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It is generally agreed that modern democracies have to be "secular." There is perhaps a problem, a certain ethnocentricity, involved in this term. But even in the Western context the term is not limpid and may in fact be misleading. What in fact does it mean? There are at least two models of what constitutes a secular regime. Both involve some kind of separation of church and state. The state can't be officially linked to some religious confession, except in a vestigial and largely symbolic sense, as in England or Scandinavia. But secularism requires more than this. The pluralism of society requires that there be some kind of neutrality, or "principled distance," to use Rajeev Bhargava's term. (2)

If we examine it further, secularism involves in fact a complex requirement. There is more than one good sought here. We can single out three, which we can classify in the categories of the French Revolution trinity: liberty, equality, fraternity. First, no one must be forced in the domain of religion, or basic belief. This is what is often defined as religious liberty, including of course, the freedom not to believe. This is what is also described as the "free exercise" of religion, in the terms of the U.S. First Amendment. Second, there must be equality between people of different faiths or basic beliefs; no religious outlook or (religious or areligious) Weltanschauung can enjoy a privileged status, let alone be adopted as the official view of the state. Third, all spiritual families must be heard, included in the ongoing process of determining what the society is about (its political identity) and how it is going to realize these goals (the exact regime of rights and privileges). This (stretching the point a little) is what corresponds to "fraternity."

These goals can, of course, conflict; sometimes we have to balance the goods involved. Moreover, we might add a fourth goal: that we try as much as possible to maintain relations of harmony and comity between the supporters of different religions and Weltanschauungen. (Maybe this is what really deserves to be called "fraternity," but I am still attached to the neatness of the above schema, with only the three traditional goods.)

Sometimes the claim seems to be made, on behalf of one or another definition of secularism, that it can resolve the question of how to realize these goals in the domain of timeless principles, and that no further input or negotiation is required to define them for our society now. The basis for these principles can be found in reason alone, or in some outlook which is itself free from religion, purely laïque. Jacobins are on this wavelength, as was the early John Rawls.

The problem with this is that there is no such set of timeless principles that can be determined, at least in the detail they must be for a given political system, by pure reason alone, and situations differ very much and require different kinds of concrete realization of agreed general...

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Secularism does not mean worldliness. Secularism is the idea or the principle that government and politics shall remain separate from religions, and the policies and programs of the government or of the people in power shall be free from the religious influence of any kind. In today's world, this is a desirable approach in public life, which even religious people can practice as part of their civilized behavior. Therefore, let us be clear about the meaning of secular. A secular person is an irreligious, worldly, materialistic person who does not believe in God or practice any religion. Technically, he or she is a godless person. Define secularism. secularism synonyms, secularism pronunciation, secularism translation, English dictionary definition of secularism. n. 1. Religious skepticism or indifference. 2. The view that religious considerations should be excluded from civil affairs or public education.... secularism. 1. a view that religion and religious considerations should be ignored or excluded from social and political matters. 2. an ethical system asserting that moral judgments should be made without reference to religious doctrine, as reward or punishment in an afterlife. — secularist, n., adj. — secularistic, adj. Secularism definition is - indifference to or rejection or exclusion of religion and religious considerations. 1851, in the meaning defined above. Keep scrolling for more. Learn More about secularism. Share secularism. Post the Definition of secularism to Facebook Share the Definition of secularism on Twitter. Time Traveler for secularism. English Language Learners Definition of secularism. : the belief that religion should not play a role in government, education, or other public parts of society. See the full definition for secularism in the English Language Learners Dictionary. Keep scrolling for more. More from Merriam-Webster on secularism. Thesaurus: All synonyms and antonyms for secularism. Nglsh: Translation of secularism for Spanish Speakers. Secularism, as defined in the Merriam-Webster dictionary,[1] is the "indifference to, or rejection or exclusion of, religion and religious considerations." One manifestation of secularism is asserting the right to be free from religious rule and teachings, or, in a state declared to be neutral on matters of belief, from the imposition by government of religion or religious practices upon its people.[Notes 1] Another manifestation of secularism is the view that public activities and decisions, especially political ones, should be uninfluenced by religious. Question: "What is secularism?". Answer: Essentially, secularism says that man does not need God. It can be defined as "a system of doctrines and practices that disregards or rejects any form of religious faith and worship. Its primary objective is the total elimination of all religious elements from society.". Secularism, also known as secular humanism, teaches that there are no objective or absolute truths defining right and wrong. In essence, to secularize something is to make it worldly and unspiritual. Its intent is to deprive something of its religious character, its spiritual