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Cosmopolitanism, World Philosophy, and the Axial Theory of History Transcritique and Copernican Revolution Between Jaspers and Karatani

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Abstract: I develop Karl Jaspers' conception of cosmopolitanism, of world philosophy, and his axial theory of history in relation to Immanuel Kant's cosmopolitan conception of world history. I relate Jaspers' Kantian conception of the idea of human history to Kōjin Karatani's more recent conception of world-history. Karatani's conception has its starting-point in his Kantian conception of transcritique which also provides the basis for his conception of literary and economic-political criticism. Karatani develops a form of Kantian-Hegelian Marxism based on a rethinking of fundamental social and economic relations. He anticipates the disappearance of the structure of Capital-Nation-State that has dominated modernity. While this would be a return to a sophisticated form of the equality, isonomia and philosophy that emerged in the Greek city state of Miletus in Asia Minor (and not in Sparta or Athens), it would also be the transformation of the systematic structure of the Kantian kingdom of ends into a truly republican world-order.

Keywords: Nation-State-Capital; imagination; apperception; world-history; technology; *isonomia*.

Karl Jaspers has a systematic conception of cosmopolitanism, of world philosophy, and of a fundamentally axial theory of history. Jaspers develops the systematic structure of Kant's conception of the original synthetic unity of apperception and shows how it can serve as the basis for a comprehensively systematic cosmopolitan conception of philosophy that unifies the historical and the transhistorical dimensions of thought and action in time and history. He conceived of the history of culture and of philosophy as having two axes on its way from the origins of history in myth and prehistory to the end of history in the cosmopolitical idea of global and encompassing human social freedom.

The first axis is said to have occurred in part independently in China, India, Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Greece from around 800 BCE to 200 BCE, with a focal point around 500 BCE. This axis has formed the basis of world culture and world philosophy. This formed the initial, though not fully integrated, basis for the eventual emergence of world culture, world history and world philosophy. The second axis in which this would occur has yet to fully establish itself. The second axis is being made possible by the systematic development of technology and science that makes world communication and world history truly possible. In the second axial age, countries and civilizations such as those China, Egypt, and India, will return to the role they held in thought, culture,

technology, and economics during the first axial age. Other cultures that were more peripheral to and still largely nascent in the axial age such as those in the Americas will come to be included. This prepares the way for a fully comprehensive and cosmopolitan conception of world history and of world philosophy that revitalizes and extends Kant's conception of it.

Modern history is marked for Jaspers by the pervasiveness of technology. Technology is leading inexorably to the globalization of communication and economic and social relations and the alternative of global dictatorship or a world community of states. Technology has gone hand in hand with the modern era and with colonialism and globalization. The European Renaissance is still too local for Jaspers to count as the beginning of a second axial age; however, it might be said to be the outer fringe of a second axis that has not yet fully established itself. Universal communicability will prepare the way for a fully cosmopolitan conception of world, of history and of philosophy that includes the entire globe.

In the wake of the end of World War II, Karl Jaspers, having survived the Nazi regime by the timely invasion of Allied forces and their entrance into Heidelberg, began to worry about the implications for the future if no powers in line with human rights and democracy are there to vanquish the powers of totalitarian dictatorship from the outside. He also began to think of philosophy and its history in more encompassing terms, namely, by seeing them in ways that went beyond not only the limits of the German philosophical tradition in which he had grown up but also beyond the Eurocentric conception that had hitherto seemed natural to him. That is why he began to conceive of a world philosophy that would match the ambitions of the encompassing Kantian conception of a world, cosmic, and cosmopolitan philosophy. It would stem from both the inside and the outside of his own tradition, place in the world, and from within world history.

For Jaspers, WWII was the first truly global war. It had been unleashed by developments, and itself unleashed developments in technology that would connect people from all around the globe in a manner that would no longer allow complete isolation, yet that simultaneously threatened humanity and the earth in their very survival. In his book on the *Ursprung und Ziel der Geschichte*, Jaspers does not depart from the fundamental commitments of his earlier conception of philosophy, going back to the 1910s and 1930s.

