

## Two Isms: Individualism & Collectivism

In our Western world there are two opposing systems which vie for dominance, namely extreme collectivism on the left and extreme individualism on the right. The collective ideal has been supported by a philosophy which, holds that only collective action can give people the "good life." It has no respect for the individual. The individual must completely surrender his will to the collective will of the state. One of the earliest advocates of this thinking is the Greek philosopher Plato (428-348 BC). Plato begins his *Republic* with the social principle that the object of rule is the good of the people, but this good must not be confused with what people may want.

Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-78) is the father of the modern effort to use the state to perfect humanity. In 1762 he wrote *The Social Contract* in which he said that individuals must surrender their Individual will to the General Will. The General Will expresses the common interest of all citizens. Citizens must be treated as children and have their upbringing and thoughts controlled. Rousseau assumed that such state-controlled citizens would be happy. The ultimate outcome of such thinking has been the increase of coercion.

Legal scholar Ronald Dworkin says that, "a more equal society is a better society even if its citizens prefer inequality." In other words, if citizens don't want to have what the state thinks is best, a change of behaviour will be forced upon them. Rousseau said that people who do not want to surrender their freedom for the sake of the whole community "will be forced to be free," Rousseau's philosophy has had many adherents even in Ontario. For example, the Ontario government is pushing to remake society according to its own collectivist agenda. A new world must be made, even if it means changing the definition of marriage and the family and treating homosexual couples as equal partners.

The French philosopher Auguste Comte (1789-1857) said that "the individual is nothing more than abstraction." This thinking has always led to despotism and tyranny since ancient times. But individuals have always rebelled against such totalitarian control.

Naziism is a classical example of extreme collectivism of the highest degree. Hitler did not allow private belief and convictions, nor acts of courage or charity to carry any significance except in-so-far as they contributed to the "totality" welfare of his regime. The Christian opposes any form of "worldly collectivism," since he is responsible to his sovereign God in all spheres of human activities. Our total allegiance belongs to Him.

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