

Duquesne University

Duquesne Scholarship Collection

Hallowed Secularism

The Collective Works of Bruce Ledewitz, Adrian
Van Kaam C.S.Sp. Endowed Chair in Scholarly
Excellence and Professor of Law

2-28-2013

February 28, 2013: Heidegger and the Jews

Bruce Ledewitz

Duquesne University, ledewitz@duq.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://dsc.duq.edu/ledewitz-hallowedsecularism>



Part of the [Constitutional Law Commons](#), and the [Law and Philosophy Commons](#)

Repository Citation

Ledewitz, B. (2013). February 28, 2013: Heidegger and the Jews. Retrieved from <https://dsc.duq.edu/ledewitz-hallowedsecularism/723>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the The Collective Works of Bruce Ledewitz, Adrian Van Kaam C.S.Sp. Endowed Chair in Scholarly Excellence and Professor of Law at Duquesne Scholarship Collection. It has been accepted for inclusion in Hallowed Secularism by an authorized administrator of Duquesne Scholarship Collection. For more information, please contact beharyr@duq.edu.

Title: Heidegger and the Jews

Date: 2013-02-28T10:49:00.001-05:00

2/28/2013—If you believe, as I do, that Martin Heidegger is the philosopher/theologian for the 21st century, then you have to deal with the fact that Heidegger joined the Nazi Party shortly after his election as Rector of the University of Freiburg in April, 1933. In his inaugural address as rector on May 27 he expressed his support for a German revolution, and in an article and a speech to the students from the same year he even supported Adolf Hitler. He did not resign from the Party until 1945. Heidegger never offered a public apology for his involvement with Nazism, though he reportedly called it privately "the biggest stupidity of my life." I think I understand joining the Party. Heidegger was always opposed to the conventional and was never supportive of liberal thought. I'm sure he flattered himself that he could lead Hitler to greatness—Plato's error. It did not take long for him to see that this was a mistake. Heidegger resigned from the rectorate in 1934. I also think I understand the failure of public apology. Heidegger thought that Nazism, Communism and Capitalism were fundamentally (ontologically) identical. To see this, imagine the following: before you can burn people in ovens, you must reduce them to the status of useful reserves. But the West began the process of that kind of thinking about the world long before Hitler. Heidegger could never have really explained himself without falsely supporting that which he thought was at the heart of the Nazi atrocities. But I could not go along with a thinker who was anti-Semitic. Heidegger denied that at the time of his joining the Party. And there are plenty of references in *Contributions to Philosophy*, which he wrote in secret from 1936-1938 and did not publish until after the War, to show his negative feelings about Nazism. Nevertheless, it is reassuring to read a short reference in *Contributions* in which he makes fun of the regime's views of the Jews. I came across this passage yesterday. Heidegger is discussing the nature of science (127). He writes: "Sheer idiocy to say that experimental research is Nordic-Germanic and that rational research, on the contrary, is of foreign extraction! We would then have to resolve to number Newton and Leibnitz among the 'Jews.'" I'm glad he put "Jews" here in quotation marks. Not only is this idea of Jewish science ridiculous to Heidegger, but so is the whole notion of threat by the Jews against Germany.