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Personality as a Dynamic Gestalt-System A Study of a Book on Personality Psychology by Eino Kaila

Introduction

In 1920, Eino Kaila published a book on “Mind as Biological Phenomenon” (Kaila 1920a, in Niiniluoto 1990, 178 ff). The book consists of three chapters, or parts: 1) What do we mean when we say that mind is a biological phenomenon? 2) Mechanistic principle, 3) Rejection of vitalistic philosophy. Part one contains a discussion of causality, and the contrast between mechanistic and vitalistic philosophy. Part two discusses physicalistic and chemical interpretations of life-phenomena. Part three is devoted to a study on intentionality, Lamarckism, and vitalism. Finally, the writer concludes that vitalism must be rejected, and the mechanistic principle is valid under all circumstances. It sounds as if the writer would have accepted a mechanistic world-view without qualification. In reality, Kaila was somewhat reserved about the mechanistic philosophy and says that the biological organisms are acting in a goal-directed way, but the physical and chemical processes lack this trait. Kaila calls this trait “one of the most difficult riddles in biology” (Kaila 1920a, in Niiniluoto 1990, 258f). In addition, he treats vitalist philosophers and biologists with a great respect and seems to think that their criticism of mechanistic biology is at least partly justified, even if their conclusions are not acceptable. “We must attempt to reconcile our acceptance and our rejection, we must develop a category of order which is free from vitalism.” (Koffka 2005, 134). Köhler also has a parallel view very much like Kaila and Koffka (Köhler 1992, 134).

In the very same year, 1920, he published a short paper on “Philosophical Remarks on the Theory of Relativity” (Kaila 1920b, in Niiniluoto 1990, 298ff). In this paper, he discusses phenomenological interpretations of physics. According to this interpretation, the only data we have are the sensory perceptions of the experienced traits of the physical objects. We know only the *phainomena* of physical objects; nothing of objects themselves. Thus, natural sciences must base their study of nature on our subjective perceptions, transmitted to us with the help of our sensory processes (Kaila 1920b, in Niiniluoto 1990, 301). Kaila continues to probe his way along the narrow ridge, and finds that here we have

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a process of intellectually mediated judgments based on sensory perceptions, we have cognitive ideas, and we believe on the basis of all this experiential material that we can, after all, rely on our senses: even if we know nothing of things in themselves, we have a firm belief that there must be a correspondence between experience and physical objects. This is judgment error which is very near to the faulty constancy-hypothesis that is based on faulty atomistic and mechanistic conceptions of the relations between stimulus and ensuing physiological and experiential processes (Koffka 2005, 95 ff; Köhler 1992, 162). These ideas form some of the foundation-stones of Gestalt psychology (Köhler 1971, 13 ff). Kaila knew this error; he refers in his paper to an article published by Wolfgang Köhler in 1913 that was based on Köhler's animal studies with apes and hens (Kaila's paper contains no exact reference, but there are enough cues for a search when he describes Köhler's paper). There is more confusion still because Köhler's name is printed V.Köhler instead of W.Köhler, but Köhler's original paper can be identified with certainty with the help of cues provided. The name of the article is "Simple Structural Functions in the Chimpanzee and in the Chicken" (Köhler 1913b, in Ellis, 217ff) . Köhler demonstrated that anthropoid apes and hens are able to perceive things so that object-constancy can be proved. Thus it is clear that no higher-order cognitive mediation is needed to be able to perceive things in a way that presumes object-constancy. We do not perceive the world as it is represented in our original sensations; what we have are images of the outer world. Physical reality is something biologically programmed (in addition to experiential facts), and as such, its representation in our minds is based on the objectivity of perceived objects (Kaila 1920b in Niiniluoto 1990, 303f, see Koffka 2005, 95 and Köhler 1992, 67ff).

This is all far away from mechanistic psychology. It seems that Kaila arrived at an intellectual turning-point already in 1920, and felt that the mechanistic viewpoint had to be abandoned. In 1922, Kaila published a paper on "Psychological foundations of the world-view of physics" (Kaila 1922 in Niiniluoto 1990, 31ff). Curiously enough, he mentions no sources for his psychological arguments. Instead, there are references to physicists, e.g. Poincare and Helmholtz. But in his argumentation Kaila builds on a Gestalt-psychological foundation. There are enough cues to make possible some detective work: With the help of Koffka's "Principles", a reference to a book on Gestalt theory by Karl Bühler was found (Bühler 1913). In Koffka's book, there is figure 9, adopted from Bühler 1913 that Kaila used in his paper (Koffka 2005, 129). This figure can be interpreted in three different ways. That he employs this figure and interprets its message means that Kaila was very well informed about Gestalt theory. Thus, it can be concluded that the turning-point in the intellectual development of Kaila took place already in 1920, or in the early 1920s. Earlier, the author of this paper thought that the turning-point in the intellectual development of Kaila should

be located in the late 1920s, or at the beginning of the 1930s (see Jääskeläinen 1981, Jääskeläinen 1983). This date should now be changed.

