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## Jaspers' Interpretation of Marx and Freud

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**Abstract:** Marx and Freud pointed out our blindness about the unconscious causes of individual and collective behavior. Their revolutionary intent was to liberate humanity by taking conscious control. Jaspers' evaluation of historical materialism and psychoanalysis turns on the contested relations between objectivity and subjectivity and science and philosophy. He tracks their two systems through stages: valid scientific discoveries within specified domains; then a de-evolution from science into world-views as a mix of pseudo-science and false philosophy; and finally, the meta-theories of Marx and Freud are absolutized into a mutually excluding universal scientific philosophy. In the century past, Jaspers argued that historical materialism and psychoanalysis (and racism) are dogmatic, dominant ideologies disguised as scientific philosophy that threatened Western civilization. From Jaspers critique we see that the relation between science and philosophy founders over a misinterpretation of the differences between knowledge and thinking. He argues that science, philosophy, and religion all rest on faith. But contemporary science produces a new form of faith as faithlessness. Modern philosophizing is contested by anti-reason and anti-faith and anti-transcendence.

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Marx and Freud offered profound insights about human beings that are worth preserving despite the fact that historically most of their particular data and generalizations have become irrelevant or false. The difference between what is profound and what is mistaken about historical materialism and psychoanalysis lies in their respective claims for recognition as true scientific philosophy. Two consequences follow: first, if either historical materialism or psychoanalysis is a universally valid science they have no need for further knowledge and Marxism and Freudianism become dogmatic and reactionary systems; second, if either is universally true as philosophical science then, the other totalizing system must be false. My argument is that Jaspers is qualified both as a scientist and as a philosopher to resolve these issues through his complex evaluation of Marx and Freud over the course of his life and career.

Arguing for the contemporary importance of Marx and Freud is a daunting task. My student's response is that historical materialism or psychoanalysis does not matter because Marx and Freud have nothing to say. In sharp contrast to this current apathy, the experience of those over fifty offers a radically different zeitgeist in which over fifty percent of the world's population lived under communist rule. A Soviet leader confidently told Americans, "We will bury you." We lived through the Berlin airlift, forty years of a cold war based on mutually assured destruction (MAD), communist inspired wars of national liberation, the Cuban missile crisis, and the capitulation of much of the European left to Bertrand Russell's "Better red than dead" movement. And the United States fought two stalemated wars against communism in Korea and Vietnam. In less dramatic but through ways the principles of psychoanalysis were expanded in the 20<sup>th</sup> century to

include explanations and interpretations of every aspect of culture and civilization.

There are four reasons to re-accessing Marx and Freud. First, their radical intentions transcended their systematizations. Second, their claims as scientific philosophies detract from their philosophic importance. Third, the philosophic contestation over the analysis of human reality should not be reduced to epistemological claims that one scientific philosophy logically excludes all validity to other claims. Finally, despite all of the above, the unforeseen consequences to the conflict between historical materialism and psychoanalysis are central to the problematic of post-modern philosophy.

First, Marx and Freud provide revolutionary theories of human liberation. Historical materialism defines reality as the material process of transformation of nature and humanity. The transformation of nature through labor is evident in the evolutionary processes of Asiatic, feudal, capitalist and future communist socio-economic formations. Marx predicts that history inevitably culminates within a communist society of socialized humanity operating "from each according to his ability, and to each according to his need." The fly in this salvific ointment is that self-transformation has been so laggard in comparison to economic betterment that humans live in a pre-history dominated by class conflict and unrecognized contradictions between the means and ownership of productive forces. For Marx history unconsciously makes men and men will make history consciously only after a revolution that overthrows capitalistic system that privileges the accumulation of wealth for the few over the self-realization of human beings. Marx's historical materialism was the secular kingdom come of humanity, and communism was the necessary end to all individual and social contradictions. Marx and Engels, like early Christians, expected the eschaton to occur within their own lifetimes. And the periodic crises of over-production and predictable economic recessions accompanied by proletarian upheavals throughout Europe in 1830, 1848, and 1870 lent empirical credence to these expectations.

Freud formulated a revolutionary re-interpretation of the Western philosophic tradition of "know thyself." Raising the unconscious to consciousness changes pathogenic conflicts into resolvable human struggles

"through an education in truthfulness toward himself."<sup>1</sup> Freud's guiding metaphor was borrowed from anthropology: the psychoanalytic task is to reconstruct individual self-knowledge from buried chards of memories, associations, and slips of the tongue, dreams and other fragmentary mentations of the primitive buried deep within each of us. In late works, Freud extended the psychoanalyses of individuals to speculative meta-psychological theories about the overpowering unconscious forces of sex, aggression and death socially sublimated by imposing and/or manipulating guilt through myth, religion, philosophy and political authority. His pessimism centered on the struggle to maintain homeostasis between the play of irrational instincts and the rational necessities of civilized living. In sum, Marx and Freud were geniuses, and the first thinkers to offer original and substantive accounts of the realities of work and love.

