



Why secularism? (Part 2) – Viewpoints

KEY QUESTIONS ??

- Who is a secularist?
- Why do people support or oppose secularism?
- Where does secularism come from?

STIMULUS

Viewpoints

Below are twenty viewpoints (a–t) on secularism, these should be matched to the authors (1–20)

VIEWPOINT

Viewpoint a

“The good of the people must be the great purpose of government. By the laws of nature and of reason, the governors are invested with power to that end. And the greatest good of the people is liberty. It is to the state what health is to the individual.”

VIEWPOINT

Viewpoint b

“(This organisation) aims to raise awareness within British Muslims and the wider public of democracy – particularly secular democracy, helping to contribute to a shared vision of citizenship (the separation of faith and state, so faiths exert no undue influence on policies and there is a shared public space).”

VIEWPOINT

Viewpoint c

“I swear by my religion. I will die for it. But it is my personal affair. The state has nothing to do with it. The state would look after your secular welfare, health, communications, foreign relations, currency and so on, but not your or my religion. That is everybody’s personal concern!”

VIEWPOINT

Viewpoint d

“We cannot, and should not, protect our country’s children from being brought up by ultra-conservative religious parents but we can, and should, ensure that they go to a school where they learn about other religions, about humanism, about living without religion and are given the confidence that people of all faiths and none are treated equally under the law.”

VIEWPOINT

Viewpoint e

“We establish no religion in this country, we command no worship, we mandate no belief, nor will we ever. Church and State are, and must remain, separate. All are free to believe or not to believe, all are free to practise a faith or not, and those who believe are free, and should be free to speak or and act on their belief.”

VIEWPOINT

Viewpoint f

“You must understand that secularism is our tradition, our choice. [...] I thank the grand imam of Al Azhar for indicating that in a secular and non-Muslim state, it is the duty of everyone to respect the law. [...] There are no rights without duties, and if the Muslims of France have the same rights as other believers, they have the same duties.”

VIEWPOINT

Viewpoint g

“If there were only one religion in England there would be a danger of despotism. If there were two they would cut each other’s throats, but there are thirty and they live in peace and happiness.”

VIEWPOINT

Viewpoint h

A man’s ethical behaviour should be based effectually on sympathy, education, and social ties; no religious basis is necessary. Man would indeed be in a poor way if he had to be restrained by fear of punishment and hope of reward after death.

VIEWPOINT

Viewpoint i

“Secularism does not mean rejection of all religions. It means respect for all religions and human beings including non-believers.”

VIEWPOINT

Viewpoint k

“My people are going to learn the principles of democracy, the dictates of truth and the teachings of science. Superstition must go. Let them worship as they will, every man can follow his own conscience provided it does not interfere with sane reason or bid him act against the liberty of his fellow men.”

VIEWPOINT

Viewpoint m

“The legitimate powers of government extend to such acts only as are injurious to others. But it does me no injury for my neighbour to say there are twenty gods, or no god. It neither picks my pocket nor breaks my leg.”

VIEWPOINT

Viewpoint o

“There is a twofold society, of which almost all men in the world are members, and from that twofold concernment they have to attain a twofold happiness; viz. that of this world and that of the other; and hence there arises these two following societies, viz. religious and civil.”

VIEWPOINT

Viewpoint q

“No one may be disturbed on account of his opinions, even religious ones, as long as the manifestation of such opinions does not interfere with the established Law and Order.”

VIEWPOINT

Viewpoint j

“The spirit or the conscience might belong to God but the body belongs to the state.”

VIEWPOINT

Viewpoint l

“Modern society requires and deserves a truly secular state, by which I do not mean state atheism, but state neutrality in all matters pertaining to religion: the recognition that faith is personal and no business of the state.”

VIEWPOINT

Viewpoint n

“Oppose anything that trespasses on the secular line of the separation of church and state, because civilization begins where the separation of church and state begins. There are no exceptions to that in any country. So it’s in the general interest, as well as your own, that we patrol that line with great vigilance.”

