

Liberalism: Foundations and Implications

Liberalizm: Temeller ve İmplikasyonlar

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Introduction

The word “liberal” comes from the Latin language. It was probably coined before the word “liberalism” came into use. It refers to certain attributes of human beings, such as being open-minded, peaceful, and generous in social affairs. To be liberal means to claim to have these characteristics and to try to live up to them in everyday life.

Liberalism as an “ideology” is believed to have been born during the Age of Enlightenment, and many people accept that it was the first systematic ideology. Conservatism emerged as a reaction to liberalism in the conviction that the liberal understanding of individuality and the pursuit of individual interests would inevitably destroy the foundations and communality of social life. Socialism appeared as the third ideology and it did not- at least initially, openly reject, despite denying almost all liberal principles, goals of liberals. It claimed that its basic aim was to improve and fully realize these liberal aims.

However, two points need to be made here: The first is about the Enlightenment and the second is about the ideological nature of liberalism.

When the word Enlightenment is used, it is mainly done to refer to the Continental or European Enlightenment. However, there is another form of Enlightenment, the Scottish Enlightenment, which is as important as the Continental one to liberalism. As for the ideological characteristics of liberalism, it must be indicated that it completely differs from, for example, socialism. Socialism can definitely be seen as a child of the Continental Enlightenment, while at least a very important branch of liberal thought has its roots in the Scottish Enlightenment. There are also fundamental differences between liberalism and socialism in the values they defend and their understanding of the society and societal life.

Is liberalism an Ideology?

An essay on liberalism must begin by seeking an answer to the question of whether or not liberalism is an ideology. This is because the suffix “-ism” at the end of the word “liberal” evokes the idea that liberalism is an ideology like socialism, fascism, Islamism, and other similar ideologies. This is best demonstrated by the fact that liberalism is categorized under the title of ideologies in the textbooks on political ideologies and history of political philosophy in university classes. Interestingly the disagreements and debates on the issue occur not only among those who are known as strict defenders of liberalism but also among those who are ardent opponents of liberal ideas and liberalism as a whole.

There are three main ways to look at and evaluate liberalism. The first is to treat it as a bunch of some basic ideas; the second is to treat it as one of the political theories; and the third is to treat it as a definite and clear-cut ideology. There is no doubt that each of these three approaches has its advantages and disadvantages, rights and wrongs, weaknesses and strengths.

The first approach, which takes liberalism as a collection of some ideas, emphasizes the true nature of these ideas in human affairs. It declares that liberalism accepts a few principles as its basic tenets. Among these are the recognition, respect, and protection of individual negative freedom; the right to life and liberty; free exchange among property owners and actors in an unrestricted market; a legal system that aims to protect basic rights and to resolve contradictions and especially conflicts among the people in a quick and just way. All these do not suffice to constitute an ideology, and therefore liberalism cannot and should not be seen and treated as an ideology. There is no doubt that this approach has its own merits. However, it is refuted by the fact that liberalism has been one of the main subjects in classes of political ideologies at university courses.

The second approach is to deal with liberalism as a political theory. Defenders of this understanding point to the fact that liberalism essentially concerned with the issues and questions that are the main subjects of the political theory in general, such as the emergence, development and nature of the state, and the values of liberty, equality, and justice. These are also the issues liberalism seeks to address. Thus, liberalism is essentially a political theory.

Obviously, this approach has some truth. Liberalism essentially tackles with the issues that political theory studies. In this respect, liberalism can be called as a political theory rather than an ideology. However, the same

also applies to other ideologies. This means that we might have to omit altogether ideologies and treat them as political theories. This could cause a kind of earthquake in university programs and may force us to abandon teaching about political ideologies altogether. Another problem with this attitude is the fact that some ideologies, especially socialism and ideologies similar to it, go much further than being simply a political theory and prescribe monopolistic solution formulas to every human problem in individual and collective life.

The view that treats liberalism as an ideology is the most popular approach among those who are interested in the subject as a field of study or as a matter of personal choice. This approach is strengthened by the fact that the word liberalism has the suffix “-ism” which denotes an ideology, as is the case with socialism and fascism. For this reason, many people believe that liberalism is an ideology in its own right and therefore needs to be treated like other ideologies.

This approach has some drawbacks. First of all, the suffix “-ism” does not necessarily evoke a full-fledged ideology. The best proof of this is the case of the word “terrorism”. Terrorism is not an ideology despite the fact that it ends with “-ism”. The same can be said for some of other ideologies, such as feminism and environmentalism since these do not constitute an ideology in themselves and seek help from other main ideologies like socialism. Second, this approach fails to distinguish between ideologies and tends to treat ideologies with different characteristics under the same title.

Ideologies are usually categorized into two groups: Completed and uncompleted ideologies. There are some other names for these two groups of ideologies: Hard and soft ideologies. Another name to give them is the primary and secondary ideologies in the footsteps of German conservative thinker E. Voegelin (1901-1985). Marxist socialism, national socialism, and religionism (Islamism, Christianity, and Judaism) can be given as examples of the completed, hard, primary ideologies. Liberalism, social democracy and conservatism appear as the samples of uncompleted, soft, secondary ideologies.

The differences between soft and hard ideologies are of utmost importance. Hard ideologies claim that they have a say in any and every aspect of life and that they have to be obliged by everyone who lives in the political area where the ideology officially reigns. People can and must be expected to exhibit full obedience to the ideology and may be coerced to do so if necessary. Thus hard ideologies leave no room to individuals to have freedom and to exercise it in their life. Countries with hard ideologies, such as the socialist Soviet Union, Nazi Germany in the past and present-day Afghanistan and

Cuba, have demonstrated the negative effects of imposing a hard official state ideology on the people.

