

*Mikko Salmela*

# THE FIGHT FOR EUROPEAN CULTURE

*Finnish Philosophers' Perspectives on  
Totalitarianism during World War II*

## Introduction

Eino Kaila (1890-1958), J.E. Salomaa (1891-1960), and Erik Ahlman (1892-1952) were the most prominent Finnish philosophers in the period between the two world wars. They all viewed World War II as a fight for the future of European culture. Still, they disagreed on whether or not totalitarian political ideologies fit this invaluable cultural heritage. Kaila first turned to Germany as the stronghold of European culture against the aggressive Soviet communism. He also suggested that there are essential affinities between the modern holistic field theory and totalitarian ideologies. Finally, he embraced the view that Erik Ahlman had adopted in the early 1930's and sustained until the end of the war, a view that communism, fascism, and national socialism were equal threats to the basic values of European culture: individualism, liberalism, humanism, and democracy. Salomaa defended parliamentary democracy throughout the war. Yet his philosophy of education during the war had

some totalitarian undertones. The totalitarian affiliations of Kaila and Salomaa remained, however, politically inspired and philosophically superficial.

## Eino Kaila

Eino Kaila is perhaps the most influential philosopher in Finland in the 20th century. Kaila acted as Professor of Theoretical Philosophy at the University of Helsinki in 1930-48, and was later nominated to The Finnish Academy. Kaila distinguished himself in both philosophy and psychology, and his academic legacy set the course for an entire generation of Finnish scholars, both scientists and humanists. As an outstanding scholar and a most accomplished lecturer, Kaila conveyed fresh ideas and approaches to Finland. These included experimental psychology, Gestalt theory, the psychology of personality, philosophical and mathematical logic, and logical empiricism, all of which merged within the broader mainstream of analytic philosophy after World War II. Kaila thus became the originator of analytic philosophy in Finland, even though he disliked the label 'analytic'. The antipathy for this term sprang from his lifelong search for a synthetic philosophy that would unify the findings and theories of modern science.<sup>1</sup>

### *The Threat of the Soviet Union and the Pan-European Promise*

Eino Kaila regarded the Soviet Union as the gravest threat to European high culture. This was a belief generally held among the Finnish bourgeoisie and intelligentsia between the two World Wars. This belief motivated and directed Kaila's political thinking throughout the 1930's and during World War II. Kaila first leaned on the Pan-European-movement that was founded and headed by the Austrian count Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi.<sup>2</sup> This movement had as its principal aim was to preserve the world domination by the white race and its cultural hegemony. World War I had already broken this domi-

nation, and the process was escalating all the time. It was therefore urgent for European nations to settle their mutual conflicts and to unite in order to defend themselves against common enemies: a new world war, general impoverishment, and rising bolshevism. Coudenhove-Kalergi claimed that if the European countries could not agree voluntarily on a customs union and an association of states, a different kind of European union would ensue after a Soviet invasion.<sup>3</sup> These allusions to the protection of European culture from a Soviet threat also appealed to Eino Kaila. He emphasized that it was especially vital for Finns to awaken to European awareness, because the next world war could bereave Finland's national sovereignty in the same way as the previous one granted its opportunity to gain it.<sup>4</sup>

The development of international politics was a great disappointment for Kaila, whose dream of a European union was crushed before his eyes. Kaila cynically concluded that visions of supranational associations with real power have turned out to be illusions. Nevertheless, he admitted that "the course of development cannot be denied and one must yield in the face of facts."<sup>5</sup> A kind of yielding can perhaps be seen in Kaila's participation at the 1938 summer festival of the *Nordische Gesellschaft* -society in Lübeck. The official purpose of this society was to coordinate the cultural cooperation between Germany and the Nordic Countries. Yet, the society had acquired a propagandistic reputation on the grounds of its former activity.

It has been asserted that Eino Kaila belonged to the antifascist and socially conservative, elderly Finnish intelligentsia that was worried about the totalitarian ideas that attracted youth in the 1930's.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, there is no doubt that Eino Kaila was among the majority of Finnish intellectuals who embraced German orientation during World War II. The traditional sympathies of Finnish intellectuals for Germany and German culture may provide a partial explanation. Little was known about the new Nazi Germany and so powerful were the positive images attached to the classic Germany of Kant, Goethe, and Beethoven. This, together with a recent memory of companionship-in-arms between Germany and the White army in the Finnish Civil War in 1918 explains, that the new Germany inherited the former German affiliations, even if the intellectuals did not have strong or particular sympathies for national socialism itself.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, even if they were aware of serious restrictions of civil rights,

antisemitism, or even concentration camps, Germany was still considered to be a lesser evil when compared to the Soviet Union. This motivation became understandable especially after the Soviet attack on Finland in 1939-40.

### *Germany as the Saviour of European Culture*

Concern for European civilization and Finnish national sovereignty were the touchstones of Eino Kaila's political thought during World War II. Kaila feared that Europe has finally drifted into a mortal power struggle that was destroying its traditional high culture. And if the culture was ruined, the whole civilization would be gone: "science will boil down to mere technology, philosophy to official propaganda, and justice to phrases."<sup>8</sup> This gloomy prognosis is quoted from a newspaper article with a telling title, "Culture as religion" (*Kultursom religion*), an article that was published in Sweden in January of 1941. In this paper, Kaila outlines a suggestive portrait of the three-millennia-old "temple" of European high culture. This temple brings together the Hellenic aspiration of virtuous life and objective knowledge, the Christian ideal of love of ones neighbour, with the modern progress of science and technology. Together these elements build up a unique whole with immeasurable value. "That [temple] is the reason for living on earth, that makes the life worth living," confessed Kaila in a semi-religious manner.<sup>9</sup> He also emphasized the individualistic aspects of European mentality. "Higher life of spirit cannot be anonymous collective product of masses, but it has been created by individuals with unrestricted personal freedom of research and judgement."<sup>10</sup> It must have been obvious for Kaila that the Nazi Germany had renounced the ideal of individualism together with many other pillars of his temple of culture. Notwithstanding, Kaila did not hesitate to take sides with Germany when it launched its attack against the state whose offences against the European tradition Kaila deemed even worse, the Soviet Union.

