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Jaspers and World Philosophy

A Critical Appraisal

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Abstract: Jaspers made a case for world philosophy as a unique exigency of our times, but in fact every age has been its own "modern world" in which philosophers have come forth to essay globally comprehensive systems. Jaspers promotes his own concept of "entering into the company of the Great Philosophers," but his Kierkegaardian existentialism tends to undercut any project of discovery of essential networking among them. His elaborate way of grouping the Great Philosophers is decidedly arbitrary. His focus on cultural diversity and philosophical individuality rather than cross-cultural and inter-textual access to perennially true ideas aligns with postmodern and multicultural projects in promoting differential historicist thinking. Against this tendency, and as illustration of its own heuristic of world-philosophical system-making, the essay ends by suggesting that Jaspers' anthropocentric concepts of *Dasein* and *Existenz* can be subsumed within a broader metaphysical framework developed by Emerson and Peirce, each of the three authors regarded as contributing to a mutually illuminating paradigm.

Cross-Cultural and Inter-Textual Syncretism in World Philosophy

My present agenda consists in reprising some of the analyses of my *Philosophy In World Perspective: A Comparative Hermeneutic of the Major Theories*, while renewing my quest to characterize Jaspers' place in world philosophy.[1] I will focus this agenda under the heading of the concept of world-philosophical syncretism. By syncretism I mean global concrescence, the endeavor to unite cross-cultural ideas in a comprehensive system. The overall point I will venture to make is that Jaspers, whose writings purport to bring us into the company of the Great Philosophers, wrote more as a retailer than original thinker in promoting world philosophy.[2] Moreover, his existential tropes do not maximally promote cross-cultural and inter-textual thought; and thus I propose at the end of the essay to suggest that his contribution can be enhanced when put in the compresence of more genuinely comprehensive theorists such as Ralph Waldo Emerson and Charles S. Peirce.

[1] David A. Dilworth, Philosophy in World Perspective: A Comparative Hermeneutic of the Major Theories, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989.

[2] Karl Jaspers, *Basic Philosophical Writings. Selections*, ed. and transl. Edith Ehrlich, Leonard H. Ehrlich, and George Pepper (Athens, OH; London: Ohio University Press, 1986) [henceforth cited as *BPW*]. Karl Jaspers, *Man in the Modern Age* (1931), transl. Eden and Cedar Paul (Routledge & Kegan Paul, Ltd., 1951). Karl Jaspers, *Reason and Existenz* (1935), transl. William Earle (Noonday Press, 1955).

In our times, the convergence of modern and pre-modern, Asian, Middle Eastern, Western, and other civilizations generates the conversation of this KJSNA panel's topic of cross-cultural hermeneutics. Despite the prevailing tendencies of professionalization and nationalization of philosophy in the contemporary academy, philosophy today has indeed a need to be global, reflecting contemporary human civilization that is being transformed by a worldwide networking of political, economic, and cultural forces. Jaspers astutely made this point as the exigency of philosophy in our "modern age."[3]

However, the history of ideas is replete with such urgencies, as well as with paradigms of cultural cross-fertilization and attendant convergence of philosophical traditions. Each was its own "modern age," and I don't think we need buy into the Heideggerian *historicist* concept of the *Gestell* (enframing) or any similar implication in Jaspers' own thought about the uniqueness (or limitations) of our own modern age.

Let us consider the record of philosophical convergences. The Athenian, Hellenistic, and Roman schools reconfigured the pre-Socratic trends of thought. The third and fourth century Neoplatonists re-gathered the theories of the Greek and Roman schools in novel syntheses. New confluences of Aristotelian, Neo-Platonic, and Arabic traditions occurred in the Middle Ages. The passage from Hindu to Buddhist, and the translation of Indian Buddhist sutras and sastras into Chinese, from the fourth century A.D. onward, presents another remarkable case of West-East philosophical concrescence. The Japanese have prided themselves on being "the museum of Asia" (in the nineteenth century words of Uchimura Kanzô), and have been a showcase of global philosophical synergies—first in its assimilation of Indian and Chinese premodern traditions and later in its broadly based absorption of Western ideas and institutions. If we take the trouble of examining them, each of these were "modern" epochs and had their own global and existential problematics.

