



The Logic of Karl Jaspers as an Intercultural Basic Knowledge

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Abstract: The philosophical logic by Karl Jaspers is contrary to all approaches to this topic by other philosophers who derive it from systems philosophy and ontology. Its aim is to combine the different strands of philosophy's history (especially after Kant) synoptically. In this synopsis we find the four modes of the encompassing (*die Weisen des Umgreifenden*) in which human practice is unfolding: being, consciousness in general, spirit, and existence, standing in a tension between world and transcendence. This means it was necessary for him to differentiate the indispensable psychological fundamental functions—and with this Jaspers delivers a contribution to integrated anthropology. Regarding philosophical logic as an overall concept, the general significance of this logic is that it is distinct from theories of methods, categories, and sciences that have to be treated separately from it. It has to be considered as underpinning an intercultural basic knowledge in contrast to that special knowledge as it is presented by the aforementioned theories. Seen from a practical point of view this logic can be utilized for religious dialogues founded on modern metaphysics, a differentiated treatment of anthropology, and an adequate social theory. This practical point of view (Jaspers' *clavis clavium*) is essential for understanding his works that were written after 1935.

Keywords: Jaspers, Karl; logic; Encompassing; philosophical method; scientific method; dialectic; phenomenology.

The primary bibliography for Karl Jaspers (1883–1969) comprises 469 works, including over 30 book publications with 600 translations.¹ Three main phases can be identified in this multifaceted oeuvre, namely, the writings on psychopathology and psychology, those on systematic philosophy and the history of philosophy, and finally those on politics and contemporary history. Although these phases overlap, each one of them, as listed here, is the empirical and theoretical foundation for the subsequent one.

¹ A version of this essay was presented at the Eighth International Jaspers Conference, Beijing, August 2018. All quotations from works referenced in a German edition are translated by the author.

Published in 1913, Jaspers' *Allgemeine Psychopathologie* depicts the indispensable foundation of anthropology, namely, the mental dysfunctions. This early work was widely regarded as liberating psychiatry from a stagnated state of scholarly research, and as offering a fundamental methodology with respect to the approaches of the natural sciences and the humanities (the former providing explanation, the latter providing understanding).² Jaspers begins by

² For example, Johann Glatzel, "Die Psychopathologie Karl Jaspers' in der Kritik," and Gerd Huber, "Die Bedeutung von Karl Jaspers für die Psychiatrie der Gegenwart," in *Karl Jaspers: Philosoph, Arzt, Politischer Denker, Symposium Zum 100. Geburtstag in Basel Und*

covering the individual facts of inner life, which are either contents derived from experience or objective mental activities. Explanations refer to causal nexuses outside the psyche, whereas genetic understanding addresses the processes by which aspects of the mind relate to other aspects of the mind and emerge from them. Analytic perspectives must, therefore, ultimately lead into synthetic ones whose horizon in its entirety is formed through inner life.

Jaspers' next work, *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen* (1919), had already reached the boundary area between psychology and philosophy, while at the same time systematically separating them. It can be considered the first account of German philosophy of existence (*Existenzphilosophie*). In it, Jaspers attempted to contrast subjective attitudes with the static elements of worldviews and images of the world. The process of movement of the living spirit (mind, *Geist*), Jaspers argued, can use the static elements of worldviews only as a source of orientation, not as a codification of how to live. He suggested that each life course must actualize itself within boundary situations and through the illumination of existence.³

After Jaspers' late turn to philosophy, which was met with suspicion by the establishment in the field, there followed a latency phase of ten years that (partially shaped by an inner dialogue with Max Weber) prepared the way for his major philosophical work.⁴ On the face of it, his intense discussions with Martin Heidegger and his engagement with Søren Kierkegaard and Friedrich Nietzsche arguably can be considered as providing the foundations for his new

"philosophy of existence." At first, Jaspers attempted to resist—in vain—this description of himself as being too restrictive. He addressed it for the last time in 1930: existence, he said, is inextricably bound up with an exhortation and movement that seeks to overcome the division of modernity into natural science, cultural sciences, philosophy, and theology. For Jaspers, the "thread of all modes of the encompassing" is reason (*Vernunft*).⁵

Subsequently, Jaspers started with publishing the three-volume edition of his *Philosophie* (1932).⁶ Here, he was concerned to articulate in a contemporary manner the traditional metaphysical triangle (the relationship of humans to the world and transcendence). In the first volume, *Weltorientierung (World Orientation)*, he treats the relationship between *Wissenschaft* (the pursuit of scientific knowledge) and philosophy, and engages with the status of positivism and idealism.⁷

The second volume, *Existenzerhellung (Illumination of Existence)*, has been identified as the second canonical work of German philosophy of existence, solely preceded by Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit*. In it, Jaspers systematized the existential categories, such as, for example, communication, will, freedom, boundary situation, or unconditional act.

The themes of the third volume, *Metaphysik*, are the possibilities of a metaphysics that could be articulated in the twentieth century, the relations between existence and transcendence, and the chiffrés of transcendence that cannot be objectified. Here, "transcendence" is a philosophical term for the many images of God and it is being used to name immanence, which is the aspect of reality that encompasses the phenomena of our world.

