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Hallowed Secularism

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Title: Modern Arbitrariness

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4/18/2008--Hallowed Secularism is in part an attempt to return to ground. Or at least an attempt to aim at returning to ground. Much of modern life in America seems like an oscillation between opinion and ideology. Both opinion and ideology seem at the same time arbitrary and totally determined. This is part of the sense of being stuck that I feel all the time in American life. The German philosopher Martin Heidegger saw this in the late 1930's, in Contributions to Philosophy, a work of unpolished thinking that he did not publish. It sat in his drawer. Heidegger calls both opinion and ideology "worldview"—opinion for every individual and total worldview for ideology that extinguishes opinion. The former is boundless in its arbitrariness and the latter is rigid in its finality. (Anyone who has tried to discuss a matter with a communist or a capitalist knows this). These two sides of worldview are both opposite and the same. Total worldview is true as a kind of overall opinion. And opinion is what is possible for each individual "as finally valid only for him." This dominance of worldview springs surprisingly easily to our lips. But it is deadly. As a cheap repentance for our past colonialism (of various kinds), we now embrace relativism. But, we don't really embrace relativism because we are still willing to pay soldiers to kill for oil and we are still willing to purchase products—and eat meat (my failing)—no matter what the cost to the planet and to others. We say "to each his own". But, in crucial matters, we don't mean it. Relativism in irrelevant matters was manifest in the 4/14/2008 announcement by the Center for Progressive Christianity that Pentecost, Sunday May 11, will celebrate religious pluralism: the "belief that other religions can be as good for others as Christianity is good for Christians." I hope you heard Heidegger there—religion "as finally valid only for him." All religions are not equally true and are not equally good for people. I am happy to say, for example, that those religions that oppress women are wrong and they will one day change. We only say that religions are equally valid because on the deepest level we are indifferent to what religions teach. Religion is mere decoration. Hallowed Secularism aims at truth above all else. It abhors not truth but violence in the pursuit of truth. And it remains open, I hope, to its own constant error.