In a clear and definite contrast, soft ideologies do not have a claim to fulfill the entire life of their followers. Instead, they stress certain values and leave the rest to individuals. Each citizen is considered to have the right to freely choose the values to follow and to organize their life according to their individual preferences. Therefore, soft ideologies promote individual freedom and the peaceful coexistence of human beings with different ideas, allowing people to live in varying and sometimes competing ways of life.

Liberalism can be considered as the main soft ideology. It defends framework values and it is possible for the individuals and separate parts of society to fulfill these frameworks with what they wish and choose. A good example could be the right to freedom. The right to freedom does not tell its holders what to believe in, what values to follow, and what ways of life to live. All these are completely left to individuals themselves. The same is true for the right of free speech which enables human beings to disclose their ideas and opinions but does not tell them what to talk about and how to express. Right to private property gives the human beings the options to try to have property or to exhibit no interest on private property. In a private property society, no one is forced to own property, and the decision to do or not to do so is left completely to individuals. Therefore, it may not be wrong to label liberalism as an ideology, as long as the distinctions between ideologies are considered and the values that liberalism defends and promotes are considered and emphasized.

Historical Roots of Liberalism

As indicated above liberalism is thought to have appeared as the first ideology in the Age of Enlightenment by many experts on the ideologies. It is definitely considered as one of the direct results of the Enlightenment. However, before going further, two points need further clarification on this issue. The first is whether or not liberalism emerged purely as the intellectual product of the West. The second is the extent to which liberalism is related to the Enlightenment in a Western context.

Liberal writers like to point out that liberal ideas go back to Ancient Greece. In ancient Athens, in the charters given to those who had been liberated from slavery, all the characteristics of negative liberty were counted. It is also possible to encounter some elements of liberal thought in the Stoic philosophy. It thought that the best way to understand an individual's life

philosophy was not to look at what he/she said but how he/she behaved in life. Good life is something desirable and in order to have a good life an individual has to understand the rules of natural order. It is because the Stoics believed that everything has its roots in the nature. Among the leading adherents of the Stoic philosophy was the Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius (121-180). After Christianity became the official state religion of Roman Empire (380) Stoic philosophy lived a rapid decline. As times get closer, the ideas of John Locke (1632-1704) and David Hume (1711-1776) are counted as the leading sparks in the development of liberalism. In economics, the opinions of Adam Smith (1723-1790) are generally credited with shaping the contemporary understanding of free market ideas. His ideas on the importance of free trade in the development of social welfare and the contribution of the division of labor to economic productivity are considered to be the leading thoughts in the development of liberal economic ideas. It must be stressed, however, that these human institutions did not come into being because of Smith's writings. Rather, they already existed and were functioning so that Smith was able to observe their functions in everyday life and their contributions to the welfare of society as a whole.

However, it is possible to find elements supporting liberal approaches in the thought of thinkers in other parts of the world. For example, it is easy to detect them in the thought of Mozi of China (470-391 BC), and Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406) of the medieval Islamic world. Mozi to some extent shared the ideas of Confucius, the well-known Chinese philosopher, that the good society is a disciplined society, and that in order to protect the good society, obedience of the youth to the old, the women to the men, and the chieftains to the country-kings is the duty of everyone living under a kingdom. In sharp contrast to Confucius, Mozi thought that richness was a good thing and people had a duty not to steal other people's property and household members. On the other hand, Ibn Khaldun argued that excessive taxation was wrong and ultimately harmful to the state and society. He developed a kind of civilization theory called the Science of Umran, and this theory has many similarities with today's understanding of civilization.

Despite all these preliberal age approaches and contributions, there is no need to deny the fact that contemporary liberalism took its present form in the so-called Western world, especially in Western Europe. The names that deserve to be mentioned and must be honored as the final developers of the main liberal ideas came mainly from the United Kingdom: John Locke, David Hume, and Adam Smith.

Locke lived and worked in and around London, while Hume and Smith lived in Scotland. Locke is more associated with the Continental Enlightenment, while Hume and Smith are considered among the leading figures of the Scottish Enlightenment. The main difference in their approaches comes out in their method of thinking, especially in the role the human mind plays in the emergence and development of basic human institutions.

Since their days, however, there have been many developments in liberal thought, and today liberalism occupies a much wider spectrum. Put another way, there are many sub-schools of liberal thought. One is the liberal understanding of the Austrian thinker Ludwig von Mises (1881-1973), who showed that in a command economy, where there are no market prices, it is impossible to rationally make a top-down plan for the whole economy. Ayn Rand (1905-1982) represents a unique way called Objectivism, which accepts that human reason must be considered as the main and, indeed, only element to shape all societal institutions and social life. Murray Rothbard's (1926-1995) anarcho-capitalism took its first inspiration from Mises' ideas but went much further, declaring that the growth of a state cannot be stopped, as classical liberals believe, because states have a natural tendency to grow larger and therefore the state is harmful to humanity. The Austrian School of Economics was founded by Carl Menger (1840-1921). It discovered the theory of subjective value and marginalism. The Public Choice Theory of James Buchanan (1919-2013) and Gordon Tullock (1922-2014) must be counted among the basic branches of liberalism. It recommended that political events should be studied with the analytical tools of economics and that the main actors in political life (politicians, bureaucrats, interest groups, and voters) should be treated as utility maximizers like the market actors. The public choice school paved the way for the emergence of the discipline of Constitutional Economics. Gary Becker (1930-2014), as a sociologist and economist, went much further down the same path. Becker was one of the first economists to use the analytical tools of economics to analyze topics that had been studied in sociology, including racial discrimination, crime, family organization, and addiction. He argued that these types of human behavior could be viewed as rational and utility-maximizing. The Chicago School of Economics, led by Milton Friedman (1912-2006) and George Stigler (1911-1991), initially rejected Keynesianism in favor of the monetarist theory and later relied on the theory of rational expectations and game theory. The Law and Economics School, appeared in 1970s, has become influential in especially legal circles. The school was led by American judge and academician Richard Posner (b. 1939). And some other names deserve to be mentioned although they did not

lead any school of thought, such as Benjamin Constant (1767-1830) and Frederic Bastiat (1801-1850) from France and Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767-1835) from Germany. On the other hand, another form of liberalism, the so-called American or welfare liberalism, has emerged with the writings of especially T. Hill Green (1836-1882), John Dewey (1859-1952), and John Rawls (1921-2002). The situation in liberal thought and intellectual currents today is so complicated that various bunches of ideas that differ from each other in many respects are called liberalism, and this causes some serious difficulties in studying and understanding the foundations and implications of liberalism.

