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On Cheerfulness and Seriousness in Nietzsche and Jaspers

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Abstract: Cheerfulness and seriousness are an integral part of philosophizing in Friedrich Nietzsche and Karl Jaspers. The main reason for this lies in the fact that both regard philosophers as being inseparable from their respective philosophies. Yet also the fact that their respective philosophies have multiple meanings shifts the focus away from truth toward style and rhetoric, that is, from the true and false to mood and laughter as well as to passionate interpretation and playful conversation.

Keywords: Nietzsche, Friedrich; Jaspers, Karl; philosopher; polemic; honesty; cheerfulness; seriousness; mood; laughter; play.

The aim of this essay is to elaborate, to discuss, and evaluate the communalities and differences in Friedrich Nietzsche and Karl Jaspers with regard to their comprehension of cheerfulness and joy on the one hand and of seriousness and sadness on the other hand.¹ I advance the thesis that in the writings of Nietzsche and Jaspers mood is fundamental in philosophy (while philosophizing as well as for their respective philosophies) as, for them, philosophy is intrinsically tied to the philosopher as a person. Jaspers insists on the "indissoluble unity of his [Nietzsche's] life and thought."² Jaspers' assistant Hans Saner confirms that Jaspers regarded philosophy as being "life and thought united" (*Leben*

und Denken ineins).³ In the "Translators' Note" of Jaspers' Nietzsche monograph, Charles Wallraff and Frederick Schmitz comment on the transformative power of philosophy:

A man's philosophy, so to speak, is constitutive as well as regulative: it determines the nature of his experienced world and, in doing so, determines his nature as well as his reaction patterns. Thus for both Nietzsche and Jaspers, philosophical thinking supplies the ground of our being – that out of which we live. [KJN vii]

Developing the right attitude and mood for dealing with "greatness and world-historical tasks" is of central relevance to both Nietzsche and Jaspers.⁴ In the

¹ A version of this essay was presented at the Eighth International Jaspers Conference, Beijing, August 2018.

² Karl Jaspers, *Nietzsche: An Introduction to the Understanding of his Philosophical Activity*, transl. Charles F. Wallraff and Frederick J. Schmitz, Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press 1965, p. 13. [Henceforth cited as KJN]

³ Hans Saner, *Karl Jaspers: In Selbstzeugnissen und Bilddokumenten*, Reinbek bei Hamburg, DE: Rowohlt 1970, p. 151. [My translation, henceforth cited as JSB]

⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo: How One Becomes What One Is*, transl. Walter Kaufmann, New York, NY: Vintage Books 1967, pp. 199-335, here p. 280. [Henceforth cited as EHK]

Introduction to *The Great Philosophers* Jaspers writes, the great philosopher has a normative streak. Whether he intends it or not (invariably the latter), he becomes in some sense a role model.⁵

Jaspers who lived from 1883 to 1969 spent his childhood during Nietzsche's lifetime that lasted from 1844 to 1900. Jaspers typified Nietzsche as being an "unsettler" and he assigns to Nietzsche together with Pascal, Lessing, and Kierkegaard the epithet "radical awakener" (*IGP* 23). Jaspers writes that Kierkegaard and Nietzsche provide "the most effective orientation for modern man" in relation to the crisis that began in mid-nineteenth century.⁶ The crisis refers to nihilism that Jaspers regards as the normal societal state. Jaspers emphasizes that "for a human being who philosophizes today it is indispensable to come to terms with Nietzsche" (*AP* 401). Besides making many explicit references to Nietzsche, he also wrote two monographs on him. In *Nietzsche and Christianity* (1938) Jaspers describes Nietzsche as the intellectual pathfinder (precursor) for the oncoming occurrences and events (the as yet to come).⁷ Indeed, Jaspers suggests that Nietzsche himself is an event (*Ereignis*) (*KJN* 218, *AP* 393). Jaspers words his main merit as follows: "He opens a vast expanse of possibilities" (*NC* 86-7). He argues that it is a thinking that does not draw conclusions but rather creates an opening. He explains it thus:

Although the thinking of Nietzsche constitutes the most incisive philosophical event since the end of German idealism, the essence of this event obviously is not substantial; it is not enduring; it is not a truth which one's mind may enclose and possess. It can only be motion itself – that is to say, a thinking which never closes but widens the space, which prepares no ground but creates possibilities for an unknown future. [*NC* 96-7]