My second contention is that they were mistaken in believing historical materialism or psychoanalysis to be universally true scientific philosophy. Marx inherited an established science of political economy and his massive transfusions of empirical data lead him to general laws such as surplus value, the commodification process that privileges product or object over human producer or subject, and that the exploitation and oppression of labor is a necessary effect of capital accumulation, as well as the determined connection between economic base and socio-political superstructure, and the law governing the falling rate of profit. These laws had the same scientific status as Newton's and Darwin's laws of gravity and evolution.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, Marx borrowed the notion of critique from German idealism that he used it as a cudgel to refute a-priori all other interpretations as ideological distortions or Utopian beliefs in contrast to the science of historical materialism. Similarly Freud, and later Jaspers himself, insisted that medical research provided a scientific basis for the new science of psychopathology. But Freud's psychoanalysis also included a systematics of unconscious forces in which neurotic behaviors were

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<sup>1</sup> Walter Kaufman, "Jaspers' Relation to Nietzsche," quotation is from Freud's *Introduction to Psychoanalysis*, in Paul Arthur Schlipp, ed., *The Philosophy of Karl Jaspers* (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1981), p. 430. [Henceforth cited as PKJ]

<sup>2</sup> Marx offered to dedicate *Das Kapital* to Darwin. Darwin declined.

treatable as effects of libidinal causes.<sup>3</sup> Freud dismissed all philosophical questioning of the unconscious as a separately existing realm of mind as pathological. In sum, the respective aims of the scientific philosophies of historical materialism and psychoanalysis were to transform human beings by overcoming their blindness, ignorance and resistance to self-knowledge.

My third contention follows from the second. If neither system is a hard science then as softer social sciences, they merely conflate observational generalizations into tautologies. For example, if historical materialism is a science that eliminates social injustice and inequality by prohibiting the unlimited transfer of wealth—and, if psychoanalysis means bringing the unconscious causes of violence, cruelty and suffering under conscious control—then, who among us would not raise both hands to be counted as a Marxist and a Freudian? Their mutually exclusive insistence on scientific purity is attributable in part to the German *Wissenschaften*, a word translatable as knowledge or science. It was Kant who gave speculative thought a bad name on the grounds that metaphysics was not scientifically empirical enough and, as a consequence, all 19<sup>th</sup> century idealists and romantics proclaimed everything they wrote to be system and science. Freud, living a generation after Marx, also inherited positivism as a scientific method in which every phenomena was a determined effect of an antecedent cause. The lure of Marxist economism or Freudian positivism is that explanation and interpretation become identical as causal nexuses of the political or psychological unconscious. Therefore, the insistence on hard science reduces agents and actions to nothing but by-products of economic or psychic forces. Ironically hard determinisms allow wiggle room for freedom conceived as necessity. Men can be forced or analyzed into self-conscious recognition of the necessary truths of governing material interests and individual needs. All other notions of liberty need not be analyzed or argued, as they are reducible to ideological distortions or neurotic resistances. The exclusive possession of total scientific truth makes alternative interpretations into false consciousnesses caused by non-rational factors. But such total truth claims are non-sustainable as it cannot be the case logically that either all history is determined by external

socio-economic causes and man is a species being with the minimalist reality of a bearer of economic predicates or, on the contrary, that all individuals are determined solely by their internal, instinctive behaviors and our conscious activity is the metaphorical iceberg where only one third of the mass is above the water or conscious and two-thirds of subjectivity are submerged or unconscious. Marx and Freud are flat out contradictions as scientific accounts of reality. Yet they agree as materialists and atheists, and both are militantly anti-metaphysical, and both thinkers were dedicated to eliminating individual and social alienation. Marx's phenomenology of man as so overwhelmed by the unconscious capitalist forces that individual and collective alienation can be overcome solely through revolution is a heartfelt expression for political justice but as an argument Marxism is less compelling. The realization of communism depends on inter-subjective cooperation but genuine individuality and collective human action plays no role in a system of historical materialism that is devoid of psychology. The abolition of private property and social classes occurs only after the proletariat becomes a revolutionary class in-and-for-itself. Freud, on the other hand, does have a psychology based on the intra and extra dynamics of unconscious forces within the self and the family. But psychoanalysis lacks a political dimension other than the positivistic model of a double-boiler mechanism with release valves that let off pent up steam of irrational and asocial desires. Politics becomes a mythical displacement to alleviate the viscous hostility between submissive egos and dominant super-egos. The spectacular disagreements between followers of Marx and Freud follow from conflicting objective analyses of either external history and or internal psyche.

In conclusion, Marx and Freud are not scientists and their systems are contradictory philosophical anthropologies. They offer two *Weltanschauungen*, or worldviews, or external/objective and internal/subjective accounts of human reality. But a philosophical anthropology featuring either a politics without a human agent or a psychology without a political dimension is cannot be an adequate account of human reality. The only possible reconciliation between soma and psyche as object and subject is a philosophical one centered on human ontology not as epistemological ego or abstract moral ego, or the ego as a desiring machine; but as the existing, historical self who experiences his/her self simultaneously as subject and object in the world. A third logical alternative to the disjunction

<sup>3</sup> Freud credited poets and philosophers with the initial discovery of the unconscious.

between the systems of Marx and Freud occurs if the systems are less universal and exclusionary; for, then, the possibility for synthesis or complimentary exists when historical materialism and psychoanalysis are viewed as dealing with different aspects of reality. In logic, opposed particulars can be true but both cannot be false just as in reverse, opposed universals can be false but both cannot be true. Any resolution of Marx and Freud has to be ontological and philosophically argued. Non philosophic resolutions of Marx and Freud took various forms including the limited sex-pol promotions of the 1920s and 1930s or the substantive mixtures in which each side is presented as a strict scientific antinomy as providing either a fundamental Marxism with a few dollops of group psychodynamics or a psychoanalytic Marxism in which the basic themes of historical materialism are re-translated into psychological complexes, e.g. class conflict becomes the Oedipal complex writ large.