Once we do the requisite background work probing the civilizational dynamics of the respective eras, we discover that this is a fruitful approach to evaluating key performances in the history of world philosophy. On our Western home front, for example, Leibniz absorbed Confucian and Neo-Confucian ideas that were reaching the Europe of his day through the letters of the Jesuit missionaries from China and entering into the fabric of various trajectories of European Enlightenment thought. In the nineteenth century, Schopenhauer and Emerson were the two most original world-philosophical theorists. Schopenhauer announced his expansive synthesis of Plato, Kant, and Indian thought in his *World as Will and Representation* in 1818 (second volume, 1845).[4] Emerson's writings achieved an even broader blending of major worldviews—the Platonic and Neoplatonic, Kant and the German Idealists, Spinoza, Goethe, Schiller, Swedenborg, Wordsworth and Coleridge, the Hindus, Buddhist, and Sufi mystics. He passed this world-expansive mindset to the tradition of American Transcendentalism. And let us not forget that Emerson and Schopenhauer were the two main influences on Nietzsche, whose thought so greatly impacted Jaspers'.[5]

On the modern Asian front, the palmary instance of the exigency of world-philosophy would appear to be found in the works of the "Kyoto School" of the 1930s, 1940s, and postwar years. The name of Nishida Kitarô heads the list, which includes Tanabe Hajime, Watsuji Tetsurô, Kuki Shûzô, Nishitani Keiji and others.[6] But while engaging the "Western" traditions in various "existential" formats, the Kyoto School

[3] See Jaspers on "The Image of the History of the Philosophy of the Encompassing": "Every philosophy has been, in fact, a philosophy of the Encompassing" (*BPW* 202). "My basic thought is only seemingly new. It cannot be authentically new, for I have spent my life conscious of finding age-old truth. In philosophy, being new speaks against being true…. I regard my thinking as the natural outcome of Western thought until now, the ingenuous synthesis by virtue of a principle that enables us to admit all that is true in any sense whatever" (*BPW* 203). "We may each adhere to a different faith, yet we can understand each other as adhering to a faith" (*BPW* 204). "… faith in the possibility of our understanding each other without restriction" (*BPW* 207). The whole passage makes the point about The Idea of a Common Fundamental Knowledge. Ergo: "The truth of any contemporary philosophy can unfold only in continuity with the entire tradition, through the clearest knowledge about the Encompassing and its modes. What existed originally must be included. What is true can reach the light of day only as the sum-total of the entirety of Western thought, indeed of the thought of mankind" (*BPW* 204).

[4] Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, 2 volumes, transl. E. F. G. Payne (New York: Dover, 1969).

[5] George J. Stack, *Emerson and Nietzsche: An Elective Affinity* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1992).

[6] *Sourcebook for Modern Japanese Philosophy: Selected Documents*, eds. David A. Dilworth, Valdo Viglielmo, and Agustin Jacinto Zavala (Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood Press, 1998).

advocates for the most part promoted time-honored Buddhist concepts as "Eastern" concepts, producing an early paradigm of polemicized multiculturalism rather than genuine theoretical syncretisms such as found in Schopenhauer and Emerson. I think a more authentic East-West syncretism is to be found in the writings of Fukuzawa Yukichi (1835-1901), the preeminent "modernizer" of the Meiji era in Japan.[7]

Out of these preliminary remarks on world-philosophical syncretisms I would like to come back to the project of my book. Its project was to establish what Charles S. Peirce would have called a "science of review"—that is, one that surveyed the entire territory of world philosophy and world religion with regard to the cross-cultural possibilities of interfacing, and establishing the essential networking among, the major classics. As an historical precedent, it patterned itself after Aristotle's way of reading his pre-Socratic and Athenian predecessors in the hermeneutical terms of his theory of the *four causes*, now reemployed to configure the homo- and hetero-archic relations of philosophical texts on a global scale.

In the course of time I have come to realize the inherent limitations of any such "science of review," in that it must be parasitic on the genuine first-order "research sciences," which in this context comes down to the original theoretical vistas created by the Great Philosophers themselves. I don't think, however, that we have to go the full length of Jaspers' Kierkegaardian existentialism in promoting their uniquely individual world-transcendence. In this respect Jaspers appears guilty of a kind of psychologism (or nominalism) whose net effect is to deconstruct the many essential networkings of efficacious ideas in the world history of philosophy—and thus preclude appreciation of their continued relevance for philosophical reflection in our own times.

