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May 27, 2010: The Tenability of the “Intermediate Position”

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Title: The Tenability of the "Intermediate Position"

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5/27/2010—A while ago, I published an essay as part of an academic roundtable on Charles Taylor's book *A Secular Age* in *Expositions*, the *Interdisciplinary Studies in the Humanities Magazine* published by the Villanova Center for Liberal Education. My contribution was entitled "Charles Taylor and the Future of Secularism". A version of the essay can be found [here](#). The point of my essay is that Taylor believes we have essentially two choices as a civilization: either we return to some rather traditional form of theism or we embrace a materialism or exclusive humanism that is destructive of human flourishing. According to Taylor, an intermediate position, one that approaches or seeks transcendence from within immanence, is not viable. (606). And despite the fact that his book is quite inconsistent in its arguments, I believe that this reflects Taylor's fundamental belief. In a way, all my work is an attempt to show that Taylor is wrong about this. Jerome Stone's book *Religious Naturalism Today*, and indeed all of his work, reflects the same commitment as mine, that something good, true, beautiful and lasting is possible in a purely natural cosmos. And there are many others, some of whom I cite in *Hallowed Secularism* and my new book, *Higher Law in the Public Square*. Taylor in his way is an ally of Christopher Hitchens and the other New Atheists. For they also want to deny an intermediate position. They also believe in a sharp distinction between the religious and the nonreligious. But what if there is no such boundary? What if there is just life and experience? What if we all, religious and nonreligious, are describing the same reality in different terms?