For him, history is still the "revelation of being,"¹ a process that is always a transition (*Übergang*) in which the truth as revealed in history is displayed in its eternal presence. Jaspers sees the human being as fundamentally historical, but also, in such individual historicity, a participant in wider events and involved in a process of transcendence towards the eternal presence of being and truth. He continues to develop the three fundamental Kantian ideas of self, world, and God in their cosmic-cosmopolitan significance. But as Jaspers rightly sees it, that significance is already involved in Kant's development of those ideas in their systematic relatedness to the original synthetic unity of apperception, and to logic, space, and time, and to history. Even the idea and systematic structure of the university and its faculties and members, in relation to their political, religious, and social context, has its source in the original synthetic unity of apperception.

There is a fascinating correlate to and in some respects antipode to Jaspers' cosmopolitan conception of world philosophy and of world history in the transcritical conception of world history and of cosmopolitan philosophy of the Japanese literary and economic theorist and philosopher Kōjin Karatani, whose conception of world history has a systematic Kantian ground in the notion of transcritique.² The important dimension of transcritique is the conception of a fundamental dynamics of structure embodied in the notion of a Copernican revolution in thought. German philosophy from J. G. Fichte, F. W. J. Schelling and G. W. F. Hegel to the Marburg school, Karl Jaspers, and Martin Heidegger has discerned in Kant's fundamental principle of philosophy, the original synthetic unity of apperception and its systematic manifestation in the different domains of thought, philosophy, culture, and politics a dynamic structuralism. This is embedded in the manner in which we traverse time and history from our changing point-of view but always with an understanding of the systematic structural whole that is history and the world for us. This dynamic structure is evident in Kant's Copernican revolution, and in the fundamental conception of structurally

¹ Karl Jaspers, *Vom Ursprung und Ziel der Geschichte*, München, DE: R. Piper & Co Verlag 1964, p. 301.

² Kōjin Karatani, *Transcritique: On Kant and Marx*, transl. Sabu Kohso, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003. [Henceforth cited as *TKM*]

situated agency it entails. Karatani draws a deeply significant connection between the Copernican turn and the inversion of Hegel in Karl Marx's conception of materialism and Kant's own Copernican turn and its systematic connection to what Karatani calls "transcritique." He elaborates:

In reference to Kant's Copernican turn, I remarked earlier that it is commonly understood as a remarkable revolution from geocentrism to heliocentrism, but that such an idea had existed since long before Copernicus. It was finally constituted as a theory by Copernicus — only thanks to his shift from the position that the subject *passively* perceives the objective world to the position that objects are composed by the form of *active* subject. It was the latter that Kant appeared to consider important. But when, in consequence, post-Kantian idealism was established around this position and flourished, another, more ultimate destination of the Kantian turn — that one is thrown into the world, instead of the world being of one's own composition — was forgotten. At that point Kant quickly intervened to refute those idealists who had grown under his influence. In the history of science, the event of the Copernican turn happened only once. But in Kant, the Copernican turn occurred more than once. For the Kantian critique involved incessant transposition and was not rooted in a static positionality. I call this *transcritique*. [TKM 136]

The Copernican revolution was also taken by Jaspers in Kant to have a fundamental systematic significance and one that is not limited to logic, or space and time, or to human agency in history, but links them all together in an epistemically but also politically critical conception. Karatani's conception of world history is grounded in an economic model of historical development, but one that radically breaks with the traditional Marxist conception while also revealing the Kantian roots of Marx's conception and their relevance to further conceptual development. Karatani argues that the resources in contemporary culture and economics are in place for development toward the conception of equality (*isonomia*) that first came into being in the Greek city-state, but that the new conception of economic and political equality will emerge within the context of an inclusive world culture and civilization. Karatani argues that this can only come about if the dynamic, systemic structure of exchange embodied in the Capital-State-Nation is overcome (TKM 280).

