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Karl Jaspers, *Psychology of Worldviews* Differentiations in the Chapter "The Psychological-Cultural Worldview"

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Abstract: This investigation of Karl Jaspers' approach to thinking is based on examples taken from the chapter "Das seelisch-kulturelle Weltbild" in his book, *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen*. From the philosopher and humanistic scholar Wilhelm Dilthey, the psychiatrist and philosopher Jaspers adopted the concept of fundamental understanding; this includes Dilthey's methods of description and analysis. Using induction, Dilthey also identified synthesis in connection with analysis. In his didactic approach Jaspers primarily distinguished between various distinctions while in each distinction and further differentiation he was also looking for unifying elements. His analysis points back to its implicit beginning. The result makes possible a new synopsis and conceptual unity. This synthesis forms the basis of every specific distinction previously alluded to. That said, synthesis as such always remains open to further differentiations as a sort of dialectic that is given importance from both a theoretical and a practical viewpoint.

Keywords: Dilthey, Wilhelm; Jaspers, Karl; appearances; distinction; differentiation; analysis; synthesis; hermeneutics; dialectic; subject-object split; discrimination; openness.

Assumptions in Karl Jaspers' Thought

In comparing Karl Jaspers to Wilhelm Dilthey, I refer primarily to Jaspers' *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen*,¹ and within that work, to Chapter II.B "Das seelisch-kulturelle Weltbild," at the end of which Jaspers quotes Dilthey. I am raising the question whether Jaspers' thinking was related to the thought of Dilthey, and if so, to which extent they differ.

According to Hans Saner, throughout his work Jaspers' thinking is based on three assumptions:²

1. Thinking is intentional and requires a deliberate focus on an object...Thinking occurs within the *subject-object split*.
2. All that exists is cognition, being that is perceived by us. It is what it *appears to be*, not being *per se*.
3. While being *per se* is, by way of anticipation, called the whole, it only manifests itself in our thinking in *disunified ways*.

Jaspers goes beyond discussing what humans are capable of understanding. While Jaspers pertains to appearances of things or objects, he referred back to Immanuel Kant and Arthur Schopenhauer about being *per se*, but which he described in his own way and manner of interpretation.

Bilddokumenten, Reinbek, DE: Rowohlt Verlag 1970, p. 111.
[Henceforth cited as *SKJ*, translations are by the author]

¹ Karl Jaspers, *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen*, ed. Oliver Immel, Basel, CH: Schwabe Verlag, 2019.
[Henceforth cited as *PW*, translations are by the author]

² Hans Saner, *Karl Jaspers: Mit Selbstzeugnissen und*

Distinctions in Chapter II.B

Jaspers develops numerous distinctions in his *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen*. While it is impossible to address all of them here in detail, ten of the most important ones are listed here and summarized as follows (PW 167-77):

- * Jaspers distinguishes the sensual-spatial worldview that is imaginable merely on grounds of perception, from the psychological worldview that is not given without the sensual-spatial worldview.
- * Within the world of things, a distinction is made between the sensory world and the non-sensory world (or, the world of generalities).
- * In the world of intellect, a distinction is made between understanding that takes place from within one's social and sensory world in relation to this world in contrast to understanding that occurs when it is detached from any context, and thus becomes intuitive (as noted in the first distinction above).
- * Jaspers further distinguishes between the understanding of human beings and their lived experience in contrast to a worldview of understanding that is derived from objective culture.
- * A distinction is also made between a closed worldview that conforms to habits and rules, and an open worldview that encompasses problems, questions, and the need for accountability.
- * A comparison is made between viewing humans in their different manifestations and viewing humans in their commonalities.
- * Jaspers differentiates between an understanding of the psychic-cultural worldviews that shape an individual's own world and which is considered to be absolute, and one's interest in the worlds of humans from other cultures.
- * A distinction is stated between humans who cling to old times as opposed to humans who believe in and actively shape the future.
- * A distinction is made between a fossilized and limited historical understanding in contrast to adopting an openness for infinite understanding as the purpose of life.
- * In historicism, a distinction is made between understanding in terms of justification of what has occurred in the past and the rejection of traditional values.

How Does Jaspers Think?

