



ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

A Critical Review of the Components of Humanistic Spirituality in Emerging Spirituality-based Movements within the Postmodern Context

Hamid Moridian^{1*}, Hamzeh-Ali Islaminasab², Sayed Mohammad Tabatabaei³, Mohammed Benlankaddem⁴

1. * Department of Islamic Education, Faculty of Islamic Education, Farhangian University, Tehran, Iran. (Corresponding Author).
2. Department of Philosophy and Studies of Religions, Faculty of Philosophy and Studies of Religions, Al-Mustafa Open University, Qom, Iran. hamzeali_eslaminasab@miu.ac.ir
3. Department of the Quran and Hadith, Faculty of the Quran and Hadith, Al-Mustafa Open University, Qom, Iran. syedmohamad_tabatabaei@miu.ac.ir
4. Department of Arts and Humanities, Faculty of Arts and Humanities, Dhar El Mahraz, Fez, Morocco. mohammed.benlankaddem@usmba.ac.ma

ARTICLE INFO		ABSTRACT
<p>Article History: Received: 29 December 2024 Revised: 20 February 2025 Accepted: 25 March 2025</p> <hr/> <p>Key Words: Postmodern Spirituality Humanist Emerging Movements Human</p> <hr/> <p>DOI: https://doi.org/10.22034/imjpl.2025.11815</p> <hr/> <p>This is an open-access article under the CC BY license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).</p> <div style="text-align: center;"> </div>		<p>SUBJECT & OBJECTIVES: Contemporary emerging spirituality is derived from spirituality in postmodern conditions, moving beyond the era of modernity toward a form of spirituality without religion. Thus, the formation of contemporary emergent spirituality arises in response to the spiritual deficiencies of modernity, characterized by a pursuit of tranquility, accommodation to existing circumstances, and a stance of moral and political disengagement. This study aims to examine the critiques leveled against the elements of humanistic spirituality in newly emerging spiritual movements situated within the postmodern framework.</p> <p>METHOD & FINDING: Using qualitative content analysis, the components of humanistic spirituality in emerging spirituality-based movements within the postmodern context were extracted and subsequently subjected to critical analysis and review. The findings of the study indicate that one of the defining characteristics of this movement is humanism, according to which the human being is regarded as the measure of all things and the axis of the universe, standing in contrast to the various forms of theocentric religious thoughts.</p> <p>CONCLUSION: Prioritizing humanity and its desires over the primacy of God and His absolute will is a central consequence of humanistic spirituality, resulting in tendencies toward empiricism, pluralism, the pursuit of liberty, and individualism. Spiritual modernism is centered on a representation of the sacred in a different form, and the stress on religious experientialism is rooted in an inadequate or flawed understanding of God, the cosmos, and the human being. With the introduction of religious experience, the legitimacy of every religion and denomination becomes dependent on the personal experience of each individual, making religiosity a relative matter and replacing religious realism with religious relativism.</p>
<p>* Corresponding Author: Email: h.moridian@cfu.ac.ir ORCID: 0000-0002-7295-7766</p>		<p>Article Address Published on the Journal Site: http://p-l-journals.miu.ac.ir/article_11815.html</p>
<p>NUMBER OF REFERENCES 29</p>	<p>NUMBER OF AUTHORS 4</p>	<p>NATION'ALITY OF AUTHOR (Iran, Morocco)</p>

Introduction

Nowadays, newly emerging movements under the banner of spirituality have emerged in an attempt to address the spiritual needs of modern humanity. Accordingly, they seek to link the age of technology and modernity with the ancient traditions of humankind, offering a form of spirituality through which some of the pain and suffering caused by the crises of modernity may be alleviated, thereby providing greater fulfillment and inner peace for the wandering human of the present age.

This turmoil originates from the fact that, during the era of modernism, the modern human—who had devoted all physical and psychological capacities and desires to extracting the utmost benefit from the crowded and limited material world—eventually discovered that material tools and facilities could not adequately meet the fundamental spiritual needs, nor could they fill the void created by irreligion and godlessness. As a result, a form of disinterest and discouragement emerged, stemming from the fatigue and monotony of modern life. The modern human, while desiring many things, often could not attain them despite great effort; or, if attained, the desire for even more persisted (Mazāhirī Seif, 2008, p. 101).

Such conditions generated intense psychological and physical pressure, for which adherence to religion was

regarded as the only path to liberation. A solution had to be found for the problems inherent in this way of life.

