

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

---

12-31-2008

### December 31, 2008: Ursula K. LeGuin Responds

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. (2008). December 31, 2008: Ursula K. LeGuin Responds. Retrieved from <https://dsc.duq.edu/ledewitz-hallowedsecularism/232>

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](mailto:beharyr@duq.edu).

Title: Ursula K. LeGuin Responds

Date: 2008-12-31T16:51:00.002-05:00

12/31/2008--Readers of this blog are aware of the role the science fiction classic *The Dispossessed* plays in the book I recently finished, *For the Establishment of Religion*. I used one scene from that book to illustrate the relationship of institutional religion to the broader reach of religion that I argue government may establish. One of the characters in the book states that religion is the profoundest relationship a human being can have to the cosmos. My point was that government may perfectly well promote that kind of relationship, but may not promote any particular religion. I wrote to the author, Ms. LeGuin alerting her to my borrowing and she graciously responded. She objected mildly to the use I was making of her character. She wondered why government would be involved and feared for the wall of separation. She noted that belief is often the enemy of mystery, which is perhaps why she was loose in her treatment of religion in the novel. Let me respond to Ms. LeGuin here so as not to become tedious to her. Government in our system is a source of cultural values. That is not so true in her book, which deals with a society without formal governing structures. But even in her anarchist setting, social pressure does the same job of setting the cultural context, which is one of the points of the book. In our society, secularism is rapidly growing. The question is, what kind of secularism will it be? I want government to promote the objectivity of values and to oppose materialism, post-modern humanism and nihilism. I believe these latter worldviews are becoming a kind of default position for many. This is not a matter of doctrine or mystery, but of approaches to reality. Government may promote a healthy culture just as it may promote a healthy physical infrastructure. A happy and healthy new year to my readers.