

THE OXFORD HANDBOOK OF

SECULARISM

Edited by

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and

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INTRODUCTION

The Study of Secularism

PHIL ZUCKERMAN AND JOHN R. SHOOK

ON 13 July 2010, France's parliament voted—nearly unanimously—to ban the wearing of veils that cover the face in public places, a vote seen as targeted specifically at Muslim women who wear veils as a religious obligation. On 8 January 2011, Leo Igwe, an outspoken secular humanist, was imprisoned and beaten by the police in Uyo Akwa state in southern Nigeria for attempting to rescue two children who had been accused of witchcraft and subsequently abandoned by their families. On 14 November 2012, Jamaica's public transport authorities banned lay preaching and commuter evangelizing on all public buses. On 27 June 2013, Julia Gillard ended her three-year term as the twenty-seventh Prime Minister of Australia; in addition to being the first woman in that office, she was also an out atheist, publicly open about her lack of belief in God and nonreligious identity. On 12 March 2014, the Supreme Court of Israel voted to end military exemptions for thousands of ultra-Orthodox young men in religious seminaries. On 13 November 2014, the Pew Research Center released the results of a survey on religion in Latin America, reporting that 37 percent of Uruguayans, 16 percent of Chileans, 9 percent of Costa Ricans, 8 percent of Brazilians, and 4 percent of Peruvians are atheist, agnostic, or “of no particular religion.” On 9 January 2015, Raif Badawi was escorted out of his prison cell and tied up in front of a mosque in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, where a throng of spectators watched as he received fifty lashes by a government whip, the first fifty lashes of one thousand lashes that he is sentenced to receive while incarcerated for the next decade. His crime? He wrote some skeptical blog posts critical of religion. On 5 May 2014, the United States Supreme Court ruled that it is constitutionally legal for city council meetings to begin with sectarian prayers. On 5 August 2015, Hindu activists took to the streets of Katmandu, Nepal, protesting against the inclusion of the word “secular” in the nation's first post-monarchy constitution. Many politicians in Nepal regard the constitutional designation of their nation as a secular state as a safeguard for religious freedom and tolerance, but others—particularly the protestors—worry that it will corrode Nepal's Hindu culture.

While these events chosen from headlines of the previous decade are certainly disparate, they do have one thing in common: they all concern various forms, manifestations, or aspects of contemporary secularism. They also provide compelling evidence that secularism is a significant factor in societies and cultures the world over, and one that

increasingly demands attention and analysis. It is with this conviction that this volume has been published: an assemblage of essays from leading scholars across philosophy, the humanities, intellectual history, political theory, law, international studies, sociology, psychology, anthropology, education, religious studies, and additional disciplines, all showing an increasing interest in the multifaceted phenomenon known as secularism. This handbook on secularism is, we hope, a timely overview and helpful contribution to the new multidisciplinary field of secular studies. The chapters that follow offer definitions and data, discussions and controversies, and typologies and theories, as well as detailed case studies, that are all relevant—indeed, essential—for as thorough an understanding of the secular and secularism as is currently possible.

SECULARISM: DEFINITIONAL APPROACHES

We did not burden any contributor with defining the secular or secularism for the whole volume, nor did we impose any definitions upon contributors, leaving authors to explain key terms from their own perspective and use them for their own purposes. Having liberated the chapters from any imposition, the introduction of core concepts is a task remaining for us as editors, although the chapters by Quack, Keysar, Bruce, and Berlinerblau in the first section analyze essential aspects of secularity, secularization, personal secularism, and political secularism.

While one can find numerous formulations, articulations, and examples of ideas that could be fairly classified with secularism amidst the assertions of various ancient Indian, Greek, Chinese, and Roman philosophers (Larue 1996; Hecht 2003), the term itself came into its own in the mid-nineteenth century in England. It was the English schoolteacher, lecturer, writer, editor, and founder of the British Secular Union, George Jacob Holyoake (1817–1906), who brought “secularism” into wide usage in 1851. The word had appeared in print before then, but Holyoake connected it to an affirmative ethical and civic agenda. Those earlier appearances of “secularism” retained the term’s indication of a contrast with churchly or spiritual matters, or even a degradation to worldly and materialistic ways. For example, in 1829 the word “secularism” appeared in a book authored by Noel Thomas Ellison, a fellow and tutor at Balliol College, Oxford. His book *Protestant Errors and Roman Catholic Truths* (1829) sought the reunion of these two Christian denominations, but each would have to admit its faults; the question is raised whether the Church of England is vulnerable to “the charge of secularism and worldly-mindedness” (204–205) raised against it. The next notable instance of the use of “secularism” is in the pages of *The Quarterly Review* of December 1842, where an article catalogues anti-Catholic criticisms, such as “its pretensions to exclusive spirituality, and its gross and materializing secularism” and similar disparagements (Anon. 1842: 239).

