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May 4, 2010: A Cross is More than a Cross

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Title: A Cross is More than a Cross

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5/4/2010—Stanley Fish asks the obvious question in the New York Times online blog. If the Establishment Clause requires government neutrality toward religion, how can religious images be used for public messages? Fish says a cross cannot have two meanings. It cannot be both a sectarian symbol of Christianity and a universal symbol of the dead in war. But, why? This cross was a WWI memorial. Has Fish never read the poem, In Flanders Fields: In Flanders fields the poppies
blow
Between the crosses, row on row, Does Fish imagine the poet was referring to religion? To Christianity? Fish says we should put the religion card on the table. How about putting the Fish card on the table? He is a flat, wooden, and sour post-modern consciousness that does not want symbols of deep meaning in the public square. The secularism I want to live is happy to sometimes share a poetic space with traditional religious images. That secularism is not afraid of a little symbolic continuity. Sure, we would not choose a cross to honor all the dead today. We are more conscious of our pluralism. But in WWI, they often did. So what and why not?