To cut to the chase, what I think validly remains in my comparative hermeneutic of the major theories only partially coincides with Jaspers' project of world philosophy in reading the Great Philosophers in terms of (1) a comprehensive principle, —or assumption as to the possibility of cross-cultural encompassment of great ideas in their essential networking, —and (2) an evaluative methodology which distinguishes between the first-order seminal classics (which I call the "wholesalers") and those that reenact—often hybridizing and popularizing—the deeper and denser first principles of those first-line classics in attenuated versions (the "retailers"). The first of these—the principle of compresence (or interpresence) of the major theoretical achievements is the very principle of world-philosophical convergence which is danger of being "shipwrecked"—or at least compromised—by Jaspers' Kierkegaardian insistence on the world-transcending existential uniqueness of the Great Philosophers.

My own principle of encompassment and suggested method of empirical investigation-and-evaluation must of course work together. I don't see any other viable approach to this kind of intensive cross-cultural and inter-textual hermeneutics. The world-history of philosophy must be, and can be, learned and relearned out of the primary sources in their essential cross-references. This should be the way we come into "the company of the Great Philosophers," that is, into extensive understanding of the still efficacious wisdom of the many inter-resonating paradigms of world philosophy. However, for the most part, neither Jaspers nor the contemporary academy is set up to do this work, as I will explain further below.

Jaspers' Way of Parsing the Great Philosophers

In the Preface to his *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics* Kant remarked "there are scholars for whom the history of philosophy (both ancient and

[7] Fukuzawa Yukichi, *An Outline of a Theory of Civilization*, rev. transl. by David A. Dilworth and G. Cameron Hurst, III (Tokyo: Keio University Press, 2008). Fukuzawa Yukichi was in the vanguard of Japanese modernization in the early Meiji period, achieving the status of being one of modern history's first East-West world-philosophers. After his three trips to America and Europe in the 1860s he wrote a number of works which, drawing upon both his own indigenous Neo-Confucian heritage and European Enlightenment sources, articulated a universal paradigm of "civilization." His journeys to America and Europe brought him into contact with the array of post-medieval "secular Enlightenment" ideas in full swing. But these were not entirely Western ideas. They were already mixed with Eastern ideas. Through the letters sent back to Rome by the Jesuit missionaries in China, Leibniz had already become the chief conduit of Confucian and Neo-Confucian ideas in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Subsequently important authors such as Wolff, Voltaire, Bayle, and Hume's friend Adam Smith contributed their own prestige to the reception of them in European dress. Fukuzawa in his early career reversed the process of transmission, absorbing those Western Enlightenment ideas back into the intellectual thought matrix of his native Neo-Confucian heritage. For the Japanese of the Meiji period the result was a novel transformation of both heritages. See also David A. Dilworth, "Was Fukuzawa a Philosopher?", in *Modern Japanese Studies*, 25, 2008, 1-25; Julia Ching and Willard G. Oxtoby, *Moral Enlightenment: Leibniz and Wolff on China* (Nettetal: Steyler Verlag, 1992).

modern) is philosophy itself; for these the present *Prolegomena* are not written."[8] his remark was an extension of a passage in the concluding section of his *Critique of Pure Reason* where Kant distinguished the nature of "the philosopher," who is the lawgiver of human reason, from "the mathematician, the student of nature, and the logician," who exhibit skills in the use of reason. He calls the latter the "technicians of reason." The philosophers, he says, are engaged in producing the universal paradigms of human awareness—legislating, though ever falling short of, an ideal "cosmical concept." The technicians of reason do not so legislate; rather they presuppose philosophical first-principles as they factor their historical subject matters in specific ways.[9]

Jaspers rang existential changes on Kant's concept. In his vocabulary, every authentic philosophy can be regarded as falling under twin categories, the "historic" and the "historical."[10] The former—the "historic"—refers to the shining vista (the immortal worldview) achieved by the genuine philosopher in his own world-transcending *Existenz*, as his contribution to Kant's "cosmical concept." The latter places the philosopher in his empirical context, subject to all the interventions of historiography and the polyglot historicist mediations of the howling wolf pack in the academy.

Jaspers establishes this binary in relation to his own explicit formulations of "world philosophy" and the "world-history of philosophy." And we should appreciate that at the heart of his existential-historic concept he lodges his full-fledged "periechontological" metaphysics, articulated as "an encompassing and energizing ideal of the unity of Being and Truth." To this notion Jaspers added his ideal of "communicative reason," a presupposition of maximal illumination of human self-awareness—the equivalent of Kant's sense of the "cosmical concept"—as furnishing the bottom-line perennial paradigms of human self-understanding and "self-being." He then suggested a set of heuristic categories with which to classify the "Great Philosophers" who, in their "personal greatness," have contributed to our basic philosophical understanding of these paradigms.[11]

True to his binary of historic and historical, Jaspers established the criteria of "personal greatness" in philosophy in terms of two qualities: (1) originality as measurable by spiritual standards and (2) historical impact as a testimony to the recognition of such originality.[12] Understandably he advised against attributing greatness to philosophers close to his own time, and this caveat would of course pertain to our present consideration of his place among the philosophers.

