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However, within the past two or three decades, both the status of secularism as a relatively unproblematic feature of modernity and the secularization thesis as a standing explanation for its regnant status have been deeply shaken. A crisis of secularism is widely recognized. Secularism is currently a vexed topic fraught with complex and difficult global implications and consequences. While scholarship on secularism has seen a dramatic upsurge, questions related to secularism have become increasingly urgent and involve enormous real-world implications. These include the battles over “Shari’ah law” in Europe and the Middle East, and the renewed importance of religion in the politics of India and Turkey. They also include the challenges posed for and by laicism in France. One might also point to the emergence of the “new atheism” and its political meanings in the West, and the battles over the authority of science in the United States. At stake also is secularism’s supposed role for arbitrating armed religious conflict, and its place in political and legal struggles over the shape of the public sphere in multiple contexts. The questions involving secularism prove essential and significant.

In recent years, secularism has been taken to task not only for its differential treatment of various religions within the state but also, and more fundamentally, for its putative imposition of cultural norms and values, political prerogatives,

1. Rajeev Bhargava, “Political Secularism,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Theory*, eds. John S. Dryzek, Bonnie Honig, and Anne Phillips (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 636–55.