After 1932, Jaspers was concerned with developing the logic of a basic philosophical knowledge in which there would be a commonality of basic concepts to be employed for communication in all cultures.⁸ The book

Heidelberg, eds. Karl Jaspers, Jeanne Hersch, Jan Milic Lochman, Reiner Wiehl, and Wilhelm Anz, München, DE: Piper Verlag 1986, pp. 162–76 and pp. 179–94. See also Burkhard Gäbler, "Karl Jaspers als Initiator des geisteswissenschaftlichen Denkens in der Psychiatrie," *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Karl-Jaspers-Gesellschaft* 3/4 (1990), 18–33.

³ Otto A. Böhmer, *Sternstunden der Philosophie: Schlüsselerlebnisse großer Denker von Augustinus bis Popper*, München, DE: C. H. Beck Verlag 1994, p. 125. See also Hans Saner, *Karl Jaspers in Selbstzeugnissen und Bilddokumenten*, Reinbek bei Hamburg, DE: Rowohlt 1987, pp. 2, 35, 69, 111.

⁴ "Ich kann nur hinweisen auf die Kontinuität dieses Blicks in mir seit 50 Jahren—darauf, daß mein Philosophieren all die Jahre nicht ohne Denken an Max Weber geschah." Karl Jaspers, *Max Weber: Politiker, Forscher, Philosoph*, München, DE: Piper Verlag, p. 9.

⁵ Karl Jaspers, *Vernunft und Existenz*, München, DE: Piper Verlag 1987, pp. 45–7.

⁶ Karl Jaspers, *Philosophie, 3 Bände*, Berlin, DE: Springer Verlag, 1932. [Henceforth cited as *PH* with volume number]

⁷ Albrecht Kiel, *Das Menschenbild von Karl Jaspers und C. G. Jung—in neuer Vermittlung. Eine differenzierte Anthropologie der leibseelischen Potentiale*, Münster, DE: LIT Verlag 2012 pp. 196–200. [Henceforth cited as *MJJ*]

⁸ Karl Jaspers, "Philosophical Autobiography," in *The Philosophy of Karl Jaspers*, ed. Paul A. Schilpp, La Salle,

was published in 1947 with the rather unrevealing title *On Truth: Philosophical Logic, Volume 1*.⁹ In 1941, while working on this task, he noted:

By way of the philosophical logic, I wish to contribute to the logical self-awareness of this age that appertains to our newly awakened philosophizing, just as Hegel's logic appertains to idealism, and just as inductive logic (for instance, the one by Mill) appertains to the positivist age.¹⁰

First Sphere of Life and Work: Five Levels of Reality that Determine the Human Journey through Life

In the first chapter of *Part 1* in *Von der Wahrheit*, Jaspers presents a preliminary draft for outlining the Encompassing (VW47ff). To this aim he introduces seven concepts in order to build an accessible narrative about the Encompassing. These include: The Encompassing as such (the world), the Encompassing that we are (*Dasein*), the ground and connectedness (*Boden und Band*) of the modality of the Encompassing (*Existenz*), transcendence, consciousness as such, spirit (*Geist*), and reason (*Vernunft*). As open spaces are involved here, the approach of this logic was such that it was meant neither to be ontology (more precisely, existential ontology) nor a systemic philosophy, but rather an open systematization designed to be utilized, and worked on, in a progressive manner. In today's theoretical language, this approach would be called a reference system. Jaspers chose a term that has remained almost completely unknown: periechontology. According to him, the word builds on Anaximander's *perichein*, on that which encompasses the infinite.

The first two spaces are concerned with metaphysics, the complex relationship between world (immanence) and transcendence. The other five spaces are geared toward a philosophical anthropology in which (in contrast to the dysfunctions mentioned earlier) the basic psychic functions are treated on five different levels. The aim of this approach was to present

a summary of the division that had been adopted in the nineteenth century, namely the division into positivism, idealism, life philosophy, and existential philosophy.

When life began, there was the sea of preconscious *Dasein*, governed by the will to live, by the instincts such as the play instinct, by drives, and even musicality. For early humans, it was dominated by the belief that humans and animals and natural phenomena are interconnected through vital spirits. Even modern humans carry out unconsciously ninety per cent of their daily actions, and the decisions influenced by them.

In this sea, the islands of consciousness-as-such appeared: first, conscious experiencing, above all, of dramatic events. Attention was concentrated here on the risks that had to be taken in order to survive, further, on stimulating linguistic expression in heroic sagas, yarns, and fanciful tales—but still enthralled by addressing a magical kingdom of demons, spirits, dwarves, giants, nymphs, and various other spirits in nature that the unconscious never tires of producing.

The core consciousness that was besotted with the present now collected memories too, and cultivated linguistic and musical expression regarding them in an expanding memory storage.¹¹ Given these new sources of orientation, passive conscious experiencing was thus shifting toward becoming active, to allow the planning of future amorous adventures, as well as hunting or bellicose journeys. This was the basis for a new life economy: the advent of culture.

