



## Humanism in the Context of Contemporary Global Transformations

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### ABSTRACT

### Original Research Article

In the 21st century, rapid globalization, digital transformation, and artificial intelligence are reshaping societies and raising pressing questions about the role and core values of the individual. This has revived interest in humanism, now represented in expanded forms such as "new humanism," "digital humanism," and "neo-humanism." These movements emphasize the protection of human dignity and balanced development in the face of technological progress and global risks, adapting traditional values such as truth, beauty, and freedom to contemporary life. Many authors note a growing crisis of values: globalization and Western individualism have undermined traditional moral compass, leading to widespread existential uncertainty. The text contrasts Western liberalism with the Eastern tradition and warns that the rejection of enduring values without their replacement is fraught with nihilism, echoing Nietzsche's concerns. The argument is that fundamental human values remain, but must be reimagined and integrated into a renewed ethical system that restores solidarity, meaning, and respect for life. Historically, humanism has manifested itself in various forms—religious, secular, existential, Marxist, scientific, and so on—but has consistently placed the value of the individual and freedom at its core. It operates through multiple channels (religion, philosophy, politics, science, art, and social norms) and requires dialogue between them. In conclusion, the authors argue that 21st-century humanism must be a dynamic, inclusive system that also considers ethical, environmental, and technological concerns. By prioritizing intercultural cooperation and sustainable development, contemporary humanism can guide humanity in addressing contemporary challenges while preserving our shared humanistic values.

**Keywords:** Universal Values, Civilization, Crisis, Modern Man, Humanism, Anti-Humanism, Dialogue, Spirituality.

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## Introduction

The beginning of the 21st century is marked by profound changes affecting virtually all aspects of social development. Economic, political, cultural, and technological processes are increasingly intertwined, shaping a new social reality. In particular, this reality is being impacted by globalization, digital transformation, and the active implementation of artificial intelligence, which are significantly altering the nature of interactions both between states and within societies. In the context of these changes, the question of the human being's place in modern civilization takes on particular relevance. Rapid technological advances and expanding

intercultural contacts require a new understanding of the role of the individual, their values, and their potential for self-realization. This is why humanism is once again at the center of philosophical analysis as a framework for preserving the primacy of the individual in a changing world.

Contemporary research shows that humanism is no longer limited to its classical understanding and is gradually acquiring new forms. Global processes are influencing the transformation of moral norms and values, necessitating their adaptation to the conditions of the 21st century. (Asylbekkyzy, M., & Rakhimova G., 2025).

At the same time, interest is growing in the concept of a new humanism, which is seen as an attempt to develop a renewed value base for society. This approach is focused on protecting human dignity and creating conditions for the harmonious development of the individual in the face of increasing global risks (Birich, Rogov, 2025). The idea of digital humanism occupies a special place in contemporary discussions. It reflects a desire to maintain a balance between technological development and humanistic values, emphasizing the need to control the consequences of digitalization and the introduction of new technologies. (Prem. E. (2024).

Furthermore, humanism is increasingly seen as an important element in shaping a sustainable model of global development. Neo-humanist approaches emphasize issues of social justice, human well-being, and environmental responsibility, which are particularly significant in the context of global crises (Sarracino, O'Connor, 2022).

Thus, contemporary global processes are contributing to a rethinking of humanism and an expansion of its content. An analysis of these changes allows us to gain a deeper understanding of the role of humans in modern civilization and determine the direction of the further development of humanistic thought.

## Main Part

### Humanism as a System of Universal Values and the Ideological Basis of Modern Society

In human history, it's difficult to pinpoint when and by whom the meanings of such values as kindness, beauty, truth, dignity, freedom, patriotism, justice, equality, humanism, love, and so on were formulated. What is known is that humanity cannot exist without these values. Particularly at the current stage of global development, the issue of values is the number one issue on the agenda.