Classical Liberalism: The Origins of Liberal Thought

Classical liberalism is the name given to the original liberalism that emerged in the 17th and 18th centuries. Two main strands can be identified within classical liberalism: The first is based on the ideas of the British philosopher John Locke and the second on the ideas of the Scottish thinkers David Hume and Adam Smith.

John Locke is known as the thinker who developed further the theory of natural rights and natural law. He is also one of the classical contractarian thinkers along with the British thinker Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) and the French writer Jean J. Rousseau (1712-1778). However, Locke's view of the state of nature differs radically from that of Hobbes and Rousseau.

Hobbes believed that in the state of nature, human beings behave like wolves and they are in constant struggle with each other. "Homo homini lupus" ("A man is a wolf to another man") is the famous Latin expression pointing to this continuing and endless fight among human beings. Therefore, what human beings need most in life is security, and the state, established by a contract among human beings, is required to provide security to its citizens. In other words, security is the first and indispensable right of human beings to live in safety, peace, and harmony.

Rousseau believed that human beings lived alone, far away from each other in the state of nature. They were quite happy to do so. They came together only to satisfy their basic needs and, after satisfying their needs, they separated. The birth of first society, and then science, art, and so on, corrupted them and ended their happiness. It is impossible for humans to turn back to the life in state of nature. What is needed to do is that human beings should come together and obey the orders of general will absolutely if they want to have basic rights and aim to be happy. General will consists of the accumulation of

the will of every member of the society but it might differ completely from individual wills.

In sharp contrast to the understanding of Hobbes and Rousseau, Locke believed that in the state of nature, all human beings have the basic rights to life, liberty, and private property. These are natural rights given to human beings by their creator. In other words, divine law requires that these rights must exist, and they should be respected by every human being and social institution. It must be also kept in mind that rights did exist at a time when there was no state.

However, this begs the question, why did people enter into the contract to create the state? It seems that there was no need for the state as people had all the basic rights and must have survived in peace and harmony. According to John Locke, the first reason to leave the state of nature was the exaggeration of individuals in the state of nature to punish those who harmed themselves, which paved the way for making a contract to create the state. The second reason was the fact that the judiciary was not established and institutionalized in the state of nature, which caused some problems in the flow of societal life. Therefore, people thought it appropriate to make a contract first to establish the society, and then a second contract to establish the state. That is how the state came into being.

This explanation of the birth of the state claims that rights existed before the state was created. What this implies is that something that comes into existence cannot violate or ignore the things that existed before it. This interpretation extends to the right to resist against the state. According to the right to resist, it is the basic duty of the state to protect human rights against actual and potential violators. If a state fails to do so or it violates the rights itself people's obligation to obey the state ceases. People, in such a case, have the right to resist the state, to destroy it, and to establish a new one.

In Locke's understanding, the legitimacy of political government does not come from a divine source, or in other words, from God. It comes from the people. Therefore, political governance has to depend on the consent of the governed. This was a hot issue to debate on the time Locke was writing. It can be said that Locke produced his main ideas on this issue while struggling to reply to the ideas of Robert Filmer (1588-1653), the main philosopher who defended divine (God given) right of the kings to govern. Locke rejected this theory and emphasized that the right to govern derives from the people and requires the consent of the governed. This understanding made Locke a leading figure in democratic theory.

Locke can be described as a rationalist in method. All parts of his political and social theory are based on human reason. However, there is no clear-cut sign indicating that human beings made such a contract, and that God gave human beings these rights. These ideas are not empirically observed and scientifically approved but they all are the results of bare reasoning. However, Locke's understanding of rationalism does not extend to what is called constructivist rationalism, which claims that human rights and societies can be created and arranged (and rearranged) as desired only by pure reason.

The second line of classical liberalism appeared in the thought of David Hume and Adam Smith. First of all, they were not rationalists in method. They both rejected the idea that any and all human institutions depended on and were constructed only by human reason. They both believed that many of these institutions evolved spontaneously through the process of trial and error over a fairly long period of time. They managed to survive because they proved to be useful to human beings.

Hume and Smith can be labelled as utilitarians in the large sense of the word. However, their utilitarianism is rule (not act) utilitarianism. Rule utilitarianism is more interested in the rules in human societies than in the utility that specific acts produce for specific persons. According to rule utilitarianism institutions that have existed for a long time manage to survive because they have proved useful to humanity. They observed the fact that humanity as a whole had immense benefits from following the rules in long term regardless of who gets what.

Hume and Smith did not deny the fact that human beings have reason and that human reason has a place in human life. It would be meaningless to do so as reason is the only ability that creates the differences between human beings and animals. However, they rejected the belief that human reason is capable of creating the human institutions from scratch, and that all the institutions were planned and purposefully created without any attribution to human experience. There are other factors which play important roles in human life, including passions, excitements, needs, expectations, and ambitions. In other words, human beings use their minds and act under the influence of motives that are unrelated, and sometimes contrary, to human reason.

This is known in the history of liberalism as the evolutionist approach. It means that all the basic institutions developed through a process of evolution. In addition to the reason, the aforementioned factors played a role in their development. The process of evolution has not been completed and it will never end. The best way for human beings to learn is through trial and

error. This interpretation of evolution is radically different from the interpretations that evolution process passes through the phages that are exactly detected and determined before evolution takes place, as was the case with the evolution theories of August Comte (1798-1857), and Karl Marx (1818-1883).

