

ISLAMISATION P.G. UNICORE Topic #1**“WORLDVIEW: ISLAMIC AND CONTEMPORARY”
[Secularism, New Atheism, Postmodernism]**

*(Text of lecture delivered by Prof. Emeritus Dr. M. Kamal Hassan)
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1. INTRODUCTION

There are many definitions of the term “worldview”. A comprehensive definition that is acceptable from the Islamic perspective is the one articulated by Ken Funk which reads as follows: “a worldview is the set of beliefs about fundamental aspects of reality that ground and influence all one’s perceiving, thinking, knowing and doing.” (Ken Funk 2013, <http://web.engr.oregonstate.edu/~funk>). For a worldview to be comprehensive, Ken Funk suggests that it should comprise the following elements: ontology, cosmology, theology, epistemology, anthropology, axiology and teleology.

A Muslim professor of philosophy from Turkey, Alparslan Acikgenc, offers his own philosophical definition of worldview as follows: “a worldview is that vision of reality and truth, which...acts as the non-observable foundation of all human conduct, including scientific and technological activities.” (Alparslan Acikgenc 1996. *Islamic Science: Towards a Definition*. KL: ISTAC).

What is important to note is that worldviews, philosophical presuppositions, metaphysical assumptions, philosophies of life, paradigms, beliefs, religious creeds or ideologies that human beings subscribe to – consciously or unconsciously – play very important roles in human lives. They also influence the way the natural sciences, the applied sciences, the social sciences and humanities were developed or constructed

2. THE WORLDVIEW OF ISLAM IN BRIEF.

With regard to the worldview of Islam, we provide the following definition: It is the comprehensive and integrated vision of reality and truth revealed by Allah SWT in the Qur’an to serve as True Guidance for all mankind towards achieving the purpose of their existence as

prescribed by Allah SWT. This True Guidance which is made available by the Grace and Mercy of Allah SWT is necessary for all mankind to follow in order to live the life of total submission (*Islām*) and obedience to the will of Allah SWT as the Living Creator, Master, Sustainer, Provider, Ruler and Judge of mankind. The fundamental constituents of the worldview which are the most salient are (1) the nature of God, (2) the nature of Religion, (3) the nature of the universe, (4) the nature of man, and (5) the nature of life. The worldview of Islam which reveals the realities and true nature of God, religion, man, the universe and life has been explained in different ways by different Muslim scholars but the “Pillars of faith” (*arkān al-īmān*) and the fundamental religious obligations of Islam known as “Pillars of Islam” (*arkān al-Islām*) in the worldview of Islam are the same and have remained unchanged.

2.1. Theology: The Reality and True Nature of God

The affirmation of the belief in the absolute oneness of God known as *Tauḥīd* is the only true conception of God. He is absolutely One and different from all His creation and He has no partners or associates or intermediaries or offspring from amongst His creatures or from anything that exists. He is absolutely transcendent but He is metaphysically close and connected to the spiritual hearts of human beings. His essence is unknowable but His attributes can be known and discerned from the written Signs of His Revealed Books, from the innumerable Signs in the universe and from the Signs in human beings and societies. He is not the Creator or the God who leaves the affairs of governing the Cosmos to His creatures, but He is the Living Ruler, Master and Sustainer of all that exists, whose sovereignty, power, authority and judgement on the Day of Judgement extend to all mankind and to the rest of His creation. He is the All-Knowing who is the source of knowledge and wisdom that mankind requires to live in the world in the proper way. It is His knowledge and wisdom which He revealed in His Sacred Books that provide the absolute criteria of what is right and wrong and what is good and evil for mankind to follow.

2.2. The Reality and True Nature of Religion.

Allah SWT has decided that only His religion which he called “*al-Islām*” is the only true religion for all mankind. It is a religion of absolute and comprehensive submission of mankind to Allah SWT, revealed to mankind over the ages by the many Prophets and Messengers, chosen by Allah SWT to convey His message of *Tauḥīd* and Islam in the revealed Books. It is a religion of uncompromising and absolute monotheism. Other religions which do not subscribe to the Pillars of Faith in Islam, including belief in the Hereafter and Day of

Judgement, are not recognised as true religions although they may have had their origins in the true religion of al-Islam.

The religion of the pre-Islamic Meccan Arabs is rejected as being a form of polytheism (shirk) because, although they believed in the existence of the One God, Allah, they also believed in and worshipped other gods and goddesses as intermediaries between them and the One God. As for Judaism and Christianity, they are regarded as having deviated from the true religion because of their falsification of the original teachings of Moses (a.s.) and Jesus (a.s.) and their rejection of Prophet Muhammad as God's final Messenger. The acceptance of Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) as the Final Messenger of Allah SWT is vital and his normative examples (the *Sunnah*) is regarded as the second source of Divine knowledge and law. The Testimony of Faith in Islam (*Kalimah Shahādah*) makes formal acceptance of His prophethood mandatory before anyone can be considered a Muslim. Finally, although Allah SWT only recognises Islam as the One True Religion in the sight of Allah SWT, Islam is not to be imposed upon other non-believers nor can Islam be spread by force. Respect for religious diversity and tolerance of other religions are important Islamic religious principles.

2.3. Cosmology and Ontology: The Reality and True Nature of the Cosmos.

The Cosmos and the whole of nature in it did not come about by accident or by the forces of natural evolution. The Cosmos and the whole world of nature was the result of deliberate creation of Allah SWT billions of years ago. He created the Cosmos with a Divine purpose, i.e. in order to manifest His Attributes and His Signs for the benefit of mankind. Mankind is to know God, His power, His knowledge and His will and other attributes, while appreciating the beautiful order and balance in the perfect design He has created in the Cosmos. The Cosmos is not just frivolous matter floating in space but it contains all kinds of Signs pointing to Allah's existence and purpose. It is a teleological Cosmos in which the earth and the heavens in it were made subservient (*taskhīr*) by Allah SWT for human beings to use with humility and gratitude to the Creator and the Compassionate Sustainer. Nature, the Qur'an says, is also engaged in its own form of praising and glorifying (*tasbīh*) Allah SWT for it is by virtue of the predetermination (*taqdīr*) and fixed laws (*sunan*) of Allah SWT that it exists and survives.