Universal, common human values are those that have been accepted by all peoples of the world and have stood the test of history. They are closely linked both to the meaning of human existence and to the meaning of each person's life. A person who loses the moral anchors organized by values falls into a state of "existential emptiness" (V. Frankl). This situation is typical for most people in the modern age of globalization. "Because, in the process of fundamental changes in all spheres of life in modern society, the traditional value system is losing its relevance, and a process of reinterpretation of values as a whole is taking place. At the same time, not only among young people but also among older people, the proportion of those who do not understand the meaning of their lives and why they live remains significantly higher." "The loss of values that are fundamental to the life of an individual (an "existential gap") often leads to a state of stress and has a strong negative impact on the overall development of the individual" (Baudrillard J., 1994).

Values have dynamic content and change over very long periods of time. Values lost at any stage can be revived and regain prominence after a while. From this perspective, we can say that the human value system consists of the value orientations dominant in a given society at a particular historical stage or period. Once a civilization discovers the phenomenon of value, it becomes forever committed to it. The limits, levels, and initiatives of human activity throughout life are measured by values. Values transcend the individual, society, and sometimes even time. Values ensure the continuity of time (present, past, future) and distinguish existence from the world as it should be. They bring a metaphysical, transcendental dimension to human existence. Universal moral and cultural mechanisms are realized through the unconditional acceptance of the fact that norms are understood as phenomena that always have an ideal essence, are absolutely important, express the interests of all humanity, do not require discussion (i.e., whether they are values or not), and set the limits and boundaries of change.

The disappearance of values characteristic of a given civilization and culture does not mean the disappearance of universal human values. But at first glance, this seems so. Values can be revived, reinterpreted, and synthesized in another culture, forming a new, progressive value system. Universal, absolute values have acquired eternal status for all humanity. The demand for values such as truth, beauty, kindness, humanism, love, faith, and so on is also endless. Humanity cannot live without them. However, since these values must be rethought in each period, their content is also understood differently. Undoubtedly, life itself is the most sacred value. Because without people and life, other values lose their meaning. However, not everyone who considers the analysis and understanding of life shares this opinion. Consider, for example, the characterization of life given by some famous Western philosophers of the 20th century.

It is well known that not only life itself, but also values in general, are perceived differently not only by individuals but also by different countries and even different cultures. Furthermore, the meaning of values has been understood relatively at different periods of history. For example, freedom has been recognized as a sacred value since ancient times. Throughout history, millions of people have sacrificed their lives for freedom. But in our time, having seemingly lost its original essence, freedom has proven to be the most difficult test for humanity (Fromm, E., 1995) From the Renaissance to the present day, particularly in the Western tradition, human existence has been regarded as the greatest value. It is the modern era of history that is remembered as the period when the individual was recognized as the most important value. Independent individuals, free to choose their own destiny, began to claim the role of "creator" of culture, science, even the universe. However, the consequences of human activity in the late 20th century and into the 21st century, which embraces individual autonomy as an absolute and prioritizes only material, rational values, are already well

known. The imbalance in the choice of moral and material values is one of the main causes of the modern moral crisis. The elevation of individual freedom above all other value systems has painful consequences. The absolutization of the individual and their rights (versus their responsibilities) is a characteristic feature of modern Western society. As is well known, Eastern civilization prioritizes traditions and customs, respect for the elderly, and so on. Traditionalism is very strong in Eastern thinking. It blocks any innovative activity. This is where the East's inertia comes from. However, assessing this as an unconditionally bad event, as the cause of backwardness, is a superficial, metaphysical approach. "It is not the greatness of inertial force, but the smallness of the driving force, not the greatness of spiritual barriers, but the weakness of intellectual aspirations that holds back the East. Since the modern Western world is internally contradictory and makes rational thinking absolute, its one-sided progress inevitably leads to degradation" (Windelband, V. 1998).

