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EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

Karl Jaspers and Plotinus

When Karl Jaspers describes Plotinus as being the greatest mystical philosopher of the West, the importance and meaning of this accolade becomes more transparent once its complexity is pondered upon. The philosopher's task, presumably one's search for wisdom, for the most part takes place in the domain of reasoned argumentation. However, strategic rhetoric alone will not suffice when discussing existential, spiritual, or metaphysical themes. Foundational axioms for any theory, regardless of whether they occur in the sciences, the humanities, or in the religions cannot be proven on factual grounds. In a simplified manner, one could argue that science resorts to proof by inference, that is, it is utilizing extrapolations from proven circumstances in order to speculate about unsolved broader questions (for example comprehending infinity or eternity); the humanities resort to argumentation and interpretation in their hitherto unsuccessful attempt of bridging the apparent schism between idealized states of human existence and lived socio-economic reality; and, religion offers language and rituals that shape and bring together their respective communities through values enshrined in doctrine.

As a proponent of philosophical faith, Jaspers attempted to carve out a space for transcendental domains of reality alongside the scientific exploration of the human condition. In pursuit of this task, he lived an exemplary life as a human being and a preeminent academic scholar. His writings are kept in a style that will challenge a reader to recognize that one's interpretation of Jaspers' writings might be, in the end, a reflection of the interpreter's world view. In contrast, Plotinus' writings demand spiritual practice. Any philosopher who engages with Plotinus merely on the grounds of text analysis will soon be entrapped in phantasms of one's own making.

The seven papers in this issue of *Existenz* should be read (and enjoyed) in conjunction with the two corresponding videos posted on our Channel. The respective authors exemplify with their own authentic work different paths of scholarship regarding topics such as mystical ascent, the One, Intellect, Soul, the unthinkable, and pure existence.

October 14, 2025

Helmut Wautischer
Editor-in-Chief

Additional presentations on this topic are posted at <https://www.youtube.com/@ExistenzJournal/videos>.

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