The Book “Personality”

“Personality” by Eino Kaila appeared in 1934. Kaila made some minor additions to later editions, but these changes were mainly some additions to bibliography. A Swedish edition was published already in 1935. The book is a theoretical study on human personality and on the fundamental questions of psychology. It is at the same time a very philosophical book. It is a textbook, but also a treatise on the deepest traits of human nature. If one takes into account that Kaila belonged to a movement that emphasized scientific philosophy, the book contains a number of surprises. It has also an existential message. In spite of its technical nature, its style is splendid, and it was very popular when it appeared. It influenced many people deeply (e.g. Ingmar Bergman), even though it is not very easy to read (Kaila 1964).

The book consists of nine chapters: I. Leading Principles, II. The Meaningful Life of the CNS, III. The Biology of Character, IV. The Dawn of the Mind, V. Psychological Forces, VI. Social Bonds and Ties, VII. The Dynamics of Needs and Drives, VIII. Personality as Totality, IX. Animal and Deep-Spiritual Life. From now on, this paper is organized according to chapters: In the first section, Chapter I is presented, in the second section Chapters II and III, in the third Chs. IV and V, in the fourth Chs. VI and VII, in the fifth Chs. VIII and IX. Finally, three special topics will be discussed (World-Views and Ethics as Gestalts, Was Kaila a Reductionist Thinker, Democracy and History). At the end some general viewpoints will be presented.

Leading Principles

In the first chapter, some important leading ideas are presented and discussed. Kaila writes in the first section of Ch. I on the foundations of the book:

“This book (“Personality”) is based on that kind of psychology which is represented by Gestalt-psychologists, and outside this group such representative German psychologists as e.g. Erich Rudolf Jaensch (1883-1940) and David Katz (1884-1953) (see Katz, 1951).”

According to Kaila, it is the task of psychology to interpret and understand the connection between the need and the action of another person. Understanding can be extended to other biological arts, as the experiments conducted by Köhler demonstrate (Köhler 1976). Normal human adults are able to strive consciously toward some definite goal(s). This trait is *intentionality*. Intentionality is a precondition for the dawn of human mind. However, in many cases “understanding” does not refer to this kind of higher-order intentionality, but to

non-conscious strivings which are usually hidden. The psychology of personality is, according to Kaila, a *dynamic psychology*. It reveals hidden strivings and motives (“entlarvende Psychologie” is the German phrase used by Kaila).

Human needs are interpreted and understood in a context of some totality or complex of strivings, drives, and other traits. According to Kaila, personality psychology is *understanding psychology*. Verstehen and Erklären were concepts intensely discussed at that time (see Kluck 2008, 89 ff). The next question is: What is this totality? The idea of totality or *Ganzheit* was first successfully analyzed by Gestalt psychologists Wertheimer, Köhler and Koffka. Before them, Ewald Hering, Ernst Mach, von Helmholtz, and von Ehrenfels made important contributions (Michael Wertheimer 2012, 175 ff) (see Ash 2007, 51 ff). Totalities where the whole has a determining position in respect to the parts are *holistic totalities*. One fault of all mechanistic theories, according to Kaila, is that they make a sharp distinction between structure and function. In reality, preserving the structure needs continuous function, and function changes the structure. Thus, there is intensive interaction between structure and function. It is hardly possible to make any sharp distinction between these concepts. Human personality is defined as a holistic and meaningful whole which has many layers. It is also hierarchically organized which corresponds to the hierarchic structure of the CNS. Kaila is somewhat ambivalent in his relations to behaviorism. In “Personality” he is more phenomenologically inclined, but in a later paper called “On the Gestalt-Problem” he is more disposed to behaviorism (Kaila 1944 in Niiniluoto 1992, 392 ff).

Biological Foundations

In this section, Chs. II (The Meaningful life of the CNS) and III (Biology of Character) are discussed. Generally, Eino Kaila puts great emphasis on the biological foundations of human personality. Higher-order processes like thinking and memory are also dependent on CNS. In the case of certain brain damage, the symbol-function and language may suffer (see Goldstein 2000, 44 ff). Many patients are unable to think abstractly. Thus, abstraction is damaged (see Gelb & Goldstein 1918, in Ellis 1997, 315ff). Kaila is very critical of the idea of instinct (this critique concerns partly also the concept of drives). These ideas lead to employment of unnecessary extra mechanisms. Another unnecessary concept is “unconscious”. However, there is conscious life, as there is non-conscious life. Both are interacting closely with each other. The concept of awareness refers to a totality of experiences.

The CNS is a meaningful and holistic whole which functions as a total structure. One mechanistic error is to make an absolute difference between learned and inherited traits. In reality both are interacting with each other, and there is always

some free choice for a change. Another error is the tendency to intellectualize the mental life. Associations do not lead to a permanent change. If there were no motives or needs that would keep up the change, there would be no sustainable change at all. Motives are necessary for learning to take place.