We have already noted that the crisis experienced by modern man is, first of all, a crisis of values, and primarily in the sphere of such tendencies as "Westernization" or "Westernization", which have dominated the world since modern times and are spreading intensively in the phase of globalization in the form. Western neoliberalism, individualism, rationalism, pragmatism, utilitarianism, etc. The decline of the value system and the crisis of humanity have been identified, acknowledged, and are recognized by Western philosophers. For example, the contemporary French philosopher J. Baudrillard wrote mockingly to Fukuyama, who became world-famous for his work "The End of History and the Last Man," where he praises and extols liberal Western values, viewing liberalism as the highest value: "Today, the triumphant illusion that the East has been tamed by the West, that is, that the policy pursued under the guise of democracy, has been shattered. We can finally understand what the real problem is. We see with our own eyes that everything is different: today, the East is greedily devouring the West. This threatens it with poverty and the violation of human rights. The East's greatest weapon is no longer the hydrogen bomb, but Chernobyl" (Baudrillard, J., 1994).

Viewing humanity as one of the highest values is admirable. A person's worth, their sensitivity to moral values, lies within the bounds of their personal choice. The worth of someone who rejects all traditional values and builds their life on nihilism is questionable. Even during periods of transition and crisis, when the value system undergoes transformation, attitudes toward them descend to the level of nihilism, which leads to undesirable results. This attitude has deep roots in the Western worldview. In the preface to his work "The Will to Power," Friedrich Nietzsche notes that the advent of nihilism is inevitable. The rejection of traditional values (nihilism) must occur sooner or later. Because the values we have held to date "have no value." They are exhausted. That is why we will have to live through an era of nihilism to realize that these values have no meaning (Nietzsche F., 2005). Modern

Western society has truly reached the point of nihilism. History proves that abandoning traditional values without creating a new value system yields no positive results. New values require only the development and implementation of existing ones in accordance with the spirit of the times, for the benefit of humanity, through a synthesis of the most diverse cultural and moral value models. Humanism is one of the eternal values that has stood the test of history. The modern global scientific community sees the rebirth of humanism on a new level as the key to resolving the global moral crisis. Based on this, let's discuss the essence of humanism and the status of the word "human" at its root. The concept of "dehumanization" signifies the alienation of a person from their fundamental human qualities, alienation from their essence. Many manifestations of loneliness are alienation from one's culture, spirituality, society, religion, nature, and so on. Alienation can be summed up in one word: dehumanization. In such a situation, what hopes can justify the proclamation of humanization as a global challenge to our time? What potential does humanism possess in a globalizing world as a value, a worldview, a spiritual tool, an ideology, and a sociocultural mechanism for rescuing a contradictory human way of life from its many problems?

The ideal of a humanized world is not the absolutization of any one factor or value, but the absolutization of the entire system of values (moral, ethical, spiritual, aesthetic, intellectual, social, etc.), which signifies the unity of values. The formation of humanism as a worldview is a fateful question. The word "worldview" reflects two concepts: the world and the attitude toward it. In today's information society, developing a worldview that provides an ideal model of social existence has become both easier and more difficult. A worldview comprises two elements. First, there's objective information about the world we live in, and second, there's a specific individual's attitude toward this reality. Today, there's an extraordinary amount of information about the world, and understanding it and forming an independent attitude is extremely difficult. This involves developing humanism as a worldview and its place in consciousness. The origins of humanism and its opposite, anti-humanism, can be traced to the dawn of civilization. It could be said that it began with the moment when man made a choice between good and evil. Paradoxically, humanism and anti-humanism are polar, dualistic phenomena that express the problem of humanity in modern times, particularly in Western culture. Their confrontational, tense dialogue has become a characteristic feature of Western philosophy and culture.

### **Humanism and Anti-Humanism as an Anthropological Dichotomy of Modernity**

Historically, humanism and anti-humanism have existed as an anthropological dichotomy between humanity and the claims made against it, and have had multifaceted, varied manifestations. As one researcher has put it, "the outcome of the conflict between humanism and anti-humanism in the

perceptions of humanity in the 20th and 21st centuries will determine the most contemporary worldview and spirituality" (Miller V., 2003) Thus, humanism and humanization acquire the status of a universal, moral paradigm of the modern era, a way of thinking and a system of values.