In this context, the newly emerging movements and spirituality-oriented schools that arose in response to the spiritual voids of the modern era advanced the claim of introducing a new form of spirituality within modernity—one that was largely under the control of capitalist and power-seeking centers. Given the dangerous consequences of producing a populace that was sick, distressed, and rebellious—yet unbound by political discipline—there was a fear that this current might lead to the emergence of ideas opposed to the capitalist system and to the transformation of the existing order. Consequently, modern civilization, along with the power-hungry and hegemonic centers, was prompted to adopt a new strategy: the expansion of an emerging spirituality tailored to the atmosphere of the modern age.

Consequently, contemporary emerging spirituality movements have manifested in the form of diverse sects, encompassing a range of schools that gravitated toward forms of spirituality devoid of formal religion. Schools such as forms of spirituality inclined toward Buddhism, Hinduism, Taoism, Kabbalism, and Christian monasticism, all of which advocate a spirituality that encompasses tranquility, adaptation to prevailing conditions, and moral and

political indifference, focusing solely on inner peace and the liberation of human beings from the suffering of life (Hewitt, 2003, p. 45).

This study aimed to critically examine the components of humanistic spirituality in the postmodern era. While clarifying the conceptual framework of the discussion, it examines postmodern spirituality—which, by moving beyond modernity, has provided the grounds for the expansion of emerging forms of spirituality—and addresses the components of humanistic spirituality. Furthermore, by gaining a deeper understanding of this current, the study highlights the role of this perspective in influencing newly emerging spirituality movements.

Conceptual Framework

1. Postmodernism

Although the term "postmodern" lacks a clear and unanimous definition among its founders and interpreters, and as Akbar Ahmad notes, the definitions provided so far are ambiguous, multifaceted, fragmented, metaphorical, elliptical, and equivocal (Nozarī, 2009, p. 225), a general overview of major postmodernist works suggests that, broadly speaking, postmodernism is a reaction against the realities of the modern world that is not confined to a specific domain. The presence of deficiencies, shortcomings, contradictions, and conflicts between the aspirations of modernity and the realities of the

modern world has provoked a reaction to the existing transformations and instabilities. This reaction, when its various aspects are disregarded, is referred to as postmodernism, postmodernity, or the postmodern approach.

In summary, some argue that the primary feature of postmodernism is its critical, dissenting, and deconstructive reaction to modernity and modernism. The core and backdrop of these protests, critiques, and structural disruptions lie in the expectations that have arisen for humanity over the past centuries. Precisely at the moment when technology was approaching its maturity, it delivered such a blow to these beliefs and expectations that the social, philosophical, and artistic spheres were suddenly confronted with a fundamental crisis.

Anthony Giddens attributes the crises of modernity—such as world wars, severe environmental crises, emerging diseases, crises of meaning, spirituality, and identity, depression, social crises, class and racial conflicts, and the production of unconventional weapons—to a crisis arising from the failure to realize expectations and aspirations, despite comprehensive planning and the absence of human error (Giddens, 1998, p. 183). On the other hand, many regard postmodernism as a new phase or era in history. For instance, Charles Jencks argues that there is a specific historical moment marking the

beginning of postmodernism and the transition from modernity: "Precisely at 3:32 PM on July 15, 1972, with the sudden death of modernism in architecture, postmodernism in architecture emerged" (Nozarī, 2009, p. 95).

There are many adherents to this view, and this forms the basis of the general belief, as it is often heard that "humanity has moved beyond the modernist era and entered the postmodern age." Drawing on the ideas of French philosopher Jean-François Lyotard, the response is that postmodernism represents a "new condition" within modernity. Lyotard regards postmodernity as a manifestation of modernity: "Now, only that which is postmodern can be considered modern. Postmodernism is not the end or culmination of modernism, but modernism in its nascent form" (Nozarī, 2009, p. 15).

Influenced by thinkers such as Marx, Freud, Lacan, Nietzsche, and Heidegger, Lyotard elucidates the concept of postmodernism as it pertains to the fields of philosophy and sociology in his work *The Postmodern Condition*.

Another group argues that, upon brief reflection, it becomes clear that postmodernism is not in itself a distinct historical period, nor merely a phase of intensified aspects of modernity. What is most evident, however, is that postmodernism represents a condition of modernity concerned with the

emergence, deepening, and growing intolerance of modernity's crises. Steinarkwal observes that much debate still exists as to whether postmodernity should be regarded as a rupture from modernity or as its continuation. Postmodern writers tend to present history in such a way that their ideas and perspectives appear remarkably novel and original (Nozarī, 2009, p. 62).

