



Secularization and Cultural Criticism: Religion, Nation, and Modernity (Religion and Postmodernism)

Vincent P. Pecora

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Religion is an undiscovered country for much of the secular academy, which remains deeply ambivalent about it as an object of study. On the one hand, secular scholars agree that it is time to take religion seriously. On the other, these same scholars persist in assuming that religion rests not on belief but on power and ideology. According to Vincent Pecora, the idea of the secular itself is the source of much of the contradiction and confusion in contemporary thought about religion. Pecora aims here to work through the paradoxes of secularization, which emerges in this book as an intractable problem for cultural criticism in the nation-states of the post-Enlightenment West.

Secularization and Cultural Criticism examines the responses of a wide range of thinkers—Edward Said, Talal Asad, Jürgen Habermas, Walter Benjamin, Emile Durkheim, Carl Schmitt, Matthew Arnold, and Virginia Woolf, among others—to illustrate exactly why the problem of secularization in the study of society and culture should matter once again. Exploring the endemic difficulty posed by religion for the modern academy, Pecora makes sense of the value and potential impasses of secular cultural criticism in a global age.

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