Kaila's contribution to the German orientation in Finland consists of one treatise and three articles. The historical treatise "Three hundred years of academic life in Finland" (*Kolmesataa vuotta suomalaista yliopistoelämää*, 1940) was published in honor the 300th anniversary

sary of the University of Helsinki. It was first published in German, and only later in French and Finnish translations, and it was sent to all headmasters of German universities. The reason for this procedure was the disappointment the Finns had felt after the defeat of Winter War. They supposed that Germans had rejected Finnish requests for help because they were ignorant that Finland was an inalienable part of the West. It was, therefore, Kaila's purpose to show that this indeed was the case: that the history of Finnish culture abounds with German influences and that the Finns belonged in every way, both culturally and racially, to Western Europe; not to the Slavonic East. This legitimization of the Fenno-German *Schicksalsgemeinschaft* through historical and cultural connections also became Kaila's self-appointed task also after the outbreak of the Finnish Continuation War in June 1941. It was in this war that Finland fought as a companion-in-arms with Germany against the Soviet Union.

Kaila published three articles in Germany during World War II. *Der finnische Mensch* (1942) echoes the contents of the earlier treatise, with some rhetoric allusions to the Nazist ideas of *Lebensraum* and leader principle. *Zur Idee einer Europäischen Friedensordnung* (1941) that was published soon after the outbreak of the Continuation War is even bolder in terms of leanings on Nazi ideology. Kaila begins with an indirect condemnation of the League of Nations. Snellman, says Kaila, would have considered such organization that claims for supranational rights without having respective powers of enforcement as some superpowers' masked instrument.<sup>11</sup> Kaila also confirms Snellman's prediction of the rising importance of nationality in history: the new national socialism is one expression of this trend. Kaila even offers a sketch of his own for national socialism in its "wide European sense".

Es heisst, das Nationalprozip *weiter* zu entwickeln, so dass aus der Volksgemeinschaft eine organische Einheit entsteht, in der es für eine "soziale Frage" keinen Platz mehr gibt. Es besagt, den Idealismus, dass heisst den Realismus der *ganzheitlichen* Betrachtungsweise auch im Gebiet des sozialpolitischen Denkens restlos zum Geltung zu bringen, im Gegensatz zu dem Materialismus des marxistischen Denkens das auf eine kurz-sichtige Weise nur *einen* Faktor des grossen Werdens, den wirtschaftlichen, zu erfassen vermag. Es heisst die Besitzlosen zum Besitzenden zu machen und jedem Volksgenossen zu dem Bewusstsein zu verhelfen,

dass der wertvollste Besitz von allem das heilige Erbe der dreitausend-jährigen europäischen Kultur ist.<sup>12</sup>

Kaila saw that this kind of Europe is taking shape by the power of Germany. He even regarded Germany as the only stronghold that could save Europe once England has betrayed European civilization by allying with the anti-cultural Soviet Union. This “unholy alliance” motivated Kaila’s strong sympathy for Nazi Germany. “*In hoc signo vincis*. Unter diesem Zeichen wirst du siegen, Europa – oder du wirst aufhören zu sein,” he concluded.<sup>13</sup>

These quotations show that Kaila had at least political grounds to support Germany in the beginning of the Continuation War. Finland and Germany fought together against the Soviet Union and it was necessary to strengthen and foster spiritual ties between the two nations. This task fell naturally on Finnish intellectuals whose German sympathies had traditionally been high. Kaila’s contributions to this task did not, as such, differ much from the treatises of Jalmari Jaakkola, V.A. Koskenniemi, and Väinö Auer, and Eino Jutikkala that were published at the same time.<sup>14</sup> But did Kaila really believe that the national socialist Third Reich could and would secure the three-thousand-year-old heritage European high culture?

### *Totalitarianism and the Weltanschauung of the 20th Century*

It is impossible to determine Kaila’s precise philosophical involvement with national socialism, or totalitarianism in general. Still, there are some rather strong allusions to totalitarian, or at least proto-totalitarian, ideas in his wartime texts. The problem is that Kaila does not subscribe to these ideas directly. Instead, he attributes them to G.W.F. Hegel and to his eminent Finnish follower J.V. Snellman (1806-81) while presenting their thought in a rather neutral fashion. The main evidence for Kaila’s own sympathy for totalitarian ideas resides in his willingness to interpret Hegel’s and Snellman’s ideas with the concepts and theories of modern holism and field theory, ideas to which he emphatically subscribes.

Stated simply, Kaila's basic idea is that there are essential affinities between the modern scientific *Weltanschauung* and totalitarian ideologies. He takes, for instance, the Nazist catchwords "voice of blood" (*Stimme der Blut*), "*Lebensraum*", and "totalitarian". The first notion, maintains Kaila, refers to the unconscious psychic forces that determine the courses of human life; the second is a political parallel to some – unspecified – notions in field theoretical biology. The third notion refers to the tremendous social upheaval that during the past two decades has brought along social levelling and uniformity, that is, totalization.<sup>15</sup> The connecting link between political totalitarianism and the modern *Weltanschauung* is field theoretical holism. Kaila asserts that the basic ideas of holism were put forward by Hegel and Snellman in their "faltering" metaphysics as early as in the 19th century.<sup>16</sup>

Kaila claims that Hegelian idealism is a plausible position if it is interpreted from the point of view of modern holistic biology.<sup>17</sup> Holism, in general, states that the laws of the more complex structures are not deducible from the laws of less complex structures. According to Kaila, this view is applicable to such Hegelian notions as objective spirit and national spirit. These are empirical regularities that are characteristic of certain cultural phases and some world historical peoples. Kaila claims that "modern ausgedrückt heisst dies, dass der 'objektive Geist' und der 'Volksgeist' insbesondere die durch Eigengesetzlichkeit ausgezeichnete übergeordnete Ganzheit der Gemeinschaft ist, die nicht durch die Summe der Individuen besteht, sondern deren unselbständige Glieder diese sind."<sup>18</sup> This means that the laws of world history are irreducible to the laws of national communities (*Volksgemeinschaften*), just as these are irreducible to the laws of the solitary behavior of individuals. Kaila further subscribes to the other tenet of methodological holism, a tenet in which all the variables that constitute the system interact with each other. It is just because of this mutual interdependency within the system that new regularities will emerge in a whole that are not present in its parts. This methodological holism does not, however, remain merely explanatory. It also takes a normative turn when Kaila, *pace* Hegel and Snellman, applies it to the explanation of social phenomena, including legal and moral norms.

