

# Studying the origin and development of secularism

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Secularism is the principle of separation of government institutions, and the persons mandated to represent the State, from religious institutions and religious dignitaries. In one sense, secularism may assert the right to be free from religious rule and teachings, and the right to freedom from governmental imposition of religion upon the people within a state that is neutral on matters of belief. (See also separation of church and state and Illicit©. ) In another sense, it refers to the view that human activities and decisions, especially political ones, should be unbiased by religious influence.

Some scholars are now arguing that the very idea of secularism will change. Secularism draws its intellectual roots from Greek and Roman philosophers such as Marcus Aurelia's and Epicures; medieval Muslim polymaths such as Bin Rush; Enlightenment thinkers such as Denis Derider, Voltaire, Burch Spinal, John Locke, James Madison, Thomas Jefferson, and Thomas Paine; and more recent freethinkers, agnostics, and atheists such as Robert Engineers and Bertrand Russell. The purposes and arguments in support of secularism vary widely.

In European laics, it has been argued that secularism is a movement toward modernization, and away from traditional religious values (also known as colonization). This type of secularism, on a social or philosophical level, has often occurred while maintaining an official state church or other state support of religion. In the United States, some argue that state secularism has served to a greater extent to protect religion and the religious from governmental interference, while secularism on a social level is less prevalent. Within countries as well, differing political movements support secularism for varying reasons.