Humanism, derived from the Latin word "humanus"—human being—is a worldview that asserts that humans and their existence are the highest value. It prioritizes freedom, ability, intellect, and rights. Proponents of this position are called humanists. It's interesting to note that in ancient times, "humanists" were the term used to describe intellectuals who communicated with each other through letters. Perhaps this first historically established form of humanism more accurately expressed its essence. Essentially, it was concluded that the thick book, the novel, was the result of this long correspondence. In ancient Rome, Cicero's contemporaries called those who communicated through letters, influenced people with their knowledge and language, and developed them spiritually, humanists. Humanists were perceived primarily as people who value friendship, communication, care, and sensitivity toward others. "If philosophy has existed for three thousand years today, it's thanks to those who, out of a love of philosophy, wrote texts about friendship and friends. This became possible thanks to the habit of writing texts to friends, the tradition of maintaining dialogue. Philosophy can also be thought of as a continuous text, passed down from generation to generation, and the contradictory interpretations of truth and communication that its authors offer." (Philosophy as a profession. <http://anthropology.ru>)

Historically, two forms of humanism have been distinguished: religious and secular. Religious humanism is considered the first stage of this phenomenon's manifestation in human history. This is the religious humanism characteristic of monotheism in Jewish, Christian, and Islamic religions. Secular humanism, in turn, has manifested itself primarily in the forms of secularism, liberalism, and socialism. But these forms of humanism do not fully reflect its existing multifaceted manifestations. Religious humanism, like conservative humanism, manifests itself in various forms. The abstract and complex nature of this concept can be seen in the book "Panorama of Modern Ideas," published in New York in 1982. In the section "Modern Humanism", the authors note that there are six aspects of humanism: "poetic humanism" (J. Bataille, M. Proust, A. Breton, etc.), "heroic humanism" (A. de Saint-Exupéry, A. Camus), "existential humanism" (M. Heidegger, J.P. Sartre, S. de Beauvoir), "humanism of the individual" (K. Jaspers, G. Marcel, E. Mounier), "Marxist humanism" (G. Lukács, A. Lefebvre, E. Blok), "scientific humanism" (F. Joliot-Curie, P. Oppenheimer, G. Marcuse, G. Bachelard). The breadth of this classification and the names of the great thinkers and writers of the 20th century are impressive. Humanist ideas of the 20th century are of particular interest, especially in their

debates with anti-humanism. Ideas for a dialogue and synthesis of the many forms mentioned here have often been expressed. This is not an impossible task. After all, no matter how different the types of humanism, they are all based on the recognition of the individual as a fundamental value. Another epochal global problem is the priority of the moral and ethical parameters of humanism. The possibility of humanizing man, society, and humanity means, above all, the development of its spiritual and moral qualities. This feature is most clearly manifested in aspects of the contemporary "new humanism" and "scientific humanism," which are characterized as the latest forms of religious humanism among possible forms of humanism. (Panorama of Modern Ideas, 1982). A distinctive feature of historically established forms of humanism is the question of which principle, which factor of the human personality, is considered the basis for spiritual perfection and humanistic development. Religious humanism recognizes that the fundamental nature of man is based on a transcendental force and that spiritual perfection is founded on ontological roots. According to liberal humanism, opportunities for self-realization are more effective when one realizes one's natural and biological characteristics and potential, develops an autonomous personality, and develops a pragmatic way of thinking. A person who determines their own destiny and puts their interests first in all relationships can ensure their own well-being. Social humanism sees the source of personal development in the system of society and sociocultural relations.

## Discussion

Thus, the diversity of content in the forms of humanism points to different aspects of its functions and mechanisms of implementation. The vertical hierarchy of these mechanisms for the implementation of the types of humanism can be imagined as follows:

- The religious form has a more dogmatic, relatively stable character in terms of worldview. Within this mechanism of humanism, dialogue is practically impossible. Mutual efforts can only be established in the form of religious philosophy.
- The dialogic function of humanism can be more fully expressed in philosophy. However, this factor is exploited for political and ideological purposes, as various irreconcilable positions, opposing views, and jealous attitudes of philosophical schools and systems toward their own teachings persist. This was facilitated, for example, by the official status of Marxist-Leninist philosophy in Soviet times.
- Humanism, which the state attempts to implement at the level of politics and ideology. In the political and ideological mechanisms of a humanistic worldview, norms and pathologies are sometimes indistinguishable, their boundaries becoming blurred. From this

perspective, it's enough to compare the state ideologies of authoritarian and totalitarian regimes.