Kaila attributes the totalitarian tenet to Hegel and Snellman, according to which a community exists both conceptually and normatively prior to the individuals that comprise it. Thus Kaila maintains that the most important practical aspect of an individual person's identity, or "substance", is neither one's spirituality (*Geistigkeit*), nor one's religious humanity. Instead, the most important factor is one's membership in a particular national community. This membership defines our identity so essentially that Kaila does not hesitate to assert that "die Substanz eines Einzelnen sei der Volksgeist."<sup>19</sup> Moreover, national spirit also determines one's ethical consciousness.

Das sittliche Bewusstsein z. B. ist dasselbe wie dieses Nationalbewusstsein. In dem sittlichen Bewusstsein erlebt der Mensch seinen individuellen Willen als identisch mit dem allgemeinen Willen, der der gemeinsame Wille der Volksgenossen ist, in denen der Volksgeist die gemeinsame Substanz ist. Aus diesem Volksbewusstsein kann der Einzelne nicht heraustreten, weil es seine Substanz ist.<sup>20</sup>

From this metaphysical and ethical dependency of individuals on their national communities, ensues a normative tenet, according to which the national spirit and national customs are the highest truth and the highest right for the individual, and there is no higher right whatsoever.<sup>21</sup>

The demand of absolute obedience to the moral rules of one's national community affects also to one's relation to the state. As the state is a realization of the national spirit, it is, therefore, an intrinsic end with no further purpose. Furthermore, it is a moral end, because it is only in a state where one can be free in the sense of participating in the spiritual process in which the nation creates its norms and rules. Kaila emphasizes the difference between this Hegelian view and the liberal conception of the state as a means of civil society and individual citizens. Since every nation aspires only to rise above other nations to lead the world in historical progress, this progress can only take place through the inevitable and continuous struggle between nations and their representative states. It is also important to realize, according to Hegel and Snellman, that this struggle cannot be evaluated by means of ordinary moral criteria. On the contrary,

the highest command of political morality is the interest of the state. And “wer diesem etwa seine Ideale der Menschenliebe, der Gerechtigkeit usw. vorzieht, ist ein Verräter des Vaterlandes”.<sup>22</sup>

What can we make of this short summary of Hegel’s and Snellman’s thought? There are, no doubt, some historical connections and affiliations between Hegelian ideas and the tenets of modern totalitarianism, as Sir Karl Popper, together with several other writers, has forcefully argued.<sup>23</sup> The extent to which Hegelianism and national socialism are affiliated is not, however, the issue here. More important is the historical fact that the neo-Hegelians of the Third Reich used Hegel’s political philosophy and the philosophy of history to legitimize the main tenets of national socialist ideology and its policies, as Hubert Kieseewetter has shown in his treatise *Von Hegel zu Hitler* (1995). The Hegelian features of national socialism included the theory of an organic state based on ethnic nationality, the introduction of vocational corporations instead of labor unions, the absolute power of a charismatic leader, the replacement of civil rights and liberties by social duties and a more “concrete” and “higher” within the state community, and national chauvinism together with legitimization of aggressive and total wars, including World War II, as historical necessities.<sup>24</sup>

I believe that it is fair to argue that Kaila emphasizes the affiliations of Snellman’s Hegelian thought and national socialist ideas, although there are only few allusions to this in this articles.<sup>25</sup> Still, Kaila points out that “wie zwanglos sich die Snellmansche Philosophie des Volksgeistes im Sinne einer modernen Ganzheitslehre deuten lässt und wie aktuell sie dadurch immer noch ist”.<sup>26</sup> Kaila’s evaluation of Snellman’s contributions to Finnish philosophy and culture is also revealing. Kaila states that Snellman imported the characteristically German, organic view of community to Finland and thereby contributed to the fact that the Finnish culture remained as an original version of the “Nordic-Germanic” (*nordisch-germanisch*) culture. Kaila describes Snellman himself as broad-minded, without being liberal, for Kaila concludes, “Er hat keine besondere Sympathie für die allgemeine Stimmrecht gehabt, sondern er hat einen korporativ aufgebauten Staat vorgezogen. Er war ein Mensch unserer Zeit.”<sup>27</sup>

## *The Painful Disillusionment*

Whatever Kaila's motives may have been for his German sympathies, he soon fell silent after it appeared obvious that Germany could not remain victorious in the long run. His next public appearance was only in the fall of 1943. At this time, Kaila protested against the persecution of Jews in Denmark in the newspaper *Uusi Suomi*. Kaila first explained the reasons for his and his colleagues' support of Germany.

Who can secure the three-millennia-old Western civilization in whose atmosphere we exist, live, and move if not the domain of German culture? This, undoubtedly, has been the opinion of the majority of Finnish intellectuals. This opinion has also determined the attitude we, friends of Germany, have taken towards German national socialism. We have been abound with good will of understanding towards it. It has not only seemed to us that in it, history has created a powerful political and military weapon against the Russian threat. We have been ready to acknowledge without any reservations the great achievements of national socialism in other areas as well, especially in the levelling of social differences. And when this revolutionary movement has revealed features that we have not been able to comprehend, we have remained silent, since we have not considered ourselves capable of judging such matters that we are not familiar with in detail.<sup>28</sup>

Nevertheless, Kaila continues that he cannot remain ignorant when Germany, by persecuting innocent people, violates the fundamental values of European culture, truth, equality, justice, and love of one's neighbour. Kaila was not the only Finn to protest against the persecution of Jews in Denmark and Norway during the fall of 1943.<sup>29</sup> Nevertheless, Professor Edwin Linkomies, who served as the acting Prime Minister at the time, stated in his memoirs that it was this particular protest of Kaila's that infuriated Hitler and made him demand stricter censorship from President Risto Ryti.<sup>30</sup>

The looming defeat of Finland and Germany made Kaila desperate. He emphasized that the heated dreams of a Great Finland that were popular in the early days of the war had to be buried once and for all. The only greatness that Finns could show "in the middle of this world historical catastrophe" is spiritual. That is, Finland had to

be ready to pay the price, whatever it was, in order to maintain its national sovereignty. Kaila referred, of course, to the Baltic states that had been annexed to the Soviet Union in 1940. Armistice with the Soviet Union in September 1944 eased Kaila's torments about Finland's destiny. Even so, he considered it likely that large-scale political purges and "Bolshevization" would ensue. But those fears never actualized in Finland, and even Kaila's own contributions to the German orientation during the war remained relatively unnoticed. Kaila and Rolf Nevanlinna, together with other German-minded intellectuals, including Wäinö Aaltonen, Yrjö Kilpinen, V.A. Koskenniemi, and Mika Waltari, were even nominated to the Academy of Finland in 1948.