On the first page of Chapter II.B, Jaspers discusses the relationship between the sensory and the psychological worldview, which allows one to gauge an initial impression of Jaspers' thinking. He points out that the sensory worldview is imaginable without the psychological one, but that the reverse does not apply (PW 167). The psychological world does not exist independently of the sensory-spatial world. Consequently, the mental realm cannot be represented without a sensory worldview:

The world of the mind is concrete, clear, real, exactly like the sensory-spatial world, but the former does not exist separately in isolation *alongside* this world; rather, it is represented in the sensory-spatial picture of the world through its objectivations alone. [PW 167]

Jaspers further states,

all kinds of psychological-cultural worldviews...[can] either be seen as members of mechanical and other natural world images or as specifically comprehensible interior worlds. [PW 167]

This distinction is reminiscent of Schopenhauer. Jaspers adds that whenever psychological-cultural worldviews are considered, they are at the same time also inside the sensory-cultural worldview at the same time. This understanding can be realized contextually from within, as phenomenon and nexus; in other words, it cannot be understood when detached from context in a solely psychological sense, as, at least from a scientific perspective at least, this would generate a misunderstanding.

In a similar vein, Dilthey writes about the subjective experience of the so-called structural context (*Strukturzusammenhang*)—this is an external experience that is perceived by a subject as an inner-psychological one, yet it is a matter of getting inside one's circumstances and one's own conditions. Accordingly, the inner world is seen primarily as the inside of the outer world and not simply as being an inner object of introspection in the tradition of St. Augustine.

And yet, Jaspers (*Psychologie der Weltanschauungen*) also points to the possibility of detaching the comprehensible from the inner world as such, even though doing so is scientifically inadmissible. According to Jaspers, one might then still see something that is eidetic but illusory in nature, and as such occupies a place in opposition

to context, and ultimately, to reality. However, if psychological-cultural worldviews are conceived of appropriately, humans will find themselves within the sensory-spatial worldview and *vice versa*:

And while still within the latter, we take the leap into the psychic-cultural world everywhere. [PW 167]

From this short passage alone, three insights emerge regarding Jaspers's thinking: Firstly, Jaspers is largely in agreement with Dilthey regarding one important content area (namely, the embedding of the psychological dimension); secondly, Jaspers' thinking follows a formal structure that is simultaneously rich in content; and thirdly, from a formal perspective, Jaspers' thinking is characterized by clear distinctions and nuanced differentiations.

The Precondition of Making Distinctions

The primary means of cognition in analysis is making distinctions. In terms of the meaning of distinctions, Jaspers has without doubt been more influenced by Weber than by Dilthey. This has also been argued by Saner (*SKJ* 34, 139). Hence, the question arises what is presupposed when making a distinction? In order to address this question, one would have to distinguish between the contents of a distinction and one would also have to know relevant details in the first place in order to make distinctions.

Something that can be distinguished in itself does not seem to be homogeneous. What appears to be homogeneous cannot, at least on a surface level, be readily understood as something that can be separated into parts. That which is to be distinguished needs to be ultimately split within itself. Distinguishing seems to be akin to Jaspers' subject-object-split, its disunity and fragmentation. But wherever there is being, there must also have been at some point an inner nexus at one time. It is a safe assumption that this was originally the case—at least when regarded from a phylogenetic point of view and probably it also has been the case at the beginning of homogenesis. However, one may also assume that with every cognition, indeed with every step of cognition, this nexus has to be temporarily restored. It is true that only heterogeneous entities can be divided, yet if they are divisible, they must also have homogeneous traits to themselves. Otherwise, it would be impossible to start out with something that appears to be uniform, to break it down along a constant dimension, and

make comparisons between the resulting parts. For without such a process, making distinctions would not be possible at all (PW 168, 172).

This holistic dimension, thanks to which comparisons can be made in the first place, is not usually apparent from the outset. When a distinction is made with regard to an appearance, stipulation of a whole has always been presupposed, even if an initial distinction typically has a merely intuitive character. This is what makes comparisons, and by extension, analyses possible in the first place.

