



Anti-Individualism in Human Development in Vietnam Today

Vu Thi Kieu Ly¹ and Pham Thi Thuy Van²

¹Faculty of Political Theory, University of Transport Technology, Ha Noi, Vietnam

²Faculty of Politics Education, Hanoi Pedagogical University 2, Vinh Phuc, Vietnam

¹E-mail: vukieuly.cdgt@gmail.com, ²E-mail: phamthithuyvan@hpu2.edu.vn

Abstract

Human development is one of the most crucial tasks that exert a decisive impact on social development. This task requires each individual in the society to be proactive in combatting demonstration of individualism in addition to incessantly self striving and self training his good qualities, aimed at building a society that can be humane and cultural in depth. It would be a society in which free development of each person functions as the condition for free development of all people, as a result, each individual would live a life of morality and without any expressions of individualism.

Keywords: human development, individualism, society



1. Introduction

Building up and promoting the human being are regarded as an issue directly related to the destiny of an entire nation and their survival. This is a great lesson, justified by the 80 year process under the revolutionary leadership of Vietnam Communist Party, and at the same time, also the scientific theory and practical experiences of numerous Parties and countries in the world. As shown by historical experiences, building up and promoting the human being, enhancing all revolutionary qualities and moralities should be actively combined with timely prevention and remedy of demonstration of the selfish individualism, personality deterioration in those who are willing to spare no means but be engaged in even moral and legal violation to satisfy one's own needs and interest regardless of the sake of the collective, community and society. At the request of the present-day situation, the combat against individualism in human development has hereby become an urgent task, which should be perceived and carried out on the scientific and practical basis. Thus, it is a request of theoretical and practical significance in-depth to provide accurate justification in terms of expressions and harms of individualism, hereby, proposing fundamental measures to stop damages caused by this illness to human beings and the society.

2. Method

The article employs a variety of methods, such as logics, analysis, synthetics, structuring and contrasting, etc. These methods are flexibly utilized to clarify the embedded content of the viewpoint on individualism, at the same time, highlight the nature, characteristics, expressions and harms of individualism in politics, economy, socio-culture and human beings. In addition, other methods are also used, such as generalization, prediction analysis, etc. to point out the causes of individualism and measures for anti-individualism in Vietnamese people development today, aiming at building a society that can be humane and cultural in depth, and a society in which free development of each person functions as the condition for free development of all people.

3. Results

3.1. Individualism_ Demonstration of deteriorated personality

The society is a massive system made up of concrete individuals. In other words, due to benefits and through benefit acquisition, individuals get together and network with one another, establishing a close relationship to form a society. Therefore, these are people of real life, coming from objective reality with different needs, interest and capabilities. These actual human beings do not exist independently nor isolated from each other, rather for their survival, they need associate with one another. Such cooperation and association give rise to common needs. However, each individual has his own needs and benefits, no one is alike, which could be similar or dissimilar, even contrastive to the society's benefits, thus, it is of tremendous role and significance to harmoniously handle the relationship between individual benefits and social ones. This task when done well can serve as the foundation and motivation for the development of socio-individual relationship, yet, it can also put an end to that development if not addressed properly by the rule of benefit relations.

Nevertheless, with extreme tendencies, individualism always separates and optimizes individual benefits in the dialectical relationship with those of the collective, community and



society. Such one-direction stress on individual benefits has step by step broken up the objective relationship between an individual and other entities, and deformed human personalities and the social life. That feature reflects immorality of individualism, which totally contrasts the essence of the neo morality_ the revolutionary one. Individualism worships ‘egoism’ and neglects ‘collectivism’, which is the foundation for existence of human life and human society, and also the root for individual developmental needs to be met. Regarding this issue, author Nguyen Chi Thanh in *Anti Individualism* stated “*Individualism is willing to place personal life and individual benefits above all, ready to sacrifice collective benefits, violate collective interest and disciplines for its ego, incessantly calculates to gain individual benefits, even offers sale-off of the collective’s cause for the personal interest in the nastiest manner*” [7, p.44]. Particularly, Ho Chi Minh, one of the great thinkers, a Vietnamese revolutionary leader, who had a lot of argument on individualism, also claimed that “*Individualism refers to prioritization of the benefits of one’s own and his family over the sake of the nation*” [5, p.56]. *In terms of the revolutionary ideology*, individualism implies “*thinking of oneself and his family rather than the big family, i.e. the nation*” [5, p.54]. *To the people*, individualism goes against the people’s benefits, stays away from the people, behaves in a bureaucratic and bossy manner to the people. *Regarding revolutionary mission*, individualism implies being scared of difficulties and hardships, fond of liberalism, always “*prioritizing personal benefits over common interest, which results in lack of disciplines, rule observance, and being obsessed with position, fame, faction, embezzlement, thriftlessness, bureaucracy*” [5, p.100]. *For one’s own*, individualism means privacy, personal interest, arrogance, self-satisfaction, grabbing success from and blaming others, seniorism; demanding for bonuses and incentives, being greedy, lazy, fame-obsessed, narrow-minded and pragmatic. Thus, in regard of the nature, individualism breaks up humane relations, which demonstrates the intrinsic characteristics of any righteous culture. Individualism destroys human beings themselves, deteriorates personalities and turns its back to the human kind’s development tendency. Accordingly, individualism is the negative side, the deterrence to individual development in the neo civilized modern society since it does serious harm to not only an individual but also the entire community and society.