In the context of this planning and reckoning, it became possible for objectivizing object-consciousness and measuring and calculating rationality to emerge for the first time—from one's rationalization of how life is conducted to the articulation of mathematics as the basis for a generally valid knowledge. At the same time, there was also the shadow of a negative (schizoid) rationality that is inclined to make itself absolute by excluding disparate levels of reality.¹²

In addition, there are areas of super-conscious disposition. These include a super-conscious Encompassing, namely the immanenz-related mind

IL: Open Court Publishing Company 1957, pp. 3-94, here p. 73.

⁹ Karl Jaspers, *Von der Wahrheit: Philosophische Logik, Erster Band*, München, DE: Piper & Co Verlag, 1947. [Henceforth cited as VW]

¹⁰ Karl Jaspers, "Über meine Philosophie," in *Rechenschaft und Ausblick*, München, DE: Piper Verlag 1951, pp. 333-65, here pp. 363-4.

¹¹ Nick Lane, *Life Ascending: The Ten Great Inventions of Evolution*, New York, NY: Norton & Co. 2009, pp. 288-90, 295. [Henceforth cited as LA]

¹² Albrecht Kiel, *Die Sprachphilosophie von Karl Jaspers: Anthropologische Dimensionen der Kommunikation*, Darmstadt, DE: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft 2008, pp. 202-10. [Henceforth cited as ADK]

(*Geist*), as well as *Existenz* being objectively related to the Encompassing of transcendence, both areas comprise the following complex basic functions:

- * identity, whose frame of reference includes family and, beyond that, kin, nation, religion, and culture;
- * creativity, in inventive outputs that require more than just the intelligence of the intellect (*Verstand*);
- * judgment, as the ability to recognize what is relevant in any given case;
- * an enthusiastic, tragic, or humorous attitude to particular themes in life.

By highlighting all of the above as a special group of psychic functions, Jaspers ensured that the human spirit was liberated of all its magical bonds with the breath of life, with death and nature spirits—and with the divine spirit. In this logic, these so-called spirits are banished and assigned to the realm of the preconscious or, as the case may be, to metaphysics.

It is in the nature of consciousness and spirit that they will always run up against boundaries: from what is unknown and incomprehensible to, and at the limits of, human knowledge, action, and planning. Jaspers started by adopting G. F. W. Hegel's concept of absolute consciousness, which strives to cross these boundaries. The existential themes and connections make concrete and evident what was addressed in Hegel's *Enzyklopädie* of 1830,¹³ as reality and deed of the absolute spirit. In contrast to Hegel, Jaspers treats absolute consciousness only as a medium for the relationship of existence to transcendence, as a medium for all the fissures that allow for the experience of unity, as "the background that bears our consciousness" (VW 110, 697).

As soon as humans recognized their mortality, absolute consciousness was concerned with life or death, the ideal way of dying, the wish for eternal youth and immortality. It was, with respect to this central group of themes, relatively late in the history of philosophy that existential decisions in boundary situations (dying, suffering, guilt, battle, and sacrifice) were thematized as influencing factors that shape one's self or, as the case may be, the existence of humans. The concepts "self" and "existence" (seen here as philosophical abstractions) for Jaspers denote one

and the same. We are faced with decisions between alternatives that determine the direction to be taken by life's journey: readiness to help as an expression of solidarity and responsibility, or exploitative egoism and indifference; autonomy and resistance as an expression of the will to freedom, or resigned conformance to the heteronomy at any given time; the will to communicate, or battle; the will to truth or to deception; love or hate; loyalty or betrayal; fanatical-dogmatic faith or tolerant faith (MJJ 149ff). The core personality—positive or dark—that takes shape as a result of the direction set by these decisions can be addressed appropriately only with special categories. Jaspers called them "signa" of existence.

A New All-Embracing Concept of Reason as Emerged Through Evolution

Reason connects all these levels of psychic reality in the manner of a nerve centre. With this central function, it is the most important human psychic asset—even more so than the intellect correlated with rational consciousness. For this reason, Jaspers always distinguishes between action based on intellect (*Verstand*) and action that is guided by reason (*Vernunft*).¹⁴ It is the task of reason to ensure that the preconscious, consciousness, spirit, and existence are not postulated as absolutes, and that all four levels of action are given "due consideration." Reason is generally that which connects—all that which seeks to overcome the processes of fission associated with the aforementioned seven concepts (VW 113ff).

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For Jaspers, reason as a consummation of truth is one of the highest levels of truth, and it is closely associated with existence. Without the higher psychic

¹³ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse*, Heidelberg, DE: Oswald Verlag 1830, §553ff, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.hwwv1x;view=1up;seq=629>, accessed 28 May 2019.

¹⁴ A detailed discussion on these types of action, with numerous practical examples, is in Albrecht Kiel, *Von der Geschichte der Logik und der Logik der Geschichte – Historische, soziale und philosophische Logik*, Würzburg, DE: Ergon-Verlag 1998, pp. 315ff. [Henceforth cited as *GL*]

functions of consciousness and spirit, the existential links to transcendence are lost, and with the loss of them reason is lost as well.

