



Evil as the Ghostly Doppelgänger of Good in Karl Jaspers

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Abstract: The originality of Karl Jaspers' thought, is embodied in his notion of evil as the "ghostly doppelgänger of the good." Jaspers argues that good and evil are inextricably connected: the good reveals itself in battle against the evil, while the evil is the answer to the temptation of the good. According to this concept, destroying one of them also implies destroying the other. While such a notion may carry a pessimistic implication for the possibility of moral improvement, it also brings an optimistic conviction that the evil can never conquer the world completely. The question that remains to be examined is whether this interconnection of good and evil in human life and action can be reconciled with another of Jaspers' beliefs, namely that of their essential opposition. The answer is affirmative when viewed from a perspective of *Transzendenz*.

Keywords: Jaspers, Karl; Kant, Immanuel; good; evil; misfortune; ghostly doppelgänger; freedom; *Existenz*; *Transzendenz*; sincerity.

Karl Jaspers' speculations on human evil (*Unheil*) have two aspects: an existential and a metaphysical one. The first is concerned with human *Existenz*, and the latter, with the structure of the world. These two aspects are closely interconnected, as it is the case also with other important categories in his philosophy. In *Chiffren der Transzendenz* (1961), Jaspers distinguishes two realms within all the evil: the evil springing from the horrors of nature (*Übel*) and the evil resulting from human action (*Böse*).¹ He builds this distinction with reference to freedom: one form of evil comes from the blind necessities of nature (*Übel*), while the other form stems from conscious, human decisions (*Böse*). The former does not depend on decisions made by humans, the

latter, however, is man's doing. Despite this important difference, within man as a simultaneously natural and spiritual being, these two kinds of misfortune are interconnected; within man, what is given by nature merges with what he does out of his own free will. At the same time, these two kinds of evil are thus seen only from man's point of view, as nature as such is not evil in itself, but it can be so perceived from the human perspective. Jaspers adds, in a mysterious manner, that they are related. We may assume that this is so because the two taken together define the *conditio humana*.

Moral Evil (*Das Böse*)

We shall start with the discussion of evil resulting from human action, which is subject to moral judgement, with the reservation, however, that by linking it with human *Existenz*, Jaspers gives it an existential dimension, and

¹ Karl Jaspers [1961], *Die Chiffren der Transzendenz*, Basel, Switzerland: Schwabe AG Verlag 2011, p. 22. [Henceforth cited as CT]

therefore it loses its purely ethical character.²

In the second volume of his *Philosophie* (1932), Jaspers devotes some discussion to evil (*Böse*) resulting from action, in which he attempts to find its roots in the human will.³ It needs to be noted that Jaspers clearly links man's freedom to good, when stating that the will is free only when it chooses the good, whereas when it turns to evil, it becomes subjected to enslavement. In regard to this point he differs from Kant, who claims in his work *Religion Within the Bounds of Bare Reason* (1793-4) that evil cannot be the aim of the will, because a man who desires evil would be identical to the devil himself. According to Kant, man does not possess a malicious mind that would wish evil for evil's sake, yet as Jaspers notes, in Kant "man only lives in indecision" (*lebt nur im Widerstreit*, CT 25).⁴ In contrast to Kant, Jaspers locates evil will within man, which he calls "the negativity of his volition" (*Negativität seines Wollens*). By the same token, he does not consider evil as a diabolical, but as a human phenomenon.

Therefore, according to Jaspers, evil will does exist, and this is decisive for the nature of the evil, because without that will, it would not exist. Jaspers insists, "it is the *will alone* that can be *evil*" (PII 170, emphasis in the original). It is the will that brings evil into the world, and apart from it, evil is not inherent to either physical or spiritual entities. In this conceptualization of evil will, we find resonance of the main premises pertinent to Jaspers' philosophy of humanity. In his concept, the essential point of "good will" is "possible *Existenz*" (*mögliche Existenz*), which is the basis for the personal being; Jaspers equates good will with the pursuit of the realization of existence, and, conversely, evil will with the annihilation of *Existenz* for the sake of *Dasein*. He states, "evil is the will that directs itself against possible existence" (PII 171). This means that freedom, when subjected to empirical *Dasein*, becomes annihilated.