Finally, in passing, I mention the unforeseeable consequences of historical materialism and psychoanalysis. Both competitive worldviews made spectacular contributions but they also had an unnoticed impact upon post-modern philosophy. One staple of contemporary philosophies is a hyper-modern de-centering of the self in contrast to the historical Cartesian self against which Marx and Freud reacted negatively. In this context, consider Marx's early account of alienation and how the fragmented self is absorbed into a social atomism that reduces man to an insignificant bearer (*Träger*) of economic categories. And who has cast more doubt upon the modern subject in its philosophic guises than Freud's case histories or novellas of how the ego is not master in its own house. In sum, Marx and Freud contribute much to the core of post-modern thought about individual and social selves.

How does Jaspers react to the intent and legitimation of their work? The parameters of the Marx and Freud debate center on the relation between science and philosophy and the differences between understanding and reason which, in turn, are implicated by the antinomial clashes between objectivity and subjectivity. Within the history of philosophy, the contested terrain between thinker and thought is the unacknowledged open sesame to all oppositions: particular/universal, finite/infinite, understanding/reason, freedom/determinism. Within Jaspers' philosophizing about the objective world and the existential subject there arises his modal distinctions between plural

existences, knowledge, truths, levels of communication, and realities.

Jaspers investigates Marx and Freud like a detective. He examines the facts of the case, looks at evidence and cross-examines texts. He sifts the data to provide a skillful reconstruction of what their systems actually stand for despite appearances. Over a long career his assessments of Marx and Freud and their work become increasingly negative. But the analogy of Jaspers as a master sleuth breaks down because it violates the basic presupposition of all detective fiction; namely, that the objective and impersonal investigator is not himself a suspect. But an existential philosopher has to begin his analysis of human reality from a different standpoint as his objective knowledge of humanity is also experienced subjectively in his own person. In the following pages, I argue that three existential considerations make Jaspers a suspect in these investigations of the complex relations between thinking and living. In consequence, Jaspers has three intertwined but distinguishable conceptions of the relation between science and philosophy as applied to Marx and Freud. Each conception is accompanied by a typical proposition that captures a conception of science and philosophy and the changes that historically governs his continuing assessment of Marx and Freud.

First there is Jaspers the scientist. In *General Psychopathology* (1913) he offers a strict conception of science and methodology. In his second book *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen* (1919) the universality within a specific domain of science gets conflated into worldview colored by psychological attitudes. This results in the ambiguity of worldviews that are neither science nor philosophy and it is this admixture that produces what Jaspers categorizes as "pseudo-science." The proposition that applies to Jaspers' work as a scientist claims, "science is indispensable to philosophy."

The second phase of examining Marx and Freud Jaspers undertakes as a philosopher. Here pseudo-science becomes more than a mingling of domains beyond established limits and pseudo-science becomes bad philosophy. Jaspers expends greater efforts to carefully distinguish science and philosophy. The attending proposition is "philosophy is not science and science is not philosophy."

The third existential aspect to Jaspers' assessment is that of a man who finds himself living in, what Hanna Arendt calls, the "dark times" of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Pseudo-sciences become bad philosophy but in the historicity of his time they have grown far beyond

epistemological or academic disputes into false and powerful philosophies of racism, Marxism and Psychoanalysis as totalitarian mass movements and new world orders that threaten to annihilate all manifestations of human spirit in the past three millennia. Here Jaspers concerns are reflected in lectures in which Marx and Freud are no longer examined as disputes over ranking science and philosophy but as concrete historicity of a struggle between truth and falsity itself. The proposition in this final phase is "philosophy is more and less than science." To grasp the impact life had on Jaspers, I add a point taken from his book, *The Origin and Goal of History*. He claims the sole historical novelty to appear since the axial period of 800 to 200 BCE has been modern science and its application in technology.<sup>4</sup>

In sum, Jaspers reaction to Marx and Freud as a scientist, a philosopher and as a historical individual in the 20<sup>th</sup> century accounts for his changing view of the relations between science and philosophy. He argues that cogent, compelling scientific knowledge can devolve into pseudo-sciences. Next he examines how pseudo-sciences become false philosophies. In the historicity of his time Jaspers shows how racism, Marxism and psychoanalysis mutate from pseudo-sciences and mistaken worldviews into the one true scientific philosophy under the illusion of identity. The false identity of philosophy and science are seductive illusions that threaten both humanity and the planet.

