

Paper: “L’éthique de l’humanisme moderne occidental : le « deuxième péché originel »”

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Peer review:

Reviewer 1: El Abboubi Zineb
Chouaib Doukkali University, Morocco

Reviewer 2: Blinded

Reviewer 3: Blinded

ESJ Manuscript Evaluation Form 2025

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Reviewer Name: Zineb El Abboubi	
University/Country: Chouaib Doukkali University, Morocco	
Date Manuscript Received: 13/03/2025	Date Review Report Submitted: 18/03/2025
Manuscript Title: L'éthique de l'humanisme moderne occidental : le « deuxième péché originel »	
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Evaluation Criteria:

Please give each evaluation item a numeric rating on a 5-point scale, along with a thorough explanation for each point rating.

Questions	Rating Result [Poor] 1-5 [Excellent]
1. The title is clear and it is adequate to the content of the article.	2
<i>(Please insert your comments)</i> The title could benefit from being more precise to immediately indicate what the specific focus of the study is. The phrase “: le « deuxième péché originel »” is metaphorical and intriguing, it could grab attention, but it may not immediately convey the precise argument of the manuscript to all readers. Consider adding a clarifying subtitle that specifies whether the paper is primarily a philosophical critique, theological analysis, or socio-historical exploration. An example would be: L'éthique de l'humanisme moderne occidental : Une relecture critique du «	

deuxième péché originel ». The aim would be to offer a better contextualization of the approach you are using for the study and to avoid any confusion and ambiguity.

2. The abstract presents objects, methods, and results.

3

(Please insert your comments)

The abstract outlines the topic, the problem statements and some other main arguments. However, it fails to provide a detailed breakdown of the methods used as well as the findings of the study in a structured manner. It indicates certain hypotheses that are not coherent. The abstract lacks certain elements, such as the aim and scope of the study, the methodology used, which approach was adopted? Will the study focus on theological, historical, or philosophical approaches? What sources will be examined and which ones are used to support the central thesis? Additionally, it should be able to highlight the key conclusions and findings with a line or two that discuss the relevance and implications of this study.

The abstract states that study "draws on the rich bibliography of the critique of modernity," « en puisant dans la riche bibliographie de la critique de la modernité, que cette éthique révolutionnaire porte en elle-même les germes de sa propre destruction. », but it does not specify the framework used to do so. Is it a comparative method ? Discourse analysis ? A philosophical critical discourse analysis? Adding a sentence on the methodology of research would offer more nuance and clarity to this abstract.

The sentence « cette éthique révolutionnaire porte en elle-même les germes de sa propre destruction » is strong but needs additional evidence. How does it lead to its own destruction ? The argument should be briefly explained and backed up to make this claim stronger.

The abstract suggests a parallel in the relationship between original sin and modernity with little to no theoretical justification. Mentioning certain mechanisms briefly like rationalism, secularization and so on could make the suggestion stronger.

3. There are a few grammatical errors and spelling mistakes in this article.

4

(Please insert your comments)

The text is generally well written, but a few minor typographical errors are present. For example, in the excerpt:

« À ses yeux, la modernité, par le biais de son éthique individualiste et laïque, a ouvert une ère de promotion et de défense des libertés et droits individuels acquis de hautes luttes et garantis par la loi. » « ...*acquis de haute lutte*... » (l'expression correcte est "de haute lutte")

Some agreement errors can be found in certain places. For example: « La modernité ambitionne de redonner à l'homme toute sa dignité d'être libre et rationnel. C'est minorité, de ce que Comte appelle l'état métaphysique du processus de développement de l'esprit humain, où l'homme, encore immature, confiait son destin à des forces supérieures. »

« ...où l'homme, encore immature, confiait son destin à des forces supérieures. » (la concordance des temps entre "définit" et "confiait" est discutable : "confiait" pourrait être remplacé par "confie" pour plus de cohérence).

Some sentences are long and complex, which hinders fluency.

