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Jaspers' Early Scientific Approach In The Light Of Alexander von Humboldt's "Cosmos"

Suzanne Kirkbright
University of Birmingham
suzkirkbright@yahoo.de

Abstract: Jaspers' book, *Psychology of World Views* (1919), includes basic tenets of his critical, at times even controversial approach to modern science. In his transitional work, Jaspers acknowledged the spirit of 19th Century scholarship, as still alive in Alexander von Humboldt's magnum opus, *Cosmos* (1858). At the same time, Jaspers counteracted his appreciation of Classical scholarship by supplying a critique of modern man, whose unique ability is to remain authentic and to expose shells of living in his ideologically changed world.¹

¹ Originally published in *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Karl Jaspers Gesellschaft, Jahrgang 20* (2007). (Eds. E. Salamun-Hybasek, K. Salamun & H. Stelzer) Innsbruck: Studienverlag.

Introduction

"The Germans, and they are not unique, possess the talent of making the sciences inaccessible."² Goethe's aphorism could have been a pertinent motto for the young Karl Jaspers. In his 1904/05 Göttingen diary, Jaspers had inscribed a sentiment that was probably drawn from *Elective Affinities*, as seen with reference to the following excerpt from Otilie's diary:

The individual is free to occupy himself with whatever attracts him, with whatever gives him pleasure, with whatever seems to him useful: but the proper study of mankind is man.³

The thought implies that whilst preparing for preliminary examinations in anatomy, physiology and psychology, Jaspers regarded his vocation as essentially inseparable from the humanist outlook. Yet his ambition was to practice in a psychiatric clinic. He desired an active and complementary role along with the possibility to conduct scientific research. In Sils Maria, Jaspers took a solemn "oath to science." The implications of his famous 1902 portrait were translated into a memorable letter to his father, in which he confessed to realizing his potential only by appreciating

inscription was marked in ink on page two of his diary, entitled "Tagebuch 1904/5: Jaspers, Oldenburg i. Grossh[erzogtum] stud. med." [Karl Jaspers' Literary Estate]. The exact words were: "Jeder kann nur eine Seite des Menschen darstellen, aber den Begriff davon haben, was der ganze Mensch sei."

² (Author's translation). Quoted after Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Maximen und Reflektionen*, in: *Werke* = Hamburger Ausgabe, Aphorism 945.

³ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Elective Affinities*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale, Harmondsworth: Penguin 1971, p. 216. Jaspers'

the rewards of a proper, actively engaged approach to his medical studies.⁴

The buoyant optimism of the early years in support of the power of science to confirm an individual's position in the world was coupled with the assertion that science holds the key to a true, objective account of life experience.⁵ Jaspers embraced science as an opportunity to become more closely involved in a sustained process of self-illumination and self-development. Here again, his attitude seemed hardly guided by an intuitive disposition of the kind expressed in Goethe's works.⁶ Jaspers' goals seem so modern as to

extol the privilege of scientific method, whose application in objective study may not necessarily be integrated into a harmonious tableau of results, but rather requires an appeal to a critical thought process. Thus, in the *Psychology of World Views*, Jaspers identified Goethe's picture of the world as almost too virtuous, as perhaps too partial in conveying trust in man's nature and in seeing a universal order being sustained.⁷

In other words, Goethe's vision of life appeared almost too good to be true. Humanity may have owed a debt to what Jaspers called the "mighty personifications" of comprehensive and vital energies, whose quality he characterized as "humanist" and "absolutist." But these dispositions implied traditional-intuitive or critical-communicative attributes that were implicitly personified for Jaspers in the lives of Plato, Goethe, Humboldt (as humanists); and Socrates and Kierkegaard (as absolutists) (*PW*, pp. 353f). Although he proved rather dissatisfied with what he called the relativism of Goethe's conduct as a scientist, Jaspers was undoubtedly drawn by Goethe's ability to represent the vital structure of living organisms in his unique morphology of life that could only be disseminated with specific reference to the intuitive capacity of the poet's creative mind. At the same time, Jaspers' ambivalence towards the status of science seems based then on an incentive to appropriate, on an inspirational level, the kind of creativity emerging from contemporary debate.