### Jaspers as Scientist

Karl Jaspers began his medical studies in 1902. Until his major work *Philosophy* appeared in 1932, his research and writings were in the fields of psychiatry and psychology. In practice, Jaspers searched for the most "rock like" scientific methodology. Medical research drew him to the pathic qualities of humans. Psychopathology deals with disease, brain localizations, genesis of neurosis from repressed unconscious were working hypotheses, originating from intuitions and ideas, and they "can become subjects of scientific psychopathology only to the extent

<sup>4</sup> Karl Jaspers, *The Origin and Goal of History*, transl. Michael Bullock (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1978). Cf. also Karl Jaspers, *Basic Philosophical Writings*, eds. and transl. Edith Ehrlich, Leonard Ehrlich, and George B. Pepper (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1994), see "Part Five, II Philosophy and History," pp. 381-395. [Henceforth cited as *BPW*]

to which quite specific methods that is, which make clinical, experimental or psychological approaches and tests possible."<sup>5</sup>

*General Psychopathology* became a standard medical school text throughout its many revisions over fifty years. It appeared in 1913, the same year as Freud's *Totem and Taboo*. Jaspers' work is suffused with a "methodological climate," because "we have to learn to know what we know and do not know, to know how and in what sense and within what limits we know something, by what means knowledge was gained and on what it was founded."<sup>6</sup> In his philosophical autobiography, Jaspers confesses his eclecticism in the search for method. He borrowed from Husserl's phenomenological method and he used the notion of intentionality as a way of describing patient's inner experiences as phenomena of consciousness. He adopted Dilthey's descriptive and analytical psychological as *verstehende Psychologie* and mentions specifically that it already was being applied by Freud (*PKJ* 18).

In practice, "we have to be dualists" because the psyche does not have an object. The book is a *via negativa* of the limits of objective understanding. But in science the limit situations are methodological rather than philosophical. Each chapter examines what we know and catalogues the limits of such knowledge. Jaspers salts the book with a statement that becomes a life mantra, "man is always more than he knows, and can know, of himself" (*BPW* 7), and he closes the book by describing "man as a concrete enigma" (*GP* 750-756). But there are difficulties that extend beyond psychopathology. For example, we do not fully understand the connection between conscious and unconscious factors in areas of reflexes, of mechanisms and performances, of feelings and drives, and the causative role of genetics and heredity. Worse yet, a psychology of meaningful connections "begins and ends with consciousness"<sup>7</sup> in citing both subjective testimony and descriptions of objective facts.

<sup>5</sup> Kurt Kolle, "Karl Jaspers as Psychopathologist," in *PKJ*, p. 464.

<sup>6</sup> Karl Jaspers, *General Psychopathology*, 7<sup>th</sup> edition transl. J. Hoenig MD, DPM and Marion W. Hamilton, BA (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1964). [Henceforth cited as *GP*]. Includes Prefaces to second and third editions, 1919 and 1922, p. xi). Also *BPW*, pp. 4-20.

<sup>7</sup> Part II "Meaningful Psychic Connections" (*Verstehende Psychologie*) in *GP* 301-313.

In consequence, no mode of comprehension bridges the gap between meaningful interpretation and causal explanation. For example, a mental illness posits the existence of a ghost in the organism since there is no corresponding physical event in the brain that can be shown to cause the psychic disturbance. The notion of psychic causation is imprecise and the whole realm of psychophysical identity is so vague that the execution of a mental order to turn on the computer and write is a scientifically observable instance of "magic."

Simply put, Jaspers holds that scientifically we do not comprehend human reality and, in anticipation of Freud and Marx, there is no dialectical synthesis that can unify objective data to the experienced subjectivity of the self. Reflection illuminates the irreducible polarity between object and person. For natural sciences the universal and concrete limit situations like suffering, death, chance and guilt are unscientific and in consequence, "psychology cannot answer to what the individual really is" (*GP* 354). This is the significant reservation to Jaspers' promotion of the complete validity of "methodological consciousness" as science that are objectively testable by the understanding and that produce the extraordinary breadth of technical knowledge.

Contrary to my view, Jaspers initially claims that Freud made genuine scientific contributions (*PKJ* 25). He credits Freud for helping him to clarify his own scientific viewpoint and specifically, reading Freud forced Jaspers to carefully distinguish both what science knows and what it does not know. In his autobiography, he characterizes Freud as a scholar he felt compelled to study but he also resisted Freud as someone who was "determined to effect something by way of our science that was not science at all."<sup>8</sup> In retrospect he considered Freud's work as a reprehensible view against which Jaspers wished to assert and clarify his own view of history and of human beings. Jaspers admits that at this time his conception of philosophy was that it was prophetic and a substitute for religion.

<sup>8</sup> The chronological order of Marx and Freud is reversed because Jaspers' medical research drew him first to Freud. Kirkbright claims Jaspers viewed Freud as a competitor. Suzanne Kirkbright, *Karl Jaspers, A Biography, Navigations in Truth* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), pp. 65-74. Marx is credited by Jaspers with scientific discoveries in history and sociology. Cf. Karl Jaspers, *The Great Philosophers*, Volume 4, transl. Edith and Leonard H. Ehrlich (New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1995), pp. 343-354.