In a nutshell, Jaspers established three main groups of Great Philosophers.[13] The first main group actually transcends "philosophy proper." It is comprised of the shortest list of "the four exemplary

[8] Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, transl. W. Ellington (Hackett, 1977), p. 1.

[9] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, transl. Norman Kemp Smith (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1965), pp. 657-668.

[10] See Jaspers on the "Illumination of encompassing existence": "to guard against the constant threat of sliding back into identifying it with a cognized object" ... "In my constant presence I am this encompassing existence, even though I can never cognize my existence as the Encompassing" (*BPW* 143). The "double nature of existence" (*BPW* 144). "The gap between the Immanent Mode and Existenz"... "Existenz is the irreplaceable historicity of a unique origin" (*BPW* 154). Spirit is not Existenz; it is a way towards wholeness by means of talent and ability; as the medium of ideas it is creative genius (*BPW* 155). Spirit and Singular Existenz: the latter cannot be sublimated into any other…. The paradox of historicity as the eternal in time.... "Faith is the historicity of Existenz in the face of transcendence" (*BPW* 157).

[11] We learn that Jaspers was preoccupied with a "World History of Philosophy" over the last twenty-five years of his life. He conceived of six distinct approaches to the history of philosophy, but, significantly, published only one, the one that seeks out "the company of the philosophers," "the miraculous greatness of unforgettable human beings." (*BPW* 209, 218-19). Cf. Joseph W. Koterski, SJ and Raymond J. Langley, *On Philosophy of History and History of Philosophy* (New York: Humanity Books, 2003): Table One, p. 9, for Jaspers' six projects for a world history of philosophy—historical, conceptual content, genetic, practical, dynamic, and personal (i.e., "The Great Philosophers").

[12] Jaspers' themes of "historic consciousness" and "personal greatness" are intertwined, and have many affinities in modern philosophy. For this reader, a significant affinity is with Emerson's writings on the transcendentalist individual in "History" (1841) and "The Uses of Great Men" (1850), essays that in turn impacted Nietzsche. The background of this is found in the concept of the "Genius" in Goethe, Kant, Schopenhauer, Wordsworth, and others.

[13] The following account closely follows that of Leonard H. Ehrlich, "Philosophy and Its History: The Double Helix of Jaspers's Thought,"19-30, in *Karl Jaspers on Philosophy of History and History of Philosophy*, ed. Joseph W. Koterski, S. J. and Raymond J. Langley (Humanities Books, 2003), pp. 19-33.

men" of the Axial Age who personally embodied the highest spiritual standards of humanity—a list exclusively comprised of Socrates, the Buddha, Confucius, and Jesus. The second main group is comprised of those who traditionally have been regarded as philosophers proper. A third group are persons concerned with the dissemination of philosophical thought in such day-to-day endeavors as the natural and the human sciences, or who pursue careers in political thought, cultural studies or literary criticism, or in the day-to-day teaching of theology and philosophy in the academy (categories which include those who attend international conferences).

Now, in the second main group (the philosophers proper), Jaspers distinguishes three subgroups. The first subgroup he calls the "Perennially Seminal Founders of philosophizing." This is for Jaspers a very small subgroup consisting of Plato, Augustine, and Kant, understood as having unique, open-ended impact on the history of thought. By contrast the second subgroup is large, comprising the "Visions of Thought" achieved by the world's many metaphysicians who cast their systems into doctrines and dogmas.[14] Jaspers then distingushes these metaphysicians from another small subgroup, the "Creative Orderers or Great Systematizers," namely, Aristotle, Aquinas, Hegel, Shankara, and Chu Hsi. These Creative Orderers have achieved an immense influence in the history of thought comparable to those of the Seminal Founders—the difference being that the Seminal Founders open up new ranges of philosophical thought, while the Orderers gather all historically realized strains of thought and bring them to completion, thus becoming the authoritative texts for schools of thought that were truly original only to the original masters. Adopting Jaspers' classification, it might do to include many of the latter-day world-philosophical syncretists (such as Leibniz, Schopenhauer, Emerson, and Fukuzawa) in this category.