2.4. Anthropology and Teleology: The reality and true nature of mankind.

Human beings emerged on the surface of the earth not by an accident of nature or having evolved from a common ancestor as the apes through the process of survival of the fittest, but

by the act of creation as willed by Allah SWT. They are the best of Allah's creation for several reasons. They were created to be the servants (*'ibād*) and vicegerents (*khulafā'*) of Allah SWT on earth using the God-given intellect (*'aql*) to develop the world and to play a constructive civilisational and ethical role to bring about "goodness in this world and goodness in the Hereafter" (Q. *al-Baqarah* 2: 201). They are essentially spiritual and moral beings with a physical body, after the spirit (*al-Rūh*) specially created by Allah SWT was "blown into the body". They were created to have the inherent Godly-inclined nature called the *fiṭrah*. They had a "primordial covenant" (*mīthāq*) with Allah SWT in pre-existential time to become faithful servants of Allah SWT.

But their lower selves (*al-nafs al-ammārah*) and base desires (*ahwā'*, singular *hawā'*) made them vulnerable to the subtle insinuations and devious ploys of Satan, their permanent enemy, and the deceptions of worldly and materialistic pleasures. Allah SWT in His compassion and mercy has provided ample guidance for human beings to be true believers (*Mu'minūn*), but many of them chose to deny, defy and rebel against Allah SWT and His Prophets and Messengers. The communities of Disbelief (*Kufr*), Polytheism (*Shirk*) and the Hypocrites (*Munāfiqūn*) constitute a single entity in opposing the spread of Islam and the religious struggle and striving (*jihād*) of the Community (*Ummah*) of Islam, which constitutes a single brotherhood based on the common faith and creed of *Tauḥīd*. In order to overcome the challenges of the external enemies and to achieve the goal of becoming the status of *Ummatan Wasaṭa* (a just, excellent and balanced community) to serve as spiritual-moral witnesses against the rest of mankind, the Muslim *Ummah* was appointed by Allah to lead mankind (Q. *al-Baqarah* 2: 143), after the failure and betrayal of the people of Bani Isra'il, by establishing virtuous society, culture and civilisation. The Prophet (s.a.w.) and the early generation of the *Ummah* succeeded in establishing the virtuous society, state, culture and civilisation in Madinah and in the medieval world.

One serious problem which continues to undermine the moral qualities of the Muslim *Ummah* throughout the world is the problem of suffering from inner spiritual crisis arising from the failure to overcome the inner enemies of *nafs*, *hawā'* and whisperings of Satan. Consequently, many Muslim leaders and nations have fallen victims – knowingly or unknowingly – of worldly temptations of power, wealth and status, while the Western world systems and secular ideologies and worldviews continue to define for mankind the false

meanings of progress, modernity, development and success. An illustration of these is give by Muhammad Asad in his commentaries on Q. *al-Nisā'*: 61-62:

People who are not fully convinced that there exists a reality beyond the reach of human perception (*al-ghayb*) ...find it, as a rule, difficult to dissociate their ethical views from their personal predilections and morally questionable desires - with the result that they are only too often "willing to defer to what the powers of evil tell them". Although they may half-heartedly concede that some of the moral teachings based on revelation (in this case, the Qur'an) contain "certain verities", they instinctively recoil from those teachings whenever they conflict with what their own idiosyncrasies represent to them as desirable: and so they become guilty of hypocrisy in the deepest, religious connotation of this word. an allusion to their ambivalent attitude and the confusion which it may have created in others. ...[T]hey will plead that their aim was no more than a harmonization of the Qur'anic ethics with a "humanistic" (that is, man-centred) world-view: a plea which the Qur'an implicitly rejects as being hypocritical and self-deceptive (cf. 2:11-12). (M. Asad, commentaries 80-81, *The Message of the Qur'an*, p. 140-141.)

It is no wonder that Allah SWT has repeatedly stressed in the Qur'an the imperative of developing the traits of good character grounded upon the process of purifying the spiritual heart (*al-qalb*), especially for those in leadership position, from the many diseases of the heart such as hypocrisy, egoism, ostentation, heedlessness, arrogance, greed, jealousy, love of power, wealth and status.

2.5. Axiology and Eschatology: The reality and true nature of life.

Unlike the materialistic or secular conceptions of life, the worldview of Islam does not confine life to this mundane existence on earth. Human life does not end here. There is life beyond death and this life is to be given serious attention by all human beings. The state of this life in the Hereafter is a consequence of the way life in this world is defined, managed and lived. Both *al-Dunyā* and *al-Ākhirah* are related in an inseparable continuum with life in *al-Dunyā* serving as a preparation for life in the *al-Ākhirah*. Achieving true success and true wellbeing in *the Ākhirah* is the ultimate goal of a Muslim with Divine pleasure in Paradise as the penultimate reward for living in the world in accordance with the teachings of Islam and Divine commandments. Life in this world, the Qur'an explains, is a period of trial (*ibtilā'*) and examination by Allah SWT to test the sincerity and strength of their faith, and the results of the trials would be known in the Hereafter. The believers are urged to strive to attain *al-Falāḥ* (true success and wellbeing in this world and in the Hereafter) and to avert the miserable destiny of *al-Khusrān* (true loss and misery in this world and in the next). The believers are to work together to develop the world and human civilisation according to the teachings of the Qur'an and the Sunnah so that the Islamic way of life will be triumphant, but they must consider

themselves as passengers on the journey to the Hereafter. So they have to be prepared to forgo some of the worldly comforts and immediate gratification of material nature for the sake of attaining the bliss in the Hereafter. They are continuously reminded by the Qur'an and the Sunnah to be always conscious of the reality of death in which the soul will be separated from the body, and be prepared morally and spiritually for that unescapable eventuality. They know from the Qur'an that Allah SWT wants them to return to Him with "a sound heart" (*bi-qalbin salīm*, Q. *al-Shu'arā'* 26: 89), freed from any tinge of disbelief (*Kufr*), polytheism (*Shirk*) or hypocrisy (*Nifāq*) and the major diseases of the heart. On the Day of Judgement, they have to be prepared to be questioned by Allah SWT for all that they have done in worldly life, and also to face the witness of the Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) with regard to the discharge of their responsibilities as members of the *Ummat Wasaṭ* which was supposed to be the Witness against mankind as to the fulfilment of the Divine commandments (Q. *al-Baqarah* 2: 143).