As for Holyoake, his story about his own first use of “secularism” placed it in his magazine, *The Reasoner*. In his book *The Origin and Nature of Secularism* (1896), Holyoake says that the issue dated 10 December 1851 was where he first mentions the word “secularism.” His memory, or his scanning of back issues, had failed him. In fact, his first use in print of “secularism” was in an earlier issue of *The Reasoner* dated 25 June 1851 where Holyoake says that he prefers “secularism” as a better label for the worldview he advocates instead of “atheism.”²¹ This

occurs in his reply to a letter to the editor by a certain Edward Search—the pseudonym of an ally in radical politics, W. H. Ashurst, who used “Edward Search” to insert useful letters for stimulating Holyoake’s wise responses. “Edward” had written to ask for a label to Holyoake’s stance besides “atheist” and suggests “secularist” instead. Holyoake’s reply agrees that “secularist” seems applicable, and then he says, “*Secularism* is peculiarly the work we have always had in hand,” which is “larger than Atheism, and includes it.”² Holyoake adds that his coming lectures about the “Martineau and Atkinson Letters” will enlarge on these terms. By May 1851 Holyoake had not yet published those lectures, but in an issue from that month he gave his answer to the question of whether Harriet Martineau was an atheist: she was not. Holyoake seemed determined to enlist Martineau in his own secularist ranks, pointing out how she nowhere denied God’s existence. The *Letters On the Laws of Man’s Nature and Development* by Harriet Martineau and Henry George Atkinson had appeared in that year, scandalizing the literary world. Both writers stated views that evidently sympathized with materialism and unbelief in the course of criticizing religion thoroughly. Martineau was already known for her alliance with Auguste Comte, the advocate of irreligious positivism and materialism in France; she published a translation of Comte’s *Positive Philosophy* in 1853.

Readers, then and now, would be understandably confused at this point—if secularism includes atheism, as Holyoake had said, why would it be important to distance those affirming atheism from secularism? Who are secularists, if not atheists? The partial overlap between secularity and atheism allows each to influence the other, but that degree of commonality also opens opportunities for each to attempt to manipulate the other (see Blankholm’s chapter in this volume). Explorations into atheism and secularity can never be exhaustive, but they are highly suggestive (Antony 2007; Zuckerman 2010; Levine 2011; Bullivant and Ruse 2013). The type of freethought proceeding all the way to skepticism about God’s existence (Martin 2007; Shook 2010) has had a powerful effect on the course of social history and politics, far out of proportion to the limited numbers of people avowing unbelief or atheism (Harrington 1985; Taylor 2007; Turner 2011; Watson 2014).

The vernacular word “atheist” goes back to the early 1500s and “secular” was visible soon after, but locating incidences of the word “secularist” before the 1840s is very difficult. Rare appearances at least indicate that the word had some small degree of common usage. It appears as early as 1799 in a novel titled *Battleridge: An Historical Tale, Founded on Facts* (London, 1799), in which one of the characters exclaims, “I am no secularist” in renouncing all temptation to assist greedy and unworthy protagonists (54). By the 1840s, the word occasionally appears in print as a synonym for “materialist” and the like, in the context of referring to deviations from orthodox thinking. Holyoake was thoroughly familiar with materialism, having advocated that worldview from his early days as a freethinker. As his reminiscences in *The Origin and Nature of Secularism* state, his 1843 prospectus advertising his newspaper *The Movement* declared that “Materialism will be advanced as the only sound basis of rational thought and practice” (1896: 46). In regards to practice, Holyoake was quite clear about his civic values. The first issue of *The Reasoner* in 1846 announced that it shall be “Communitistic in Social Economy—Utilitarian in Morals—Republican in Politics—and Anti-Theological in Religion.” Issues of *The Reasoner* from 1852 onwards associate secularism with those agendas. Martineau herself promptly allied with secularism; her 1853 letter in the *Boston Liberator* was oft-quoted by Holyoake because it captured his intentions. For example, she wrote, “The adoption of the term Secularism is justified by its including a large number of persons who are not Atheists, and uniting them for action which has Secularism

for its object, not Atheism. On this ground, and because, by the adoption of a new term, a vast amount of impediment from prejudice is got rid of, the use of the name Secularism is found advantageous.”³

Robert Cooper, another popular freethinker and atheist in England at that time, attached himself to the label of “secularist” soon after Holyoake employed it in 1851, and many others applied that label to themselves, to Holyoake’s satisfaction. However, Cooper soon turned against Holyoake. Holyoake had always repudiated the term “atheist” because it carried the negative connotation of abandoning morality along with religion, and it offered no affirmative social agenda besides a combative stance against religion. Holyoake’s allegiance to rationalism prevented him from knowing whether God exists, a stance he later called “agnosticism” following Thomas Henry Huxley, lending little incentive to argue for atheism or disparage humble religiosity. By guiding his version of secularism away from unanswerable religious questions and unnecessary atheist proselytizing, he constructed a nontheist alternative to the strategy of aggressive atheism. That combative strategy was already taken up by self-proclaimed atheist and leading organizer Charles Bradlaugh (1833–1891), causing a significant rift dividing the British secularist movement (Royle 1974; Mullen 1987).