For Karatani, Kant's cosmopolitan conception of a world republic promises to transcend the nation

and nationalism. Karatani foregrounds relations of fundamental equality, for which the Ancient Greek term is *isonomia*, and suggests reconstructing neo-Marxist economic and social theory on modes of exchange rather than on modes of production. Surplus value derives in Karatani's account more from circulation and exchange than it does from production; its source is the exchange of equivalents within one value system into another. Karatani hence replaces Marx's conception of the means of production with his own conception of "modes of exchange."³ Humans profit from the international circulation of ideas more than from their production. In contrast to Marx, who focuses on the means of production, Karatani grasps the modern social formation as a nexus of three different modes of exchange: capital, the nation, and the state. The nation complements and mediates capitalism and the state.

Karatani's account of the structure of world history takes up the Hegelian and Marxist conceptions of stages or phases of world history. As detailed above, modes of exchange replace the means of production as the motor in a fundamentally modified historical materialist interpretation of history. Karatani's interpretation of the basis of the historical materialist account of history in terms of modes of exchange rather than the means of production leads him to take nomadic societies, rather than the forms of production associated with archaic communal landownership, as his starting point. Karatani draws on Marcel Mauss' account of the importance of the gift and of gift-giving. However, noting that his conception of the origins of society, economics, and culture are nomadic rather than tribal, Karatani argues that practices of reciprocal gift-giving and obligation are impractical in a nomadic society where private property is almost meaningless. Therefore, he places greater emphasis on the earliest mode of exchange, which consists of the "pure gift" (WH 36-7), associated with early nomadic social exchange and reciprocity in practice.

In Karatani, modes of exchange replace Marx and Friedrich Engels' appeal to the means of production as the driving motor in human history. Although Karatani continues both to argue that

³ Kōjin Karatani, *The Structure of World History: From Modes of Production to Modes of Exchange*, transl. Michael K. Bourdaghs, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014. [Henceforth cited as WH]

economic considerations are fundamental and to reject a teleological conception of history, he no longer takes the means of production to be the economic base underlying a superstructure of state, religion, and culture and their ideology, and there is also no indication that Karatani is worried by questions of economic determinism. The Kantian synthesis ensures that Karatani has a sophisticated framework available to him for addressing such questions. And the Kantian dimension of his problem remains very much present in his conception.

Karatani's project is to transcend the hegemonic trinity of capital, nation, and state and to satisfy a desire to overcome the defects of capitalism and the nation-state, as well as to address the failure of Marxian expectation that nation-states will simply wither away with the final surpassing of capitalism. Karatani's appeal to Kant involves a moral-political dimension that is embedded into the merely economic structure of history. This conception provides the promise of world peace, which ultimately requires an abolition of the nation-state as a condition for realizing a "simultaneous bourgeois revolution" that would finally overcome state and capitalism and establish a world federation. For Karatani, one of Kant's great insights, especially in his later years, is his rejection of the importance of a people and of nationalism. He explains:

On the one hand, Kant had to be a thinker of the Enlightenment, since the old religious order continued to reign in Germany. On the other hand, however, he encountered the prevalence of the imaginary recovery of the community which had been destroyed by the Enlightenment in Romantic nationalism, epitomized by Herder's notion of the *Volk* who share German language and culture. The fact that Kant acutely contested this current of nationalism in his later years has been neglected. Kant's harsh critique of Herder and Fichte, no doubt, has been attracting sufficient interest, but it has never been read as a critique of their nationalism, despite the fact that Kant gradually clarified his position as a cosmopolitan. Although it is possible to say that Kant's later works can be integrated into his idea of "perpetual peace," this does not mean that he shifted his interest from metaphysical questions to actual questions of politics. Rather, it means that he found a new theological metaphysics in questions that were seemingly actual and political. To the extent that Kant's later works aimed at nations as transcendental illusions, they can be considered as sequels to the three *Critiques*. That nations are transcendental illusions implies that they are illusions

based upon reason rather than sense-perception, and, therefore, cannot be overcome by intellectual enlightenment.⁴

