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March 6, 2013: Charles Taylor's Error

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Title: Charles Taylor's Error

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3/6/2013 – – The greatness of Charles Taylor's achievement in his book, *A Secular Age*, in 2007, is that Taylor allows us to see an error that he makes, which is also an error that everyone else is been making. Taylor assumes that as religion recedes—as the public realm becomes less religious, as people go to church less, as belief in God becomes merely a cultural option—what emerges is simply the secular. In other words, Taylor assumes that the secular is what you have when you no longer have religion. He assumes that the secular in this sense is the opposite of religion. But if Taylor's account were accurate, then the secular would become more firmly established as religion recedes. This, however, is not the case. The best way to describe the secular today is that "everything is up for grabs." In the current era, in which, as Taylor writes, religious commitment is merely an option, all commitments have become merely an option. The proper term for this age, therefore, is not *A Secular Age*, but the age of nihilism. From the perspective of nihilism, the religious and the secular are in the same boat. Both the religious and the secular are oriented toward ultimate meaning and are directed to opposition to nihilism. Instead of a world divided between religion and the secular, it is more fruitful to see religion and the secular as 2 ways, not identical but related ways, of seeking the good, the true and beautiful. Thus, we should speak not of the secular and the religious, but rather of the secular/religious. In contrast to the secular/religious, there is nihilism and all the forms of dealing with nihilism. The forms of dealing with nihilism have numerous manifestations, but they all deny that there is Truth. In this new description, the New Atheists, seem pretty clearly on the side of the secular/religious, rather than coming out of nihilism. They all seem pretty committed to absolute truth, even if they lack a proper term for it.