The evolutionist approach of liberalism distinguishes between organized order and spontaneous order. In the former, there is a person or a group of persons who constructed the order in order to achieve certain predetermined goals. This is a common understanding of order in these times, especially among intellectuals who are, due to the education they have been given, better able to use their minds to understand and explain society. People generally tend to believe that if there is an order in somewhere, there must be a creator of order. Contrary to this common understanding, the idea of spontaneous order does not refer to an agent or factor that creates the order. Social order can emerge spontaneously in social life, with the anonymous contributions of all human beings and this happens over a fairly long period of time.

In spontaneous order, people may follow the rules that they do not know or they cannot put in a written form. These rules are embedded in the traditions, mores, styles, habits, and similar social institutions. There are many examples of micro-spontaneous orders. The main examples could be money, markets, and languages. Small children learning their native language can form correct sentences even though they do not know any of the grammatical rules. It is not known who created money and when it was created. It entered into the social life through anonymous processes in many places at about the same time. The same is true for market behavior. In the market people act according to the rules they do not know exactly.

This is a very important aspect of the reality of spontaneous orders. People tend to act in similar ways because they obey the rules, most of which they do not know or they are unable to express in words. For example, prices for commodities are set where supply and demand meet. In economics, this is called the Law of Supply and Demand. Every buyer tries to buy at the lowest possible price, while every seller tries to sell at the highest possible price. Thus, each buyer and seller contributes to the formation of prices, but neither is able to set prices alone.

The emergence of social order spontaneously through a process of evolution makes it clear why we should have a limited state. An unrestricted state would partially deform or obstruct the functioning of the spontaneous order by intervening in areas from which it should keep away, and this would harm the spontaneous social order.

In the evolutionist approach, the state is seen as a kind of nice contradiction in human life. It is believed that the basic duty of the state is to limit the violence in social affairs as much as possible, but on the other hand, the state itself is an apparatus of violence. In other words, human beings created an instrument of violence, called state, in order to prevent widespread violence in social life.

Adam Smith is known as the leading figure in economic thought. Smith is considered to be the founder of modern economics as a science. He pointed out in his work that the division of labor greatly increased the productivity of human beings and that trade greatly contributed to common welfare. Thus, he claims that free trade and the spread of the division of labor are the main factors in the incredible increase in human welfare.

In the tradition of classical liberal thought in a broader sense, there are some other lines. One is the approach based on the ideas of German thinker Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) and it is called deontological contractarian liberalism. Another approach comes from the authoritarian political thinker Thomas Hobbes, and it is purely rationalist. A famous strand depends on the ideas of Ayn Rand, a name of Russian origin, and it is called Objectivism, again a purely rationalist approach.

However, none of these has been as effective and influential in liberalism as the Lockean and Humean-Smithian lines. It is doubtful that the Kantian notion of the autonomous human being could provide a basis for liberalism. It can be said that at least some classical liberals do not accept the idea that liberalism can rely on Kant's approach because no human being in the world can be able to make all the rules he/she has to follow. The same goes for the ideas of Thomas Hobbes. It is very unlikely that pure classical liberalism can be produced from Hobbes' ideas, an important part of which is the claim that states cannot be limited by the laws they make. This is the main reason why he is generally recognized in the history of political ideas as the foremost developer of an authoritarian political theory. The Ayn Rand's Objectivism is a typical rationalist approach. For Ayn Rand, two names are important in the history of thought; the first is Ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle (384-322 BC) and the second is herself. She prides herself as the person who completed philosophical thought. According to Rand, the basic struggle is between the rational and the irrational. Mind is the main ability that distinguishes man from other creatures and that can build the world from scratch. Ayn Rand's ideas come very close to creating a kind of totalitarian worldview. What stops her is her strict individualism and her unwavering admiration for individual private property.

However, classical liberal thinkers should not be seen as flawless. As would be expected of any human being, they made mistakes and sometimes fell into contradictions. John Locke is known as a great defender of toleration but his toleration does not include Catholic Christians and atheists. Thus, that he can be accepted as the leading thinker of tolerance is very doubtful. It is also possible to detect some signs of constructivist rationalism in Lockean approach because he claimed in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689) that human character could be remade. Adam Smith had received the example of the pin factory in explaining the importance and contribution of the division of labor to the production from an Islamic thinker, Nasiruddin Tusi (1201-1274), but he never mentioned Tusi in his famous *Wealth of Nations* which was published in 1776, almost five centuries later.

Classical liberal traditions of thought are still vivid. Robert Nozick (1938-2002), for example, appeared as an important interpreter of the liberal ideas in his famous *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, published in 1974. The book had been written against John Rawls' *A Theory of Justice*, which came out in 1971. While Rawls tried to legitimize the redistribution of income by state Nozick tried to show that redistribution could not be realized without violating basic human rights. The tradition of David Hume and Adam Smith was carried into the 21st century by Carl Menger, the founder of the Austrian School of Economics, and F. A. Hayek (1899-1992), the most interesting and important thinker of the 20th century. Hayek improved the evolutionist school much further and especially his work on the theory of justice actually proved that social justice is a pipe dream and it is more harmful than useful for humanity. Hayek took the question of knowledge production and coordination as the main problem of human society and showed that in a free society, it is done much better in every respect. He emerged as the defender of classical liberal theory at a time when everybody thought that it was dead and the general tendency was in favor of totalitarian models. He waged an intellectual war against the totalitarian approaches, which were incredibly popular in 1940s with the publication of *The Road to Serfdom* in 1944, and all his criticisms of socialist totalitarianism were proven correct in the early 1990s by the failure and collapse of socialist systems.

