

**Paul Fussell, *The Rhetorical World of Augustan Humanism*  
(Oxford, 1965) Courtesy of Prof. R.F.W. Kroll**

Fussell argues that the “Augustan humanists” held a number of tenets in common, whether we are speaking of Dryden or of Burke and Reynolds.

1. “The humanist either professes or affects such broad and historical awareness of actual human nature as to justify grave doubts about the probability of any moral or qualitative ‘progress.’”
2. “The humanist believes that most human ‘problems’ cannot be solved.”
3. “The humanist assumes . . . that it is both the index and privilege of the human consciousness to be largely a construction of man’s own imaginative making, and that, therefore, the mind and imagination--what perhaps can be called the symbol-making power--are the quintessential human attributes.”
4. “The humanist betrays so habitual and profound a concern with the act of evaluation that it often grows into what can be described as ‘evaluative obsession.’”
5. “The humanist is pleased to experience a veneration, which often approaches the elegiac, for the past, a feeling accompanied by a deep instinct for the tested and the proven in the history of human experience.”
6. “The humanist is convinced that man’s primary obligation is the strenuous determination of moral questions; he thus believes that inquiries into the technical operation of the external world (‘science’) constitute not only distinctly secondary but even irrelevant and perhaps dangerous activities.”
7. “The humanist assumes that ethics and expression are closely allied.”
8. “The humanist believes that human nature, for all its potential dignity, is irremediably flawed and corrupt at the core.”
9. “The humanist tends to assume that the world of physical nature is morally neutral and thus largely irrelevant to man’s actual--that is, his moral--existence.”
10. “The humanist tends to be suspicious of theories of government or human nature which appear to scant the experienced facts of man’s mysterious complexity.”
11. “The humanist assumes that, because of man’s flaw and his consequent need of redemptive assistance, man’s relation to literature and art is primarily moral and only secondarily aesthetic.”
12. “The humanist believes that man is absolutely unique as a species.”

(see pp. 4-9)