Thereby on the basis of what was known in the twentieth century, this philosophical logic encompasses anthropology with the aid of which all the psychic functions were brought together. Humans are, as natural beings, not just particularly well-constituted animals. They are not just an *animal rationale* but at the same time, as social beings, they are also complex spiritual beings. They are additionally compelled to face existential challenges in the realms of ethics and religion.

Reason also encompasses the polarity of the psychic forces of *anima* and *animus*. *Anima* strives to combine and (erotically) unite. These days Jaspers gets most attention on grounds of the sentiment, "reason is, that which connects" and also on grounds of his world philosophy project.

Reason does not, however, stand only for the connecting function of the *anima* but also for the assertive function of the *animus*—for separation and self-assertion. Reason does, unlike the intellect, demand that one has to keep on trying to talk with religious fighters, but it also demands to set limits to them. This is why reason connects only that which can be connected, that which proves to be connectable. Exclusively with its help one can handle aggression appropriately and counterbalance individual and collective strengths and weaknesses in resisting.

Reason is not exempt from having to live in the tension of the evolutionary antinomy between egoism and altruism, between heterotrophy and symbiotic sexuality. Life on this planet began when aggressive bacteria in search of nutrients managed to gain violent entry into the interior of other bacteria. It is part of the miracle of life that metabolic interdependencies between the predators arose in the process: as a result of horizontal genetic transfer there emerged, in a fateful encounter, the eukaryotic cells that have been branching out in an inexhaustible array of forms since two billion years (LA 110, 112, 116, 133, 141).

Reason also encompasses all further psychic polarities; it is passive and active, concrete and abstract, extroverted and introverted.

Rationalization, framed by reason as *Wissenschaft*, also disenchant the world. Judgment rejects what is not relevant, and identity excludes what is alien to its nature or opposed to it in hostility. Creativity can also mean inventive destruction. Existential decisions can be

unconditional and lead to battle. For Jaspers, reason is a broad, and by no means harmonious, field of study.

The Modes of the Encompassing

Jaspers calls these seven logical levels (the world, transcendence, preconscious *Dasein*, consciousness as such, *Geist*, *Existenz*, and reason) "modes of the encompassing" (VW 48). After discussing the concepts "existence" and "chiffres of transcendence," Jaspers develops in the section "The Philosophical Basic Operation" a third foundational category: "The question is: what is being [*Sein*]?—The question for this question is: how can I and how ought I have to think of being? Subsequently Jaspers shows that being cannot be shown as an object, and he adds:

Everything that becomes objective for me is in each case bound together in a relative wholeness of our world, in which we live...It envelops us, so to speak, in a *horizon* of our knowledge. Every horizon encloses us; it denies us a further outlook...the horizon, so to speak, accompanies us. [VW 37]

By way of adducing object and horizon, this thought process already reveals the dichotomy between objectivizing and rational consciousness, and the spirit that reflects human and cultural horizons.

For conscious experience, there are the many horizons of the story of one's own life, always remembered only in fragments, and the path taken by the destiny of the family, kin, the nation, and the cultural or religious community. Out of these part-truths, personal and collective identities are formed in very different ways.

For the objectivizing object consciousness, there is the macro-physical (spatial and temporal) event horizon of our cosmos; and there is the micro-physical horizon of the subatomic level—the origins of matter-energy that grow more and more mysterious, down to the level of strings and quantum foam. From this materiality, human consciousness forms its objects, with which it rationally calculates and operates.

As spiritual beings, humans live within the countless horizons of religious truths and social ideas, whereby social evolution, with its metamorphoses and its collective and cultural creations, has never ceased to produce, question, and ultimately destroy.

The horizon of existentially conscious human beings is determined by the multiplicity of their decisions—those that are actually put into practice,

those that are not carried out, and those that are rejected. And all this takes place in view of the worlds mysterious origin (the matrix) to which so many names have been given: the divine, the gods, the one God, being, life, matter-energy or in the words of Meister Eckhart: *Wirklichkeit*. It is all that has an effect (*wirkt*).

Jaspers then arrives at the definition of the Encompassing in two stages:

For each time the possibility presents itself of stepping further beyond the attained appearance of being into being. The definite, the cognized being is always encompassed by a further one... This being, which is neither an (always restricting) object nor a whole shaped within an (always delimited) horizon, we call the *Encompassing*.

Therefore, the Encompassing is that which solely announces itself – in what is present in objects and looms on the horizons... It actualizes only indirectly... Within each horizon, we positively grasp the things... that through it become transparent by means of the Encompassing. [VW 38]

Through this synopsis of object world, personal horizon, and ever further horizons, the immanence of our world becomes transparent in view of the transcendence that encompasses all horizons.

Transcendence stands in opposition to the world that is accessible to humans, to the cosmological event horizon. That is its monistic metaphysical aspect as the totality of all foundations of, or backgrounds to our superficial reality. This reality is, in the here and now, accessible only in one tiny part. It is surrounded not only by all possibilities for the future but also by the whole multitude of past evolutionary and historical events, which we can reconstruct only in part, in the form of some basic features: What is past is that which will never pass away.