The Elements of Classical Liberal Thought

There are different views on what the basic elements of classical liberalism are or must be. Tolerance, for example, is included by some authors among these elements, while some other authors tend to point out that where negative

freedom is established, there is no need for tolerance, since negative freedom can provide all the benefits expected from tolerance. As was the case with Kant, the notion of autonomous human being who produces every rule he/she is supposed to follow can be seen as a strong foundation for liberal thought. I think it is completely wrong, because human beings are inevitably born into a set of values and rules and they are expected to accept and obey them if they wish to live in the society. They cannot create all the values and rules from scratch and their contribution to the changes in them which take much longer time than life time of ordinary persons is negligible.

Despite all the conflicts of ideas and all the disagreements about the basic elements of classical liberalism, it would not be wrong to say that there is a fairly widespread agreement about the basic elements of the classical, i.e. original, liberalism among the defenders of classical liberal thought. These are individualism, negative liberty, private property and free market economy, and respect for the law and limited state.

Individualism

The first fundamental component of classical liberalism is individualism. In short liberalism is considered as the main, if not only, individualistic theory in the world of ideas. Individualism has two interpretations in liberal theory.

The first of which says that the individual is the main human building block in each and every society. This approach is called ontological individualism, according to which society consists of individuals. The individual is the smallest part of society. Each society can be divided into its basic units, in other words, atoms which are individuals.

Ontological individualism divides classical liberals into two groups based on their attitude toward social units such as families, groups, and society as a whole. Some claim that only individuals exist in the real sense and that social units do not exist in reality. Some tend to accept that social units exist but their existence is quite different from the existence of individuals. Individuals exist in a physical sense, but social units do not have such a presence; rather, they can be seen as a network of relationships among individual human beings. Individuals can come together in social units but later on, they can go on their way after separating from these units.

The second meaning of individualism is methodological rather than ontological. Methodological individualism accepts that scientific study to understand the actions of human beings should start from individuals and proceed

to the social groups rather than from social units to individuals. Individuals do exist, while social groups are mainly the relationships between human beings. Thus, studying the individual helps to understand the group, but human knowledge cannot advance by directly studying social groups.

Classical liberal understanding of individual and individualism has some reflections in social, economic, and political life. A family consists of a woman and a man who come together and join their lives. When a family breaks up, the woman and the man can go their own way. Each person is individually responsible for his/her wrongdoings in criminal law. Human rights are usually attributed to the individuals in democratic constitutions. Despite the ongoing debate in political theory about who owns human rights, it is an undeniable fact that so-called group or collective rights cannot constitute a reason to ignore individual rights. Thus, freedom of expression and freedom of religion are the fundamental rights that belong to and are exercised by individuals. Collective rights can be achieved by observing individual rights, but there may be cases in which observing so-called collective rights may mean violating individual rights. When there is a contradiction or conflict between the demands for collective and individual rights, individual rights must be given priority.

Negative Freedom

Freedom is the value most often associated with classical liberalism. In many cases, they are used interchangeably. If liberalism were to be expressed in terms of only one value, it would be freedom. Classical liberalism depends on and rigorously defends negative individual liberty.

Freedom has a long and rather complicated intellectual history and theoretical accumulation. Liberalism defends negative freedom, which means the absence of obstacles coming from other single individuals or groups of individuals. If there is an arbitrary obstacle in front of a person, he/she cannot be said to be free.

However, another interpretation of freedom, called positive freedom, has developed over time. The positive freedom approach began within the liberal intellectual tradition with the writings of Thomas Hill Green. At first, it did not seem to stand in a definite and sharp contrast to negative freedom. It was even thought that it might contribute to the development of negative individual freedom. Many of these expectations turned out to be false. In many respects, the main interpretations in the thought of positive freedom represent a sharp contradiction with negative freedom.

Among the interpretations of positive freedom, the first one sees freedom as being physically able to do things. This has nothing to do with freedom because being free refers to the situations in which human beings is not obstructed by, not his/her physical conditions, other human beings. The same goes with relations between human beings and nature. In order to give a sharp sample, it can be said that a person who is obstructed from doing something, like jumping up one hundred meters, is not free constitutes just nonsense. Freedom concerns only relations between human beings not the relations between human beings and natural forces. The most popular interpretation of positive freedom tends to see freedom as being financially able to do things and gives to the society, in fact to the state, the duty to support the individuals financially so that they can be free. This raises many questions and in the end it reaches to the point where freedom of some people are violated in the name of supporting the freedom of some others. It must be emphasized that the relations between the individuals and the Gods they believe in and adore cannot be evaluated in terms of freedom. It enters into a completely different area, as freedom is only related to the relationships among human beings. Political rights, in other words the right to vote and the right to get elected in free and fair elections, appear as the only correct interpretation of positive freedom which is compatible with negative freedom to a large extent.

Individual negative freedom is seen as a natural right given at birth. There are different views as to who or what gave man this natural right. There are two main approaches to explaining this issue. According to the first one, negative freedom is God-given, like all other basic rights. The second approach takes negative freedom as something that came into existence spontaneously, without interference from the non-human world. It was created by human beings either under the guidance of human reason or as an uncalculated result of human affairs. The theory of contract can be given as an example of the first approach, while the evolutionist explanation can be given as a typical example of the second approach.

Negative freedom has several manifestations in social life. Freedom of expression or the right to free speech is the leading one. It is a crossroads where all other rights meet, or any kind of right can be reached by starting from this crossroads. Freedom of expression means that individuals should be able to express their opinions, especially about the actions of those who are in a position to use public authority and to influence public life through their actions and decisions. In the beginning, this freedom was known as the right to free speech because speaking was the only way to make ideas known. As time progressed new tools and methods were added to the means of expressing ideas,

opinions, and convictions. In today's world, in addition to books, magazines, newspapers, and radio and television broadcasts, every tool, opportunity, and facility associated with the Internet can be counted among the tools for freedom of expression.

Religious freedom is another intersectional freedom. To have religious freedom, people must have the right to freedom of expression and other basic human rights. Private property and freedom for free enterprise are a must for religious freedom. So are the rights to associate and disassociate, to travel, and to settle down. The existence of religious freedom can be seen as a result or as an indicator of all these rights.