Making Distinctions and Differentiations

According to Jaspers, making distinctions is not possible until something has been understood and is not only experienced as a subject's reaction but is at the same time also objectively accessible (PW 168). Hence, making distinctions is being built upon a subject-object relation (in line with the subject-object split). Not only the subjective side but also the objective side of this relationship can be examined. In his opinion, it is also possible to examine the worldview of the objective per se—that is, the world of the non-psychological (PW 169). In fact, Jaspers juxtaposes "viewing everything through the lens of psychology" to an entirely non-psychological, even non-human-centric worldview in order to provide an equally one-sided worldview of the psychological existence from another—previously foreign—side. Despite the fact that the mental space cannot be represented without a psychologically-related sensory world, this process of detaching it nevertheless, results occasionally in a one-sided worldview.

Moving on from writing about appearance, Jaspers then addresses the subject of making distinctions. He describes not only what is presupposed by it, but also distinguishes it within itself as well as from itself; a differentiation that allows further distinctions. This means that both sides of a distinction can be further differentiated. This entire thought process could be identified as enabling a differentiation. This process requires at least intuitively to some extent the presupposition of synthesis, at least intuitively. In this context, all analytical steps also include synthetic elements, which is being argued below.

Dilthey's Analytic-Synthetic Approach

Wilhelm Dilthey in his "Ideas concerning a descriptive

and analytic psychology,"³ argued that the methodology of human sciences, and in particular that of psychology is descriptive and analytic. This understanding is also stated in Jaspers' *General Psychopathology*, adding that he had benefitted from this way of thinking.⁴

Due to Friedrich Schleiermacher's influence, Dilthey's later writings moved closer to hermeneutics and was already showing signs of an analytic-synthetic approach. Jaspers' *Psychology of Worldviews* was published shortly thereafter.

In "The Origin of Hermeneutics," Dilthey tried to shore up his ideas with methodological support.⁵ According to Dilthey, hermeneutics serves the interpretation of objectifications (for example: of works of art). He added that interpretation consists primarily of a description of the object and that an analysis takes place following the description. He noted that in doing so, it becomes apparent that a whole is already posited but will not develop contours until individual elements are captured and organized, thus enabling the whole to assume its eventual form. Dilthey sought to arrive at an understanding of the form of an interpretation method whereby the understanding of the individual presupposes that of the whole, and *vice versa* (EH 330). The whole and the individual are not arrived at independently from each other. Using descriptions as a starting point, inquiries consist not only of analyses but also include synthetic elements.

In *The Formation of the Historical World in the Human Sciences* (Aufbau der geschichtlichen Welt in den Geisteswissenschaften), Dilthey (1910/1965) posited synthesis alongside analysis, and used reconstruction on an inductive basis to tie them together:

Each has its characteristic connectedness, but here too analysis of the complete work on the basis of induction

must be counterbalanced by synthetic reconstruction of the whole, again on the basis of induction, and with constant awareness of general truths.⁶

According to Dilthey, analysis of a whole (which is anticipated using ultimately inductive underpinnings) and synthetic reconstruction of that whole from the relationship of its parts (also inductive) are intertwined. Or reversely, one can look for patterns in structural connections by ascending from the particular to the general under the constant presence of the general and moving backwards again.

In line with inductive constitution of synthesis, deductive pathways are also relevant for the analysis even though they cannot be identified using logical deductions. According to Dilthey, both the inductive and deductive methods pursue goals for purposes of classification and order,

that proceeds from the particular to the general and back to search for regularities in productive systems. [FHW 180]

The relationship between analysis and synthesis is not one of opposites, but rather one of complementarity, since analysis and synthesis presuppose each other. For instance, Frithjof Rodi refers to Wolfgang Goethe who, being a poet and researcher, always proceeded both synthetically and analytically.⁷

The analytic-synthetic approach was designed to make it possible to find the requisite internal interconnectedness of a whole within the ensemble of its components. Hermeneutics encapsulates a spiral-shaped movement from an analysis to an initial synthesis and, proceeding from this new structural level, another movement from synthesis to analysis, and so on. The resulting circle is not resolvable in purely logical terms, and can only be overcome in practical terms.

Nonetheless, it is doubtful that an academic theory could ever be developed from this. Dilthey was unable

³ Wilhelm Dilthey, "Ideen über eine beschreibende und zergliedernde Psychologie (1894)," in *Wilhelm Dilthey Gesammelte Schriften*, 5. Band, *Die Geistige Welt: Einleitung in die Philosophie des Lebens*, Stuttgart, DE: B. G. Teubner Verlagsgesellschaft 1957, pp. 139-240.

