

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

12-25-2013

December 25, 2013: The Future of the Secular Outlook

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). December 25, 2013: The Future of the Secular Outlook. Retrieved from <https://dsc.duq.edu/ledewitz-hallowedsecularism/795>

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: The Future of the Secular Outlook

Date: 2013-12-25T11:30:00.003-05:00

12/25/2013—For Christmas, the New York Times columnist Ross Douthat has written a remarkably apt op-ed, which appeared in the NY Times on Sunday, and today in the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette. In Ideas from a Manger, Douthat imagines the manger scene as a complete worldview. The manger encapsulates both the vertical relationship of God and man and the horizontal sense that the transcendent could be represented in the lowly manger and baby. This latter sense was revolutionary in world history and represents the key Christian message—Christ emptied himself and became a servant: kenosis. This sense of the meaning of the manger is widespread today but actually encompasses three distinct modes of understanding. In the biblical world picture, the story is still of God revealing himself in these particular people at one particular time. In contrast, in the spiritual world picture, the divine is manifest everywhere, at least potentially, as symbolized in the manger story. But in the secular world picture, the vertical dimension is lost and only the horizontal message of human solidarity remains. Then Douthat goes on to make a startling point—though all three world pictures have their problems, the secular "suffers from a deeper intellectual incoherence than either of its rivals, because its cosmology does not harmonize at all with its moral picture." Douthat means here that the cosmology of material accident does not mesh with the strong secular commitment to human rights and equality. I am most interested in Douthat's possible future. He predicts a change of some kind in the secular view—it will be replaced by "something new." He leaves out the something I envision—a new sense of materially based teleology. Even matter yearns for the good.