THE INFLUENCE OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON WESTERN LIBERTARIAN THOUGHT

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ABSTRACT

The current crisis has overwhelmed current debates about the need for an immediate response on the part of governments to act or take extreme measures to reduce human costs and economic losses. At the same time, governmental measures largely disprove the laissez-faire ideology that favors a “minimum state”, or government limited scope. Which puts us in front of important questions that build on the early liberal discussions about the importance of the government role at the political, economic and social levels that emerged generally in the face of the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The research aims to reach reasonable conclusions about government intervention in times of crisis. Crises are exceptional cases; require a comprehensive mobilization of social effort at the governmental and popular levels to avoid expected losses and damages because of crises. Libertarian inclinations oppose governmental intervention in the activities of public life. Which exposes for discussion the problem related to the importance of the government role in solving public problems that need capabilities that overtop the capabilities of the private sector. In addition to that; the government having an important role in providing social benefits to the poor classes who are unable to work in Healthy urban conditions.

Keywords: Western Libertarian Thought, COVID-19

I. INTRODUCTION

Libertarians are a group of thinkers, who value individual freedom very much; they believe that its reverence justifies the strong protection of individual freedom. Therefore, they insist that justice is opposed to coercion or coercion of people to do certain things Such as serving the public interest or interfering with personal property, and they advocate equal rights for homosexuals, decriminalize drugs, open borders, and oppose most military interventions. Libertarians represent the extremes of political and economic freedom by maintaining the state's function as a "night watchman." The most prominent pioneers of libertarianism are Isaiah Berlin, Robert Nozick, Murray Rothbard, Leonard Read, and Frederick von Hayek.

The importance of the libertarian school lies in the fact that it is a political philosophy had broken the dominance of analytic philosophy over Anglo-Saxon thought in the 1970s with John Rawls publishing his book: A Theory of Justice (1971). John Rawls had revived the social contract tradition and liberal welfare state justification in defense of individual liberty and redistribution by using a different form of the state of nature to justify the welfare state by defending freedom in a just and fair society. Rawls' arguments caused a steady stream of reactions over the following decades. The left criticized Rawls because they thought he did not go far enough towards a collectivist state, Libertarians criticized him for calling for social justice through the redistribution of social resources.

Surprisingly enough, the biggest challenge Rawls faced came from one of his Harvard colleagues, A younger philosopher, Robert Nozick (1938-2002). Nozick’s Anarchy, State, and Utopia, published in 1974, had the unexpected effect of transforming libertarianism from a political philosophy that only a handful of academics circulates into a mandatory subject of discussion between American philosophers and their students. The two works had considered a key to twentieth-century political philosophy. In addition to Nozick, the writings of
Defining the meaning of libertarianism is controversial, especially among libertarians themselves. There is no single way in which we can define libertarianism clearly, or there is not a single principle or set of principles on which all libertarians agree. However, there is a kind of family resemblance that can bring libertarians together in a unified analytical framework. Therefore, we will focus in our research on libertarianism of Robert Nozick's political thesis on political and economic freedom and compare it with the views of some important libertarian theorists. Regardless of the details, the libertarians meet with approximate agreement on a set of criteria and political generalizations that we will try to define in three main points: individual freedom, State activity limits, and the power of the state to use legal coercion. Noting that freedom in general is associated with freedom of action, Markets in classic propositions such as Adam Smith and John Stuart Mill, In contemporary discourses, this can be seen in Joseph Schumpeter in: Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy (1942), and Friedrich Hayek's : The Road to Slavery (1944).

Most libertarian thinkers agree that pursuing a political philosophy that sees individuals, not countries or any groups of any other kind are essential existentially and normatively and Individuals have rights against certain types of coercive interference by other social forces, and people should be free to do “anything peaceful”, As the libertarian thinker Leonard Read (1898-1983) said. For libertarians, Freedom understood as non-interference. It is something that able to claimed legitimately in front of others as a matter of legal or political right, And anyone should be free to do whatever he want. As long as he does not commit acts of violence or fraud against any other peaceful person, Libertarians call this principle “non-aggression”.