⁴ Karl Jaspers, *General Psychopathology*, transl. J. Hoening and Marian W. Hamilton, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press 1963, pp. 301-2.

⁵ Wilhelm Dilthey, "Die Entstehung der Hermeneutik (1900)," in *Wilhelm Dilthey Gesammelte Schriften*, 5. Band, *Die Geistige Welt: Einleitung in die Philosophie des Lebens*, Stuttgart, DE: B. G. Teubner Verlagsgesellschaft 1957, pp. 317-338. [Henceforth cited as EH]

⁶ Wilhelm Dilthey, *The Formation of the Historical World in the Human Sciences*, *Wilhelm Dilthey Selected Works*, Volume III, transl. Rudolf A. Makkreel and Frithjof Rodi, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 2002, p. 180. [Henceforth cited as FHW]

⁷ Frithjof Rodi, "Dilthey's Strukturbegriff im Kontext von Naturwissenschaft und Philosophie des 19. Jahrhunderts," in *Dilthey's Philosophie des Lebenszusammenhangs: Strukturtheorie – Hermeneutik – Anthropologie*, Freiburg, DE: Verlag Karl Alber 2016, pp. 51-69, here p. 43.

to perform research or devise a research program that could have demonstrated what types of outcomes and forms would have been expected to result from his approach. I have argued elsewhere that contrary to the generally held assumption, this result was not accomplished in his biographical studies either.⁸

Jaspers' Use of Analysis and Synthesis

At first glance, one might say that Jaspers breaks down an object (analysis) and puts it back together again (synthesis), although he must have been in possession of something shared that enabled him to make distinctions, and by extension, perform an analysis. For Jaspers, too, analysis goes hand in hand with synthesis, but not in the same way as for Dilthey.

For Jaspers, the thinking process proceeds as follows: In order to carry out a first distinction, one must, in an intuitive sense, already have formed a common ground that can be understood as an implicit synthesis. Once the distinction has been made, an explicable common ground results, which can be compared with the original one. Thus, the intuitive common ground has been transformed into an explicit synthesis, which is the common ground for the further differentiation.

For example, in distinguishing representational worldviews from psychological worldviews, both one-sided worldviews can be further differentiated. In the context of worldviews regarding the external reality a distinction can be made between the sensory world and the world of the non-sensory (such as ideas, intellect, abstract laws) whereas in the context of a psychological worldview, a distinction can be made between one's understanding that forms within the sensory world in contrast with an understanding that occurs in isolation from any context. As for further differentiations on both sides, the ongoing synthesis, which starts out as being intuitive, is divided in two aspects. Each one is used as a new implicit synthesis for further differentiation, the result of which will once again give rise to a new explication of the implicit, with the sensory world spawning further differentiations. In this process of differentiation, each synthesis forms the basis for the anticipated commonalities of the distinctions that follow.

⁸ Mark Galliker and Hans-Ulrich Lessing, *Psychologie des Lebens: Dilthey im Diskurs*, Göttingen, DE: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht Verlag 2020, p. 105.

In the course of the differentiation process, however, explications can change compared to what is initially only implicit. This may occur in a qualitative sense but also quantitatively, especially when it comes to expanding the common ground. Such changes may occur as or without being the result of a deliberate decision.

Expanding the Range of Interpretation

The mode of Jaspers' process of differentiation can be illustrated by the example of distinguishing between different opinions. The differences of opinion emanating from views presupposes anticipations that for all intents and purposes are already synthetic, albeit only in an initially implicit sense. The distinguishing process often produces one-sided points of view but can be used to expand the range provided by the initial anticipations to the other side.

Both biases will have to be repeatedly entertained as preliminary viewpoints in order to steadily broaden at all the syntheses regarding a worldview of what is understandable. [PW 169]

However, synthesizing is occasionally fraught with problems as there are times when the conflict that emerges from a prior attempt of distinction prevents an analysis to be sufficiently expanded.

The poles are reached only by way of occasional approximation, hence rendering the worldview void, futile; its growth then stops. Objectively seen there is merely the never-ending accumulation of historical data, which subjectively seen are always forcefully comprehended and "deduced" according to some types and rules. [PW 169]

What has been analyzed will be synthesized yet again in order to arrive at a fresh synthesis that is now explicit. The addition of more instances leads to a concrete response.

