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‘Civil Religion: a window into perennial themes in political philosophy’

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The Author

Ronald Beiner is Professor of Political Science at the University of Toronto and a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada. He was educated at McGill University, where he read Political Science and Philosophy, before going on to postgraduate study at Balliol College, Oxford. The mid- to late-1970s were a lively time to be in Oxford studying political theory: Balliol alone could then boast among its members Steven Lukes and Alan Montefiore, who were fellows at the College, the latter being the supervisor of Michael Sandel, whose own DPhil later became his celebrated *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice*. While there Beiner also worked with Charles Taylor at All Souls —another McGill graduate— who at the time held the Chichele chair in social and political theory. Beiner’s own 1980 DPhil, ‘Hannah Arendt’s contribution to a theory of political judgement’, became the basis of two major publications, his 1982 edition of Arendt’s *Lectures on Kant’s Political Philosophy* (foreign-language editions have appeared or are forthcoming in 15 other languages), and his 1983 book on *Political Judgment* (London: Methuen, 1983), which together were responsible for drawing scholarly attention to the distinctiveness and significance of Arendt’s work on Kant’s concept of judgment.

Beiner started a post as Lecturer in Politics at Southampton University in 1978; he returned to his native Canada in 1983 in order to teach Philosophy at Queen’s University, Kingston, later moving to the University of Toronto’s Political Science Department, where he became a full Professor in 1990. Since those early works on Arendt, Kant, and judgement, Beiner has since edited and authored numerous works on political philosophy, including *What’s the Matter with Liberalism?* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), *Philosophy in a Time of Lost Spirit* (University of Toronto Press, 1997), and a set of essays on debates in contemporary political philosophy on political community, *Liberalism, Nationalism, Citizenship* ((Vancouver: UBC Press, 2003). In his most recent book, *Civil Religion* (Cambridge University Press, 2011), he explores how thinkers from Machiavelli to Rawls have addressed the problem of politics and religion, and his paper for us will introduce his argument in this book to a Cambridge audience.

Other Selected Publications

Democratic Theory and Technological Society, edited with Richard B. Day and Joseph Masciulli (London: M.E. Sharpe, 1988)

Kant and Political Philosophy, edited with William James Booth, (Yale University Press, 1993)

Theorizing Nationalism, edited, (New York: SUNY Press, 1999)

Canadian Political Philosophy, edited with Wayne Norman, (Oxford University Press, 2001)

Judgment, Imagination, and Politics, edited with Jennifer Nedelsky, (Rowman & Littlefield, 2001)