II. THE LIBERTARIAN PERSPECTIVE OF ROBERT NOZICK

Nozick’s theory characterized by its adoption of an ethical norm derived from Immanuel Kant's justifications for individual freedom, Nozk tries to argue that a minimal state is justified and that any state with more extensive powers would violate the natural rights of its citizens, at the same time, he seeks to refute anarchism, which is opposed to any state. Individuals are ends, not means, and it is not permissible to sacrifice them or use them to achieve other ends without their consent. Man is a rational, self-aware being, free will, has the ability to make rational judgments. In addition, he has inherent dignity and right, he cannot be a properly treated as a tool or commodity. In The Nature of Rationality (1993), he argues that rationality is a critical factor of the self-image of the human race and not just a tool for acquiring knowledge and improving our lives. Understanding our rationality brings a deeper insight into our nature and our own situation The human being, as Nozick sees, is a free being who possesses a self-owner, In the Virtue of Selfishness (1964), the Russian novelist and writer Ayn Rand (1905-1982) goes to more provocative position in her defense of human autonomy. Rand's defense of the ethic of self-interest and natural survival is an integral part of her defense of classical liberalism. She justifies her defense of self-interest as rational selfishness. Rand says: Just as man cannot survive by any random means, he must discover and practice the principles, which his survival requires, nor can a person's self-interest be determined by blind desires or random whims, but it must be discovered and realized by guiding rational principles, this is why objective ethics is the ethics of rational self-interest or rational egoism. In addition, one does not exist as a servant or slave to the interests of others, and everyone's life and happiness are his ultimate goals. Rand sees in the concept of selfishness, which adopts an objective ethics its main purpose is to keep people free, which makes slavery immoral for libertarians, Because enslaving someone is a theft of his self, which he owns alone, and no one has the right to possess it by another. Nozick says: Individuals have rights and there are things that no person or group may do to them - without violating their rights-. The libertarian theorist and economist Murray Rothbard says: The basic idea of libertarians is "that no man or group of men shall attack the person or property of any other person.", That is, Nozick and Rothbard give the individual an independent entity corresponding to the institutional entity of the state. The problem for Nozick is that “some people have the desire to integrate By selling shares in themselves to get protection”. They give up some rights related to making some decisions such as drug rights, prices, deciding the parts of the body that can be donated...etc. So that everyone has, the right to make decisions, through a series of mergers these rights has become owning by a dominant agency that protects its members and “reserves the right to rule on any court action applied to its clients”. The conclusion from the analysis of Nozick’s story is limited in two important points: first, the deduction of the hypothesis of the minimal state. Second, the establishment of a moral link between slavery and the identification of the functions of political power, both (the state of traditional slavery and the state) commit essentially the same violations of the right to human dignity.
Libertarians greatly question the legitimacy of political power and the state, because of the basic libertarian hypothesis about the moral independence and equality of individuals, and none of them is naturally subject to the will of anyone else. The state must respect all the moral rights of individuals, including their rights to their conscious selves and their other external properties. Therefore, libertarians require the voluntary acceptance of any form of social organization or legitimate state power, for this reason, we always find the concept of the state leads to confusion and prolonged debate in the writings of libertarians. In the origin of the state, Nozick returns to a "dominant agency" and does not accept the theory of the social contract, in which he sees a concession to important freedoms for the individual. Friedrich Hayek (1899-1992) argues: “It is extremely misleading to identify the population or citizens of a particular political unit as a prototype of society.” Under modern conditions, there is no single society, to which an individual usually belongs; it is highly desirable that this not be the case”. Hayek tries, by addressing the prototype, to reformulate the concept of the state as an abstract system in a direct interaction environment based on common spontaneous rules and not collective orders. Because, Hayek sees society as an object of the rules of spontaneous market movement and a space for rational and voluntary action and does not serve a specific purpose, but it represents a peaceful pursuit of various ends that make the abstract system a great society, Not bound by any particular ideology. For limiting the organizing forces in society that would be “an instrument of arrangement or organization by which the individual is made to serve pre-designed purposes”. As for Murray Rothbard. He sees in the state a system of compulsory monopoly and all the services provided by the monopoly system of a state provided by the private sector at a high efficiency. Group of men who call themselves "the state" are trying through long historical eras to monopolize leadership positions in the economy and society. The state reserved for itself the monopoly of the police, the military, the law, the judiciary, the power of money, the streets, and the highways "so long as control of land and transport was an excellent means of ensuring the overall control of society." . Rothbard even considers wars as mass murders and taxes as looting. As for Nozick, “taxes on labor profits are equivalent to forced labor.” For redistribution in the modern state and to finance the various programs of the bureaucratic welfare state. Which is morally illegal, because the state withdraws money a result of individuals from work, thus, forcibly withdrawing it from them amounts to partial servitude, "it is like forcing a person to work hours for another purpose”. And granting every citizen certain benefits in the welfare state, such as social security or any other services, is part of the proceeds from the work of individuals that were withdrawn from them in the form of taxes. That is, the state claims that it has a right to a part of the individual, which is his work, and this completely intersects with the principle of self-ownership, so we find that Nozick and Rothbard call the tax system as a theft. Subsequently, Modern liberal welfare-state programs have become morally incompatible with libertarianism as long as they follow a planned path. It sponsors slaves to be citizens of the state, and the only moral justification that Nozick gives is what he calls the minimal state or the night-guard state that protects individuals by police and military forces, from assault on private property, fraud, theft, and the courts run the law. “The tiny state maintains a monopoly on every use of force except what is necessary for immediate self-defense.”, Despite Nozick's approval of the Night's Watch state, Rothbard disagrees with him. Rothbard's student, Hermann Hans Hope, says in the introduction of “Rothbard: The Ethics of Liberty” (1982): Rothbard considered the classical liberal solution to the basic problem of humanity represented by the state of the night watchman or a constitutionally limited government; It is a naive and hopelessly confusing idea. Once the agency is allowed to collect the current tax, it will ask for more taxes in the future and tend to use this feature to expand its jurisdiction, which creates a problem in restricting the legal authority of the state, and there is no other way to restrict authority except by abolishing the state. Nozick believes that such a state cannot interfere in the regulation of freedoms, social security, education, minimum wage laws, rent control and similar measures that limit the freedom of citizens, The minimal state will inevitably arise from an Anarchical society. Originally, it evolved into an agency that attended direct self-defense that had caused issues related to revenge and compensation for criminal acts, instead, this agency administers protection and law enforcement services for those who "buy protection and enforcement policies" by paying taxes. Justifying paying taxes in this way that Nozick suggests is a redistribution that can achieve social justice. However, redistribution, as Nozick believes, differs from the redistribution of Rawls and his followers, who see in taxes a redistribution in order to ensure a fair distribution of wealth and income in the society they govern.