In this respect, Jaspers frequently acknowledged the influence of Max Weber.⁸ *General Psychopathology* is often cited as Jaspers' exemplary endorsement of Weber's belief in objectivity, as distinct from the creative impetus of science, and more in tune with Weber's appeal for 20th Century intellectuals to appreciate their connection to a German tradition of

⁴ Karl Jaspers' letter to his father was first published by Hans Saner as *Karl Jaspers. Studium 1901-1907. Autobiographische Schriften*. In: *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Karl-Jaspers-Gesellschaft*, Vol. 9/1996, Elisabeth Salamun-Hybasek and Kurt Salamun eds, pp. 32-40.

⁵ Jaspers' views on science were repeated on numerous occasions, but his expositions in *Philosophy* and in the 1948 inaugural lecture in Basel are noteworthy. See Karl Jaspers, *Philosophy 1* ("Introduction to Philosophy"), trans. E. B. Ashton, Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1969, especially on "Systematics of the Sciences", pp. 174-225 (henceforth cited as *P1-3*); and Karl Jaspers, "Philosophy and Science" in: *Way to Wisdom (An Introduction to Philosophy (1950))*, trans. Ralph Manheim, New Haven and London: Yale University Press 1954, pp. 147-167. A useful overview of Jaspers' approach is also in the revised edition of Kurt Salamun, *Karl Jaspers*, Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann 2006, especially "Philosophie und Wissenschaft," pp. 94-101.

⁶ Jaspers' Goethe critique in his acceptance speech for the Goethe Prize in 1947 became controversial due to E. R. Curtius's polemic, in which he saw him as "a Wilhelm von Humboldt for our time", see E. R. Curtius, "Goethe oder Jaspers?," *Rhein-Neckar-Zeitung*, 7 May 1949. Hans Saner's analysis of Jaspers' speech showed how the Goethe critique dated back the 1919 book, Hans Saner, "Existentielle Aneignung und historisches Verstehen. Zur Debatte Jaspers - Curtius um die Goethe Rezeption," in Bernd Weidmann, ed., *Existenz in Kommunikation. Zur philosophischen Ethik von Karl Jaspers*, Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann 2004, pp. 151-166 (henceforth cited as *EIK*). Significant is that Jaspers sets against his objection to the blindness of Goethe's theory of colour, his ignorance of technical expertise, a treatment of "Goethe's limitations" that did not necessarily address these as creative restrictions, especially because of his interest in Goethe's philosophical inspiration. In the posthumous edition of the *Great Philosophers*, Jaspers' perception of Alexander von Humboldt is similar to his perception of Goethe's incentive to inspire in others a creative, philosophical outlook in the service of "expanding horizons". See Karl Jaspers, *Die Großen Philosophen*, (Nachlaß 1, Darstellungen und Fragmente), Hans Saner, with Raphael Bielander eds., Munich and Zurich: Piper 1981, p. 120.

⁷ Karl Jaspers, *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen*, Berlin: Springer 1919, p. 352f. Henceforth cited as *PW*.

⁸ Many instances in Jaspers' published works and private correspondence testify to Weber's influence, but in the foreword to the third edition of *Philosophy*, Jaspers described Weber as the key influence for his separation of natural from human sciences: "That true science might be at work there [in the scientific nature of the historical sciences, SK], and how (beyond the undoubtedly scientific activities of gathering, restoring, judging texts and documents and monuments) - this became clear to me through Max Weber's writings." *P 1*, p. 12.

distinguishing historical from natural sciences.⁹ The German consciousness of a division of natural sciences from the so-called humanities was played out in Jaspers' highly respected first book, in specific appropriation of the ongoing debate on meaningful understanding and causality.¹⁰ Jaspers showed here how what he later described as the "glorious ability to know" (*PI*, p. 13), because of his background in medicine and psychiatry, was both in league with, yet wholly distinct from a creative, that is to say, philosophical approach. After the success of his first book, it became clear that Jaspers felt a growing disquiet, perhaps even frustration at the fact that his endeavours in psychology should have coincided with Freud's venture into the unconscious realm. Jaspers periodically distanced his work from Freud and his pupils, whose idea of psychoanalysis indulged in pseudo-scientific practices that were, for Jaspers, as if claiming a privileged insight into society's ills.¹¹ If Jaspers consistently emphasized the sheer objectivity of a scientific outlook as a matter of principle, his rather narrow definition of a strictly scientific contribution appeared particularly helpful when his views about science transcended the terms of reference of his research in Heidelberg's psychiatric clinic.