## J.E. Salomaa

Jalmari Edvard Salomaa was a philosopher with broad learning. His works include treatises on metaphysics, the theory of knowledge, value theory, philosophy of education, philosophy of history, and the history of philosophy. In comparison with Kaila, Salomaa represented a more traditional approach to philosophy. His main influences came from the German neo-Kantianism and from phenomenological value theory. J.V. Snellman was also an important intellectual mentor for Salomaa, especially in his philosophy of culture and philosophy of education. Salomaa held the Chair of Philosophy at the University of Turku from 1930 to 1958. His influence on Finnish philosophy has remained rather weak, but he was an active and well-known person in his own time.

### *Democratic Finnish Nationalism*

Salomaa was above all a democrat with a strong Finnish nationalist bent. His nationalist affiliations began to emerge already in the 1920's. Salomaa embraced the popular demand of the nationalist students that the Swedish language needed to be abolished from the University of Helsinki. Salomaa even suggested that this kind of solution would have been supported by Snellman himself.<sup>31</sup> Even so, Salomaa

distanced himself from the highly influential Academic Karelia Society (AKS), a student organization with aggressive Finnish nationalism and annexationist claims on the Soviet territories in Eastern Karelia. Salomaa did not subscribe to this organisation's passionate hatred for Russians, nor did he accept the idea of the racial basis of nationality.<sup>32</sup> Salomaa's clearest evidence for his democratic conviction was, however, his public condemnation of the right-wing nationalist Mäntsälä rebellion in 1932. Salomaa sympathized with the rebels' worries about the communist revolutionary activities. Yet he was also determined to reject right-wing terrorism and illegal actions.

Democratic emphasis continued to remain the touchstone of Salomaa's political thought during World War II. Salomaa tried to encourage his fellow citizens before the outbreak of the Winter War by pointing out that we have friends especially in the Nordic countries and in the United States, "to whom we are connected by the same free and democratic form of government [and] the Western civilization."<sup>33</sup> This was also the message of his radio speech on the Finnish Independence Day on December the 6th, 1942. Salomaa thus asserted that the democratic and republican form of government "corresponds to the historical conditions and national characteristics of the Finnish people to whom a Nordic sense of freedom has become firmly rooted."<sup>34</sup> The same democratic conviction is repeated in his popular adult education manual *Suunta ja tie* (Direction and the Road, 1942) and its more scientific counterpart *Yleinen kasvatustoppi* ("A General Theory of Pedagogics", 1943). Still, these works are also characterized by rather totalitarian emphases on education.

### *Totalitarian Tones on Education*

Salomaa agrees with Snellman [and Hegel] on the national character of culture, for he states, that "it is a generally acknowledged fact nowadays that culture is *national*. -- It would be senseless to talk about a nationless culture or a culture that shared by all nations."<sup>35</sup> Salomaa shared with Snellman also the view according to which cul-

ture could only be created by nations aware of their cultural mission and that are bound together by a living national consciousness and national spirit. Salomaa intends to separate his own position from “nationalism”; the latter results in heated national chauvinism and in the elevation of state and nation to absolute values. Respect for one’s own national culture may not be accompanied by contempt and underestimation of other nationalities. Salomaa is nevertheless willing to admit that “every genuine and high culture has always tolerated only little of that which is digging ground under that particular culture.”<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, he contends that “the nation-state must become a common cause, or even the highest common value for everyone so that its furtherance is held as a self-evident, holy duty.”<sup>37</sup> This communitarian emphasis reaches even totalitarian tones as Salomaa concludes that education aims to foster “citizens that are ready to sacrifice themselves to the state, that will not be frightened even by the last and greatest sacrifice, the sacrifice of ones’ life.”<sup>38</sup>

The most important philosophical problem of education is the choice between individualistic and communitarian views of education. Salomaa maintains, *pace* Kant, that humans beings must always be treated as ends and never as mere means. Yet Salomaa adheres to the Hegelian tradition that emphasizes the individual person’s metaphysical and moral dependence on his or her community. One can learn and assimilate culture only in interaction with one’s tradition. It is also obvious that each individual’s contribution to the culture of his or her community is bound to remain quite insignificant, compared to the amount we inherit from our family, tribe, nation and from humankind. It is, therefore, evident that education “intends to mould the object of education for communal life and by means of that, in the last resort, to a life in a state community.”<sup>39</sup> Salomaa’s strongest comments in favor of the communitarian view of education date from the warperiod. In a popular article *Individual and Community in Education* published in 1943, he even declared that:

an individual only exists in order to enhance the life of a whole, a community. Not the individual but the community, *the nation*, has historical significance. An individual has value only to the extent that he serves the community. The community can tolerate only such individuals that

in their behaviour realize the ends of the community. Useless individuals it excludes from its circle.<sup>40</sup>

This kind of annihilation of intrinsic value of individual persons, together with the demand that individuals must submit to the ends of their community, contradicts with the Kantian principle of human dignity and is congenial to modern totalitarianism.<sup>41</sup>

The communitarian view determines also the content of education. Salomaa protests against an universalist ideal of humanity as the sole aim of education. He admits that there are some universal elements in the ideal of education. These include such virtues as truthfulness, respect, dedication, judgement, and physical fitness. However, there are also some special ideals that vary between national cultures. "The aim of education here in Finland is not to foster a perfect human being in his or her abstract bloodlessness, but to produce a vigorous and nationally aware *Finnish human being*, just as education in Germany intends to foster Germans, in Italy Italians, etc."<sup>42</sup> Salomaa's list of special Finnish virtues includes the need for autonomy, uprightness, loyalty, trustworthiness, endurance, perseverance, courage, patriotism, righteousness, honesty, obedience to the law, sense of beauty, as well as religiosity that gives basic tenor to the entire Finnish ideal of cultivation. The recent two wars (the latter of which was still continuing) have, according to Salomaa, shown that this aim is not merely a dream, but a feasible ideal.