« *Déjà, à l'aube de la révolution française, période charnière dans la mise en œuvre des idéaux de la modernité, des voix se sont élevées pour mettre en garde contre le danger de la pensée révolutionnaire qui a balayé toute la sagesse inhérente à la tradition.* »

Proposition de simplification : « *Dès la Révolution française, période clé de la modernité, certains ont mis en garde contre le danger d'une pensée révolutionnaire rejetant la sagesse traditionnelle.* »

The text maintains an academic tone and is well-structured, adhering to academic norms. However, some passages are overly dense, which can make the reading process somewhat laborious. Additionally, there is frequent use of lengthy quotations. It would be beneficial to analyze these quotations more thoroughly to avoid creating an impression of merely compiling sources without providing meaningful interpretation or perspective. The tone is formal, but some phrasing could be simplified for greater clarity.

« *Ce travail porte un regard critique sur l'orientation éthique du projet de la modernité occidentale.* » a smoother alternative would be: « *Cette étude examine l'orientation éthique du projet de la modernité occidentale.* »

The text occasionally alternates between argumentation and assertion. It would be beneficial to further clarify certain logical connections. For instance, in the transition between the critique of modern rationalism and its assimilation to the "original sin," it would be appropriate to introduce clearer logical markers to enhance the coherence and transparency of the reasoning.

To enhance readability and clarity, it would be beneficial to reduce syntactic density by shortening overly complex sentences and introducing more frequent subheadings to better structure the text. Additionally, the reasoning could be made more transparent by incorporating explicit transitions between sections and strengthening the argumentation. This could be achieved by integrating opposing perspectives and addressing them to provide a more robust and balanced discussion.

4. The study methods are explained clearly.	2
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(Please insert your comments)

The manuscript suffers from a lack of a clearly defined methodology, which significantly undermines its academic rigor. A primary concern is the absence of a specified methodological framework: is the study a textual analysis, a historical critique, a philosophical argument, or a theological examination? While the paper seems to blend these approaches, it fails to explicitly articulate its method, creating ambiguity. Additionally, the selection of sources such as Spinoza, Kant, Durkheim, and Taylor is not justified, leaving readers unclear about the rationale behind these choices. Why these thinkers specifically and not other? That is a question that should be clarified. A brief explanation of the criteria for source selection would greatly enhance the paper's clarity and coherence. Furthermore, the argument is predominantly one-sided, critiquing modernity without engaging substantively with counterarguments. For instance, how do proponents of modern humanism respond to claims of ethical decay? What perspectives do postmodernists offer on the crisis of modernity? Are there alternative explanations for the moral crises of modernity beyond the rejection of divine ethics? Addressing these questions would provide a

more balanced and robust critique. To strengthen the manuscript, the author should clearly define the methodological approach (e.g., comparative theology, historical analysis, or philosophical discourse analysis), justify the selection of sources, and incorporate alternative perspectives to enrich the argument.

5. The results are clear and do not contain errors.

4

(Please insert your comments)

The manuscript presents findings in the form of a critical examination of the ethical orientation of Western modernity, and comes out with the conclusion that by displacing God as the guarantor of moral values and placing humanity at the heart of it, it led to a certain ethical void and an existential crisis. The author draws a clear parallel between original sin as a biblical concept and the ethical revolution of modernity. The findings suggest that the humanist project of modernity represents a “second original sin” that led to an existential and moral chaos similar to the fall of Adam and Eve. The manuscript presents the results through a structured argument beginning with an explanation of modernity’s humanist project, then analyzing its revolutionary ethical implications, and concludes by assessing the shortcomings, contradictions and failures of this model. The author supports these claims with philosophical and theological texts from prominent key figures of the fields, notably Kant, Durkheim, Rousseau, and biblical narratives.

The manuscript correctly identifies modernity as a project of emancipation that seeks to liberate humanity from religious and political tutelage, emphasizing rationality and autonomy. This is well-supported by historical and philosophical evidence, particularly the Enlightenment's emphasis on reason and individual freedom. The claim that modernity's ethical framework is revolutionary, replacing divine authority with human rationality, is also accurate. The manuscript effectively contrasts medieval Christian ethics, which derive moral values from God, with modern humanist ethics, which place humanity at the center of moral decision-making.