Chapter III begins with a survey of the endocrine system and its connections with human personality. After this, Kaila turns to ontogenetic and phylogenetic aspects of human biopsychological development. Kaila concludes that the human is a result of a development that started with the dawn of a *wonder child of anthropoids*. Basically, humans are thus wonder-children of anthropoids. All this is a result of an ontogenetic developmental retardation which has led to a long childhood and slow maturation process which gives time for new cognitive achievements. Concerning heredity and environment, Kaila writes that there is no genetic determination without environment. Thus, there remains always some free space for learning and autonomous change. Some Finnish studies demonstrate that the role of heredity is less dramatic than the results of studies conducted e.g. by Francis Galton or by Lange seem to indicate (Kaila 1964, 89 ff). There follows a description of Kretschmer's typology, a section on typology and handwriting, and a section on human non-verbal expressions – facial expressions and mimesis. This is a very interesting section because Kaila refers to Darwin. The empirical material in this section is from studies of Philipp Lersch (see Lersch 1932) and from some Finnish studies. Kaila criticizes Darwin for his associations- and habit-theory of human and animal expressions. Associations and habits cannot sustain any system of expressions over generations. This is possible only if there is a need-drive structure supporting this system (see Köhler 1958, in Henle 1961, 97ff).

The Dawn of Humanity

Chapter IV begins with some reflections on the philosophy of science. All scientific activity strives for a general theory. Science means organized knowledge, and the ideal form of this is general theory. In psychology, there are some new principles which may lead to a general theory of this field. These principles are *holism and meaningfulness*.

Kaila refers to Scheler and Plessner and writes that the evolution of humankind is a rationalization process (Ernüchterung) on a grand scale. Bocheński has summarized Scheler's position aptly: "Spirit is therefore objectivity (Sachlichkeit), the capacity of being determined by the objective nature of things" (Bocheński 1961, 147). Kaila discusses the "tabula rasa" theory presented already by Aristotle. Kaila thinks that this theory is one of the greatest errors ever committed in psychology. In the first place, the theory assumes that there is a constancy-correlation between stimulus and sensation. There is no constancy-relationship

between stimuli and sensations. The second error is that the reception of impressions is a passive process. This is not the case. In reality, the reception of impressions is an active process, a full functional activity directed by individual needs.

Humans live in a world which is subjective in the functional sense, but objective in the phenomenal sense. This means that human cognitive processes are more or less relative to the individual. So it happens that some people think that dreams have the same value as “normal” cognitive processes in mediating the reality. Human values are functionally subjective but they have phenomenologically objective status. The reality recognized by science is a single one, but there are as many “value-realities” as there are individuals.

The Mind's Forces & Social Forces

In psychological theory, the theory of forces has an important place. However, it is necessary to liberate the concept of force from its physical associations which are too much associated with machine-theoretical mechanisms. Some experimental psychologists once thought that association between the intention to achieve something (decision to do something = *Vorsatz*) and the real deed can possibly be the force which leads to real behavior. However, Kurt Lewin was able to demonstrate that a habit cannot be a reason to do anything. If a habit has some significance in making something happen, it means that there is need, a motive which is using habit as its vehicle (see Lewin 1926, in Ellis 1997, 283 ff). Habits and associations are thus causal factors *provided* there is some need or motive which is sustaining these habits (see Lewin 1935, 239 ff). According to Kaila, Freud's great insight was not the unconscious as a seat of hidden strivings, but the role of needs in the dynamics of the personality.

Chapter VI is about social forces. Human life-space is social, and the need for a self-enchancement means the need to rise upward socially. According to Kaila, there is a general social need or drive which is valid for animals as well as for humans. There is always, of course, the possibility that someone, for one reason or another, must come down the social ladder. Often the result is deep depression and a feeling of failure. Kurt Lewin has in a number of experiments demonstrated that striving to keep up the social level so far achieved is a strong motivating force (Lewin 1935, 250 ff). There is a need to keep the social level as high as possible. Alfred Adler has analyzed the superiority tendencies, stresses and safeguarding systems associated with these social strivings. The community lives in individuals as Hegel says, but here the word “individual” must be understood functionally. In this sense, “individual” contains also the field as experienced by the subject. Kaila discusses cultural change and concludes, with reference to Spengler and Hegel, that all civilizations go through some process of change which contains

periods of flowering, but also periods of decline. Kaila refers to Edouard Zeller's famous work "Die Philosophie der Griechen" (II,1). The change of Greek tragedy from Aischylos to Euripides is here a good indicator. Agitation, great drama with great tensions, and military fights of grand importance change into skepticism, quiet resignation, irony, and doubt. There is a clear analogy with individual development. *The law of avidity rules*. This means: The need-satisfaction determines the level of achievement. In the case of Ancient Greece, there is a change from culture to civilization. Human needs are satisfied, there is no need for hard striving. Instead, the needs and strivings are more specific and selective, and there is a certain tiredness in the whole society. Many people feel bored. The civilization grows old.