Despite the overwhelming importance of nationality, Salomaa argues that the governing principle of education must, nevertheless, be the education to fight. Never-ending spiritual and physical fight is both an irreversible world historical fact and the force that maintains all progress. Salomaa claims that "in battle with oneself and other people, in battle with other peoples and states, must every generation secure itself those spiritual values that it wants to own."<sup>43</sup> From this we can conclude that, "the unity of governmental system of education can only be founded on the uniform, primordial idea of the state development, *that is, education to fight*." In short: "Whom ever we want to cultivate to be a human being, we must educate him or her to fight."<sup>44</sup> This idea of progress evolving through continuous struggle is basically a Hegelian idea but it is also congenial to national socialism. The concept of fighting as the governing principle of edu-

cation, instead, is a Nazi surplus. Its original context was a pseudo-Darwinian view of cultural evolution by survival of the fittest races and nations that justifies the struggle. Salomaa's interpretation of the principle of fight was, however, much less belligerent than was the original Nazi interpretation. For Salomaa this means that people "are taught to comprehend genuine, enduring values of human dignity. --[Thus] education to fight does not, in fact, mean anything else but *cultivation of personality*."<sup>45</sup> The whole idea of the education to fight also disappeared from Salomaa's texts after World War II.

### *Reorientation after the War*

Salomaa distanced himself from the German orientation after World War II, even though he had not involved with in it in any direct way. Still, there are somewhat different emphases in his interpretations of Snellman's philosophy during and after the war. In his Snellman monograph that was published in 1944 Salomaa claims that Snellman adheres to a totalitarian theory of state, in which the state is an intrinsic end and individuals exist for its sake, not the other way round.<sup>46</sup> In the next spring, however, he introduced Snellman as a true pioneer of democracy, even as a radical in his own time. Salomaa now emphasized Snellman's demands for freedom of the press, civil marriage, rights of illegitimate children, freedom of religion, separation of state and church, together with the free promulgation of socialist and communist ideas. Salomaa complains that the previous research has neglected the strong liberal and reformist elements in Snellman's social, political, and religious thought. Past research has, instead attempted to use Snellman as a precursor of all sorts of reactionary views. Salomaa even claims that Snellman's social and political philosophy were much more in harmony with the democratic tradition of French and British philosophy than with German philosophy.<sup>47</sup> This evaluation is astonishing, because it was only six months ago that Salomaa had asserted that Snellman's political philosophy approaches Hegel more than in any other domain of philosophy.<sup>48</sup>

After the war, Salomaa's philosophy of education also shifted toward a more individualistic position. The communitarian argument

for a 'situated' self was still there, but Salomaa was also willing to emphasize our right to "authentic and personal existence".<sup>49</sup> This ideal could only be realized when individuals are allowed to use and develop his or her internal power of growth without hindrance or coercion. Nonetheless, this power needs social environment and human interaction in order to actualize. Hence, there is no contradiction between the aim of individual self-realization and societal interests. Individual self-improvement is also a benefit to the whole society, as both Bernard Bosanquet and John Stuart Mill have pointed out. Still, Salomaa maintained that individuals must exercise their freedom for socially acceptable and valuable purposes.

## Erik Ahlman

Erik Ahlman began his academic career as a classical philologist. However, he was attracted to philosophy by some strong inner urge enough to gradually exceed his philological interests. In 1935 he was appointed the first Professor of Philosophy and Theoretical Pedagogics at the recently-founded Jyväskylä Institute of Pedagogics (later the University of Jyväskylä). In 1948 Ahlman returned to Helsinki to become the Professor of Practical Philosophy. However, he was able to hold the post only for a few years as a terminal illness put an end to his life in 1952. All in all, Ahlman published seven books and several articles on philosophy, mainly on ethics, philosophy of culture, and philosophical anthropology.

### *Totalitarianism as a Threat to European Culture*

Erik Ahlman was a politically neutral intellectual who derived his inspiration for political thought from the First World War. In 1932 he estimated that the war had created a trauma "that left the Western soul into a condition of sickly lability."<sup>50</sup> This lability, together with moral vacuum created by the declining authority of the Christianity, provided impetus to communism, fascism, and national socialism. Ahlman considered all these political movements to be equally threatening to European peace as early as in the 1930's.

Ahlman thus observed the rise of totalitarian regimes in Europe with acute interest. He soon realized that there was a fundamental change going on, replacing traditional European individualism with a new collectivism. According to Ahlman, the introduction of absolutist state and restriction of civil rights, one-party dictatorship, voluntary organizations of violence, repression of freedom of the speech and severe propaganda, together with subordination of science, religion, and culture to politics were all characteristic of both fascism, national socialism, and communism. A partial explanation for the rise of these ideologies was the religious and moral vacuum, created by the decay of Christian moral authority. Totalitarian ideologies were substitutes of traditional religion that provided their adherents a clear sense of meaningful life and absolute values.<sup>51</sup> Still, their fanaticism and conceptual confusions made them poor candidates for this task. Therefore, "we must nevertheless either develop individualism further, or else the entire European form of culture is bound to die," as Ahlman concluded in his diary already in 1934.

Ahlman summarized his analyses of modern political ideologies in a concise paper in 1939. These ideologies were the liberal-democratic, the nationalist-totalitarian, and the marxist-bolshevist one. The first is characterized by tolerance and extensive civil rights, individualism, racial and sexual equality, internationality, principled pacifism, and the autonomy of science, art, and religion. The nationalist-totalitarian ideology is the complete opposite of the liberal-democratic one, except for the respect for private property. Nationalist totalitarianism emphasizes the authority of the leader, subordination of individuals to the community, racial and sexual inequality, nationality, militarism, and the subordination of culture to politics. Marxism and liberalism are therefore tied together by the ideals of justice, racial and sexual equality, and internationality. On the other hand, marxism resembles the anti-Christian nationalist totalitarianism by valuing the subordination of individuals to community, of culture to politics, and of state to ideology. Ahlman anticipated that the pattern of three major ideologies would not last, and that the a new situation would emerge with only two fronts. Yet he hesitated to predict whether or not the nationalists and marxists would find themselves in a common, totalitarian, camp, or whether the Western pow-

ers and the Soviet Union would band together in the name of their common ideals.<sup>52</sup> This was a wise decision because, as we know, both alternatives were eventually realized.