From the perspective of the philosophy of existence, the consideration of transcendence (Heidegger calls it "remembrance" or "devotion" or "more thoughtful thought") ought to be thematized as an essential structural element of human personality traits: it gives us critical self-consciousness, the awareness that we did not produce ourselves but were created, and that we are nonetheless free to set goals to ourselves (*PH1* 196, *PH2* 4, 65).

Since there are highly personal experiences involved in these matters, this also means that one has to relinquish any kind of objective metaphysics. What cannot be objectivized, insofar as the existential themes

are concerned, they can be expressed in the crucial sentences, "Existence is only for existence," and, "the metaphysical relevance of an interpretation is there only for existence."¹⁵

For Jaspers, the Encompassing is a diversifying thought that releases one from any particular form of being (*Seiendes*) and forces one to turn back from any solidifying thought. He sees it as a thought "that overturns itself" (VW 40) and at the same time seems to be unrealizable. There is, he argues, always the danger that the Encompassing would be thought of objectively; in reality, it is for him merely a "dawning of a consciousness of being that defies comparison with all definite knowledge" (VW 41). He also calls this self-consciousness the basic mood, basic attitude, or basic state of the philosophizing human. He sees it not as a new method but as a tool or a path. He is adamant that it does not lead to a blueprint for being conceived as an ontology or system; instead, he believes that this basic thought creates for us the free space in which philosophical logic can develop.

The modes of the Encompassing became Jaspers' principal sphere of life and work. Together, they represent an anthropology that developed organically. With it, he wanted to liberate himself, as a systematist, from Nietzsche's arbitrary shifts in perspective on reality.

Given that the history of ideas thrives on labels, this philosophical anthropology could be characterized as an original and functionally nuanced anthropology (that is to date hardly being discussed). It can be compared to a prism that displays the possibilities for human action on four levels of reality: the vital, conscious, mental, and existential ones. The degree of precision with which the prism is cut, therefore, determines with how much nuance – or, as the case may be, with how much diffusion – the human lifeworld is being perceived. Related to it are a correspondingly nuanced theory of communication with various levels of communication, and also a coding theory that is able to distinguish between images, signs, symbols, and signs of existence.

¹⁵ Gerhard Knauss, "Anfang und Ende des Denkens von Karl Jaspers: Biographisches und Gedankliches," in *Karl Jaspers: Geschichtliche Wirklichkeit mit Blick auf die Grundfragen der Menschheit/Karl Jaspers: Historic Actuality in View of Fundamental Problems of Mankind*, eds. Andreas Cesana and Gregory J. Walters, Würzburg, DE: Verlag Königshausen & Neumann 2008, pp. 21-9.

**Second Sphere of Life and Work:
Philosophical Logic, Theory of Methods,
Theory of Categories, Theory of *Wissenschaft***

In his Introduction to *Von der Wahrheit*, Jaspers announced three further volumes. A theory of methods (in the service of certainty) was intended to describe the operations with which particular insights are reached including the boundary of every certainty thus determined. The theory of categories (in the service of clarity), intended to raise awareness of the fact that all knowledge is being determined by categories. The theory of science (*Wissenschaftslehre*) was to be concerned with the objects and systematic forms of *Wissenschaft*, and also with its sense, the cosmos of its unity, as well as its divisions by subject matter; it would stand "in the service of the inner overview of the law of possible knowledge" (VW 27).

Jaspers describes the close relationship between all these parts of philosophical logic. They were his second most important sphere of life and work. The parts can be traversed in a circle between the outermost horizons and origins illuminated through them, by way of recognition of the methodologically possible movements and the forms of knowledge in the categories, to the multifaceted cultural memory of what is known.

Or, in other words: starting from the encompassing pre-logical, we take paths of knowing (methodology), in perceptible meanings of objectivity and what becomes clear in concreteness (theory of categories), through systematic forms [*Gestalten*] of truth (theory of *Wissenschaft*), back to the origin (truth). [VW 27]

In this way, Jaspers sought to connect two spheres of life and work: a functionally nuanced philosophical anthropology and an innovative theory of methods, *Wissenschaft*, and categories—for him, all this together constitutes a philosophy of life with which it is possible to live.

Only some forty years later, in 1991, was the material intended for these three volumes published, collected from Jaspers' papers.¹⁶ It is in various stages of elaboration, but it can certainly be used in practice nonetheless. Every scholar in the natural sciences and humanities, every philosopher, physician, or lawyer

actually practices, more or less consciously, in the ambit of these two spheres that have been addressed here.

Methodological Monism and Specific Methods

Choosing a method means in the original Greek meaning of *methodos*, setting off upward a particular road, following a marked path. The Greek poet Hesiod already wrote about the steep and narrow road that leads to virtue and the broad one that leads to vice. And Heraclitus of Ephesus cautioned that we should never forget where a path is leading.

With regard to questions about method in the field of economics and politics, as well as in the *Wissenschaften* (collective term for academic fields in the pursuit of the sciences and knowledge) and philosophy, we are thus being confronted not only with a theoretical academic issue but also, and always, with questions that are of immediate practical relevance—in fact, even, with entire ideologies. Dialectical materialism is one example. After all, it identified a method stemming from philosophy and the humanities—the dialectical method—as the real pathway to truth for the *Wissenschaften*. This, however, caused quite considerable consternation among natural scientists. Even biologists and evolutionary scholars found themselves compelled to use dialectical triads in the forewords to their publications.

