

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

5-2-2013

May 2, 2013: Nihilism and Science

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). May 2, 2013: Nihilism and Science. Retrieved from <https://dsc.duq.edu/ledewitz-hallowedsecularism/741>

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: Nihilism and Science

Date: 2013-05-02T00:52:00.005-04:00

5/2/2013 – – In a way, our current moment can be described as the intersection of nihilism and science. Both are powerful images and resources. Nihilism gives a sense of something ending in our time. The reliable sources of meaning, such as God, truth and reason, no longer seem so reliable. It is not clear to what the young give their loyalty and in what they hope. We have left many of the old forms, particularly the old forms of religion, behind. The many ongoing effort to obscure that are not persuasive. Nothing seems to have power to build civilization. And yet there is science. I don't mean by that the technological behemoth or even the intricate gadgetry of modernity. Nor am I paying homage to materialism, which is not an adequate account of reality. I mean basic science and basic exploration, such as the Mars probe. Science is the one realm that still delights and still surprises. But how are these two phenomena related? Science was also part of the old world. Why has it not been discredited? Nor has nihilism been rendered impotent by scientific investigation. The one who pointed the way to putting these two together – – nihilism and science – – is Martin Heidegger. Heidegger pointed out in Contributions to Philosophy that being is no thing, being is nothing. And nothing, or the nothing (das nichts), is more than just a nullity. The more the nothing is enriched, the more simple is being. I don't know how these fit together, if they do. But certainly nihilism has to do with the nothing. The question is, is science the search for being? Scientific materialism certainly is not that. But the kind of science that we can associate with Teilhard de Chardin may be. The quantum void before the Big Bang was nothing, but it was a roiling nothing, filled with hints, intimations and promise.