This synthesis will ultimately come about in the concrete historical view. What is being reached by way of comprehending is solely shown in the representation and understanding of individual historical phenomena, in casuistry. [PW 169]

Accordingly, explicit distinctions are made in the immediate synthetic opinions in order to return to new, more reflected upon syntheses derived from expanded opinions. What has been distinguished from the original object of analysis now refers back to the intuitive

beginning. This differentiation thought process is also directed backwards. Jaspers' thinking process can also be interpreted as being two-sided in temporal terms.

Jaspers is conscious of the fact that distinctions in general can make life more difficult and increase uncertainty. In this context, he brings up, among other topics, historicism. According to Jaspers, a person in this category understands and accepts everything without feeling the need to analyze or criticize. Jaspers writes,

By way of absolutizing understanding, the human being is ultimately being robbed of personal existence. Everything and therefore nothing becomes important to him. [PW 177]

At best, critical elements may have entered into one's argumentation, but merely in order to distance oneself from absolutizing:

Instead of selecting, affirming, or opposint, one acknowledges all that comes into effect merely by virtue of it being present and effective. The presentation of the development of a subject matter is identical with critique to him. [PW 177]

From this dissociation, criticism emerges only to be removed out of the picture again in the second part of the following distinction:

History and boundless understanding either serve him to justify all that has become, or vice versa: it shows as it were to a human being simultaneously the path of the devil who destroys all that is of value in each step of history. [PW 177]

Inadvertently, the author has arrived at the second understanding, in which man uses history to reject everything;

since he understands everything, he sees the negative everywhere. [PW 177]

Consequently, this differentiation results in two extreme positions, to which Jaspers adds yet a third possibility, namely, general enthusiasm, general rejection, or a mix of both.

Jaspers also cares about the transitions, that is, about the mediation of the absolutized points of view within a distinction that ultimately have something in common, namely the individual who favors limitless understanding as well as the individual who rejects everything, face both the same situation,

what disappears is the awareness of the present, the sense of and the unending importance of existence in the now, the awareness regarding the decision making,

responsibility, in one word, the lived existence. [PW 177]

Yet Jaspers does not leave it at that. In his opinion, the schematization of historicism requires further distinction:

first, *the absolutization of the unending understanding becomes the purpose of life*, second, *the absolutization of certain, static, confined historical and psychological conceptions*. [PW 178]

After describing various historical schools of thought, Jaspers provides a quote from Dilthey on the historical school, which is viewed sympathetically by Dilthey but is met with differentiated criticism by Jaspers.

A purely empirical method of approach lived and was practiced in this school, loving immersion into the distinctiveness of the historical process, a universal spirit of historical study, which aims to determine the *value* of the individual facts *solely* in reference to the context of development, and a historical spirit of societal teaching, social studies or sociology, which *for life in the present times seeks explanation and rule* in the study of the past and whose spiritual life is ultimately historical in every respect. [PW 179]

Bridging the Gap – Incompatibility and Practice

According to Jaspers, one's understanding of objective meaning and understanding humans and their lived experience are not identical. Hence, a distinction is also made between modes of understanding; and regarding understanding human beings' experiences, another distinction is made.

Jaspers is conscious of the fact that people can make distinctions with too little differentiation. They live as if everything they encounter could be taken for granted in the world of the understandable that surrounds them; they think that the unchanging social environment from which their world emerges quite simply reflects obvious reality, and is the only one, without taking a deeper interest in it by applying differentiation. Quite naively, everything else is considered to be congruent with their lived experience. Essentially, all that matters is either compatible with one's own thinking and therefore being considered reasonable or it is being considered as being crazy if it does not agree with one's thinking (PW 168).

In other words, if one's own world is tacitly posited as being absolute, there are no comparisons and

hence no awareness of problems, and therefore also no consciousness of one's own existence as a specific one. There is a possible consequence to this:

What is foreign is being misunderstood, traced back to motives and purposes of one's own world, and is being regarded as resulting from ill will or asininity. [PW 168]

Distinctions are above all separations, including discriminations, that come about not only in cognitive and linguistic terms, but also in social terms. The latter is true especially when distinctions are not appropriately processed or fail to evolve into differentiations. What follows is that lack of differentiation that can lead to discrimination of the foreign. Jaspers suggests certain preconditions for actualizing differentiation in practice, namely (1) recognizing that foreign worlds exist after all, which leads to a consciousness that other kinds of fates, institutions, experiences exist; (2) developing an interest in getting to know this otherness; and (3) opening one's mind to acknowledge the foreign, seeing it, and expanding one's worldview beyond one's own reality and experience, while maintaining one's self-identity (PW 169).