Religious freedom can be considered in two main areas. The first is related to God and the second is to the ways religions are lived and exhibited in societal affairs.

The first is the right of the believers to decide which God they believe in and worship. In this respect, for a country to have full religious freedom, it should give its citizens one hundred percent freedom. This means that believers have the right to believe in whatever they choose as their God, be it Gods with holy books or things like trees, sun, and things with no physical existence.

The second part of religious freedom relates to people's daily practices. This includes style of worship, religious education, religious practices, religious dress codes, etc. As expressed by Robert N. Audi (b. 1941) three principles can be counted in this regard: libertarianism, equality and neutrality

The first principal, libertarianism, means that the goal in religious freedom is to leave the people as free as possible and to restrict or hinder their daily religious practices only when they have the capacity to destroy a common, peaceful life. Prohibitions must be the exception, not the general rule. And basic human rights must be the guiding principle in the attempts to restrict religious practices. In short, religious freedom does not and cannot permit the practices that restrict the freedoms of others or endanger their lives. In this context, sacrificing human beings or parts of human body to make a God happy cannot be allowed in the context of religious freedom, because the right to life and the integrity of human body is a basic human right, and it comes before all other rights.

The second principle that appears as part of religious freedom is equality. Equality requires the public authority not to discriminate positively or negatively between the believers of different religions or different interpretations

of the same religion. All religions and religious interpretations should be treated equally, for example, in public employment and services.

The principle of neutrality, which is the third, points to the fact that in a free society not everyone acts as a believer in a sacred religion, and therefore non-believers or believers/followers of the so called secular religions must be treated equally with believers by the public authority. Public authorities cannot say that what is important for citizens is to believe in this or that sacred religion and they must keep away from being a non-believer. Non-believers, for example, deists and atheists, have the same rights as believers in every aspect of life. This issue is so important that J. Stuart Mill (1806-1873) pointed out that without the equality of atheists with believers religious freedom in the United Kingdom would have remained incomplete.

Private Property and Market Economy

Property is the exclusive right to use things. When something is under any form of property, only those who hold the right to property can use that property, and they have the right to exclude others from using it. Non-owners can use the owned property only with the permission of the property owner.

There are three main forms of property. The first is common property; the second is public property; and the third is private property.

Common property gives the right to use the thing usually to a community, as in the case of the people of a village who have the property of the pasture around the village. It is the inhabitants of the surrounding villages who are excluded from using it. Public property is assumed to belong to all citizens, such as roads and bridges in the country. Private property refers to the ownership of things by individuals or relatively small groups of individuals over things. In the private property system, other individuals or groups of individuals are excluded from using the thing under private ownership.

Classical liberalism accepts the right to private property as one of its leading and indispensable principles. Private property refers to the individual ownership of things. There can be no ownership over individuals. In other words, only things -not human beings- are subject to private property. Human beings cannot be owned, as was the case in the age of slavery.

The right to private property includes also the right to exchange it with things that belong to other human beings. Therefore, any restriction on the exchange of things can be read as a restriction on the right to private property. For this reason, in order to have an unrestricted right to private property,

a market economy is necessary. In a market economy, things are freely exchanged by individuals or firms, which are a collection of human beings. The market spontaneously comes into existence, it does not need a creator, and the behavior of free individuals automatically leads to human beings constituting it. If there is no market, in other words, if the exchange of things is restricted by a private or public authority, the right to private property loses much of its meaning.

Economies based on private property are much more productive than economies in which public rather than private property dominates economic life. This is the essence of the prosperity we enjoy around the world today. Wealth produced in a private property economy does not remain confined to where it was created and to those who initiated its creation, but spreads to or spills over into other parts of the world.

An economic system based on private property naturally produces inequalities of income and wealth. These are natural and inevitable results of the exchange process. However, it does not mean that liberalism does not care about justice in societal life. The classical liberal theory is linked to procedural justice. According to the theory of procedural justice, justice arises spontaneously in the market and has nothing to do with the content and results of economic exchanges. The only way to judge whether an exchange is fair or not is to look at the conditions to determine whether the exchange was conducted according to the rules of justice.

Procedural justice has three basic rules:

1. The recognition of and respect for private property.

Private property appeared as a reply to the problem of scarcity in the world and produced wonderful success in the fight of human beings first to survive and second to prosper. Therefore the right to private property must definitely exist and this right should be strictly respected and obeyed by all individuals and public authorities in all aspects of life.

2. The voluntary transfer of private property.

Where there is no exchange of properties the right to property cannot exist in reality. In a free society, properties under private ownership are continuously exchanged. This is done through contracts between individuals in an unrestricted market exchange process or legal inheritance and voluntary donations, grants, and endowments.

3. The keeping of words and promises in contracts.

Social life and relations between people depend on written or unwritten, short-term or long-term contracts, and the parties of all these contracts

are expected to keep their promises. If they fail to do so without any reasonable, unavoidable, and acceptable obstacle, they are forced to provide their promises in contracts or they are punished by the established legal authorities for the harm they gave to the other side of the contract through their failure.

Any exchange that took place without violating any of these rules of procedural justice can be considered fair, regardless of its contextual results for and effects on the parties to the exchange. This approach was shared by a wide range of philosophers from David Hume to Immanuel Kant. The German thinker Kant, for example, said that justice must be sought not in the content but in the form of market exchanges. In a caricatured sample we can think about an exchange in which a camel is exchanged with a flea. For an observer from outside who is interested in this exchange might obviously seem an open injustice. However, for somebody who subscribes to the procedural justice theory, it is exactly fair as long as the exchange took place without breaking any of the rules of procedural justice.

Classical liberals do not take seriously any understanding of social justice, be it moderate, as in the theory of John Rawls, or radical, as in the Marxist theory of justice. The reason for their attitude is that social justice has no clear-cut definition. There is also a lack of objective and identifiable principles in all theories of social justice, such as the rules of procedural justice. This leaves the theory of social justice open to the interpretation of those who demand it and those who claim to realize it.