2. Spirituality

In the postmodern era, spirituality is no longer produced solely through traditional religions; rather, it is possible to be spiritual without adhering to any specific faith. Sandra Schneiders defines spirituality as a dimension of humanity concerned with virtue, which disposes the individual toward achieving a transcendent unity with ultimate truth. This ultimate truth may be understood by the seeker in whatever form is meaningful to them at a given moment. In this sense, every human being has the potential for spirituality or for being spiritual (Schneiders, 1993, p. 11).

For some, the term signals a shift from the phenomenological study of religion toward a new approach that emphasizes inwardness and personal experience—standing in contrast to detached outward objectivity—and focuses on the spirit of religion rather than its external form. In this light, a renewed emphasis on religious experience has come to replace

traditional spiritual theology, affirming the possibility of spirituality even within secular societies.

Within the postmodern framework, the concept of spirituality is thus applied across a wide spectrum of religious and non-religious traditions. While spirituality was once regarded as an aspect of religion, it is now seen as merely one among several possible spiritual paths. In the past, it was understood as a means of achieving a deep union with God; today, however, for many, God is no longer the sole aim of their spiritual quest, but rather one of many possible avenues toward connection with various transcendent realities. Consequently, spirituality has evolved into a broad symbolic term denoting humanity's pursuit of direction, meaning, and transcendence. Given this plurality and diversity, spirituality and the search for meaning now carry a range of interpretations shaped by different philosophies, schools of thought, and approaches.

The human-based nature of emerging spiritual movements entails the removal of God as the ultimate aim and destination of inner journeys. In the teachings of many non-religious spiritual sects, there is no mention of God or movement toward Him; instead, the goal is to unlock latent human capacities, find peace, heal suffering, and liberate oneself from external and internal afflictions,

replacing them with joy (Ananda). According to their claims, such aims can be attained without belief in God or prophets, solely by turning inward and seeking refuge within oneself.

3. Anthropocentric Thought (Humanism)

Humanism, rather than being merely a school of thought, is a pervasive perspective that has taken root in numerous ideas, theories, and intellectual movements, influencing major global arenas such as culture, economy, ethics, and politics. The scope of meaning in humanism is so broad that it has consistently remained at the center of modern world discourse and, in various forms, has continued to draw attention in the postmodern era (Bayāt, 2011, p. 43). Historically, humanism dates back to the culture of ancient Greece and cannot be confined solely to the modern era or the Renaissance movement. This intellectual current has, over time, gradually penetrated all spheres of life, placing the human personality and its full development above all else, granting humanity a special status, and considering humans the measure of all things.

If we regard the pinnacle of the humanist movement as the enlightenment of the modern era, humanism may be defined as a worldview in which the human being is considered the measure of all things and the center of the universe, standing in direct contrast to various theocentric

religious perspectives. This way of thinking acts as a spirit animating emerging spiritualities, casting its shadow over all discussions in this field; with the human at the center, it accommodates every kind of perspective (Sarbakshī, 2009, p. 238).

Within new spiritualities, humanism—infused with a spiritual dimension—is presented as a substitute for disillusioning theologies and harmful ideologies. Embracing humanism is claimed to replace despair, prejudice, and blind faith with optimism, hope, truth-seeking, tolerance, patience, love, and beauty.

Literature Review

A number of academic studies have been conducted on the topic of the present paper. Below, a selection of these works is provided by way of example, followed by an explanation of how this article differs from them:

1. In the article *A Critique of Postmodern Mysticism* by Ḥamīd Riḍā Mazāhirī Seif (2005), the foundations of postmodernism—namely Hinduism, Buddhism, humanism, and secularism—are subjected to critical examination. In contrast, this study focuses specifically on the components of humanistic spirituality within the framework of postmodern emerging spiritual movements, namely individualism, libertarianism, and experientialism. In essence, this
- research offers an analytical and critical exploration of the components of one of those foundations—humanism.
2. The article *Postmodern Mysticism and Islamic Mysticism: Differences and Approaches* by Mirjalil Akrami et al (2007) addresses the following five main themes:
 - The objectives of postmodern and Islamic mysticism;
 - The status of God and the human being in postmodern and Islamic mysticism;
 - The role of religion and Sharia in postmodern and Islamic mysticism;
 - The strategies of Islamic and postmodern mysticism in engaging with systems of domination;
 - Nihilism versus truth-seeking in postmodern and Islamic mysticism.

While the article does reference humanism, this study offers an analytical and critical investigation of the components of humanistic spirituality in emerging spiritual movements within the postmodern context.