⁵ Karl Jaspers, "Introduction to *The Great Philosophers*," transl. Ruth Burch, Florian Hild, and Helmut Wautischer, *Existenz* 12/1 (Spring 2017), 13-49, here p. 20. [Henceforth cited as *IGP*]

⁶ Karl Jaspers, *Aneignung und Polemik: Gesammelte Reden und Aufsätze zur Geschichte der Philosophie*, ed. Hans Saner. München, DE: Piper 1968, p. 398. [My translation, henceforth cited as *AP*]

⁷ Karl Jaspers, *Nietzsche and Christianity*, transl. E. B. Ashton, Washington, DC: Henry Regnery Company, 1961. [Henceforth cited as *NC*]

In my view, Nietzsche deems nihilism to be an unavoidable transitional phase on the way towards a novel affirmation of life. "Nietzsche's philosophical lawgiver" (*IGP* 17) lives his philosophy by way of undertaking experiments (*Versuche*) with the aim of putting his thoughts to the test. He declares in a note entitled "My new path to a 'Yes!':

Such an experimental philosophy as I live anticipates experimentally even the possibilities of the most fundamental nihilism.⁸

The objective of it is to have a Dionysian relationship to existence in the sense of *amor fati*, that is, "affirmation of the world as it is, without subtraction, exception, or selection" (*WP* 536, #1041).

Like Nietzsche, Jaspers discredits static systems of philosophy and, instead, fosters philosophy as an ongoing practice. In *Way to Wisdom* Jaspers defines that

the essence of philosophy is not the possession of truth but the search for truth, regardless of how many philosophers may belie it with their dogmatism, that is, with a body of didactic principles purporting to be definitive and complete. Philosophy means to be on the way.⁹

Jaspers constructs and reconstructs his own philosophy to a great extent out of Nietzsche's "heap of ruins" (*KJN* 3), that is, out of his fragmented texts. This required an investigation of the "systematic interrelations" in Nietzsche's thought (*KJN* 13).

Next, I explore what is linking and separating Jaspers and Nietzsche. Their respective philosophies are multilayered and have a large scope; both Jaspers and Nietzsche are arguably "philosophers of the future."¹⁰ This means that Nietzsche and Jaspers are cultural philosophers whose objective is to improve the world: Nietzsche is interested in the active shaping of the destiny of humanity at large by aiming at a "revaluation of all values" (*EHK* 326); Jaspers envisions to create a communicative world

⁸ Friedrich Nietzsche, "Note 1041 (1888)", in *The Will to Power*, transl. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale, New York, NY: Vintage, 1968, p. 536. [Henceforth cited as *WP* with Note #]

⁹ Karl Jaspers, *Way to Wisdom: An Introduction to Philosophy*, transl. Ralph Manheim, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press 1960, p. 12. [Henceforth cited as *WW*]

¹⁰ Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, transl. Walter Kaufmann, New York, NY: Vintage 1966, p. 53.

philosophy and he predicts that humans are

on the road from the evening-glow of European philosophy to the dawn of world philosophy.¹¹

In the Preface to his book on Nietzsche, Jaspers states how Nietzsche studies ought to proceed, namely by carrying out

a study that amounts to an appropriation achieved by occupying ourselves with the totality of the intellectual experiences which make him so representative of our age. He then becomes symbolic of the destiny of humanity itself as it presses onwards toward its limits and its sources (*KJN* xii).

It is Jaspers' professed intention to unearth the "prophetic earnestness" (*KJN* xiii) of Nietzsche, to whom he refers in his wording as the "perhaps the last of the great philosophers of the past" (*KJN* xiii). Jaspers draws attention to the fact that, as he puts it,

Nietzsche's passionate desire to communicate did not prevent his loneliness from increasing throughout his life. [*KJN* 58]

Yet, Jaspers too regards solitude as a necessary component of an authentic existence as the inner transcendence has to be individually performed. He even tentatively poses the question:

Is my communicative philosophizing not in fact the loneliest of modern endeavors?¹²

Existential communication amongst fellow human beings is the most fundamental concept in Jaspers that he closely connects with selfhood, truth, and reason. For Jaspers, philosophers

philosophize in communication, not in isolation. Our point of departure is man's relation to man. [*P* 2]