To begin with, there are four pairs of contrasting methods:

- * individual parts of a larger context are examined analytically, and conversely, individual parts are joined together synthetically into a larger whole;
- * the inductive method works proceeding from the part to the whole and, conversely, the deductive one from the whole to its parts;
- * the method of the natural sciences, which aims to explain, is hardly suited to the interpretation, for example, of literary texts or complex symbols, for example, and it is therefore complemented in the humanities (cultural sciences) by the (hermeneutic) method of understanding;
- * states of affairs are characterized descriptively with precision descriptively, before norms are sought out prescriptively that can be applied to those states of affairs in future.

The polar oppositions in these four pairs of methods suffice to show that all insight in the *Wissenschaften* can but be specific (*partikular*). This is due to the fact that it has favored one of these perspectives. At best, we

¹⁶ Karl Jaspers, *Nachlass zur Philosophischen Logik*, eds. Hans Saner and Marc Hänggi, München, DE: R. Piper & Co. KG, 1991. [Henceforth cited as *NPL*]

can succeed intuitively in combining several of these perspectives—but hardly so when following all paths at once.

Methodological monism that concentrates on a specific method appears to be more adequate in the natural sciences than in the humanities. Here, ingenious combinations—a multiplicity of methods tailored to each particular case—are more likely required in order to find the right road to Rome, or rather a road leading away from the Rome of hegemonic received opinion.

It is above all the natural scientists who, in their search for generally valid knowledge, have to split reality up into subject (observer) and object (target of scrutiny). After having taken this step to insight, they must retreat into the third-person perspective, which means excluding everything subjective.

Special Methods in the Humanities and Natural Sciences

Ethnologists use a different methodology for research—namely, participatory observation. Additionally, there are also numerous other specialized methodological formats:

- * the axiomatic method proceeds from a principle that has already been proven;
- * the historical or genetic method aims to work backwards through causal connections and thereby relate situations in life (draw links between them), and not to singularize (isolate) or relativize (finding excuses for) them;
- * the genealogical method aims to take other realms of life into account, for example by deriving cultural phenomena from economic forces;
- * the sceptic method questions currently received opinions;
- * the scholastic method, conversely, proceeds on the basis that they are still valid;
- * the cathartic method aims to remove mental burdens through psychotherapy
- * and to the above ones can be added the numerous pedagogical methods and objectives.

Furthermore, there is a broad range of imaginative methods, the significance of which is often underestimated.

Albert Einstein, for instance, found out his two theories of relativity using methods that can be described as fictional and imaginative thought experiments. This represented a new genre of scientific creativity. The thought experiments unfolded in the

subjunctive: "What would it be like if one were to run along behind a ray of light? What if one were to ride on it?" Einstein traversed the cosmos using superfast trains or lifts, and in the process developed images that in his head coalesced into films.¹⁷

This is just one example of how the imaginative method is by no means confined to naïve stages of knowing such as magic or artistic imagination, but it has also proven to be capable of revolutionizing the backgrounds to our worldview.

The imaginative method also includes thinking in images and schemata that make a knowledge system apparent and that aim to achieve a condensed overview. Examples of this are the evolutionary trees of life in the works of Charles Darwin and Ernst Haeckel. The diagram connects text and image.

For Kant, the schema represents an architectonic of concepts, yet it is only a technical, a mechanical way of proceeding. Picking up on this, Jaspers stresses that each of Kant's formal schemata merely refers to a multitude of ways of ordering the world, that each refers only to the regulative idea of a unity. Because of this, Jaspers explains that it must be supplemented with an emphatically heterogeneous schema of existential themes. This prompted him to refer to the signs of existence. With them, however, in his view, the possible existential courses of action can never be properly grasped; they can, at best, be illuminated.¹⁸

Universal Methods (Dialectics, Phenomenology, and Formal Logic)

The universal methods are characterized by the fact that they are of significance for the *Wissenschaften* and for philosophy alike.

In his theory of methodology, Jaspers characterizes phenomenology as an effort to make what one thinks available to oneself, as an attempt to allow the matter of inquiry itself to be present, to bring it closer to oneself by releasing it from empty opinions, to lay the matter bare and stay with it (affirmatively) and to immerse oneself into it. This, for him, spans from sensory intuition to the

¹⁷ Jürgen Neffe, *Einstein: Eine Biographie*, Reinbek bei Hamburg, DE: Rowohlt 2005, pp. 81, 144, 157, 164–7, 228, 235, 367.

¹⁸ Werner Stegmaier, "Schema," in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie, Volume 8, R-Sc*, eds. Joachim Ritter, Karlfried Gründer, and Gottfried Gabriel, Basel, CH: Schwabe Verlag 1992, pp. 1250, 1257.

completion of abstract thoughts, from real experience to flights of imagination. Its achievement, he suggests, lies in "bringing whatever can become objective as materially close as possible" (NPL 296).