In this view of Jaspers, a peculiar paradox is revealed: will, as the willing of evil, leads to the negation of itself. By negating *Existenz*, the will negates its own freedom, as the proper (*eigentliche*) freedom in Jaspers' philosophy is equated with *Existenz*. This makes it

clear that the will is free only insofar as it is good, while evil will ceases to be free. In turn, Jaspers arrives at the statement that in this case choice does not exist; the will does not choose between good and evil, but it is will only as good willing, while the willing of evil is will no more; it turns upon itself, it is "the turning against itself" (*Umkehr gegen sich selbst*), and a counter-freedom (*Gegenfreiheit*).

Next, I treat the consequences of the difference between good will and evil will. Good will leads to the rise (*Aufschwung*) of *Existenz* toward *Transzendenz*, and thereby enhancing personal development, being oneself; love of being is its substance. Conversely, evil will replaces *Existenz* with *Dasein*; it is focused on empirical survival, thus rejecting true being, and is informed by the hatred of the latter. The basic dichotomy of these two aspirations, visible herein, is significant for our discussion: on the one hand, unconditional striving for good based on freedom and the love of true being, the "will to being" (*Wille zum Sein*), which expresses the nobility of human being, and on the other, striving toward evil, enslaved and permeated, with hatred toward being, characteristic of the empty *Dasein*, the "will to nothingness" (*Wille zum Nichts*). The former progresses in communication with another person, while the latter, the lack of one's own true being also means the loss of the connection with another; freedom versus enslavement; love versus hate; true being versus nothingness. Therein the significant difference is revealed between good and evil according to Jaspers – we shall return later to that.

Essentially Evil Will (*Im Grunde böser Wille*)

Another significant difference between good will and evil will, according to Jaspers, can be found with regard to the subject matter of knowledge. Like Kant and Socrates before him, Jaspers also holds the belief that knowledge is the path to the good, that in fact they are one and the same. This pertains to the knowledge of what is good, and what is evil, which, in Jaspers' view, is obtained in communication with other people. However, when it comes to evil will, interesting differences can be noted. In contrast to Socrates or Kant, who believed that the lack of knowledge is the source of evil, Jaspers maintains that evil is born when the "will knowingly turns against itself" (PII 172). It is his belief that man can consciously desire evil, and in this way his will becomes evil: "it must be the evil will that does this, and simultaneously knows of its action or is capable of

² In Jaspers, the general ethical premises are adopted from an existential perspective, thus they lose their universal quality.

³ Karl Jaspers [1932], *Philosophie II: Existenzerhellung*, Berlin, Germany: Springer 1973, p. 170. [Henceforth cited as PII]

⁴ All translations made by the author.

knowing it" (*PII* 172). At the same time, Jaspers finds it inconceivable that this mechanism of the will turns against itself and against all being, this destructive drive of the will toward evil.⁵ He presupposes that some enigmatic suppression of the desire for true knowledge must thereby occur. It is one of several enigmas or unexplained points within Jaspers' thought.

As is well known, Kant saw this differently: initially, in his critical philosophy, he focuses above all on the good; and the good, according to both Socrates and Kant, results from the concord between will and reason. That is why the good springs from the will being subjected to reason, which has discovered moral law. At that time Kant's belief in reason as the source of good is prevalent; the good that allows humanity to build "the kingdom or realm of ends" (*Zweckreich*) as presented in the *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785). In this period Kant presents an optimistic philosophy of the good, his ethics is the ethics of good, he is not occupied with the conflict between will and reason, as the good will is the good in itself. Kant stands for progress as he states that human reason is making headway towards a better world. It is not until his work on *Religion Within the Bounds of Bare Reason* that Kant raises the issue of evil.⁶ He begins his speculations there with a most pessimistic statement, namely that the world is wallowing in evil. At this juncture we see the change in his position, as he notices that evil cannot be rationally explained; to him, it becomes an enigma.⁷