In 1913, the year that *General Psychopathology* was published, Jaspers began his academic career as a lecturer in psychology then a part of the faculty of philosophy at Heidelberg. He published *Die Psychologie der Weltanschauungen* (1919). This work has implications for the assessment of Marx and Freud as worldviews mingle elements of both science and philosophy. He characterizes this book as his transition from *Verstehenspsychologie* to existentialist philosophy by "the demarcation of a scientific psychology and the methodological knowledge concerning its possibilities and limits" (*PKJ* 27). Jaspers defines the issue as follows:

The word *Weltanschauung*, worldview, has indefinitely varied meanings. Our view of the world seems to embrace it as a whole as it becomes an image; the act of viewing simultaneously denotes the way in which I view. There seems to be a possibility of several world images and several ways of looking at the world. It seems that there is one true way or the truth is a combination that links them all, or else there are several truths. If there were many mutually exclusive worldviews and all of them were true, the applicable truth concept would have to differ from what we mean by generally valid scientific truth.<sup>9</sup>

According to Young-Bruehl Jaspers extends the presence of the psychologist into the science of psychology.<sup>10</sup> His psychological typology was derived from Aristotle's notion in the *De Anima* that the mind as a *capax omnium*, i.e. all things and ideas are presented first in consciousness. From this notion Jaspers, as a

<sup>9</sup> Karl Jaspers, *Philosophy*, 3 volumes, transl. E. B. Ashton (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969-71, 1932). [Henceforth cited as *P* with volume number]. Cf. Vol. I, p. 151 for an alternative definition: "What is a worldview? Something whole and something universal. If, for instance, one is speaking of knowledge, it is not particular forms of knowledge in particular domains, but knowledge as a whole, or totality, as it manifests itself in values, forms of life, destiny, in the lived rank-order of values. Or, to state both in other words: when we speak of worldviews, then we mean ideas, the most final and the whole of man, both subjectively as experience, force, and reflection, and objectively as the objectively formed world." (*Psychologie der Weltanschauungen*, Berlin: Springer, 1922, p. 1) quoted in Tom Rockmore, "Jaspers, Weltanschauung, and the Idea of Philosophy," pp. 281-282, in Karl Jaspers, *On Philosophy of History and History of Philosophy*, eds. Joseph W. Koterski and Raymond J. Langley (New York: Humanity Books, 2003), pp. 279-294.

<sup>10</sup> Elizabeth Young-Bruehl, *Freedom and Karl Jaspers' Philosophy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981) p. 132.

psychologist, thought he could occupy himself "with everything it is possible to know" or understand in history or man (PKJ 24). Jaspers noted that all world views are simultaneously unified and sundered by the "manifold relations between subject and object" (Ludwig B. Lefebvre, PKJ 489). This ambiguity is fundamental as a world view can appear as an attitude—as when we say that someone is an idealist, or realist, materialist or romantic—or else a world view carries objective reference as totalizing world pictures (*Weltbild*). But how do we decide whether our psychological attitudes are read into nature or does nature itself dictate what we see? This crucial issue marked Jaspers struggle to demarcate "that type of psychology which one may call scientific psychology from that psychology which itself is already philosophy" (PKJ 25).

That is, the ambiguity between subjectivity and objectivity produces a plurality of worldviews. And this conflation of limited empirical sciences into total worldviews makes the work of Marx and Freud into plausible and mutually exclusive world pictures. Neither attitudes nor logical constructions constitute reality but their mixture offers a picture tour of human possibilities as world views represent "what is ultimate and complete in man, both subjectively as experience, power and conviction, and objectively as the formed world of objects" (Lefebvre, PKJ 489). Jaspers took offense when a critic described this psychological typology as "a gallery of world views from which people were free to choose" (PKJ 27). Jaspers defended this typology of worldview not as some sort of pictures at an exhibition but as the largest possible realm in which "existentialist decisions occur which no thought, no system, no knowledge anticipates."<sup>11</sup> Ultimately the difficulty with *The Psychology of World Views* was the lack of a clarified viewpoint since the book was not his psychological inquiry into the reality of worldviews but "the philosophic interest in the truth of various philosophic points of view" (PKJ 27).

For example, the ambiguity between a psychological phenomenology of worldviews (*verstehende Psychologie*) and existential philosophizing about the possibilities of human existence becomes evident in Jaspers analysis of how worldviews function as defenses against universal relativism. He chooses

evocative terms like "shells" and "cages." Worldviews are plural frames or world pictures in the mental life of individuals that are experienced subjectively as objective processes in the objective world. A shell is "a petrified world view" that occurs when one's subjective way of experiencing the world is mistaken for the world as such by being made absolute (Lefebvre, PKJ 491). The cages that result from shell building are self-protective withdrawals and lead to fanaticism, or sophistry and in cases of psychosis to suicide. For Jaspers, these psychological responses are an untenable synthesis of objective and subjective factors wherein true particular aspects of existing in the world get conflated into wholes. Jaspers' philosophizing transcends this mistaken synthesis by describing ontological boundary situations of death, chance, suffering and guilt, which are both universal conditions for existence and inescapably experienced by every individual. In the last section of this book, Jaspers deals with "spiritual types" who respond variously to the boundary situations above in antinomial ways: defiance and surrender, rising and falling, diurnal law and nocturnal passion, the one and diversity.<sup>12</sup>

In sum, Jaspers as a scientist claims that science is indispensable for philosophy in a positive sense as denoting what and how we know and a negative sense of pointing out what we do not know. His conclusion is that science does not know and cannot know what a human being is. Neither general psychology nor worldviews capture the ontological dimensions of human beings. In his scientific work, Jaspers anticipates both Husserl and Heidegger in eliminating psychologizing and worldviews in favor of ontology.

