

Modern and Postmodern Humanology

Perspectives and Critiques of Modern Humanology

Wrong Definitions of the Human Being

- Man is a talking animal.
- Humans evolved from apes.

Out of all the available definitions, these two are perhaps the most famous theories we have heard about **the human essence**.

Even though scientists later doubted and even rejected both of these opinions, their initial impact has been so great that today they are widely accepted beliefs. So it is very difficult to prove whether they are true or false.

This variety of opinions to describe the most important creature in our life is interesting in its own way. You can look at philosophy books to get acquainted with **different schools of thought**. Each was a game changer in its time and started great social movements. But very soon it expired and left its fans with a lot of emotional stress, disappointment, and frustration.

The first brick for building social structures in any society is its dominant **ideology**. If that ideology is wrong, then "**a bad beginning makes a bad ending**." Therefore, it is not wrong to claim that **the imbalanced behavior of contemporary humans is the result of the faulty ideas of intellectuals and thinkers from different historical periods. They developed false beliefs about the truth of human beings and the world and then injected them into society.**

In this article, we will explore some incorrect views about humans which were soon turned into a school of thought and were widely accepted across the world. We will address the negative consequences of these views in another article that follows. By following the logical arguments presented in these articles, you will come to a reasonable conclusion about the topic at hand.

Ancient Humanology and Modern Humanology

“Human essence changes over time.”

What do you think about the above sentence? Is it true or false? Does the human essence really change over time?

From 1400 to 1800, an important movement began in Italy and gradually spread throughout Europe. This movement, which is referred to as the **Renaissance**, affected all cultural, social, economic, and religious aspects of European societies and established the foundations of the modern Western civilization.

At the same time as the Renaissance period, a mode of thinking called "**Modernism**" spread in Europe and the "**modern human**" was born from this way of thinking.

Modern humanology tried to make the whole world accept that, along with the transformation in other areas, humans have radically changed as well. It argued that the modern human is a new person whose identity, traits, and tendencies are completely different from those of the ancient human.

The ancient and **medieval human**, being indoctrinated by the Catholic Church, had become a fanatical and superstitious person. He considered all the pleasures of life as sinful. The church promoted the belief that **humans are inherently sinful**, have no free will, and are created only to serve God.

The medieval mode of thinking rejected using the intellect, as it believed that rational arguments would weaken one's faith. It was also believed that God's communication with humans through revelation was sufficient, and there was no need to use the intellect. Such religious extremism in medieval European societies set the stage for changes that would free people from the pressures of the Church.¹ The Renaissance and the rise of the modernist discourse provided the conditions for such a transformation to take place.

At the same time as the Renaissance, Western philosophers tried to bring back the spirit of human freedom and autonomy that had been lost in the Middle Ages. But unfortunately, instead of correcting the Church's interpretations of religion, they denied the essence of religion itself. Therefore, very soon a doctrine called '**humanism**' emerged within the context of modernism and was accepted. This mode of thinking completely denied the existence of God. It considered the human being to be **the center of the universe** and the owner of all existence.

In the school of humanism, which is one of the main components of the modern world, the criterion for recognizing the truth is not the commands of God, but the **human intellect**.

¹. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Western-philosophy/The-Greek-Fathers-of-the-Church-and-Origena>

In this philosophy, the modern human who has replaced God only accepts the things that fit into the framework of his **intellect and experiment**. He denies anything that the reason cannot justify, or experimental sciences cannot prove.

The Modern human does not believe in concepts such as God, the unseen world, angels, the afterlife, and similar concepts, because experimental sciences cannot prove them.

Modern ideology is trying to prove that religious commandments are outdated and have no place in today's world. It argues that the intellect of contemporary people is sufficient to enable them to manage their lives and the world around them.

This ideology, which still has its own supporters, was gradually channelized according to the culture and beliefs of different societies. For example, it has given rise to an outlook among Muslims which says, "Islam was a religion for Arab societies 1400 years ago and is not relevant to the needs of modern society."

Postmodern Humanology

"The postmodern human is a nomad, living a stagnant and soulless life, with no aspirations or lofty ideals to strive for." This interpretation may be the best way to describe the lives of humans in today's world.

In the late 1960s, a new movement called "**postmodernism**" emerged and spread in France. Along with this movement, Western society experienced a newer version of humanity; in the words of Michel Foucault, a human being was born who is subservient to his own desires.

The postmodern school of thought, which emerged in the West after modernism, lacks clear principles and frameworks. It is even strongly opposed to principles and frameworks, to the extent that even its founders cannot provide a clear definition of it.

Some consider it a continuation of the modernist thought, while others believe that it has come to challenge the principles and components of modernism. In any case, postmodern ideology is also a completely materialistic ideology that, like modernism, limits the entire existence to sense and experience.

This school is highly **relativistic** and has no fixed point of view in any field. Postmodernists reject the idea that there are any absolute or universal **moral** values or principles. They believe that morality has no specific criteria. What may be considered bad behavior by one person may be viewed as good by another, but it does not matter. Everybody is free to live as he likes and does not have to follow any principles in society.

This school questions the status that the modern school of thought gives to the human intellect. David Hume even considers the human **intellect** to be much weaker than his **instincts**; he believes that these desires and instincts are the greatest guide of humans in life.

Like modernists, they deny the existence of a fixed essence and identity in human beings, since both schools of thought are influenced by Darwin's theory of evolution. They view humans as evolved animals and believe that a being that is the result of the evolution of lower species has no inherent essence.

The whole life of postmodernists can be summed up in two words: **seeking pleasure** and **consumption**. They believe that here is paradise, although it may be sad, boring, and superficial; here is paradise, and there is no other paradise.

Commercials, many TV shows and movies, success books, some psychology sites, and Instagram pages are clear examples of the promotion of postmodern lifestyle.

In the postmodern school of thought, the ideal person is someone who places great importance on his physical fitness and beauty. He constantly thinks about enjoying the weekend, career advancement, and increasing his income. He upgrades his home with the latest gadgets and spend his free time at parties. In short, he is caught up in the daily grind.

The ultimate concern of a postmodern individual is to uphold the right to freedom of belief and behavior for all, protection of the environment, and supporting the rights of animals. All of this is not even aimed at achieving a lofty goal, but only at maintaining the quality of his life.

Those who follow modern and postmodern schools of thought are adrift, irresponsible, and aimless. They lack a sense of identity. They do not know where they came from or why they are here. They do not think about their ultimate destination. They only seek momentary pleasure and get rid of anything or anyone that threatens this pleasure. In short, they have no past or future, no stability or identity in life; they are in a haze of confusion in the world. In modern and postmodern society, a person is born, lives, and dies with no specific purpose!

What we discussed was a very small part of Western philosophy's perspective on human beings and the world.

Western philosophy promotes a certain type of lifestyle which influences everything from architecture to international policymaking. A detailed account of all its dimensions is definitely beyond the scope of a single article.

We have introduced some of the important viewpoints of Western philosophy about human beings. The implications of these viewpoints in personal and social life are discussed in the article "The Harms of Misdefining Human Beings." We highly recommend reading that article and sharing your thoughts in the comments section.