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July 22, 2007: Hallowed Secularism and the Four Sons

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7/22/2007--This blog entry continues the consideration of secularism's indifference to religion as a potential impediment to the development of Hallowed Secularism. I will deal with the hostility of secularism to religion in other entries. Here, I am dealing with the fact that many secularists, especially among the young, have no interest in religion and don't know much about it. The context here is akin to the story in the Haggadah, the collection of stories, blessings and prayers that Jews gather around at home on the evening of Passover. The story of the Exodus from Egypt is to be told and, it is said, there are four types of sons who may hear it (yes, the Haggadah speaks only of sons, but we may forgive its antiquated language and substitute a new round of family members): the wise son, the contrary son, the son who is simple and the son too young to know how to ask a question. The hostile son we will deal with presently. Here, I want to address the simple son with questions. Look around you. Why is there something rather than nothing? You may give an answer from astro-physics. You may say, It's the big-bang. Everything we see, everything we know, and much that we cannot see and cannot know, just sort of happened out of nothing, one day. But does this not awaken in you a sense of awe? Does it not bring forth in you a sense of reverence for the mystery of existence? If it does, you are not so indifferent to religion after all. But, perhaps it doesn't. Perhaps you are dull to such feelings. Then I will ask you, what about the love you feel for your wife or husband or child or parent? Don't these feelings awaken in you amazement in the presence of the power of love? Don't you wonder if there is not something greater that you might love? If you tell me these feelings of love have a biological purpose, I will ask you whether you are more than a biological purpose? And if you tell me you are not, I will ask you what the biological purpose is of your wondering whether you are more than a biological purpose? Perhaps you don't love anyone and no one loves you. I hope that is not the case, but there are such people. I will ask you then, how do you know how to live? If you tell me you seek pleasure, I will tell you that the pleasure you seek pales, eventually, if it has not already. You are not made for that kind of pleasure. There is a greater pleasure awaiting you. But no one can experience it who does not love. Is anyone in the room still indifferent?