### Jaspers as Philosopher

In 1920 Jaspers began teaching philosophy at Heidelberg, Heinrich Rickert, the distinguished neo-Kantian, was the chairperson and he famously "claimed universal and compelling validity for scientific philosophy." Jaspers opposed Rickert in terms of his own conception of science as a "critical knowledge which knows about its limits." Jaspers, as a philosopher, was confronted with philosophy as an *Urwissenschaft* or

<sup>11</sup> Karl Jaspers, *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen* (Berlin: Springer, 1922) p. 14.

<sup>12</sup> Elizabeth Young-Bruehl, *Freedom and Karl Jaspers' Philosophy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981) p. 136.

first science. In response, he "developed an idea of philosophy as altogether different from science."<sup>13</sup>

re-thinking appeared in the three volumes of *Philosophy* (1931), dealing respectively with "World Orientation," "Elucidation of Existenz," and "Metaphysics." An exposition of Jaspers' philosophy is beyond the scope of his reaction to Freud and Marx, but many pages carefully reconsider the relation of science to philosophy. This can be summarized briefly in the analysis of the proposition advanced by Jaspers as a philosopher: science is not philosophy and philosophy is not science.

#### *Science Is Not Philosophy*

Cogent, methodological, compelling and universal knowledge characterizes science. He notes that methodical cognition provides compelling certainty that can be overthrown only by untruthfulness. And scientific knowledge is universally valid as comprehensible by all. Finally, its universality "encompasses everything that is real and thinkable."<sup>14</sup> Hence, all questions of fact are objective determinations of scientific methods. Thus, without science there would be no cogent knowledge of the objective world.<sup>15</sup> And conversely, if all reality is reducible to objective phenomena then either philosophy is science or it is nonsense.

#### *Philosophy Is Not Science*

First, Jaspers' distinguishes between natural sciences and *Geisteswissenschaften*. The later is defined as a "capacity

that transcends what is cogently knowable" (P1 359). Philosophizing is a mental activity that transcends objectivity to grasp "Existenz in its singularity ... a task that is always merely particular and never universal" or as the transcending "to what cannot be known but is present in Existenz" (P1 359). Roughly this is Jaspers' version of Kant's distinction between understanding and reason. Kant explained ideas of reason as the categories of the understanding extended beyond all possible verification. These totalizing ideas of world, self, freedom and theism are beyond all possible objectifications and as antinomies that formally posit and negate, (e.g., the world is either created or eternal) they cannot be resolved by either empirical verification or rational demonstration. So Jaspers is a neo-Kantian in his argument that philosophizing is a mental activity that goes beyond the objectivity of scientific cogency or the understanding that merely subsumes empirical data under categorical rules.

Second, philosophy is not science because the meaning and truth of objectivity is not itself a scientific object but an idea of reason. The point of science, as the urge to rationally unify all cognitions, transcends all standards of objective knowledge. The unity of science itself is not objective but rather a philosophical issue. As Jaspers says, "metaphysics makes for meaningful science and metaphysics has no place in science" (P1 161). Hence, questions concerning the meaning or limits of science, or the limits of objective world orientation, or the world in its totality, or the value of truth and the nature of reality can not be scientific objects of investigation (P1 161).

The decisive element in philosophizing is the relation between thinking subject and non-thinking object of thought. The ontological gap between thinker and thing is a substantial issue that separates philosophy from science. Jaspers repeatedly argues that both Marx and Freud failed to confront the metaphysical relation between reason and *Existenz* from our scientific understanding of natural objects in the world. The assumption of science is that the spatiality of all external existence from the cosmos to geography constitutes all reality without remainder. But says Jaspers "to know reality we must know the unreal" (P1 185). For example, mathematics, as the archetype of cogent knowledge, is a mental construction. Hence we must admit "beyond anything accessible in world orientation" the realms of "unobjectifiable historicity" and, beyond psychology, what I am as a subject. To Jaspers the philosopher, the

<sup>13</sup> PKJ 31. The arguments on world views in *Philosophy I*, pp. 251-261 later led Jaspers to contrast scienticism to philosophizing in *Der Philosophische Glaube*, translated as *The Perennial Scope of Philosophy*, (1948). What separates genuine from false philosophizing is faith and unbelief. "We call unbelief any attitude that asserts absolute immanence and denies transcendence" (p. 119). Three forms of unbelief are characterized as demonology (the urge toward nothingness), deification of man in the world, or intolerable nihilism; and these three forms are 20<sup>th</sup> century versions of anti-philosophy.

<sup>14</sup> Karl Jaspers, BPW 131; quote from *Philosophical Faith and Revelation*.

<sup>15</sup> Karl Jaspers, *Philosophy of Existence*, translation of *Existenzphilosophie* (1938), with an introduction by Richard F. Grabau (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1972), introduction p. xi ff.

confrontation between objectivity and subjectivity as nature and man yields the "fourfold reality: matter, life, soul, mind" both in the world and as worlds of their own.<sup>16</sup> For philosophy both man and reality are more than we can know about them objectively (*P1* 187).

The three volumes of *Philosophy* exclude all historical or contemporary references. This material was dealt with in Jaspers 1932 book, *The Spiritual Situation of Our Time* (translated as *Man in the Modern Age*), especially in "Part IV—Our Present Concept of Human Existence," wherein Jaspers offers an exposition of Marxism, Psychoanalysis, and Racism as three empirical sciences conflated into universal and total explanations of man in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>17</sup> Marxism, psychoanalysis and racism have caused the growing de-spiritualization of the historical situation of the age.<sup>18</sup> Marxism, psychoanalysis and racism have caused the growing de-spiritualization of the historical situation of the age.

