

Ilkka Niiniluoto, Sami Pihlström (eds.), Reappraisals of Eino Kaila's Philosophy. Acta Philosophica Fennica vol. 89, Societas Philosophica Fennica, Helsinki, 232pp., 30 €, ISBN 978-951-9264-75-2, ISSN 0355-1792.

Eino Kaila (1890 – 1958) was the leading Finnish philosopher in the decades between 1930 and 1960. Nevertheless, for several decades he was internationally not very well-known since he published only in Finnish and German. This situation is changing. Meanwhile a considerable part of his work has been translated into English. Moreover, in the last twenty years or so, a considerable amount of secondary literature on Kaila (often in English) has been produced. I'd just like to mention the following sources:

1. *Eino Kaila and Logical Empiricism* (1992);¹
2. *Analytic Philosophy in Finland* (2003);²
3. *The Vienna Circle in the Nordic Countries* (2010).³

For every reader who is seriously interested in 20th century Finnish philosophy these books are obligatory reading. Most of the publications collected in these volumes conceive of Kaila as an analytical philosopher - although already in 1992 Hintikka pointed out that this holds only with some important qualifications. In contrast, many papers in *Reappraisals of Eino Kaila's Philosophy* (henceforth *Reappraisals*) take also into account aspects of Kaila's thought that are related to other philosophical traditions, in particular to German Neo-kantianism and American pragmatism. From *Reappraisals* a richer picture of Kaila's philosophy emerges from which it transpires that he certainly cannot be considered as an

¹ Ilkka Niiniluoto, Matti Sintonen, Georg H. von Wright (eds.), *Eino Kaila and Logical Empiricism*, Acta Philosophica Fennica 52, Helsinki, Hakapaino Oy, 1992.

² Leila Haaparanta, Ilkka Niiniluoto (eds.), *Analytic Philosophy in Finland*, Poznan Studies in the Philosophy of the Sciences and Humanities vol. 80, Amsterdam and New York, Rodopi, 2003.

³ Juha Manninen, Friedrich Stadler (eds.), *The Vienna Circle in the Nordic Countries. Networks and Transformations of Logical Empiricism*, Vienna Circle Yearbook vol. 14, Springer.

analytical philosopher in the usual Anglo-American sense. Kaila's thought was not only influenced by the different currents of „scientific philosophy“ of his time such as logical empiricism, neo-Kantianism, and phenomenology, but also by *Lebensphilosophie*, „existentialism“ or how to call it. In this sense, one may say that Kaila was a truly European philosopher, even if this was hardly noticed outside Finland.

Reappraisals is a collection of ten essays, eight written by Finnish authors and two by philosophers from abroad. By far the longest contribution is Juha Manninen's *Eino Kaila in Carnap's Circle* (9 – 52) that deals mainly with discussions that Kaila had with members of the Vienna Circle, in particular Carnap, around 1928 and 1929. Manninen heavily draws on unpublished sources (letters and diary entries, mainly in German).

Matthias Neuber's ambitious paper *From Carnap to Kaila – A neglected Transition in the History of „wissenschaftliche Philosophie“* (53 – 70) puts forward the thesis that „Kaila may be regarded as one of the „most up-to-date representatives of the early 20th century project of a scientific world-conception“. According to Neuber, Kaila was engaged in the project of finding a way between (Carnap's version of) logical empiricism and *Naturphilosophie*. For this purpose the concept of „invariance“ played an essential role. Neuber even claims that Kaila's „invariantism“ may have some affinity with Nozick's structuralist objectivism put forward in his last book *Invariances. The Structure of the Objective World*.⁴ Somewhat surprisingly, he does not treat the interesting problem of how Kaila's and Cassirer's accounts of the role of invariances are related. As we shall see in a moment, this is done by Matti Sintonen's contribution.