In its contemporary form, however, Jaspers believed that all in all phenomenology required the transcendental method. For Jaspers, phenomenology is concerned above all with perceptions and all that goes with them, with what Hegel understood as "becoming present," as being no more than a stage of every conception of truth. In contrast to contemporary phenomenology's lack of philosophical substance, Hegel's phenomenology was, for Jaspers, an illumination of the possible objective manifestation of original existences in their manifestations, beliefs, and deeds—whereas contemporary phenomenology turned merely to consciousness (NPL 364).

The method of dialectics is of special significance in making it possible to follow the dynamics of psychic processes. Only a small proportion of the dialectical triads in Hegel's philosophy relates to the history of ideas (for example, dogmatism, skepticism, dialectic) or to categorical logic (for example, thesis, antithesis, synthesis; or, immediacy, mediation, and renewed immediacy). Most of them relate to philosophical anthropology (for example, unconscious, conscious, self-conscious; or, sensibility, intellect, and reason).

Jaspers introduced further dialectical triads (thesis, antithesis, and synthesis) in his anthropology: three kinds of consciousness, three kinds of knowledge, and three effects of the absolute, transcendently oriented consciousness on human behavior. He further distinguished between three languages of transcendence (the immediate one channeled by the experience of mystic union, vision, and revelation; the mythologization, canonization, and dogmatization of these experiences in religious communities; and finally the metaphysician's philosophical reflection on these records of the history of religion as chiffres of transcendence).

Further triads can be added as well: there are three kinds of judgment (theoretical-reflective, practical-determining, and aesthetic), as well as three guiding structural concepts in anthropology (memory, orientation, and control). The method of dialectic is, on grounds of the numerous triads on and between the four psychic levels (preconscious, consciousness, spirit, and existence) indispensable for an integrated philosophical anthropology.

It is crucial for Jaspers that dialectics is employed

not as a universal and abstract method but as a "concretely illuminating dialectic" that must always connect with particular methods in the *Wissenschaften* and in philosophy, if it is to lead to tangible insights. This concerns not only therapeutic person-specific anthropology but also collective historical dialectics.

An ideological thesis with its (revolutionary) action has always led to an antithesis with a (conservative) reaction. Various reactions have proven to be possible in social history: first of all, we can mention complete breaks with it such as confessional war or the civil war of class struggle. Alternatively, a synthesis, or integration, would be sought, as it is done in the national churches. The foundation of the Anglican Church by Queen Elizabeth I was the foundation for internal peace and the rise of England. Something similar holds true for the Prussian united church, which resulted from a synthesis of Calvinist and Lutheran views. Likewise, Bismarck's social state can be regarded as a successful synthesis (in the sense of a diversified government) of nobility, bourgeoisie, and workers (ADK 123, 126).

Philosophical Methods

It was above all in his relationship to Nietzsche that Jaspers arrived at a specific method of philosophical hermeneutics characterized by:

- * critical distinction and existential appropriation (he called it *Anverwandlung*).¹⁹
- * Indirect communication is ambiguous and it is expressed, for example, through irony, but it also manifests itself in forms of behavior that is exemplary or serves as a model. It keeps spaces open for the others, in which they can respond if and how they choose, it encourages independent contemplation.
- * Self-reflective reductionism explains complex states of affairs by means of simple layers of reality, yet it is aware of the problems relating to the fact that this cannot lead to the whole truth.
- * Meditation, too, is a purely philosophical method. It aims, through pure introspection and the suppression of all external sensory stimuli, to attain a new degree of attentiveness and a new way of viewing other living things. This is meant to make it easier to control inner states and emotions.

A deficient anthropology is the only possible outcome if monolithic methods, such as the dialectical

¹⁹ Karl Jaspers, *Die Geistige Situation der Zeit*, Berlin, DE: deGruyter 1931, p. 151; see also VW 25.

or the linguistic-analytic, are made absolute and proclaimed as the "royal road to truth." The realities of psychic behavior, regarding which proceeding logically in terms of *Wissenschaft* is but one part can be grasped adequately solely through many methods, namely such ones that are appropriate to the given topic. Consistent with Jaspers' methodological inquiry, it is reasonable to assume that achieving a conscious plurality of methods is a philosophical duty.

Specific and Universal *Wissenschaften*

In any theory of *Wissenschaft*, a distinction must be drawn between the natural sciences that are concerned with individual phenomena and are thus specific and the humanities and social sciences that are investigating universal concerns.

The universal *Wissenschaften* include formal or mathematical logic and psychology, as well as anthropology, sociology, and the humanities and social sciences. For Jaspers, the universal *Wissenschaften* are always already on the road to philosophy; they are a philosophy that has not yet become conscious of itself. They thus stand between science and philosophy (Carl Gustav Jung emphasized that psychology is characterized by a necessary penchant to philosophy, similar to a river that seeks the sea). Jaspers believed that only through the specific *Wissenschaften* can the essence be grasped of genuine *Wissenschaftlichkeit* (NPL 376ff).

