

**EINO KAILA and
GESTALT PSYCHOLOGY
in FINLAND**

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EINO KAILA 1890 - 1958

- University of Helsinki
student 1908-10
dissertation 1916
- Professor of Philosophy
University of Turku
1922-30

Wien 1929, 1932, 1934



CAREER

UH Professor of Theoretical
Philosophy 1930-48

The Academy of
Finland 1948-58

President, Philosophical
Society of Finland 1936-52



Eino Kaila

LITERATURE

- *Reality and Experience* (1979), Introduction by G. H. VON WRIGHT
- M. JÄÄSKELÄINEN: *Eino Kailan psykologia: Rakenne ja kehitys* (1983)
- MJ: article in *Gestalt Theory* 3 (1981)
- I. NIINILUOTO, M. SINTONEN & G. H. VON WRIGHT (eds.), *Eino Kaila and Logical Empiricism* (1992)
- I. NIINILUOTO & S. PIHLSTRÖM (eds.), *Reappraisals of Eino Kaila's Philosophy* (2012)

ACADEMIC PSYCHOLOGY (I)

- until 1948 at the University of Helsinki, psychology (together with logic and metaphysics) was a branch of Theoretical Philosophy
- J. V. SNELLMAN 1856-63, Hegelian idealism
- W. BOLIN, materialism
- Th. REIN 1869-1900, from Hegel to Lotze, dualist interactionism
- debates with E. WESTERMARCK (later professor of Practical Philosophy), evolutionary naturalism, psycho-physical parallelism

ACADEMIC PSYCHOLOGY (II)

- experimental psychology in Wundt's laboratory at Leipzig
- HJ. NEIGLICK: light perception 1887
- A. GROTFENFELT: Weber's Law 1888, later professor of Theoretical Philosophy
- R. LAGERBORG, Westermarck's student and friend, psychological behaviorism

KAILA'S EARLY PHILOSOPHY

- scientific and artistic personality
- critical comments on
 - materialistic monism (HAECKEL)
 - voluntarism (BERGSON)
 - pragmatism (JAMES)
 - positivism (MACH)
 - organized religions

KAILA'S EARLY PSYCHOLOGY

- *Über die Motivation und die Entscheidung: Eine experimentell-psychologische Untersuchung* (diss. 1916)
- causal laws of association (O. KÜLPE, Würzburg)
- parallelism vs. interactionism
 - physical brain processes prior to psychological experiences, supervenience (G. E. MÜLLER)
- *Sielunelämä biologisena ilmiönä* (1920)
 - mental life as a biological phenomenon
 - no independent psychological causality, special cases of physiological causation, yet anti-reductionist
 - against vitalism in biology: elán vital, entelechy
- first experimental psychological laboratory in Turku in 1922

GESTALT THEORY

- reference to KOFFKA's 1912 work in 1916
- experimental works on perceptual psychology 1919-23
- *Sielunelämän rakenne* (1923)
 - a chapter on Gestalt psychology
 - JAMES: stream of thought
 - criticism of VON EHRENFELS in 1890 (and MEINONG): too atomistic
 - KÖHLER, WERTHEIMER, experienced time and motion, perceptual illusions

MATURE PHILOSOPHICAL WORKS

- contacts to REICHENBACH, SCHLICK, CARNAP
- 1925 *Der Satz vom Ausgleich des Zufalls und das Kausalprinzip*
- 1926 *Die Prinzipien der Wahrscheinlichkeitslogik*
- 1928 *Probleme der Deduktion*
- 1928 *Beiträge zu einer synthetischen Philosophie*
- 1929 *Nykyinen maailmankäsitys*
- 1930 *Der logistische Neupositivismus*

LOGICAL EMPIRICISM

- 1926 logical vs. psychological empiricism, against metaphysics
- *Nykyinen maailmankäsitys* 1929:
 - philosophy is “the alfa and omega of science”
 - study of the best scientific theories:
time and space, matter, life, soul
- “close” to the Vienna Circle 1929
- appointment as Professor of Theoretical Philosophy, University of Helsinki 1930
 - E. CASSIRER as referee, the new Method of Philosophy

SYNTHETIC PHILOSOPHY

- Kaila wished to solve the riddle of reality
- unitary or monistic world view:
 - matter vs. soul
- *Beiträge* 1928:
 - relations vs. properties
 - quantity vs. quality
 - additive vs. non-additive wholes
- Gestalt theory between mechanistic and vitalist approaches
- emergence? Köhler's physical Gestalts?

CLASH WITH CARNAP

- criticism of CARNAP's *Aufbau* (1928)
 - phenomenalism: elementary experiences vs. MACH's elements
 - external world and other minds as meaningful problems
- theory of reality and invariances (1936)
 - three levels: phenomenal, physical, scientific
- 1936 *Über das System der Wirklichkeitsbegriffe*
- 1939 *Inhimillinen tieto* (Human Knowledge)
- 1942 *Über den physikalischen Realitätsbegriff*

EXPERIMENTS IN VIENNA

- new psychological laboratory in Helsinki 1932
- CHARLOTTE BÜHLER's institute in Vienna 1932
 - experiments with 71 suckling infants (2 to 8 months)
- *Die Reaktionen des Säuglings auf das menschliche Gesicht (1932)*
 - imitation of facial expressions of a human adult
 - reaction to a Gestalt-quality of the eye region
 - not an innate or instinctive reflex, maturity of coordination, rudimentary intentionality in attempts of mimic imitation (5 months)

DEBATE WITH Ch. BÜHLER

- *Zeitschrift für Psychologie* (1935)
 - Bühler: instincts, what is whole and part?
- new experiments in Vienna in 1934
- defence of own position still in 1945
 - reference to LORENZ: ethology, study of animal behavior
 - specific preformations, releasing stimuli as keys to neural locks
 - reactions to smile: matching between such keys and locks

PERSONALITY

- Kaila's masterpiece in psychology:
Persoonallisuus (1934)
 - translations to Swedish (1935) and Danish (1949)
- dynamic psychology
 - needs and meaningful action (KURT LEWIN)
 - animal, mental, and deep-mental needs
 - personality as a holistic complex
- signals, expressions, symbols (KARL BÜHLER)
- symbol function as the mark of humanity

GESTALT BEHAVIORISM

- 1939 logical behaviorism, physicalism
 - statements about other minds translatable to statements about their bodily behavior
- 1943 *Syvähenkinen elämä, Tankens oro* (1944)
- 1945 "Hahmoprobleemasta"
 - physicalization of the symbol function
 - Gestalt theory does not know the symbol function or meaning

TERMINAL CAUSALITY

- Romantic philosophy of nature (HEGEL, SNELLMAN) anticipated holistic field theories
 - Quantum theory, Systems theory, Gestalt theory
- 1956 *Terminalkausalität als die Grundlage einer unitarischen Naturbegriffs*
 - *atomdynamik, biodynamik, neurodynamik*
- 1958 *Hahmottuva maailma* (The World as a Structuring Whole), unfinished ms.
- 1960 *Die perzeptuellen und konzeptuellen Komponenten der Alltagserfahrung*

KAILA'S STUDENTS

- separation of Theoretical Philosophy and Psychology in 1948
- logic and philosophy of science: VON WRIGHT, KETONEN, STENIUS, HINTIKKA
- psychology: (GRANIT), VON FIEANDT, LEHTOVAARA, OKSALA, TAKALA, RAINIO
- physics: LAURIKAINEN
- education: KOSKENNIEMI
- economics: AF HEURLIN
- history: RENVALL