

**IUMW4005 - Ways of Thinking**  
**Lecturer: Kylie Boon**

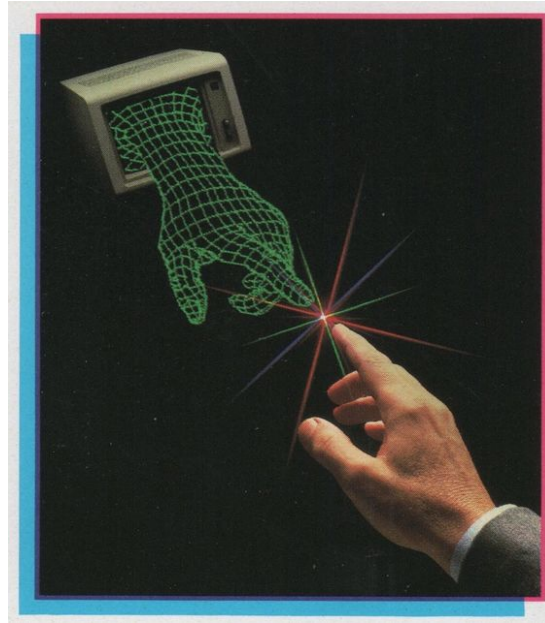


The contemporary human is a complex and multifaceted being. We are the product of millions of years of evolution, and we have inherited a wide range of physical, cognitive, and emotional traits (Bodley, 2012). We are also shaped by our culture and environment, and we are constantly evolving in response to new challenges and opportunities. According to Steven Pinker, an American psychologist in 2018, "The contemporary human is increasingly interconnected, both physically and virtually. We are facing a number of global challenges, such as climate change, poverty, and inequality. We are also experiencing a period of rapid technological change. The future of the contemporary human is uncertain, but it is full of potential."

One of the defining characteristics of the contemporary human is our ability to reason and problem-solve. We are capable of abstract thoughts, and we can use our knowledge to build tools, solve problems, and create new things (Wilcock, 1993). This ability has allowed us to thrive in a wide range of environments, and it has helped us to become the dominant species on Earth. Another important characteristic of contemporary humans is our capacity for language. Language allows us to communicate with each other, share information, and build relationships. It is also a powerful tool for creativity and expression. Through language, we have been able to create art, literature, and music that has enriched our lives in countless ways (Stanger and Walinga, 2019). In addition to our cognitive abilities, the contemporary human is also characterised by our emotional complexity. We are capable of a wide range of emotions, from love and joy to anger and sadness. These emotions play an important role in our lives, and they help us to connect with others, make decisions, and cope with challenges.

The contemporary human is also a social creature. We are hardwired to form relationships with others, and we thrive in close-knit communities. Our social interactions help us to learn, grow, and feel supported. They also give us a sense of belonging and purpose. In the 21st century, the contemporary human is facing a number of challenges. These include climate change, global inequality, and political instability. However, we also possess a number of strengths that would assist us in overcoming these challenges. Our ingenuity, our creativity, and our ability to cooperate with each other give us hope for the future. Joseph Campbell, an American mythologist and writer has mentioned that “The contemporary human is a being of great potential. We have the ability to shape our own destiny, and we can choose to use our powers for good or for evil. It is up to us to decide what kind of world we want to live in, and it is up to us to make the most of our time on this planet.”

The future of the contemporary human is uncertain, but it is full of potential. We are facing a number of challenges, but we also have a number of strengths. The way we choose to use our abilities will determine the future of our species. If we choose to use our powers for good, we can create a world that is more just, equitable, and sustainable. We can use our ingenuity to solve the problems that we face, and we can use our creativity to build a better future for all. However, if we opt to use our powers for evil, we can destroy ourselves and the planet. We can use our technology to create weapons of mass destruction, and we can use our power to oppress and exploit others. The choice is ours. We can either create a better future for ourselves and our planet, or we can destroy ourselves and everything we have built. The future of the contemporary human is up to us. At the end of the day, just like what Oprah Winfrey said in her book *What I Know for Sure*, “The contemporary human is a creature of spirit: we are connected to something larger than ourselves, and we find meaning and purpose in life. We are also a creature of love: we are capable of deep love and compassion, and we want to make the world a better place for everyone.”