At this point, Jaspers' fascination with the humanist world-view could be said to have intensified, at least in the sense that he seemed committed to the idea that in order to appreciate one's full potential, it is necessary to reflect what manifests itself through life as authentic being:

The individual's ideal sense of self is as a microcosm; he strives to realize the entirety of man's possibilities in himself (*PW*, p. 352, author's translation).

⁹ The split of natural and human sciences was implied in Dilthey's dictum "We explain Nature, we understand the soul."

¹⁰ See further S. Nassir Ghaemi, "Karl Jaspers and the General Psychopathology: What is scientific Psychiatry?," in Leonard H. Ehrlich and Richard Wisser eds, *Karl Jaspers' Philosophie. Gegenwartigkeit und Zukunft/Karl Jaspers's Philosophy. Rooted in the Present, Paradigm for the Future*, Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann 2003, pp. 187-194.

¹¹ See Matthias Bormuth, *Lebensführung in der Moderne, Karl Jaspers und die Psychoanalyse*, Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog 2002, especially pp. 52-8 and pp. 66-8.

In the preface to the fourth edition of the *Psychology of World Views*,¹² Jaspers also recalled the results of his book as a "naïve" impetus dating from his youth. In retrospect, he regretted that his uncritical approach to values that were not yet neutralized in his study was difficult to view at the time as a defining process towards a conception of life experience that was not restricted to a particular viewpoint in psychology. The purpose of this essay cannot be directly to address the manner in which the focus of Jaspers' early work shifted from his scientific background to the emergence of his philosophy. Instead, this contribution is restricted to an examination of Jaspers' appropriation of a scientific viewpoint, insofar as it emerges in his second book, where the underlying rationale may be read in comparison to the endeavour of the world famous explorer and scholar Alexander von Humboldt. In particular, we consider the proposition that Jaspers' critique of *Weltanschauung* is in principle similar to the central gesture of Humboldt's development of the results of his many scientific expeditions into a project that dominated his later years, finally culminating in his supervision of the magnum opus, *Cosmos*.

2.

In Jaspers' 1919 book, there is an impressive record of nuances from German Idealist thinkers and from this tradition, which guided the selection of the concept "Weltanschauung" as the work's title-theme. In the introduction, Jaspers produced a comprehensive list of influences – Dilthey and Hegel, Kant, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche and Max Weber's sociology of religion (*PW*, p. 11). The collection of these works at the outset lends the book amongst all Jaspers' works the sort of intrinsic claim to objectivity that he characteristically searched for in his representation of contemporary life. In exposition of the question "What is Weltanschauung?", Jaspers also responded as follows:

At least something whole and something universal. If, for example, the debate is about knowledge: not as an

¹² *PW*, preface to the fourth edition, 1954. The perplexity of translating Jaspers' interpretation of "Weltanschauung" into English is evidenced by the fact that of all Jaspers' works, his 1919 book has yet to be produced in authorized translation. In this essay, I elected to leave the concept in the original German. Moreover, further translations from Jaspers' book are my own.

individual specialist discipline, but knowledge as an entirety, as cosmos (*PW*, p. 1).

The reader confronted with this reflection cannot avoid noticing the appeal to maintain an open mind about the outcome of the work.¹³ Yet the holistic dimension of this study was a quality that Jaspers readily acknowledged as representing a particular dilemma, since it necessitated compiling a merely superficial, or "encyclopaedic" survey of facts, whose preparation could scarcely count in comparison to a particularly fruitful tradition:

If the best philosopher is defined as anyone who is the most universal and concrete – without being merely encyclopaedic – and who most broadly appropriates, comprehends, defines and contributes to the *Zeitgeist*, then today the best philosopher is perhaps a trained scientist, who only happens to stand with both feet in one discipline. However, *de facto* he searches for cognitive relations in all aspects – always in a concrete sense – and interacts with reality, as it is physically present (*PW*, p. 2).

Such a self-referential exposition was perhaps admissible, since Jaspers knew that his book might qualify as his habilitation thesis. Nor was the irony lost that Windelband initially recommended Jaspers as an associate professor in philosophy, not psychology.¹⁴ Jaspers' ambition to win approval for his dedication to the philosophical tradition in which he lived and worked meant that this text necessarily included inconsistencies resulting from the practical need to remain ambivalent about his approach.

