

The Capabilities That Make Society Good

Have you ever asked yourself a question, “Do I live in the right place? Is this place optimal for me? What people do I communicate with?” There is a high probability that you have not. In fact, we never do having once taken our life for granted. Below, two opposite approaches to managing one’s life are discussed.

In his book *The Good Society: An Introduction to Comparative Politics* (Draper and Ramsay 2007), Alan Draper argues that the society has something to strive for to become better than it is; in other words, a big goal encourages its aspiration for self-perfection. There are no limits for improvement, and something always remains to be changed. Thus, it is interesting to discuss the following questions: what are the characteristics of a good society? How can one define if it is not good enough? Whom should it be good for? All these questions are quite easy to answer, according to Draper. The notion of capability leads one to the answers to all of them. It is the basic point for classifying nations as the ones with a high level of society development and those who still have something to strive for.

The first issue that should be marked is that the good society is a democratic one (34). Draper argues that the most important thing that influences the society is the political regime. This idea seems to be well-grounded: indeed, political structure performs a function of the basis for the whole society, and in case it is rotten, the whole construction together with its foundation is doomed to “fall to the ground”. To illustrate this statement, it is sufficient to refer to the experience of some country with domination of the totalitarian regime. For example, it is reasonable to recollect the Fascist regime in Italy. Tied hand and feet, people could not bear the system they lived in, and the government deprived of the inner support could not cope with the tension rising up from the very heart of the country.

The issue of a country's capability deserves paying particular attention. This notion is quite broad and includes several components. First of all, the country should give as much freedom to its citizens as their democratic rights allow to. Here, it is interesting to refer to the example of the North Korea. Its population is partially deprived of some rights that democratic countries provide to their citizens; thus, the country is pushed way back in comparison with such democratically developed countries as the EU members, Canada, or the USA. When oppressed, people have no intention to act for the benefit of the country they live in.

Another aspect that should be discussed is the capabilities that build a healthy society with no essential problems in its development. The first capability is life: indeed, permanent fear of death can cause a severe damage to people's personalities. The second element is physical health and bodily integrity. Human beings are not liable to damaging their body intentionally; on the contrary, they make effort to protect their health from the external threats. Thus, it is important to provide people with the environment in which they will not be concerned about being hurt or wounded. In fact, constant danger of death or injury is the explanation of why the state of war is considered to be unnatural to a human. The next component is the concept of senses, imagination and thought. People enslaved by their own government are limited in using their imagination and expressing thoughts sincerely, which is very disturbing and exhausting. This may remind one of Orwell's anti-utopia *1984* (Orwell), which tells the story of the community whose minds are controlled by the reigning party. Being perceived as a nightmare by the citizens of the Western developed countries, this situation has become a part of life experience for those people who live in countries the totalitarian regime. They are constantly afraid of saying or doing something wrong or even getting imprisoned for their own thoughts.

One more concept, which is affiliation, carries certain contradiction in the case of a totalitarian country: Affiliation is the notion which implies that one is supposed to live for the sake of the others and be a decent compatriot for them. In the totalitarian societies, on the one hand, people are demanded to demonstrate their affiliation; on the other hand, being suppressed by the state, they can hardly enjoy the idea of having affiliation to the state that keeps their lives in danger and violates their rights.

The next issue is the emotional condition of the society. Making a slight exaggeration, it is reasonable to remind that slaves are not able to laugh. Suppressed people limit expression of their emotions and actually have poor grounds for positive impressions; thus, the mood of the whole society is saturated with negativism and despair.

Finally, it is necessary to touch upon the interaction between the environment and the people. Those who cannot take control of themselves are not able to take control over the world they live in. The nature, the other species and the scientific development will remain a mystery to them, and it is impossible to continue further explorations. There are no other options for such countries than stagnating as they are, trying to find their place in the world and slowly figuring out that their attempts bring no results.

In the modern world, totalitarianism remains something unrealistic and blurred for many people; yet there are several countries whose regimes could be classified as totalitarian. Along with North Korea, these are Libya, a state in Africa where people are living for the sake of dying since the political environment is upsetting, and so is the economical state; Myanmar, a state in Asia known because of Burma located on its territory: people living there can be described as not quite realizing that they actually live. Sunken in the miseries of their lives, they are a shocking contrast

to the prosperous European countries. It is also reasonable to mention Uzbekistan where the government has seized power not only over the state, but also over the people; the citizens live a life full of restrictions and limitations and do not even know that there is another way of social organization.

It is possible to assume that these countries are not numerous and their impact on the modern society is very insignificant. Indeed, this seems to be true, and this insignificance can be to the great extent explained by domination of the totalitarian regime itself: these countries just do not have enough power to develop. However, the developed countries make efforts to liberate citizens from totalitarian countries from this pressure and give them the opportunity to make decisions about their lives on their own. Along with the capability as the “creative way to measure performance” (47), these efforts contribute to these countries’ capabilities necessary for growth and prosperity.

Works Cited

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