Components of Humanistic Spirituality

The humanistic spirit constitutes the common denominator in emerging spiritualities, in which the human being is placed at the center of all things. This perspective situates humanity in a position where everything must serve human purposes. It regards the path to human transcendence and flourishing

as attainable solely through empirical methods and reliance on autonomous reason—enabling the individual to dominate and master the surrounding world, rendering it pleasing and compliant to their will (Āzarnang, 1997, p. 534).

Within this framework, the spiritual human assumes a divine status, implying the belief that everything exists to serve humanity, while humanity serves no other being. Such a view stems from an excessive and unrestrained emphasis on human dignity and worth, disregarding human limitations and shortcomings, and ultimately positioning humanity in place of God. This outlook yields outcomes such as individualism, experientialism, freedom-seeking, and pluralism—identified as the core components of humanism (Rajabī, 2001, pp. 46–49). In the following, the first three components will be clarified and examined within the postmodern context of emerging spiritual movements:

1. Individualism

In this component, humanism is expressed in the form of individualism, in which rationalism and reliance on human individuality are regarded as the origin and foundation of thought—an idea epitomized in Descartes' famous dictum, "I think, therefore I am" (*Cogito ergo sum*). This interpretation of individualism, however, is rooted in the

modernist conception of the human being. From this perspective, the interests, desires, and benefits of the individual constitute the standard for all things, and personal reason and intellect are considered the essential and autonomous pillars of human perfection and well-being. Within this framework, the individual is viewed as more real and fundamental than society, social institutions, and structures, and is accorded a higher moral and legal status than the collective (Kant, 1991, p. 153). Accordingly, the desires, aims, and achievements of the individual are prioritized in all respects over the interests of society.

This conception of individualism represents an interpretation of humanism that has prevailed over its collectivist readings (Arbilastar, 1989, pp. 19–20). In this view, everything exists not merely to serve humanity in general, but to serve the individual in particular—meaning that individual desires and interests take precedence over those of the collective and cannot be curtailed for the sake of communal benefit. Adhering to the primacy of the individual over society yields consequences such as the ethical neutralization of worldly realities, the relativization, individualization, and self-foundation of values, moral neutrality and pluralism, the commodification of human relationships, libertarianism, and egalitarianism. The detrimental effects of individualism can be observed in various

spheres, most notably in the domains of values and ethics, as well as religion.

Since postmodernism is interpreted as an advanced stage of modernism—one in which the core processes of modernity are further extended—individualism within postmodernism is likewise understood in its more developed form. The most significant transformation of this evolution can be seen in the emergence of a culture grounded in an excessively expressive yet superficial subjectivity, whose sole guiding principle is “self-actualization” (Hamīdīyeh, 2012, p. 172).

Furthermore, Paul Heelas argues that, through the cultural turn, modern individualism has been transformed into the postmodern form of “subjective-life spirituality,” in which individuals not only regard the discovery of truth as a personal matter but also fabricate truths themselves according to personal tastes. He designates this view as “subjective-life spirituality” (Heelas et al., 2005, pp. 1–11).

The following hints deal with the examination of the above-mentioned component through a critical analysis:

1. Advocates of emerging spiritualities seek to replace faith-based religion with a self-centered form of spirituality rooted in individualism. This approach, however, has led to a crisis of both spirituality and ethics in contemporary society. With the rise of relativism and the elevation of the individual as the ultimate

criterion—both intrinsic to postmodern thought—transcendent values and human virtues are gradually eroded, leading to the moral downfall of humanity and leaving no foundation for its genuine perfection. Individualistic notions, far from leading to the ideal human condition—as understood in emerging spiritualities, where the highest stage of humanity is defined by the fulfillment of personal desires—ultimately result in the enslavement of the self. Consequently, spirituality is regarded primarily as a matter of personal responsibility shaped by individual preferences, with God and spiritual mentors reduced to the role of mere advisors rather than true guides (Fā'ālī, 2010, p. 144).

2. Based on the foregoing account of individualism, this tendency reaches its zenith in contemporary emerging spiritualities, wherein all choices are determined according to personal desires and preferences. In this framework, religion and spirituality are construed as entirely private matters, and one's relationship with God is considered part of the individual's personal domain. Under the pretext of safeguarding individual freedom, each person is entitled to hold any belief and to act upon it. Consequently, mutual respect for divergent beliefs is deemed

obligatory; otherwise, the imposition of any belief is regarded as an infringement and a threat to personal liberty. In this paradigm, even God is denied entry into this private sphere, wherein the individual's own decision reigns supreme.

