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### August 27, 2008: The Future of Secularism

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Title: The Future of Secularism

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8/27/2008--There is a new openness on the part of secularism to religion. Secularism is growing in importance in the world. Despite the hopes of some religious figures, the current worldwide upsurge in religious fundamentalism no more spells the end of secularization than did the earlier wars of religion in Europe forecast a more religious civilization. Studies among the young show increasing rejection of organized religion. The question is not whether we are continuing to become more secular—we are—but what kind of secular society we are going to be. Our secularism may turn out to be religiously-oriented. Beneath the noise of Christopher Hitchens and the other New Atheists, a variety of secular thinkers are proposing a new, and friendlier, relationship between religion and secularism. In philosophy, Jurgen Habermas (*Between Naturalism and Religion*), Susan Neiman (*Moral Clarity*) and James C. Edwards (*The Plain Sense of Things*) are describing a secularism open to religious insights. In science, Simon Conway Morris (*Life's Solution*) and Stuart Kauffman (*Reinventing the Sacred*) are expressing openness to the transcendent. Even in religion itself, a kind of secularism is emerging in the work of Michael Hampson (*God Without God*) and John Shelby Spong (*Jesus for the Non-Religious*). There are many other examples of this trend. In politics too, the old lines of secular/religious hostility are blurring. The Democratic Party is determined to gain some lasting support among religious voters. Its candidates are speaking the language of faith and are eschewing strict separation of church and state. The Democratic Convention in Denver is clear evidence of this. Obviously, my contribution to this trend is the book *Hallowed Secularism*, which will be published in March. And, of course, this blog. What surprises me is that a tendency I thought was unnoticed has, in the short time in which I was writing the book, become a clear trend. As with *American Religious Democracy*, my earlier book, my thinking seems to go almost instantaneously from outrageous speculation to obvious cliché.