A fourth subgroup, having its place between the Metaphysicians and the Creative Orderers, Jaspers identifies as the "Great Disturbers," and he subdivides these into two further subgroups, the "Probing Negators" (as in the methodological projects of Abelard, Descartes, and Hume) and the "Radical Awakeners," which he identifies with the Pascal, Lessing, and the personal suffering of the two post-Kantians, Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. Jaspers explicitly sees himself as a disciple of these latter two Awakeners.[15]

Jaspers—somewhat psychologistically, I think—speaks of the philosophies of the post-Kantian Great Disturbers as forged in "internal suffering" over the impact of modernity, the collapse of the stabilizing universalism of Christianity, the loss of faith, the preemptive rise of modern science and technology, the manipulation of the individual, and so on.[16] We see this same psychologistic tendency in other post-Kantian philosophers protesting against Max Weber's description of the Iron Cage of modernity. For example, the writings of Santayana, like that of his compatriot Unamuno, call to mind these headings of protest against the rising tide of modernity, — though as a world-historical philosophical trope apart from the issues of Western modernity the trope of suffering conspicuously traces back via Schopenhauer to the Buddhist classics. The Marxists, by the way, have their own historicist and psychologistic versions of Western modernity.

Of course, Jaspers' groupings remain in fluid and overlapping tensions with one another, providing not for cast-iron pigeon-holing but rather for a dynamic kaleidoscope of relationships. Nevertheless, given his text's promotion of radical *Existenz* and celebration of the radical diversity of "historic" philosophizing in *Dasein*'s empirical, or "historical," situatedness, his classification of the Great Philosophers exhibits a principle of arbitrariness that appears explicitly to block a systematic rationale. The very heart of his *Existenz*-philosophy celebrates difference; it "shipwrecks" the imposition of any algorithm on the array of Great Philosophers, who must be appreciated for their unique embodiments of human genius. In proto-postmodern fashion, his approach negates the possibility of discovering generic and specific networkings of great ideas. His specific categories rather produce a hodgepodge of names—Plato, Augustine, Kant; or

[14] Examples of the second subgroup: The *original metaphysicians* (Parmenides, Heraclitus, Plotinus, Anselm, Cusanus, Spinoza, Lao-Tzu, Nagarjuna); the *secularly pious* (Xenophanes, Empedocles, Anaxagoras, Democritus, Poseidonius, Bruno); the *gnostic dreamers* of truth and verity (Origen, Boehme, Schelling); and the *constructive minds* (Hobbes, Leibniz, Fichte) (*BPW* 219).

[15] "But even though Jaspers published much on Nietzsche and hardly anything on Kierkegaard, it is the latter whose influence on Jasper was stronger" (*BPW* 38).

[16] Here again I hew close to the characterizations of Leonard H. Ehrlich, "Philosophy and Its History: The Double Helix of Jaspers's Thought," 27.

Aristotle Shankara, Chu Hsi, Aquinas, and Hegel; or the more bewildering heterogeneous variety of metaphysicians; or the great disturbers Kierkegaard and Nietzsche (the strangest of bedfellows)—categorizations which on close examination end in paradoxical pairings rather than genuine family resemblances.

Here it is important to appreciate that Jaspers truly described himself as a Great Disturber in the wake of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. And of course there is some positive value in this. In reprising the Great Philosophers in such loose groupings, he commits his and our own philosophical freedom to accessing lines of conceptual communications among them. But his agenda seems mainly to consist in its political trajectory, which is anti-"modern." Like Dewey, for example, he rethinks the Great Philosophers in his own act of philosophizing in the "modern" age with respect to an "encountering" reconstruction of the paths of contemporary philosophizing.[17] The positive aspects of such a critique, in both Dewey and Jaspers, have to be weighed against the negative, which runs the risk, I think, of throwing the baby out with the bathwater. The problem for example is revealed here in Jaspers' negative views on "modern technology," a backward-looking trajectory that seems to parallel his political stance on the world-history of philosophy.[18]

Now, on the opposite side of the spectrum, Jaspers' third group, which has its place after the "philosophers proper," consists of persons who are concerned with the dissemination of philosophical thought in such day-to-day endeavors as natural science and the human studies, or in the day-to-day teaching of theology and philosophy. This third group pretty much corresponds to what Kant called "the technicians of reason." They have technocratic skills rather than legislate for human reason. In other words, their business consists for the most part in retailing the legacies of the Seminal Founders, Great Systematizers, Metaphysicians, and Great Disturbers into consumable products in the contemporary academic marketplace. This indeed seems to be the situation of the modern philosophical academy to the extent that it has severed itself from the efficacious wisdom of the great traditions.

