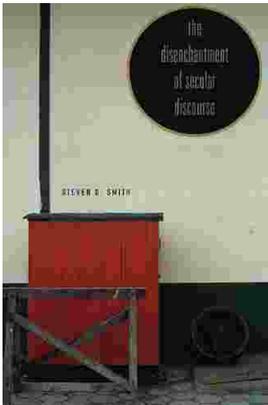


# The Disenchantment of Secular Discourse



The Disenchantment of Secular Discourse

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4.5/5 From 599 Reviews

Steven D. Smith

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3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. This book opens eyes  
By Charles A. Clough  
This is a rich resource on exposing modern secular discussion's reluctance to openly mention the worldviews it surreptitiously uses. Steven Smith does a masterful job of documenting how especially the academy and the legal community studiously avoid acknowledging the classical ethical sources of Western civilization even while using ill-disguised substitutes. The reader's eyes are opened to what really goes on in major controversies like assisted suicide, use of the do-no-harm principle, and separation of church and state. He documents his claims with careful citations including US Supreme Court publications.  
4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Well-Written, Incisive Critique of the Iron Cage of Secular Discourse  
By Mark L Ward Jr  
Excellent analysis and critique; solution rather bland, as the author himself admits. But the critique is so effective that I still must award the book 5 stars. (And I enjoyed his gentle humor and easygoing writing style.)  
The real strength of this critique, in my mind, is that Smith bothered to search out what leading secularists in the liberal tradition (and here I speak of the kind of liberal that All Americans, both Republicans and Democrats, generally are) actually said at the highest levels of academic discourse and jurisprudence. As a law professor, his mining of court opinions on euthanasia was particularly valuable. That leg-work demonstrated his thesis that even the most ardent secularists smuggle metaphysical and/or theological assumptions into the iron cage of secular discourse (a concept similar to Charles Taylors immanent frame). Smith also spent time critiquing renowned philosopher Martha Nussbaums viciously circularhe saysjustification for human rights. And he offered a valuable critique of scientism, drawing from Joseph Vining (*The Song Sparrow and the Child: Claims of Science and Humanity*), namely that while evolution may provide an explanation for morality, it doesnt seem to be one that scientists themselves personally believe with consistency. Scientists do not act as if we all live in a closed system of material causes. This brief summary demonstrates, I think, that Smith was not critiquing no-name lightweights or picking odd, extraneous issues. I have written a much longer review article about this book that I hope to publish elsewhere, but I want to share one conclusion for the community (and for both of the readers of my blog). Smiths biggest contribution to me was actually how he helped crystallize the message of *After Virtue* by Alasdair MacIntyre. MacIntyre looks at the same problem Smith did but at much greater length and in a somewhat more purposefully historical fashion. MacIntyre demonstrates that the major phases of philosophy