With this, he continued Wilhelm Dilthey's incomplete project of developing a systematic understanding of the humanities. Dilthey had already recognized that there cannot be a clear-cut division between the humanities and the natural sciences that produce precise results, but only the above-mentioned transitional zone between distanced and participatory observation, when cultural phenomena are to be evaluated or texts and works of art are to be understood interpretively. The direct experience of such phenomena—how they appear to us and what sense they seem to have—is also an inseparable part of understanding.

Above all, a theory of *Wissenschaft* must examine the interplay of the natural sciences and the humanities in the boundary areas where they adjoin each other. In addition, the responsibilities of philosophy that extend beyond science must be defined—offering the orienting knowledge of a social philosophy and philosophy of history—and thereby differentiating among

the suprarational, the mental (*geistigen*) functions, illuminating the signs of existence, and asking what form a contemporary metaphysics should take.

Specific, Universal, and Encompassing Categories

Finally, general orienting knowledge requires a theory of categories aimed at achieving a philosophical basic language in order to avoid ambiguities in philosophical argumentation and discussion. The relationship between language and thought is at stake here, as are the various categories of the mental functions, for example the categories of rationality, those of the spiritual functions, and those of the existential consciousness of freedom.

Despite the fact that Jaspers worked out these basic mental functions in his philosophical logic, he segments the theory of categories in a new way. He begins by distinguishing between the origins of the categories: the universal categories of the object, the specific categories of reality, and the signs and figures of freedom.

In a second step, these three groups are divided themselves in terms of universal and specific categories (in relation to the theory of *Wissenschaft*), as well as in terms of encompassing categories that relate to his philosophical logic. This is not meant to be knowledge of the various levels of reality of the "modes of the encompassing," instead it aims to contribute to their illumination. The illuminating movement toward cognition of the Encompassing opens the paths to being (*Sein*). "The theory of categories, by contrast, gives definite answers to the question of being. It indicates the very conditions within which it must always stand" (NPL 32).

Of general interest beyond the specialist field of philosophy is only that theory of categories that is capable of capturing the fundamental preferences—or indeed limitations—of a language. It is precisely due to languages that an anthropology that is nuanced to a greater or lesser degree can be contained.

The philosophical achievements of the German language include, for example, the ability to distinguish between *Verstand* and *Vernunft*, *Realität* and *Wirklichkeit*, *Gefühl* and *Empfindung*. This began with the German writings of Meister Eckhart all along to Leibniz's philosophy of language; later on in the nineteenth century, after Kant, it branched off not only into idealism and positivism but it also attained a scope of complexity that encompassed this division with the

help of the even more distant poles that are addressed in the philosophy of life (Schopenhauer and Nietzsche) and the philosophy of existence (Kierkegaard, Jaspers, and Heidegger). Consequently, the breadth of horizon thus reached should not be narrowed again in the field of anthropology that aims to do justice to the study of humans.

Intercultural Philosophy

Hannah Arendt was the most important intellectual point of call for Jaspers after Max Weber and the Indologist Heinrich Zimmer. After receiving Jaspers' *Logic*, she shied away from reading the book for two years for she was "overwhelmed by a fear" that she would be gobbled up by philosophy "for months on end." Jaspers responded ironically that he would understand if she were never to read it. For him too, he said,

tedious professorial rambling in overly fat books is at best a dubious enterprise...even though we invest so much work in them and live in the unshakable faith that at some time they just could be important for someone. And in the course of time – who knows? – you may find one chapter or another useful to you.²⁰

Arendt apologized: "Wherever I opened the book I was so caught up by it that I wasn't able to go back to my own very concrete material with any concentration

²⁰ Karl Jaspers letter to Hannah Arendt, 3 February 1949, in *Hannah Arendt Karl Jaspers Correspondence 1926–1969*, transl. Robert and Rita Kimber, eds. Lotte Kohler and Hans Saner, San Diego, New York, London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich 1992, p. 131. [Henceforth cited as C]

again."²¹ Eight months later, as if in an outpouring she did find words for this work:

this is the greatest of your books and a very, very great book indeed. These movements of thought (and the whole thing is really written in the style of an andante) open up and make present and pace off the space and the whole multidimensionality in which "perception in concern," actually responsive perception, has established itself as reason. That is neither eclecticism nor a synthesis of opposites but, rather, a kind of synthesis and reconciliation of things at the greatest possible remove from each other. With the construction of this space – which can be opened only by the movements of thought or of an indefatigably thinking, omnipresent movement – each individual thought loses, as it were, its tie to a certain place and so its pedantry. It becomes free to be near what is most remote. Politically speaking, this is the de-provincializing of Western philosophy.²²

In this letter, Arendt added the speculation "as to whether this isn't perhaps the last book of Western philosophy, its last word, so to speak, and at the same time the first book of a world philosophy, its first word, so to speak" (C 157). With this conjecture, she intuitively captured the intercultural approach of Jaspers' new way of linking logic and philosophical anthropology.

²¹ Hannah Arendt letter to Karl Jaspers, 15 February 1949, in C, p. 132.

²² Hannah Arendt letter to Gertrud and Karl Jaspers, 4 October 1950, in C, pp. 156f.