The theme of Chapter VII is the dynamics of needs and drives. According to the law of avidity, the achievement level rises when needs are satisfied. People want to have something different, maybe something "extra". The human mind lives under constant pressure caused by non-conscious and unintended needs and strivings. One example of this phenomenon is active forgetting. In normal human communication a scientific attitude and totally objective speech are hardly possible. Does anyone believe that people would trust any political speaker who says that "my propositions are true with a probability of xx%, and the probable error is something like zz%"? A mere intellectual argumentation has hardly any impact. Knowledge is in everyday life an instrument which is employed by needs and strivings. If needs and strivings are blocked, they will turn inward: "des Herzens Wege schäumte nicht so hoch empor und würde Geist, wenn nicht der alte stumme Fels, das Schicksal, ihr entgegenstände." – Hölderlin

The rest of the chapter is concerned with compensation and overcompensation (Adler), frustration, sublimation, and other concepts of dynamic psychology.

Personality as a Whole; Lower-Level and Higher-Level Mental Life

Chapter VIII is concerned with human personality as a whole. According to Kaila, "personality" is a functional concept while "self" is a phenomenal concept. The higher-order functions are by nature active functions. From the viewpoint of the individual, these functions are like a burden, they have the nature of work. Activity and work are functions which belong to the very essence of a human being. "By the sweat of your face/you shall eat bread" (Gen 3:19, New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, NRSV). The higher-order functions require a persistent and sustained activity which means that one must try hard for a long period of time. The tolerance level of higher-order personalities is thus high, while neurotics have often a lowered tolerance level.

Kaila analyzes the concepts of awareness and self-awareness. Awareness is a means to obtain knowledge; self-awareness is thus a means to obtain knowledge

of one's own person. Self-awareness is a process which leads to the very center of personality. Humans normally have strong safeguarding systems which create obstacles to this process. Humans are prone to self-deception; self-awareness thus leads us often astray. Humans are disposed to see themselves in a deceptively positive light. *What motivates humans to exercise correct and objective self-awareness?* Kaila does not answer this question in any simple and unequivocal way but instead presents a discussion of consciousness, self-awareness, human spiritual depth, and ideal-formation. He concludes that the need and drive for a deep spirituality (which is not necessarily traditional religiosity) is the single most important force which leads humans to higher self-awareness. Ethical meditation and ethical values turn inward, toward the internal center of personality. This requires honest and real embracing and realization of the ideal; this will sustain the direction of the inward view. There follows a section on religious conversion (five pages based on a short story "My Religious Awakening" by the Finnish writer Juhani Aho who was a son of a priest like Eino Kaila). The chapter ends with a critique of human self-evaluation. As a rule, humans are disposed to see their actions controlled by higher-level motives, while in truth they are steered by lower-level, even animal internal strivings.

The book ends with chapter IX which is concerned with the integration of lower-level (animal) and higher-level (deep-spiritual) life-styles. These two ideas are not contrasting concepts, even if there exist tensions in human personality between these two forces. In all human activity, both are more or less present. Humans think and act in an objective and social way only if they have to. By nature humans are children who believe that they are all-mighty and peerless, until hard realities teach them to be realistic and to respect other people, and compel humans to be aware of their limitations and their real nature. Religions are deep-spiritual systems, but they are also *spiritual insurance companies* (this phrase used by Kaila stems from Max Scheler) which serve as safeguards (concerning the exact meaning of this concept, see Adler) against fears, inconvenient realities, and threats against one's own beliefs and attitudes. Kaila presents a number of Bible-citations which demonstrate the deep-spiritual traits of Christianity, but these same citations serve as examples of how easily even the most noble ideas can be used for lower-level purposes. So everything in Humans serves two Masters: God and Devil.

There was a stereotyped belief that Kaila, son of the Archbishop of Finland, was an atheist, materialist, positivist and some kind of enemy of the Christian church in general. This simple-minded statement is not true, and never was true. The truth is more complex. Kaila was certainly no traditional Christian believer, but his Bible citations demonstrate a high level of sophistication and understanding concerning human spirituality. There is deep spirituality in "Personality" (1934), and still more so in his book "The Deep-Spiritual Life"

(1944) (see Kaila 1986). The many Biblical citations and allusions in chapter IX and elsewhere in “Personality” witness a vast and deep Bible study. He uses freely and with intuitive mastery a whole register of Biblical ideas, citations, allusions and concepts. In “Personality” one finds citations from the New Testament – Matthew, John, Letters to Romans, Letters to Corinthians, Letters to Colossians –but also from Genesis. He illustrates his social-psychological, sociological and cultural arguments with the help of these citations, but also communicates his belief in the higher-level spirituality of humans which lies hidden in the deepest depths of the human mind.