Ensuring the freedom of individuals requires the protection of their material and moral rights, So Nozick puts forward his Entitlement theory of justice. The justice for Nozick based on three main principles: The first is the principle of fairness in acquisition, or seize natural resources, it is the same principle adopted by John Locke in mixing private work with things, second: It is the principle of fairness in the transfer of ownership. Nozick supports the principle that less holdings is just if it is voluntary. Because it stems from respect for a person’s right

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to dispose of what he owns. Third, it is the principle of justice in correcting grievances and using appropriate means to prove acquisition and Transfer of ownership. Therefore, Nozick's theory of distributive justice requires compliance with the three conditions: Acquisition, Transfer, and Rectification, It is a very logical result, Libertarianism stems from the importance of the moral individual within the group. The results of these conditions do not require distributive equality in so far as they take into account individual entitlement. Nozick says that normative justice theories are either historical end-state theories, or end-result theories. Opinions that take the final result require that the distribution of wealth in a typical or structurally organized society. As for the historical theories of distributive justice, Nozick believes that it corresponds to "the previous actions and conditions of people that create different entitlements" based on differential conditions, which must match actual history. Simply that distributive justice consider who has worked hard and who deserves more in accordance with the three principles of justice, Which makes Nozick's model more compatible with freedom, which he believes "disturbs patterns.". It allows people to dispose of their property voluntarily, it never agrees with the theories of the stereotypical distribution of justice, whether by socialists or capitalists, or any other theory of distributive justice. The minimal state model is what Nozk considers "inspiring and totally correct.". It corresponds to the dreams of Utopia, It allows for the actual verification of each individual's vision within the political collective, It respects pluralism in all its forms. All that libertarianism requires is that individuals adhere to their political or religious beliefs without imposing them by force or without their consent, For Nozick the lower state would be a "frame for utopia". a comprehensive system in which social, moral, religious and ideal visions are realized at the same time, It thus provides a vehicle for people with radically opposing viewpoints (socialists, capitalists, liberals, conservatives, atheists, religious believers). Individuals join the utopia of their own choosing and live side by side in peace, rather than designing a ready-made society in which they dissolve and cancel their individuality.