When Jaspers discusses Kant's concept of radical evil (*das radikal Böse*), he stresses that according to Kant, the propensity to evil belongs to man's freedom, whence springs this specific inversion, namely that the completion of duty is made dependent on the realization of happiness. Jaspers writes: "He [man] executes the inversion (perversion) of the conditioning relation."⁸ Will makes the pursuit of happiness the condition for following the moral law, instead of making the following of the law the condition for happiness; as a result, what is unconditional, becomes conditioned. Jaspers notes that for Kant the "propensity to evil belongs to man as man" (*RB* 112) and because evil is linked to man's freedom, it cannot be eradicated. However, despite this, Kant sees a possibility of finding a way leading from radical evil to the good will, through the "revolution of the inner attitude" which is the transformation of will itself, and which he equates, in a manner of speaking, with recreation or reconstitution of man. But here we also arrive at an enigma, as Jaspers stresses that the origin of this propensity to radical evil is one of the greatest mysteries in Kant, which cannot be logically explained; similarly, the aforementioned transformation, which in his opinion moves the problem of evil in Kant's thought into the realm of Christian theology (*RB* 125-6).

In a similar way to Kant, Jaspers states that "evil is a part of us" (*unser Teil ist*)⁹ and he, hence, opposes its objectification and its treatment as if it were something external to man, and as if in this way its consequences could be avoided. Like Kant, Jaspers also believes that there is no evil power in the world, no diabolical evil, but that there is only human evil, which he describes as being ordinary. In his view, this ordinary evil springs from a lack of unconditionality in human action. And

trap as Socrates. They both share humanism's belief that man will not consciously, or voluntarily, choose evil. Kant thinks that man desires the good, and that reason tells him, what is the good; that man is good by nature, and therefore he chooses the good. Yet at the same time he notices in man a propensity to evil, which, in his opinion, does not result from the desire for evil itself, but rather the desire for happiness.

⁵ In regard to his incomprehension of this drive, Jaspers coincides with Socrates up to a point. In his ethical intellectualism, as a result of equating moral knowledge of the good with willing the good, Socrates arrives at an absurd conclusion stating that the soul which does evil voluntarily is better than the one which is involuntarily evil, and in his conversation with Hippias he admits that he cannot agree with himself regarding his own argument. The difference between the two philosophers seems to be rooted in the fact that for Socrates, evil springs from the lack of awareness of evil, that is, the lack of full knowledge of evil, while for Jaspers, evil results from a voluntary action consisting in withholding the desire for full knowledge.

⁶ Aleksander Bobko presents this interpretation of Kant's philosophy in his work *Myślenie wobec zła*, Kraków, Poland: Instytut Myśli Józefa Tischnera 2007, pp. 181ff.

⁷ It should be noted that when Kant presumes that the will follows reason, he seems to fall into the same

⁸ *Er vollzieht die Verkehrung (Perversion) des Bedingungsverhältnisses*. Karl Jaspers, "Das radikal Böse bei Kant" [1935], in *Rechenschaft und Ausblick*, München: R. Piper 1958, pp. 107-56, here p. 111. [Henceforth cited as *RB*]

⁹ Karl Jaspers, *Der philosophische Glaube angesichts der Offenbarung*, München: Piper 1962, p. 317. [Henceforth cited as *PGO*]

yet it is this human evil, as a conscious turning away from good, which approximates diabolical evil—so to say, as if the devil itself was involved. And here again we arrive at an enigma, reaching down to the very foundations of human will: perceiving in oneself this possibility of a conscious turning away of the will from the good, voluntarily wishing for evil, leads man to a position in which he has to state about himself: "I understand myself in my will as essentially evil" (*PII* 173).¹⁰

Reciprocal Action between Good and Evil

The originality of Jaspers' view of evil, however, in my assessment consists above all in his reflections on the interrelationship between good and evil. Surprisingly, Jaspers states that good and evil not only are inextricably linked to the human being, but also that they are inseparable. He therefore rejects not only the ancient eudemonic tradition which proclaims the possibility of attaining absolute moral perfection, but also the view that evil could be overcome—a view to which Kant also temporarily adhered—for instance by way of progress, learning, or self-education, as a result of which man would be able to possess goodness forever, and humanity could actually attain perpetual peace.

At this point it is helpful to remember that Jaspers considers evil to be insurmountable, and yet, he argues, that one should not surrender to it, for hope to conquer evil triggers struggle against it, and brings—albeit only a momentary—victory. During it—and this is key—the good reveals itself. Jaspers confers, "as evil is not destroyed, and only in the struggle against it, the good becomes reality" (*PII* 173).

