

OMPU3112

# PHILOSOPHY AND CURRENT ISSUES

SELF INSTRUCTIONAL  
MATERIALS  
ACADEMIC YEAR 2024

**FACULTY OF BUSINESS, HUMANITIES &  
HOSPITALITY**

**BACHELOR OF COMMERCE (HONS) IN  
INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS**

# Topic 8 ► Postmodern Relativism

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this topic, you will be able to:

1. Compare the perspectives of intellectuals and theologians on truth and knowledge.
2. Explain key modern ideologies and their philosophical foundations.
3. Analyze the characteristics and assumptions of postmodern ideology.
4. Evaluate the implications and challenges of postmodern relativism and propose possible solutions.

## ► INTRODUCTION

Postmodern relativism is a philosophical perspective that challenges the existence of absolute truth and universal knowledge. It argues that truth is not fixed but is shaped by cultural, social, and individual contexts. This perspective emerged as a response to modernist thinking, which emphasized reason, objectivity, and universal truths.

In contemporary society, debates about truth, knowledge, and values often involve contrasting viewpoints between intellectuals, who may rely on critical reasoning and empirical evidence, and theologians, who emphasize faith, revelation, and spiritual truths. These differing perspectives highlight the tension between objective and subjective understandings of reality.

Postmodern relativism has influenced various fields such as education, culture, politics, and media. While it promotes diversity of perspectives and critical thinking, it also raises concerns about moral uncertainty, lack of shared values, and challenges in distinguishing truth from falsehood.

This topic explores the development of modern and postmodern ideologies, compares intellectual and theological perspectives, and examines the implications and challenges of postmodern relativism in contemporary society.

## 8.1 INTELLECTUALS VS THEOLOGIANS

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### 8.1.1 Intellectual Perspectives on Truth and Knowledge

Intellectuals generally approach truth and knowledge through **reason, logic, and empirical evidence**. Their perspective is often influenced by modern philosophy, which emphasizes objectivity, scientific inquiry, and rational thinking.

Key characteristics include:

- Reliance on critical analysis and evidence
- Emphasis on objectivity and universality
- Openness to revision based on new information

 **Example:**

A scientist evaluates a claim based on data, experiments, and logical reasoning.

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### 8.1.2 Theological Perspectives on Truth and Knowledge

Theologians approach truth through **faith, revelation, and religious teachings**. Truth is often viewed as absolute and derived from divine sources.

Key characteristics include:

- Reliance on sacred texts and religious authority
- Emphasis on moral and spiritual truth
- Belief in absolute or universal truths

 **Example:**

A religious scholar interprets ethical issues based on teachings from sacred scriptures.

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### 8.1.3 Comparison and Tension

The differences between intellectual and theological perspectives create both dialogue and tension:

- Intellectuals emphasize **evidence and reason**
- Theologians emphasize **faith and divine guidance**

While these perspectives may appear conflicting, they can also complement each other by addressing different dimensions of human understanding—rational and spiritual.

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💡 **Understanding both perspectives allows for a more balanced view of truth and knowledge.**

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## 8.2 MODERN IDEOLOGY

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### 8.2.1 Characteristics of Modern Ideology

Modern ideology is rooted in Enlightenment thinking and emphasizes:

- **Rationality and reason**
- **Scientific progress**
- **Objective truth**
- **Universal principles**

It assumes that knowledge can be discovered through systematic inquiry and that progress is achievable through human effort.

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### 8.2.2 Influence of Modern Ideology

Modern ideology has contributed to:

- Advances in science and technology
- Development of democratic systems
- Emphasis on human rights and equality

#### 👉 **Example:**

Scientific advancements in medicine are based on modern principles of evidence and experimentation.

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💡 **Modern ideology promotes objective knowledge, progress, and rational thinking.**

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## 8.3 POSTMODERN IDEOLOGY

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### 8.3.1 Characteristics of Postmodern Ideology

Postmodern ideology challenges the assumptions of modernism by questioning the existence of universal truths.

Key features include:

- **Relativism** – truth varies across cultures and contexts
- **Skepticism** – doubt toward absolute knowledge
- **Pluralism** – acceptance of multiple perspectives

- **Critique of authority** – questioning established institutions and narratives

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### 8.3.2 Differences Between Modern and Postmodern Ideology

Modern Ideology	Postmodern Ideology
Belief in objective truth	Truth is relative
Emphasis on reason and science	Emphasis on interpretation and perspective
Universal principles	Multiple perspectives
Confidence in progress	Skepticism about progress

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### 8.3.3 Impact on Society

Postmodernism has influenced:

- Education (focus on multiple perspectives)
- Media (diverse narratives and interpretations)
- Culture (acceptance of diversity and identity)

#### **Example:**

Different interpretations of the same historical event reflect postmodern thinking.

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 **Postmodern ideology challenges certainty and encourages multiple perspectives.**

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## 8.4 IMPLICATIONS AND CHALLENGES OF POSTMODERN RELATIVISM

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### 8.4.1 Implications of Postmodern Relativism

- Encourages openness to diverse perspectives
  - Promotes tolerance and inclusivity
  - Challenges dominant narratives and power structures
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### 8.4.2 Challenges of Postmodern Relativism

- Difficulty in defining truth
- Risk of moral relativism (no clear right or wrong)
- Challenges in decision-making and policy-making
- Potential spread of misinformation

#### **Example:**

In social media, conflicting information can make it difficult to determine what is true.

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### 8.4.3 Possible Solutions

To address these challenges, individuals and societies can:

- Promote critical thinking and media literacy
- Balance openness with evidence-based reasoning
- Encourage ethical frameworks to guide decisions
- Integrate rational and moral perspectives

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 **Balancing diverse perspectives with critical thinking helps address the challenges of relativism.**

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#### SELF CHECK 8.1

Compare modern and postmodern ideologies, and evaluate the implications and challenges of postmodern relativism in contemporary society.

## ► CONCLUSION

In this topic, we learned that:

- postmodern relativism challenges the idea of absolute truth;
- intellectuals and theologians offer different perspectives on knowledge;
- modern ideology emphasizes reason, objectivity, and progress;
- postmodern ideology emphasizes relativism and multiple perspectives;
- postmodern relativism has both positive implications and significant challenges;
- critical thinking is essential in navigating diverse perspectives in modern society.