This means that Karatani offers the striking argument that for the later Kant nations are transcendental illusions; this is a very interesting and controversial claim. Indeed, one can say that it is at the heart of his own conception of Kantian cosmopolitanism. Once the nation turns out to be a transcendental illusion, then this shift begins to undermine the normativity of the state and of capital, as well. For Karatani, Kant's kingdom of ends and the dynamic structure implicit in the very conception of the original synthetic unity of apperception and of transcritique undermine the very trinity of Capital-Nation-State that they have brought forth in human history. Transcritique leads one to a conception of a world republic in which the nexus of Capital-Nation-State has been superseded. Karatani summarizes his project:

Kant's project for perpetual peace is not a question of mere international politics. He regarded human history as a process of achieving the kingdom of the end or the "world republic." Hence, it can be said that Kant's world republic entails a situation in which the trinity of capital-nation-state is superseded. Reading only Kant's works, however, does not clarify how his philosophy proceeds to the world republic. In *Transcritique*, I tried to elucidate Kant's works through those of Marx, who was rather ungenerous with Kant. Conversely, this also meant that I tried to reread Marx's works as a continuation of the Kantian critique. Still, I must admit that there are some important aspects missing from the transcritical reading of Kant and Marx: violence and aggressivity. Through a transcritical reading of Kant and Freud, I believe, these points can be brought to light. [TKF 35]

Regardless of whether Karatani is correct that the post-Kantian idealists, as Heidegger claimed, lost track of human beings' thrownness into the world, for him, this does set up some of the tasks of systematically reading philosophy and the philosophy of history through the relation of Marx to Kant and to Hegel. He details:

⁴ Kojin Karatani, "Transcritique on Kant and Freud," in *Nation and Aesthetics: On Kant and Freud*, transl. Jonathan E. Abel, Darwin H. Tsen, and Hiroki Yoshikuni, New York, NY: Oxford University Press 2017, pp. 33–64, here pp. 34–5. [Henceforth cited as TKF]

I give the name *transcritique* to the task of reading Marx by way of Kant and Kant by way of Marx. This does not mean, of course, a simple comparison or synthesis of the two. In fact, another philosopher stands between these two: Hegel. To read Marx by way of Kant and Kant by way of Marx is also to read Hegel by way of these two philosophers, who precede and follow him. In other words, it means to undertake a new critique of Hegel. [WH xiii]

For Karatani, Hegel is the philosopher who conceptualizes the self-stabilizing system of Capital-Nation-State, whereas Kant and, in a different way, Marx endeavor to break with that triad. Karatani's ambition is to find a way out of this self-stabilizing system of Capital-Nation-State. To do so, he goes back to Kant and to a conception of human cosmopolitan associative relations that he takes Kant to anticipate. Karatani aims to find a structure that can pry us apart from the end-of-history framework of the Capital-Nation-State structure. For that purpose, he revisits the way Marx sought to invert the structure of Capital-Nation-State that Hegel had recognized. Karatani argues:

Marx's critique of Hegel was a materialist inverting or turning on its head of Hegel's idealist speculations, which is commonly imagined as an up-down inversion (between the sensible or material and the ideal). But it is most important to see how it was an inversion between before and after.

According to Hegel, the essence of something only becomes apparent in its effects. That is, he viewed things *ex post facto*, "after the fact." Kant, on the other hand, viewed things *ex ante facto*, "before the fact." With regard to the future, we can only make predictions, not draw positive conclusions. For this reason, Kant held that ideas are illusions. But they are *transcendental illusions*. This means that, unlike illusions that arise from our sense perception, we cannot eliminate them by way of reason, because they are illusions that are necessary to reason itself. In plain language, without these illusions we would lapse into schizophrenia. [WH xvii]