At the end of this chapter, Kaila discusses the phenomenon of social equality. According to Kaila, equality is increasing in all western societies. Accordingly, social inequality is diminishing. This is due to the development of democratic values. The same pressures and needs which were seen in the discussion of religious beliefs are working here. Humanity has less and less understanding for great inequalities that were common in former times. Democracy employs both high-level altruistic values and lower-level strivings.

The last chapter IX contains an analysis of social revolutions which are discussed in the light of the French Revolution. These sections provide Kaila with an opportunity to illustrate his psychological thesis that all human action is a combination of lower-level as well as higher-level motives and strivings.

World-Views and Ethics as Gestalts

Psychology is the scientific study of the behavior of human beings and animals in their contacts with the outer world (Koffka 1929, 4). Koffka calls this “view from without”. It is concerned with *functional* concepts. In order to *understand* these behaviors represented and analyzed with functional concepts, a “view from within” is needed. This is the *phenomenological* view. Koffka writes that this view from within is analyzed with descriptive concepts (Koffka 1980, 4 ff). In this paper, however, the term “phenomenological” is used in accordance with earlier usage adopted from Kaila (1934). Here the logic of Koffka is very much the same as in “Personality” by Kaila: We see and study the concrete behavior of human beings, but in order to really *understand* it, we need to study the phenomenological “view from within”.

In order to understand humans as individuals or as groups, we should thus know something about their different internal processes. World-view is a concise key concept which summarizes a number of different vitally important traits into a meaningful and describable whole. According to Kaila (1929), world-view is based on material which is gained through experience. However, this material as such is chaotic. For example, our idea of three-dimensional space is not “any copy of reality as such” (Kaila 1929, 294) but space and time are results of

creative, basic processes of articulation (*Gestaltungsprozesse*). The final result of these processes is a *pregnant Gestalt of space-time systems which is both simple and elegant at the same time*. Human reason produces our world-views. Reason is one expression of the biological life-processes. It is the striving of the living system to articulate (*gestalten*) himself/herself as an independent whole and as a conscious, goal-striving being who lives in a continuous interaction with his or her environment, as it is represented in human phenomenological reality.

But it is not enough to have representations of objects, of space-time, of other human beings and so on. Humans need some goals, some directions in which to go. In other words, humans should have values, norms, and life-goals. These are usually integrated in the world-views. According to Kaila (1964, 174), values are subjective in the functional sense but objective in the phenomenal sense. He writes that science builds a world-view which is universally valid. However, values are based on the personalities of human individuals, and so long as values form an essential ingredient of the world-views, we will have as many as there are individuals. The attempts to build some universal value-system are doomed to failure. The reality of science is *one* but there are *many* value-realities. Even so, the different value-systems can be communicated and understood by other humans. According to Köhler, value situations fall under the category of Gestalts (Köhler 1966, 75). In spite of the functional subjectivity of values, there are no irrational ingredients in the world-views, but they obey some clearly definable cognitive rules, like Gestalt-laws. They are pregnant and parsimonious wholes like the scientific ingredients in the total world-view.

In 1938, Kaila translated into Finnish and published the first part of David Hume's "An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding" and wrote a preface to it (Kaila 1938). This preface is a long essay of some thirty pages on David Hume and on the "Enquiry", and at the same time it provides an interesting insight into the thinking of Kaila. Here we will refer only to those parts of the essay that are relevant to our theme concerning world-views. Kaila discusses the concept of natural law and refers to the contributions by Kant and Reichenbach. The idea that natural processes are ordered and organized is not based on rational principles. The one and only criterion is empirical observation and its results. When Hume gives the principle that nature conforms to some regularities, this is not based on reason. It is totally dependent on empirical induction. That scientific principles were not based on reason was a shocking observation in Hume's time. However, as Kaila says, it is nothing new or sensational today. Many philosophers have tried to answer Hume's argumentation. One weakness is the psychology Hume is employing. Hume's psychology is traditional association psychology which builds on mechanistic models. This is most clear in his studies on causality. In his preface to his translation of the first part of Hume's "Enquiries" Kaila cites Kant's Critique of Pure reason, first edition,

page A 126: “The understanding is always busy examining appearances, in order to discover some rule in them.” In any case, Kaila writes that Hume was right in his analysis of the cause-effect relationship. This is not an analytical relationship. But Hume does not understand phenomenological psychology. In human experience, the cause-effect relationship is an entirely different affair. Hume’s analysis of cause-effect relationships leads to a positivistic psychology. Things and processes are separate and scattered. World-view is barren, without any meaning and without any goals. Kaila is quick to remark that this is not the case. Hume’s understanding of human phenomenological experience is limited. Human experience is full of purposes and meanings, his/her world-view is an integrated whole, a Gestalt, not a collection of scattered pebbles. This articulated Whole is a pregnant Gestalt, simple, elegant, and well-articulated. Kaila admits that Hume was right in his logical and epistemological analysis of human knowledge. Human knowledge is something which may be characterized as a generalized description of events in relationship to each other, nothing more. In his “Personality”, Kaila (1964 27) refers to the old idea of *homo faber* who views human beings as blacksmiths, or technologists. This homo faber rules over Nature. Mechanistic and machine models are his specialty; in psychology, homo faber applies mechanistic association psychology. This is one problem in the Humean world-view: it leads to a faulty idea of human experience in its relationships to the outer world.