Holyoake never deviated from his original plan for secularism. The third edition of his *Principles of Secularism* stated that secularism is “the study of promoting human welfare by material means; measuring human welfare by the utilitarian rule, and making the service of others a duty of life” (1871: 11) In that year the “Articles of Secular Belief,” endorsed by the London Secular Council but substantially composed by Holyoake, appeared in *The Reasoner*.⁴ His 1896 book *The Origin and Nature of Secularism* stated similar principles:

Secularism is a code of duty pertaining to this life, founded on considerations purely human, and intended mainly for those who find theology indefinite or inadequate, unreliable or unbelievable. Its essential principles are three: (1) The improvement of this life by material means. (2) That science is the available Providence of man. (3) That it is good to do good. Whether there be other good or not, the good of the present life is good, and it is good to seek that good. (41)⁵

In the hands of Holyoake, secularism was a worldly approach to life, and life’s opportunities and challenges, unencumbered by anything religious. Despite his continual efforts, however, it remained entangled with materialism and egoism on the one side and atheism and anticlericalism on the other. Those entanglements were not going to be papered over, by Holyoake or anyone else—they were built into the way that Christendom had defined “secular.”

DEFINING THE SECULAR

The origin of the word “secular” is Latin: *saeculum* typically meant a fixed period of time, an age, one hundred years or so (Feeney 2008: 145). The *saeculum* was not defined in contrast to any sacred concerns, and had a freestanding usage in Latin. In Christian Latin of medieval times, *saeculum* was a useful term for distinguishing this temporal age of the world from the eternal realm of God. This term was borrowed by the Romance languages and easily entered

Middle English. Basically, something “secular” has more to do with worldly affairs rather than with religious affairs. Secular princes exercised their civil authority (piously, the people hoped), while secular monks provided their priestly services among the people (reverently, the church hierarchy hoped).

One of the earliest large English dictionaries, *Dictionarium Anglo-Britannicum: Or, A General English Dictionary* (London, 1708) by John Kersey, gave these three definitions:

Secular, belonging to the space of 100 years; also relating to this world, or Life. Also that is convenient in the World, without being engaged in a Monastick Life.
 Secularity, the Condition of a Secular Person, a Secular Life.
 To Secularize, to make Secular.

Nathan Bailey’s *An Universal Etymological English Dictionary* (enlarged second edition, London, 1731) does not list “secular” but it does include “secular games” (“once in an age or an hundred years”), “secularization” (“converting a regular person, place, or benefice to a secular one”), and “secularness”:

Secularness [*secularis*, L.] worldliness, addictedness to the things of this world.

Samuel Johnson’s famous *A Dictionary of the English Language* (1755) gave these definitions:

Secular, adj. [*secularis*, Latin; *seculier*, French] 1. Not spiritual; relating to the affairs of the present world; not holy; worldly. 2. [In the church of Rome.] not bound by monastic rules. 3. [*Seculaire*, Fr.] Happening or coming once in a *secle* or century.
 Secularity, n. s. [from *secular*.] Worldliness; attention to the things of the present life.

English dictionaries after Johnson’s typically repeated his definitions. The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (London, 1773) included “secular” as “something that is temporal; in which sense, the word stands opposed to ecclesiastical.” Thomas Sheridan’s *A General Dictionary of the English Language* (London, 1780) restates Johnson’s definitions for “secular” and “secularity.” The *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED*, 1880s) followed the earlier dictionaries and currently provides those two primary meanings for “secular”:

Of or belonging to the present or visible world as distinguished from the eternal or spiritual world; temporal, worldly.
 Belonging to the world and its affairs as distinguished from the church and religion; civil, lay, temporal. Chiefly used as a negative term, with the meaning non-ecclesiastical, non-religious, or non-sacred.

The *OED*, like earlier dictionaries, supplies the primary meaning of “secular” in two concepts—the temporal and worldly—and both of those concepts can be accurately defined without reference to anything religious. All the same, the secular does make sense as the contrary of the religious and the alternative to religious ways of life. Correspondingly, two meanings for “secularization” are primary in the *OED*:

The giving of a secular or non-sacred character or direction to (art, studies, etc.); the placing (of morals) on a secular basis; the restricting (of education) to secular subjects.
 The conversion of an ecclesiastical or religious institution or its property to secular possession and use; the conversion of an ecclesiastical state or sovereignty to a lay one.

The first definition for secularization highlights how a secular standpoint does not regard any religious standpoint (however religion or the religious may be characterized) as necessary for expressive or intellectual activities, moral conduct, or learning in general. Without waiting for religion to congeal or define itself (and pessimism about that is warranted), secularization would guide humanity in a manner very different from that presumed by religions, unable to see why human culture and human achievement must be forever incomplete without the guidance offered by a religious standpoint about other-worldly or nonnatural matters and values.

“Secularization” refers to some sort of process or set of processes that, if meaningful for those who live through it, could at most serve as a means, not as an end in itself. The prior questions must be asked and answered: Why should religious conviction relax its grip on the mentalities of people, and why should religious institutions surrender control over the workings of society? Those are precisely the questions taken up by secularism. If there are reasonable answers, secularism must provide them, and the destiny of the secular may depend on its success.