3. TWO IMPORTANT BOOKS ON THE FUNDAMENTAL CONSTITUENTS OF THE ISLAMIC WORLDVIEW.

It is useful to know that among several books on the subject of the Islamic worldview written in the 20th century, which includes books written in Urdu by Abu'l A'la Maududi and in Indonesian by HAMKA, two works deserved to be mentioned here, one in Arabic and the other in English. The first is entitled *Khaṣā'is al-Taṣawwūr al-Islāmī wa Muqawwimātuh*, (Characteristics of the Islamic Worldview and Its Fundamental Constituents) (Beirut: *Dār al-Shurūq*, 1983, originally published in 1962 by *Dār Ihyā' al-Kutub al-'Arabiyyah*), written by Sayyid Qutb (1906-1966) and the second is *Prolegomena to the Metaphysics of Islam: An Exposition of the Fundamental Elements of the Worldview of Islam* written by Professor Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 1995). It should be mentioned that the second part of Sayyid Qutb's book was published as a separate volume under the title "*Muqawwimāt al-Taṣawwūr al-Islāmī*" by Muhammad Qutb several years after the death of the original author. Sayyid Qutb says:

The fundamental components of the Islamic worldview are the totality of the basic truth of the Islamic creed which give rise in the mind and heart of the Muslim that special conception of existence and the Creative Power and the Directing Will behind it, as well as the relationships and linkages between this existence and this Will. (Sayyid Qutb 1962, p. 41)

Qutb's main focus of his writings on the fundamental constituents is the Reality of Allah SWT (*Ḥaqīqatu'llāh*) and the Reality of Man (*Ḥaqīqatu'l-Insān*). He describes the Reality of Allah

SWT in great detail under the heading of the true nature of unadulterated and perfect Oneness of God Who is All-Powerful and whose Omnipotent Authority extends over all things. The other Realities explained in great detail by Sayyid Qutb are the Universe which he calls “The Open Book of the Universe” (*Kitāb al-Kaun al-Maftūh*) and Life. He asserts that human beings and the universe have very close and intimate relations because both are the creation of the same Creator. But the Creator has designed the universe to make its content amenable to the needs of man who is expected to treat nature in a congenial way. However, in the secular worldview, nature is considered to be purposeless and “soulless” and therefore the modern secular human beings and scientists have adopted the attitude of selfish and exploitative dominance over nature as though human beings are the masters of nature.

It should be noted that while the book of Sayyid Qutb is written in a popular *da'wah* and literary style with innumerable quotations from the Qur'an, the book written by Professor Syed Naqib al-Attas is a sophisticated philosophical exposition of the metaphysics of Islam. He explains that:

the worldview of Islam is characterized by an authenticity and a finality that points to what is ultimate, and it projects a view of reality and truth that encompasses existence and life altogether in total perspective whose fundamental elements are permanently established. These are, to mention the most salient ones the nature of God; of Revelation (i.e. the Qur'an); of His creation; of man and the psychology of the human soul; of knowledge; of religion; of freedom; of values and virtues; of happiness – all of which, together with the key terms and concepts that they unfold, have profound bearing upon our ideas about change, development and progress. (Syed Naquib al-Attas 1995, pp.4-5).

4. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ISLAMIC WORLDVIEW.

In facing the ideological challenges of his time, Sayyid Qutb felt it was necessary for him not only to write on the fundamental constituents of the worldview of Islam but its characteristics as well, which became a popular and ideological response to the intellectual and cultural invasion of secular Western ideologies such as Marxism, Socialism and Liberal Democracy in Arab societies. Therefore, he wrote his book on the worldview of Islam which he called “*al-Taṣawwūr al-Islāmī*” which describes the following characteristics or principles. These are:

- (1) *al-Rabbāniyyah* (Divine origin),
- (2) *al-Thabāt* (permanence),
- (3) *al-Shumūl* (comprehensiveness),
- (4) *al-Tawāzun* (balance),

- (5) *al-Ījābiyyah* (positive orientation or optimism),
- (6) *al-Wāqi'īyyah* (realism),
- (7) *al-Tauhid* (absolute Oneness of Allah SWT) (Sayyid Qutb 1962).

After Sayyid Qutb's book on the Islamic worldview, Shaikh Yūsuf al-Qaradāwī comes up with his "general characteristics of Islam" (*al-Khaṣā'is al-Āmmah li'-Islām*) consisting of

- (1) *al-Rabbāniyyah* (Divine origin),
- (2) *al-Insāniyyah* (humanism) ,
- (3) *al-Shumūliyyah* (comprehensiveness of time, place and humanity, and it includes the three values of eternity (*al-Khulūd*), internationality (*al-Ālamiyyah*) and accommodationism (*al-istī'āb*),
- (4) *al-Wasaṭiyyah* (balance, moderation),
- (5) *al-Wāqi'īyyah* (realism),
- (6) *al-Wuḍūh* (clarity),
- (7) *al-Jam' baina al-Thabāt wa'l-Murūnah* (combination of unchangeability and flexibility) (al-Qaradāwī (1977) *al-Khaṣā'is al-Āmmah li'-Islām*. Cairo: Maktabah Wahbah).

5. MODERN WESTERN WORLDVIEW

(based on the lecture by Dr Sharif El Topgui, "Modern Western Worldview vs. Islamic Worldview", from You Tube viewed on 1st January 2022)

As the worldview which has been the most dominant in the world since the beginning of Western political and economic dominance over the rest of the world, and from which many other Western derivative worldviews had branched out, it is crucial that we know what the Modern Western Worldview means in brief. The Modern worldview is essentially a secular paradigm, which broke off from the womb of European Christian culture.

It is possible to trace its origin to the 15th century Renaissance when the European mind began to liberate itself from the medieval control of the Christian church, and a revival of ancient Greek art and culture. The meaning of being human was resurrected and the use of human reason to understand the world replaced the Christian dogmas, which curtailed the use of independent reasoning. The new humanistic culture being developed became anthropocentric as opposed to the theocentric orientation of the pre-Renaissance era. This humanism led to the European Reformation of the 16th century with the Protestant church led

by Martin Luther revolting against the divine authority of the Catholic Pope. The radical individualism, which became a long lasting characteristic of Western modernity had its roots in the Protestant revolt against the hierarchy of the Catholic church and its stranglehold on the human mind. The long and bloody Wars of Religion (1562-98) between Protestants and Roman Catholics were among the factors which led to the emergence of the philosophy of secularism with far-reaching impacts on defining the meanings of modernity, the nation-state and the ideology or project of progress from Western perspectives.

In the 17th century the West witnessed its Scientific Revolution with Rene Descartes (1596-1650), a leading philosopher as the Father of Modern Philosophy. He was the first of the modern rationalists who thought that reason was the only means of attaining knowledge of eternal truths and thus laid the foundation for the 17th century continental rationalism which was later opposed by the school of empiricism which taught that knowledge came only or primarily from sensory experience.