This bond of good and evil constitutes the basic characteristic of Jaspers' understanding of man's position in the world: "he can never realize himself truly and purely, never perfectly, never self-sufficiently" (*PGO* 317). This is so because, according to Jaspers, even the very awareness of victory over evil contains an element of evil, springing from being content with oneself for being good—incidentally, Kant already mentioned this as one possible form of evil. Jaspers adds to this, that the victory over evil is never the success of a sole individual, and also, that such a victory, in a way, tempts evil.

¹⁰ *Ich erfasse mich in meinem Willen als im Grunde böse.*

We can draw an analogy between this statement, which refers to a primal contamination of man, and the biblical parable of the original sin, which burdens humanity from the outset. In this case, however, we are transported to Jaspers' world of ciphers.

We see that here is the source of this boundary situation, which Jaspers calls the total, incomprehensible, and indelible guilt. The guilt is born from the consciousness of the lack of absolute purity of one's actions, while the false belief in such purity Jaspers calls "the pride of a narrow minded man" who does not perceive the ambiguities and the variety of motives in his actions.¹¹

For Jaspers, only good and evil in combination determine the human fate:

History of the world ambiguously shows its changing aspects: the growth of great figures and creations, the progress of understanding and its practical application resulting from knowledge and inventions, the changes in overall circumstances, observing the all-conquering process of destruction until the at ever increasing speed approaching doom, which is not anymore occurring in singularity, but in regard to the whole. [*PGO* 313]

The specific interrelationship between good and evil is well reflected in Jaspers' powerful statement that evil is the ghostly doppelgänger (*der gespenstige Doppelgänger*) of the good (*PII* 174). This denomination signifies that the good has logical precedence. This means, therefore, firstly, that evil needs the good as its prototype, which it distorts, and secondly, that the presence of the good provokes evil to distort it, as a doppelgänger cannot precede its prototype. And yet again, it would demonstrate that the good could not occur in its pure form in the world, but that it is always accompanied by its ghostly shadow, which is undermining the absolute character of the good. A pessimistic conclusion follows from Jaspers' term, namely, that good and evil need one another, and not only is the evil dependent on the good, but also, in a sense, the good is dependent on the evil.

From this, further conclusions would follow: if good and evil co-create the human situation, and neither occurs alone, then the evil needs the good in order to distort it, while the good is fighting its distortion. That is why Jaspers advises us to be vigilant. Although it would seem that the good and the evil are fundamentally different, as we tried to demonstrate above, in Jaspers, they are in the very core of the human being mysteriously intertwined, so that one easily morphs into the other. Of course, we are here concerned with vigilance in the face of evil, which, as I

¹¹ Karl Jaspers, *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen* [1919], Berlin: Springer 1960, p. 278. [Henceforth cited as *PW*]

have indicated before, is contained in the possibility of enslaving the will by empirical *Dasein*: by not opposing it, we are effectively contributing to its victory.

Vigilance is also important in another regard because, as Jaspers believes, this concurrence of good and evil may cause the illusion that evil contains some truth, which might attract us. "This lies at the human boundary: the law of the day does not rule over the passion for the night. They are mutually exclusive. But deep down, they depend on each other" (*PGO* 317). Therefore a desire can be born in a man to follow many contradictory directions, without commitment. Jaspers speaks in this context of "a dangerous desire to approach all gods and devils, yet without subservience to any one of them" (*PGO* 317).

We can see that Jaspers' depictions testify to his profound knowledge of man's soul. It seems as if he placed, on the one hand, two ancient, cosmic Manichean powers, the two gods—light and darkness—within the human soul, where, eternally intertwined, they fight their inconclusive battle. And yet, on the other hand, we encounter puzzling statements by Jaspers, that seem to situate these powers outside man, for instance, when he writes that "the reality of the *Dasein* of humans seems to be determined by some destiny beyond all freedom, in which freedom itself constitutes a factor that causes that which it does not want" (*PGO* 314). This, similarly to the aforementioned enigmas, leads us to wonder whether evil, according to Jaspers, is indeed ordinary and human in character, or whether it is extraordinary and superhuman?