In my experience, the current schools of contemporary academicians are not the places where one looks to find authentic practices of cross-cultural hermeneutics! It is in this category of scholastic technocracy that we run into the current waves of deconstructive multicultural studies which promote nominalistic, historicistic, relativistic, skeptical agendas of interpretation, often explicitly impugning the "historic" classics as hegemonic or obsolete. In contemporary postmodernism, history is refracted into differences, that is, into competing cultural histories—and "her-stories"—which is to say, into agonistic

[17] Jaspers' "Present Task" of historical qua historic philosophizing had a political import, namely, its vigorous assertion over against totalitarianism (National Socialism) and totalitarianism's aftermath in Marxist sociology (*BPW* 126). Jaspers also had in mind philosophy's rejection of scientism à la Bertrand Russell (*BPW* 129).

[18] See Peter-Paul Verbeek, *What Things Do: Philosophical Reflections on Technology, Agency, and Design*, transl. Robert P. Crease (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005), pp. 15-46. According to Verbeek, Jaspers' philosophy of technology developed in two phases. The earlier phase he set forth in *Man in the Modern Age* (1931) in which he impugned the "demonism of technology." He described this demon of "mass culture" and "mass rule" in the terms of a human-suffocating "Apparatus" brought into existence by the "modern age" of "modern technology," that is, with the coming of the Industrial Revolution at the end of the eighteenth century. This "mechanization" of "mass life" has choked the possibilities of authentic individual existence. Despite Jaspers' critique of Marxist Sociology, Verbeek indicates how Jaspers' "alienation thesis" is closely related to those of the Marxist writers Günther Anders and Walter Benjamin, as in the latter's near contemporary work "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (1935). Verbeek argues that all these views are "backward thinking" based on wrong assumptions of a "transcendentalist tradition" that imposes discursive concepts of origins over creative outputs (technology's capacity to create new ways of existing). The second phase of Jaspers' view on technology came after World War II with his publication of *The Origin and Goal of History* (1953) and *The Atom Bomb and the Future of Man* (1958). He held that while modern technology has *become* demonic, this is not essential to technology but still due to human perversity. He claims that human sovereignty in the use of reason extends to sovereignty over technology, and this requires a "revolution in thought" by way of the "intellect" (*Verstand*) transformed into "a new way of thinking," an "existential" way of thinking governed by "reason" (*Vernunft*), in which individuals exist authentically for themselves. The later-phase position is still a "backward thinking" position, according to Verbeek's analysis, in which a negative judgment on modern technology predominates—both earlier and later positions of Jaspers failing to recognize that human beings and technology are inextricably interwoven in creative becoming. Verbeek's second chapter convicts Heidegger as having the same backward-looking view of technology in his "The Question of Technology" and "The Memorial Address" (1971), as does that of Jaspers (Verbeek, pp. 48 ff.).

linguistic matrices and their attendant cultural symbolics foundationally legislated as to their irreducible particularities.

Although this is something of an aside, let me approach the same point in terms of the multicultural politics that is the rising tide lifting all boats in the university today. Wittingly or unwittingly, the modern university already fosters differential historicist thinking in the way it divides academic life into such administrative units as "Western philosophy" and "Asian Studies." "Asian Studies," including "Asian philosophy," are often somewhat strangely placed under other academic umbrellas, such as Interdisciplinary Historical Studies, Religious Studies, or Comparative Literature. Asian or Religious Studies becomes the home of further administrative cuts made among Middle Eastern, Indian (Southeast Asian), Chinese, and Japanese thought traditions. In this bureaucratic way the university forces genuine forms of perennial philosophy to survive in the form of regional-based tracks of academic courses taught out of unrelated "anthologies," as for example in the various "Sourcebooks" of Indian, Chinese, and Japanese traditions. Scholars who work independently of "Western" varieties generally man the "Asian" varieties. But, to be sure, the Western traditions also tend to split up into scholastic specializations such as "Continental," "British," and "American" schools and sub-schools of thought, often accompanied by a hegemonic promotion of a particular disciplinary establishment.

In effect, the university establishes competing "histories of ideas" and students learn to think in such eristic terms. Instead of philosophers canvassing the traditions with a goal of discovering the perennial true ideas, the tendency is to burrow into separate turfs—which are to say, into the sanctuaries of their own hermeneutical circles.

