BOOK REVIEW

Juha Räikkä (2014) *Social Justice in Practice: Questions in Ethics and Political Philosophy*. Heidelberg: Springer (xviii + 167 p.).

In this book professor Juha Räikkä continues his study of perplexing questions that arise when some of our wellestablished notions of what is just meet our less than perfect world. It is both a presentation and analysis of the current state of discussion over several important issues of social justice and a collection of clear and consistent arguments supporting the author's position. Although professor Räikkä refrains from calling the views expressed in his book "a theory", they are certainly bound together by the method of reasoning, generating statements that many readers will find both logical and intuitively compelling, yet novel. Another important merit of the book is its architecture: the topics are carefully grouped, and brief introductions are followed by expositions of the arguments.

The book consists of twelve chapters, grouped into pairs. The first chapter contains a discussion of recent line of attack on normative approach in political philosophy, taking form of what came to be called "feasibility arguments". Professor Räikkä challenges the notion of feasibility of social policies as being stable and measurable, and reveals some of the costs, entailed by pragmatic turn in political philosophy. The second chapter focuses on the "paradox of conservative justice", deriving from Henry Sidgwick. While accepting some of the claims of conservative justice, professor Räikkä rejects its most important requirement, that of abstaining from reforms, on the grounds that it does not necessarily follow from the concept of "just expectations".

Chapter 3 is dedicated to the problem of finding the second-best option. Here professor Räikkä, developing on his earlier works, considers three conceptions on approximation which provide us with algorithms for finding the second-best. The condition-based conception operates when a list of conditions for the best option exists, but one is capable to meet only several of them; the degreebased conception operates when one can advance towards the best option, but to a certain degree; the denial-

based conception of approximation suggests one to ignore constraints that make the best option unobtainable and still implement the full strategy to achieve it. As it happens, all three conceptions can be misleading as well as successful. Professor Räikkä, after examining current debate on the topic, arrives at the conclusion that the three conceptions are insufficient for both explaining some of our choices of the second-best and for providing a reliable pattern of choosing.

Chapter 4 deals with presumptions and their connections to rules and obligations placed upon our actions, particularly on actions, demanded as a profession. It is well established that making decisions based on presumption rules and independently of personal beliefs lies at the core of some professional activities, i.e. that of judges. In this chapter professor Räikkä shows that the approach that separates beliefs from presumptions can be extended to cover a much wider range of human activities.

Chapter 5's title "On the Epistemic Acceptability of Conspiracy Theories" may cause some surprise, but the arguments presented here deal with very specific issue of general importance for philosophical discussion of social justice. Juha Räikkä addresses the problem of falsifiability of conspiracy theories, particularly that of political conspiracy theories (although it seems that the arguments might have wider scope, applying to any doxa). When discussing such theories, authors, such as Brian L. Keeley claim that every attempt at maintaining a conspiracy theory against contradicting facts in some way involves expanding its scope. Professor Räikkä provides several counterexamples, showing that this is not necessarily the case, thus clearing political conspiracy theories of some of the most common charges.

Chapter 6 continues the examination of conspiracy theories, this time focusing on their ethical acceptability. The author provides a collection of arguments from both sides to see if the merits of public alertness to covert wrongdoings outweigh the possibilities of forming false notions and slandering the innocent. The answer seems to be a careful "yes", although counterarguments are granted due significance.

Chapter 7 deals with the problem of privacy norms. The key presumption of the argument is that most of our socially accepted standards can differ from one culture to another. Among others, these include privacy norms. This idea leads us to the question of the relativity of privacy claims. Is it fair, for instance, to consider privacy as entirely culturally determined concept? What are the possible consequences of this view? The author claims that most of the privacy norms, regardless of their cultural context, derive from the common source, namely the human interest in self-control and self-determination.

In chapter 8 professor Räikkä deals with the question of moral acceptability of the concealment of information. Is it important to hide information from each other, and why? Some might say it is mostly advisable for people to keep no secrets from one another, so that society could be perfectly clear of deceptions of any kind. But is it really so? According to the author's point of view manifestations of the concealment of information, such as white lies, self presentations, secrets, are all connected to privacy issues. Hence, given that concealment of information is itself neither right nor wrong, it can be seen as socially permissible not to be obliged to report any information one might have.

Chapter 9 aims to the problem of conflicts that so called alien beliefs that people possess could lead to. It is widely accepted nowadays that people tend to possess a range of ideas, feelings and beliefs they are not aware of. The specific type of beliefs that people share without being aware of it, is referred in this chapter as alien beliefs. More dramatically, these beliefs often seem to contradict what the person consciously believes. Holding alien beliefs can lead to a variety of conflicts such as ethical dilemmas. Professor Räikkä states that contemporary advances in neuroscience may raise new questions about the status of one's alien beliefs by making such type of data accessible.

Tenth chapter deals with the issue of uncertainty of demands for forgiveness. While it is a common opinion that forgiveness is rather a socially approved act, it is still quite problematic issue regarding to what is referred here as "demand for forgiveness". The problem, as professor Räikkä puts it, is that such demands sound mostly incongruous. It is not certain when it is the right time or the proper case for one person to forgive

another. Neither it is clear whether it is fair to blame someone who does not forgive another. As the chapter concludes, even if the victim of the crime seems blameworthy for not forgiving the offender, it doesn't necessary mean that she deserves being blamed.

In chapter 11 author addresses the issue of selfdeception and the way to consider its status. The author raises the question of the relation between adaptive preference formation and self-deception. Adaptive preference formation is seen as an irrational process of selection one option instead of the other when the second one is impossible or relatively difficult to achieve. As it is considered in the chapter, this process include a factual error, and therefore lead us to self-deception. The main problem in this respect is the status of the adaptive preferences, given that they are formed partly by selfdeception.

Chapter 12 deals with the issue of religious beliefs as a form of self-deception. The main question in this respect is whether it is fair to consider religious beliefs as irrational thinking and therefore as a form of self-deception. The author aims to argue that since there is a common understanding of self-deception as it is applied in the chapter 11, it is clearly not the case that we should treat religious beliefs as a form of it. This understanding includes cases when a person makes clearly mistaken conclusions because she misinterprets or rejects information due to her fears or desires.

As an example of religious beliefs professor Räikkä uses the belief in the afterlife. As it is shown in the chapter, there are no sound reasons to claim that this belief is based on self-deceiving as many contemporary thinkers implicitly assume.

This book has an admirable quality of serving well as an introduction and a contribution to the topics discussed, which makes it a valuable read for both aspiring and established professionals in the field - or anyone philosophically interested in the numerous subjects of the book. For each case the author is careful to present the competing positions in detail and then follow the argument wherever it leads. This often becomes an intriguing journey, and sometimes, as is the case with ethical acceptability of conspiracy theories, the result might seem unexpected. Professor Räikkä states at the outset that the book does

not contain a theory, however, a general theoretical stance is visible throughout the book, for example, in favouring normative approach and expressing reservation towards particularlism and relativism.

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