Kurt Salamun amongst others regards Jaspers' philosophy as being a "philosophy of communication."¹³ In fact, Jaspers links communication with his conception of originality;

he explains:

Like any human, each genuine thinker is original when he is truthful and authentic. However, each great thinker's originality is novel. That is to say, he brings a way of communication into the world that did not previously exist. The originality is in the work itself and in the creative act, which cannot be repeated in an identical manner but can guide those who come later toward their own originality. [*IGP* 19]

Communicability is Jaspers' truth criterion; his third lecture in *Vernunft und Existenz* is entitled "Truth as Communicability."¹⁴ Nietzsche too wants to find, as he expresses it, a "first language for a new series of experiences" (*EHK* 261). In an unpublished note he elaborates on this topic by stating that the philosopher's very first feat is

to have to *make up*, to *create*, to posit concepts and then to convince himself and others of these concepts.¹⁵

Jaspers points out that

it is not Nietzsche's insight into the limits of science, but rather his account of truth as illusoriness and the suicidal annulment of all truth (as it were) within a constantly recurring circle of ever-changing aspects that lead him to a skeptical questioning of reason in general. [*KJN* 211]

For both Nietzsche and Jaspers, rhetoric becomes ever more important in their philosophies in which the unattainability or inexistence of truth is being conceded and reason is interrogated or doubted. They undertake appealing linguistic seduction moves in order to counteract the loss of certainty and unambiguousness.

While for Nietzsche gaining knowledge is mainly successfully achieved through the individual in isolation from others, for Jaspers, illumination of existence (*Existenzerhellung*) occurs, when speaking with others. In Jaspers' view, not only philosophers but everyone all over the world ought to desire discussion and to actively seek it in order to avoid the eruption of

¹¹ Karl Jaspers, "Philosophical Autobiography", in *The Philosophy of Karl Jaspers*, ed. Paul Arthur Schilpp, New York, NY: Tudor Publishing Company 1957, pp. 3-94, here pp. 83-4. [Henceforth cited as *JPA*]

¹² Karl Jaspers, *Philosophy, Volume 1*, transl. E. B. Ashton, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press 1969, p. 24. [Henceforth cited as *P*]

¹³ Kurt Salamun, *Karl Jaspers*, München, DE: C. H. Beck 1985, p. 72. [Henceforth cited as *KJS*]

¹⁴ Karl Jaspers, *Reason and Existenz: Five Lectures*, transl. William Earle, New York, NY: Noonday Press 1955, pp. 77-106. [Henceforth cited as *RE*]

¹⁵ Friedrich Nietzsche, "Nachgelassene Fragmente: Frühling 1885 34[195]," in *Friedrich Nietzsche: Sämtliche Werke, Kritische Studienausgabe, Vol. 11*, eds. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari, Berlin, DE: de Gruyter 1988, p. 486-7. [My translation]

violence. Yet communication that is open and creative needs to allow for dissension. Jaspers uses in this context the concept of "loving struggle" (*liebender Kampf*):

The process of manifestation in communication is a unique struggle, combative and loving at once...The love in this communication is not blind love regardless of its object. It is the fighting, clear-sighted love of possible Existenz tackling another possible Existenz, questioning it, challenging it, making things hard for it.¹⁶

Similarly, Nietzsche is a passionate and innovative lover of knowledge who regards the seeking for knowledge in gaiety as the sense in life. Comparable to Jaspers, Nietzsche too upholds *amor agonis*, the linking of love with dispute and contention. Dissimilar to Nietzsche, Jaspers is a thinker of transcendence, yet emphasis of immanence and dialogic communication is at the core of his thought nevertheless. For instance, in a letter from 3 April 1953, Jaspers writes to Heidegger:

We will reach the seriousness of what is still to be touched upon in thinking only by way of what is entirely concrete, present, and palpable in our existence with others.¹⁷

For Nietzsche and Jaspers, opposites are not completely different. Jaspers believes in the antinomical structure (*antinomische Struktur*) of the world and of the human beings in it. For instance, for him, there is no truth without falsehood. This means that cheerfulness and earnestness are not entirely separable from each other either. Jaspers comments:

Drawing on Nietzsche's idea, it is a measure of greatness to the extent of which one can hold together contradictions within oneself. [*IGP* 42]

On 1 February 1883 Nietzsche writes to his friend Peter Gast (aka Heinrich Köselitz) that "there is nothing more serious and also nothing more serene" written by him than Zarathustra.¹⁸ Since Nietzsche identifies

himself strongly with the figure of Zarathustra, he adds that he himself wants

to become permanently this combination of seriousness and cheerfulness, that these moods become his "natural" colors." Yet it is not necessary that they mix with each other. [*L370*]

In a similar vein, Jaspers advocates daring to make the leap to have philosophical faith. His philosophical faith (*philosophischer Glaube*) has to do with a "life-affirming basic mood" (*KJS* 148) that results from having taken the existential decision to favor optimism over pessimism. Additionally, Jaspers describes having philosophical faith as "a venture of radical openness."¹⁹ He explains that

the ultimately desirable is the human being who loves in failure and who maintains an incomprehensible trust in the fundament of things.²⁰

For Jaspers, love is a phenomenon that is unfathomable and cannot be evidenced in the empirical reality. Love is about having faith or "trust in the origin of things" (*PD* 147), love is also the condition of possibility for truth and truthfulness and is being characterized in the life of each individual by its uniqueness (*Einmaligkeit*). In this context, Jaspers also points out that an I-Thou relationship, which he understands as a mutual, loving struggle, is only possible with another human being, but not with God as, according to him, the relationship with God in prayer or conscience can only ever be a cipher for transcendence (*PD* 147).

Comparable to for Nietzsche, also for Jaspers „all knowledge is interpretation" (*WW* 77). Jaspers argues, "genuine interpretation...does not claim to know with finality" (*KJN* 6). His ciphers of transcendence too are without exception not univocal but rather ambiguous (*vieldeutig*) in meaning.²¹ For a Nietzschean self, knowing means making an exegesis (*Auslegung*) or an interpretation rather than simply providing an explanation.²² This makes one think of Jaspers'

¹⁶ Karl Jaspers, *Philosophy, Volume 2*, transl. E. B. Ashton, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press 1970, pp. 59-60.

¹⁷ Karl Jaspers, "3 April 1953 letter to Martin Heidegger," in *The Heidegger-Jaspers Correspondence (1920-1963)*, eds. Walter Biemel and Hans Saner, transl. Gary E. Aylesworth, New York, NY: Humanity Books 2003, p. 201.

¹⁸ Friedrich Nietzsche, "1 February 1883 letter to Peter Gast," in *Friedrich Nietzsche: Sämtliche Briefe, Kritische Studienausgabe in 8 Bänden, Vol. 6*, eds. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari, Berlin, DE: de Gruyter 1975, p. 321 #370. [My translation, henceforth cited as *L370*]

¹⁹ Karl Jaspers, *The Perennial Scope of Philosophy*, transl. Ralph Manheim, London, UK: Routledge 1950, p. 16.

²⁰ Karl Jaspers, *Kleine Schule des philosophischen Denkens*, München, DE: Piper 1983, p. 183. [My translation, henceforth cited as *PD*]

²¹ Karl Jaspers, *Philosophy, Volume 3*, transl. E. B. Ashton, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press 1971, p. 130.

²² Friedrich Nietzsche, "Nachgelassene Fragmente: Herbst 1885 – Herbst 1886, 2[86]" in *Friedrich Nietzsche:*

verstehende Psychologie and his insistence on the distinction between understanding (*verstehen*) and explaining (*erklären*) that he has adopted from the philosopher and historian of culture Wilhelm Dilthey and his hermeneutics of life. Whilst abstract explaining in the natural sciences is governed by mechanical laws of nature and causal relations, empathic understanding in the human sciences is concerned with freedom and creativity in human behavior that springs from purposiveness and is driven by reasons, motives, emotions, and passions.²³

Nietzsche and Jaspers pursue an anti-systematic thought that is always perspectival. Now the question becomes: in what spirit and mood ought interpretations be made? In my view, as I have suggested at the outset of this essay and evidenced thereafter, not only Nietzsche's thought is inseparable from cheerfulness, but Jaspers' incessantly dynamic thinking is dependent upon a cheerful impetus as well when, for example, he encourages his readers to question, break open, and to leave the shells or casings (*Gehäuse*) of inauthentic world views in order to explore possible *Existenz*, while being in elevated spirits by virtue of their philosophical faith.