3. According to Paul Heelas's theory of "*inner spirituality*", the central point—corroborated by empirical studies, particularly the findings of the Kendal Project—is that religiosity in industrial societies is shifting toward *inward-oriented religiosity*, namely, turning inward to discover or even construct truth. This inward religiosity is what is referred to as spirituality. This perspective implies that the pattern and model of religiosity are no longer grounded in divine revelation and the Word of God, as the revealed message to prophets transmitted through religious tradition. Instead, God is conceived as an immanent presence, akin to the energy of existence, oxygen in the air, or phenomena such as time and motion, and thus no longer capable of communicating through revelation. In place of revelation, each person is expected to establish a connection with God through introspection and heeding the inner voice. What exists as revelation or sacred scripture is regarded merely as historically conditioned interpretations shaped by the culture of their time. *Inner spirituality*, as the outcome of

legitimizing freedom of conscience, upholds individual understanding, experience, and personal preference as the ultimate criterion of validity. When such freedom of understanding and conscience is combined with social and cultural liberties, it permeates and transforms all layers of culture (Shākernejād, 2015, p.119).

2. Freedom

One of the fundamental beliefs rooted in humanistic and anthropocentric thought is the pursuit of freedom from any constraints that limit human beings, with religious teachings counted among the most significant of such restrictions. In emerging spirituality, freedom is regarded as a key attribute of the ideal human. From this perspective, an ideal human can employ his or her freedom to secure material interests and fulfill personal needs. What characterizes emerging spirituality is its emphasis on boundless human freedom, wherein individuals experience freedom within nature and society autonomously, without reliance on anything else to shape their surroundings or to bring about change and improvement in their lives. This view entails that human beings, driven by self-love and other base desires, are unwilling to accept the notion of human freedom as framed by religious teachings and their derived moral values. Instead, they endeavor to evade it by every possible means, turning instead to a

religion woven by the mind and arising from egocentric passions.

This pursuit of freedom extends to the point where moral values themselves are called into question, and human beings regard themselves as the arbiter of all values, perceiving adherence to religious values as incompatible with their own freedom and desires. Consequently, by legitimizing what is socially prohibited, individuals feel free to engage in any action they wish, disregarding social norms. In doing so, they subsume everything under the category of the permissible and strive for the utmost degree of human freedom (Khaṭībī Kūshkak & Negāresh, 2006, p. 55). This line of thought—aligned with humanistic, liberal, and secularist ideologies—is today vigorously promoted by prominent figures of emerging spirituality, such as Paulo Coelho, Osho, the Dalai Lama, Falun Dafa, etc. For example, Osho maintains that the attainment of truth depends on a person doing whatever they wish, without regard for the consequences. For him, it is irrelevant what others say or want; what matters is what the self desires (Osho, 2006, p. 99).

The following hints deal with the examination of the above-mentioned component through a critical analysis:

1. From a humanistic and anthropocentric standpoint, human beings are regarded exclusively as rights-bearing and demand-making

entities, rather than as obligated and responsible moral agents. Within this framework, the categories of good and bad are rendered irrelevant; what matters is whatever brings pleasure and plays a decisive role in achieving human fulfillment. In emerging spirituality, this conception of humanity constructs an ideal in which individuals are continually encouraged to make ever-greater claims over their possessions and freedoms, to misuse their liberties, and to exclude any moral consideration of right and wrong from the very “process of desire.”

2. In emerging spirituality, lust is propagated under the guise of mysticism and spirituality in place of genuine love. This assertion can be traced within the discourse of the proponents of such spirituality. For instance, in Coelho’s works, sexual relations are portrayed as the pinnacle of love and the foremost path to attaining lofty spiritual states, to the point that acquaintance with sexual energy is presented as the sole gateway to profound mystical secrets (Coelho, 2005, p.203). By contrast, an authentic spiritual tradition must distinguish between impure and pure love, elucidate the sanctification of love, and channel the immense power of love toward the reality of true love rather than toward unrestrained and immoral carnal passion.

3. Robert Wuthnow, in an analysis of recent decades' social conditions and the activities of civil and social freedom movements, concludes that new spirituality has taken shape under the influence of postmodern freedom movements. These movements not only attach importance to individual freedom of choice but also go beyond it, advocating freedom of conscience and the possibility of creating one's own alternatives alongside existing ones. According to this theory, spirituality represents a form of religiosity that grants individuals the liberty not merely to select their religion, but also to construct one based on their personal understanding, experience, and inclinations (Wuthnow, 1998, p. 94).

