

Society in its Challenges: Philosophical Considerations of Living in Society

Santiago, Sia. *Society in its Challenges: Philosophical Considerations of Living in Society*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014

Reviewed by Li Lin

We live in a society which is full of challenges. Marx believes that the relationship between human beings and society more reflects the reality of society, and people cannot exist alone without society (Marx, 1956). The development of mankind and society is unified (Li, 2018). To improve the quality of life, various challenges from society need to be resolved. So how to deal with the challenges is always a hot topic to be discussed. However, society is changing day by day, and the challenges are also constantly changing. It seems to have not a standard, unchangeable answer to meet the challenges of society. Pursuing and creating a better life is the motivation for social development. So doing our best to deal with the challenges is a certain onus for all of the members in society. The excellent philosopher and educator Professor Santiago Sia took on the responsibility. He wrote the book to show the relevance and importance of philosophical considerations of the challenges of living in society, and hopefully to add to its enrichment.

The structure of the book is reasonable and readable. Because of the focus of the respective essays, the book is mainly divided into two parts: Theoretical Considerations and Contextual Considerations. Interestingly, readers can choose which part to start depending on their background and interests. Start from part I or II has little effect on reading this book. Just like the writer said: this work is a volume of essays rather than a monograph. This book has 12 chapters in total. Every part has 6 chapters, part II also contains the conclusion of the book. Besides, after the conclusion, the author uses two appendices to show a special challenge confronting society and the meaning of society to its members.

The content of the book is plentiful and exhaustive. The 12 chapters of this book cover very plentiful content. Chapter one introduces philosophy and philosophizing, and their relationship to the social context. It lays out the point and method of the book. Chapter two analyzes and compares the public and individual interests,

and provides some practical guidelines. Chapter three is based on a dualistic conception of society and using critical analysis to interpret the relationship between the individual and society. Chapter four combines to the writing of Martin Buber to quest human relationships in its various forms. Chapter five draws largely on Charlse Harshorne's philosophy, and tries to answer the question: How should one understand one's identity and status in society? It also anticipates and responds to possible criticisms of the notion of a social self. Chapter six focuses on the discussion of ethics issues. It analyzes the content of the ethical challenge, that is, the importance of ethical thinking, of developing ethical sensitivity, and of taking a moral stance. Chapter seven shows the tension between image and reality, and discusses the question of truth and the related issues of right. Then it offers some guidelines to deal with these challenges and issues. Chapter eight discusses whether human beings are truly free, and to what extent they should be free? It also provides some guidance on how we are to conduct our lives in society. Chapter nine combines the Confucianism and its teaching to discuss the subject-matter of ethics in the public scene. It looks closely at the ethical responsibility attached to roles and the ethical living out of a role in society, particularly to public office. Chapter ten discusses the issues of the economic crisis. It explores the reason for the economic crisis and discusses the issues of accountability in the context of "moral hazard" and "moral luck". Chapter eleven discusses how education should meet the changing demands and global marketplace, and how to adapt to the knowledge and competitive society, basing on the Bologna process. Chapter twelve sketches some specific challenges and particular issues in higher education and gives the reasons for the challenges and issues, as well as corresponding suggestions. This book philosophically considers the essence of philosophy, individuals and society, power and obligation, morality and freedom, economics, education, and so on, and addresses the challenges in society from all aspects. Its content is detailed and comprehensive. In the chapters, there are several cross-references. It shows a certain vision, despite the differences in style and content of the various essays.

The creation process of the book is logically meticulous, strongly academic, and worth learning. Every chapter of the book is like a themed thesis. We can get a lot of information from it. It does not give you the information in a big write, but using differently related essays to discuss and demonstrate. For example, the title of chapter one is *Philosophizing, Philosophy, and the Social Context: A Reflection on Human Living*. It includes *Philosophy, Questions and Question, Question in Context, Philosophizing and its Source, Question and Context, The Social Setting, Turning to Philosophy as Resource, Philosophy in Context, The Quest as a pursuit of Wisdom*, 9 parts in total. All of the parts are related and supportive of chapter one, and the order of each part is logical. For example, the first part is Philosophy. It gives a brief introduction of philosophy, especially discuss "What is philosophy?". The second

part is Questions and Question. It starts with a simple sentence: What is philosophy? Then it uses philosophizing to answer 4 questions: Why do we ask questions in the first place? What enables us to raise questions? Why does it matter that we seek answers? What kind of answers can we expect (Santiago, 2014)? The part three is Question in Context. It explains that many questions are taking place in context, and questioning in context is useful to address “why and what” of philosophy. The book is strongly academic and worth learning. The definition of the philosophy, firstly, the writer quotes the definition as “love of wisdom”, but he thinks the definition is not sufficient. So he defines the philosophy to “pursuit of wisdom” because the word of pursuit can show active participation in our full development as human persons (Santiago, 2014). The difference is only one word, but it is enough to reflect the writer’s high academic requirements for the work. Apart from this, most of the views in the book can find the resources or further explanations by footnotes. It not only helps readers to understand the book, but also shows the attitude of the rigorous academic of the writer.

The value of the book is outstanding. First, the book is well-founded and appropriate. It will not use many gorgeous rhetorics and languages to overstate something. For example, even if the theme of this book is to explore the effectiveness of philosophical consideration on social challenges, in the conclusion, the writer just tells us that philosophical step may lead us in the right direction, alerts us to wrong avenues, opens up other routes, or even redirects us to another destination (Santiago, 2014). In the book, most of the views’ resources are marked by footnote. It is not only readable, but also trusted. Second, this book has a realistic reference significance. Because every chapter of the book discusses the different society’s challenges in particular situations, so the advice for addressing the challenges is diversity and particularity. Third, the impact of this book is sustainable. This book not only gives us much information on how to address the challenges in society, but also teaches us to build up a frame of philosophy vision for confronting the challenges of living society. It makes us own a strong reminder of our responsibility to the whole universe, and own the ability to promote the development of society.

This book has almost no weaknesses, except for one small error. There are too many footnotes and references in the book. The use of punctuation is confusing. Some of them end with a period, some of them end with no punctuation, some of them even end with a comma. But it is understandable in such a long monograph. This book is still worth reading. In this book, the philosophical considerations are well used to meet the challenges in society and give a lot of practical information and inspiration from different perspectives. I hope it will receive serious attention from philosophers that it deserves.

Acknowledgment

This work was supported by a project from Faculty of Education in Palacky University (project grant nr. IGA_PdF_2020_007). This work was also supported by a project from Sichuan Special Education Research Center (project SCTJ-2019-04).

References

- [1] Li Mingyue. (2018). *The Study of Marx and the Theory of Social Relations*. Jilin Agricultural University, 12.
- [2] Marx Karl Heinrich. (1956). *The Outline of Feuerbach*. People's Publishing House, 5.
- [3] Santiago Sia. (2014). *Society in its Challenges: Philosophical Considerations of Living in Society*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 11–238.

Li Lin
Faculty of Education
Palacky University
Žižkovo nám. 5
Olomouc, 77140
Czech republic
e-mail: liandyang1992@gmail.com