With the advent of the 18th century Enlightenment, the idea of Deism, a belief that God only created the universe, *a deus ex machina* (god outside the machine), but left it to operate on its own – a belief that contradicted the Jewish and Christian theologies, crept into European philosophy while the impasse between rationalism and empiricism was resolved by Immanuel Kant who developed his own epistemology of “Transcendental idealism”.

The 18th century further developed the Scientific Revolution, which began towards the end of the Renaissance period with Kant’s major work accommodating the Revolution which altered the pre-modern ontology and introduced the scientific method advanced by Newton’s Principia Mathematica (1687) which had a wide-ranging impact on the development of the new modern science whose ontology and epistemology were altered to accommodate the naturalistic and empirical worldview produced by modern science. In this new epistemology, knowledge became basically a knowledge of the empirical world. Any knowledge claims that were non-empirical or went beyond human experience and reason were relegated to the realm of subjectivity or irrationality.

The 19th century was the century of the secularisation of the European mind which was a gradual process. In the middle of the century was Darwinism, which played a huge role in the secularisation of the European mind. The Darwinian interpretation of the world and of

human beings in the naturalistic cosmos has a great impact on the development of the natural sciences, the social and the rise of atheism.

By the end of the 19th century, atheism in Europe became mainstream philosophy which was declared with Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900)'s infamous saying that "God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him". With this declaration Nietzsche meant to say that the Enlightenment had eliminated the possibility of the existence of God.

The 20th century was the century of High Modernity which prided itself with scientific, technological and material progress and advancement never before attained by human beings, thanks to secular modern science and technology. In the late 20th century and early 21st century Post-Modernity emerged which declared the end of all grand narratives (including religious beliefs and worldviews), the relativity of all values and the end of all absolutes.

5.1. The Ontology, Epistemology and Anthropology of the Modern Worldview

It is possible to summarise the ontology, epistemology and anthropology of the Modern Worldview as follows:

5.1.1. Ontology

Only the reality of the empirical, material and natural world is affirmed. While the Islamic ontology recognizes God as the Absolute Being from which all other beings in the world of the seen (*'alam al-shahādah*) or the world of the unseen (*'alam al-ghaib*), the ontology of the Modern Worldview denies the supernatural world or the realm of Transcendence. On the existence of God, it is either silent on the matter, or it relegates the matters to preferences of individuals, or confines it strictly to the realm of the private domain of individuals. On the issue of eschatology, the Islamic ontology affirms the events of the Resurrection and Judgement Day in which there will be moral accounting by God and the existence of Heaven and Hell, the ontology of the Modern Worldview denies any identifiable eschaton or leaves that issue to the beliefs of individuals. Similarly, while the Cosmos and human life in Islamic ontology are infused with Divine purpose and meaning, the Modern Worldview denies objective meaning or teleology. Compared to the Islamic worldview ontology, the ontology of Western worldview is very deficient and very restricted.

5.1.2. *Epistemology*

In the realm of epistemology of the Modern worldview, the sources of knowledge are limited to sense experience and reason, whereas in the epistemology of Islam, the sources include Divine Revelation (Qur'an and Sunnah) as the highest in the hierarchy of knowledge, sensory perception and experience (*hiss*), reason (*'aql*), truthful report (*khobar ṣādiq*) and spiritual intuition (*kashf, hads*). In the Christian epistemology, Revelation is also the highest source of knowledge, but with the advent of the Enlightenment, revelation was rejected as a source of knowledge. With the rejection of Divine Revelation, the modern man and society loses the most important source of knowledge, which is required by human beings to know the Real Truth, the unseen realities and Transcendence. The loss of Transcendence and Certainty is the greatest loss of human beings and secular modern civilisation.

5.1.3. *Anthropology*

On anthropology, the Modern Worldview perceives of mankind as a result of the Darwinian process of natural evolution, not a creation of God or supernatural power. Unlike the human beings in Islamic anthropology who possesses a spiritual essence and soul in a physical form, the modern anthropology conceives of human beings with only the body and the mind, which most modern scientists tend to reduce it to the functions of the brain. Without the connection to a God Who provides a higher spiritual meaning and functions to human beings, the Darwinian human beings derive meanings in their lives from their relationship with the physical realities in the Cosmos. The struggle for survival of the fittest and the need to dominate lesser beings, nature or lower creatures with the help of reason without the guidance of Divine Revelation and wisdom define for them the meanings of life which varies in relation to the particular cultural contexts they find themselves to be in. While different ethnicities and cultural groups are sources of “knowing one another” in Islamic anthropology, in the anthropology of modern worldviews, the white-coloured people of Caucasian origins are conceived as having an innate superiority over the coloured peoples. During the colonial period the civilising mission (*la mission civilisatrice*) was one of the justifications for Western colonialism and imperialism. In the North American context, the enslavement of the sub-Saharan Africans and the slave-trade were even justified on theological grounds before the abolishment of slavery. The resurgence of white racism in North America and in Europe in recent years indicate how deeply entrenched is the Darwinian notion of the survival of the fittest, the natural selection or of the “selfish genes” as postulated by Richard Dawkins in 1976. The Islamic anthropology views human beings as being equal in the eyes of God irrespective

of colour or culture. All of them are morally responsible beings who are charged with vicegerency of the earth not in the name of ethnic superiority but in the name of servitude to Allah SWT.

Finally, we ought to know the Defining Characteristics of Modernity as follows:

5.2 Defining Characteristics of Modernity

(taken from Modernity Characteristics, www3.dbu.edu)

There have been numerous attempts, particularly in the field of sociology, to understand what modernity is. A wide variety of terms are used to describe the society, social life, driving force, symptomatic mentality, or some other defining aspects of modernity. They include:

- i. **Disenchantment of the world:** the loss of sacred and metaphysical understandings of all facets of life and culture;
- ii. **Rationalization:** the world can be understood and managed through a reasonable and logical system of objectively accessible theories and data;
- iii. **Secularization:** the loss of religious influence and/or religious belief at a societal and personal levels;
- iv. **Alienation:** isolation of the individual from systems of meaning—family, meaningful work, religion, clan, etc.;
- v. **Commodification:** the reduction of all aspects of life to objects of monetary consumption and exchange;
- vi. **Decontextualization:** the removal of social practices, beliefs, and cultural objects from their local cultures of origin;
- vii. **Individualism:** growing stress on individuals as opposed to meditating structures such as family, clan, academy, village, church;
- viii. **Nationalism:** the rise of the modern nation-states as rational centralized governments that often cross local, ethnic groupings;
- ix. **Subjectivism:** the turn inward for definitions and evaluations of truth and meaning (without Divine Guidance and Revelation to provide the real truths and meanings);
- x. **Objectivism:** the belief that truth-claims can be established by autonomous information accessible by all (again in purely empirical ways);
- xi. **Universalism:** application of ideas/claims (including radical scepticism) to all cultures/circumstances regardless of local distinctions;
- xii. **Reductionism:** the belief that something can be understood by studying the parts that make it up (including the tendency of modern science to reductionism);