Due to Christendom’s cultural, intellectual, and political dominion over Europe for so long, distinct agendas raising rivals to that multidimensional hegemony were inevitable. And any other civilization’s experiences with a more complex and pluralistic religious history would naturally witness even greater variability to nonreligious agendas. Is secularism one or many? Perhaps we can see one-in-many. If those distinct agendas each claim to represent the secular and fulfill secularism, that only displays their family resemblance. If any of these secularisms claim exclusivity and dismisses the rest as subsidiary or counterproductive, that preeminence similarly reveals a shared heritage. So it was before Holyoake attempted their cohesion, and so it remains today.

For example, Jacques Berlinerblau defines secularism as “a political philosophy, which, at its core, is preoccupied with, and often deeply suspicious of, any and all relations between government and religion” (2012: xvi). According to Barry Kosmin, secularism “involves organizations and legal constructs that reflect the institutional expressions of the secular in a nation’s political realm and public life” (2007: 1). Joseph Baker and Buster Smith define secularism as a “cosmic belief system that is explicitly nonreligious in orientation” (2015: 8). For Philip Kitcher, secularism “claims that there are no supernatural entities” and it entails the expression of doubt in the existence of “deities, divinities, spirits ghosts, and ancestors . . . and the supernatural forces to which the world’s various religions, past and present, make their varied appeals” (2011: 24).

A considerable amount of definitional disparity is evident. More and more leading scholars are publishing a book with “secularism” in the title, but unless its author is leading a particular secular approach, it seems harder to find a clear definition of the term within those books’ pages (see, e.g., Jakobsen and Pellegrini 2008; Calhoun et al. 2011). The lack of consensus over the meaning or purpose of secularism should no longer be any surprise, given its multiform history and multipurpose potential. Most words, terms, and labels that seek to capture something that is simultaneously social, philosophical, legal, demographic, historical, and cultural are typically difficult to adequately define. After all, consider how difficult it is to define “family,” “religion,” “environmentalism,” “art,” or “fundamentalism” in a way satisfactory to all interested parties.

Our considered view, shared by most of the contributors to this volume, judges that it is best to conceive of secularism as multipronged and multifaceted. And its meaning surely

varies for different societies the world over. To collect a limited but robust set of chapters, purporting some degree of adequate coverage to this topic, surely requires more preparation than the ritual acknowledgments of secularism's multiplicity. The next section explains how the secular has become a legitimate object of objective research, bringing into view expansive fields and enticing questions sufficient to compel further academic exploration. The final section delineates our chosen design for the initial cartography across such broad secular expanses.

SECULARISM SURGING

Obviously, no volume of this kind comes into being out of thin air. Its conception and development—and the fact that we have been able to recruit the work of forty-three scholars inquiring into so many aspects of secularism—speaks to the emergent and enlarging interest in all things related to secularism: unorthodoxy, blasphemy, apostasy, irreligion, religious criticism, agnosticism, atheism, naturalism, earth-centered -isms, humanism (and trans- and posthumanisms), rationalism, skepticism, scientism, modernism, human rights causes, and separations of church and state the world over.

This expanding interest has been increasingly accessible to both public and scholarly audiences. The public front has been especially dynamic, as shown by the unprecedented success of international bestsellers critical of religion by the likes of Sam Harris, Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens, and Ayaan Hirsi Ali, as well as by the scale of reactions against New Atheism (Amarasingam 2010). A dramatic increase in the size and number of secularist groups and communities in the United States has also received much attention. Over two thousand local groups and meetups now dot practically every county of every state, and national-level associations such as the Secular Coalition and the Student Secular Alliance have joined older thriving organizations such as the Freedom From Religion Foundation and the American Humanist Association. And we have observed the emergence of secular organizations seeking to mimic religious congregations; the Sunday Assembly movement is currently the prominent example of so-called atheist churches that have sprouted up in cities all over the world.

The most important component to secularism's growing significance in the public sphere has been the dramatic increase of nonreligious people. The voice of religion could not be expected to fall silent around the world (Berger 1999), but the voices of nonreligious people are undeniably more numerous than ever before. For example, the percentage of Americans who claim “none” when asked what their religion is has grown from 8 percent in 1990 to 16 percent in 2007 and to somewhere between 23 percent and 30 percent today. And among those between the ages of 18 and 24, 36 percent have no religion. According to the latest 2015 General Social Survey, 7.5 million Americans have joined the ranks of the nonreligious since 2012.⁶

America is no longer looking so different from other regions of the world that are already quite nonreligious. Whereas only 2 percent Canadians were nonreligious one hundred years ago, nearly 30 percent of Canadians are nonreligious today (Bruce 2011: 14; Csillag 2013). One hundred years ago, less than 1 percent of Australians were nonreligious, but today about 20 percent are (Bruce 2011). Surging rates of secularity are even more dramatic in Europe.

