

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

---

2-15-2020

### February 15, 2020: The Age of the Decadent Thinker

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. (2020). February 15, 2020: The Age of the Decadent Thinker. Retrieved from <https://dsc.duq.edu/ledewitz-hallowedsecularism/1287>

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: The Age of the Decadent Thinker

Date: 2020-02-15T08:11:00.000-05:00

2/15/2020—Here is the letter to the editor that I wrote addressing Ross Douthat's several page essay in the New York Times last Sunday—The Age of Decadence. To the Editor: Ross Douthat's essay, The Age of Decadence (2/9/2020) was disappointing. Not because he was wrong—since the piece was basically Douthat's view of things, he could hardly be called wrong—but because it was so pointless. Douthat's view of history is that of ebb and flow. We happen to be in an age of decadence now. A renaissance will come, but all we can do, he writes, is “look and hope” for it. Conveniently, this lets Douthat completely off the hook. Douthat's view is especially odd because one of his prime examples of previous ages of decadence, the decline of the Roman Empire, was occurring at the same time that the Patristic Era was unfolding—one of the most creative periods in the history of the Church. Those Christian leaders presumably did not feel decadent. If Douthat is too worn out and fatalistic to find the creativity occurring right now, let him turn his column over to someone who is not so jaded. The decadence here is that of Douthat, not of society. \*\*\*\*\* The passivity of Douthat's thinking is striking. Here we are and there is nothing to do about it. I suppose there is such a thing as decline. The US certainly seems to be in decline right now. Britain was in decline after WWII. China has been on the rise. Etc. And surely there are forces involved that no one can immediately alter. But is any of this relevant to how we should live? What we should do? It is certainly not an excuse for doing and thinking nothing. Offering no help at all. Can't one look into the sources of this supposed decadence? Are they material? Cognitive? Spiritual? And why didn't the editors at the New York Times ask Douthat about any of this?