VIEWPOINT

Viewpoint p

“Secular knowledge is manifestly that kind of knowledge which is founded in this life, which relates to the conduct of this life, conduces to the welfare of this life, and is capable of being tested by the experience of this life.”

VIEWPOINT

Viewpoint r

“The purpose of government is purely material – the prevention of in-fighting and disorder between people.”

VIEWPOINT

Viewpoint s

“God has ordained two governments; the spiritual, by which the Holy Spirit produces Christians and righteous people under Christ; and the temporal, which restrains the un-Christian and wicked so that – no thanks to them – they are obliged to keep still and to maintain an outward peace.”

VIEWPOINT

Viewpoint t

“You may belong to any religion or caste or creed. That has nothing to do with the business of the state. We are starting with this fundamental principle that we are all citizens and equal citizens of one state. Religion should not be allowed to come into politics. Religion is merely a matter between man and God.”

STIMULUS

List of Authors 1–20

1. John Locke

17th century English philosopher commonly referred to as the Father of Liberalism.

2. Thomas Hobbes

Englishman who published his most famous book, *Leviathan*, in 1651. Argued that political power must be representative and based on the consent of the people.

3. Voltaire

French Enlightenment philosopher noted for his advocacy of freedom of religion, freedom of speech and the separation of church and state.

4. Denis Diderot

Prominent 18th century French thinker during the Enlightenment, an associate of Jean Jacques Rousseau.

5. Thomas Jefferson

American Founder Father who was the principal author of the Declaration of Independence and third president of the US from 1801 to 1809.

6. Jean Jacques Rousseau

An 18th century Genevan philosopher famous for his ideas about the basis of society as a social contract.

7. Martin Luther

Born in 1483 priest and monk Martin Luther was a seminal figure in the Protestant Reformation. He rejected several teachings and practices of the Roman Catholic Church. In particular he famously attacked the selling of indulgences.

8. George Jacob Holyoake

Nineteenth-century newspaper editor who coined the term secularism in 1851.

9. Richard Dawkins

An English evolutionary biologist who published the bestselling book *The God Delusion* in 2006.

10. British Muslims for a Secular Democracy

A charitable organisation of Muslims founded in 2006 by Nasreen Rehman and Yasmin Alibhai-Brown dedicated to supporting secularism in the UK.

11. Mahatma Gandhi

An Indian activist who led the Indian independence movement against British rule. He inspired movements for civil rights and freedom across the world.

12. Susan Blackmore

Noted psychologist interested in the study of consciousness.

13. Nicholas Sarkozy

French politician who served as president of France between 2007 and 2012.

14. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk

Turkish army officer, revolutionary and founder of the Republic of Turkey. Was its president from 1923 until 1938. Strong advocate of secularism.

15. Christopher Hitchens

Anglo-American author and columnist who was one of the four “New Atheists” together with Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett and Sam Harris.

16. Albert Einstein

Renowned German-born theoretical physicist who developed the theory of relativity.

17. Muhammed Ali Jinnah

Lawyer, politician, committed secularist and founder of Pakistan. After Indian independence in 1947 he was its first governor-general.

18. Déclaration des droits de l’homme et du citoyen

A human civil rights document from the French Revolution approved by France’s National Constituent Assembly in 1789.

19. Ronald Reagan

American actor turned politician who became the 40th president of the US from 1981 to 1989.

20. Dalai Lama

Leading monk of the Gelug school of Tibetan Buddhism, widely perceived as a global spiritual figure.

EXERCISES

- Q1. Match the quotes (a–t) with their authors.
- Q2. Did you correctly match this quote (a–t) and author?
- Q3. Why or why not?

TAKE IT FURTHER

- Does knowing more about the author of the quote change your view of what they are saying? Why or why not?
- Think about the different reasons that people have for supporting secularist ideas in different historical, geographical and political contexts. Sort these quotes into groupings based on these.
- Encourage students to find out more about these authors and their views on secularism and freedom of and from religion.
- Find five additional positive and negative (ten in total) quotes about secularism from political, philosophical or historical figures.