Thus, Marx's inversion of Hegel is for Karatani less of an up and down inversion in which the primacy of the ideal relative to the sensible is replaced by the primacy of the sensible relative to the ideal than it is a temporal inversion, an inversion in what comes before and what comes after. Hegel viewed the essence of things in their effects and hence after the fact. Karatani also thinks, though, that Hegel differs from Kant in that Kant held that

one could only make predictions, not draw possible conclusions about the future. Here Karatani draws a false contrast, for Hegel ends his Preface to the *Philosophy of Right* with the assertion that philosophy always comes too late to make positive claims about the future. Humans can only understand where the future is going from the vantage point of what is now already past. He elaborates:

For example, with regard to world history, Kant says that looking at developments up until now, we can regard them as gradually progressing toward the "kingdom of ends" (a world in which moral law is realized). He calls this sort of idea a "regulative idea." This is distinct from a "constructive idea" in that, while it can never be realized, it perseveres as an indicator that we strive to approach...By contrast, for Hegel, ideas were not, à la Kant, something oriented toward future realization but that would never go beyond the stage of illusion. For Hegel, ideas were not illusions; they were real: reality itself was ideal. For Hegel, history by definition was over. [WH xviii]

This is not the place to dispute Karatani's claim (and one widely shared and believed) that, for Hegel, history has, by definition, ended. However, it is important to note that Karatani's conception rests on two highly problematic assumptions. The first is that Kant conceived of the nation (and by implication capital and the state) as a transcendental illusion. It can be argued with at least equal plausibility that Kant anticipated some of Hegel's analysis of the structure of nation, state, and capital. But that would mean that Kant's conception of cosmopolitanism is not the dissolution of that triad that Karatani is looking for. And again, for Hegel, ideas are always grasped from one's own standpoint in history so that they bring with them an ineliminable transcendental illusion (*Schein*); their *Sein* for us is always also *Schein*.

Karatani sees Ionia in ancient Greece, rather than Athens, as a possible forerunner of his conception of economic and political equality and thus the possibility of a future repetition of the *isonomia* that he takes to be distinctive of Ionian city-states and of Ionian philosophy in Ancient Magna Graecia. Karatani embeds his account of the significance of Ionian philosophy and social structure within a conception that is implicitly sympathetic to the axial theory of history, advanced by Jaspers after the Second World War, and uses it as the starting point for a truly cosmopolitan world-philosophy, which he outlined in *Vom Ursprung und Ziel der Geschichte*.

Karatani cogitates:

Around the sixth century BCE, Ezekiel and the biblical prophets emerged from among exiles in Babylon; Thales emerged in Ionia on the coast of Asia Minor; Gautama Buddha and the Jain founder Mahavira appeared in India; and Laozi and Confucius emerged in China... This simultaneity and parallelism are striking and cannot be explained straightforwardly based on socioeconomic history.⁵

Comparable to Jaspers' axial conceptual representation of history, Karatani's conception of the structure of history implicitly has twin axes with the prospect of the future repetition of a past possibility of a truly global world order in which economic and political equality and human rights are sustained and philosophical thought flourishes. Karatani shares Jaspers' Kantianism. However, they differ in respect to the status of economic relations in the structure of history. To be sure, Karatani's conception repudiates any economic determinism and even emphasizes that the first axis of human history resists explanation in narrowly socio-economic terms, as his remark indicates that socioeconomic history cannot account for the simultaneity and parallelism of the emergence of the founding fathers of world civilizations. Karatani takes Ionian society and natural philosophy to point the way toward a non-religious form of economic and political equality and toward the possibility of a universalism that is not based on religion. He explains:

Universal religion is born of a critique of the religions affiliated with the state and community (modes of exchange B and A), that is to say, of the dominance of priests and officials. However, that critique is bound to be absorbed within a religious framework, that is to say, to revert to the dominance of a new caste of priests and officials. Another way of seeing this is to say religion ends up becoming the state itself. *The Structure of World History*, while giving due emphasis to the emergence of mode of exchange D on the one hand in the form of universal religions, poses the question of whether mode of exchange D might not take a nonreligious form. I then locate the first actual example of mode of exchange D, that is to say the return of mode of exchange A through the sublation of modes B and C, in the thought and politics of Ionia in ancient Greece. However, I was not able to develop this point

sufficiently in *The Structure of World History*, and I take that opportunity now, in the current volume. [IOP 140]

