

## Western Humanology

### Challenges Faced by Western Humanology

#### A Review of the Concept of Humanology in Western Philosophy

**Philosophy** refers to the way of **thinking** and using the **intellect** to discover the laws governing the universe. The history of **philosophy** is as long as human history. Generally, **philosophy** deals with **questions** that have occupied the human mind since the beginning of creation and are raised again with the birth of every child. In a broad sense, **philosophy** is the knowledge that we are all engaged in because all of us are in search of an answer to our fundamental **questions**.

- Do humans have a spirit, or is their identity solely tied to their body?
- What is death?
- What is waiting for us after death?

These are the **questions** that many **philosophers** and **thinkers** have tried to find a convincing **answer** to, and this very effort has led to the emergence of various philosophical schools of thought. Followers of each school have a specific **answer** to each of these **questions**. By relying on these answers, they offer a specific **definition** of the universe, life, and human beings.

## The Course Taken by Western Philosophy in the Field of Humanology

**Philosophy** can be broadly divided into two parts: **Western** philosophy and **Islamic** philosophy. In this article, we will provide a general overview of **Western philosophy**, and we will explain Islamic philosophy in detail in another article.

Human beings have always been trying to find a **meaning** for life and discover the nature of their existence. This quest has had many ups and downs from ancient times to the present day. In various historical periods, **philosophers** have focused their views on specific **questions**, and as a result, various **philosophical schools of thought** have emerged.

After the Middle Ages, with the weakening of Church principles and doubting the Aristotelian philosophical principles, **philosophy** took a separate path from Christianity and Aristotelian **intellect** in the **West**. Around the 14th and 15th centuries AD, a way of **thinking** emerged; its followers considered all metaphysical realities to be an illusion, and they turned towards **experience**.

Figures like William of Ockham introduced some viewpoints that were based on the primacy of **sense** and **experience**.<sup>1</sup> Later, **philosophers** such as Francis Bacon and Thomas Hobbes emphasized them in the following centuries. By relying on **empiricism**, David Hume started questioning supernatural matters and the truths of natural events,<sup>2</sup> and thus **Western philosophy** entered a new phase of skepticism.

---

<sup>1</sup>. <https://iep.utm.edu/ockham/>

<sup>2</sup>. <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/hume/>

The philosophy that initially claimed that humans must look for the basis of their **knowledge** within themselves (Descartes), ultimately, doubted everything and did not lead anywhere. Instead of focusing on the **meaning** and purpose of life and finding them, philosophy became a tool for the formation of various intellectual **schools of thought** and different political theories.

These **schools of thought** failed to provide an acceptable answer to the **questions** they raised; we are now witnessing their decline and fall after years of dominating people's minds around the world. They declined mainly because their answers were uncertain, or they were proved ineffective after being tested and experienced. In addition, in recent times, **Western philosophy** has abandoned the fundamental and intellectual **questions** of human beings. It has focused more than anything else on political **philosophy** and defining the desired political system. For a general introduction to various **philosophical schools of thought**, you can refer to the article "The History of Epistemology in the West."

### **The Problems Faced by Philosophical Humanology**

Philosophical humanology faces two major challenges. First, the human intellect is limited. Second, **philosophers** sometimes use experimental achievements of humanology to prove their own views, while as discussed in the article "An Examination of Experimental or Scientific Humanology," **experimental humanology** has many flaws.

**Experimental humanology** views us as natural beings and ignores other dimensions of our existence. As a result, this way of thinking is generally

ineffective in dealing with issues that cannot be measured. It is possible to gain knowledge about the physical dimensions of **human beings** through **experimental** methods. But since **experimental** sciences have no way of understanding our non-material dimensions, they cannot give us a comprehensive understanding of human beings.

### **The Limitations of the Human Intellect**

The human intellect, as the primary tool of **philosophy**, has some limitations. In fact, the **intellect** acts as a tool for acquiring knowledge and information based on the data we give to it. It does not have any built-in content. It is like a hunting camera that helps to better see distant images but does not record or store images within itself. The information we receive is like raw material for **thinking** and **reasoning**, so this information plays a fundamental role in the judgments made by the **intellect**. In fact, the **intellect** requires accurate, comprehensive, and complete **information** that is available to it without any barrier.

### **The Factors that Limit the Human Intellect**

If the information available to the human **intellect** is correct but incomplete, our **intellect** will not make a sound judgment. This can be compared to a driver who sees the street ahead, but fails to notice a "No Entry" sign, so he makes a wrong judgement, enters the street, and violates the law.

However, there are also cases where the **intellect** does not make any mistakes on its own. But the information that it receives is flawed or incorrect; or the nature

of the subject is such that all its aspects are not apparent to the human intellect. **Philosophical** issues which are related to the essence of the human soul, the world after death, or the nature and attributes of God are typically of this kind. If the information available to our mind is fundamentally flawed, it is obvious that our **intellect** will form an incorrect and misleading judgment.

In another case, we may have no knowledge or education on a particular subject, so our intellect is incapable of making a judgment. For instance, if someone asks us about quantum mechanics or Bremsstrahlung radiation, and we have no prior study in these fields, we normally will not have any opinion to offer.

Apart from the above cases, the **intellect** itself should also be in perfect or good health to be able to reason and analyze a problem. This depends on how a person is born and on her individual capacities, which are different among different individuals.

### **The Factors Influencing Rational Judgment**

In addition to the limitations that our **intellect** faces in various circumstances, sometimes **rational judgment** is influenced by internal or external factors. For example, the **intellect** may form a correct judgment by weighing various aspects of a subject, but under the influence of advertisements, pressures, emotions, or bias, it may get away from **rationality** and act against its findings. In fact, desires can prevent our **intellect** from acting according to what it knows is right. Biased criticism that some scientists make against certain theories is of this kind.

Therefore, although the **intellect** is considered the most important tool for our **recognition** and **analysis**, it is not completely reliable.

In this article, we provided a general definition of **philosophy** and discussed the ups and downs of **Western philosophy**. As mentioned before, **philosophical humanology** faces two major problems. The first one is the limitation of the human **intellect** as the primary tool of knowing **philosophy**. The second one is its reliance on some of the achievements of **experimental humanology**, which itself has numerous flaws.

We would be happy to have your thoughts on this topic before you continue reading the rest of the articles.