A century ago in Holland, around 10 percent of the population claimed to be religiously unaffiliated; today, it is over 40 percent (Bruce 2011: 10; Halman 2010). And for the first time in Dutch history, there are now more atheists and agnostics in the Netherlands than believers in God (Savelle 2015). Back in the 1950s, only 2 percent of British adults said that they did not believe in God, but today over 40 percent of British adults say that they either do not believe in God or take an agnostic viewpoint, claiming that God's existence is impossible to make judgments about, one way or the other. And nearly half of British adults now claim no religious identity at all (Crockett and Voas 2006; Bagg and Voas 2010: 97). Seventy-six percent of Swedish adults claim to be either atheists or not religious, with citizens of the Czech Republic and Spain not far behind; about half the population of Western Europe describe themselves as either not religious or convinced atheists (WIN/Gallup International 2015). And recent survey information from Japan illustrates extensive secularization over the course of the last century: sixty years ago, about 70 percent of the Japanese claimed to hold personal religious beliefs, but today, that figure is down to only about 20 percent (Reader 2012). Such global levels of irreligion are historically unprecedented.

In response to the dramatic rise of irreligion noted here, more and more scholars from a variety of disciplines have started to train their lenses on secular life and culture. The past decade has seen a true explosion of scholarly interest in matters pertaining to secularism in all its varied forms. In 2005, the Institute for the Study of Secularism in Society and Culture was founded at Trinity College, established to advance the understanding of the role of secular values and the process of secularization in contemporary society and culture. In 2008, the Non-Religion and Secularity Research Network was founded by scholars at Cambridge University and Oxford University, in an attempt to create an international and interdisciplinary network of researchers who are focused on the topic of nonreligion and secularity. In 2011, a department of secular studies was established at Pitzer College in Claremont, California. Also in 2011, the peer-reviewed academic journal *Secularism and Nonreligion* was launched; an open access, interdisciplinary journal, it is published with the aim of advancing research on various aspects of the secular. In 2012, the Anthropology Department of the London School of Economics launched a Programme for the Study of Religion and Non-Religion, with the aim of fostering discussion and research relating to issues "relevant to religion, atheism, secularism, humanism and post-humanism."

If books are a sound measure of productive scholarship, the secular has reached academic respectability, as the bibliographic effort to keep up with works relating to secularity, secularization, and secularism is by now nearly unmanageable. The catalogues of every major publisher and most small presses do not disappoint. New York University Press recently launched a Secular Studies series, meant to provide "a home for works in the emerging field of secular studies," with published works "rooted in a social science perspective, exploring and illuminating various aspects of secular life, ranging from how secular people live their lives and how they construct their identities to the activities of secular social movements, from the demographics of secularism to the ways in which secularity intersects with other social processes, identities, patterns, and issues." Also in 2012, Palgrave Macmillan launched a new book series on "Histories of the Sacred and the Secular, 1700–2000," welcoming "book proposals on the history of Atheism, Secularism, Humanism and unbelief/secularity and to encourage research agendas in this area alongside those in religious belief." In 2014, De Gruyter also launched a new book series, "Religion and Its Others: Studies in Religion, Nonreligion, and Secularity," which "explores nonreligious or 'irreligious' phenomena."

Additionally, numerous academic conferences have been held around the world with a focus on the secular, such as “Secularism and Religious Diversity in Europe: Opportunities and Perspectives” at Leuven University, Belgium, in 2012, “Secularism on the Edge: United States, France, and Israel” at Georgetown University, in 2013, “Religion and State: From Theocracy to Secularism, and in Between” at Bethlehem University in Palestine in 2013, “Global Secularisms” at New York University in 2013, “Explaining Nonreligion and Secularity in the U.S. and Beyond” at Pitzer College in 2014, and “Women’s Religious Agency: Negotiating Secularism and Multiculturalism in Everyday Life,” at Uppsala University, Sweden, in 2015. Attendees at the annual conferences held by the Secularity and Nonreligion Network, the American Academy of Religion, and the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion are seeing more and more papers and panels about secularism each year.

It is from within this surging wave of interest in secularism that this volume has come into being. We hope to further and shape this surging growing interest in secularism by providing in-depth analyses of its many manifestations and implications.

ORGANIZING THE STUDY OF SECULARISM

Admitting how secularism is not easily defined in theory and rarely organized in practice cannot be avoided by any scholar serious about the subject. Still, that admission is no excuse for complacency toward the study of secularism lapsing into disarray. Editors of even a modestly comprehensive volume about secularism cannot avoid their duty to lend some organization to the ventures of academic inquiry. Fortunately, the root meanings of both “secular” and “secularity” have been relatively stable for several centuries, and the “secular” lends its meaning to all of its cognates. To seek what is secular is to observe the signs of secularity, and the capacity to identify secularity in turn permits the objective study of any of its manifestations.

The nonobsolete meanings of “secularity” are these, according to the *OED*:

The condition or quality of being secular. (a) Occupation with secular affairs (on the part of clergymen); secular spirit or behavior. Also occas. in wider application: Worldliness, absence of religious principle or feeling. (b) Lay character (of persons claiming to be in holy orders). (c) Secular or non-sacred character; absence of connection with religion.

Setting aside the two specific references to the character or conduct of religious clergy mentioned in (a) and (b), we are left with these two primary meanings for “secularity”:

Worldliness, absence of religious principle or feeling.
 Secular or nonsacred character; absence of connection with religion.

