

# Juhani Pietarinen

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**BORN INTO A FAMILY** of junior school teachers in Iisalmi, Juhani Pietarinen was educated in Kemijärvi before enrolling at the University of Helsinki to study psychology and later philosophy. It was in the mid-1960s that, together with Risto Hilpinen and Raimo Tuomela, he joined Professor Jaakko Hintikka's group in their ground-breaking research into philosophical logic. He completed his doctorate in 1972 with a thesis published by the North Holland Publishing Company in its *Acta Philosophica Fennica* series entitled *Lawlikeness, Analogy and Inductive Logic*, in which he examined the significance of variable evidence, analogy and the regularity of generalizations on inductively reached conclusions and demonstrated how these factors can influence the probability and acceptability of hypotheses. The work was a notable step towards doing justice to analogical decision-making and assumptions based on the regularity of generalizations in the context of probabilistic inductive logic.

Pietarinen was an acting professor at the University of Jyväskylä in 1972 and acting professor of moral and social philosophy at the University of Turku in 1972–1975. His position in Turku was

then made permanent in 1976 and he occupied it continuously until his retirement. He was elected to membership of the Finnish Academy of Science and Letters in 1987.

Out of respect for the obligations attached to his position, Pietarinen steered his research in Turku towards social philosophy, ethics and the history of philosophy, combining these themes in a consistently fresh and sometimes surprising manner. He could never be accused of narrowness of vision. In the context of general social philosophy, for instance, he reviewed and compared various concepts of freedom and autonomy and then relied on these conclusions in both his bioethical discussions of the self-determination rights of patients in medical contexts and his historical discussions of the concepts of freedom put forward by Hobbes and Locke and the status of women in Early Modern political theories. Another theme in social philosophy that was close to his heart was the social significance of nature, which he discussed in his more theoretical writings and also in his comments on the ideas put forward by Pentti Linkola. The desire to allude to the history of philosophy when considering topical issues was

one feature of Pietarinen's thinking that was adopted by many of his students.

It was Pietarinen who in practise introduced social ethics, and particularly bioethics, into Finland, and it was under his direction that the Turku University Bioethics Centre was founded in the early 1990s. Nowadays social ethics is on the curriculum of practically every university in Finland. In this connection, however, Pietarinen also set out to consider the principles governing decision-making in bioethics, one of which, the right of the individual to independence, he illuminated in a particularly interesting manner, pointing out that independence presupposes that the individual who has this right possesses a certain competence or set of capabilities. In common with some other philosophers, he made a distinction between situational competence and general competence, which is useful, since a person who is in general terms competent to make decisions (and therefore does not require a guardian) may possess extremely limited competence in certain particular contexts, e.g. when faced with an especially difficult choice between alternative forms of treatment for an illness.

In the 1970s Professor Pietarinen became one of the first philosophers in the world to consider the value of nature and man's relationship to nature. The recognition of four basic attitudes, utilism, humanism, mysticism and vitalism, and the later addition of a fifth, sentientism, are among the milestones of Finnish environmental discussions, and Pietarinen developed these basic principles in the course of numerous publications. In his paper *Ihmislähtöiset arvot ja luonnon omat arvot* ("Human values and nature's own values", 2000) he provides an excellent discussion

of the meaning of values and issues concerned with the sources of values and those who hold them, in which he defends the concept of ecologically enlightened humanism. His internationally most prominent contribution to environmental philosophy was the book *Philosophy and Biodiversity* (2004), edited together with Markku Oksanen and published by Cambridge University Press in its Studies in Philosophy and Biology series. His own contribution to this volume was concerned with Plato's concept of biodiversity in nature. It is also important to remember the part he played in a number of Academy of Finland research programmes in the 1990s that laid the foundations for the environmental philosophy tradition which now prevails in the University of Turku and gave rise to a number of doctoral theses.

Juhani Pietarinen also wrote about professional ethics and research ethics, and it should particularly be noted that the basic ethical requirements for research work that he set out in these writings serve well to reflect his own rigorous attitude towards research (see Karjalainen et al., eds., *Tutkijan eettiset valinnat*, 2002).

Pietarinen adopted a strictly rational attitude towards the world in general, accepting human reason as the only tool available for determining the essence of that world and insisting that ethics should also be grounded in a rational understanding of it. He was also greatly inspired by nature, which he admired and idealized. It is therefore not surprising that he was profoundly influenced by the ideas of the Dutch philosopher Benedictus Spinoza (1632–1677), who emphasized the divinity of nature. Spinoza's expression "Deus sive natura" implies just this, that God is

synonymous with nature. Thus Pietarinen spent the last decades of his life engaged in meticulous investigations into Spinoza's philosophy, a labour that reached fruition in his last, posthumously published, work *Opas Spinozan Etiikkaan* ("A Guide to Spinoza's Ethics", 2018), a detailed exposition and interpretation of the principal themes of that philosophy. In Pietarinen's interpretation the key to Spinoza's philosophy lies in the crucial concept of power, or force (*potentia/vis*), i.e. Spinoza attempted to revoke the traditional Aristotelian ontology of substance and attribute, maintaining that everything that exists is a manifestation of one and the same primeval force.

As a professor, Pietarinen was attentive to his students and well liked. He was a re-

spectful but demanding supervisor of doctoral candidates and many of these later gained professorships. As a person, he was a lucid speaker who tried to find concrete applications for abstract ideas. For example, he had recognised his calling to express the tenets of philosophy in a manner that was intelligible to ordinary people long before interaction with society at large had been adopted as a third task of universities in addition to teaching and research. He was well aware of the value of philosophy and was prepared to lecture on it and discuss it in all manner of forums. Like Spinoza, whom he admired so greatly, he believed in the ideal of a life governed by rational thought and in the power of rationality to restrain our negative feelings.

*Obituary by Olli Koistinen*