Both Nietzsche's and Jaspers' writings are carefully crafted compositions. Jaspers was well aware of the poetical and literary side of Nietzsche's writings as, for instance, he writes

it was a mistake to admire Nietzsche as a poet and writer at the cost of not taking him seriously as a philosopher. [KJN 4]

Nietzsche's first rule regarding style reads: "The style has to *live*."²⁴ Further, in his conception, lively writing

shall prove that one *believes* in ones' own thoughts, and that one is not just thinking them, but that one is *feeling* them. [NF 39]

Sämtliche Werke, Kritische Studienausgabe, Vol. 12, eds. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari, Berlin, DE: de Gruyter 1988, pp. 67-169, here p. 104.

²³ Wilhelm Dilthey, *Der Aufbau der Geschichtlichen Welt in den Geisteswissenschaften*, Stuttgart, DE: B. G. Teubner 1968, pp. 88-120.

²⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche, "Nachgelassene Fragmente: Juli 1882-August 1882," in *Friedrich Nietzsche: Sämtliche Werke, Kritische Studienausgabe, Vol. 10*, eds. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari, Berlin, DE: de Gruyter 1988, pp. 9-42, here p. 38. [My translation, henceforth cited as *NF*]

Nietzsche's lyrical, melodious writing style mirrors his merry mood. Nietzsche himself composed musical pieces and his longtime friend Köselitz was a composer by profession. In a world without absolute truth, seductive rhetoric becomes of paramount importance. Zarathustra is such a skilled, demonic seducer. Michael Gillespie and Tracy Strong argue that the form, the how, in Nietzsche is more important than the content, the what. They state this shift in approach with the words:

the meaning of Nietzsche's enigmatic utterances can best be understood by examining the style or structure of his thought.²⁵

Having undertaken this way of reading Nietzsche, Gillespie and Strong agree with me that cheerfulness is essential and not merely incidental in Nietzsche who was in this respect deeply influenced by the American philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson whose beneficent cheerfulness and cheerful serenity Nietzsche valued highly, as for example also Graham Parkes has traced it in his 1996 book, *Composing the Soul*. Cheerfulness allows for the affirmation of life in all of its manifestations. Indeed, Nietzsche's motto in the first edition of *The Gay Science* is an Emerson citation. It reads:

To the philosopher all things are friendly and sacred, all that happens is beneficial, all days holy, all men divine.²⁶

It needs to be noted that Nietzsche dedicated an entire book to the theory and practice of *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* in which he brilliantly dissolves the dichotomy of philosophic and poetic thinking by showing that one cannot be without the other.

Jaspers attests Nietzsche to have always actively pursued seriousness in philosophy. He even mentions "the incomparable seriousness Nietzsche's" (*AP* 390). In his 1935 lecture at the University of Groningen, Jaspers refers to Kierkegaard and Nietzsche:

²⁵ Michael A. Gillespie and Tracy B. Strong, "Introduction," in *Nietzsche's New Seas: Explorations in Philosophy, Aesthetics, and Politics*, eds. Michael A. Gillespie and Tracy B. Strong, Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press 1988, pp. 1-17, here p. 1.

²⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science: With A Prelude in Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs*, transl. Walter Kaufmann, New York, NY: Random House 1974, p. 27. [Motto my translation, henceforth cited as *GSK*]

In a magnificent way, penetrating a whole life with the earnestness of philosophizing, they brought forth...a new total intellectual attitude for men. This attitude was in the medium of infinite reflection. [RE 25]

In the seventh out of twelve radio lectures held in 1949 at the broadcasting studio in Basel, Switzerland, that Jaspers titled "The World," he states,

the passion of knowing it is, to get by way of its highest intensification precisely there where knowing is foundering.²⁷