A secular person, social activity, or cultural institution is worldly, concerned for matters of daily life. To study the secular and secularity is to study the temporal and worldly. From the concept of the secular itself, five additional broad topics emerge, each dependent upon prior concepts higher on the list, amounting to six foundational concepts:

The Secular: features of personal and social matters concerning the mundane temporal world and one’s daily life.

Social Secularity: observing and explaining how social/political/economic (etc.) norms, structures, and institutions have primarily secular functions and aims.

Secularization: measuring, analyzing, and explaining any growth trends in social secularity discerned in countries around the world; and studying correlations between secularization and other socio/cultural features.

Personal Secularity: studying and explaining trends in the numbers and types of secular people, their degrees of secularity, the correlations with social secularity and secularization, and the ways that secular people avoid, enter, or cease religious participation.

Secular Living: inquiring into how people understand their lives and seek meanings and values in worldly ways, along with the study of contrasts between secular and religious living, and ways secular people interact with religious features of their society.

Secularism: explanatory justifications for secularization in society and personal secularity for individuals, and the promotion and improvement of partially or fully secular living.

The last topic of secularism is here defined schematically, reliant on more basic secular concepts yet open to various justifications for any sort of enhancement of secularization or degree of personal secularity, and undefined with regard to what type(s) of secular living may be promoted and to what extent. Conceptions of secularism utilized by our contributors are less schematic and more concrete in order to play useful roles in research and theorizing from discipline to discipline.

“Secularism” is also listed last rather than first because secularism functions as an “-ism” or viewpoint—a view of things with some point to it, which is more about recommending answers to contentious questions than about asking questions answerable with confirmable facts. The first five topical areas are views upon specified matters that can be roughly understood through the basic concept of the “secular” and objectively described wherever found by whoever takes the trouble to do it with some scientific care. Particular devotion to some specific kind of secularism can shape what one sees, yet such partiality need not doom the academic study of secular matters to subjectivity or relativism, or to ideology. Furthermore, no preference or commitment to secularism is needed, by the observer or the observed. One can live a secular life and participate in secular folkways and institutions without thinking of oneself as secular, adhering to secularism, or undertaking secularist action. Being secular is more like being a pedestrian than a podiatrist. If you are observed taking advantage of public walkways, you are a pedestrian no matter whether you would care to tell anyone that you are a pedestrian. On the other hand, if you are not familiar with what being a podiatrist is like, you are not a podiatrist. Secular people, in other words, do not have to know how to be a “secularist,” and no endorsement of secularism is required. As for scholars, they can theorize accounts of secularity and secularization for due consideration by scholarly communities quite independently of whether they personally approve or whether they can sympathize with any of secularism’s agendas.

By contrast, secularism is the sort of thing that typically finds its advancement and advocates in secularists. There is no single type of secularist to be identified, and secularist attitudes can be found in unlikely places. Religious people may endorse one or another agenda of secularism, such as funding public education or separating church from state, and to that limited extent they could be tagged with holding a “secularist” stance. Like religious allies, secularists will pick and choose their own priorities, and any such advocacy occurs within the particular local context where one resides and expresses one’s views. What is manifested as secularism and secularist activism on the ground will vary greatly from one country to

another, and even from one small territory to another. Secularism in a Buddhist society may have little in common with secularism in a Christian society. Islamic culture is hardly the same in every Muslim country, so secularisms in those countries will correspondingly look different. Any kind of secularism offers a characteristic view with a point that makes sense in its proper context, but no formulaic method to advancing secularism should be abstractly sought in advance.

As some chapters expressly warn, secularism is distinct from secularization. Secularization can occur in the course of human history without any explicit or organized efforts to justify or advance it. Secularization does not require lots of secular people, any work of secularists, or the public promotion of secularism, because secular dimensions to social institutions and cultural practices can emerge and develop from the ordinary activities of people in large groups, even large religious groups. Over long periods of time, religious societies have developed vast secular dimensions, such as educational, economic, or political institutions, in the absence of any deliberate attempt to promote secularity or secularization, simply because modified social conditions turned out to arouse and develop those secular features. Governments refraining from requiring a single religion or promoting any religion, for example, emerged occasionally in the course of civilizations and empires, without any political secularists involved at all. It is actually an unusual feature of modern Western civilization and its inheritance from the Greco-Roman civilization that intellectuals have formulated secular justifications for governments and established somewhat secular governments.

Although secularism involves the advocacy for and advancement of secularization in some form or another, secularism is not reducible to a judgment that “nonbelief is growing,” “secularization is expanding,” “secularization follows modernization,” “secularization follows science,” or “secularization is inevitable.” Religion’s admirers can admit some validity to such judgments, if genuinely confirmable, without feeling that they are thereby endorsing secularism. And secularism can be vibrant where nonbelief and secularization is declining, no modernization or science is around, or even where religiosity’s expansion seems inevitable. Secularism may (unjustly) gain comfort from sociological or political predictions, but disappointed predictions cannot touch secularism’s point.