But now, what of Jaspers, whose thought contains both a Kantian principle of unlimited horizon and a methodological sense of the irresolvable tension between world-transcending *Existenz* and world-oriented *Dasein*, as in his binary of historicity and history? To some degree, I think, Jaspers has added his prestige to the academy's tendency toward multicultural psychologism. For present purposes, in addition to his retrogressive and Marxist-sounding views on technology, I cite the evidence of this in his "encounter rhetoric" on American pragmatism[19] and on Asian philosophy.[20] In relation to both of these significant test cases, Jaspers proves to be no genuine syncretist at all, rather offering chauvinistic interpretations of them from his own European standpoint.

Encompassing System-making in Recent Philosophical History

Above I mentioned Schopenhauer and Emerson as genuine world-philosophical syncretists in the nineteenth century. One of my current interests is to show how the major metaphysical concepts of the second half of Charles S. Peirce's career have their provenance in the writings of Emerson, itself a conduit for the "Romantic" influences of Goethe, Schelling, Schiller, Wordsworth, Coleridge, and others, —and that Peirce came to acknowledge that influence.[21] What

[19] Re Jaspers' reading of American Pragmatism: "Anglo-Saxon pragmatism … was nothing more than an aggregate of insipid analyses of existence and cheap optimism of life, and was no more than the expression of a blind confidence in the contemporary confusion" (*BPW* 59) (Jaspers, *Man and the Modern Age* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, Ltd, 1931, 1951), p. 160). "The pragmatic concept of truth … is only changing, relative truth" (*BPW* 242). "Truth has to come from the purity of Existenz ... Existenz experiences truth in faith … in breaking through all worldly immanence, returning to world-being now living in it and beyond it, and only for the first time truly myself " (*BPW* 243).

[20] Re Jaspers reading of Asian philosophy: "Negative theology acts as a gentle shadow that merely enhances, in the West, the light of the glorious world of ciphers. In Asia, however …" (*BPW* 336). To Jaspers, Buddhist thought transcends all ciphers; he interprets Buddhism as a "total indifference, losing ourselves totally and in every sense, thus losing all ciphers entirely" (*BPW* 339), in contrast with Meister Eckhart "where we breathe with him the air of the West" (*BPW* 340). Thus he writes of "The Other Way of Thinking": outside of the Western tradition that is schooled by antiquity and the Bible; "Asian philosophy is rooted in Indian Hindu and Buddhist mysticism, a way of fulfillment in the foundering of thought beyond all ciphers" (*BPW* 342) [what happened to China, as on. p. 177?]. "Asian philosophy uses thinking to destroy itself, in self-destruction through thought" ... Ergo it is not itself a way of authentic fulfillment (*BPW* 344). "It finds a home not in the real world but in disappearing and letting disappear, a self-dissolution of the metaphysics of ciphers, leading, in temporal existence, to nothingness, the indifference and arbitrariness and absurdity of nothingness" (which "we" authentic Western *Existenzen* resist in our authentic existential energy) (*BPW* 346).

[21] See the writer's two forthcoming articles: "Elective Affinities: Emerson's 'Poetry and Imagination' as

interests me as that Emerson and Peirce appear to resonate with Jaspers on certain bottom-line issues, but that the two American philosophers do not finally trade in the language of "historic-historical," but go deeper in grounding Jaspers' predominantly anthropocentric concepts of *Dasein* and *Existenz* in an underlying metaphysical concept of Nature.

As adumbrated above, Jaspers' *Existenzphilosophie* can, *mutatis mutandis*, be translated into Emerson's concept of the "historic genius." Its main tendency runs parallel to Emerson's twin concepts of "The Over-Soul" (the Encompassing of all Encompassings) and "Self-Reliance" (*Existenz*). Both philosophers also converence with Peirce's mature metaphysics. Peirce articulated his "first" normative principle of the *summum bonum* as consisting in the energizing ideal of "concrete reasonableness," a "cosmic" principle that drives his synechism and fallibilism in the direction of inexhaustibly ramifying semiosis and evolutionary love. Here Peirce not only reprises Emerson's Over-Soul but overlaps with Jaspers' own principle of the Encompassing and its activation in communicative reason. (In broader perspective I think these affine principles of Emerson, Peirce, and Jaspers trace all the way back to Plato's principle of the Good/Beautiful which can be understood as the principle of an inexhaustible plentitude of Reality. The metaphysics of the I Ching and of Chu Hsi are not far off from the same grounding principle.)