Ilkka Niiniluoto in *Eino Kaila's Critique of Metaphysics* (71 – 90) also investigates the role of invariances in Kaila's philosophy of science. He points out that Kaila's conception of reality

⁴ Robert Nozick, *Invariances: The Structure of the Objective World*, Cambridge/Massachusetts, Cambridge University Press, 2001.

was based on the concept of invariances that distinguished several distinct levels of reality according to their different degrees of invariance.

Anssi Korhonen's *Eino Kaila's Scientific Philosophy* (91 – 116) pursues the issue of what Kaila understood by „scientific philosophy“ or „wissenschaftliche Philosophie“ in more detail. Korhonen characterizes Kaila's philosophy as „robustly scientific“ since he regarded philosophy as being in line with the other sciences. This meant to acknowledge that philosophy had no proper method of its own, moreover Kaila subscribed to a basically realistic outlook to the world thereby maintaining a close relation with a kind of scientific realism.

Jaakko Hintikka's brief *Kaila and the Problem of Identification* (117 – 122) is another piece of *Reappraisals* that aims to show that the concept of „invariances“ was a key concept of Kaila's thought. Hintikka argues that Kaila used this concept in line with Leibniz and that Kaila's insights concerning this notion may be useful to overcome some problems in modal logic that arise from the question of what makes an object the same in different „possible worlds“. According to Hintikka, we should learn from Kaila in matters modal and conceptualize objects as concretizations of invariances. Before we go on to deal with the other contributions to *Reappraisals* just a short remark: Not less than four contributions of *Reappraisals* deal with the issue of invariances. This is evidence that Kaila's account of invariances may be a useful source even for contemporary discussions of this topic.

Matti Sintonen, in his contribution *Kaila on the Aristotelian and Galilean Traditions* (123 – 145), aims to correct the widely accepted picture of Kaila as an obedient follower of logical empiricism or positivism. He wants to show that Cassirer's „critical idealism“ strongly influenced Kaila's mature philosophy of science. More precisely, Sintonen contends that Kaila took over the concept of invariance (which was of crucial importance for him) essentially from Cassirer. According to Sintonen, evidence for Cassirer's influence is Kaila's basic distinction between the „Aristotelian“ and the „Galilean“ scientific tradition which

allegedly has its origin in Cassirer's distinction between the substance-oriented thought of Aristotle and the function-oriented thought of Galileo – possibly mediated through the influence of Kurt Lewin's paper *Der Übergang von der aristotelischen zur galileischen Denkweise in der Biologie und Psychologie* (Lewin 1930)⁵ There are, however, also important differences between Cassirer's and Kaila's concepts of invariances. While Cassirer's concept essentially relied on mathematical considerations (Felix Klein's *Erlanger Programm*) Kaila's was strongly influenced by biological and psychological considerations.

In *Kaila's Reception of Hume* (147 – 162) Jani Hakkarainen argues that Kaila was a competent interpreter of Hume (although not a professional Hume scholar). Hakkarainen asserts that Kaila's introduction to his Finnish translation of Hume's *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding* still has some philosophical and scholarly value for the contemporary Finnish reader.

From a contemporary point of view a quite peculiar piece of Kaila's *Naturphilosophie* is his concept of terminal causality (*Terminalkausalität*) which is the main topic of Michael Stöltzner's *Terminal Causality, Atomic Dynamics and the Tradition of Formal Teleology* (163 – 193). Stöltzner's paper is – perhaps somewhat surprisingly - the only contribution to *Reappraisals* that deals with a genuine topic of philosophy of physics. Kaila understood the expression „terminal causality“ as a „general designation for such a (non-statistical) regularity of the events, for which not so much the initial conditions but the limit conditions, the boundary conditions, the final conditions are decisive.“ In his favorable reading of Kaila's approach Stöltzner comes to the conclusion that in modern terms terminal causality should be interpreted not so much as an expression for nature's parsimony (which would have a strong taste for metaphysics) but rather as a criterion for modal selection.

⁵ Kurt Lewin, „Der Übergang von der aristotelischen zur galileischen Denkweise in Biologie und Psychologie“, *Erkenntnis* 1(1), 1930, 421 – 466.