3. Experientialism

One of the central themes in emerging spiritualities is the concept of "religious experience." This is generally defined as a form of "encounter" or "immediate awareness" that entails a spiritual approach and an inner consciousness of a particular subject or state. In this framework, religious concepts and approaches are grounded in sensory impressions and inputs to the extent that religion, revelation, and faith are reduced to mere inner experiences. Consequently, religion is confined to a purely personal sentiment, limited to one's own emotions and internal experiences. This development stems

from the exclusion of reason and rational argumentation from discussions on religion; as reason is diminished, religion becomes an inward, individual, and emotive matter (Kosrowpanah, 2000, p. 173).

For instance, Coelho, instead of employing the notion of faith in discussions of religion and metaphysics, refers to "experience," which he characterizes as a feeling related to sensory phenomena. In his view, true faith is not merely the belief in or acceptance of metaphysical matters, but rather something that an individual directly experiences. From this perspective, God is nothing more than a kind of experience; consequently, God differs for each person, resulting in as many conceptions of God as there are individuals. He elaborated, "For me, God is only a faith experience—nothing more. I believe that attempting to describe God is a trap. During a lecture, someone posed this question, and I responded, 'I do not know. God is not the same for me as He is for you,'" upon which the audience applauded for an extended period (Coelho, 2000, pp. 44–45).

The following hints deal with the examination of the above-mentioned component through a critical analysis:

1. In the conception of spiritual sentiment promoted in emerging spirituality, religious devotion and adherence to doctrinal authority are diminished, giving rise to a form of spiritual self-centeredness. This

- phenomenon is well recognized in the domain of new religions and contemporary spiritual movements, and is often described as personal religion (Encyclopedia of New Religious Movements). Personal religion denotes a mode of religiosity and spiritual living in which the individual, disregarding any external criteria, pursues a spiritual path solely through personal inclinations, emotions, and inner experiences. Within this paradigm, traditional religious standards lose their legitimacy, religious scholars are perceived as impediments, and the individual is expected to discover their own spiritual gift.
2. The form of spiritual modernism currently referred to as "New Spiritualities of Life" or "New Religious Movements" is characterized by a distinctive rearticulation of the sacred. This spirituality is thus non-ideological and experiential in orientation, with its discourse centering on liberation from suffering—a goal framed in non-religious terms. Devotional submission is minimized, and the individual is regarded as entirely autonomous. In other words, when a person encounters a supernatural phenomenon, the defining feature of this engagement is the subjective inner experience, particularly when the individual seeks, through deliberate effort, to align their life with the supernatural (McCormick, 2004, p. 22).
 3. The emphasis on religious experientialism arises from a distorted understanding of God, the world, and humankind. Furthermore, the inconsistency of many religious doctrines and propositions with reason and logic has reinforced experiential and emotional tendencies, as well as pragmatic and utilitarian orientations. This trend has consequently undermined the rational and argumentative dimensions of religion.
 4. Once religious experience is placed at the center, the legitimacy of any religion or denomination becomes contingent upon the personal experience of each individual. This renders the criteria for religiosity relative, replacing religious realism with religious relativism, and paving the way for religious pluralism, which maintains that multiple religions embody different truths. In this view, religious experience is regarded as the primary basis for claims of truth. Advocates of this approach consider the essence of all religions to be a single reality, encased within distinct cultural "shells" specific to each tradition. This, they argue, accounts for the multiplicity of religions—though there remains substantial disagreement over what precisely

constitutes that essence (F'ālī, 2004, pp. 142–153).

5. Some intellectuals have sought to offer a new reading of religion in which faith is interpreted as a form of inner experience. However, such an experientialist understanding of faith and religion is untenable and inaccurate, for the very origins of religious experience in the West differ fundamentally from the concept of faith in the Islamic tradition. In Islam, the roots of faith go back to the Quran; in contrast, in the West, the rejection of revealed theology led, in an effort to safeguard spirituality, to a turn toward religious and mystical experience. In the Christian context, the notion of religious experience emerged in the wake of biblical criticism, and proponents advanced this theory as a way of shielding the Bible from damage and critique. Hence, faith possesses a heavenly orientation, whereas religious experience adopts a critical and earthly orientation—a distinction of considerable significance.
6. The first step on the path to spirituality is the attainment of sound, truth-conforming knowledge—knowledge that guides a person toward the Source of existence. The second step of spirituality in Islam consists of specific practices set within a divinely ordained program,

revealed in accordance with the latest conditions of humanity and, more specifically, humanity's immersion in the material realm. Within the Islamic religious framework, one must follow this divinely prescribed program; any alteration constitutes a departure from it and amounts to self-centeredness and opposition to the Creator. There is, in essence, no difference between the self-centeredness characteristic of the modern and postmodern eras and idolatry. From this perspective, the postmodern emphasis on personal theorizing amounts to nothing more than a crude and counterfeit form of spirituality (Loft-Abādī, 2005, pp. 264–267).