Firstly, there was the immediate concern with the methodological debate and his desire to release his treatment of psychology from the bounds of "rigorous science" and thus implicitly to work through and beyond Weber's influence. Secondly, his desire was to highlight the possibilities of philosophy as something more than objective science and thus by association also

¹³ Amongst Jaspers' contemporaries, Heidegger's critique was the most aggressive and Jaspers afterwards implied in his reading note that engaging with Heidegger's critique would have changed his entire book. See Martin Heidegger, "Anmerkungen zu Karl Jaspers' 'Psychologie der Weltanschauungen,'" in Hans Saner ed., *Karl Jaspers in der Diskussion*, Munich: Piper 1973, pp. 70-100, here p. 100.

¹⁴ Jaspers related the circumstances of the clerical error in his autobiographical interview, *Karl Jaspers erzählt sein Leben*, Münsterschwarzach: Vier-Türme Verlag, 1997.

to submit a critique of Rickert.¹⁵ Finally, there remained the latent principle of the poetical or intuitive approach to science, as alive in Goethe's scientific works. In respect of each of these points, Jaspers' striving to achieve an overarching survey of ideas that was collated and systematically ordered seems such that it cannot entirely be dissociated from the "encyclopaedic" character of Humboldt's late work. If Humboldt was motivated to disseminate his meticulously recorded observations in a philosophically embellished discourse, Jaspers' representation of world-views and interconnecting attitudes could not afford the kind of language that would place in question his credentials as a scientist. On the one hand, Humboldt disseminated empirical facts in a classic, literary text. On the other hand, Jaspers' reputation depended no less on the perspicuity with which he shed light on his subject, but he hoped, too, to highlight the limitations and possibilities of a key project.

3.

At stake was the plausibility of Jaspers' "understanding psychology" and he had glimpsed of a new phase of his creative work in which he could see that it was vital to achieve the transition from psychology to philosophy. This period of transition occurred from around 1913 to 1919, thus coinciding with a time of unprecedented crisis in Europe. Perhaps, it is not incidental that Jaspers sought a model of authentic experience in a world in which traditionally accepted ideologies were in flux. At this time, Jaspers' critical focus on Goethe's humane world-view highlighted how for Goethe each individual experience could have been described as authentic, yet only within a framework where each experience was relative to the last, with the resulting condition that no single experience could be found as authentic, or unique. In this light, the immediacy of each fresh experience becomes reduced to a facet of a compulsion for the kind of harmony that fails to highlight how the self may also be radically called into question (*PW*, p. 353).

What remains other than a fragment of life experience is reduced to the "-ism" of a seemingly compelling ideology, yet an ideology that may spread

¹⁵ Christian Rabanus, "Kommunikation als praktischer Kern von Jaspers' Philosophie," *EIK*, pp. 35-52, here p. 37.

with alarming tempo and even with revolutionary consequences.¹⁶ The issue that obviously distinguishes Jaspers' interpretation of *Weltanschauung* from Humboldt's gesture in *Cosmos* is not necessarily that the latter strove to compile a theory of the universe without special reference to the circumstances of the time, but that the anti-ideological focus of the former was difficult to appreciate precisely because of the radical nature of political change in the early 20th century. Moreover, if Humboldt had delivered his lectures in 1828 in pre-revolutionary Berlin when political affairs were no less turbulent and unsettling, the final blueprint submitted by Humboldt was wedded to the Homeric conception of the cosmos as positing beauty and order.¹⁷ Humboldt's conception of the universe was rooted in devotion to the Greek tradition; and through his repeated allusions to the orderliness of a different and static world, the reality of heaven and earth was to be studied in sharper focus.

Thus, Humboldt's vision of his world was filtered through the inclusion of mythology, which was part of the appeal of his enterprise. In contrast, Jaspers' *Psychology of World Views* was successful by virtue of the fact that it interrupted the idea of connection to man's dependency on systems of thought that were, in Hannah Arendt's terms, a claustrophobic, "mythologizing building".¹⁸ In other words, the plausibility of reading Jaspers' appropriation of *Weltanschauung* in connection with Humboldt's achievement only arises by setting aside Jaspers' critique of the modern individual's potential to inhabit "shells" of ideologies in which he may retreat into an inauthentic conception of reality. Jaspers' main

objection to this type of behaviour lay in what he already seemed to identify as the undemocratic appeal to the masses (*PW*, p. 282). Jaspers' conception of modern life assumed an uncompromising shift of man's focus beyond the world of actual discovery of mountain peaks and tidal currents that was still possible for Humboldt. Problematically, Jaspers' approach was caught within the tradition from which he emerged.¹⁹

4.

