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When did you first become interested in philosophy?

JH: Very early in my life. I was interested in all sorts of different things already in high school, and philosophy was one of them. That's when I got my first impulses in philosophy and philosophical thinking; but, largely under the influence of the famous philosopher Eino Kaila. He was a charismatic figure and very influential in Finland in those days.

When did you decide to enter academic philosophy?

That's a good question, because I don't think it was really a decision. I studied mathematics and philosophy at the University of Helsinki side by side. My dissertation was still technically in mathematics. But, slowly I realized that my talents were better suited for philosophy than for mathematics. For mathematics to be a topped-ranked mathematician you need certain talents in a very, very high degree; either combinatorial or geometric intuition, or some combination of those. Even though I am not bad at mathematics, I did not have those two talents to that high of a degree.

What advice would you give to a student who is considering enrolling in a Ph.D. Program, or has just started their studies in one?

That's a hard one. I don't know. Partly, it's a question of where I think philosophy is going, and I think you'll be asking me about that separately. My personal advice would be to dig into one important problem-complex and really, really get into the cutting-edge questions about some part of philosophy. And then try to broaden yourself from that. The most important thing is to learn to argue and research on some particular topic in philosophy. If you go deep enough, that will lead you to the other parts of philosophy. So, that's one thing I would say to a beginning philosopher.

What would you say your biggest contribution to philosophy has been ... so far?

I don't like 'so far'. First, I don't know the answer to your question, because of the nature of my contributions. I would have to change the question a little bit in order to answer it. My best ideas have been somewhat; I wouldn't say technicalDBut they've been specific results in logic or epistemology, whose philosophical significance remains to be worked out by myself or by others. And, what makes this difficult to answer is that I don't know how far that process has gone in different ways, because it doesn't depend on me. But, to be more specific, I have contributed several things to the ideas of game theory and the independence of logic. Before that, I contributed to epistemic logic, possible world semantics and so on. So, presumably those are considered as my most important contributions, 'so far'.

Why should we study logic beyond the rudimentary level? In other words, why should we go beyond first-order logic?

Because the rudimentary level is too rudimentary; it doesn't tell the whole story. Maybe you don't have to go beyond certain basic areas in logic. Perhaps something fairly basic will suffice for most philosophical purposes. But the present logic as it stands now doesn't serve that purpose yet. So in the present situation, you'd better go beyond what the introductory text books in logic say. Take just one example: if you go by the rules of logic that are taught in a typical introductory or intermediate logic classes, you are told that you cannot define truth for logical languages in the same language. This would be tremendously important in terms of its philosophical implications, if that were the last and final word. It turns out that this is not the case. If you enrich and deepen your basic logicDand I mean basic logicDand if truth becomes definable, which has enormously important consequences for philosophy in general.

You've obviously witnessed a huge change in the relationship between philosophy and science. What do you think the relationship is today?

By and large, but there are exceptions, I feel that the close links that existed maybe one hundred years ago have been loosened up, and what philosophers are doing is no longer considered relevant to what is actually going on in the sciences and mathematics. One hundred years ago, the leading mathematicians were intensely interested in what was happening in philosophy of mathematics, because this was felt to be of tremendous immediate importance to their subject. These days, most of what is written under the heading of philosophy of mathematics, mathematicians couldn't care less about. In some
IN APRIL 2007 ARCHÉ EDITOR DAN RYAN SAT DOWN WITH DR. HINTIKKA TO DISCUSS THE RENOWNED SCHOLAR’S LIFE, WORK, AND PROJECTIONS FOR THE FUTURE OF ANALYTIC PHILOSOPHY.

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other areas the situation is better. In the philosophy of science, there are some philosopher-scientists who are much better at combining the two fields. But, even there, I would like to see more close connections. I suspect, although it's not my field, that the same thing could maybe be said about philosophy and economics. There used to be a tremendously interesting tradition, specifically in Cambridge, England, of actual cooperation and coexistence of cutting-edge economics and philosophy. Keynes, Frank Ramsey, and Marshall before them. There isn't anything quite as impressive as that in contemporary philosophy. So, I think that the connection has been lost to a great extent.

In your work, what are normal forms?

Normal forms are just simplified forms of logical formulas. The interesting question is what the interpretation of them is. Normal forms can actually be viewed in different ways. They may be viewed simply as possible chronicles as to what happened if you started examining possible worlds. Another interpretation of normal forms might be that they mark the dimensions of logical space. So, their technical explanation is simply formal and boring and incomprehensible. But, then the interest is due to the interpretations, of which there is no single one. So there is no single explanation of what the normal forms, so to speak, 'are'.

But you subscribe to the first reading?