- xiii. **Mass society:** the growth of societies united by mass media and widespread dissemination of cultural practices as opposed to local and regional culture particulars;
- xiv. Therapeutic motivations--the understanding that the human self is a product of evolutionary desires and that the self should be assisted in achieving those desires as opposed to projects of ethical improvement or pursuits of public virtue;

5.2.1. *Conditions of the Modern Self*

(Adapted from Craig M. Gay, *The Way of the (Modern) World: Or, Why It's Tempting to Live As If God Doesn't Exist*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998.)

- i. The modern self assumes an autonomy that seeks to reject the claims of authority, tradition, or community.
- ii. The modern self searches for personal therapy that only results in the subjective experience of well-being.
- iii. The true, the good, and the beautiful are undiscoverable, so they are judged as not applicable to human experience.
- iv. The modern self has moved from an emphasis on redemption of character to liberation from social inhibitions.
- v. Identity is self-constructed through self-consumption of products of desire.
- vi. Such claims about identity and truth call for a technical mastery of the environment, as well as a division between the public and private spheres of reality.

5.2.2. *Peter Berger's Six Propositions on The Nature of Western Individuality*

- i. Thus, with the above in mind, this is how most of Western society understands human identity:
 - ii. The uniqueness of the individual represents his or her essential reality.
 - iii. Individuals are or ought to be free.
 - iv. Individuals are responsible for their own actions, but only for their own actions.
 - v. An individual's subjective experience of the world is "real" by definition.
 - vi. Individuals possess certain rights over and against collectives.
 - vii. Individuals are ultimately responsible for creating themselves.
- (Peter L. Berger "Western Individuality: Liberation and Loneliness," *Partisan Review* 52, 1985).

5.3. Secularism

As a derivative of the larger Modern Worldview, secularism which developed in Europe particularly in the mid-19th century has been perceived by majority Muslim reformist and revivalist thinkers in the 20th century as one of the most inimical ideologies as far as Islam was

concerned because it undermined the Islamic belief that Islam, unlike Christianity, conceived of religious values and laws as comprehensive, to include political matters and matters of governance.

The idea of separation of state from religion was anathema to the worldview of *Tauhid* which posits that Allah's authority and sovereignty cover not just matters of belief or worship proper, but are inclusive of state administration, economic system, legal system, cultural affairs and international affairs. That was why the majority of Muslim scholars in the world rejected the institutionalization of secularism and secularization in Turkey – under the name of '*laicite*' – by Mustafa Kemal Ataturk in 1928 after abolishing the Caliphate. Turkey became the first Secular State in the world, which not only reduced the religion of Islam to the realm of the individual privacy, but adopted the French legal system and abolished the Arabic script. Turkey's *laicite* imposed the separation of religion and state and introduced the external symbols of Western culture to create a Westernised secular elite. The existence of Turkish assertive secularism with disastrous effects on Islamic education, law and culture has served to reinforce the Muslim reformist and renewalist aversion to the gradual process of secularization of politics, economics, law, education and culture in other Muslim countries.

In post-Independence Malaysia and post-Independence Indonesia Islamic reformist political leaders too were against the introduction of elements of secularization in law, education and culture. The most powerful philosophical critique of secularism and secularization in the English language came from the pen of Professor Syed Naquib al-Attas whose *Islam and Secularism* (1978) became one of the most popular original works, which is highly regarded in the Muslim world.

The modern European mind generally welcomed secularism as a political ideology in the mid-19th century as it heralded the liberation of man from the religious and metaphysical control over his mind and his language. The famous work *The Secular City* written in 1965 by the Harvard theologian Harvey Cox discussed the integral components of secularization – which was regarded by Western social scientists in the 60's as a necessary condition for the modernization and progress of a community and nation – as consisting of three elements, namely **(i) the disenchantment of nature, (ii) the desacralization of politics** and, **(iii) the deconsecration of values**. Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas explains the three elements as follows:

The first means the freeing of nature from its religious implications. It involves the dispelling of godly, animistic spirits and magic from the natural world. This separates the world from God, and distinguishes man from it. As a result, man may no longer view nature as a divine entity. This idea will allow and 'empower' him to act freely upon nature as he wishes, to exploit it according to his needs and plans.

The second means the abolition of sacral legitimation of political power and authority. There is no such concept, for example, as 'the vicegerent of God' on earth or any form of supernatural representation of one's worldly power. There is no such thing as ruling or controlling people on behalf of any religious institutions. This notion is the prerequisite of political and social changes, again as man deems them fit and necessary.

The third means the rendering transient and relative all and every value system which includes religion and world views having ultimate and definitive significance for one's life. In this way, man's future is open to change and evolution. Meaning, man is free to create the change and immerse himself in the so-called 'evolutionary' process, moving from the state of 'infantility' to 'maturity'. (Wan Azhar Wan Ahmad, "Religionism and Secularism")

It should be noted that while theologian Harvey Cox saw secularism in his *The Secular City* not as something un-Christian but in fact as a Christian theological imperative that ought to be welcomed in the modern city of urban civilisation, Charles Taylor who wrote his monumental *The Secular Age* (2007) argued that secularity opened the way for the pluralism of religious meanings and that belief in God was one of the multiple contested options in late modernity.

In discussing the worldview of secularism, it is important to remember that the concept and practice of secularism and secularisation in the world have undergone many changes over the last decades. It would be a mistake to view it as something static, monolithic and unchanging. The secularism as practiced in France, England and United States, for instance, has significant differences. French secularism has strong reservations against Islam and its religious symbols. UK has accommodated Islam and Muslims in a tolerant way, while in the USA, Muslims as judges, members of Congress or White House officials are allowed to wear the hijab. Indian secularism has become very intolerant of Islam and Christianity, whereas Turkish *laite* has abandoned its anti-Islamic spirit of the past. The secularism of Singapore treats all religions equally and Muslim minorities have learned to adjust to Singapore's secular policies.

