

# Raimo Tuomela

**EMERITUS PROFESSOR** Raimo Tuomela is one of the best-known Finnish philosophers. He held the chair in moral and social philosophy, with special reference to the methodology of the social sciences, at the University of Helsinki in 1971–2008 and was a research professor of the Academy of Finland in 1995–2000.

"I decided while still in upper secondary school to go to university in America, but although I was already interested in philosophy I began by studying psychology, because I wasn't at all sure that I could make a living and support a family on the basis of philosophy studies."

As it was, he earned his doctorate in Helsinki in 1968 and at Stanford University the following year. His early work was concerned with the philosophy of science and action theory, including a defence of 'scientific realism', which maintains that technical terms refer to genuinely existent phenomena and are not just instruments devised by scientists for their own convenience.

"Early on in my studies I passed the 'approbatur' level in at least ten subjects. There were many subjects that I was interested in, and in this way I got to know something about all of them. I particularly value the doctorate that I received at Stanford, as it is one of the top universities, and it was that doctorate that opened up the world for me."

Tuomela has made repeated visits to the major universities and research centres in his field in the course of his career, including the University of California at Berkeley, and he has been a visiting professor at the University of Munich since 2005. Since then he has spent some weeks each year in Munich.

In more recent decades Tuomela has been concentrating on social ontology and collective intentionality, a new line of research that he opened up in 1984 with his book *A Theory of Social Action*. This lays emphasis on accuracy and the detailed analysis of concepts. In addition to the numerous books that he has written or edited,

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he has also produced hundreds of papers in journals. In his latest book, *Social Ontology*, published in 2013, he examines collective intentionality and group activities.

"I have published rather little in Finnish, as the majority of my works have gone to the world's leading publishing houses such as Oxford University Press", Tuomela explains. He is a genuinely independent and systematic thinker who has been creating an agenda of his own and not merely commenting on one, so that his books have without exception been very well received by his international colleagues. One reviewer of his book *Social ontology*, for instance, writes that, "All in all, Tuomela's book stands as a model of excellence in social ontology ... His book is a must reading in social ontology."

In the course of his long career Professor Tuomela has directed a number of research teams financed by the Academy of Finland, and he has been a keynote speaker at many conferences in his field. He has given the philosophy of the social scienc-

es an established position in Finland and has helped to build up a significant scientific community in this field and a research platform that enjoyed the status of 'centre of excellence' during the period 2012–2017.

"The pace of work has calmed down somewhat in the last few years, but I am still getting far more requests to review other people's work than I can cope with," Tuomela remarks.

Professor Tuomela has received a research award from the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, and he has been a member of the Finnish Academy of Science and Letters since 1983.

*The Academy Award is the highest honour that the Finnish Academy of Science and Letters can confer on a scholar in recognition of his life's work. The Academy has awarded the Academy Award since 1945.*