In the foreword to *Cosmos*, Humboldt mentioned his illustrious contemporaries, as inspirations for his will to compile such an ambitious study of the natural world. The more sublime his language, the more secure Humboldt felt his success as a scientist. Schelling's philosophy of nature and his brother, Wilhelm's philosophy of language had presented a literary-philosophical tradition that obliged him to produce a document rivalling the calibre of their work.²⁰ Humboldt's project involved aspects of autobiographical reflection, empirical observation, and literary discourse, which were interwoven in repeated allusion to a mythical dimension of the interpretation. His devotion to compiling a holistic conception of the vitality of living organisms punctuated the minutiae of his portrait of the natural world. The apparent leap of faith in Humboldt's work in which science is enriched through myth and allegory prompts a comparison with Jaspers' devotion to Kant's regulative principle, which seemed to count above all for Jaspers' interpretation of *Weltanschauung*. In Kant's *Critique of Judgement* we find mention of the concept of *Weltanschauung* in association with Kant's protracted reflection on nature and the sublime. What is called the "intuition of the

¹⁶ This is not to say that Jaspers overlooked the tide of political events, merely that he reflected on these elsewhere. In particular, he represented his views at Heidelberg University's political club, where he described to his parents that he gave a talk on "Weltanschauung in politics," see Karl Jaspers, "Letter to father, Heidelberg, 4 August 1917" [Literary Estate]. The talk was first published by Dominic Kaegi as *Politische Stimmungen*, in Reiner Wiehl, Dominic Kaegi eds, *Karl Jaspers – Philosophie und Politik*, Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter 1999, pp. 229-255.

¹⁷ Alexander von Humboldt, *Kosmos. Entwurf einer physischen Weltbeschreibung*, Editiert und mit einem Nachwort versehen von Ottmar Ette und Oliver Lubrich, ed. Hans Magnus Enzensberger, Frankfurt am Main: Eichborn 2004, p. xx. (Henceforth cited as *Kosmos*).

¹⁸ Hannah Arendt, *Was ist Existenzphilosophie?* Berlin: Hain 1990, p. 40. (Author's translation).

¹⁹ Reiner Wiehl, "Karl Jaspers' Psychologie der Weltanschauungen zwischen Metaphysik und Erfahrung," in Reiner Wiehl, *Subjektivität und System*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp 2000, pp. 271-292. Wiehl called Jaspers' *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen* representative of Jaspers' ultimate conception of man as "the cosmos of Weltanschauungen" whose character was to "shine more brightly in certain locations," *ibid.*, p. 289. (Author's translation).

²⁰ See Interview with Hans Magnus Enzensberger, "Der Mann geht stets aufs Ganze," *Der Spiegel*, 13 September 2004, pp. 175-178, here p. 178 and further, "How come Humboldt is booming in Germany?," *Kosmos, Mitteilungen der Alexander von Humboldt-Stiftung*, October 2005.

world" is by way of accession to an infinite realm of ideas that transcend the sensory realm.²¹

That Jaspers incorporated into his *Psychology of World Views* an appendix on Kant's doctrine of ideas – a text pre-dating the preparatory lectures he gave in 1917 on the subject of his subsequent book and reinstating his work for Emil Lask – suggests that the principle of his book was less in critical application to Goethe's conception of man as opposed to the rigorous, Kantian doctrine of ideas. In this sense, Jaspers' conception of *Weltanschauung* loses its immediate connection with a particular political-historical dimension, even if his understanding of an individual's temporal connection with reality cannot entirely dispense with this dimension, in order to create a picture of his authentic being. Jaspers' adoption of *Weltanschauung* in some respects seems to have stripped the term of its intuitive connotation, only curiously to reinstate it in critical appeal to metaphysics as the realm of eternal truth.²² Thus, Jaspers' use of the concept of *Weltanschauung* becomes redundant to the extent that it is only incidental to the start of a speculative appraisal of an individual's purpose in life.