In Egypt, the late Dr. Abdul Wahhab Elmissiri has developed the idea of Partial Secularism (*al-'almāniyyah al-juz'iyah*) which is acceptable to him and Comprehensive

Secularism (*al-'almāniyyah al-shāmilah*) which he opposed. In view of the varieties of secularism and secularisation in the world today and in the future, it is conceivable that Islamic political thought would not be able to continue making generalisations about a single or universal worldview of secularism. The emergence of different types of secularism or hybrids of secularism and religion in the future will have to be addressed differently and assessed accordingly.

6. NEW ATHEISM

(based on New Atheists iep.utm.edu)

It was journalist Gary Wolf who coined the term New Atheism in 2006 to represent the thoughts of some Anglo-American atheists of the 21st century, particularly that of Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennet, Sam Harris, Christopher Hitchens. They advocate that religion, irrationality and superstition should be strongly countered, criticised and challenged by rational and scientific arguments. Despite employing different approaches, New Atheism share a general set of assumptions involving metaphysics, epistemology and ethics. On metaphysics, their common stand is that there is no God, deity, supernatural or divine beings. On epistemology, they regard empirical science as the only basis for authentic knowledge of the world, and religious belief as irrational and lacking adequate evidence. On ethics they claim that there is an objective and universal moral standard derived from secular thought. They believe it is possible to have spirituality without religion or belief in God. They reject the idea that it is not possible to lead satisfying non-religious life based on secular morality and scientific discoveries (New Atheists. Iep.utm.edu.).

“[New Atheism’s] intellectual composition provides a qualitatively distinct blend of modern and postmodern elements and its political aims and strategies are more extensive than those from earlier forms” (Kettell, S. What’s really new about New Atheism? *Palgrave Commun* 2, 16099 (2016). <https://doi.org/10.1057/palcomms.2016.99>)

...there is no consensus on what “new atheism” actually is. Nevertheless, a number of key themes emerge with regularity. For example, new atheism is based on a naturalist worldview and places a strong emphasis on the use of reason, rationality and science as the best (or the only) means of understanding reality. Religious beliefs and doctrines are treated propositionally, as making truth claims about the nature of reality, and are subsequently rejected on the grounds that there is insufficient evidence to support them. New atheism further maintains that religion is not simply wrong, but irrational, pathological and uniquely dangerous. By promoting beliefs and behaviours that emphasize cosmically ordained rules, sanctions and ways of life, religion is believed to foster divisive tribal mentalities, creating prejudice, discrimination and violence. On

this basis, new atheists take an avowedly critical posture towards all forms of religion, attacking ostensibly moderate and mainstream religious views, as well as its fundamentalist extremes. (Steven Kettell 2016)

A key factor behind the emergence of new atheism was the dramatic rise of the Internet as part of the revolution in global media and communications from the 1980s. Many of the New Atheism groups, such as the Richard Dawkins Foundation for Reason and Science operate online.

The core political aims of new atheism are centred on upholding the separation of church and state, criticizing religion (and promoting atheism), and campaigning to ensure legal and civic equality for atheists. One of the central goals here is to normalize non-religious beliefs, to change adverse public perceptions and secure mainstream acceptance of atheist views. Among the key strategies that have been adopted to promote these ends include the use of billboard advertisements (beginning with a bus campaign launched in London in 2009, carrying the slogan: “There’s probably no god. Now stop worrying and enjoy your life”), campaigns to encourage atheists to “come out” and identify themselves to raise public visibility, and high-profile public displays of group activity and cohesion (such as the Reason Rallies of 2012 and 2016). Another key goal of new atheism has been to build a sense of community and group cohesion. Examples of this include community gatherings (such as the Atheist Film Festival and Camp Quest), the promotion of conferences, conventions and meetings (such as Skepticon or The Amazing Meeting), as well a self-conscious attempt to construct a deeper sense of atheist identity and transform atheism-in-general into a wider social movement. (Steven Kettell 2016)

Islamophobia

“Some commentators have accused the New Atheist movement of Islamophobia. Wade Jacoby and Hakan Yavuz assert that “a group of ‘new atheists’ such as Richard Dawkins, Sam Harris, and Christopher Hitchens” have “invoked Samuel Huntington's ‘clash of civilizations’ theory to explain the current political contestation” and that this forms part of a trend toward “Islamophobia [...] in the study of Muslim societies”. William W. Emilson argues that “the ‘new’ in the new atheists' writings is not their aggressiveness, nor their extraordinary popularity, nor even their scientific approach to religion, rather it is their attack not only on militant Islamism but also on Islam itself under the cloak of its general critique of religion” (New Atheism, Wikipedia)

APPENDIX**POSTMODERNISM****A. This is a lecture on “What is Postmodernism and how does it affect our culture today, given by Dr. Jamie Dew on February 25, 2020.**

So what exactly is postmodernism and should we even care about it anymore?

Indeed in the previous decades before us, postmodernism was in vogue in the academic settings of our country and in the Western world. It's not necessarily that way today. You still find it in literary departments. You still find it, unfortunately, sometimes in theology departments. But in the natural sciences and philosophy departments and in other departments, such as history departments, you really don't have an obsession with this thing called postmodernism anymore.

It is however still very much alive in our culture. For example, the TV shows that you're watching probably right now, the movies that you're watching probably right now, the things that we're watching play out in our courts right now all have been deeply affected by this thing called postmodernism. So, while it may be waning in the academy it is still very much got its grip on us in our culture. We do need to understand what it is and what it's about.

Now, it's complex. And nailing down exactly what postmodernism is, people have said it's like trying to nail down Jell-O. And so that's true in many ways.

Part of the difficulty is we have difficult time saying exactly when postmodernism starts. So for example, on questions about epistemology, that is the philosophical questions about our knowledge, well you can trace it all the way back to people like Immanuel Kant. But if you're looking for our views about what human beings are, our anthropology, man, you'd have to come all the way up past Freud. And so depending on the topic in question, postmodernism seems to have these different starting points. And so it's very, very difficult for a lot of reasons.

Modernism

I think the best way to understand postmodernism is to say something about modernism just very quickly. Modernism starts in the 17th century with people like René Descartes and Francis Bacon.

This is the move away from religious perspectives that sort of ground our knowledge. In the past, in the pre-modern world if you wanted to know something you looked to the Church. You wanted to explain something you explained it with God. This was the Judeo-Christian worldview prior to the 17th century.