In *Isonomia and the Origins of Philosophy* Karatani makes a striking case for the importance of Ionian philosophy and the conception of *isonomia*, or equality or no-rule, that, so he argues, developed in Ionia and not in Athens with its rule by the less well-off majority, its democracy, which also encouraged Athenian colonialism and imperialism. Thus, the Ionian philosophers become the harbingers of Karatani's conception in which he argues that Milesian natural philosophy emerged as an effort to defend and reinstate the principle of *isonomia* and social contract at the time in which it was under threat from forces internal to the Ionian city-states that were encouraging the development of tyrannies. He describes the ensuing political crisis as follows:

Gaps between rich and poor, and ruler-ruled relations, were becoming prominent internal features in different Ionian poleis by this time. This signaled the breakdown of *isonomia*. As a means of naturalizing these relations, the idea of a community based on tribal or mythical affiliation began to be emphasized over the idea of the polis as a collective based on social contract.

It was in order to counter such a climate that Thales and the natural philosophers of Miletus offered an explanation of the world without reference to the gods. It was their way of reconfirming the identity of the polis, not in tribal or mythological lineage, but in a social contract. This was linked to the strategy to rebuild a society without the ruler-ruled relation, which is to say, reestablishing *isonomia*. Natural philosophy is, in this sense, fundamentally social philosophy.

Prior to this, Ionians did not think about the meaning of their social practice. As a rule, people become aware of the significance of something only when it is disappearing. For the Ionians this would be in the middle of the sixth century. In the various regions of Ionia, as the relations of *isonomia* progressively deteriorated, democratic reforms were initiated. In most cases these resulted in tyranny. In Samos, for example, reforms initiated by Polycrates and his confidante Pythagoras ended in him assuming the position of tyrant in 538 BCE. Polycrates's plan was to bring about political reform. However, through this process he gradually turned dictatorial. Behind this process, though, were social realities in need of reform, and the tyranny received the support of the people. We have to assume this sort of situation played out not only in the island of Samos but in the entire territory of Ionia. The natural philosophers' inquiry into the primal

⁵ Kōjin Karatani, *Isonomia and the Origins of Philosophy*, transl. Joseph A. Murphy, Durham, NC: Duke University Press 2017, p. 1. [Henceforth cited as IOP]

substance, or arche, originated in this context. Thales's young associate Anaximander writes as follows: "From [such] things existing objects come to be, into them too does their destruction take place, according to what must be: for they give recompense and pay restitution to each other for their injustice according to the ordering of time." [IOP 57]

In a footnote, Karatani states that he slightly amended the quoted passage of Anaximander by replacing "From what things" with "From [such] things."⁶ Karatani adds "things" to the much more indefinite "that out of which" of Anaximander who does not yet even have a thing ontology, but rather a conception of nature-being (*physis*) in which the four elements give way to each other as they emerge from the indefinite.

Karatani very plausibly suggests that Ionian philosophy took everything to be natural and without fundamental hierarchy, and that while different elements were taken by the Ionian philosophers to be fundamental, the important point was that there were no gods that moved everything, everything was self-moved. Karatani continues:

To reiterate, the idea of a self-moving matter was a cornerstone of Ionian natural philosophy, shared by all in its lineage. Where their thinking diverged was on the question of what this original matter might be. For Thales, it was water. Anaximander, on the other hand, while recognizing four composite factors (earth, water, fire, air), posited a substratum or *hypokeimenon*, because these four elements are mutually transmutable. This substratum was the boundless or apeiron. Put this way, Anaximander appears more profound than Thales, who simply identified arche as water.

However, Anaximander's pupil Anaximenes went on to locate the primordial matter in air...Subsequently, Heraclitus found it in fire. This development seems rather strange in that all these things were already contained in Anaximander's four composite factors. If Anaximander had appeared after these thinkers as a synthesis, that would make sense. But why did these later thinkers feel the need to return to Thales?

