

The Ratio of Eastern and Western Moral Principles.

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ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the essence of collectivism and individuality and their relationship with the social sciences through examples from Western and Eastern societies. It is explained that collectivism and individuality are essential features of social relations and human spirituality, and that they take on different proportions under the influence of objective and subjective factors.

This article analyzes the essence of collectivism and individuality, as well as their relationship with the social sciences, using examples from Western and Eastern societies. It is explained that collectivism and individuality are essential characteristics of social relations and human spirituality, and that under the influence of objective and subjective factors they may take on different proportions

ARTICLE INFO

Received: 8th September 2025

Accepted: 7th October 2025

KEY WORDS:

Individuality, collectivism, despotic, rationality, objectivity, subjectivity.

Introduction.

Collectivism and individuality are multifaceted phenomena that are studied by psychology, cultural studies, political science, economics, philosophy, and other disciplines from the standpoint of their respective subjects. In recent years, scientific research on this issue has intensified due to the growing informatization of society and the spread of elements characteristic of the information society, leading to the creation of numerous studies [1; 1012].

Culture is usually divided into two types: cultures in which collectivism prevails, and cultures in which individuality is dominant. Today, the idea that Eastern culture is based on collectivism and Western culture on individuality is recognized by the scientific community. Without delving into the content of these multifaceted concepts in different periods or into existing theories about them [2; 134], we will focus on several aspects that are important for our discussion.

So, why did collectivism become dominant in Eastern culture?

Because the natural and economic living conditions in Eastern countries were relatively favorable, life was comparatively easier, making the governance and unification of people particularly important. For this purpose, governing institutions (the state) retained broad powers and sought to limit public freedom as much as possible. The establishment of a specific "Asiatic mode of production" in Eastern despotic states is also explained by this reality. Facing the overwhelming authority of the state, property owners would gather supporters, relatives, and close associates around themselves, striving to unite, protect themselves and their property through clan collectivism, resist the state, and preserve their material wealth and economic opportunities. As a result, clan structures developed; obedience to elders and leaders, as well as attitudes of special respect and service toward them, became predominant.

Ordinary members of the clan lived under the protection of clan leaders, lacking personal freedom and complying with the rules and norms of the community. The predominance of clan and collectivist interests in the lives of the population also simplified the functioning of state power, creating convenient conditions for governance. Collectivism became a dominant principle on the scale of society and the state. Its establishment

at the national level contributed to social stability and the preservation of established norms, rules, and traditions.

Methods.

In several European countries, socio-ethical relations developed in a somewhat different direction. The natural living conditions in these regions compelled the creation of an environment that allowed individuals to act freely. Individuals were required to use all their abilities to secure their material livelihoods, and at the same time, to pay state taxes. Under such conditions, personal freedom and freedom of activity developed. The emergence of cities in particular created favorable opportunities for individual freedom of action.

However, in the East, the development of cities preserved certain peculiarities in the relationship between the individual and the community. Deep-rooted clan structures and a large population led to the formation of cities on the basis of neighborhoods (mahallas). In this system, a particular clan would dominate a given field of production, the residents of the mahalla would know one another, and members of the clan were clearly distinguishable from outsiders. The collectivist worldview, the dominance of customs and traditions, and the complete subordination of personal freedom to community interests were preserved. The dominant position of the collectivist worldview became even more firmly established.

Western scholars hold various views on collectivism as a moral principle. K. Popper firmly links individuality with rationalism and humanism. According to Popper, an open society is one that suppresses collectivism and turns individuality into the prevailing principle. In his arguments, he stresses that the concepts of “individuality” and “egoism” must not be confused, and that individuality should be viewed in logical opposition to collectivism, while egoism should be contrasted with altruism. Numerous examples can be given of altruistic individuality in the courage shown by many famous individuals for the benefit of the community. Altruistic individuality is based on respecting oneself as well as other individuals.

Indeed, individuality united with altruism and connected with human responsibility constitutes a correct moral principle. The ideology of liberalism based on this principle has played a significant historical role in the struggle against slavery, totalitarianism, racial, ethnic, religious, and other forms of discrimination, and in the advancement of the rule of law.

K. Popper views the society of the future as an abstract society and considers collectivism a principle with no prospects. However, if we analyze morality and real ethical relations in contemporary society, a number of serious problems become apparent. In some developed Western countries, the weakening of collectivism among young people has opened the way for an individualistic lifestyle to turn into egoism, which is disastrous for humanity, and has led to the spread of immoral social processes that contradict universal ethics.

The formation of cities in Europe occurred under somewhat different conditions. People coming from various regions—with different cultures, worldviews, beliefs, and professions—began to make up the urban population. Their interactions (economic and spiritual) were based on freedom. As a result, the mindset of individuality gradually began to dominate over collectivist thinking. An urban resident could engage in any activity he wished and ensure his own livelihood; in other words, a person could attain the kind of life he was capable of achieving. Individuality compelled a person to rely solely on his own strength, to develop his abilities, and to use all his physical and intellectual potential.

The worldviews of collectivism and individuality left their mark on shaping the character of societies as well as the relationship between state power, society, and individuals. This was also reflected in the doctrines of the East and Europe. In the East, the idea that the state is above everything, the representative of the divine on earth, and that the head of state is the sole ruling force continued to be preserved. Eastern ideologies were built upon this idea. As Alisher Navoi said: the ruler is like the sea, and the people are rivers that take water from it; if the water of the sea is salty, the river will also be salty; if the sea is bitter, the river will also be bitter. That is, everything depends on the ruler.