According to Jaspers, individual contexts can be separated into autonomous spheres that still relate to each other and remain interrelated. They are all under the umbrella of the knowing subject, enabling one to ultimately become amenable to synthesis regarding other humans, for instance, regarding foreigners.

The Openness of Jaspers' Thinking

Jaspers draws distinctions between the worldview of the objective culture and that of human experiences:

Some build a worldview of *objective culture*, and others build one of *humans and experiences*. The former ones are entirely oriented toward objectivity, while the latter ones have a subjective-psychological orientation. [PW 169]

One's world of experience can end up in conflict with the objective cultural world. However, Jaspers sees in this distinction also a unity:

Opposed to the understanding of objective meaning, of subject matters, of what exists independent of experience is the understanding of humans and their lived experiences. Ultimately, neither one is possible without the other, they are factually always conjointly active. [PW 169]

Jaspers continues to paint a differentiated picture in the context of the psychological-cultural worldview. Thus, he distinguishes between a closed worldview that appeals to routine and rule and tends to shun responsibility and purpose, and a worldview that fosters an awareness of problems, accepts missions, and upholds responsibility. This open worldview focuses on the "infinity of the comprehensible" (PW 172), it appeals to living characterized by reason, initiative, and strength.

Evaluation of historical data varies, depending upon whether one believes in progress or rather holds on to the good old days (PW 173). Similarly, one can classify human beings either with regard to their sameness or by focusing upon the differences in their characters. And lastly, there are those for whom

the infinitude of each individual becomes the event and continual horizon for learned analysis. [PW 175]

Other Thinkers

For all his differentiation, Jaspers often thought in terms of opposites. The hallmark of opposites is that they cannot exist without their respective other part. Each one forms a condition for the other's existence. Therefore, it is precisely in the extremes that commonalities can be found where they reflect a form of dialectical thinking that is also evidenced in his many debates with contemporary thinkers. Jaspers did not only engage with exponents of schools of thought that were close to his own thinking but also with those that were dissonant with his own thinking, and within the individual schools of thought with representatives whose positions were particularly far apart from each other. For instance, his participation in the following controversies evidences this:

- * debates regarding the Christian religion (Rudolf Bultmann and Karl Barth),
- * contentions with other existential philosophers (Martin Heidegger and Jean-Paul Sartre),
- * disagreements regarding the analysis of existence (Ludwig Binswanger and Medard Boss),
- * arguments with psychoanalysts (Carl Gustav Jung and Alexander Mitscherlich),
- * dissension with György Lukács and the Frankfurt School (including Theodor Adorno).

Jaspers' way of selecting his opponents and his approach to discourse brought about a similar rapprochement from the other side and often lead

to a search for common ground. One example illustrating this is the Lukács-Jaspers dispute as it is described by Saner: After World War II, Jaspers and Lukács were antipodes at the first *Rencontres Internationales de Genève* in 1946.⁹ They clashed strongly on their respective views of history and the individual's relationship to society. And yet, it was especially Jaspers who appeared to explore ways to accommodate Lukács and look for commonalities. A reading of the discussion transcripts suggests that despite differences in opinion they were able to stake out common ground (SKJ 142-3).

However, Lukács dismantled Jaspers' thinking in his book *The Destruction of Reason*,¹⁰ portraying Jaspers as a philosopher of life and accusing him of relativism. According to Lukács, Jaspers labeled all that is objective about cognition with the term "shell" (*Gehäuse*) and concluded that for a philosophy of life, all objectivity appeared to be nothing but fossilized and dead. To Lukács, the concept of *Gehäuse* suggested that Jaspers ultimately was leaning toward a form of subjectivism. The Hungarian literary historian and philosopher contended that Jaspers' thinking would lead to individualism, causing humankind to fall into despair with itself, thus preventing it from confrontation with reality, and bringing about political abstinence as well.