Because secularists agree in their secularity but do not necessarily agree about why religion should be avoided or about specific agendas for resisting religion, the phenomenon of “polysecularity” has to be recognized. As some chapters explore in more detail, the emergence of secularity in the form of open opposition to religion lacks a uniform manifestation. Across human history and cultures, there have been many phases and modes of secularism operating in resistance to religious ideas and institutions. Historians of narrow scope assume that secularism and modernism are twins born of the same western European mother, but intellectual resistance to religion was not an uncommon struggle across the ancient world and the history of Eastern thought.

Six major modes of modern secularism stand out to our Western eyes: political secularism, economic secularism, educational secularism, ethical secularism, scientific secularism, and religious criticism.

Political Secularism: defenses of the secular functions of government, the constitutional secularity of government, and the promotion of governments showing legal neutrality toward, and relative independence from, religions.

Economic Secularism: the promotion of material values and economic progress by economic systems relatively free from religious control, along with scrutiny of proposed measures of secular well-being. Because economic secularity may require some government scrutiny, advocacy of political secularism may be involved.

Educational Secularism: advocacy of the widespread availability of primary and secondary education that is not infused with religious indoctrination or denominational proselytizing. Because this may require supervision over private schools and/or government-supported public schools, advocacy of political secularism can be involved.

Ethical Secularism: scientific explanations for human morality, philosophical justifications for morality's validity and authority, and promotion of kinds of ethical systems having only naturalistic bases and secular aims, such as human excellence and happiness.

Scientific Secularism: studying the development and promotion of the sciences and their methodologies, scientific and naturalistic worldviews, and the virtues/ideals that scientific research and scientific communities exemplify. The scientific study of religion and religious experience explaining them in natural terms, is included here.

Religious Criticism: criticizing religion and justifying nonbelief, by applying rhetorical, polemical, and logical means of persuasion. Increasing personal secularity in society is a major goal, along with decreasing religious influence in society. Intellectual arguments against religion proceed into the area of atheology and its defense of atheism.

Political secularism is often regarded as vital or even essential to any mode of secularism, since its absence practically forbids the effective pursuit of the rest. Religious criticism is always on call in support of all modes of secularism as needed, and it gains effectiveness as other modes of secularism become robust.

This short list could easily be subdivided or extended, and no claims for exhaustiveness are implied. It also bears repeating that different societies will witness their own characteristic patterns of active secularisms. Perhaps economic and political secularisms happen to be most dynamic for a time, followed by educational and ethical secularisms at another time, or any other combinations, including their decay, decline, or even disappearance. They certainly cannot be expected to march together or necessarily proceed at the same paces.

OVERVIEW OF CONTENTS

The sections to this volume offer coverage of the six foundational secular topics, and the chapters taken together include discussions relating to each of the six major modes of secularism, at least a cursory extent.

Part One, "Identifying the Secular, Secularity, Secularization, and Secularism," provides orientations and overviews to these concepts, their applications, and their interrelationships. Johannes Quack distinguishes what he calls worldview secularism from political secularism, pointing out their intertwined histories and contemporary engagements. Ariela Keysar compares the beliefs of atheists, the nonreligious, and religious people and specifically analyzes their different attitudes about the question of science conflicting with religion. Steve Bruce traces the relationship between modernism and secularization trends and judges that conditions remain favorable for further secularization in the West. Mark Juergensmeyer ponders how the traditional narrative that secularism must conflict with religion presumes

unnecessary dichotomies and encourages extremism on both sides. Jacques Berlinerblau examines the principles of political secularism and liberalism during their historical emergence in Europe, which now inform distinctive approaches to secularism today. Jonathan Fox surveys that contemporary political scene in order to see which types of political secularism are actually guiding democracies around the world.

Part Two, “Secular Governments,” provides in-depth examinations of selected countries and regions where secularization and secularism have had significant yet highly variable impacts. On Western models of government, there are chapters by John Perry (on England and America); Amélie Barras (on France); Kenan Sevinc, Ralph W. Hood Jr., and Thomas Coleman (on Turkey); and Guy Ben-Porat (on Israel). For Middle Eastern, African, and South Asia regions, there are chapters by Abdullah Saeed (on Islam); Baffour Takyi (on sub-Saharan Africa); and Vidhu Verma (on India). Additional chapters are by Sonja Luehrmann (the Soviet Union and then Russia) and Cheng-tian Kuo (comparing China and Taiwan).

Part Three, “Contesting Political Secularism,” offers political and philosophical debates over the particular significance of experiments with secularisms and their relative merits and problems. The contentious status of liberalism’s theoretical proposal to erode or erase religion from the public sphere is the main focus of chapters by Cristina Lafont, Shadia Drury, and Roger Trigg. As those chapters intimate, despite their disagreements with each other, what religious conviction and religious community can practically contribute to public life and representative government should be taken into account. Jacob Goodson contributes an overview of Jürgen Habermas’s evolving position on secularism, multifaith societies, and postsecularism. With the issue of multiculturalism and respect for religious diversity taking center stage, Veit Bader recommends a liberal-democratic constitutionalism able to handle the nuances and trade-offs needed for any implementation of a secularism. Tariq Modood also seeks a flexible and pluralistic compromise, involving robust state–religion relationships that allow the multi-establishment of religions. Like some other contributors in this section, Yolande Jansen questions any simplistic opposition between religion and secularism, urging that the political, socioeconomic, cultural-historical, religious, and ideological features particular to a country receive full consideration.