Erik Ahlman's scrupulous meditations on the common features of Soviet communism, Italian fascism, and German national socialism were rare in the ideologically divided Finland of the 1930's. Although the later research on totalitarianism by, for instance, Raymond Aron, Carl Friedrich and Zbigniew Brzezinski, and Hannah Arendt has corroborated Ahlman's views on several affinities between communism and fascism<sup>53</sup>, this claim would have been a sacrilege both to the right-wing nationalist *Academic Karelia Society* and to the *Kiila* ("Wedge")-group of leftist intellectuals and artists. Equally untimely was Ahlman's conception of individualism, liberalism, and democracy as the cornerstones of European culture. "Democracy" was a concept with leftist aura in Finland of the 1930's, and it was separated from liberalism and individualism in this context. The bourgeois intellectuals with patriotic and nationalist sympathies, especially the influential AKS, were suspicious of or even reluctant towards democracy.<sup>54</sup> Ahlman admitted that there are some problems with democracy, such as reaching an agreement in decision-making. The respect for personal autonomy that lies behind the ideal of democracy still overrides these problems. Ahlman also insisted that democracy, with its extensive civil rights, is superior to its challengers in the sense that its defects can be pointed out and remedied openly.<sup>55</sup>

### *The Quiet Opposition during the Continuation War*

The Second World War was the darkest period of Erik Ahlman's life. For him, the only relevant things at stake in the war were not Finnish national sovereignty and supremacy over Europe, but above all, the war was about the future and destiny of European culture and its basic ideal of humanity. Ahlman suffered from intellectual and moral isolation and solitude, especially during the Finnish Continuation War, when he opposed the companionship-in-arms of Finland with the dictatorial Germany. The latter had renounced the fundamental Western ideals and plunged Europe into war by its ruthless and ex-

pansive politics. Ahlman's aversion to Germany was also heightened by the fact that his spouse, Else, was a Dane by birth and Germany had occupied her native country since 1940. Ahlman did not, however, make his critical opinions public during the war. The only witness of Ahlman's internal moral conflict, besides his family, was his diary in which speculations on war and its effects on European culture took primacy over philosophical meditations.

Erik Ahlman's wartime diaries are "a rare document of a single person's attempt to keep to consistent and moral thinking in a hard situation", as his grandson, Professor Eerik Lagerspetz has suggested.<sup>56</sup> Ahlman's estimations of the course of the war and its effects on European culture were also astonishingly correct. Yet Ahlman had no access to secret information, nor did he have any political or military expertise. His main sources were the Swedish radio and newspapers that passed Finnish censure. On the other hand, lack of political involvement may have been the secret to Ahlman's farsightedness: he had no interest to interpret course of events in favour of any particular party.

There are three distinct periods in Ahlman's wartime thought. The first was the period of German success from the outbreak of the war until the fall of 1941, and this was characterized by meditations on justice in world history and the effects of war on humankind in general. Ahlman witnesses with shock the German triumph and the colossal destruction of European cultural treasures. Nevertheless, he hopes and believes that Germany will finally call up punishment for its unjust actions. On the other hand, the war may have created a chance for fundamental change in human minds that could lay the foundation for a new, even more humane, refined, and noble culture. Ahlman also predicted that philosophy would concentrate on ethical and existential questions after the war. His disappointment was considerable when the opposite was the case, at least in the Anglo-American analytic philosophy.

Ahlman found the second period, which extended from the outbreak of the Finnish Continuation War in 1941 until the German defeat in Stalingrad, to be the most strenuous phase of the war for him. He suffered from his isolation more than ever, and he was increasingly uncertain about the result of the global war. Ahlman had met his old friend the professor-poet, V.A. Koskenniemi, only few

days before the outbreak of the Continuation War, but they turned out to hold complete opposite views. Koskenniemi was very excited about the war that he supposed would be over in a few weeks. Ahlman, in contrast, had anticipated as early as in the spring of 1941 that Germany would eventually lose the war if both the Soviet Union and the United States joined as its enemies. Ahlman describes in his diary how he had told to Koskenniemi that “it is best for us as a small nation to take the road of justice. That, eventually, is our only protection. VAK [Koskenniemi] said that we are powerful now. To this I replied that we are powerful only as long as Germany is powerful, but not for a minute longer. This he did not bother to take into consideration.”<sup>57</sup> The dispute created considerable coolness between old friends. Koskenniemi was elected to the position of the vice-president of the German oriented European Society for Writers. Ahlman, who was reluctant to support the German cause by propaganda, retired to privacy.

The prolongation of the war led Ahlman to a serious personal crisis. His mind was filled with doubts about the rationality of world history, with self-critical evaluation of his own previous thought, and torments about the future of humankind and the European cultural tradition. Belief in rationality in world history seemed irrational, for lies and violence were racing from one triumph to another. Ahlman’s worries about the result of the global war eased a little when the United States joined the war. Still, signs of a turning point started to appear only in the fall of 1942, and Ahlman suffered from the delay. He was tormented about the propaganda that intended to make nations to hate each other. Furthermore, the future of European culture seemed desperate. Germany could not save culture even if it would win the war: culture would not flourish in a New Europe that was united with iron and blood. The Allied victory would, in turn, lead to the “Americanization” of European culture, “which means that it would not be culture in the previous sense of the concept any more.” European culture may also begin to flourish in the United States. Even so, Ahlman feared that it would not be the same as in Europe, “not as delicate, sophisticated, probably not even as internal and deep. -- The ‘New Europe’ will in any case be only a political or economical, not a cultural notion,” concludes Ahlman his rather apt prediction.<sup>58</sup>

The battle of Stalingrad was the turning point of the World War II for Ahlman. It meant that his original anticipation of German defeat was now only a matter of time, although Finland's destiny became a new major concern. Defeat seemed inevitable for Finland too, but public opinion was reluctant to face the facts, which made the situation even worse. Nevertheless, the looming end provided Ahlman with reason for a private conclusion from World War II already in January 1943. Ahlman repeated his view from the 1930's according to which liberalism, democracy, individualism, humanism, and autonomy of science are the basic ideals of the Western culture. Germany has betrayed all these ideals, therefore the United States will inherit its position as the spiritual leader of Western humankind.