The analogy between modernity's ethical revolution and the biblical original sin is thought-provoking and well-argued. The author convincingly draws parallels between the fall of Adam and Eve (their desire to become like God) and modernity's ambition to elevate humanity to a godlike status through reason and science. However, one of the limitations is the sole focus on biblical references and no other texts from other monotheistic religions.

The manuscript's assertion that modernity has led to an ethical void and existential crisis is supported by references to thinkers like Max Weber and Charles Taylor, who have extensively discussed the "disenchantment of the world" and the loss of meaning in a secular, rationalized society. The manuscript accurately critiques modernity's universalist ambitions, particularly its role in colonialism, environmental destruction, and the rise of totalitarian regimes. These critiques are well-documented in historical and philosophical literature.

While the manuscript is generally clear, some sections are overly dense, particularly in the discussion of philosophical theories (e.g., Kant's categorical imperative, Rousseau's social contract). These sections could benefit from more concise explanations to make them accessible to a broader audience. Additionally, the manuscript would be strengthened by engaging more explicitly with counterarguments. For example, while the author critiques modernity's universalist ambitions, they do not fully address the benefits of modernity, such as advances in human rights, scientific progress, and democratic governance. A more balanced discussion would enhance the manuscript's credibility.

As mentioned before, the manuscript lacks a clearly defined methodology. It is unclear whether the approach is primarily philosophical, theological, or historical. This is why a more explicit methodological framework would help readers understand the basis for the author's claims and would support the accuracy and validity of the findings.

6. The conclusions or summary are accurate and supported by the content.	4
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(Please insert your comments)

The conclusion effectively recaps the manuscript's argument but could be strengthened in several key areas: it lacks a clear call to action, leaving readers uncertain about the proposed solution to the failures of modern ethics. Should society return to religious ethics, or is a new moral framework needed? Additionally, the conclusion does not fully explore the broader implications of the critique for contemporary issues such as global moral relativism, or transhumanism, which are highly relevant in today's context. Finally, the conclusion would benefit from a stronger final statement that leaves a lasting impression, whether by posing a provocative question about the future of ethics or suggesting avenues for future research, such as exploring alternative ethical systems or the role of technology in shaping moral values. These enhancements would make the conclusion more impactful.

7. The references are comprehensive and appropriate.	3
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(Please insert your comments)

The references in the manuscript are extensive and well-chosen, drawing from a rich array of classical philosophical and theological sources to support the argument. However, two key improvements are necessary to enhance the manuscript's rigor and relevance: first, the bibliography leans heavily on classical works, and incorporating more contemporary scholarship on modernity, ethics, and secularism would strengthen the manuscript's connection to current academic debates. Second, there are instances where sources are referenced in the text but are missing from the bibliography, which undermines the manuscript's scholarly integrity and academic rigor. To address these issues, the author should integrate recent academic discussions on modern ethics, such as works addressing the challenges of secularism, post-humanism, or global ethical frameworks, and conduct a thorough cross-checking of all citations to ensure accuracy and consistency in the bibliography. These adjustments would significantly improve the manuscript's academic rigor and contemporary relevance.

Overall Recommendation (mark an X with your recommendation) :

Accepted, no revision needed	
Accepted, minor revision needed	
Return for major revision and resubmission	
Reject	

Comments and Suggestions to the Author(s):

Strengths of the Manuscript

The manuscript demonstrates an effective integration of philosophical, theological, and historical perspectives. This comprehensive critique of modernity's ethical project enriches the discourse by drawing from multiple fields, thereby fostering a nuanced

and well-rounded discussion. One of the key strengths of the manuscript lies in its originality. The analogy between modernity's ethical revolution and the biblical notion of original sin is both novel and intellectually stimulating. This perspective offers fresh insights into the critique of modernity and encourages further reflection on the ethical underpinnings of contemporary society. Furthermore, the manuscript addresses timely and pressing issues, such as the ethical consequences of scientific progress, environmental degradation, and the emergence of transhumanism. By engaging with these contemporary concerns, the manuscript contributes meaningfully to ongoing debates about the ethical trajectory of modernity and its broader societal implications.

Weaknesses and Areas for Improvement

Despite its strengths, the manuscript would benefit from a more balanced discussion that acknowledges the positive aspects of modernity. While the critique is done well, the manuscript does not sufficiently engage with the benefits of modernity, including its advancements in human rights, scientific progress, and democratic governance. Incorporating counterarguments would strengthen the overall argument by demonstrating a thorough engagement with differing perspectives.