Part Four, “Politics of Church and State,” delves into specific points of controversy and conflict animating church–state relations today. Perhaps not all of the contributors to this section would label themselves as secularists, but typical secularist agendas are amply heard. Paul Cliteur explains how arguments against religion’s influence over politics are developed from the entirely secular position that ethics and human rights should be autonomous from religion. James Arthur addresses ongoing legal conflicts in the area of education and religion, discussing some recent Supreme Court and European Court of Human Rights decisions in this arena. Niamh Reilly describes the major developments to debates about religion and secularism in public and political life where they especially concern the role of women and the critiques of feminism. Juhem Navarro-Rivera and Yazmín García Trejo report on the growing racial diversity of secularism in America, showing why this trend correlates with the exodus of secular Americans away from the Republican Party. Sikivu Hutchinson focuses on African Americans, who are not as secular as other cultural groups, yet secular humanist and atheist traditions in African American thought have counterbalanced black religious orthodoxy. Caroline Mala Corbin surveys religion jurisprudence in the United States, where the free exercise clause has become more potent in Supreme Court decisions, shifting constitutional jurisprudence from “separationism” toward “neutrality” and diminishing the

role of the establishment clause. David Niose represents recent and ongoing judicial cases as cautionary illustrations of church–state issues involving the ongoing culture wars that show little sign of subsiding.

Part Five, “Secularity and Society,” returns to the level of personal secularity, bringing into better view the real lives of nonreligious people as they experience the transitions and disruptions of today’s world. Insights into African, Japanese, Jewish, Muslim, and American secular experiences illustrate that diversity. David Eller anthropologically deconstructs the category “secular” to expose the rich diversity observable in secular living and suggests that the categories of “the religious” and “the secular” may not last as easy contraries for much longer. Jesse Smith adds his sociological insights into that same vast diversity, with additional concrete examples of how the secular involves many paths, has many meanings, and is expressed and experienced in different ways. Luke Galen agrees that the religious inter-fuses with the secular, including where claimed effects of religiosity are in reality attributable to secular mechanisms, so that religiosity cannot claim any special unworldly benefits. David Yaden, Jonathan Iwry, Emily Esfahani Smith, and James Pawelski utilize positive psychology’s scientific findings, and its shift toward a meaning-oriented and humanistic view of well-being, to help fill in supposed gaps to secular living. Robert Fuller exposes how secularity is interfusing with spirituality for many religiously unaffiliated people, who seek such things as self-growth, openness to wonder, authenticity, metaphysical explanations, and communal and ecological morality. Will Gervais and Maxine Najle turn to lingering prejudices harbored against nonreligious people, inquiring into causes behind discrimination against the nonreligious and the impact of vocal atheist movements. Marlene Winell discusses the difficult transitions that many formerly religious people experience as they undergo cultural readaptations and psychological healings needed after abandoning religious indoctrination.

Part Six, “Morality and Secular Ethics,” collects chapters that offer various ways to present naturalistic accounts of morality and justify secular approaches to ethics. Erik Wielenberg considers the problem of whether the freedom, agency, and responsibility expected from moral behavior can be accommodated within the natural world. Dennis Krebs and Kaleda Denton recount the current scientific thinking on the long evolution of human sociality, morality, and altruism. John Teehan delineates the major differences and disagreements between secular ethics and religious ethics. Sor-hoon Tan recounts how secular ethics was not limited to any single civilization, as Aristotle’s philosophy and Confucianism require no otherworldly religious beliefs, and a Confucian secular ethics can be fused with John Dewey’s reconstruction of the religious. Joseph Blankholm surveys nineteenth- and twentieth-century manifestations of organized secularism and humanism, illuminating tensions still animating struggles over the point of secularism. Looking forward, Joachim Duyndam articulates a positive humanism upholding liberty, responsibility, justice, solidarity, pluralism, the art of living, and sustainability. Finally, gazing even farther into the future, Bryan Turner ponders a paradigmatic secular quest for life extension and living forever, and confronts the choice awaiting us between posthumanism and transhumanism.

Not surprisingly, given the times in which we are living, political secularism, democratic governing, and church–state relations in America, Europe, and around the world have the place of prominence at the core of this volume. That worldliness and timeliness seems in keeping with the spirit of secularism.

NOTES

1. *The Reasoner* 11, no. 6 (25 June 1851): 88.
2. Ibid. On Search's identity, see Royle, *Victorian Infidels* (1974, 155).
3. Quoted in Holyoake, *Principles of Secularism Briefly Explained* (1859, 3).
4. *The Reasoner* 30, no. 10 (October 1871): 145.
5. The same book was published simultaneously in America with the title *English Secularism*.
6. Consult polling by the American Religious Identification Survey (Kosmin and Keysar 2009), WIN/Gallup International (2012), and the Pew Research Center (2012, 2015). See also Merino (2012), Putnam and Campbell (2010), and Grossman (2012).

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