Social justice is concerned with the position of social groups in relation to each other, while procedural justice is interested in the actions between individuals. This puts the theory of social justice in a situation where it can have no connection with criminal law. In other words, the actions and results that are considered against social justice cannot be sued in front of criminal courts because nobody could be held responsible for the injustices in the eyes of social justice seekers.

Criminal codes in almost every country include a large part of procedural justice. For example, killing is not allowed and this protects the basic right of individuals to life. In terms of creating welfare, stealing and cheating are forbidden. No one can take something that belongs to someone else without the permission of its owner. Thus, people who initiated to the creation of things have the chance and capacity to keep these things in their hands. This is the main incentive of any attempt to produce; otherwise, in the case that products or results are taken away by force or in any other way from those

who produced them, productivity is frightened, and productive activity is to a large extent obstructed. This applies not only to extortion by others but also to extortion by the state.

Respect for the Law and Limited State

Another prerequisite for classical liberal theory is to respect the law and to make the state obey and be limited by the law. A liberal society is a society of law. There can be no freedom without law. As I. Kant indicated, law is seen as the tool which coordinates everybody's freedom with freedom of others.

How the law came into existence is the subject of much debate among ordinary people as well as scholars. It is quite common to accept that law can and should be deliberately created by a law-making authority, be it a person, as in absolute monarchies, or a group of people freely elected by the people with such a duty, as in contemporary democracies.

Both approaches have their pros and cons. It is clear, however, that law emerged over a long period of time and was not created by an identifiable and observable authority. Law appears as a product of ordinary human activity. Every human being who spends any time in the world is expected to contribute to its formation. Thus, the law is a common product of all humanity, past and present.

The misconceptions concerning the law formation are mainly due to the confusion between the creation and the codification of law. To codify law is not to create it from scratch, but rather to write down legal codes and try to simplify them as much as possible. Human history has witnessed several great codification efforts, but in none of them was law created or recreated from a point where there was no law. The prior existence of law made the effort to codify the legal rules possible.

In a situation where there is no state, legal rules will continue to exist because human beings are by nature producers of rules and order, and no social order can exist or survive without rules. However, due to the exaggeration of individuals in punishing those who harm themselves and a functioning legal system, human societies need an authority to apply the legal rules, as Locke said. This is why the state comes into existence. There are different views among liberals on how the state came into existence. Some believe that the state was born with a contract in society, as Locke wrote. Some others, like Hume, accept that the state appeared spontaneously at the end of a long evolution process in human societies.

Whatever the explanation for the birth of the state and law, almost all classical liberals accept that state authority should be limited by the law. This is achieved through three basic principles: the rule of law, the separation of powers, and constitutional government.

According to the rule of law, laws must be certain, clear, abstract, and non-retroactive, and they should not make negative or positive discrimination among the subjects to whom the rules are applied based on their social, ethnic, economic, religious, or political backgrounds. In other words, rules should be applied impartially and equally. This is sometimes expressed as the principle of equality before law, meaning that everybody is equal in front of the law enforcing authorities and institutes.

Separation of powers refers to the fact that in order to have and protect individual freedom and fundamental human rights, the basic powers of the state, legislation, political governance, and justice must not be in the hands of the same organ. They must be exercised by separate branches of the state structure, because the unification of all state powers in the same organ creates a power which is impossible to limit in its actions and to hold responsible for its wrong doings.

The principle of constitutional government indicates the need that all the powers of state organs should be derived from a - preferably written - constitution that openly declares and recognizes human rights. Government as a whole or all the subbranches of government should not attempt to use powers not openly granted to them by the constitution.

Classical Liberalism and Others

Classical liberalism can be explained and proved scientifically up to a certain point. However, it is nonsense to equate it with science, as is done with Marxism under the name of scientific socialism. Rather, it emerged as a result of the long and extensive human experience and interrelationship among human beings. Ultimately, its emergence can be attributed to the characteristics of human nature, the basic specialties of human beings, the nature of power, and the ecosystem in which human beings are condemned to live.

In short, human beings prefer their own interests to the interests of others. They prefer the known to the unknown. They give priority to their short-term interests over their long-term interests. They are eager to earn, achieve and have things with, not most, but least (minimum) effort. This is because they are born this way, or because they were shaped in thousands of years of

events like this. Whatever they are, these qualifications cannot be eliminated from human nature and must be taken into account as given in the efforts to develop a social theory.

Power in human societies is either a useful or harmful tool, depending on the conditions it is based on and the functions it shoulders. Human experience shows that unlimited power definitely corrupts and harms people. As Lord Acton (1834-1902) said, "Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely". This is the nature of power, whatever its source, religious or secular, scientific or traditional, exercised by a single person or a group of persons. Therefore, the state should stay and act within clear and open limits, or else it may harm human lives.

Human beings live in an ecosystem where scarcity is its main characteristic. In order to first survive and then prosper, people have to produce. Private property, with all the incentives it creates, is an answer to this fundamental problem. As indicated above, communities with private property have been much more productive and have created more wealth. That is why we need private, not public, property economies.

Classical liberalism can be seen as a social and political theory that emerged as a result of all these situations and conditions. However, like some other approaches, it did not stay as it was born and developed in two directions.

The first appeared as a way to extend the principles of classical liberalism to their extreme logical positions. Thus anarcho-capitalism emerged. It is an approach that strictly and definitely rejects the conviction that the state is inevitable and necessary for human societies. Any society without a state is destined to be more successful and prosperous than any society with a state. Therefore, it is a duty for those who really appreciate freedom to fight for societies without a state.