Individualism appears in the form of a lavish life for personal sake, regarding individual interest as the basic goal of all main activities and standards to evaluate and examine all phenomena occurring around. Hidden under the cover of personal freedom respect, people with individualism always absolutize their ego, center on themselves and each opposes to the entire community. In this case, individual freedom is over evaluated to the point that it is totally separated and opposing to free development of all people. The motive and goal of an individualism follower in his performance always abide by principles beneficial to himself_ He has no mood to strive forwards nor study for betterment, which is exactly reflected in Schopenhauer’s remarks when he described mentalities of individualism “*An individual who wants to be the ruler and gets rid of everything against him; an individual who considers himself as the world centre, regards his own existence and interest above all others, is willing to destroy the world in order to retain his ‘ego’ somewhat longer; an individual who sees himself as the goal while others act merely as a means for him*” [8, p. 72].

Individualism also demonstrates in the form of faction, group interest and lack of solidarity. This demonstration is resulted from the collusion of a group in an organization with the aim of dominating the perception and behaviours of the organization, benefiting the group despite probable harm to the collective, to the righteous benefits of the organization and community. Consequently, such demonstration does harm to the national sake since it creates some form of self-government, faction or league in a way of “policies issued by the higher governments and



counter regulations released by the lower authorities”, which invisibly breaks up the consistency and uniform of the approach to socialism construction and national defence; allows for ‘fragmentation’ and ‘allocation’, does harm to the common benefits, dominates the society by means of group benefits and interest groups and the like to paralyze the spirit and weaken the strength of the organization, thereby, eroding the national strength. Hence, deformation of individualism certainly does harm to the sake of the nation.

Individualism obviously displays ‘deterioration’ of an individual, ‘separation’ of that individual from a collective and a community. As a result, individualism exerts hazardous impacts on all fields of the social life, and first of all, on the individual himself.

On political side, the greatest harm done by individualism is the negative influence on the Party’s leadership and the State’s management, ruining the Party’s and the State’s bodies from within, leading to lack of internal solidarity, erecting barriers that hinder the execution of directions and policies; obstructing the national construction progress. The natural consequence is the people’s reduced trust in the Party and the social system, which poses a danger to the political stability and the system’s survival. Therefore, individualism if not eliminated soon will do harm in various aspects, such as deteriorating the cadre contingent, making the State’s bodies more and more bureaucratic, stay away from the people, degraded and less effective. From another aspect, individualism may possibly lead to political crisis, directly threatening the survival of the existing system.

On economic side, damages caused by individualism are tremendous and serious, which are expressed in improper consumption, wasteful expenditure by agencies and the State; in internal collusion, between the agency itself and ill-mannered entities outside, even foreign people and organizations to exercise wrong doings in order to drain treasure and assets from the State and the people. Such damages have caused great loss in the State’s assets, driven many State-owned enterprises to bad performance of low quality and efficiency. Individualism in the economic field has also provoked unhealthy competition in various economic sectors and unfair play, resulting in losses on the side of true workers whereas those who are good in bribery can enjoy advantages in business. It is also the factor that breaks up strategies and plans for socio-economic development, hinders investors from the market, directly exerts bad impacts on socio-security policies, drains out the domestic resources for investment, hinders economic activities on the macro scope, and restrains operation of the micro-sized economic branches.