The clarified war situation released Ahlman's energies to academic work. The subject he was interested in was justice. Ahlman was convinced that one major reason for the outbreak of the war had been humankind's lacking sense of justice. In the treatise "*Oikeudenmukaisuus ja sen suhde moraaliin*" ("Justice and its Relation to Morals", 1943) he attempted to elucidate the content of that fundamental notion and the demands it sets on our actions. For instance, Ahlman emphasized that good intentions are not enough to make acts just. He also criticized the German "might is right" and *Lebensraum*-policies and political propaganda that despite the factual legal anarchy pompously presents ones own state as champion of justice.

A public evaluation of the Finnish Continuation War was possible only after the war. Ahlman made his as the Headmaster of the Jyväskylä Institute of Pedagogics. In his opening speech for the term 1944-1945 he asserts that the main reason for the war was a heavy pressure of external forces and conditions. There are, nevertheless, grounds for slight self-criticism. Ahlman scolds his fellow Finns for defective sense of reality and lack of cold deliberation. National arrogance has also contributed to these defects. Instead, Ahlman stresses our Nordic tradition of democracy and respect for the value of individual personalities and their rights. It is deplorable that some quarters of Finnish society, including academic youth, have forgotten respect for this tradition that fits "the essence and needs of our people". Still, Ahlman thinks that the totalitarian attitudes have mainly been fashionable import from abroad.<sup>59</sup>

Ahlman chose the topic of the public evaluation of the whole World War II for his opening speech for the term of 1945-1946. He argued that together with the Axis Powers had been destroyed an ideology that was

a fateful, perhaps even mortal threat to humane culture and humanity. Principles of freedom of the thought and speech, autonomy of science, social justice, [and] equality before the law and court were so precious cultural achievements that one cannot renounce them as lightly as one throws away an old cloth. Nations could not adjust to such conviction that e.g. some particular race supposedly was determined to achieve world domination, that e.g. Jews are not allowed even the most elementary human rights, that talk about women's equality with men is a declined liberalist prejudice, that democracy must be replaced by authoritarian system, that humanity is a symptom of weakness.<sup>60</sup>

Here Ahlman deploras Germany being eliminated as a cultural and economic power in Europe. Its destiny is tragic, but the German people can only blame themselves. The Third Reich that was possessed by inhumanity, fanaticism and violence betrayed the classic German heritage of Kant, Goethe, Schiller, and Herder that will always be remembered with respect and gratitude.

## Conclusions

It appears that all three Finnish philosophers were basically reluctant towards political totalitarianism. They all feared communism, but neither did national socialism interest anyone of them before World War II. Yet the Winter War and the fate of Baltic republics showed that it is bad to stay alone in the midst of an international conflict. Germany was a European superpower whose support the Finnish government and army sought after the Winter War primarily for political reasons. Intellectuals knew these reasons as well, and most of them felt that cultural and spiritual defence was their patriotic duty, even if it involved tolerating national socialism or German-minded propaganda. Totalitarianism was also a powerful new ideology and a political system whose rise had naturally provoked ques-

tions concerning its historical origins and present connections. These kind of reasons may account e.g. for Kaila's comparison of totalitarianism and the modern *Weltanschauung*. Yet the various interpretations of Snellman before and after the war reveal a distinguishing feature of philosopher's political thought: their possibility to present fashionable political ideas without subscribing to them.

Nevertheless, it seems to have been rather difficult for Finnish philosophers, with the exception of Ahlman, to frame an adequate account of the essence and historical relevance of totalitarianism, especially national socialism. Its historical connections to Hegelianism, hinted at by Kaila and Salomaa, may have provoked an impression that old ideas were returning in a new form, and that no radical change was taking place, even though the Nazist writers were anxious to insist to the contrary. In addition, the tremendous fear of the Soviet Union may have distorted judgements in Finland. It was no doubt obvious for many intellectuals, such as Kaila's young pupil Georg Henrik von Wright (b. 1916), that fascism and national socialism aim at making fundamental ideological changes in Western culture. Yet intellectuals thought that the restrictions of civil rights in totalitarian countries would possibly turn out to be temporary and that ideological and political disagreements between the Allied and the Axis would be of secondary importance compared to the world historical perspective of Finland's and Europe's survival from Soviet communism.<sup>61</sup>

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> von Wright 1979, xxiv.

<sup>2</sup> Eino Kaila was a founder and a board member of the Pan-European Society in Finland (Suomen Paneurooppalainen liitto) that was established in 1930.

<sup>3</sup> Coudenhove-Kalergi 1931.

<sup>4</sup> Kaila 1934; Kaila 1931.

<sup>5</sup> An unpublished manuscript "Mitä valtiollinen itsenäisyys voi tarjota kansakunnalle?" ["What Can National Independence Offer to a Nation?"] Eino Kaila's archives.

<sup>6</sup> Klinge 1990, 175.