Conclusion

Within the postmodern context, emergent spirituality—by attending to the desires, diverse pleasures, and endless gratifications of contemporary humanity—locates spirituality in the satisfaction of inner inclinations and aspirations. On this basis, all values are determined by human judgment, leaving no place for divine faith. In this human-centered framework, God and obedience to Him recede from view, and the focus shifts instead to inner desires and carnal appetites. While this outlook claims to promote human centrality and complete self-realization, it seeks them through fleeting whims and passions that yield nothing but decline and ruin. Thus, the measure of all things becomes human

desire, and God is reduced to the status of a mental construct.

This perspective elevates human beings and their desires over the primacy of God and His absolute will, holding the attainment of the greatest worldly good to be the highest human aim. It strives to exclude all forms of metaphysical, revelatory, or divinely grounded thought, regarding such conceptions as the greatest obstacles to human values. Such an orientation arises from an excessive and unbounded emphasis on human dignity that ignores human deficiencies and limitations, effectively placing the self in the position of God—so much so that self-deification comes to supplant even humanism itself.

Accordingly, postmodern mysticism, with its anthropocentric and God-averse orientation, is directed solely toward material and worldly ends. Among its chief objectives are filling the spiritual void of the modern individual estranged from divine religions and aiding in the recovery of both physical and psychological capacities.

Acknowledgment

This article is derived from a Ph.D. Thesis entitled '*A Critical Review of the Components of Humanistic Spirituality in Emerging Spirituality-based Movements within the Postmodern Context.*' I would like to thank the supervisor, Mr. Dr. Ahmad

Hossein Sharifi, and the advisor, Dr. Hossein Tavasoli, for their contribution to the enrichment of this article, as well as to the reviewers of the International Multidisciplinary Journal of Pure Life (IMJPL) for directing me to valuable points.

Funding

No financial support was received for the research, writing, and/or publication of this article.

Author Contributions

The corresponding author took the lead in writing the article, overseeing tasks such as data analysis, preparation, organization, and editing. The second author refined and edited the final version of the article for narrative consistency. The third and fourth authors also supervised the data analysis process and edited specific sections of the article.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this manuscript.

Negative AI Statement

The author(s) declare that no AI tools or services were used or heavily applied during the preparation of this work.

OPEN ACCESS

©2025 The author(s). This article is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License, which permits use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license, and indicate if changes were made. The images or other third-party material in this article are included in the article's Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the article's Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder. To view a copy of this license, visit:

