###### Individualism and Expressive Individualism

Individualism originated in Western civilization in the 15th century. Individualism holds that life is sacred, and that human beings should be treated with dignity. Individualism also considers human beings as more important than society. Now, expressive individualism refers to the unique expression of an individual’s feelings and thoughts. Expressive individualism most likely had its origins in the Romantic movement of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. ***Romanticism*** was a movement that rejected the scientific approach with its focus on reason and scientific inquiry to improve the human condition. The scientific approach generated a body of knowledge, which was used to understand the workings of our world. In other words, science was the primary method for human beings to control their destiny. However, science relied heavily on the use of our intellect and reason to dominate nature, making us overly confident that science was the only acceptable kind of knowledge.

***Expressive individualism*** is about the basic goodness of human beings, and it stresses and emphasizes our emotional life, creativity, and imagination. It’s about trusting your intuition on things in the world. In comparison to science, expressive individualism could lead to intuitive knowledge by de-emphasizing the importance of using our intellect and reason to understand our world. It focuses on how self-reflection can generate self-discovery.

Self-reflection just means sitting and thinking about things. Expressive individualism nurtures self-realization, self-growth, and self-actualization. I wonder if these three concepts mean the same thing? What do you think?

One can argue that our culture focuses too much on how we feel and on nourishing the growth of our true self. I’m not sure about this. I’ve got to think more about it, and I’ll get back to you later. All right, I’ll think and discuss it with you now. Expressive individualism may deceptively encourage human beings to become too self-sufficient and self-reliant. It may encourage a pursuit of too much individual fulfillment and discourage individuals from making more serious connections to others, to society and to social institutions. One final thought for you to ponder. Is it possible for human beings to develop their genuine selves as they distance themselves from their cultural and social connections? By cultural and social connections I mean attachments to cultural and institutional anchors such as churches, synagogues, schools and colleges, museums, and cultural arts centers.