Georg Henrik von Wright always mentioned that his academic teachers had been Eino Kaila and Ludwig Wittgenstein. He even spoke of the two as his “father figures”. Georg Henrik was a sunny boy, but his “fathers” appear to be quite enigmatic. An industry of philosophical literature is needed to interpret Wittgenstein. Kaila seems to be at most a minor figure with some contacts to the Vienna Circle. It is not wrong to see von Wright as a follower of Wittgenstein, and von Wright’s life-long work was decisive for the fact that all of Wittgenstein’s Nachlass is now available.

In what follows, I will concentrate more on Kaila and his Viennese connections than on Wittgenstein. I make an attempt of trying to see the two “fathers” from a perspective that was or at least could have been von Wright’s contemporary view. Vienna – or, more accurately – the recent past of Vienna was also von Wright’s city of dreams. Kaila is an interesting case as concerns the networking typical of the Vienna Circle, especially as an example of Rudolf Carnap’s rich scientific contacts at that point of his career. It was Kaila who made the start of von Wright’s career possible and determined a number of his philosophical interests and orientations, including the specific way in which von Wright’s work can be said to be linked to the Vienna Circle and logical empiricism. Of course, after World War II “analytic philosophy” was the acceptable designation for that kind of work that von Wright was pursuing in Cambridge, but his story can not be told without attention to the impulses from Vienna.

When von Wright began his studies at the University of Helsinki in 1934, he had a discussion with Kaila who was responsible for an undivided chair for philosophy and psychology. Without any preparation he had to answer a question: Would he be more interested in psychology or logic? Von Wright explained that in the recent years he had been reading Bergson, Nietzsche, some of Plato’s dialogues and also Kant. Kaila was not satisfied and when pressed von Wright gave the answer: Logic.1 The answer proved to be significant for all of von Wright’s career.

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1 G. H. von Wright, Elämäni niin kuin sen muistan. Helsinki: Otava 2001, p. 57. A number of the following informations are drawn from these memoirs by von Wright.
In practice, the textbook for logic in Kaila’s courses was Rudolf Carnap’s *Abriss der Logistik*. It was accompanied by *Der logische Aufbau der Welt*. Kaila had obviously heard that his new student, von Wright, was not completely uninitiated in philosophy. Kaila even mentioned to him the new *Die logische Syntax der Sprache*. But this was something that could be read only later on. In fact, Kaila would himself be struggling painfully through the book for a long time.

During the first year of studies Kaila directed von Wright’s interest towards induction and probability. It meant the writings of Richard von Mises and Hans Reichenbach. Karl Popper’s brand new *Logik der Forschung* was read immediately when it appeared. In Kaila’s opinion, this was not enough. He gave to von Wright his own copy of *A Treatise of Probability* by J. M. Keynes. Von Wright complained that he could not read English. Kaila’s reply was simply that after reading the book he would be able to do so at least to some extent. Von Wright, of course, followed the advice. In the final examination, there was only one small book, Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*.

Kaila was promoting modern logic and its applications to philosophical questions. During the latter half of the decennium he chaired a Logic Club with such advanced students as Max Söderman, Oiva Ketonen, Erik Stenius and von Wright. Simultaneously, he was leading other students to empirical and experimental psychology. Kaila’s influence was not restricted to his own country. In 1932, he delivered an expert’s evaluation to the Uppsala University, pointing out how old fashioned he found the work of the then fashionable local school:

> It is a curious state of affairs that the ‘Uppsala philosophers’ who prefer to be seen as logicians do not seem to posses any knowledge of the enormous width and development of logical research in the recent decennies […] I mean the exact research which has its best known exponents in Frege and Russell as regards the elder generation, and among the younger probably in Wittgenstein and Carnap.\(^2\)

These Swedish philosophers were entangled in an unacceptable psychologism: “They always talk about ‘conceptions’, ‘judgements’, ‘mental images’ etc. without sharply enough separating from these acts the sole interest of logic, the objects of these psychological acts.”\(^3\)

Only in 1945 Kaila was pleased to write to the Uppsala university concerning its candidates for a philosophical chair:

Docent Konrad Marc-Wogau […] has begun partially to find his own ways. His latest works show that he has intensively studied the English Cambridge School, and not even the Vi-

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