These questions spring from a degree of uncertainty which is notable in Jaspers' view: on the one hand, Jaspers believes that evil is real, an objective of will, a real turning of the will away from Existenz and subjecting it to *Dasein*. On the other hand, we have his definition of evil as a doppelgänger, and therefore something secondary to the original good. He also refers to evil in terms of the "phantom that is there as if quasi behind the back of the good will" (*PfI* 172), a kind of an apparition, and, therefore, something that seems to be not entirely real. These denominations seem to diminish evil, much like Jaspers' statement that human evil is ordinary and not some absolute evil with a greatness of its own. He maintains that "what is diabolical as opposed to godly would possess a greatness that cannot be real in the world" (*Das Teuflische wäre als das Widergöttliche selbst von einer Grösse, die im Dasein nicht wirklich sein kann*), and, he adds, "if the evil becomes real, then it is already unclear and it can be no longer absolute

evil" (*PfI* 172). This creates the impression that Jaspers is alternating between recognizing evil as merely a distorted reflection of the good, and acknowledging it as a dark power, independent of man, and expressed in the aforementioned *Verhängnis*, to which freedom is subjected. In favor of the first version, which agrees with Kant claiming that evil has a humane, and not diabolical dimension, we observe that Jaspers, like Kant, sees the roots of evil in the dependence on the existential actualization of the *Dasein*-happiness, which would bring Jaspers close to Kant's "radical evil".¹² In favor of the second reading, we can adduce his statements on destiny, on the mysterious, conscious turning of the will away from the good, on discovering, within oneself, the "essentially evil will," or even the statement that human evil approximates diabolical evil.

Another controversy stems from the interrelationship between good and evil, which seems to blur the boundaries between the two concepts, and thus to introduce relativity. The latter is in contrast with Jaspers' stance as to the reality and absoluteness of evil, and his belief that there is a fundamental difference between good and evil, which I have accentuated at the beginning of this discussion. Jaspers poignantly portrays human reality as being permeated by universal misery. It is this misery, horror, and evil that defines the human situation, which Jaspers calls the ultimate situation of man. At the same time, he stresses that "the realization of misfortune is always done against the criterion of the glory of nature or the goodness in people, who provide us with the measure for what we perceive as the great misfortune, and who themselves are as real as is that misfortune" (*CT* 22). Is it therefore possible to reconcile these two standpoints, namely, that good and evil are radically opposed to one another, and also, that

¹² According to Kant and Jaspers evil results from the enslavement of the will through the striving toward the *Dasein*-happiness that follows the satisfaction of factual needs. Like Kant, Jaspers indicates such causes of evil as giving way to passion, egoism, license—as is the case with Kant's radical evil, especially, if the happiness that is given priority is to be understood in terms of hedonism. However, we should reiterate, there is an important difference here, based on the understanding of good will, which in Kant's case has a decidedly moral dimension, as it signifies subjection to moral law even at the cost of happiness, while in Jaspers' case it has an existential dimension, as it is directed to actualization of *Existenz*, even at the cost of *Dasein*.

they are inextricably connected? What could be their connection? We shall attempt to answer this question at the end of this essay.

Earthly Misery

The above portrayal of human misfortune, contained in the category of the ultimate situation of man, brings us to the realm of evil of the other kind, which is as incomprehensible as the evil resulting from human action: namely the evil which man experiences in the world, pertaining to the structure of reality in which he is living. In Jaspers' work, this second kind of evil is expressed in terms that are specific to his philosophy. And so the contradictions permeating human life are already to be found in Jaspers' first work of philosophy, his *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen* in terms of the "antinomic structure of the *Dasein*" (PW 232-47).¹³ Man's being torn between contradictions, the failure he experiences in the course of his life, is later called foundering (*Scheitern*). In his *Philosophie* Jaspers also notes that the antinomic structure of the world signifies the lack of ultimate fulfillment. It appears "as the hopeless misery within the world" (PII 250). Negativity and inexplicability of man's situation are most emphatically expressed in his description of boundary situations (*Grenzsituationen*), which are elaborations of the ultimate situation (*Grundsituation*)—Jaspers treats these already in his first work of philosophy, later expands them in his *Philosophie*, and returns to them in his subsequent works.