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

References

- Akrami, M. J., & Abedi, M. (2007). 'Irfān-e Post-Modern va 'Irfān-e Eslāmī; Tafāvohā va Rūykardhā [*Postmodern and Islamic Mysticism: Differences and Approaches*]. *Researches on Mystical Literature*, 1(4), 61-90.
- Arblaster, A. (1989). *Zuhūr va Suqūt-i Librālīsm-i Gharb* [The Rise and Fall of Western Liberalism] ('A. Mokhbar, Trans.). Nashr Markaz.
- Āzarnang, 'A. (1997). *Modernīteh, Postmodernīteh va Tamaddon-i gharb* [Modernity, postmodernity, and Western civilization]. Negāh-e Now.
- Bayāt, 'A. (2011). *Darāmadī bar Makātīb va Andīshehā-ye Mo'āṣer (Farhang-e Vāzhehā)* [An Introduction to Contemporary Schools and Thoughts: A Glossary]. Mo'assaseh-ye Andīsheh.
- Coelho, P. (2000). *Confessions of a pilgrim: Juan Arias in conversation with Paulo Coelho* (D. Ghahreman, Trans.). Behjat. [In Persian]
- Coelho, P. (2005). *Brida* (A. Hejazi & B. Jafari, Trans.; 8th ed.). Karavan Publishing. [In Persian]
- F'ālī, M. T. (2004). *Tajrobeh-ye Dīnī va Mokāshafeh-ye 'Erfānī* [Religious Experience and Mystical Revelation]. Research Institute for Islamic Culture and Thought.
- F'ālī, M. T. (2010). *Āftāb va Sāyeh-hā: Negareshi bar Jaryān-hā-ye Nowzohūr-e Ma'navīyat-garā* [The Sun and the Shadows: A Review of Emerging Spirituality Movements]. Nashr-e 'Ābed.
- Giddens, A. (1998). *The Consequences of Modernity* (M. Salasi, Trans.). Nashr Markaz. [In Persian]
- Hamīdiyeh, B. (2012). *Ma'navīyat dar Sabad-e Mašraf* [Spirituality in the Consumption Basket]. Research Institute for Islamic Culture and Thought.
- Heelas, P., Woodhead, L., Seel, B., Tusting, K., & Szerszynski, B. (2005). *The Spiritual Revolution: Why Religion is Giving Way to Spirituality*. Blackwell.
- Hewitt, J. (2003). *Ārāmīsh va medītāsyon* [Relaxation and Meditation] (R. Jamalian, Trans.). Bitā. [In Persian]
- Kant, I. (1991). *Tamhīdāt* [Prolegomena] ((G. Haddad Adel, Trans.). Markaz Nashr-e Daneshgahi. [In Persian]
- Khaṭībī Kūshkak, M. & Negāresh, H. (2006). *Farhang-e Shi'a* [Shi'a Culture]. Zamzam-e Hedayat.
- Ḳosrowpanah, 'A. (2000). *Kalām-e Jadīd* [New Theology]. Islamic Development Organization.
- Loft-Abādī, H. (1384 [2005]). *Mabānī-ye Nazarī-ye Meqyās-hā-ye Dīnī* [Theoretical Foundations of Religious Scales]. Research Institute of Hawzah and University.
- Mazāhirī Seif, H. R. (2005). *Naqd-e 'Erfān-e Postmodern* [Critique of Postmodern Mysticism]. *Ketab-e Naqd (Book of Critique)*, 7(35).
- Mazāhirī Saif, H. R. (2008). *Jaryān-Shenāsi-ye Enteqādi-ye Erfān-hā-ye Nowzohur* [Critical Typology of Emerging Mysticisms]. Research Institute for Islamic Sciences and Culture.
- McCormick, D. & Rastgār, A. (2004). *Ma'navīyyat va Modīriyat* [Spirituality and Management]. *Seven Heavens*, 6(22), 179-192.
- Nozarī, H. A. (2009). *Postmodernīteh va Postmodernīsm: Ta'ārīf, Nazariyeh-hā va Kārbord-hā* [Postmodernity and Postmodernism: Definitions, Theories, and Applications]. Naqsh-e Jahān.
- Osho. (2006). *I Teach Courage* (M. Pezeshkī, Trans.). Houdīn. [In Persian]

- Rajabī, M. (2001). *Ensān Shenāsī* [Anthropology] (3rd ed.). The Imam Khomeini Education and Research Institute.
- Sarbakshī, M. (2009). *Akhlaq-e Sekular* [Secular ethics]. The Imam Khomeini Education and Research Institute.
- Schneiders, S. (1993). Spirituality as Anacademic Discipline. *Christian Spirituality Bulletin*, 1(2).
- Shākernejād, A. (2015). Ravāj-e Ma‘navīyat: Rūy-gardānī az Dīn yā Bāzgasht be Dīn? [Popularity of ‘Spirituality’: Ditching Religion or Turning to it?]. *Eslam and Social Studies*, 3(1), 95-122.
- Wuthnow, R. (1998). The New Spiritual Freedom. In *Cults and New Religious Movements*. Wiley–Blackwell.

AUTHOR BIOSKETCHES

Moridian, Hamid. *Department of Islamic Education, Faculty of Islamic Education, Farhangian University, Tehran, Iran.*

✓ Email: h.moridian@cfu.ac.ir

✓ ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7295-7766>

Islaminasab, Hamzeh-Ali. *Department of Philosophy and Studies of Religions, Faculty of Philosophy and Studies of Religions, Al-Mustafa Open University, Qom, Iran.*

✓ Email: hamzeali_eslaminasab@miu.ac.ir

✓ ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7295-2997>

Tabatabaei, Sayed Mohammad. *Department of the Quran and Hadith, Faculty of the Quran and Hadith, Al-Mustafa Open University, Qom, Iran.*

✓ Email: syedmohamad_tabatabaei@miu.ac.ir

✓ ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2810-4154>

Benlamkaddem, Mohammed. *Department of Arts and Humanities, Faculty of Arts and Humanities, Dhar El Mahraz, Fez, Morocco.*

✓ Email: mohammed.benlamkaddem@usmba.ac.ma

✓ ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6278-1808>

CITE THIS ARTICLE

Moridian, H., Islaminasab, H. A., Tabatabaei, S. M., & Benlamkaddem, M. (2025). A Critical Review of the Components of Humanistic Spirituality in Emerging Spirituality-based Movements within the Postmodern Context. *International Multidisciplinary Journal of Pure Life (IMJPL)*, 12(43), 85-102.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.22034/imjpl.2025.11815>

URL: http://p-l.journals.miu.ac.ir/article_11815.html