In Western countries, however, during this period ideology developed in a different direction due to the growth of free enterprise: the state is a “night watchman,” whose main task is to protect the population from external enemies and to refrain from interfering in individuals’ free activities (liberalism).

Results.

In short, the proportion of collectivist and individualist principles within a culture is the result of natural–historical development. Their relationship plays a decisive role in shaping the nature of social relations and the spiritual world of individuals.

Collectivism has contributed many positive qualities to social life. It has helped maintain social stability; instill in future generations the values accepted by society and the moral-legal principles accumulated throughout the lives of ancestors; foster high human virtues; ensure respect for the beliefs of the majority; and uphold community interests as a superior guiding principle. In other words, the “pure” morality of society, resembling the ethics of the ancestors, is largely a result of collectivist principles. The role of collectivist thinking is also invaluable in moral phenomena such as loyalty and respect toward elders, leaders, brothers and relatives, and friends, as well as in serving them.

Collectivism does not absolutely or completely deny individuality. Otherwise, the development of traditional societies would not have been possible. The activities of individuals who gained recognition through their personal qualities in various fields are proof of this. However, when collectivism is absolutized and attempts are made to completely subordinate individuality to it, conflicts arise between them, restricting the free development of individuality. Under the conditions of collectivism’s absolute dominance, individuality could manifest itself only among certain elite individuals.

Individuality is a moral principle that stimulates the free expression of a person’s abilities. It means that a person is responsible for his own actions and must demonstrate his strength and capacity without hiding behind the protection of the community.

Before production acquired a mass character and private entrepreneurship rose to a high social status, individuality developed only in the activities of a small number of select individuals. Ordinary people and the broad masses of workers remained within the framework of collectivist thinking and were compelled to live as executors and subordinates, fully dependent on the protection of the community.

Individuality manifested itself particularly at turning points in history. With the economic and spiritual development of society, individuality gradually strengthened its position. In particular, the development of education and private entrepreneurship marked a new era for the growth of individuality in individuals.

In the present era—when humanity is transitioning to a new type of society, the information society—the moral principles of collectivism and individuality are engaged in a complex and contradictory relationship, acquiring distinctive significance. The development of various forms of knowledge, as well as advances in science and technology, require individuals to possess modern knowledge, creativity, and a high sense of responsibility. As human capital increasingly becomes society’s primary wealth, individuals are driven to develop their personal qualities, human virtues, knowledge, and spirituality. The complex social life of today demands that every person adopt a rational life position and continuously improve their skills, competencies, and professional abilities.

At the same time, in an era of rapid development, individuality faces the danger of growing into its opposite—egoism. As the great thinker of the Eastern Renaissance, Abu Nasr al-Farabi, noted in *The Virtuous City*, “When the people of ignorant cities—those who pursue their own aims (seeking fame, property, and the enjoyment of wealth)—see that such (bad) aims are forbidden in the virtuous city, they try to violate its (just) laws, to distance themselves from what is related to truth, and to distort these laws and conceptions...” [3; 234]. Although this danger has always existed, under the dominance of collectivist thinking it did not take on a socially harmful character and was restrained by the influence of collectivist values.

Today, however, the expansion of individual freedoms, the development of democratic thinking, and the improvement of material and spiritual living conditions create a favorable environment for egoism. Disregard for public morality, placing one’s egoistic—often temporary and limited—interests above communal and future interests, ignoring common and universal human values, distancing oneself from constructive, life-affirming activities under the influence of narrow, egoistic goals and unscientific, harmful, and unfounded “knowledge”—all these trends are spreading, and forms of behavior incompatible with social ethics are becoming widespread. This process is especially characteristic of Western countries.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the above considerations, we divide collectivism into two types: rational collectivism and totalitarian collectivism.

The main criterion of rational collectivism is development. Although collectivist moral principles remain dominant in the cultures of Japan, South Korea, China, Malaysia, Singapore, and other countries that have preserved universal and national moral values, they do not hinder individuals' creative aspirations or their relative freedoms.

In this regard, Uzbekistan is also forming a reasonable balance between collectivism and individuality in the process of transitioning to an information society. As a result, relying on and further developing our national values, conditions have been created for the constructive individuality of individuals and for their moral perfection.

Mass culture—which reflects life superficially and does not encourage people toward lofty spiritual ideals—deprives individuals of integrity, fragments them, and limits and narrows their personality. Concerning the destructive power of individuality, the Russian philosopher V. Solovyov wrote as early as the 19th century: “In the contemporary West, the excessive development of individuality leads to its opposite—to collective impersonality and shamelessness. When the consciousness of the individual is overstressed and cannot find an object befitting itself, it shifts into empty and petty egoism that reduces everyone to the same level” [4; 25]. Although the intensification of societal informatization creates great opportunities and objective conditions for human spiritual development, the general environment of life and activity strengthens individuality. In conditions of unrestrained freedom—where collectivism seems to have no influence on a person's fate and appears temporary, superficial, or even excessive and harmful—egoistic tendencies increasingly gain the upper hand. The primary source of immorality is not individuality, but absolutized egoism. Egoism opens the door wide to anti-cultural and anti-moral processes.

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