake the world on the model of American freedom. Both these groups are incredibly narrow. They understand this much about the world: the area around Washington and major cities in the states. They understand nothing about the outside world. They don't even understand us [Canadians] and we're not culturally very far away from them. They understand nothing about Iraq, nothing about Iran. They just are extremely narrow. Now America could do better than this because in the State Department, there are a number of people who do understand Iraqi society, do understand Iranian society, do understand European society, etc. The tragedy is that those people were deliberately shut out. They all said you can't do this invasion in Iraq and they just were deliberately shut out. So a very stupid man is being advised by very narrow minds and the rest are just shut out. Any input into intelligence and knowledge was just not allowed. It's been a nightmare. These last six, seven years have been a real nightmare.

AG: How is it possible in a democratic society that a situation like this develops? Our country, if the government does something like this, it's normal because it's non-democratic and it's a fundamentalist regime. To hear the claims that it's a democratic society, how could you in this politically democratic structure evolve this form of government?

CT: Alas, it's not impossible. This is my interpretation. It is identity politics, again, going wrong, going awry. That Bush managed even in 2004 to get a majority because he appealed to a certain U.S. identity. We are strong. We are powerful. We are pure. We are good. And we're fighting evil people. And this mood was so strong that for a long time people who stood out against him were shouted down: "you are not really American". And that can happen in a democratic society

AG: American society seems to be very apolitical.

CT: Well, yes and no. I am very bucked up after the 2006 elections because finally a lot of people woke up. Now it took many deaths in Iraq but with time you can hope to rectify this in a democratic society. But there were six years totally wasted, wasted in a catastrophic direction.

AG: Iranians are still worried that the American government may attack us.

CT: Well, I hope after 2006, it's less likely because they're beginning to feel that they don't have the population behind them. What worries me is a kind of dynamic between Bush and Ahmadinejad. They're both a little bit similar kinds of demagogues in a way. And they're both whipping up their populations by pointing to the dangerous enemy and they both play into each other's hands. And that worries me.

AG: My last question has to do with Israel, in particular Palestine. It's a historical issue that has remained without a solution. It's not the destruction of Israel. That's not what we mean. It's the Palestinians who are being destroyed. How do we solve this issue with justice. Who is at fault?

CT: There is so much wrong on both sides, it really doesn't help to look back into the past and say, "Who did what?" But it only helps to look forward and the oddity about

that issue is that every kid can draw you a picture of the peace solution now. We know pretty well exactly what it will look like. Withdrawal to 1967 borders, maybe a few swaps of territory. Everybody knows this. But the problem is that, principally, Israel cannot accept doing what it would need to do now to make that credible, which means withdrawing certain of the settlements. And only the United States could really coerce them. The United States is actually funding them now. And at the very minimum, they would have to say, "If you don't do X, Y and Z, we cut the funds." Now the tragedy is that the American public is appallingly, badly informed about Israel and Palestine. And they look at it in a very simple terms: good people, bad people, honest, innocent people and terrible enemy people. They look at it in that simple framework. It's like Ahmadinejad reversed. And that's been the biggest disaster for the Middle East for the last...it's not quite true because Clinton did see that he had to make a move and he tried to move in that direction but the present American government, they just have no idea and American public opinion has not been prepared.

AG: How do you prepare the American public for this?

CT: It's very hard. Somebody has to get up and say, "You've had a totally distorted view." They'll be totally attacked. And as soon as they begin to say this, a major political figure with a political ambition cannot say this. And they immediately retreat. I mean, there's a terrible cowardice about this.

AG: The influence of Israeli lobby here, I'm told, is very strong?.

CT: Well, it is but I'm not sure that's the whole explanation. There also are very strong fundamentalist Christians who have their own very complex reasons for supporting Israel. And there also are the consequences of 50 years of distorted reporting.

I mean, the average American has no idea what it's like in the West Bank now. This is a tragedy. Only America has the clout to force Israel to move towards what everybody knows is the solution.

AG: You are a very religious person and you know that in all religions, there are certain beliefs that fit today's time. And all of the major books, the Qur'an, the Bible, etc., you can't claim that in the Qur'an there are more of these points than in the Bible. Today, all of the attacks are focused on Islam and the Quran. And it doesn't seem to be any combination or question about the Bible. Why do you think that is? Why so much Islamophobia?

CT: Well, I think this is a very complex sickness of the West and I don't know if I fully understand it. It's partly that there is a deep history behind this. Christendom and Islam, the Crusades, Ottoman Empire, Balkans, all these things go back. It's partly about this that I think plays a role. Even people are who are very ignorant of history have the sense. It's partly 9/11. Various kinds of jihadis and al Qaeda attacking us, blowing up towers, the London tube, the Madrid trains attacks, etc. So all this awakens all those historical memories. Then very secular-minded people target Islam, but you're right. They target only Islam. They throw their whole weight toward pointing out what's terrible about Islam. And I really have a great fear because there is a very simple-minded Islamophobia which is being preached in the West and it's very hard to fight because people just assume a lot and you have to talk to them and work on them and say, "This is ridiculous, ignorant." But it's an uphill struggle because that other picture is demagogically designed and it's so perfectly simple. It has a target. It has certain examples it picks out.

AG: You were politically involved in Quebec. What experiences do you have that you can share with us that would help us? As one who was involved in political struggle? As Habermas says, most intellectuals are in ivory towers; but he praises intellectuals who are involved in the public sphere.

CT: Yes, it was very admirable what Habermas said. I absolutely support this view.

AG: What can intellectuals do?

CT: Well, it's very hard to speak from my experience and then have something to say about this totally different scene in Iran. I have taken on this Quebec government commission on the issue of accommodating religious difference precisely because I saw that there is a danger of Islamophobia here, too.

AG: This is a commission of the Canadian government?

CT: The Quebec government.

AG: My problem is what is it about intellectuals who seem to not get involved in public sphere and play around with abstract concepts instead of being actively involved in politics; and they say to be getting involved in public sphere affairs we are turning too political?

CT: To be fair to them, some of them find this more difficult than others, and it depends on the country. It is harder in the States. It's much easier in Canada. I'm not quite sure why. I've moved between the academy and the political, and people understand me so I can speak as an intellectual and to some extent be heard. But it's something to do, perhaps, with the political system here in the US. It's dependent so heavily on money. That makes it very difficult for intellectuals to have a role.

AG: So you must admire people like Vaclav Havel ?

CT: Yes. I admire him tremendously, yes.

AG: Thank you very much.

CT: Well, thank you. I've enjoyed this tremendously and, really, I admire you very, very much, and I wish you the best of success.

AG: It was a privilege for me to meet with you.