My sort of tacit interpretation, in my own mind, is that normal forms precede technical work; that there has to be an intuitive understanding of what the normal forms are before you can even hope to understand the formal technique. So, these are purely formal. From dire necessity you have to say what you mean, but you cannot really get very far in the applications unless you have an understanding of what these mean substantially, intuitively.

I know you've written about and studied Wittgenstein extensively. What are language games or primary language games?

Well, I think the answer is this. How is language connected with reality? There are different answers, but I think the only viable answer is that we humans have to do something to keep these connections going, through certain human activities, or sort of mini institutions. And these mini institutions are simply labeled language games. The game analogy is just an analogy, and maybe a misleading one. But, the basic idea is that the semantic relationships between language and reality are constituted by certain kinds of human activities, or governed by certain human activities. This is actually how Wittgenstein came to first think of language games.

Is analytic philosophy dead? Clearly it's alive and well as an entrenched academic school, but is it dead as a project?

Is philosophy in general dead as a project? I think you have the same difficulty answering that. Let me give my take on the history of analytic philosophy, or at least some of its main trends. Most people still think of the present situation in analytic philosophy as a finally getting over the restricting influence of logical positivism. That's simply historically wrong, I think. What we are experiencing now is the tail-end of the reaction against logical positivism within analytic philosophy for critics like Quine, Popper, and Kuhn, it is the tail-end of their influence. This leaves analytic philosophy as a tradition that started from logical positivism, or logical empiricism, as I would prefer to call it. What did logical positivists promise, so to speak? They promised to solve all the problems on the foundations of science and foundations of mathematics by the logical analysis of language. Did they do that? No, they didn't succeed, and I think that is the ultimate philosophical reason why the influence of logical positivists has waned. But, as a thought experiment, as a fantasy, imagine what would have happened if the logical positivists had solved those problems. If they had solved the interpretational problems of quantum theory, if they had cleared up the problems that were left by the incompleteness results of Gödel and Tarski and all of those people. What would have happened if they had succeeded? I think I can tell you: we would all be logical positivists. So, the question about the future of analytic philosophy, I think, is whether we can make real progress in those areas focused on by the logical positivists. They made some progress, they cleared up a number of things, but I think the ultimate question is whether analytic philosophers can fulfill the promise of the logical positivists. I'm an optimist in that regard, and perhaps that puts me in a very small minority, but that's what I think.

What do you think is the most important work of 20th century philosophy?

Well, I'll answer that, but first I'll make a comment on it by telling a story about the meeting of the Aristotelian Society. J.L. Austin first gave a paper called "A Plea for Excuses." It was criticized at great length for the trivial-
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ity of the whole enterprise of ordinary philosophy and finally, when one critic stopped, Austin took the pipe out of his mouth and said, "Well now, sometimes importance isn't quite that important." So I would say that all kinds of importance are very important. I can think of the most influential philosophers, but that's a different question and that's for the historians to answer. I would like to ask, where do we find the ideas for the future? What results will matter in the future? I think the most important work in that regard is simply the work that is meant to raise the level of explicitness and rigor in philosophical enterprises: the development of logic, philosophical logic, and the development of modal theory. These are the most important works for future work in philosophy. Of course, I don't think there is any doubt that Wittgenstein's work contains extremely promising ideas and displays a very high level of conceptual awareness; however, I think that Wittgenstein's philosophy has generally been misunderstood, and the ideas that are there are not the ones that have typically caught philosophers' attention. I think that Wittgenstein's ideas ought to be developed a lot further independently. Of course, Wittgenstein is certainly one of the most influential and rightly influential philosophers. The importance, I don't know.

Maybe this would indirectly answer your question, if I tell who I think was the most gifted philosopher of the 20th century. I don't think you would guess it. I think the most gifted philosopher of the 20th century was Frank Ramsey, because he died when he was not even thirty, so he didn't have the time to achieve so much success. I think he had the best understanding of the thinkers of his time on the foundations of mathematics. He was instrumental in creating contemporary decision theory. He had brilliant ideas in epistemology. I think he was the most gifted philosopher of the 20th century, by a long shot.

*On that note, who should be read that is not typically included in the undergraduate curriculum?*

Well, just a moment. There are many philosophers who should be known better.

*If you have to pick one.*

Well, Ramsey has attracted a fair amount of attention. But, of course, he did not have time to accomplish all that much. I cannot say that he has been neglected. The current run of the mill work in philosophy is a comparison of different philosophers, so I think that most philosophers have got their fair share of attention. Of course, there may be philosophers in other countries and different philosophical traditions that might deserve a little more attention, but I do not think that there is anybody who has been clearly neglected. Misunderstood, yes; but not neglected. But if I had to give one answer, it would be Ramsey, in spite of the attention that he is now getting.