Nietzsche and Jaspers both were psychologists and psychiatrists—experts of both the healthy and the pathological soul. In 1913 Jaspers wrote a course book on psychopathology that today still receives positive attention and scholarly recognition.²⁸ In 1950 Walter Kaufmann published his influential book on Nietzsche with the subtitle "Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist." It is a historical fact that both Nietzsche and Jaspers knew physical as well as mental suffering from personal experience. Nietzsche himself acknowledged that his illness imparted him "fingers for *nuances*" (EHK 223). Learning to overcome his suffering by exercising a regime of rigorous self-care taught him also the Dionysian

saying Yes to life even in its strangest and hardest problems...to be oneself the eternal joy of becoming. [EHK 273]

Comparable to Nietzsche, Jaspers took his ill health into his service and became a lucid philosopher. In his autobiography, Jaspers mentions the melancholia he felt knowing that his life might end soon having had to cope with bronchiectasis and secondary cardiac insufficiency (JPA 10). In his stylized autobiography *Ecce Homo* (1888) Nietzsche asks rhetorically:

Who among philosophers was a *psychologist* at all before me...There was no psychology at all before me. [EHK 331]

He also confesses regarding the genesis of his *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*:

²⁷ Karl Jaspers, *Einführung in die Philosophie: Zwölf Radiovorträge*, München, DE: Piper 1953. p. 60. [My translation]

²⁸ Heinz Häfner, "Descriptive Psychopathology, Phenomenology, and the Legacy of Karl Jaspers," *Dialogues in Clinical Neuroscience* 17/1 (March 2015), 19-29.

"Gay Science": that signifies the saturnalia of a spirit who has patiently resisted a terrible, long pressure...and who is now all at once attacked by hope, the hope for health, and the *intoxication* of convalescence. [GSK 32]

In short, both of these philosophers have advanced knowledge of human emotional life and also of its extreme states. Nietzsche goes as far as seeing himself as a surrogate mother-figure who gives birth to his works:

constantly, we have to give birth to our thoughts out of our pain and, like mothers, endow them with all we have of blood, heart, fire, pleasure, passion, agony, conscience, fate, and catastrophe. [GSK 35-6]

Like Nietzsche, Jaspers accords contentious rhetoric and polemic an important function in philosophy when he, comparable to Nietzsche, links love with conflict and struggle as well. Hans Saner details:

Every philosopher certainly stands in relation to other thinkers, takes up their thinking again, fights against it, appropriates it. Under this dynamic aspect, the history of philosophy becomes the history of philosophical polemics, philosophical appropriation, and communication in thought. [JSB 79]

Saner explicitly concludes that in Jaspers "polemics are an essential part of the process of appropriation" of the great philosophers of the past (JSB 80). Jaspers correctly assesses that Nietzsche's "last writings as well as the first two parts of the *Untimely Meditations* are predominantly polemical in form" (KJN 5). Indeed, the subtitle of Nietzsche's *On the Genealogy of Morals* reads "A Polemic," and Saner's edited volume of Jaspers' talks and essays has the title *Aneignung und Polemik*. Søren Kierkegaard whose writings influenced Jaspers considerably is a polemicist too. Additionally, both Nietzsche and Jaspers use wit and irony as a rhetorical strategy when they playfully explore philosophical problems.²⁹ They deliberately elicit laughter when they passionately polemicize. Jaspers notes that

To Nietzsche laughter is an expression of this truth that cannot be communicated. [KJN 220]

In an unpublished note Nietzsche acutely points out that a laughing preacher is a contradiction in terms for

²⁹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals: A Polemic*, transl. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale, New York, NY: Vintage Books 1967, pp. 13-163, here p. 107.

"the old god-human was unable to laugh."³⁰ The motto of Nietzsche's work *The Case of Wagner* (1888) reads: *ridendo dicere severum* (through what is laughable say what is somber). In its Preface Nietzsche reveals:

interspersed with many jokes, I bring up a matter that is no joke.³¹

Instances of the application of this way of proceeding can be found in the epigrams at the beginning of *The Gay Science* entitled "'Joke, Cunning, and Revenge': Prelude in German Rhymes" (GSK 39-69). Nietzsche's and Jaspers' hilarity has a subversive effect. For this reason, both rely on provocative humor and "exuberant mockery" as important means for fostering socio-cultural change.³²