- <sup>7</sup> See Hiedanniemi 1980.
- <sup>8</sup> Kaila 1941a.
- <sup>9</sup> Kaila 1992 [1937], 48. The quotation is from an earlier Finnish paper from which Kaila translated large sections for his Swedish article.
- <sup>10</sup> Kaila 1941a.
- <sup>11</sup> This accusation was also presented by the Nazis, see e.g. Rosenberg 1934.
- <sup>12</sup> Kaila 1941b, 540. Original italics.
- <sup>13</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>14</sup> See V.A. Koskenniemi, *Finnland – Schild des Nordens* (1941), Jalmari Jaakkola, *Finnlands Ostfrage* (1941), Väinö Auer & Eino Jutikkala, *Finnlands Lebensraum* (1942). These treatises, as well as Kaila's articles illuminate the euphoric atmosphere in Finland right after the outbreak of the "Continuation War". German sympathies and speculations of a new European order together with Finnish annexations reached their peak. Even the supreme command of the Finnish Army and the Finnish government described the war as a crusade against bolshevism that aimed at the annexation of Eastern Karelia. See Rusi 1982, 101-132.
- <sup>15</sup> Kaila 1992 [1940], 242.
- <sup>16</sup> See Kaila 1992 [1941], 256: "When, therefore, in our days that which is suitable to be called field theoretical thinking, is gaining prevalence in every domain, from theoretical physics to day-to-day high politics, among the first impulses of this field theoretical thinking was the German so-called romantic thought of 150-100 years ago --."
- <sup>17</sup> Kaila 1942, 242: "-- die Hegelsche Betrachtungsweise des historisch-sozialen Lebens könnte man sogar im Sinne eines modernen ganzheitlichen Biologismus deuten. Eine solche Deutung würde noch klarer zeigen, dass die Hegelsche Geistesphilosophie in der Tat der erste Ansatz zu einer modernen Ganzheitslehre ist."
- <sup>18</sup> Ibid., 238.
- <sup>19</sup> Kaila 1942, 247.
- <sup>20</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>21</sup> See Kaila 1942, 250: "Die höchste Norm eines jeden Volksgenossen ist stets die, dass er den Sitten und Gesetzen seines Volkes gehorcht. Diese vertreten den Volksgenossen das absolute Recht und die absolute Sittlichkeit. Dies besagt, dass jene Gebote objektiv und allgemeingültig sind." See also Kaila 1992 [1941], 259.
- <sup>22</sup> Kaila 1942, 252.
- <sup>23</sup> Popper 1963; see also Hayes 1973; Kiesewetter 1995.
- <sup>24</sup> See Kiesewetter 1995.
- <sup>25</sup> The allusions are most obvious in the article "Zur Idee einer europäischen Friedensordnung" (1941).

- <sup>26</sup> Kaila 1942, 252. J.V. Snellman's role as a historical precursor of Finnish national socialism was emphasized more clearly by his grandson, Teo Snellman, together with Jussi Leino in their pamphlet "Suomalainen kansallissosialismi" ("The Finnish National Socialism", 1942). In his paper *Vapaa Suomi* ("Free Finland") Teo Snellman even called his grandfather the first national socialist in Finland. See Ekberg 1991, 183.
- <sup>27</sup> Kaila 1942, 253.
- <sup>28</sup> Kaila 1992 [1943], 295.
- <sup>29</sup> Rusi 1982, 300-312. Similar protests were extended by the social democratic and Swedish-language press in Finland that time.
- <sup>30</sup> Linkomies 1970, 282. Rolf Nevanlinna (1976, 158) tells in his memoirs that Kaila's protests against German actions did not limit to the defence of Danish Jews. Kaila also took initiative in an academic declaration that criticized the arrest of several professors of the University of Oslo.
- <sup>31</sup> Salomaa 1924.
- <sup>32</sup> See Alapuro 1973.
- <sup>33</sup> Salomaa's speech on October the 12th 1939. J.E. Salomaa's archives.
- <sup>34</sup> Salomaa's speech on December the 6th 1942. J.E. Salomaa's archives.
- <sup>35</sup> Salomaa 1943b, 121-124.
- <sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 130.
- <sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.
- <sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 127.
- <sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 100.
- <sup>40</sup> Salomaa 1943a.
- <sup>41</sup> On the destruction of human dignity in totalitarianism, see especially Arendt (1966).
- <sup>42</sup> Salomaa 1943b, 125-126. In a later treatise that was published after the World War II in 1950, Salomaa's exemplary states have changed into Sweden and England, although it is not clear whether the educational systems in those countries intended to enhance the pupils' national awareness and characteristics to the same extent as the totalitarian regimes in Germany and Italy.
- <sup>43</sup> Salomaa 1942, 44; see also Salomaa 1943b, 130.
- <sup>44</sup> Salomaa 1942, 45; see also Salomaa 1943b, 132.
- <sup>45</sup> *Ibid.* The principle of education to fight was a much more concrete and comprehensive ideal for national socialist writers. For Ernst Kriek (1940) and Alfred Baeumler (1943), for instance, this meant that individual citizens are to be educated into absolutely obedient servants of the political and military ends of the *Führer* and the *Reich*.
- <sup>46</sup> Salomaa 1948, 324. But see also Salomaa (1947, 107) for a similar, totalitarian interpretation of Snellman.

- <sup>47</sup> Salomaa 1945.
- <sup>48</sup> Salomaa 1948, 314. Salomaa here only states that Snellman underlines freedom in the state more than Hegel and thereby approaches liberal endeavours. Tuija Pulkkinen (1984, 2-3) has also reported inconsistencies in Salomaa's interpretation of Snellman. These inconsistencies concern the content and scope of natural law in Snellman's moral theory, and the justification of human actions.
- <sup>49</sup> Salomaa 1947, 117.
- <sup>50</sup> Ahlman 1932, 11.
- <sup>51</sup> Ahlman 1932; Ahlman 1934; Ahlman 1936; Ahlman 1938, 123-131.
- <sup>52</sup> Ahlman 1939.
- <sup>53</sup> See Aron 1968; Arendt 1966; Friedrich & Brzezinski 1965. Aron (1968, 193-194) summarizes the five main elements of totalitarianism. Firstly, totalitarianism presupposes a regime which gives to one party the monopoly of political activity. Secondly, the monopolistic party has an ideology on which it confers absolute authority and which consequently becomes the official truth of the state. Thirdly, in order to impose this official truth, the state reserves for itself the monopoly of the means of coercion and persuasion, including the media. Fourthly, most economic and professional activities are subject to the state and become part of the state itself. Therefore, fifthly, as all activity is state activity and subject to ideology, an error in economic or professional activity is by the same token an ideological fault. This politization of all the possible crimes justifies ideological terrorism.
- <sup>54</sup> See e.g. Sallamaa 1997; Sevänen 1997.
- <sup>55</sup> Erik Ahlman's unpublished diary, 3.8.1935.
- <sup>56</sup> Lagerspetz 1993, 52.
- <sup>57</sup> Erik Ahlman's unpublished diary, 21.1.1944.
- <sup>58</sup> Erik Ahlman's unpublished diary, 21.11.1942.
- <sup>59</sup> Ahlman 1944.
- <sup>60</sup> Ahlman 1945, 90.
- <sup>61</sup> von Wright 1941. Later after the war, von Wright (1981, 15-24) avowed that the ideological struggle between totalitarianism and liberal humanism had been the crux of the war, as well as in the world historical perspective

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