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10-15-2012

October 15, 2012: Politics and Religion

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Ledewitz, B. (2012). October 15, 2012: Politics and Religion. Retrieved from <https://dsc.duq.edu/ledewitz-hallowedsecularism/685>

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Title: Politics and Religion

Date: 2012-10-15T12:28:00.002-04:00

10/15/2012—I am writing off and on about *The Faith of the Faithless*, Simon Critchley's new book about politics and religion. Critchley is attempting to change our starting point in assumptions about these two realms. Most people assume that they can be separated. Critchley is not so sure. Nor is he certain that such separation is positive. And he believes unbelievers can have religion. "Is politics conceivable without religion? The answer is obviously affirmative as the evidence of various secular political theories testifies. But is politics practicable without religion? That is the question. ...Can politics become effective as a way of shaping, motivating, and mobilizing a people or peoples without some sort of dimension—if not foundation—that is religious, without some sort of appeal to transcendence, to externality, to what we called...with Charles Taylor, 'fullness,' however substantive or otherwise that appeal might be. I do not think so." We can and must interpret these terms, of course. But I think the major issue is starting point. For Critchley, belief or faith is something available to most people, including atheists. And, it is a good, even a necessary, thing. This is what I think some--most?--secularists would have a hard time accepting.