On socio-cultural side, individualism would tangle the country’s disciplines and rules, mess up social relations and decrease the people’s trust in justice, right doings and kind-hearted living style. Particularly, if not totally prevented, the target obsessed with individualism may associate with other wrong doers, even criminals in an organization, economic offenders, cash launderers to mess up the society, erode the moral and legal fundamentals as well as the all-sided development of human beings. It is because individualism helps quickly widen the gap between the rich and the poor and increase social inequality_ the true worker lives a hard life while the wrong doer enjoys a lavish life. Due to harms caused by individualism, human personalities deteriorate while the nation’s traditional moral values erode. The pursuit of material benefits, ready to trample on the usual doctrines, threaten the country’s sustainable growth and destroy public services, is causing frustration in the social life. Concurrently, principles and moral standards are distorted; the executive system is paralyzed and internal solidarity is broken, all which will offer an opportunity for the enemy’s destruction.



On human side, individualism, first of all, affects the individual himself, then does harm to people around and the entire society. Since dominated by individualism, a person finds *happiness* only in the search of and combat for his personal benefits, ready to spare no means, including moral and legal offence, to satisfy his own needs. He may even sacrifices the national interest in exchange for his personal benefits. For those obsessed with such a conception and following egoism all their life, they cannot reach *happiness* in its true meaning. Thereby, individualism has destroyed human beings themselves, worsened them and eroded their humanity, which opposes to the tendency of humankind's development. Thus, individualism is the negative side and the deterrence to personal development in the neo society.

The reason why individualism practice is still in complex progress and likely to spread widely among individuals and the society is the existence of those without proper self- cultivation and training. As a result, they are dominated by their egoism and lowly benefits, which have become their motive and goal in life. Also, due to lack of political standpoint, under the influence of negative impacts resulted from the market economy and the open door policies, etc. those people keep worsening in their ideology, morality and living style. Besides, weaknesses in the State management and social control as well as ununiform laws have paved up gaps in social management; the relationship between personal interest and collective benefits is not clearly identified, all which accelerates income classification in the society, directly affecting the ideology, political viewpoint, morality and living style.

3.2. Measures coping with individualism in human development today

Expressions and hazardous impacts made by individualism show that for the time being, this illness if not soon eliminated will do harm in many fields, particularly common benefits of the society, including personal interest. Therefore, to combat individualism in human development today, several major measures should be taken as follows:

One, widely disseminate among the community and society the hazardous impacts and neo expressions of individualism among the community and society.

Individualism is the 'toxin' to the ideology and spirit, dominates human beings' perception and action. Yet, part of the society has not been fully aware of its negative impacts, the neo expressions and egoism in living style. Some may argue that it is natural to care for their personal interest. Thus, it is necessary to promote communication and education so that each person can clearly identify the expressions, demonstration and hazardous impacts made by individualism, and they are also able to recognize the necessity of combatting this illness. Propaganda and education are to enable each individual to understand that individualism will destroy oneself first, and then do harm to other people and the entire society. A human being with egoist behaviours will become a spoiled person sooner or later. As a result, he will be despised because of his selfish living style since he only cares for himself without consideration given to others, the collective, community and society. Promoting propaganda and education is also to help people distinguish protection of righteous personal interest from individualism, which are quite different in nature. Protecting righteous personal interest is to safeguard the benefits acknowledged and defended by the law. These benefits are not contradictory to those of other people, the collective, community and society, and above all, the sake of the nation. Propaganda and education on individualism, prevention and combat against it require persistence, regularity, continuity, uniform and coordination from families, schools and the society via mass media. During



propaganda and education, it is necessary to evoke such good traditional values as the spirit of solidarity, sharing and assistance in difficulty or trouble, and the like. At the same time, examples of good people and good deeds are also praised and duplicated to establish trust in sincerity, honesty and aesthetics in each person and the society.

Two, improve the legal system and promote efficiency in law enforcement.

