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Ronald Dworkin, *Justice for Hedgehogs*, Belknap Press, USA 2011, pp. 506.

The quotation from Archilochus: "The fox knows many things, but the hedgehog knows one big thing" is the main adage of Ronald Dworkin's (1931–2013) penultimate book¹ titled: *Justice for Hedgehogs* (Dworkin 2011). The most famous use of this metaphor one can find in the context of political thinking that is present in Isaiah Berlin's essay *The Hedgehog and the Fox: An Essay on Tolstoy's View of History* (Berlin 1993). Other writers who referred to above-mentioned idea are: Stephen Jay Gould (2004) and Steven Lukes (2003). The author of the reviewed book focuses on a 'thing' hedgehogs know which is 'one big thing'. We can read at the beginning of the opus: "Value is one big thing. The truth about living well and being good and what is wonderful is not only coherent but mutually supporting: what we think about any one of these must stand up, eventually, to any argument we find compelling about the rest. I try to illustrate the unity of at least ethical and moral values: I describe a theory of what living well is like and what, if we want to live well, we must do for, and not do to, other people. The idea – that ethical and moral values depend on one another – is a creed; it proposes a way to live" (Dworkin 2011: 1).

¹ The last book he had written is titled *Religion without God* (Dworkin 2013).

The genesis of this book is connected with antecedent event symposium on the content of *Justice for Hedgehogs*, attended by: Russ Shafer-Landau, Daniel Star, Michael Smith, David Lyons, T.M. Scanlon, Amartya Sen, Kwame Anthony Appiah, F.M. Kamm, C. Edwin Baker, James E. Fleming, Hugh Baxter, Martha Minow & Joseph William Singer, Samuel Freeman, Frank I. Michelman, Robert D. Sloane, Robert G. Bone, Stephen Macedo, Jeremy Waldron (“Boston University Law Review” 2010, vol. 90, no. 2). The brainstorming and interchange of ideas and concepts had an important influence on the shape of the book, what is frequently underlined by the author.

The book is structured in the following order: first chapter, titled *Baedeker*, is a kind of roadmap, the remaining eighteen chapters are divided into five parts: *Independence, Interpretation, Ethics, Morality, Politics*; at the end we can read epilogue titled: *Dignity Indivisible*.

All the works of Harvard philosopher are characterised by an argumentative approach; a moral and political reasoning is the core of his theory and we already can find it in his first works. In *Justice for Hedgehogs* he modifies his early theses. In the work titled *Taking Rights Seriously* (Dworkin 1977) he insisted on the standpoint that morality and law are two different systems, but in the new book he changed his mind toward the thesis that there is a nexus between this two branches, and this nexus is the interpretation. The interpretation is such a meaningful concept because the law has an in-

terpretative nature. Major characteristic of Dworkin’s style is the use of the first person plural, which underlines interpretative dimension of considerations – the interpreter cannot stand out of his society’s perspective; every interpretation has social character. Hence, we face this kind of sentences: “Every effort we make to find a trap door out of morality confirms that we do not yet understand what morality is” (Dworkin 2011: 39); “We assume that the speakers we aim to understand employ the same logic as we do and that their beliefs are in general true, though not necessarily true in each case” (Dworkin 2011: 148); “We share these concepts, as I said, not because we agree in their application once all other pertinent facts are agreed upon, but rather by manifesting an understanding that their correct application is fixed by the best interpretation of the practices in which they figure” (Dworkin 2011: 160); “We are responsible (if we are) because what we believe is at least in large part fixed by how things are” (Dworkin 2011: 236).

Justice for Hedgehogs is permeated with a plethora of plots: metaphysical, epistemological, ethical, political and legal, so it is impossible to describe all of them in such a short form like review. We are going to focus on main and most interesting issues of this book, namely: 1) the basic principles of the theory; 2) the relation between ethics and morality; 3) the critical view of the internal skepticism; 4) the meaning of interpretation; 5) the role of the truth in moral investigations.

The author treats the equal concern for fate and full respect for responsibility as basic principles which constitute the core of his moral theory. These principles indicate proper manner of distribution, because, according to the author, there is no distribution which could be politically neutral – every act of distribution is caused by law and policy. It leads us to the conclusion that policy precludes any possibility to avoid values. Concern for fate and respect for responsibility direct us to the territory of ethics.

Ethical considerations are focused on the category of 'good life' which is related to such concepts as *eudaimonia*, fulfilment or happiness broadly construed. The main object of this consideration is an individual human life. It is the way which everyone should choose in his own interest. But this is not the limit of human activities. Besides this dimension of human life, we have to deal with the category which Dworkin names 'living well' and which is related to our relationship with other people. As the effect, we face the fact that morality and ethics are strictly correlated. The connection has the interpretative character what means that the man who does not act right toward other people cannot achieve a 'good life'. The other side of the issue is that someone can have a bad life despite living well. This situation appears when someone dares greatly and fails, but also goodness of his life does not depend only on his decisions. On the other hand, someone has a good life while he is not living well. This kind of situation

takes place when someone chooses immoral means to achieve good life's goals. This kind of person acts wrong, because depreciates responsibility. So which one of these principles is most important? As the author figured out: "Which is then the more fundamental ethical responsibility? Living well. It is ethically irresponsible for you to live less well in order to make your life a better one, and inappropriate for you to take pleasure or pride in your life's goodness when you achieved this at the cost of living badly. We might say (using a term developed by economists that John Rawls made popular among philosophers) that the value of living well is lexically prior to the value of a good life" (Dworkin 2011: 201).