Anaximander's boundless or infinite (apeiron) is not matter that can be known through the senses, but rather an abstract idea...As I have explained, this was a restatement of the mythological idea of chaos, and

not a decisive advance on Thales's thought. Hence, to really transcend mythology, it was necessary to once again assert that matter was moved not by the gods, but of itself. Thinkers from Anaximenes on pushed their thought in that direction. [IOP 59]

The conception that Karatani recognizes in Ionian philosophy represents an alternative to the opposition between teleology and mechanism that is the result of taking motion and matter to be fundamentally separated. The separation of motion and matter then requires the conception of divine intervention which the Ionians likewise eschew in favor of a completely naturalistic approach. Karatani notes that this naturalism is then taken up by Marx in his early work, especially in his doctoral dissertation on Greek atomism.

According to Marx, it is this swerve in atomic motion which, while mechanistic, brings about a variation that appears teleological in effect. In this way the young Marx discovered in Epicurus an attempt to criticize both teleology and mechanistic determinism based on the idea of the atomic swerve. The thought of the Ionian school is revived in this way in Marx's materialism.

In many respects, the thought of the Ionian school remains vital even today. As discussed before, the thinking of the Ionian school, which sees no separation between motion and matter, has been regarded as magical. Indeed, modern physics is built upon their separation. However, as Descartes showed, such a separation is premised on God, or else a godlike perspective. That is to say, on this point modern physics inherits an Aristotelian metaphysics or theology. Quantum mechanics decisively displaces this perspective. In some sense, it recuperates the Ionian position that matter and motion are inseparable. That is to say, the quantum (light, or the electron) is at the same time both particle (matter) and wave (motion). [IOP 67]

In his more recent work, *Nation and Aesthetics*, Karatani comes back to the role of Kantian imagination in reconceptualizing historical development to establish his conception of a new economic and political order. He rightly suggests that "imagination" in Kant is not a mere psychological imagining or fancy, a mere representation of what is not present. As Hegel had already emphasized in his earliest published works, especially in *Glauben und Wissen*, Kant's conception of the imagination was grounded in an underlying felt unity of reason and nature, and of understanding and sensibility. The imagination in

⁶ From "Anaximander," in *The Texts of Early Greek Philosophy: The Complete Fragments and Selected Testimonies of the Major Presocratics, Part I*, ed. and transl. Daniel W. Graham, Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press 2010, pp. 45-71, here p. 51.

Kant mediates between reason and sensibility, but as Hegel emphasized against the surface narrative of the Critiques imagination can only mediate between reason and sensibility because imagination is an expression of their underlying ground. Karatani notes that the fundamental mediating role of the imagination as it was conceived by Kant came to provide the foundation to modern aesthetics. But this mediating role has often been understood in terms of a narrow subjectivism and methodological solipsism that trades on its connection with the much more ambitious conception that the young Hegel had already discovered in Kant while officially rejecting it.

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries modern aesthetics came to be entangled with the development and the expression of nationalism. This was possible because aesthetics was already fundamentally social and even political in Kant, as Hannah Arendt argued in her book on Kant's political philosophy. This became more accentuated in Romanticism and post-Romanticism. In Italy, Germany, and Japan, nineteenth century nationalism morphed into twentieth century fascism. The fascists in those countries found especially in aesthetics a dimension of imaginative possibilities that would allow them to go beyond capitalism and the state through the source of real possibilities that mediate between capital and state.

Karatani argues that the theories of Kant and Freud, which are usually understood to be contrasting theories, are deeply linked and suggest ways to go beyond the triad of the three modes of exchange: Capital-Nation-State, that have held modernity captive. Karatani proposes using instead the resources of Kant's cosmopolitan conception to go beyond the nation and the nationalism that appeared in the fundamentally aesthetic guise of fascism in the direction of the world republic that Kant had outlined principally in his essay *Zum ewigen Frieden: Ein philosophischer Entwurf*.⁷ Like Jaspers, but with a greater emphasis on economic relations, Karatani endeavors to theorize the conditions under which the resources that have emerged from the hegemony of technology, can prepare the way for a new conception of social relations and communication that would make a second axial age possible.

