

Collectivism

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For the descriptive terminology as used in anthropology and psychology, see Collectivist and individualist cultures. For the magazine, see Collectivism (magazine).

Collectivism is a term used to describe any doctrine that stresses the importance of a collective, rather than the importance of the individual. Collectivists believe the individual should be subordinate to the collective, which may be a group of individuals, a whole society, a state, a nation, a race, or a social class. Thus, collectivism contrasts with individualism. [1] (<http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-9024764?query=collectivism&ct=>)

There are differing groups of collectivists, ranging from conservative to the liberal. There are such as romantic collectivism, propagated by such as Mariya O. Osadchy, who reconcile collectivist beliefs with those of the romanticism period.

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Politics

Some consider an early example of collectivist political philosophy to be Jean-Jacques Rousseau's Social Contract, which maintains that human society is organized along the lines of an implicit *contract* between members of society, and that the terms of this contract (e.g. the powers of government, the rights and responsibilities of individual citizens, etc.) are rightfully decided by the "general will" - that is, the will of the people. This idea is part of the philosophical foundation of democracy.

Economics

Generally speaking, collectivism in the field of economics holds that things should be owned by the group and used for the benefit of all rather than being owned by individuals. Central to this view is the concept of the commons, as opposed to private property. Some collectivists apply this principle only to capital and land, while others argue that all valued commodities should be regarded as public goods and placed under public ownership.

Collectivism in economics may or may not involve a state as a manager and steward of collective property. For instance, anarcho-communists, who argue for the immediate abolition of government, wish to place all goods under collective ownership. In 1876, at the Florence Conference of the Italian Federation of the International, where the principles of anarcho-communism were first laid out, it was stated:

"The Italian Federation considers the collective property of the products of labour as the necessary complement to the collectivist programme, the aid of all for the satisfaction of the needs of each being the only rule of production and consumption which corresponds to the principle of solidarity."

Collectivist societies

There are many examples of societies around the world which have characterized themselves or have been characterized by outsiders as “collectivist”.

On the one hand, there are the communist states, which have often collectivized most economic sectors (and agriculture in particular). On the other hand, there are Israeli kibbutzim (voluntary communes where people live and farm together without private ownership), and communities such as the Freetown Christiania in Denmark (a small anarchist political experiment centered around an abandoned military installation in Copenhagen; Christiania has laws abolishing private property).

Democracy, with its emphasis on notions of social contract and the collective will of the people, has been characterized by some as a form of (political) collectivism.

Anti-collectivism

The term *collectivism* is used more often by anti-collectivists than by anyone else. Supporters of Objectivism — Ayn Rand and many people influenced by her — claim that collectivism is fallacious in theory and immoral in practice. They further argue that many or most political ideologies (other than Objectivism itself) are forms of collectivism or at least contain significant collectivist elements. Ironically, Objectivism has been criticized by some for its emphasis on emulating Rand rather than on being a true individual with one’s own thoughts and feelings.

Other ideologies that define themselves in opposition to collectivism include libertarianism and anarcho-capitalism, which are seen by their supporters as defending individual rights against various forms of collectivism (while many collectivists argue that their policies are aimed at maximizing the rights and benefits of all - or most - individuals within a group).

See also

- collectivist anarchism
- communalism
- communitarianism
- Gleichschaltung
- Marxism
- primitive communism
- collective identity

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