Lukács later revised his negative assessment of his opponent after reading Jaspers' work, *The Future of Germany*. There seemed to be ample reasons from philosophical, sociological, psychological, and other standpoints for raising questions about the similarities between Jaspers' *Gehäuse* and Lukács' "reification" (*Verdinglichung*) and the theories related to these terms, in addition to raising questions about the various differences in opinion.

Jaspers' subject-object-split seems to be widely applicable to Western societies, not just to natural science. This split is one of the preconditions of reification, a concept Lukács developed from bartering. Accordingly, the subject-object-split could be the appropriate vehicle to illustrate the mediation between these two terms.

Comparison of Jaspers' and Dilthey's Thought

Analysis and thus also distinctions feature prominently in the methodological use of both authors. Jaspers, as a forcefully differentiating thinker, imposes additional distinctions onto distinctions whereas Dilthey, coming in equal parts from a historical and humanistic direction, tends to search for concepts and their counterparts (outer experience versus inner experience; causality versus finality) in order to examine and investigate those concept-pairs through an empiricist lens (in the broadest sense of the concept).

While Dilthey was more likely to use descriptions as underpinnings for his analyses, Jaspers relied more on already established concepts that were differentiated further, thus allowing new terms to emerge. Dilthey was more of an empiricist (*Erfahrungswissenschaftler*) whereas Jaspers was more of a philosopher of human existence and freedom.

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Jaspers accorded special significance to the differentiating process, to establishing commonalities and to the search of yet additional commonalities. At the same time, those distinctions were used in the quest for establishing a synthesis that represents an expansion and deeper understanding of the originally presupposed concept.

In addition to analysis both thinkers considered synthesis to be important in addition to analysis. It is true that Dilthey connected those processes by using both induction and deduction, which Jaspers did not explicitly do. However, concerning induction it should be noted that Jaspers wrote that there was a need to collect new historical material, when he needed to extend the range of interpretation.

For Jaspers, the openness of thinking was of central significance. As becomes clear from the real-life example of discrimination against the foreign, Jaspers' concept of understanding and his attempts to keep understanding relevant and within the realms of the possible was open to a forward direction toward the future as well as a backward direction toward the past, as is evident from each step of differentiation.

⁹ Karl Jaspers, Talk at the 1946 conference in Geneva, *L'Esprit Européen*, pp. 363-404, <https://www.yumpu.com/fr/document/read/16641870/01-1946-lesprit-europeen-rencontres-internationales-de-geneve>.

¹⁰ György Lukács, *Die Zerstörung der Vernunft*, Georg Lukács Werke, Vol. 9, Neuwied, DE: Hermann Luchterhand Verlag, 1962.

It is unavoidable that understanding of the possible becomes limitless; an infinite dialectic unfolds; contrary views are equally comprehensible; all that is genuine is yet to be put into question again; an ultimate fixation is possible nowhere. [PW 178]

Jaspers' approach can certainly be called "dialectical," however, his mode of dialectics had little to do with either G. W. F. Hegel's ultimately "affirmative dialectics" or Adorno's "negative dialectics."

Jaspers appears to go beyond Dilthey, especially with regard to his dialectic. In addition, the openness that accompanies the dialectic is more pronounced in Jaspers and seemed to be of greater concern to him than to Dilthey. Yet, in Dilthey's "Addition to the Formation of the Historical World," there is a passage that comes quite close to Jaspers' openness:

The structural nexus is not simply pointed backwards into our memory and its unchangeableness; it presses unremittingly – and this is its most dominant characteristic – from out of the past and the present,

reckoning with the future, playing with images, but also striving. The lived experience that involves such striving simultaneously encompasses constraint and freedom – never inferentially, but in a lived way.¹¹

Jaspers and Dilthey are two great thinkers of the recent past who are still worth to be explored in depth. Both thinkers can assist in solving the problems of the present times, which is a time of crisis; they certainly can still contribute to current debates, especially with regard to their principle thought and its conceptual as well as historical and empirical prerequisites.

¹¹ Wilhelm Dilthey, "Additions to the Formation of the Historical World," in *Wilhelm Dilthey, Selected Works, Volume III: The Formation of the Historical World in the Human Sciences*, transl. Rudolf A. Makkreel and Frithjof Rodi, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 1985, pp. 344-367, here p. 350.