III. THE LIBERTARIAN ATTITUDE OF THE EPIDEMIC

Accordingly, the libertarian viewpoint appears to be very rigid towards protecting individual liberties from the interference of societal authority. Even if the restriction of freedom is a rational act, the motive behind doing or refraining from doing a certain act must be the source of the inner will of the individuals. This problem has emerged recently about the state's right to restrict the movement of individuals and oblige them to wear protective masks or refrain from certain actions to maintain public safety. It is the subject of freedom in light of the Corona pandemic. The coronavirus crisis has highlighted the shortcomings of European liberalism due to the shortcomings of social safety nets and the collapse of markets, leaving people destitute and marginalized. This reinforced the claims of advocates of the need to strengthen the social role of the state as a welfare state rather than a state focused on saving “individuals” in the end rather than solidarity from others. Therefore, the Corona pandemic has opened the opportunity to reflect on how social security programs that include providing adequate support to people in the context of difficult working and health conditions work. One of the options that has emerged in many countries during the pandemic is the universal basic income (UBI) as a possible solution to some of the consequences of the pandemic and as a long-term solution against economic variables related to individual income. The Spanish government has announced its intention to adopt a basic income, which is likely to cover the income guarantee of about 2.5 million people, as an essential part of its policy response. The proposal to adopt a basic income has also signed by 100 UK parliamentarians, The political decision maker will also face problems related to determining the appropriate level of government interventions to mitigate the spread of infection. These interventions include preventing mass gatherings and closing schools, and imposing stricter lockdown restrictions, It may cause costs to society, Such as the negative effects of violence, job loss on a personal level, and societal losses due to the decline in economic activity, which calls for government intervention and the decision-makers’ initiative to take appropriate decisions to mitigate these effects. In addition to providing financial support for scientific research and providing vaccines. It is, as we said, moral responsibilities towards society that do not justify the libertarian argument for limiting the functions of the state as a night watchman. In fact, the libertarian position is not uniform on this issue. In a recently published study by Walter Block entitled: A Libertarian Analysis of the COVID-19 Epidemic (2020), Block writes that libertarians are divided into quarantine: hawks who prefer government intervention to solve the problem even though they do so reluctantly because such measures lead to the imprisonment of the innocent, this group represented by: Walter Olson and Ilya Shapiro. The Doves who oppose quarantine and compulsory vaccinations as violations of rights. They prefer individualism and decentralized initiative and insist on this position; Jörg Guido Hülsmann, Lew Rockwell, Philipp Bagus, and Richard Epstein represent this group.
For the German economist Hülsmann (1966-) believes that the main concern of the issue is government intervention, which could prolong and increase the current difficulties, the classic example refers to the events of the Great Depression in the thirties, where the increased intervention of the state caused the expansion and prolongation of the economic crisis. As for Leo Rockwell, director and founder of the Mises Institute, he goes beyond mere concern about state interference. He finds the violation of the principle of non-interference that libertarians believe in. Rockwell believes that the main argument lies in the act or initiation of the explicit action that justified the forced quarantine against the Corona virus, considering this measure an aggression and aggression against individuals. He cites passages from Murray Rothbard's writings to support Rothbard's saying: “The fundamental axiom of libertarian theory is that no one may threaten or commit violence (“aggress”) against another man’s person or property. Violence may be employed only against the man who commits such violence; that is, only defensively against the aggressive violence of another. 1 In short, no violence may be employed against a non-aggressor. Here is the fundamental rule from which can be deduced the entire corpus of libertarian theory”, In the sense that Rockwell's justification for rejecting the preventive measures related to the restriction of freedoms is tantamount to an attack on the rights of individuals who have not been proven to have committed the infection, but merely speculate on that. This time contradicts the basic principle of libertarians, especially since Rockwell agrees with Rothbard that the act of aggression is considered real because the justifications for quarantine are based on the act of “panic at the threat” only without a direct and explicit threat. Rothbard writes in “The Ethics of liberty” : "It is important to insist... that the threat of aggression be clear, immediate and direct", Which leads to coercive measures that justify tyranny. Philip Bagus summarize the libertarian view: "For Rothbard, and libertarians in general, the concept of rights is quite negative, and rights protect a wide range of persons’ activity that no one else can interfere with by violence. Ownership limits define the area that one can freely dispose of. This stems from Rothbard's calls to convert all properties that provide public services to private properties, including streets; it is unjustified to violate the private property and freedoms by closing schools, cafes and shops under the pretext of “panic” of the epidemic. The last conclusion about doves leads us to the conclusion that it is not legally justified to impose restrictions on freedom of movement, work and worship just by fearing the transmission of the virus, although individuals may not have the intention to not adhere to the prevention instructions. Fear or panic about the spread of the virus does not justify taking any measure that restricts freedoms. In short, these procedures are considered aggression and aggression against individuals who commit any explicit or direct mistake.

