

“For man, when perfected, is the best of animals; but, when separated from law and justice, he is the worst of all.”-Aristotle, Politics

What I am about to discuss here is the nature of man and his abilities for development both in metaphysical and social aspect. This is necessary in order to explain to what extent the human being can become “perfected”, what means he uses for this task and what is the achieved result. Is really the man an animal and is he able to become perfect anyway? What is the purpose of laws, regulations and justice and what kind of role they play in the man’s life? What happens in the case of their absence? These questions should find their answers in order to apprehend the sense of Aristotle’s statement.

Topic 1 – The nature of man

Man is the best developed animal of all, without any shadow of doubt which can be attributed to his reason. As Blaise Pascal claims, he is the only creature that realizes its existence and this makes him superior. Unlike Nature, which is perfect but unconscious, man is imperfect, but he realizes it and this fact puts him in a state in which he exceeds Nature. However, man is an animal. Apart from his reason and the faculty to think, he remains a part of the animalistic world as the superior animal. He resembles animals in all aspects, but his thought. He bears the scars of his animalistic nature not only in a physical way but also in his behavior. Namely the behavior is what we will take under consideration here – the man’s social skills and their dependence on the human nature and the regulations that the society imposes.

Topic 2 – The “perfected” human being is the one that is separated from laws and justice.

What do we mean when we say that a human being is “perfected”? If we recognize the man as an animal and speak of excellence, we should mention the name of Friedrich Nietzsche. He floats the idea that the man is an animal in all he does and he should not only avoid changing this fact, but also he claims that the man should turn himself backwards to this very animalistic nature and abandon all kinds of cultural forms which try to “cultivate” the gist of man. These forms include culture, religion, laws, morals and virtually everything that imposes a model of demeanor. Nietzsche maintains that the perfect human being is, what he calls, the “superman”. This is the last stage of human development in which all social and cultural laws are abandoned and superseded by the human will for power and supremacy over everything. This will is actually the animalistic part of man, which Nietzsche defends. He recons that abiding by this very will, is what will make the man “perfected” In this sense, Nietzsche contradicts Aristotle’s statement for he thinks that the separation from laws and regulations makes the man the best animal and the best creature that could ever exist. This appears to a beneficial process with positive outcomes. The idea of this superior being is presented as the perfect existence which will lead the individuals back to their normal evolution in which their human nature is not obstructed by laws or Christianity, for example, which try to change the human nature by imposing a life-model which contradicts to the real nature of man and makes him live in a manner

which is unnatural. This is why Nietzsche holds that the “perfected” human being is the “superman” who lives without following moral principles and striving for justice and this is what makes him perfect, indeed. Of course, we should mention that this stage of development is an utopia and practically the state of excellence is not real. Nietzsche himself says in “Thus spoke Zarathustra” that when reaching the “superman”, the man actually dies. This means that the idea of the “superman” is actually impractical but still it has contributed to the Modern philosophy as a well substantiated idea.

Topic 3 – The “perfected” human being is the one that abides by regulation, laws and justice.

According to Aristotle’s view, the best human existence is the one that attends virtuosity. He claims that in order to live a happy and fulfilled life, one should be a virtuous person and this is not a state, but an activity. Virtuosity consists in making the right choices consciously and without an inner conflict and also seeing the truth in every situation. This is actually the ethics. Ethics is a part of the social behavior of man, an inevitable one. If you follow the ethical principles, and therefore follow morals, then you cannot offend the law and you act in accordance with justice. This is the way to become a good citizen and member of the society. Virtuosity in its essence is perfect when it is not accompanied by inner conflicts when a decision is made. When this is achieved, then the man could be considered “perfected”. However, virtuosity does not make the man a less-animal, but still it shows development which turns the man into a better being. Perhaps this is implied in the statement that the “perfected” man is the best animal.

Immanuel Kant has also given a thought on this problem. In his work, “What is Enlightenment?”, he claims that we should get rid of the immaturity and become fulfilled human beings by following his appeal - “Dare to be wise!”. In this way only can we overcome the immaturity and start to think independently and follow the Imperative. When we trust the Imperative, we live in accordance with our a priori moral guide. This is when we think clearly and right. This makes us mature and, in some sense, “perfected” for we no longer act in accordance with the others, who we listen to, but we trust our own reason. We see that if we obey the laws (in this case the Imperative), we are fulfilled human beings and also “the best of animals”.

Topic 4 – What are the results of the separation of the man from laws and justice? The conflict.

There is a case in which the man does not regard the laws of the society, or any other laws, and is separated, so to say, from these cultural forms. The philosopher Hobbs maintains that in the natural state of man, where there are no authorities or whatsoever, the man is in war with all the other individuals on the grounds of protecting his own freedom and simultaneously trying to dominate over them. As this is an animalistic characteristic, it clearly shows that the lack of laws that “constrain” the animal in the man could easily lead to disorder and wars. This is why Hobbs proposes the social contract as a solution to the problem of this state of war. This contract actually represents the norms, which make the man a “better animal” In their absence we see that a conflict is born. In this very conflict the man could be very cruel for, as we said in the beginning, the difference between the other representatives of the somatic sphere and man is that the man realizes his state. His thought can turn out

into a powerful weapon which could be worse than the behavior of the most furious beast. What I mean here is that the human's disobedience could lead to very serious consequences which can reflect in a bad way on the whole world we live in. The problem here is that, with man we have the power of intention. This factor has led to severe consequences to the social life and the life on this planet. The events of September, 11th perfectly exemplify the state in which the lack of justice and laws results in an inhumanely treatment to those who pertain to our own kind. When laws are helpless or neglected man can turn into the worst animal, which destroys, kills and imposes disorder. Consequently, he destroys even his human nature and becomes an animal which does not care even for his own kind. Moreover, the sad truth is that in this way man de-evolutes and acts in a manner which is despicable and does not match his with the name "reasonable being".

Topic 5 – The conclusion

As we see, there can be many facets to the problem of the "perfected" human being and what makes it perfect. On the one hand, we distinguish the utopian idea of Nietzsche for the perfect existence of man which excludes regulations, religious beliefs and morals, and on the other hand we see that this model is just a well defended idea which can never work in the circumstances of the normal civilization and society for the disobedience is not actually the key to a successful living. The truth is that the man always has to strive for improvement. He has to try to become perfect all his life by following the regulations of the society, acting in accordance with his own reason, trying to do the virtuous activity and the most important - trying to act like a human being. Excellence is probably an utopia either but still this endeavor for a better living, will make the man the best animal of all, which is admirable. This is implied in the term "perfected". Namely the effort to live according to the laws and justice as the signs of humanity is the key to perfection.