Was Kaila a Reductionist Thinker?

One is justified in asking this question because there is so much biological material in “Personality”: Physiology, anatomy, endocrinology, embryology, heredity, evolution and development, morphology, neurology ... However, the answer to this question is *no*. Kaila was no reductionist. He believed that biological factors can be helpful in the search for explanations, biology may provide useful hypotheses, but psychology is not reducible to biology. Let us take one concrete example: Paul Alfred Weiss (1898 – 1989) was a remarkable biologist. Kaila refers to Weiss in his book in chapter I where Kaila discusses the leading principles. One of these principles is the dominating position of the totality in relation to parts. In this connection Kaila presents a summary of the early transplantation studies of Weiss, as told in his book “Morphodynamik”. These studies were conducted with newts. Kaila was very impressed by these studies, because they seemed to him to prove that organisms as biological systems demonstrate many traits in common with psychological systems (flexibility, the dominating position of the Whole (Ganzheit) in relation to parts, compensation in the case of injury, and so on). In his argumentation Kaila refers to many other biologists than Weiss, but let us study more closely Weiss and his research, and his colleague Ludwig von Bertalanffy. Paul Weiss was educated

in Vienna under the leadership of Hans Prizbram, in the Biological Research Institute of the Academy of Sciences in Vienna. On the basis of his studies he concluded that behavioral elements are subordinated to the state of the whole system (Drack 2007). He extended his view later to vertebrate nervous systems. He remained a research-oriented biologist his whole life, being in this respect different from his colleague and one time friend, Ludwig von Bertalanffy who turned to philosophy and General Systems Theory, a study of systems and their interactions, a branch of science and learning he helped to establish (Bertalanffy 1968, 10ff). Paul Weiss was an important background figure in these activities, although both men had little contact with each other after their Viennese years (Drack 2007). Kaila refers to Bertalanffy's book "Das Gefüge des Lebens" in the section where he formulates his conceptions concerning structure and function. Here again, biological processes provide important analogues for the understanding of biological phenomena, but there are no signs that Kaila would ever consider any reductionism. It is notable that von Bertalanffy, the biologist and systems theorist, rejects the mechanistic reductionism as a basis for science. In many respects, both Weiss and von Bertalanffy think in the same vein as Gestalt theorists (Bertalanffy 1975, 26 ff).

Kaila defines psychology of personality as understanding psychology. Its main data are phenomenological and behavioral descriptions. Biological factors are important, but they have a role as background factors. In addition, Kaila's epistemology is monistic. Therefore, biological, phenomenological, and experiential data all belong to the same reality. This kind of epistemology makes reductionism superfluous. Finally, Kaila thinks that understanding and explanation belong both to the same methodological frame of reference. This was also what Wertheimer thought, as reported by Koffka (2005, 20f). The concrete sentences used in the context of understanding differ semantically from the sentences used in the context of explanation, but basically both roads lead to Rome, i.e. they lead to the same results concerning the final outcome.

Democracy and History

Erik Allardt, a Finnish sociologist, was a student of Kaila. He wrote in his memoirs that he was deeply impressed by Kaila as a young student, but Kaila's theories are, according to Allardt, somewhat too individualistic. Allardt himself emphasized some supra-individual social factors as presented e.g. in sociology, economics, social philosophy, social policy, and in political studies in general (Allardt 1995). What would these factors concretely be? Can one find examples of them? Yes, of course. They are factors like social class, role and status, position in social networks, economic and financial factors (e.g. division between rich and poor people), and so on. There is no end to social, economic, and political dividing lines which influence human experience and behavior. Kurt Lewin is a

theorist whose ideas will prove to be useful in the studies concerning the motives of individual behavior and individual experience of the environment (Henle 1986, 74 ff).