And on the other side, Libertarian hawks tend to support these measures, For example, the American academic Walter Olson says: “I'm a bit of a COVID-19 hawk myself — being exposed to a fatal load of virus particles by some well-meaning stranger in a shared public space seems to me a kind of physical aggression”. Ilya Shapiro agrees with Olson, saying that he has recently found himself embarrassed to defend all of the government's outlandish actions, Although this contradicts my affiliation with the Cato Institute of thought devoted to individual freedom, markets and limited government. However, in the case of a pandemic “when we do not know who is infected and the infection is often asymptomatic, these kinds of restrictions end with the maximization of freedom. Although the libertarian principle tends to the ultimate freedom of the individual, this right “ends at the tip of someone else's nose, which means that the government can restrict our movements and activities because we are all whores now.

Between the two positions, Jason Kuznicki, editor of the libertarian Cato Institute, writes: Committing to social distancing and wearing masks is necessary when interacting with people. The libertarian part is that doing so is voluntarily a matter of personal and free choice, Meaning that exceptions will be present and effective because they are simply a free choice. Regardless of the opinions of some libertarians about doubting the validity of the epidemic, like Hülsmann, But wearing masks and quarantine must be mandatory. In fact, there is no need for coercion, because it is a matter of individual safety and the safety of others, and because we do not like to appear or be infectious. Thus, coercion can be overcome by rational voluntary action.

Roderick Condon, Professor of Philosophy at University College Cork in Ireland, wrote: The coronavirus crisis extends beyond the external shock caused by a pathological factor, and extends to the principles of social organization of this event. This event requires a re-enhancement of shifts in societal understanding and an affirmation of collective responsibility to go beyond collective outcomes in favor of the population. This may contradict the neoliberal model of social reality as it consists of markets and rational individuals, but in the end it expresses the popular crisis slogan, which is “we are in this together” in resorting to solidarity as a means to bypass the nation-state in building a global and responsible society through comprehensive cooperation through. On this point of view, Slavoj Žižek believes that: "we are in the same boat"! In addition, that we live today in a
healthy society and our need to hear other voices does not necessarily mean a pluralistic democracy or parties. It is an issue that requires an open space with the state because control will spread mistrust and create more conspiracy theories, Žižek says: "Only mutual trust between people and the state can prevent this from happening."

IV. CONCLUSIONS

Epidemics are exceptional and emergency situations that put our individual and collective convictions, our priorities and our ability to the test. It tests the effectiveness of social, governmental and private institutions, as well as ethical principles and strengths and weaknesses in the social fabric. Taking health measures to prevent the pandemic requires advanced epidemiological surveillance systems and effective scientific studies. The implementation of health policies related to health prevention requires public institutions capable of activating them. Which requires the allocation of huge funds to support these measures. This is what libertarians consider it an as an economic cost that burdens the state. That is why they call for the privatization of public services such as healthcare. This in turn leads to the diminishing of the regulatory and preventive role of the public health department over time because some financial and commercial sectors consider health and environmental controls as hampering economic activity. The ideology of minimal state or laissez-faire often views health and environmental measures as threats to individual liberties. However, individual liberty alone as a natural right may not be a sufficient justification when public health is threatened. Rather, restricting freedoms by necessity and the need for an active role for government institutions that can play a pivotal role in public health during the pandemic can be viewed as rational and legitimately justified measures that serve the public interest.

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