Building and completing a uniform legal system with mechanisms, socio-economic policies is one of the important measures aimed at ‘filling the gaps’ so that advantages are not given to those spoiled with individualism to practise wrong doings. Thereby, laws are considered as an effective tool to govern the society, adjust human behaviours towards prevention and elimination of crimes, social evils while encouraging, assisting and promoting the good deeds, good morality already in existence in each human being. In the circumstance of individualism making hazardous impacts now, laws ought to demonstrate their power in reestablish the order and disciplines. There is no exception for anybody in observance and enforcement of the State’s laws. Only when laws are well and fully built and properly observed, then can each person in his performance be ready to fight for justice and righteousness; strive towards the good deeds and the aesthetics; know how to live with morality and without expressions of individualism. This requires the law system once issued to clearly identify the authority and responsibility of each collective and individual in each work item and include strict punishment regulations for legal violation in order to combat and prevent the deterioration. The legal documents issued ought to be well protected to prevent those people in authority from taking advantage of them to possess the State’s assets, violate the rights and legal benefits of the collective and the individual. The documents should also include all necessary most active mechanisms to timely detect and effectively deal with legal offences, particularly in such fields as allocation, distribution and utilization of public budget and property, equitization of State-owned enterprises; the State’s capital management; land, natural resources and minerals management; finance, bank, tax and customs management, etc. In addition, attention should also be paid to quality of law makers and law enforcement officers; at the same time, laws ought to be properly brought into life via law education.

Three, create a healthy environment for economy, culture and society to build up neo human beings living with culture, warm sentiments and responsibility.

After all, human beings are products of particular eco-, socio- cultural development. Creating a healthy socio-economic environment is to exploit to maximum the positive facet of the market economy and minimize its negative facet. The market mechanism needs be fully and flexibly employed to vigorously and effectively bring into play all resources, aiming at fast and sustainably developing the economy, improving the people’s life, encouraging legal money making and eradicating poverty at the same time, and promoting social consent. A progressive cultural environment once created will spiritually back the neo human being build-up. On the grounds of a healthy cultural life, education and training of morality and living with culture; civilized living style, social evil elimination, then a generation of neo human beings embedded with personality, ambitions and righteous dreams will come into being. Such a progressive and healthy cultural environment enables the cultural values to penetrate deeply into every aspect of the social life, which is concretely demonstrated in performance, work, daily interaction of the community and each person, generating resistance to toxic produce. To care for cultural development as spiritual background for the society and mental foundation for the neo human being build-up, Viet Nam ought to strengthen and keep building a healthy environment of abundance and variety, in which sincerity, honesty and aesthetics are encouraged, praised, supported while evils, wrong doings,



individualism, egoism, etc, must be condemned. Values of traditional and revolutionary cultural heritages in human personality education should be preserved and brought into play. The mass media network should be improved towards promoting ideology, education and propaganda of healthy living style, taking it as the basis for neo human being build-up. International cooperation in culture should be extended and improved in terms of efficiency in order to acquire the Mankind's progressive cultural values, foster and heighten public resistance to countercultural phenomena.

Four, practise democracy, promote and bring into play the people's ownership.

To combat individualism among cadres and Party members, promoting the people's involvement in the struggle is one of the very important measures. Enhancing the people's role in the anti-individualism combat should be addressed from both sides. *On the one hand*, from the people's side, it is crucial to raise the people's perception and political awareness, evoke their activeness and creativity in the anti-individualism combat. *On the other hand*, from the Party and the State's side, authorities of all levels should enhance their awareness and responsibility towards the people, provide all possible conditions in terms of organization, mechanism, policies and laws to bring into play the people's role in the struggle against this dangerous enemy. To employ the people's strength and wisdom in the anti-individualism combat, democracy must be extensively practised in such a way the people are the real owners and actually master their life. Institutions need to be built for the people to exercise their direct and indirect rights to democracy in all fields of economy, politics, culture and society; execute step by step the right to organization and management of communal life. Besides, election procedures should be renovated and improved to overcome formality in election, providing favourable conditions for the people to truly have the right to choose qualified candidates, who would on their behalf undertake the duties assigned by the country and the locality, which is the people's most important right. Apart from that, there should be a system supplying the people with information and taking responsibility in justification of the State bodies' performance to the people; issuance of such laws related to the people's ownership as Law on Referendum, Law on Information Right, etc.

Five, ascertain that the Party's operating mechanism and the political system are performing scientifically and transparently.

