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### May 15, 2008: David Brooks--The Neural Buddhists

Bruce Ledewitz

*Duquesne University*, ledewitz@duq.edu

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Title: David Brooks--The Neural Buddhists

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5/15/2008--Everyone interested in the thrust of this blog—and my book—should take a look at New York Times columnist David Brooks' column of May 13, entitled The Neural Buddhists. Brooks is criticizing hard-wired materialism and suggesting that its day is done. The new neural science undoes hard materialism because "meaning, belief and consciousness" cannot be reproduced by any physical arrangement. We are more than the sum of our parts. This suggests that the self is not fixed, that people have common moral intuitions, that we are equipped to experience the sacred and that God is best understood as the unknowable total of all there is. Readers of this blog have seen all this. Brooks should not use the term "neural Buddhists" but hallowed secularism. Anyone with romantic delusions about actual Buddhism should take a look at Nikolai Grozni's book, The Making and Unmaking of a Buddhist Monk. I'm not criticizing Brooks. He is using Buddhism as a symbol of the dissolving self. Brooks is also misled by his Buddhism image to ignore history. Religion does not teach us primarily about internal reality but external reality. Religion is about social organization and justice. As a conservative, perhaps Brooks wants religion to stay home, so to speak, but it will not. The main point in all this is that science is simply true for what it does. Insofar as religion contradicts the laws of nature, it cannot be true. On the other hand, there is more to reality than any simple account suggests. All we know of religion and believers is somehow true as well.