Kant's conception of a world republic has been influential in the twentieth century, especially in response to the two World Wars. The League of Nations was formed after World War I under the influence of Kant's conception in his section on "Perpetual Peace" and the renewed attempt at a United Nations and its Charter addressing the fundamental status of human rights has firm roots in Kant too. Karatani explains:

Rather than benevolence or understanding, "unsocial sociability" as humanity (or human nature), as well as the wars or disasters it causes, lead to the League of Nations and ultimately the "world republic." Our experiences in the twentieth century endorse Kant's thinking. After the First World War the League of Nations was formed, and after the Second World War the United Nations. It is not human benevolence or understanding but the world wars, which were manifestations of "unsocial sociability," that actualized those institutions. As it were, nature actualized them. [TKF 36]

Karatani adduces article nine of Japan's postwar constitution, which renounces the right to wage war, as an expression of Kant's principle of peace and human rights. More implausibly, Karatani also takes said constitution to be influenced by Freud's radical revision in his conception of the superego. Thus, Karatani argues that the theories of Kant and Freud are not in fundamental opposition to each other but rather provide both a kind of explanation of current nationalistic and imperialistic tendencies, and tendencies to a renewal of fascism and simultaneously also the resources from which to transcend those nationalistic, imperialistic and fascist tendencies.

Jaspers was not very sympathetic to Freud and would have rejected Karatani's claim that Freud's conception of the superego or of the death drive contributes significantly to an understanding of the psychopathologies at work in human culture. Yet Jaspers no less than Karatani is fundamentally interested in overcoming psychopathology by moving in the direction of individual and social wellness and integrity. Marx plays a significant, but more peripheral role for Jaspers than for Karatani. But Jaspers does not diminish the significance of Marx or fail to recognize the Kantian dimensions of Hegel's notion of the social struggle for successful mutual recognition and its impact on Marx.

Jaspers emphasizes the connection between modern technology and the systematic form of inquiry of modern science. He draws on Kant's

⁷ Immanuel Kant, *Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Essay* (1795), transl. M. Campbell Smith, London, UK: Swan Sonnenschein & Co, 1903.

conception of the systematicity of the revolution inaugurated by Copernicus in modern astronomy and by Francis Bacon in empirical science. Kant aimed to generalize and to extend this systematic revolution to philosophy in his Copernican revolution as he emphasized in the B-Preface to the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Kant went on to extend this systematic account to the idea of self in its relation to other selves, to the idea of the world and to our idea of God, an account that Jaspers reconstructs from his own vantage-point in the three parts of his *Philosophy*. While rejecting science or philosophy as system Jaspers pushes forward a conception of the systematicity of philosophy and of science that is extend also to his understanding of the idea of human history.

Karatani and Jaspers share a Kantian conception of world history as the normative idea of human social and economic freedom, of human communicative freedom in history. Jaspers recognizes the possibility that global despotism may succeed and a more democratic political liberalism may fail to gain traction, a situation

that is closer to realization than it was even after the end of World War II. A second axial age does not depend for Jaspers on establishing the kind of social relations that allow for individual freedom and freedom invested in social structure. It might emerge from the radical alienation of the current globalization of technology. Karatani differs from Jaspers not in the potential (and the threat even to human survival) they take to be inherent in the global proliferation of technology. Karatani argues that the idea of a Kantian cosmopolitan world-order will and must bring about the abolition of the systematic structure that binds Nation-State-Capital and a renewal of cooperative relations that are not primarily grounded in private property, but are expressions of equality of a more searching kind. Jaspers was deeply critical of communism and state-capitalism, but open to the importance of the kind of cooperative socialism advocated by Karatani. For Jaspers this might well turn out to be consistent with human flourishing and freedom on a global scale. For Karatani, it is the only way such flourishing is conceivable.