To combat individualism and restrict deterioration in political ideology, morality and living style of each person and the society, assuring the Party's structure and the political system being scientific and transparent is also one of the very important measures. In particular, the Party's structure and the political system should keep renovating and improving towards streamlining, enhancing validity and efficiency of leadership, steering and management. At the same time, the middle-man sections must be examined and erased, the overlapping agencies in the Party's structure and the political system should be merged. While restructuring the Party's mechanism, those agencies of very little use or doing the same function as the State's bodies and socio-political organizations must be abolished; renovating functions and duties of the Party's lower levelled units should go on in such a way to suit the neo situation; some titles of the Party's and the State's leaders should be unified towards empowerment and power control as well so as to ensure the centralised, uniform, democratic and smooth leadership in the political system, above all, among agencies in the Party's structure. The leader's responsibility in the anti-individualism combat should be properly perceived and clearly defined; the whole process and all steps of human resource management need vigorously renovating; cadre development in terms of qualities and capabilities should be regularly conducted at the Party's lower levelled agencies and personnel management offices.



Six, promote individual activeness and self-discipline in training and fostering one's own morality.

Individualism in each person originates from both objective and subjective factors, with the latter relating to his own political awareness and perception. Hence, the anti-individualism combat cannot succeed unless each individual's voluntary involvement is mobilized. When each person appears indifferent or merely cares for the anti-individualism combat in the collective or in other people but not in himself, when some people consider the anti-individualism combat is the task to be done by the Party's agencies, the leaders, then this combat is sure not to bring about practical and concrete effects. That's why in the anti-individualism combat, each individual should also be an important entity helping to ensure the effectiveness of the combat. Therefore, each person himself should keep fostering and training such moral qualities as industriousness, thriftiness, honesty, truthfulness, dedicatedness but care-free, etc. and incessantly fight against individualism in all forms. To do so, *for himself*, each individual should prioritize the common benefits above all, fair and square, while performing the tasks related to the sake of the people and the country. *For the Fatherland and the people*, each individual must serve his country and people throughout his life; has to take care of the people's life, tries all means to satisfy the people's righteous needs and interest; respects the people's ownership and is determined to work for the people. *For the work*, he is obliged to be dedicated and highly responsible. In the society, each person differs in position, thus, their assignments also vary across branch, level and unit, yet, the perception of responsibility is the sole. It is the utmost devotion, the total dedication of mentality, efforts and capabilities to the common cause in his own position with the highest productivity, quality and efficiency. Performance effectiveness is the measure of personal responsibility rather than the title or position. Naturally, it should be understood that the higher the position and the bigger the authority, then the heavier the responsibility. There is no same level of responsibility while the scope of authority and position of individuals are clearly defined in different assignments.

4. Conclusion

Individualism is a dangerous enemy to the process of social development and personal growth; at the same time, it is also the negative side, the deterrent to individual development in the neo civilized and modern society. That is because if individualism spread all over the society, it would create a generation of egoism, only caring for himself and neglecting other people, the collective and society. It is also obvious from the current reality that individualism is enjoying a tendency and an opportunity to expand and demonstrate in a more and more complex and dedicate manner. Thus, at the request of the new situation, now than ever, combatting expressions of this illness in human development is a basically significant demand as well as a critical mission in terms of both theory and practice.

5. References

- [1] Nguyễn Khánh Bật, et.al. (2006). *Promoting Revolutionary Morality, Combating Individualism – Some theoretical and practical issues*. Ha Noi, Viet Nam: Political Theory Publisher.
- [2] Vũ Khiêu, et.al (1996). *Ho Chi Minh Ideology and Morality – National tradition and Humankind*. Ha Noi, Viet Nam: Social Science Publisher.
- [3] President Ho Chi Minh Relics Zone – Ho Chi Minh Academy. (2009). *Theoretical and Practical*



Values of the Book “Promoting Revolutionary Morality, Combating Individualism”. Ha Noi, Viet Nam: National Politics Publisher.

[4] Đặng Xuân Kỳ. (2005). *Ho Chi Minh Ideology on Culture and Human Development*. Ha Noi, Viet Nam: National Politics Publisher.

[5] Hồ Chí Minh. (2011). *Full Set*. (Volume 8). Ha Noi, Viet Nam: National Politics Publisher.

[6] Nguyễn Quốc Sửu. (2013). *Preventing and Combatting Bureaucracy in Public Services in Viet Nam – Theory and practice*. Ha Noi, Viet Nam: National Politics Publisher.

[7] Nguyễn Chí Thanh. (1969). *Anti Individualism*. Ha Noi, Viet Nam: Truth Publisher.

[8] A. G. Spirkin. (1989). *Social Philosophy*. (Volume 2). Ha Noi, Viet Nam: Propaganda Publisher.