In man's ultimate situation, other kinds of misfortune are also contained; their source is lying in the very nature of reality. They spring from the fact that when acting, man faces infinite choices, and he is never able to realize all the options. When choosing his path, he sees other paths that he has not selected, and by realizing one possibility, he rejects and erases other possibilities. Each movement from the infinity of possibilities to the finite reality means losing all the

other chances forever. This loss causes man to feel a sense of discontent, and also a sense of guilt; it feels like as if he was losing a part of himself, namely, the part that he will never be able to realize. Jaspers points to man's characteristic aspiration to fully realize his possibilities, to self-realization, which would mean achieving one's own individual perfection. But, as Jaspers states: "no man can actualize all that lies within him" (PGO 316). Therefore, man perceives the choice of one possibility at the cost of other possibilities as self-limitation, as life in narrowness (*Enge*), which evokes the feeling of imperfection and the ensuing feeling of guilt. As a reaction to this, he wishes to remain in the realm of possibility, and he resists reality (*sträubt sich gegen der Realität*).¹⁴ Jaspers is negatively critical towards the avoidance of involvement and taking responsibility, rather he advocates courageously accepting one's limitations, answering for the choice one has made, and remaining faithful to one's decision. This braving one's frailty is accompanied with the aforementioned guilt resulting from the acceptance of oneself in one's limitations. Life's misfortune has its source in the discrepancy between what man desires as full perfection, the ideal, and that to which he is doomed. He regards this desire as a kind of self-delusion, for if man wants to stay alive, he must get involved with the world, and this means that he cannot avoid this form of misery, namely, living sensing imperfection. Here we see the inevitability, which is characteristic for Jaspers' boundary situation of guilt: man is guilty, when he gets involved, because in this case he lives in the narrowing of his possibilities; and he is guilty too when he does not get involved, because then his life lacks seriousness.

Jaspers addresses the age-old problem of the reasons for human misfortune as it results from human action and also pertains to the structure of the world. He poses the great question, which keeps returning in the history of philosophy: who is guilty of the unhappiness and evil in the world, who is responsible for it? "If I knew the beginning of my guilt, it would become confined

¹³ By which term he means insurmountable opposites and man's total conflict with the world; both his external and inner life are permeated by contradictions. Man encounters insurmountable boundaries both in regard to knowledge and action: he suffers failure, being unable to attain absolute truth in cognition, or absolute meaning in life. Already in his first philosophical work, Jaspers argues that the futility of efforts, great suffering, and the pain of numerous losses combine to define human fate.

¹⁴ Jaspers' description, showing man pausing in the realm of possibility, is reminiscent of Søren Kierkegaard's portrayal of his aesthetic hero, torn between countless possibilities, who out of fear of risk and failure, and above all, of responsibility, switches from one possibility to another, without choosing any of them seriously and responsibly. This attitude of a torn man as well as the non-involved man as described by Jaspers, is prone to infidelity, which becomes the rule of irresponsible life.

and avoidable; my freedom would make it possible to avoid it" (PII 197). If human action is the source of evil, then with the sense of guilt that man feels arises doubt as to the very possibility of doing evil, which he finds in himself as given; and he asks who is guilty, whether he can be guilty. Jaspers' argumentation reads:

I know myself as responsible; therefore, I must be, in some sense, free, I become guilty. But who, or what, is guilty of me being free in the sense of the possibility-to-become-guilty, the necessity-to-become-guilty? [PGO 372]

Jaspers quotes various traditional attempts to answer the question as to the cause of both misfortune, and evil in the world, responsibility for them, and also for guilt: the karma and the transmigration of souls, the Gnostic narrative on the fall of angels, the Christian parable of the first parents tempted by the serpent and punished with expulsion from Paradise, the biblical story of Job, the concept of predestination, and Plato's tale of the world's creation out of chaos by the Demiurge; in his opinion, none of these theories provides a convincing explanation for the existence of evil.

He himself proposes a disposition of honesty (*Redlichkeit*), where the presence of evil is clearly perceived. This honesty requires the perception of the different paths that people choose and that they follow, inclusive of the path to nothingness in the passion for the night (*Leidenschaft zur Nacht*). Awareness of the fact that these choices exist in the world does not allow for an easy optimism, or for overt self-confidence; it advocates modesty towards one's own path, while warning against critical judgment. Jaspers does not condemn this path of passion for the night, but he calls it the desperately earnest one (*das verzweiflungsvolle Ernste*), thus distinguishing it from unserious life with no involvement. It should be stressed, however, that the awareness of the path to obliteration, the path of destruction of oneself and of the others, the perception of it and even, as he believes, the respect for it, does not mean, in his view, the acceptance of distortions and consent thereto, but rather facing them by way of communication in a loving struggle (*liebenden Kampf*, PII 71).