However, there are some indications that Kaila understood at least something about these supra-individual Wholes. Kaila emphasizes that great social movements and changes often have multi-layered motivations. The higher-level motives are usually real but they are weak, but the lower-level (“animal”) motivations are strong. Kaila presents an interesting thesis concerning historical materialism (Marx): Historical materialism fails, not because it thinks that the higher values and higher motivations play only a minor role in the great drama of history, but because it emphasizes in a one-sided way only one type of lower-level motivation, namely economic and financial strivings. Historical materialism does not give any role to other kinds of lower-level motives, e.g. self-assertion, vanity, striving for superiority, desire for revenge, and so on. Kaila makes an allusion to G.H.W. Hegel and writes that “the cunning of the deep-spiritual life-style is hidden behind the façade which conceals that the lower-level motivations are in effect serving the deep-spiritual strivings” (Kaila 1964, 350). Kaila refers to Max Scheler who wrote that such ideals which have no grounding in the vital layers of human drives are not sustainable. They do not influence history, and are soon forgotten.

According to Kaila, the history of humanity is a purposeful process directed by the laws of human needs and drives. It has both direction and meaning. The general trend in history seems to be, according to Kaila, toward increasing equality and democracy. Again, we have here a multi-layered motive-complex: There might be higher-level motives like increasing altruism, increasing sensitivity to human suffering, and increasing empathy and sympathy, including increasing solidarity. On the other hand, there are lower-level strivings like jealousy, revengefulness, self-assertion and vanity. *The law of avidity* means that under less frustrating conditions people have higher expectations concerning the level of need-satisfaction than before. Thus, better and more humane living-conditions may actually lead to more dissatisfaction than before. However, the grand view of history is that humanity as a whole is striving for more equality, for more solidarity, for more love for one’s neighbor. There may be temporary variations in this movement, and it is uneven at times, but nothing can really interrupt its advancement. It is so fast anchored to the existing realities. Humans have a natural *striving for superiority* (Adler) which means that the lower strata in the society have a natural upward tendency (Kaila 1964, 254 ff). People are less and less satisfied with existing conditions, if these conditions lead to the situation that the higher classes in a society are able to keep their privileges at the cost of all other groups. This is simply unacceptable, and it will not be tolerated in the long run. According to Kaila, in a future society people will view the

social inequalities we still have as some kind of barbarism, like the earlier slave-system. Kaila is not moralizing here. He talks only about human motivations and strivings which will necessarily lead to more equal and more rightful social systems where social and cultural resources are more justly distributed.

Some General Viewpoints

The air that is resting over the reader when he/she reads “Personality” is somewhat heavy with pessimism. Human beings are directed by needs. They can be convinced by rational and objective arguments only under special circumstances. When they are afraid of something, humans may listen to the voice of reason, but as soon as this fear disappears, they will fall back to their short-term need-satisfaction, and other bad habits. It is worst with social revolutions: violence, looting and killing continues even after the rebellious party has de facto won their campaign. When there are no guilty people left from the old ruling classes, the innocent ones will be killed. Gallows, guillotines, and execution platforms are set up and put to use. Jurisdiction functions summarily and in a haphazard way. Shooting executions are made spontaneously, and so on. Old jealousies and wants for revenge for past injustices have no end. This is a very gloomy perspective. In everyday life humans show off through vanity, they like to lie to each other about themselves and about their neighbors. Humans like to present themselves as better persons than they are. They may not like any deep spirituality, but they like to pretend that this is a trait which is important to them. Many are self-centered and they are incessantly striving for superiority which most of them do not deserve but which they like to pretend in any case. Enlightenment is powerless and hardly able to influence anyone. In order to change human behavior, one must know the needs and drives of the people and act accordingly with the help of advertising, small groups, marketing, propaganda, and so on. Mere knowledge convinces no one. The perspectives are not very good. Humans deceive and they like to be deceived, writes von Grimmelshausen in his book “Simplicius Simplicissimus” which describes the adventures of a simple soldier during the 30-years war in Germany which lasted 1618-1648.

However, this is *not* the whole truth of humans. There is another, brighter side to human personalities: Humans have a number of higher-level functions which may influence people’s behavior. Humans have the capacity to think: they have a large cortex. They have language for communication which is based on symbol function. They have social feelings and emotions which help to make them beings who have social empathy, sympathy and a need for dialogue and cooperation. They have intelligence and inventive interests. And, finally, they have the capacity for deep-spiritual life. Kaila says that deep-spirituality may not be something that is readily seen, but it lies concealed in the depths of human personality. According to Kaila, its voice is very silent, but it is persistent. Finally,

it gets the upper hand of the lower-level strivings. The problem is only that this process may demand a long time: sometimes too long a time.

Kaila admired Thomas Mann. He found the following short text in an essay by Thomas Mann (*Die Stellung Freuds in der modernen Geistesgeschichte*, 1929):

“Wir mögen, sagt Freud, noch so oft betonen, der menschliche Intellekt sei kraftlos im Vergleich zum menschlichen Triebleben, und recht damit haben. Aber es ist doch etwas Besonderes um diese Schwäche; die Stimme des Intellekts ist leise, aber sie ruht nicht, ehe sie sich Gehör geschafft hat. Am Ende, nach unzählig oft wiederholten Abweichungen, findet sie es doch.” (Mann 1960).