Well, Descartes was a good catholic and Bacon was a good protestant, but what they felt was wrong with the Western world was that ultimately we had some assumptions in the going about of our knowledge that were ineffective. So they wanted to start clean. They wanted to set for themselves sure and certain foundations that they could build our knowledge upon. And so they cast aside religious perspectives as many of these modern thinkers did.

There're several themes that come up in the modern period. So for example, the idea that we can be completely objective in our perspectives. We can sort of strip away our biases, our dispositions, our backgrounds, our educations and we can see it from “a

God's-eye perspective". That means a view from nowhere. We won't be filtered by our perspectives or our assumptions or any of those things. We'll just see things as it really is. Just the facts. And in many ways you see that in the modern sciences. And so this idea of objectivity, universal objectivity was an assumption of modernity.

They also had this idea of universal rationality. They thought that there was one right way to think and everybody if we would just educate them the right way would think that way everywhere in the world. And we would find as we'd go around from society to society, culture to culture, we would find them using the same rationality.

Well, as modern anthropology and modern sociology emerged in the Western world, actually what we found was just the opposite. There isn't a universal rationality shared by all people everywhere. And so that modern assumption gets blown up.

There's also the idea in modernity, the idea that comes about called inevitable progress. The idea that we were going to get better and better and better and better. Sure, our knowledge was getting better. This is the age of modern science where our scientific discoveries and knowledge just explodes. This is the age where we set aside the feudal system, politically speaking, and we move into democracies and things like that. And so you can understand why people think that we're just getting better and better and better.

In theological circles we begin to think things like postmillennialism where we think we're gonna usher in the kingdom of God. And so those types of things are what you see there.

Well all of that stuff may sound benign, but understand this: the moderns were explicitly rejecting these religious ideas as the bedrock of our knowledge. That's what modernity is doing.

Postmodernism and Truth

Postmodernity is now going to reject all of those modern assumptions and ideals. And to us that might sound like it's not that big a deal, but here's the catch: The way they rejected it was by getting rid of concepts of truth. Now postmoderns certainly have ideas of truth, but they don't believe about truth the same thing you and I believe.

So for example, here's a statement we all think to be true: I'm wearing a gray suit. You think that's true because the statement itself corresponds to the way things really are. That's called a correspondence theory of truth. That had been the premodern and the modern assumption. Postmoderns reject that. Truth now is simply what works for us. Or truth is simply which is consistent with other things.

And so they have ways of defining truth, but there is no longer anything like Truth with a big T. No what we'd call metanarrative, that is meta meaning overarching, narrative meaning story. There are no overarching explanations of reality. There's no truths. So you shouldn't pretend to have one. I shouldn't pretend to have one. That's at least what they say, but notice in our culture these people that dub themselves as postmodern. What they're really after and what they're really against is our truth. They want to substitute it with a different truth, with their own morality, and things like that.

Postmodernism Today

So one example of where you're gonna see postmodern ideals flesh out in our culture is really what you're seeing happening in this sort of culmination of the sexual

revolution and the movement into transgenderism and other things like that. We're now in a place where people will say things like, "I know I'm in a boy's body, but I'm not a boy. I'm something else underneath that." And we're left to define, not just truth out there anyway we want to, we're now able to define ourselves in any particular way we want to.

And there's this getting rid of these classical, traditional ideas that go well back before Christianity. They would go back to the classical period of the philosophers. This would be Plato and Aristotle. It would come up through the Christian tradition. It would come up through the medieval traditions. It would come up all the way through modernity. It would even come up pretty far into the 20 and 21st century, but now you're seeing it come to full fruition where we're gonna redefine or get rid of definitions of what it means to be a human, what it means to be a male, what it means to be a female, and we're free now to just define that any way we want to.

This is very much a good example of the way postmodern thought has infected our culture and shaped the way we think about very, very important things.

So in short, that's a crash course on postmodernism. It is still very much alive in our culture and we do need to know what it is.

B. Postmodernism (from WIKIPEDIA)

Postmodern philosophy is a [philosophical](#) movement that arose in the second half of the 20th century as a critical response to assumptions allegedly present in [modernist philosophical ideas](#) regarding culture, identity, history, or language that were developed during the 18th-century [Enlightenment](#).^{[1][2]} Postmodernist thinkers developed concepts like [difference](#), repetition, [trace](#), and [hyperreality](#) to subvert "[grand narratives](#)", [univocity of being](#), and epistemic certainty.^[3] Postmodern philosophy questions the importance of power relationships, personalization, and [discourse](#) in the "construction" of truth and world views. Many postmodernists appear to deny that an [objective](#) reality exists, and appear to deny that there are objective moral values.

[Jean-François Lyotard](#) defined philosophical postmodernism in *The Postmodern Condition*, writing "Simplifying to the extreme, I define postmodern as incredulity towards meta narratives...."^[4] where what he means by [metanarrative](#) is something like a unified, complete, universal, and epistemically certain story about everything that is. Postmodernists reject metanarratives because they reject the conceptualization of truth that metanarratives presuppose. Postmodernist philosophers in general argue that truth is always contingent on historical and social context rather than being absolute and universal and that truth is always partial and "at issue" rather than being complete and certain.^[3]

Postmodern philosophy is often particularly sceptical about simple binary oppositions characteristic of [structuralism](#), emphasizing the problem of the philosopher cleanly distinguishing knowledge from ignorance, social progress from reversion, dominance from submission, good from bad, and presence from absence.^{[5][6]} But, for the same reasons, postmodern philosophy should often be particularly sceptical about the complex spectral characteristics of things, emphasizing the problem of the philosopher again cleanly distinguishing concepts, for a concept must be understood in the context of its opposite, such as existence and nothingness, normality and abnormality, speech and writing, and the like.