A key counterargument is that modernity has played a fundamental role in the expansion of human rights and individual freedoms. John Locke's *Two Treatises of Government* (1689) laid the groundwork for liberal democracy, emphasizing natural rights and government by consent. Later, Jürgen Habermas (1981) in *The Theory of Communicative Action* argued that modernity's emphasis on rational discourse and democratic institutions fosters ethical progress through deliberative democracy. While modernity may have its ethical shortcomings, its contribution to human rights is undeniable and should be acknowledged in any critique. Another counterargument is that modernity's advancements in science and technology have enhanced human well-being. Auguste Comte (1830) in *Course of Positive Philosophy* argued that the scientific method leads to continuous progress, enabling societies to overcome superstition and ignorance. Similarly, Thomas Kuhn (1962) in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* demonstrated how paradigm shifts in science drive intellectual and moral development.

The manuscript critiques transhumanism as an example of modernity's ethical decline, yet some argue that it represents an ethical enhancement. Nick Bostrom (2005) in *In Defense of Posthuman Dignity* argued that human enhancement technologies can expand human potential and ethical capacities. Conversely, Francis Fukuyama (2002) in *Our Posthuman Future* raised concerns about transhumanism but acknowledged its potential to improve well-being and reduce suffering. Recognizing these perspectives would provide a more balanced critique of transhumanism's ethical implications.

I would urge you the author to explore new literature in this regard. In "Reforming Modernity: Ethics and the New Human in the Philosophy of Abdurrahman Taha" (2019), Wael B. Hallaq explores how modernity has facilitated ethical pluralism by enabling diverse philosophical traditions to engage in dialogue. This is intricately linked to the main thesis of the manuscript. See Christine Rosen's "The Extinction of Experience" (2025), and Alasdair MacIntyre's "Ethics and the Conflicts of Modernity" (2016).

Additionally, the manuscript may overemphasize biblical analogies, which, while compelling, might limit its appeal to a broader, secular audience. The author could consider reframing certain arguments in more universal terms to enhance accessibility and ensure the manuscript resonates with a wider readership. Another area for

improvement concerns the density of certain philosophical discussions. Some sections, particularly those analyzing the works of Kant, Rousseau, and Durkheim, are overly complex. Simplifying these discussions through clearer explanations and concrete examples would make the manuscript more accessible and engaging. The conclusion, while effective in summarizing the manuscript's key arguments, could be strengthened. It currently lacks a clear path forward or suggestions for alternative ethical frameworks that might address the failures of modernity. Expanding this section to propose potential solutions or avenues for further exploration would significantly enhance the manuscript's impact.

Suggestions for Improvement

To strengthen the manuscript, the author should consider the following improvements:

1. Explicitly state and justify the methodological approach, whether it is philosophical analysis, historical critique, or theological reflection. Clearly outlining the selection of sources will provide the manuscript with a stronger academic foundation.
2. potential counterarguments will provide a more balanced discussion and enhance the manuscript's credibility.
3. Making the discussions on Kant, Rousseau, and Durkheim more accessible through simplified language and concrete examples will improve reader comprehension and engagement.
4. Strengthening the conclusion by not only summarizing key points but also suggesting alternative ethical frameworks or solutions will add depth and forward-thinking insight to the manuscript.
5. While maintaining the originality of the biblical analogies, framing certain arguments in more universally applicable terms will broaden the manuscript's accessibility and appeal.

Overall Assessment

The manuscript presents a compelling and original critique of modernity's ethical project by integrating philosophical, theological, and historical perspectives. The analogy between modernity's ethical revolution and the biblical notion of original sin is particularly thought-provoking, offering a unique contribution to the critique of modernity. However, the manuscript would benefit from a more balanced discussion that acknowledges modernity's positive aspects, a clearer methodological framework, and more accessible philosophical discussions. By addressing these areas for improvement, the manuscript has the potential to make a significant contribution to contemporary debates on the ethical implications of modernity.

Comments and Suggestions to the Editors Only: