

TOPIC OF THE WEEK

MAY'19 (09 to 15 May)

Individualism

The word “self” is the bane of every dictator, every iron fist, every dark lord, and every god. All words pertaining to the self are also considered evil by Totalitarians, Populists and any Statist of any kind. Of all philosophies in ethics there are two polars about interest, one of which is rational and one of which is irrational. There is Egoism and there is Altruism. The fundamental political conflict in America today is, as it has been for a century, individualism vs. collectivism. Does the individual’s life belong to him—or does it belong to the group, the community, society, or the state? With government expanding ever more rapidly—seizing and spending more and more of our money on “entitlement” programs and corporate bailouts, and intruding on our businesses and lives in increasingly onerous ways—the need for clarity on this issue has never been greater.

Collectivism is the idea that the individual’s life belongs not to him but to the group or society of which he is

merely a part, that he has no rights, and that he must sacrifice his values and goals for the group's "greater good." According to collectivism, the group or society is the basic unit of moral concern, and the individual is of value only in so far as he serves the group.

While, Individualism is a moral, political or social outlook that stresses human independence and the importance of individual self-reliance and liberty. It opposes most external interference with an individual's choices, whether by society, the state or any other group or institution (collectivism), and it also opposed to the view that tradition, religion or any other form of external moral standard should be used to limit an individual's choice of actions. The term "individualism" was first used by French and British proto-Socialists, followers of Saint-Simon (1760 - 1825) and Robert Owen (1771 - 1858), initially as a pejorative term, and mainly in the sense of Political Individualism (see the section below). The 19th Century American Henry David Thoreau is often cited as an example of a committed Individualist. In popular

usage, the connotations of "individualism" can be positive or negative, depending on who is using the term, and how.

Business owners, as leaders of their organizations, set the tone for ethical decision-making. Individualism in decision-making entails making a choice that best serves your long-term self-interest. In theory, if everyone makes decisions based on self-interest, everyone will benefit, which is why some business owners favor this approach. Innovation is a potential benefit of individualism. Competition can breed creative solutions, as employees compete for new and better ways to secure personal benefits. For example, a car dealer might offer a sizable bonus to that month's top salesperson to motivate the sales department to find new ways to increase sales. In the arena of production, promoting individualism can lead to greater efficiency, as workers compete to find new ways to cut production time and costs. Talking about its drawbacks we must say Some people might pursue short-term rewards at the expense of long-term

benefits, such as sustainable progress. For example, Wall Street's focus on individualism in the 1980s fostered a speculative atmosphere in which business owners and investors made unethical decisions that destroyed some companies and hurt the reputation of the entire business community, according to the book "Ethics and Corporate Social Responsibility: Why Giants Fall," by Ronald R. Sims. In other words, individualistic decision-making might offer little incentive for your employees to consider how their selfish actions affect the future of your company.

Studies show that parents from individualist cultures (such as middle class and upper-middle class families in the U.S.) overwhelmingly value making their children independent, both socially and economically. Self-worth and self-esteem are developed by focusing on individual achievement. Parents from collectivist cultures see their children's primary role as being contributing members of the family unit. Children are expected to understand and act on a strong sense of responsibility toward their

immediate and extended family and their community. Self-worth and self-esteem are not terms that are commonly used in collectivist cultures, because the individual's wants and needs are always subordinate to the needs of the family or community.

Individuals who tend to pride themselves on being different tend to live happier lives as they are not restricted by the judgments of others. By pursuing their passions, they excel in whichever field they choose as they are motivated and interested to learn and improve, thus improving the quality of their work. By pursuing their own endeavors, these unique individuals tend to be better leaders as they are not afraid to take risks think outside the box to solve problems.

While we can agree that being different is better for individuals, we should also analyze its effects on society as a whole. Individualism gives rise to capitalism. In a society where an individual takes risks and makes a fortune out of luck and determination, a monetary

imbalance appears. This imbalance forces the less fortunate people to abandon their individuality for better paying jobs in order to live comfortably while a small percentage of the population enjoys most of the world's wealth. Moreover, individuality does not guarantee success. For example, only 1.1 percent of musicians actually achieve fame and stardom, the rest having to work multiple jobs to pay rent and pursue their passion in the hopes that they will be discovered, which a majority of them do not. In a more collectivist society, every person's needs are cared for and they are valued for their contributions.

Individualism need not look the same the world over. As families are adapting living arrangements that accommodate members as well as their freedom, so too might family ties adapt to better accommodate personal goals and choice. In India, where family has been such an important factor in individuals' life choices, it remains to be seen how this increase in individualism will reshape traditional expectations. For now, the flux is creating

tension between old traditions and new aspirations. But when the dust settles, we may find ourselves with a newer, more inclusive breed of individualism – and family – the world hasn't seen.

To conclude, while individualism is greatly beneficial in order to preserve art, culture and identity, it may be detrimental to society as a whole. The race for success and wealth causes people to be so engrossed in themselves that individuals begin to lack compassion for the less fortunate, creating a grossly unfair hierarchy that needs to be abolished in order for humanity to survive.

For reference:-

- <https://www.theobjectivestandard.com/issues/2012-spring/individualism-collectivism/>
- <https://smallbusiness.chron.com/individualism-ethical-decision-making-56240.html>
- https://www.philosophybasics.com/branch_individualism.html