



# Existenz

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# EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

## Psychopathology and Understanding

Karl Jaspers' book *General Psychopathology* has become an irreplaceable source in support of a phenomenological approach in psychotherapy, ever since its first publication in 1913, and today it is still a seminal core text within the field of person-centered psychiatry. Jaspers' philosophical position was shaped by philosophers such as Wilhelm Dilthey, Edmund Husserl, Immanuel Kant, G. W. F. Hegel, Friedrich Nietzsche, and other thinkers of the time. Of critical importance in this context is Jaspers' objection to an excessive objectifying analysis of mental states as it was suggested, for example, by Emil Kraepelin. Jaspers favors a descriptive person-centered approach for psychiatric care over conducting dissected neurophysiological clinical care. This later clinical approach eventually dominated psychiatric practice and Jaspers' taxonomy was replaced with biological and neurophysiological taxonomy, starting in the *DSM-III* and continuing up to the current *DSM-5* edition.

One of the central concepts in Jaspers' conceptual apparatus is the distinction between *erklären* and *verstehen*. S. Nassir Ghaemi offers in his essay a revised interpretation of these concepts by arguing that they had been incorrectly applied to Jaspers. The essay by Jann Schlimme is an applied example of human-centered psychotherapeutic practice in which one of doctor Schlimme's clients actively contributes to writing the essay. This way of proceeding brings to the reader a realistic sense of delusional convictions.

Giovanny Stanghellini, who is arguably one of the currently leading practitioners in person-centered phenomenological psychiatry, offers a rare and insightful view into his professional development by way of responding to four highly qualified critics of his book *Lost in Dialogue*. The critics are Otto Doerr-Zegers (Chile), Louis A. Sass (Rutgers), Guilherme Messas (Brazil), and Anthony V. Fernandez (Kent State).

In closing, having awareness regarding the methodological contrast that marks, for example, the differences of psychiatric practice as seen by Jaspers or Kraepelin, is still of vital importance today, at a time when massive amounts of research funding are allocated to projects that aim to replicate the inner life of human beings by way of developing complex computing systems that purportedly simulate life.

A discussion of these topics is posted at <https://www.youtube.com/@ExistenzJournal/videos>.

September 21, 2023

Helmut Wautischer  
Editor-in-Chief

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