Jaspers also offered a lecture series at the University of Groningen, Holland, in 1935 that was published as *Reason and Existenz*. This book provides a condensed version of the larger work *Philosophy*. His first lecture "The origin of the contemporary philosophic situation" deals with Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. Here and elsewhere, Jaspers credits them as forerunners of existential philosophizing in striking contrast to this growing criticism of Freud and Marx as pseudo-scientists and false philosophers.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>16</sup> *P1* 367. Much more is said about the ontological leaps between the four realms of being and the relations between the world and man as objective phenomena grasped by understanding and science and as objects of reason and ontology. The two dangers of conflating science with philosophizing are "the danger of naturalization" ("critically limited by an awareness of the relativity of its point of view"), and "dogmatic passion," derived from existential appropriation beyond objectively cogent facts.

<sup>17</sup> Karl Jaspers, *Die geistige Situation der Zeit* (1931), translated by Eden and Cedar Paul as *Man In The Modern Age* (Garden City, NY: Double Day Anchor Books, 1957). [Henceforth cited as *MMA*]

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Walter Kaufman, "Jaspers' Relation to Nietzsche" in *PKJ* 429 where he rebukes Jaspers for misinterpreting Freud in claiming that psychoanalysis tries "to return (man) back to nature that no longer requires him to be a man."

<sup>19</sup> Karl Jaspers, *Reason and Existenz*, Five Lectures. A translation of *Vernunft und Existenz* (1935), with Introduction by William Earle, Afterword by Pol Vandavelde (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1969).

### Jaspers as Living Through Dark Times

In 1921, the thirty-eight years old Karl Jaspers became a tenured professor of philosophy at Heidelberg. Over the next fifteen years he secured renown as a philosopher and scholar. In 1937, the Nazi government named Jaspers "an enemy of the State." Dismissed from his professorship, Jaspers was prohibited from publishing because his wife, Gertrude, was Jewish. Various attempts to emigrate or invitations to teach in England, France and Switzerland failed, in part because his wife was denied an exit visa. They spent eight years from 1937-1945 living in internal exile. Journal entries from this time painfully confess his growing fear for their lives and he considers the possibility of joint suicide rather than deportation to the death camps.<sup>20</sup>

Reinstated to his professorship by the allies in 1945, Jaspers wrote *The Question of German Guilt* (1946). The book was a philosophic meditation of the existential and moral guilt shared between the German people and the State. In the next fifteen years several books appeared based on lecture series or selections from his major late work *Von Der Wahrheit* (1947). These books dealt with the clashes between the totalitarian movements of fascism and communism as well as the impact of global capitalism. The history of the 20<sup>th</sup> century bears witness to two world wars that brought about mass murder and death tolls on an unprecedented scale and closed with the sustained threat of atomic annihilation.

In Jaspers' writings from this period the mistakes and misinterpretations of Marx and Freud goes far beyond academic debates about science and philosophy as intellectual pathways that lead from valid to pseudo-sciences and to worldviews into totalitarian mass movements that threaten civilization. For Jaspers this profound shift between thinking of Marx and Freud as transgressing the limits of scientific understanding and objectivity to Marxism and psychoanalysis as life threatening and catastrophic forms of anti-reason and anti-philosophy. Their systems generated illusionary philosophies founded on tragic faithlessness in human and historical possibilities.

Reason extends beyond the boundaries of scientific cogency and science denies real transcendence beyond mere phenomena and this double blindness creates pseudo-sciences masquerading as philosophy. False

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Jaspers, selections from "Journals" in *BPW*.

philosophy is bad philosophy because it uses reason against itself. Total knowledge and total planning leads to the destruction of societies and their replacement by mechanized orders regulated by coercion through terror or a mass psychology that reduces man's self-image into a dispirited and demoralized sub humanity. What has been lost in contemporary thought about humanity and history cannot be demonstrated or observed objectively. This anti-reason and anti-philosophy argues against philosophizing out of reason and *Existenz* as "that which man can be when he becomes himself. It is the possibility of human existence, and it is by means of Reason."<sup>21</sup> The faithlessness of our time of anti-reason and anti-philosophy can overcome in two ways. First, we acquire scientific methods "that sees the untruth of total knowledge and pseudo-mythical objectifications and positively proves the foundation for all truthfulness; and secondly by taking a leap into the imageless, unobjectifiable, self-impelling source of our self, which is reason."

### Conclusion

We are both subjects and objects to ourselves and to others in our complex relations to the nature and civilization. Marx analyzed external objective socio-economic realities of labor and capital. Freud concentrated on the internal subjective reactions of human drives and emotions. Their revolutionary approach was the positing of an unconscious as a non-cognitive blindness to the real causes of individual and collective behavior. The failure of historical materialism and psychoanalysis was to betray the undeniable realities of objective and subjective being for an abstract, necessary and determined total system. The systems of Marxism and Freudianism were diverted into perversions of reason in the name of universal science.