- Scientific humanism is relatively more tolerant and transparent as a function of value formation. However, extreme positivism and rational science, understood as "one truth for all," suppress many phenomena that constitute the totality of human existence. This reduces their significance to zero (recall the modern "cult of science").
- Literature and art also play a vital role as mechanisms of humanism. Sometimes, they describe the most perfect, democratic forms of humanism. Historically, literature has expressed and continues to express the general goal and tendency toward the humanization of individuals and society.
- Secular moral and ethical norms shape an individual's ability to make moral choices and apply moral sanctions. A combination of factors can ensure success in this area. If a democratic state fails to ensure societal solidarity and the humane nature of citizens' social relations, this does not mean that moral norms, like legal ones, are established.
- The fact that social communication is considered a social value and serves interpersonal dialogue is a sacred condition for every individual to live a full life. Because in a problematic and contradictory society, people see each other as guilty and rivals. Communication gives way to hatred and hostility. In such an atmosphere, the realization of humanism remains an illusion.

These nuances of humanistic self-expression of human existence have a long history. At various times, their balance has shifted, with one prevailing over the other. For example, in our time, secular humanism has almost completely replaced religious humanism in its scope. Culture, science, politics, ideology, and the spiritual sphere have unconditional priority and strive to realize humanistic potential. Religious humanism retains its influence at the individual and traditional level. Regardless of everything, regardless of anything, this tradition will exist to a greater or lesser extent in the future, as it always has. Especially in the era of modern transformations, in a period of socio-civilizational crisis, this tradition is acquiring extraordinary potential for revival.

All this demonstrates that dialogue between various forms of humanism is crucial. No one form of humanism can be considered absolute or superior to another. Otherwise, it would be more accurate to speak of the destruction of humanism. Because spirituality, as the foundation of human existence, has a sacred status, just like intellect, experience, culture, need, science, knowledge, and so on. So, what are we witnessing today?

Today, market fundamentalism, individualism, freedom, free competition, utilitarianism, pragmatism, etc., considered the values of liberal humanism, challenge all other values and

destroy the right to life. Liberal and neoliberal values, which emerged in the West, gained strength, and were deliberately spread throughout the world through ICT as one of the goals of globalization, have now completely exhausted their potential, plunging humanity into crisis. Seeing interactions with others not as friends but as rivals, not as the goal of communication but as a means of extracting benefits from others and advancing one's career—all this is liberalism's "contribution" to traditional humanism.

## Conclusion

The current stage of global civilization's development is accompanied by significant changes affecting not only social structures but also value systems. In these conditions, humanism remains relevant, but its content is gradually being rethought in light of new realities.

The influence of globalization, technological progress, and the digital environment leads to the fact that humanism is beginning to be viewed as a multidimensional phenomenon. It includes not only traditional ethical principles, but also issues related to technology, ecology, and social development. That is why the scientific community actively uses such concepts as new humanism, digital humanism, and neohumanism, reflecting the adaptation of humanistic ideas to modern conditions (Birich, Rogov, 2025; Sarracino, O'Connor, 2022). The issue of human relations and technology is of particular importance. The rapid development of artificial intelligence and digital systems reinforces the need to preserve the human dimension in social development. The focus is not so much on technological progress itself, but rather on its consequences for the individual and society. No less important is the role of humanism in fostering intercultural interaction. In a context of cultural diversity, it is humanistic values that create the foundation for dialogue, reducing tensions and fostering sustainable forms of cooperation.

Thus, humanism in the 21st century can be viewed as a dynamic value system evolving alongside society. Its further interpretation involves finding a balance between innovation and preserving the fundamental principles that ensure sustainable development and harmonious coexistence in a globalized world.

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