Characteristic claims

Many postmodern claims are a deliberate repudiation of certain 18th-century Enlightenment values. Such a postmodernist believes that there is no objective natural reality, and that logic and reason are mere conceptual constructs that are not universally valid. Two other characteristic postmodern practices are a denial that [human nature](#) exists, and a (sometimes moderate) skepticism toward claims that science and technology will change society for the better. Postmodernists also believe there are no objective moral values. A postmodernist, then, [tolerates](#) multiple conceptions of morality, even if he or she disagrees with them subjectively.^{[9][10]} Postmodern writings often focus on [deconstructing](#) the role that power and ideology play in shaping discourse and belief. Postmodern philosophy shares [ontological](#) similarities with classical [sceptical](#) and [relativistic](#) belief systems.^[11]

The [Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy](#) states that "The assumption that there is no common denominator in 'nature' or 'truth' ... that guarantees the possibility of neutral or objective thought" is a key assumption of postmodernism.^[11] The [National Research Council](#) has characterized the belief that "social science research can never generate objective or trustworthy knowledge" as an example of a postmodernist belief.^[12] [Jean-François Lyotard](#)'s seminal 1979 [The Postmodern Condition](#) stated that its hypotheses "should not be accorded predictive value in relation to reality, but strategic value in relation to the questions raised". Lyotard's statement in 1984 that "I define postmodern as incredulity toward meta-narratives" extends to incredulity toward science. [Jacques Derrida](#), who is generally identified as a postmodernist, stated that "every referent, all reality has the structure of a differential trace".^[3] [Paul Feyerabend](#), one of the most famous twentieth-century philosophers of science, is often classified as a postmodernist; Feyerabend held that modern science is no more justified than witchcraft, and has denounced the "tyranny" of "abstract concepts such as 'truth', 'reality', or 'objectivity', which narrow people's vision and ways of being in the world". Feyerabend also defended astrology, adopted alternative medicine, and sympathized with creationism. Defenders of postmodernism state that many descriptions of postmodernism exaggerate its antipathy to science; for example, Feyerabend denied that he was "anti-science", accepted that some scientific *theories* are superior to other theories (even if science itself is not superior to other modes of inquiry), and attempted conventional medical treatments during his fight against cancer.

Definitional issues

Philosopher [John Deely](#) has argued for the contentious claim that the label "postmodern" for thinkers such as [Derrida](#) *et al.* is *premature*. Insofar as the "so-called" postmoderns follow the thoroughly *modern* trend of [idealism](#), it is more an *ultramodernism* than anything else. A postmodernism that lives up to its name, therefore, must no longer confine itself to the premodern preoccupation with "things" nor with the modern confinement to "ideas", but must come to terms with the way of signs embodied in the semiotic doctrines of such thinkers as the Portuguese philosopher [John Painsot](#) and the American philosopher [Charles Sanders Peirce](#). Writes Deely,

The epoch of Greek and Latin philosophy was based on *being* in a quite precise sense: the existence exercised by things independently of human apprehension and attitude. The much briefer epoch of modern philosophy based itself rather on the instruments of human knowing, but in a way that unnecessarily compromised being. As

the 20th century ends, there is reason to believe that a new philosophical epoch is dawning along with the new century, promising to be the richest epoch yet for human understanding. The postmodern era is positioned to synthesize at a higher level—the level of experience, where the being of things and the activity of the finite knower compenentrate one another and provide the materials whence can be derived knowledge of nature and knowledge of culture in their full symbiosis—the achievements of the ancients and the moderns in a way that gives full credit to the preoccupations of the two. The postmodern era has for its distinctive task in philosophy the exploration of a new path, no longer the ancient way of things nor the modern way of ideas, but the way of signs, whereby the peaks and valleys of ancient and modern thought alike can be surveyed and cultivated by a generation which has yet further peaks to climb and valleys to find.

History

Precursors

Postmodern philosophy originated primarily in France during the mid-20th century. However, several philosophical antecedents inform many of postmodern philosophy's concerns.

It was greatly influenced by the writings of [Søren Kierkegaard](#) and [Friedrich Nietzsche](#) in the 19th century and other early-to-mid 20th-century philosophers, including [phenomenologists Edmund Husserl](#) and [Martin Heidegger](#), [psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan](#), [structuralist Roland Barthes](#), [Georges Bataille](#), and the later work of [Ludwig Wittgenstein](#). Postmodern philosophy also drew from the world of the arts and architecture, particularly [Marcel Duchamp](#), [John Cage](#) and artists who practiced [collage](#), and the architecture of [Las Vegas](#) and the [Pompidou Centre](#).

Early postmodern philosophers

The most influential early postmodern philosophers were [Jean Baudrillard](#), [Jean-François Lyotard](#), and [Jacques Derrida](#). [Michel Foucault](#) is also often cited as an early postmodernist although he personally rejected that label. Following Nietzsche, Foucault argued that knowledge is produced through the operations of *power*, and changes fundamentally in different historical periods.

The writings of Lyotard were largely concerned with the role of narrative in human culture, and particularly how that role has changed as we have left modernity and entered a "postindustrial" or [postmodern condition](#). He argued that modern philosophies legitimized their truth-claims not (as they themselves claimed) on logical or empirical grounds, but rather on the grounds of accepted stories (or "[metanarratives](#)") about knowledge and the world—comparing these with Wittgenstein's concept of [language-games](#). He further argued that in our postmodern condition, these metanarratives no longer work to legitimize truth-claims. He suggested that in the wake of the collapse of modern metanarratives, people are developing a new "language-game"—one that does not make claims to absolute truth but rather celebrates a world of ever-changing relationships (among people and between people and the world).

Derrida, the father of [deconstruction](#), practiced philosophy as a form of [textual criticism](#). He criticized [Western philosophy](#) as privileging the concept of [presence](#) and [logos](#), as opposed to absence and markings or writings.

In the United States, the most famous pragmatist and self-proclaimed postmodernist was [Richard Rorty](#). An analytic philosopher, Rorty believed that combining [Willard Van Orman Quine](#)'s criticism of the [analytic-synthetic distinction](#) with [Wilfrid Sellars](#)'s critique of the "[Myth of the Given](#)" allowed for an abandonment of the view of the thought or language as a mirror of a reality or external world. Further, drawing upon [Donald Davidson](#)'s criticism of the dualism between conceptual scheme and empirical content, he challenges the sense of questioning whether our particular concepts are related to the world in an appropriate way, whether we can justify our ways of describing the world as compared with other ways. He argued that truth was not about getting it right or representing reality, but was part of a social practice and language was what served our purposes in a particular time; ancient languages are sometimes untranslatable into modern ones because they possess a different vocabulary and are unuseful today. Donald Davidson is not usually considered a postmodernist, although he and Rorty have both acknowledged that there are few differences between their philosophies.

Criticism

Criticisms of postmodernism, while intellectually diverse, share the opinion that it lacks coherence and is hostile to notions such as [truth](#), [logic](#), and [objectivity](#). Specifically, it is held that [postmodernism](#) can be meaningless, promotes [obscurantism](#) and uses [relativism](#) (in [culture](#), [morality](#), [knowledge](#)) to the extent that it cripples most judgement calls.

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