5.

This desire for a speculative interpretation of life invoked a problem, which Humboldt recognized as a particular difficulty of determining *Weltanschauung* from within the confines of purely scientific experience (*Kosmos*, p. 25). The potential inadequacy of this universalist approach was that it represented a twofold challenge not merely to represent empirical knowledge, but to do so with rhetorical measure and skill. The successful transition from a vast survey of mundane, yet meticulously annotated facts ranging across disciplines in Humboldt's *Cosmos* highlighted how an accurate depiction of the universe, as seen in the opening paragraph of Humboldt's text, was only possible by capturing "the realm of nature" as the province of "freedom" (*Kosmos*, p. 9).

This scheme therefore involved a price of recognizing that any individual accomplishment is

merely transitory. Humboldt understood that his theory of the universe was hardly to be viewed in posterity as a key permanently to unlock the store of man's empirical knowledge. Thus, his blueprint of the natural world belied a keen sense of humility about the static reality of the natural order and an appreciation of the potential danger of a scientific enquiry in pursuing a limitless examination of the vitality of life forms (*Kosmos*, p. 18). Of course, Humboldt knew first hand the precariousness of exposure to the force of nature through his first expedition with Bonpland in the Americas and their stricken though brief period of being stranded on the Orinoco. He sought the higher ground of philosophical clarification, not only because this was a natural gesture for a 19th century researcher. By contrast, Jaspers' exploration of a specific conception of man was always seeking a connection with reality, which he could neither practice nor express with the same immediacy as Humboldt. Yet Jaspers recognized that the way ahead was increasingly to render science more accessible from within an individual specialist discipline, if not necessarily from within philosophy. Arguably, further comparison is necessary with Jaspers' accomplished terminology of *Existenz*, as for example, in the classic definition: "To experience boundary situations is the same as *Existenz*" (*P2*, p. 179). Yet to explore such a comparison would extend beyond the limits of the present analysis and weaken our grasp of the central gesture of Jaspers' 1919 text as hinging on the fact that through living and working in a scientific tradition, it became possible to break away from its influence. Jaspers could attend to the creative aspect of formulating a conception of man's *Existenz* that is glimpsed in 1919 in definitions of limit situations of contest, death, chance and guilt (*PW*, pp. 226-247). These situations remain embedded in a pastiche, an extraordinary collation of ideas from any and every source, including an excerpt from a case study that Jaspers originally reproduced in his 1913 essay on acute psychosis in medical cases of schizophrenia.²³ By revising the earlier reference to a patient's case history in his speculative interpretation of *Weltanschauung*, Jaspers highlighted just how finely poised the balance was between his psychologically defined conception of reality and a purely speculative account of an

²¹ Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Judgement*, trans. James Creed Meredith, Oxford: Clarendon 1952, B 92f (§ 26).

²² *PW*, p. 408. In his biography, Hans Saner pointed out the involuntary poetic quality of Jaspers' prose, Hans Saner, *Karl Jaspers*, Hamburg: Rowohlt 1970, p. 133ff.

²³ Karl Jaspers, *Kausale und 'verständliche' Zusammenhänge zwischen Schicksal und Psychose bei der Dementia praecox (Schizophrenie)* in: *Zeitschrift für die gesamte Neurologie und Psychiatrie*, XIV/2 (1913), pp. 158-263, here p. 239.

individual's life experience. He had previously identified how a patient's search for the security of an intellectual Weltanschauung degenerated into what he called the "fiasco" of proportions. To mention this reference in the main text of his book again underlined how a break with tradition was not yet complete, how his work was in a phase of creative flux. The sceptical world-view that he identified from his patient's case notes served to illuminate his hypothesis of man, in which there remained a particular emphasis on the negativity of the individual's state: "The individual who exists in a shell tends to live cut off from limit situations" (*PW*, p. 369).

Ultimately, if this statement was the measure of Jaspers' contribution, then its positive consequences only later emerged beyond the specialism of science and within the new dimension of his philosophy. At this time, however, the Humboldtian gesture of enriching a work of science with an appeal to the realm of philosophy was alive. Moreover, Jaspers' critique of the Weltanschauung seemed no less based on a distinctive, if comparable aspiration to that of Humboldt to disseminate results both as a scientist and a humanist, whose particular field of expertise is to shed light on the Urgeheimnis of man.