Both humanism and posthumanism are schools of thought that examine the nature of mankind and its place in the world from a variety of distinct angles. The philosophical and ethical tradition known as humanism places an emphasis on the significance of human reason as well as human freedom and dignity. As Martha Nussbaum, an American philosopher mentioned in 2012, "Humanism is a way of life that is based on the belief in the power of human reason and the importance of human values.". In addition, in 2023, the International Humanist and Ethical Union made a statement similar to Martha', stating that "Humanism is a way of life that emphasises the importance of human reason and experience, and the potential for human beings to improve their own lives and the world around them." . On the other hand, posthumanism casts doubt on the conventional humanist view of the individual human being as an exceptional and self-sufficient being. Posthumanism, also considers the human to be only one component of a much bigger network that includes biological, technological, and environmental systems (Pramod, 2013).

The way in which humanism and posthumanism think about and interact with technology is one of the most significant distinctions between the two. The humanist perspective on technology is typically one that sees it as a tool that can be used to better the human condition. On the other hand, posthumanism takes a more pessimistic view of technology and argues that it has the potential to dehumanise and alienate people. For instance, there are post-humanists who believe that the use of artificial intelligence could one day result in the development of a new form of being that is more advanced than humans (Rosi, 2019). Rosi Braidotti in 2019, stated that "Posthumanism is about the blurring of the boundaries between humans and machines, between the natural and the artificial."

One more distinction that can be made between humanism and posthumanism is how each philosophy views the human body. The human body is typically viewed through the lens of humanism as a physical vessel that houses the human mind and soul. This viewpoint, however, is called into question by posthumanism, which contends that the human body is not merely a container but rather an active contributor to the formation of the self rather than merely a passive one. Some posthumanism, for instance, maintain that the use of prostheses enables humans to increase the capabilities of their bodies and bodies in general.

The argument between humanism and posthumanism is still under progress at this point. There are compelling points to be made in support of either position, and it is highly possible that this discussion will rage on for many more years to come. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that these two schools of thought present contrasting viewpoints regarding the character of humanity and the role it plays in the wider universe. The argument between humanism and posthumanism is a difficult one, and there is no straightforward solution to it. However, having this discussion is worthwhile because it compels us to critically consider the essence of humanity and the trajectory of its existence in the world. It is possible for us to have a deeper comprehension of who we are and where we stand in the world if we investigate the divergent viewpoints presented by humanism and posthumanism.



I am a real, breathing human being who was born in the 21st century. I am a member of a modern, globalised civilization that is becoming more interconnected and dependent on one another. I find myself surrounded by technology that is ever advancing and altering the way in which we live our lives. In light of this information, it is only logical to wonder: who am I? In a world that is so different from the one in which our ancestors lived, what does it mean to be human?

In response to this inquiry, the humanist perspective and the posthumanist perspective are the two primary schools of thought. A philosophical school known as humanism, according to the American Humanist Association, "Humanism is a progressive philosophy of life that, without supernaturalism, affirms our ability and responsibility to lead ethical lives of personal fulfillment that aspire to the greater good of humanity.". On the other hand, posthumanism, according to Max More, "Posthumanism is the belief that humans are not the end of evolution, but rather that we are evolving into something new and different.". Where do you see me fitting in, then? Should I consider myself a humanist or a posthumanist?

I believe the answer would be that I am a combination of the two. I consider myself to be a humanist because I place a high value on things like human dignity, human reason, and human freedom. I think that people have the potential to accomplish amazing things, and that we should all work together to make the world a better place. Nevertheless, I also consider myself to be a posthumanist since I feel that advances in technology are altering the way that people think about themselves and their place in the world. I feel that the lines between what it means to be human and what it means to be non-human are becoming increasingly difficult to differentiate as a direct result of our rising reliance on technology. Just like James Hughes mentioned in 2004, "Posthumanism is about the potential for human enhancement through technology, but it is also about the dangers of such enhancement.".

I believe that viewing me as a posthumanist humanist is the most effective method for gaining an understanding of who I am. Even while I feel that human values are extremely important, I also think that we need to be open to the changes that are being brought about by technological advancements. If we are prepared to think creatively and question established paradigms on what it means to be human, I believe that we will be able to build a better future not only for ourselves but also for our planet.

I have not completely resolved the questions of who I am and what I stand for at this point in time. However, I am certain that I am heading in the correct direction. My opinion is that individuals who are willing to think creatively and question the established order will be the ones to thrive in the years to come. If we are willing to accept the shifts that are being brought about by technological advancements, I believe that we will be able to make a better future not only for ourselves but also for our planet.

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