Jaspers claims that Marx and Freud made original scientific contribution to socio-economics and psychopathology. They subordinated the contestation between objectivity and subjectivity to a metaphysical unified theory of man and the world. They absolutized valid scientific knowledge within specific domains into false worldviews of the one true economic cause or the one true desire as the mutually exclusive, determinate

causes of human reality. Explanation of hard sciences from genetics to quantum mechanics depends upon over-determinism by multiple causes yielding statistical probabilities subject to uncertainty, chance and our lack of knowledge about the nature and cognition. Marx and Freud are better thinkers than their systems imply because they fell into theoretical temptation of proclaiming the necessary determination of all phenomena. Historical determinism and psychoanalysis were perverted by the identification of universal science as philosophy.

Jaspers evaluation of Marx and Freud changed over the course of a long life and career as a scientist, a philosopher and as a European living amidst the totalitarian struggles and two world wars. His estimates of Marx and Freud were filtered through a progression of propositions governing the relations between science and philosophy. Changes in propositional content may appear as a sort of dialectical progression but each proposition stands as an independent argument. In his work as a scientist, Jaspers recognizes that science is indispensable to philosophy. Scientific knowing sets the standards for grasping objective facts and evaluating them. In terms of epistemology, science offers universal, objective criteria for distinguishing what we know and how we know it from what we do not know. In his work as a philosopher, Jaspers recognizes that science is not philosophy and philosophy is not science. Questions about the extent, limits and validity of scientific knowledge are ontological issues and the concerns of philosophy transcend objectivity. The final synthesis of these contrary but not contradictory explanations is expressed in the proposition that "philosophy is both, more and less than science."

The "both more and less" of philosophy in relation to science captures Jaspers' mature ontology which he terms "periechontology." He remains faithful to the reality that we are both subject and object. Methodologically the sciences proceed dualistically separating our cogent, objective knowledge from our unique subjective experience. But the shift from either/or to both/and becomes possible because the divisions of object and subject are different aspects of being. Objective scientific knowledge refers to the realm of world orientation that includes all natural science and social sciences, as well as economics and psychology that consider human beings as objects. Philosophizing, as thinking, as action and lived experience, transcends objectivity and strives for the illumination of *Existenz* in

<sup>21</sup> Karl Jaspers, *Vernunft und Widervernunft in unserer Zeit* (1950), transl. Stanley Godman, *Reason and Anti-Reason in Our Time, The Struggle for Man's Mind* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952), p. 37.

its historicity. Both world orientation and *Existenz*, philosophy express different levels of existence, knowledge and truth, and both are rationally separable moments within the being of all encompassing. The systematics of Jaspers' ontology account for both external objectivity and internal subjectivity, as ontological manifestations of the plurality and unity of being that far surpasses the fixed and exclusionary totalizations of Marx and Freud that yield pseudo-sciences, false philosophies, and totalitarian ideologies.

In sum, Jaspers philosophy does much more than re-adjust the lineaments of science and philosophy. Overall his fundamental position is "Man and the world are far more than we know." Jaspers concluded that Marx and Freud were thinkers who transgressed the boundaries of their respective scientific expertise to create theories that denigrate human beings and distort the thinking of reason into pseudo-sciences, false world views and as totalizing scientific philosophy. In contrast, genuine philosophizing is a fallible struggle toward authentic self-formation within historicity as a free and communicable existent.

Obviously much more could be said about the existential integration of objective and subjective realms of being. But I think that Jaspers sustained examination of Marx and Freud offers several pathways for our philosophizing about the human condition in the natural and social world. First, I suggest that Jaspers' arguments about science and philosophy can be understood as a long meditation on the difference between knowledge and thinking. Science yields cogent and certain knowledge within specified domains. Thinking is oriented toward universal limit situations which are experienced by the individual as foundering, shipwreck, the confrontation of receding horizons, the muteness of the natural world and the finite boundaries imposed by our lack of self-knowledge about nature and human origins and ends. These specifically human experiences are possibilities for either breakdown or breakthroughs in transcending, and are expressed by us in the loving struggle for communication through cipher scripts.

The second path concerns Jaspers articulation of philosophic faith. His subtle examinations and arguments disclose that science, as well as philosophy (and obviously religion), all depend on faith. Faith in science has two aspects. First, there is a positive faith that science yields a coherent and intelligible account of the objective cosmos. Granted that the cosmos pre-existed human cognition by billions of years, and David

Hume's argument that there is neither any universal empirical experience nor reason a priori that can demonstrate any necessary connection between cause and effect because every matter of fact and real existent is a contingent actuality whose opposite is conceivable without contradiction. So, science rests on the belief that our knowledge corresponds to the actual causal connections of things. More significantly, Jaspers shows that the faith behind contemporary science, including historical materialism and psychoanalysis, amounts to a negative theology or what he terms "anti-faith." Scientific philosophy adheres fanatically to an anti-metaphysical, anti-transcendence that presupposes that there is no order, intelligibility, or meaning that corresponds to the deepest yearnings of mind and spirit.

Consider the testament definition (Hebrews): "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Science, philosophy, and religion all believe in the "evidence of things not seen." But in the name of objective science as philosophy, there is no substance "of things hoped for," as the human subject is reduced to a by-product of overwhelming, mythological forces of economics, sexuality, or power. Philosophy as a fallible way of life pitted against unconscious forces. It seems obvious that this faithlessness of modern science has won the day. With respect to the liberation promised by Marx and Freud we lack all conviction that the abolition of private property or the right, therapeutic mix of repression and sublimation can overcome our feelings of boredom, powerlessness and loneliness in the technological world of instrumental reason.