Nowadays our citizenship will roughly paint our future, likewise being stateless will also paint a future, but not one where comfort, happiness and basic human rights are an option.

Many countries and individual philosophers such as Aristotle have their own definition of what citizenship is. A loose definition of citizenship in today’s world according to UNESCO is having voting and passport rights. On the other hand, Aristotle believes that only people who can adequately participate in an office involving deliberation and decisions can be called a citizen. In his eyes, children, women and seniors are not citizens because they are simply unfit to participate in politics and significant decisions. If this was the definition that countries still chose to abide by, it would deem the lives of stateless people unliveable. According to the UNHCR, millions of people from all over the world are deprived of citizenships from their respective countries, states and territories. This means they can not leave to seek citizenship elsewhere as well, but that is the least of their concern. Statelessness deprives these humans from education, healthcare, jobs, marriage, owning a house, and even opening a bank account. All the things other citizens take for granted.

If Aristotle’s ideologies and methods were to be implemented today, it would change that number from millions to billions, making his take on citizenship irrelevant in today’s fast-paced world as it would be inhumane. Hannah Arendt’s view on statelessness could be more logically applicable as she was once stateless herself between the years 1937 – 1950, making her someone with more recent first-hand experience. Despite her struggles, she is the one of the stateless people who had it relatively ‘easy’. Many people around the world today do not have the opportunities that were bestowed on her. Like Hannah, Jean Jacques Rousseau had his citizenship taken from him, but later had it returned to him. Rousseau’s way of thinking was that to make a functioning society / country each individual must be directed by a narcissist urge to improve and adapt, but these urges can not be in conflict with their ‘objective’ civil identity. In theory it seems to make sense as we are only humans, so self-interest is our natural way of thinking, but in practice giving all the power to the rulers’ of a country is starting to look very witless. Many humans live in countries where their rulers neglect their existence resulting in an unliveable life, and Rousseau’s methods seem to be justifying these actions of humans rather than tackling the problem at hand. If rulers choose to also put their self-interests ahead of their states’ which is unfortunately an on-going problem in many areas around the world, then how can they expect that other humans will not pursue their own self-interest through revolt and other forms of civil disobedience.

Power is a drug and too much of it can cloud the brain’s judgement. Scientists claim that power corrupts and that it is as addictive as cocaine. This alone says a lot about the way the world works. Certain people on earth can pick and choose who is fit to be a citizen and who is not, and the one’s who aren’t chosen are supposed to fend for themselves. How can we be expected to live in a world full of equal opportunities when we can not even live in states that provide equal opportunities? Back in the days before social media and technology, it was much easier to rule over and act like God. Nowadays corruption is becoming harder and harder to conceal due to the fact that awareness can easily spread online. The government’s responsibility is to take care of it’s people, but when they have the power to choose who ‘their people’ are and who isn’t, then we are consciously choosing to leave people in our society behind. The scary part is that citizenship is fragile, and having one today does not guarantee that you will have it tomorrow, and the reality of being stateless is a distant image for most people that they take their citizenship and life for granted. For a long time, stateless people, we neglected, but the UNHCR has vowed to end statelessness by 2024, for whatever reason they became stateless. There are many causes to statelessness ranging from discrimination against ethnic and religious groups, gender, existing states that transfer territory, the emergence of new ones and gaps in nationality laws. These are all ‘excuses’ to commit crimes against humanity, as stated by Hannah Arendt in her book, Thinking Without a Banister. Why it is a crime against humanity is because stateless people do not even have a legal basis if they wish to attempt attaining a citizenship, and not only can they not also seek refuge elsewhere they can not leave the areas they were born in. This negligence from the government’s side is forcing these millions of people to lead lives where human trafficking, rape culture, and other despicable crimes are the norm. The definition of citizenship truly becomes meaningless when people in power do not treat all other humans as equal humans, but more like scattered garbage that is not their problem.

Hence, in todays world, deprivation of citizenship should be considered as a crime against humanity, with serious consequences as it not only a crime in itself, but also a gateway crime leading to a downward spiral of a failing world, and the deeper we keep going the harder it is going to be to stop and reverse it.

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