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Title: Hallowed Secularism and Our Religions

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6/27/2007--One of the tasks of Hallowed Secularism is to learn from the collected wisdom of our religions. This will help wean secularism from its current unthinking hostility to anything religious. The recent atheism books proclaim hostility to anything pertaining to God. Yet many people who think they agree with these books are also looking at, and are influenced by, religious traditions associated with Buddhism and Yoga. It is not religion that is bothering secularists but two other matters: some of the teachings in some of the religions, such as the subordinate role of women, and the total commitment that people have to their own religions, which makes something like suicide bombing possible. Hallowed secularism should be looking instead at what all, or almost all, of our religions teach. The sage Frithjof Schuon wrote: "Our starting point is the acknowledgment of the fact that there are diverse religions which exclude each other. This could mean that one religion is right and that all the others are false; it could mean also that all are false. In reality, it means that all are right, not in their dogmatic exclusivism, but in their unanimous inner signification... ." Granted, Schuon meant something different from religious "teachings" here, but this can at least be our starting point. We could begin, for example, with the golden rule on the one hand and the sense, on the other, that there is something more to life than what we can taste and see. As to the second point, that religion allows people to do crazy things, let me point out that it was not religious people who invented and used the atomic bomb, nor religious people who organized Auschwitz. Nor, for that matter, did the killing of WWI have anything to do with religion. I am not defending the violence of religion. Rather I am suggesting that these comparisons between the secular person and the religious person are not useful. The statement, we would be better off if there were no religion, is meaningless. It is meaningless because it cannot happen—people are religious by nature--and because we cannot clarify our terms well enough to produce evidence on either side.