One way in which Nietzsche and Jaspers make provocation work is their rhetorical strategy of remaining deliberately ambiguous. They create intentionally subversive imaginative tension. They provoke for they want each one of their readers to think and act in reaction to their thought: they incite them to discuss their ideas in a controversial and in an emotionally and intellectually highly engaged manner and to use the insights gained for self-transformation. For both Nietzsche and Jaspers human beings are constantly in process and actively transforming themselves. In fact, as Jaspers writes, human beings are this process:

Man is always something more than what he knows of himself. He is not what he is simply once and for all, but is a process; he is not merely an extant life, but is, within that life, endowed with possibilities through the freedom he possesses to make of himself what he will by the activities on which he decides.³³

Nietzsche reveals in a note from 1882 that:

³⁰ Friedrich Nietzsche, "Nachgelassene Fragmente: November 1882-Februar 1883," in *Friedrich Nietzsche: Sämtliche Werke, Kritische Studienausgabe, Vol. 10*, eds. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari, Berlin, DE: de Gruyter 1988, pp. 109-229, here p. 159. [My translation]

³¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Case of Wagner: A Musician's Problem*, transl. Walter Kaufmann, New York, NY: Vintage Books 1967, pp. 153-92, here p. 155.

³² Friedrich Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations*, transl. R. J. Hollingdale, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press 1997, p. 225.

³³ Karl Jaspers, *Man in the Modern Age*, transl. Eden and Cedar Paul, London, UK: Routledge & Kegan Paul 1951, p. 146.

it is very well-bred and *very clever* to leave it to the reader *to draw the last quintessence* from our wisdom. [NF 39]

Nietzsche expresses his esteem for

insight, born of an excess of honesty if not of exuberance.³⁴

Living in the absence of absolute truth in the immanent world, Jaspers also considers honesty and truthfulness as being indispensable philosophical virtues for navigating such an ambivalent existence. He writes, for example, that

for the truthfulness of an honest human, neither the revolt nor the faith in harmony is acceptable.³⁵

Jaspers is drawing on Immanuel Kant's notion of sincerity (*Aufrichtigkeit*) and explains, "sincerity is truthfulness with myself."³⁶ Similar to Nietzsche, he suggests to approach human misery with sincerity and to see reality as it is. For, since there are no absolute opposites, reality will not present itself to humans in the form of an alternative between good and evil, but rather as a conjunction of good and evil, that is, one is not to be had without the other.

Nietzsche endorses cheerfulness that originates in profundity and that desires life, affirmation and eternity:

a formula for the highest affirmation, born of fullness, of overfullness, a Yes-saying without reservation, even to suffering, even to guilt, even to everything that is questionable and strange in existence.

This ultimate, most joyous, most wantonly extravagant Yes to life represents not only the highest insight but also the *deepest*. [EHK 272]

In his *Psychology of Worldviews*, Jaspers correctly comments that in Nietzsche,

the ultimate in terms of the expression of the force of life is lust.³⁷

³⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy, Or: Hellenism and Pessimism*, transl. Walter Kaufmann, New York, NY: Vintage Books 1967, pp. 15-144, here p. 95.

³⁵ Karl Jaspers, *Die Chiffren der Transzendenz*, eds. Anton Hügli und Hans Saner, Basel, CH: Schwabe Verlag 2011, p. 36. [My translation, henceforth cited as CT]

³⁶ Karl Jaspers, *Philosophical Faith and Revelation*, transl. E. B. Ashton, New York, NY: Harper & Row 1967, p. 254.

³⁷ Karl Jaspers, *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen*, Berlin, DE: Springer 1971, p. 256. [My translation]

Already the young Nietzsche associates wisdom (*Weisheit*) with

that gentle sunshine of a constant spiritual joyousness.³⁸

In 1961 Jaspers concludes his final lecture (*Abschiedsvorlesung*) on the topic of having philosophical faith entitled "The Cyphers of Transcendence" at the University of Basel with the words:

³⁸ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human: A Book for Free Spirits*, transl. R. J. Hollingdale, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press 1996, p. 135.

Provided that cheerfulness and joy originate not only from the beautiful life-jubilance of vital force and dwindles away with it, provided that cheerfulness and joy are the certainty of the eternal origin, they are as long as we exist in fulfilled presence still and time again possible. [CT 112]

This and all of the above supports my conclusion that Jaspers agrees with Nietzsche that life in the now can be fulfilled under the condition that it is being spent in cheerful seriousness.