The second approach went in the opposite direction. It believed that the state could do better than classical liberals believed. The state can increase positive freedom and reduce economic inequalities. It can provide basic needs, especially in education and health care, to everybody and free of charge. It can provide social security and a minimum social income to all its citizens. It can make its citizens able to use their freedoms through financially supporting them. So what we need is not a limited state, but a larger and bigger state that constantly interferes with social life for the benefit of the disadvantaged.

The position of classical liberalism and others can be explained and summarized in short by their view of the state. Classical liberalism sees the state

as a necessary evil for societies. State is useful to human societies as long as it is kept within the limits mentioned above. The benefits it produces are far outweigh the harms it inflicts on human beings. The anarcho-capitalist line of thought sees the state as an unnecessary evil for humanity. The state itself violates the rules it is supposed to apply to its citizens. It becomes a monopoly, for example, in justice, policing, and security. Thus, it hinders the functioning of the market economy. This harms the society. According to the so-called American liberalism, welfare liberalism, or new modern liberalism, the state is an inevitable and useful tool for human societies. It can help to solve almost all essential social problems. Therefore, the state is not evil in any sense, but something very good and useful, so the more we have it, the better we are.

It must be emphasized that in the world today the third approach is the most popular and used form of liberalism. In every society and country, states are deeply involved in social issues and they are both eager and able to interfere in the economic, societal, and religious life of their citizens.

Liberalism and Civilization

Civilization is among the most used and respected concepts in the world we are living today. Every thinking person has something to say about and almost all the strands of thought claim to be the owner and defender of civilization. In short two main approaches to depict and explain civilization can be counted.

Of which the first says that there have been and still are more than one civilization in the world. These can be named after their geographical location as with the concepts of European, American or Far East civilization. In some cases civilizations are called with references to religions as happens when we say Islamic or Christian civilization. In this case the names of religions are identified with civilizations.

According to the holders of this view civilizations can be, as Samuel Huntington (1927-2008) claimed in his theory of clash of civilizations, in a severe conflict and their basic aim is to destroy completely or to take under their control the other civilizations. There is also the approach that seeks peace and harmony between civilizations and it is called the meeting of civilizations, as was the case with the project led by Türkiye and Spain for some time in the near past.

The second approach takes the issue in a completely different context. It says that there has been, and still is, only one civilization, and it is called

common human civilization. Because civilization is created by human beings, and human beings constitute a certain type of existence completely different from other living beings, for example, animals. It is true that there can be differences among human beings but that does not mean that human communities with observable differences belong to a different type of creature. In essence every human being is human being and all human beings live under very similar conditions and pass through the same stages during their stay in the world. To put it differently it can be said that similarities among human beings are much more than differences among them. For this reason it is meaningless to exaggerate the cultural, religious or other differences among human beings and to claim that almost each society creates a separate civilization. There is and there will always be only one human civilization.

Seen in this context there is also a widespread conviction that the major civilization in the world today is so called Western civilization. It was mainly created only by the West. Those who contributed to its appearance most are the Westerners. In other words contemporary civilization has been created by and belongs to the West.

This approach is mistaken. The correct name of the so called Western civilization is liberal human civilization. Two reasons could be counted to support this claim. The first is the fact that contemporary human civilization depends on mainly liberal values, or, to express it differently, all the values so called Western civilization grounded on either created or explained and strongly defended by liberal authors and approaches. Among these values are religious freedom, freedom of expression, the right to private property, procedural justice, free market economy, rule of law, separation of powers, constitutionally recognized and protected human rights, limited and constitutional political governance. Without all these values and social, economic, and political structure depending on them it is just nonsense to speak about civilization.

As to the second reason, not every strand of thought in the West sympathized with these values. Quite contrary, the streams that harshly rejected and violated these values appeared in the West and found their first or most important application in the West. In addition to that, racism, systematic negative discrimination and eugenics were born as the children of the West. Totalitarian ideologies which aimed to forcefully unite the society around an absolute and monopolistic scale of aims and values and in doing so killed individuality also appeared in the West and found their way to excessive barbarism in Western soils as was the case with orthodox socialism, nationalist socialism, and fascism.

Therefore the correct name for the contemporary civilization is not Western but liberal Western civilization. However, when contributions to liberal thought which appeared in the various parts of the world and the fact that human beings constitute a unique type of living creatures are taken into consideration it is better to call it not Western liberal but simply liberal civilization. Indeed the civilization we are proud of or we have to defend today mainly depends on liberal values. If we take all its content, values and rules away from our civilization, almost nothing remains back and human civilization disappears.

Conclusion

As explained in the article liberalism first appeared as classical liberalism despite the fact the adjective classic came much later. In time it was narrowed down towards anarcho-capitalism and widened up towards statist liberalism. Both rejected the role classical liberalism predicted for the state in a free and prosperous society.

Anarcho-capitalism denied the liberal conviction that limited and law abiding state is needed and useful for human beings and societies. State has a natural tendency to expand and it is a hopeless case to expect the state stay limited in its functions in the society. Therefore the best thing to do is to abolish the state completely and leave its functions to the free market economy and civil society.

Etatist liberalism moved in the other direction. It thought that state is a useful apparatus and it is capable to improve the living conditions for especially poor and disadvantaged people. What we need is not less but more state. State should widen its functions and interfere into inequalities in the society usually in the name of material equality and social justice.

Therefore the original liberalism, which is called today as classical liberalism, stresses the differences between itself and other interpretations of liberal approach. Classical liberals accept that state is useful tool for the societies provided that it stays limited and keep away from occupying the fields of civil society and interfering into market economy.

Despite all these debates and disagreements among liberals, liberalism has a long history and very rich intellectual accumulation. Every attempt to study contemporary civilization and its concepts would sooner or later make us to face its intellectual richness especially in the form of classical liberalism. As classical liberalism helped most to the spontaneous construction of

the civilization, classical liberal values and rules turned out to be a sort of meta-ethic values and rules. These values and rules are voiced and defended, at least rhetorically, by almost every ideological position, consciously or unconsciously, in the years we are living.

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