In difference to the speculative tradition of the West, Jaspers does not pose the question of the world creator's responsibility for the world, he does not accuse God, nor does he present a theodicy. He believes that man cannot blame divine *Transzendenz* for evil, as the divine

Transzendenz cannot be judged by human categories of good and evil. For Jaspers, on the one hand, the complete unknowability of *Transzendenz*, similar to the complete incomprehensibility of God for Kierkegaard, makes it impossible to pass moral judgment in categories of fairness, responsibility, and guilt.¹⁵ On the other hand, Jaspers realizes that the human sense of justice requires finding the guilty party who can be blamed for all the world's evils and all the human imperfections, as man himself does not feel he is the author of such a world.

Jaspers' *amor fati*

Is there, then, no guilty party; is anyone responsible for evil in the world? Yes and no. We remember that Jaspers decidedly argues, as already noted, that the evil in the world is real and cannot be removed, and its reality means destruction while "what destroys must be something...has to exist. Evil...is...in itself a mighty adversary, it is the hatred, which feeds upon itself" (PGO 371-2). And even perhaps, as Jaspers seems to be warning us, it can become an irresistible power. However, he believes that seeking the sources of evil existing in the world somewhere beyond this world, is not justified from the outset, for when we reach beyond the world to its fundament and origin, we need to abandon the duality in which we recognize and judge things in the world, where "what exists for us, and what we are, is grounded in contradictions" (PGO 369). But, since at the fundament of Being in *Transzendenz* as understood by Jaspers – all contradictions, or opposites, disappear, we cannot know it, as knowing always occurs by means of juxtaposition. Jaspers claims that God knows neither evil, nor good. For Jaspers, like for Plato, Saint Augustine, or Kierkegaard, God is beyond evil. This would explain Jaspers' view that evil is not absolute in character, that it is not an extra-terrestrial power, but that it is ordinary, that is, it is human and of this world.

Jaspers explains that "evil, for us, lies within the phenomenon of time," therefore we cannot ask for its source by way of turning towards Being, which is outside time. The foundation of Being is the place, where all thought stops, and "we are left with the

¹⁵ For Kierkegaard, divine *Transzendenz*, which is quite inaccessible to human understanding, may be expressed only through the power of absurdity; for Jaspers, it lies in his language of ciphers, remaining therefore beyond moral judgment, beyond good and evil.

comprehension of the incomprehensible" (PGO 383).

Jaspers ventures even further, when he states that not only we cannot judge God – the world's foundation, as remaining beyond our comprehension, but also we cannot judge the world as evil, as we do not know the world completely, in its entirety. "For the truthfulness of an honest human, neither the revolt nor the faith in harmony is acceptable" (CT 37).

Therefore, if evil is present, and if it destroys, who can take the responsibility and the blame, when it does not lie in the very cause of the miserable world, not even in the world itself? According to Jaspers, guilt and responsibility ultimately fall up man. We shall find the solution of the problem in Jaspers' understanding of existential freedom. He believes that: "Where there is freedom, there is also responsibility, and where there is responsibility, there is also guilt" (PGO 357). In his *Philosophie*, he writes: "Because I know myself as free, I consider myself guilty" (PII 196). Within this concept, paradoxically, man's freedom prompts the acceptance of necessity, and therefore, the accession to something that cannot be changed.

This shows that Jaspers' answer to the problem of evil is a certain *amor fati*. In his case it means that man accepts as his own that, which, as Jaspers puts it, happened before time: "It is as if I had chosen myself, the way I am, before time, and that choice, that in fact had never been made, I accept, by my deed of regarding it as mine" (PII 196-7). When taking upon himself that, which he cannot avoid, Jaspers' man also takes the responsibility for it; he behaves as if he, indeed, had chosen himself the way he is, back in eternity, and now, in time and he takes upon himself the consequences of such a choice, accepting the blame for the whole imperfection: his own, and the world's.

Jaspers refers to Kant's notion of sincerity (*Aufrichtigkeit*). He explains that "sincerity is my truthfulness when facing myself" (PGO 383). He calls for the attitude of sincerity toward human misery, consisting in being able to see both the rationality, beauty, and glory of the world and its futility, ugliness, and irrationality; in seeing the greatness of man in the flights of his *Existenz*, as well as his meanness and his downfall in its betrayal. For reality will not reveal itself to man in the form of an alternative between good and evil, but as the conjunction of good and evil. The attitude of sincerity may, to some extent, help man to take upon himself the guilt that is not his, the blameless guilt.