For some years Sami Pihlström has been pursuing the task of investigating the reception of American pragmatism in the Scandinavian countries, in particular in Finland. Already in his contribution to *Analytic Philosophy in Finland* (2003) (mentioned in the beginning), Pihlström pointed out that Kaila played a leading role in this endeavor. In his contribution *Eino Kaila on Pragmatism and Religion* (195 – 211) Pihlström investigates the not quite unproblematic relation between Kaila and William James, who certainly was the best known and most influential American pragmatist in Europe during the early decades of the 20th century. As Pihlström emphasizes, Kaila's early sympathies with pragmatism à la James later clashed with his empiricist conscience, so to speak. It was difficult for him to find a balance between these two often antagonistic influences. In a sense, then, Kaila – as an individual philosopher - had to come to terms with similar difficulties as the logical empiricists as a collective in the 1930s when they were forced to leave Europe and to adapt to a new philosophical and cultural environment deeply marked by pragmatist currents. According to Pihlström, there were interesting parallels between Kaila and James, for instance, both started their careers as psychologists rather than philosophers, and both had a certain inclination to a kind of „romanticism“, as Pihlström and other authors of *Reappraisals* rightly emphasize. It may be expedient to mention here that twenty years ago Hintikka (in his contribution *Eino Kaila's „Blue Fire“* to the already mentioned collection *Eino Kaila and Logical Empiricism* (1992)) had gone even so far to characterize Kaila as a „*Naturphilosoph* in the same sense as the great romantic philosophers of nature.“

The favorite and most important notion of Kaila's „synthetic“ *Naturphilosophie* was the concept of the „deep mental“ or „spirituality“ to be interpreted as a kind of free-floating religiosity that embraced Man and universe as a unified whole. It seems to me that this attitude brings Kaila close to what may be subsumed under a specific version of philosophical romanticism that flourished in the first decades of 20th century particularly in Germany, to wit, *Lebensphilosophie*. On the other hand, this romanticist „world vision“ was hardly

compatible with a *wissenschaftliche Weltauffassung* favored by his philosophical colleagues of the Vienna Circle. Kaila considered this apparent conflict between the scientific world view and the „higher“ pursuits of humanity, inducing morality and religion, as the „disease of the age“. In this diagnosis he again meets with Cassirer who put this aporetic dichotomy as follows:

„Here romanticism – there positivism; here ‘reason and scientific rationality’ — there the opposition, even the disdain of both, here mysticism, there ‘physicalism’, this is the whole theme of philosophy in the last 150 years. Do we necessarily subscribe to one of these alternatives – or is there a kind of ‘reconciliation’ that is more than an eclectic mixture?“⁶

Mikko Salmela’s contribution *Eino Kaila on Ethics* (213 – 232) also deals with this issue concentrating on Kaila’s stance with respect to ethical matters. According to Salmela, Kaila as a „scientific“ philosopher felt obliged to restrict philosophy to the epistemological and logical analysis of science, on the other hand, he aimed at a „synthetic“ *Naturphilosophie* that comprised non-scientific issues of culture, spirituality, and values. Thereby, Salmela suggests, Kaila comes close to a kind of Hegelian evolutionary humanism for which „spirituality“ occupied the highest possibility for human existence. It goes without saying that these speculative ideas fit badly the standards of scientific philosophy. They testify that Kaila was, at least partially, a genuinely „Continental“ philosopher.

Reappraisals will certainly help facilitate the recognition of Kaila as an important mid 20th century philosopher for the non-Finnish reader. Whether Kaila will become posthumously a „first rank European philosopher“ as the editors of *Reappraisals* contend in the introduction of this book - time will show.

⁶ Ernst Cassirer, *Zur Metaphysik der symbolischen Formen, Nachgelassene Manuskripte und Texte* Band 1, Hamburg; Felix Meiner Verlag, p. 131.