*Is there a philosopher or book that would surprise readers to learn that you admire?*

I don't think there is a philosophical book, and my interests are public. Though not everybody realizes how deeply I am interested in, say, Aristotle's Metaphysics, but that's still public knowledge. If there's a book that people wouldn't realize that I have been impressed by, it would probably not be a philosophy book. It would probably be Erich Auerbach's work on literary theory. Auerbach was a very interesting literary historian. He had to flee Germany in the 30's because of the Nazis, but he didn't make it to the United States. He ended up in Turkey without any extensive library of facilities. His great plan was to write the history of representation or reality in Western literature. What he ended up doing, instead of writing a systematic history in the usual fashion, is he wrote his book by taking samples from the Western literature, literally from Homer and the Bible to Virginia Woolf. Everything he says is analyzed out of these brief passages, and of course using all the background knowledge he had, but it's all related to what you can find in these passages in the literature. The book, and particularly the method, impressed me very much. I don't think you can find influences in my writings; but this has been in my mind since I first came upon it more than fifty years ago.

*What do you think the basis is for the so-called analytic-continental divide?*

I don't think there such a clear divide or that there should be. That's very artificial and I think we should get rid of it. As I usually say when somebody uses the term, I always thought that Vienna was on the continent too. Also, historically, if you look at what happened in the 20th century, there is much more interplay between the allegedly different traditions, and there are many more differences between the thinkers in any one school than people are aware of. Let me give you a concrete example. A long time ago, I once heard somebody criticizing Husserl for essentially plagiarizing the
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The second task would be work in the history of philosophy, which should be given a slightly different direction. Currently, philosophers use the history of philosophy to debate contemporary problems. They think of the problem of induction by talking about Hume. But the history of philosophy would be more relevant to general education if it concentrated more on the general history of ideas and the development of ways of thinking, rather than the particular perennial philosophical issues that are debated very often under the guise of history of philosophy. If philosophy departments serve these two purposes well, they’ll have plenty of justification for existence even apart from the so-called philosophical research they undertake.

Where will philosophy go in the next fifty years?

One of my favorite quotes is from a jazz musician who, when asked, “Where is jazz going?” responded, “Man, if I knew that, I would be there already.” In a way, my answer will be different. I have my own idea of where philosophy ought to be going, which I have directly and indirectly indicated to you already. But, where philosophy will go, I don’t have any idea that depends on so many contingent factors. We should go back to the basic epistemological and logical questions, and take on those first, while at the same time taking care of the educational function of philosophy. That’s what philosophers ought to be doing, but whether they will do that, I don’t know.
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The whole idea of phenomenology from Ernst Mach, the arch-positivist. I dismissed it, thinking there are all sorts of conspiracy theories in the history of philosophy, until I realized that the writer had perhaps seen something that wasn't then in the public domain. I came upon Husserl's own explanation of phenomenology, and there he says that his phenomenology is a continuation and radicalization of certain ideas in the philosophy of science represented by Mach. Husserl adds that that's where he got the term phenomenology, too. So what do you make of that? This is Husserl's own explanation, so we have to take this connection between the two traditions much more seriously. I think what really have had is that history has not had enough dialogue between the two traditions. But, that is superficial relative to the contrasts between the different thinkers in the allegedly same traditions, which are sometimes extremely sharp. Not everybody is aware of how contemptuous Heidegger was of Husserl. At the very early stages of his thinking, he had not only not admiration, but positively contempt for Husserl as a philosopher. 'Husserl has never been a real philosopher for a single moment of his life,' 'He's getting more and more ridiculous.' I think that the differences between the separate traditions are sometimes much, much smaller than those within the individual traditions. Of course, analytic vs. continental is an easy way of making up a division of labor, but I would like to get rid of the whole contrast altogether, and instead emphasize the shared problems and shared concerns.

In 150 years, will there still be philosophy departments in universities?

I don't know; I don't run a university. It depends on what philosophers do. I think their self-imposed job description will have to change somewhat, to keep philosophy departments as formal entities. I think what philosophers ought to concentrate on is the teaching of, on the level of undergraduate education, reasoning and argumentation, critical thinking. That is the most important education mission of philosophy, but research philosophers have neglected that whole area. The theory of reasoning and argumentation is not fashionable among philosophers doing research. Let me illustrate this. What is taught in logic classes, for instance, is called `rules of inference.' What are the rules of inference? If you have 20 premises, and you ask yourself or someone else, `what shall I do?' do the rules of inference help you to decide? No. They don't tell you what inferences you should draw, what inferences people usually draw, what they necessarily draw, or even what they ought to draw. The so-called rules of inference are merely permissive.