We have now reached that point which concludes

Jaspers' main philosophical considerations, to their climax and their main reference point, namely, to *Transzendenz*. According to Jaspers, man's sincerity is not suspended in a vacuum, and it would not be tenable as such, but it is "sincerity in the movement of certainty," which, as he believes, is led by the Oneness of *Transzendenz*. It is this power which guides man beyond all contradictions, including the one between good and evil. Jaspers' asserts in his philosophy that man's behavior in his existential situation ultimately requires the support in faith as a source of certainty, which is provided by the bond with *Transzendenz*. Elusive to human questions and judgments, *Transzendenz* is regained in the certainty of philosophical faith. This certainty, obtained in the act of faith, however, does not eliminate doubt, nor does it obliterate the questions posed by the mind. The guilt that burdens man not only does not explain the questions as to human misery, but it exacerbates them. After all, the mysteriousness of the world and of the interior of the human soul, which is revealed in Jaspers' considerations, prompts us to continue posing questions such as, for example: If the world and the transcendent Being were fully knowable, would evil lose its destructive character; would it turn out to be good, as a necessary element of harmony in this best of possible worlds, as it is proposed in Leibniz's theodicy, and in this case would man be pure and innocent?

To conclude: in Jaspers' concept, the evil, devoid of absolute character, is—in a manner of speaking—a temporary evil, relative not only to the world, but also dependent upon the good. This interdependency has the aforementioned pessimistic implication, and it also suggests the comforting conclusion that evil can never win over the good and rule over the world, because in that case it would also annihilate itself as the ghostly doppelgänger. The victory of one of the two intertwined elements would eliminate both. But that unearths further doubts. Dependency of the evil on the good, and vice versa, in a sense, renders the good relative, and from this move there is only one step needed for saying that the evil is necessary for the existence of the good. And so in his *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen* Jaspers states: "only he who is a sinner can also be moral" (PIV 238). He notes there that good adjoins evil so closely that we can notice the one merging into the other, and he agrees with Goethe, when he said in his speech to the Shakespeare day on 14 October 1771 in Frankfurt that: "what we are calling the evil is only the other side of the good." Can we, therefore, reverse this statement,

and claim that the good is only the other, the bright side of the evil? Does Jaspers, in some way, attempt to justify the evil?

Again I shall answer: yes and no. I have already voiced my observations on the ambiguity of Jaspers' standpoint: on the one hand I presented his dramatic descriptions of human misery and evil, which should be countered, and on the other hand, I presented his treatment of the distinction between good and evil as a result of our involvement with the world, and therefore, not as having its foundations in a reality independent of man, but in the subjective conditioning of human cognition, speaking in the words of Kant, not in the *Ding an sich*, the *noumenon*, but in the *phenomenon*. We have seen, on the one hand, the radical conceptualization of evil in the description of the antinomic structure of reality, the boundary situations, the foundering, and on the other hand, its softening in juxtaposition to the attitude of the sincere man (*des aufrichtigen Menschen*), grounded upon the guidance of *Transzendenz* as Oneness beyond all contradictions, and, thus, also beyond good and evil. In our conclusion, let us try to find an explanation for this.

We believe that the answer to the question regarding Jaspers' stance toward evil should take into account the question of perspective: that is, from the perspective of *Transzendenz*, the differentiation between the good and the evil, and therefore the evil taken alone loses its significance; and from that perspective, the evil might be justified. Yet Jaspers stresses that this is impossible to be achieved, as we cannot look from the perspective of *Transzendenz*, but instead, only from the world, toward *Transzendenz*.

And, here, in the world, Jaspers' existential man makes his dramatic choice between good and evil, which is of fundamental importance to his personal being, because, due to it he either finds or loses himself. And yet he always remains guilty, for his will is essentially evil (*Wille im Grunde böse*). When taking the burden of fate upon his shoulders, the responsibility for the whole of the evil of the world and his own frailty, he bends under the weight of blameless guilt. It would seem that this makes him pitiable, but the way Jaspers sees it, in doing this task he shows his heroism.