Most interesting issue from epistemological point of view is a criticism of skepticism², which was present in earlier Dworkin's works, for instance *Law's Empire* (Dworkin 1986). The Harvard philosopher is known as skeptic about skepticism. First of all, the author shows a typology of skepticism, and subsequently shows its meaning for interpretation as a social practice. Talking about the core of skepticism, Dworkin employs the idea that there is a common thing amongst every kind of skepticism. It is denying an *ordinary view*, and *ordinary view* is a perspective of every man possessing a moral sense. Moreover, skeptics claim that there is no objective truth in

² Ronald Dworkin uses a word 'skepticism' which is preferred in the American English language. The British version is 'scepticism'.

moral reasoning. The ordinary view is based on the intuition and obviousness. If we see an act of robbery, then we do not need a moral reasoning which gives us an evidence of wrongness of this act. But when we cannot catch the incident by the sight, then we need a moral reasoning – for example, in the case of war in Iraq, citizenry of United States could not see this phenomenon, so they needed moral investigations. Ronald Dworkin, inspired by Mark Johnstone, writes about the analogy between aesthetic and moral claims: “Your lover really is beautiful, although you might have to take the right interest in her to see it. You do not reason or infer her beauty. You see it the way a chessmaster sees a stalemate in three moves. But this cannot be, in either of those cases, a causal kind of perception. You see that the boys burning a cat are depraved, but the sense in which you see that provides no further evidence or argument for their depravity as an eyewitness’s seeing does provide further evidence of a stabbing’ (Dworkin 2011: 439).

The typology of the skepticism is described in the following way. There are two orders that exist within moral philosophy. First of them has substantive character and questions related to it concern internal dimension of the system of ideas, whereas second order is constituted by metaethical questions – which means questions about the system of ideas itself. The extension of this distinction is a division between ‘internal skepticism’ (first order) and ‘external skepticism’ (second order). The former must as-

sume the truth of certain general moral claims – “They rely on morality to denigrate morality” (Dworkin 2011: 31), while the latter assumes Archimedean point – the external perspective – “They are able to denigrate moral truth, they say, without relying on it” (Dworkin 2011: 32). One of the subdivisions is made within the external skepticism and it leads to the ‘error skepticism’ and ‘status skepticism’. The former consist on value-neutral metaphysics which eliminates the morality from the categories of our universe. The latter claims that the ordinary view is not a description, but it consist in masked orders – ‘Cheating is wrong’ in reality means ‘Don’t cheat!’. The internal skepticism, however, takes various forms – besides the key examples, which are cultural relativism, we can find the *internal error skepticism*, which Dworkin describes subsequently: “Other people are internal error skeptics about the place of morality in foreign policy. They say that it makes no sense to suppose that a nation’s trade policy can be either morally right or wrong. They reject positive moral judgments that many other people hold [...]” (Dworkin 2011: 33). Another example of the internal skepticism is *global internal skepticism*. Only supernatural power could settle down moral claims as true, so our claims cannot be universal and our acts are irrelevant in the face of universe. At this stage, the skeptical problem touches upon the investigation into determinism and non-determinism. But what does it mean in the context of the social life? To answer this, Dworkin uses an inte-

resting case of astrology and religion. Every attempt to negate astrology or theism in itself is not astrological or religious assertion: “However, if we define an astrological judgment as one that describes the character and extent of planetary influence, then the statement that there is no such influence is indeed an astrological judgment. If we define a religious position as one that presupposes the existence of one or more divine beings, then atheism is not a religious position. But if we define it as one that offers an opinion about the existence or properties of divine beings, then atheism certainly is a religious position” (Dworkin 2011: 40–41). In social terms, it means that every interpretation takes place within a social life context and there is no such thing like Archimedean point. The only version of skepticism that makes sense is the internal skepticism understood as critical approach to the functioning moral concepts.

The author indicates that there are three types of interpretation: collaborative, explanatory and conceptual. Moral reasoning belongs to the last one of these types. It means that moral concepts are designated of given values and interpretation takes place only within the net of moral concepts. Justice is a moral concept which makes sense only in the connection with other moral concepts, the same way it works in Plato’s *The Republic*, where the clue is investigation into the nature of justice, made by the analysis of related moral concepts. As Dworkin writes: “We can in principle continue this expansion of our argument, exploring other va-

lues until, as I said, the argument meets itself” (Dworkin 2011: 163).

The last element which we would like to describe in this review is the role of truth in the moral reasoning. The idea of objectivity seems to be indefensible on the philosophical ground. The majority of thinkers claims that objectivism is some kind of superstition. Ronald Dworkin proposes a different approach. He recognizes truth as a cause of moral claims and moral arguing. Hence, this category is relevant regardless of metaphysical difficulties. He employs an excellent case connected with this thesis. He starts from Darwinism and one of its thesis. The reason for condemnation of homicide is to keep the gene pool (1). This is the reason for which this condemnation was spread to the whole world (2). This anthropological thesis leads us to the conclusion that homicide is wrong – and it is objective truth (3). For a question: what makes moral claims true, Dworkin replies: they are made true through an “adequate moral argument for their truth”. “Of course that invites the further question: What makes a moral argument adequate? The answer must be: a further moral argument for its adequacy. And so forth” (Dworkin 2011: 37). The employment of this category to the political and moral philosophy is a very innovative move in the context of the nature of these disciplines.

Justice for Hedgehogs is undeniably extraordinary book. But the most important thing is it presents not only political doctrine and specified vision of policy or

justice. It is rather a tool-box with methods that show how to argue and reason; therefore, this book also has a vast heuristic and practical potential. As a conclusion, we can say that Dworkinian 'skepticism about skepticism' is a robust attempt to rescue liberal discourse from its own impasse.

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