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SHORT INTRODUCTION TO THE THEORY OF LIBERALISM

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Liberalism is a social phenomenon of the so-called Western world of the last few centuries. However liberalism is understood, there is no consensus about it and it cannot be regarded as common to all cultures or as the destiny of all mankind.

Here is a few basic definitions of liberalism from the most respected and popular sources: “*Liberalism is a political philosophy or worldview founded on ideas of liberty and equality*” (Wikipedia); “*Liberalism is a belief in the value of social and political change in order to achieve progress*” (Marriam-Webster); “*Liberalism is a political doctrine that takes protecting and enhancing the freedom of the individual to be the central problem of politics*” (Britannica). These definitions are obviously not enough to give a complex idea on what liberalism is.

People often misunderstand and misjudge the very concept of nowadays so to realize the meaning of liberalism it’s better to go into some etymology. In English there are two very similar words such as *freedom* and *liberty*. But their meanings are not the same.

Liberty comes from the Latin word “*libertas*”, which means unbounded, unrestricted or released from constraint and even contains the idea of being separate and independent while the English word *freedom* is very tricky indeed. You can trace its roots to the Germanic or Norse word “*frei*”. It describes a state of belonging to a tribe and having the rights and protections that go with it.

To have liberty is to be unencumbered (not to carry any burden). To have freedom is to have the aggregate benefits and protections provided by society. As citizens we give up some of our liberties in exchange for freedoms. This is the social contract. And people must be extremely careful with that as having more and more freedoms essentially brings you to the communism. The right for free education, free vacations, free healthcare, free (but obviously, severely limited) food in exchange for coupons - all the free stuff government provides us with is nothing else but freedoms.

It is important to understand this difference before examining such thing as liberalism. As soon as one examines it, “liberalism” fractures into a variety of types and competing visions. While generally they support the ideas and programs such as freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of religion, free markets, civil rights, democratic societies, secular governments and international cooperation you can find two main vectors: pro-liberty (classical liberals) and pro-freedom (modern liberals).

As of now liberals have very little in common with their original roots and are basically best represented by the Democratic Party in the USA. They’ve gone too far pro-freedom, right to the authoritarian side of the coin. The very concept “protecting and enhancing the individual rights” became inverted and replaced by socialistic populism.

Thus we must be aware of the concept of liberalism and give a true, classical-liberalism a chance to change our society for better.