There is still another interesting trait in the psychology of Kaila: Kaila is critical of Freud's unconscious and other “instances” like superego in Freud's dynamic psychology. However, Kaila has his own theory of the strata of human personality. He presents two different dynamic “forces” in human personality: “Animal” or lower-level functions, and deep-spiritual, or higher-level functions. These two systems act in many ways antithetically in relation to each other. In his late philosophy, Scheler outlined a new philosophy. According to this, “the higher levels of being are weaker than the lower ones” (Bocheński 1961, 151). However, in the scenario by Kaila, there is a constant “battle” going on between these forces. Human beings act according to the demands presented by lower-level functions, but they value the higher-level system. So they want to be seen as some kind of “representatives” for their own deep-spirituality. “The battle” between these two systems is undecidable, but it is incessantly going on.

Kaila had certainly this kind of frame of reference partly from Freud: where else did he get it from? Another evident source is Scheler. It is pretty sure that Kaila was strongly influenced by Scheler, and Scheler had developed a somewhat corresponding theory of human nature (Stegmüller 1978, 99ff). Still another source was Paul Schilder, the psychoanalyst whose “*Medizinische Psychologie*” is a reference used much by Kaila (see Kaila 1966). The third possible source is Friedrich Nietzsche. There are many references to Nietzsche in “*Personality*”. Clearly Kaila was Nietzsche's avid reader. On the basis of the content and of ideas presented, one possible source could be Philipp Lersch, but his “*Der Aufbau des Characters*” (later published under a new title: “*Der Aufbau der Person*”) came out only in 1938 which was too late. “*Personality*” was published in 1934. Finally, some important dynamic psychologists (Kurt Lewin, Alfred Adler and Pierre Janet) should be mentioned, although they were not strata-theorists. They were very influential theorists of psychodynamics. In fact, as a dynamic theorist Kaila was nearer to them than Freud or other persons mentioned in this section above.

Summary

This paper is about the book "Personality", written by the Finnish philosopher-psychologist Eino Kaila and published in 1934. Kaila was a Gestalt theorist who applied Gestalt theory in psychology, but in addition also in his philosophical studies. In the paper, it is argued that Kaila became a Gestalt theorist in the early 1920s, possibly already in 1920. Next, the constancy hypothesis is discussed. Kaila had in this question the same critical attitude as Gestalt psychologists. After this, "Personality" by Kaila is presented. It is a very philosophical book, although it was used as a textbook in the psychology studies at the University of Helsinki. At the same time, it was an original contribution to the psychology of personality. It summarized in an excellent way the available empirical and theoretical material. The book contains nine chapters. The first chapter contains a presentation of the basic principles: Understanding (Verstehen) as method, human intentionality, holism, dynamics of personality, personality as a hierarchic system. After the study of all nine chapters, the author has chosen three themes which are studied in a more intense way: World-views and ethics as gestalts, the question of whether Kaila was a reductionist thinker, and democracy and history in the light of Kaila's "Personality".

Keywords: Eino Kaila, Gestalt theory, Gestalt psychology, personality.

Zusammenfassung

Dieser Artikel behandelt das Buch "Personality" des finnische Philosophen und Psychologen Eino Kaila, das im Jahr 1934 veröffentlicht wurde. Kaila war ein Gestalttheoretiker, der die Gestalttheorie in der Psychologie angewendet hat, aber darüber hinaus auch in seinen philosophischen Studien. Dieser Artikel geht davon aus, dass Kaila in den frühen 1920er Jahren, möglicherweise schon im Jahr 1920, Gestalttheoretiker wurde. In einem nächsten Schritt diskutiert der Artikel die Konstanzhypothese. In dieser Frage vertrat Kaila dieselbe kritische Position wie die Gestaltpsychologen. Im weiteren Verlauf des Artikels wird Kailas Werk „Personality“ vorgestellt, das, obwohl es als Psychologie-Lehrbuch an der Universität Helsinki verwendet wurde, ein sehr philosophisches Buch ist. Gleichzeitig war es ein eigenständiger Beitrag zur Persönlichkeitspsychologie, in dem das verfügbare empirische und theoretische Material hervorragend zusammengefasst wurde. Das Buch enthält neun Kapitel. Das erste Kapitel enthält eine Vorstellung der Basisprinzipien: Verstehen als Methode, menschliche Absichten, Holismus, Dynamiken der Persönlichkeit und Persönlichkeit als hierarchisches System. Nach eingehendem Studium aller neun Kapitel hat der Autor dieses Artikels drei Kapitel ausgewählt, auf die er genauer eingeht: Weltanschauung und Ethik als Gestalten; die Frage, ob Kaila ein reduktionistischer Denker war, und Demokratie und Geschichte vor dem Hintergrund von Kailas Werk „Personality“.

Schlüsselwörter: Eino Kaila, Gestalttheorie, Gestaltpsychologie, Persönlichkeit.

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