Jaspers' own text runs the gamut of articulation of a paradoxical "double consciousness" of worldly situated *Dasein* and world-transcending *Existenz*. His term "illuminated *Existenz*" within world-orientation formulates the same point, and anchors the "cipher-scripts" of illuminated *Existenz* in the absolute transcendence of the Encompassing of all Encompassings. In this fashion Jaspers' periechontology accords with Emerson's symbolism of the Over-Soul in transcending the monologism of world-being in its finite encompassing orders of *Dasein*, consciousness-as-such, and spirit. His paradoxical, non-dual logic of the disontological and the ontological is yet another cipher of the Encompassing Wholeness of Reality. In Emerson's language, Identity and Metamorphosis go together as the twin laws (Siamese twins) of "the Unattainable, the Flying Perfect," that is, the fluent, internally free Reality that cannot be quantified, or set in any cause-and-effect or other discursive frame.

But, in my judgment, Jaspers' world- and modernity-transcending mentality proves somewhat otiose, —and is not entirely viable, —on the big-ticket issues of mankind's evolutionary capacities in philosophy, art, science, and technology. While Emerson's world-affirming philosophy has its two greatest disciples in Peirce and Nietzsche, Jaspers' paradox logic that embraces Kierkegaard and Nietzsche in the same act of philosophizing produces a different effect. Its oscillating tension of opposites does not trace down to a positive metaphysics of emergent Nature, but rather digs its heels in the "paradoxical" form of a nature-inhabiting-cum-nature-transcending Archimedean point of human *Existenz*.

In Peirce's broader and more straightforward metaphysical language—which features his master-concepts of inexhaustible networkings of qualitative possibility and ever-ramifying continuities of world-habit-formation, —we experience degrees of regularity in our natural environments and bodily states, in our mental and social systems, etc. We likewise experience and observe, subjectively and objectively, an incalculable range of irregularities—variations, spontaneous departures from law, freedom—in the human and inhuman worlds. The habits of nature are stochastic, not mechanistic. But still, there is no break in the grand continuum of Nature.

Translated back into Jaspers' language of the Encompassing Transcendence, which communicates itself in the cipher-semiosis of world-being, "existential freedom" is itself such an instantiation of the degrees of alescence (admission of new traits) by which we humans, but also the animals, plants, and all things of the nano- to the galactic worlds, flourish in the world's metaphysical freedom. Regularity, which exists to certain limited, and sometimes decryptable, degrees in nature, accounts for the stable repetitions, the homeostatic processes of arrested growth and replication, and their incessant conflicts, in our lives and the world—and thus also for the fallible possibilities of philosophical, scientific, artistic, technological, and moral discoveries and embodiments. The relation between the determined regularity and the undetermined plasticity of our lives, including our intellectual and emotional systems, admits of no algorithm, and thus needs endlessly to be inquired into—as it indeed is inquired into along the broad front of scientific, technological, aesthetic, and philosophical trajectories.

Anticipation of Peirce's Buddhisto-Christian Metaphysics," and "Elective Metaphysical Affinities: Emerson's 'Natural History of Intellect' and Peirce's Synechism" (both appearing in *Cognitio* in 2009).

Here Emerson's and Peirce's sense of the synechistic plenum of qualitative, emergent Nature dovetails with Jaspers' sense of the encompassing wholeness in one respect. Each has a version of a Poetic Ground, so to speak, underwriting the possibilities of communicative reason. But Emerson's and Peirce's view is less bound by the anthropocentric and psychologistic exigencies of Jaspers' concept of *Existenz*, and I think Jaspers has to learn something from Emerson and Peirce here. Whatever the phenomenological approach—and there may be many viable ones—the bottom-line metaphysical concept, I submit, must be Nature ("God or Nature" in Spinoza's sense, or more precisely *Natura naturans/naturata* without the mechanistic implication).

Needless to say, I cannot spell out all the ramifications of this clustering of ideas here. Let me end with just a few hints. And I offer the following as an exemplification of the methodological point of this essay—which is that we can think in terms of clusters (networkings) of philosophers instead of the usual "one-author" approach.

To be sure, the principle of the Encompassing Wholeness of Reality quicksilvers the modes of immanent encompassing (as in Jaspers' worldly *Dasein*, consciousness-as-such, and spirit). It dissolves their structural rigidities, opening up breaches in the interstices in which we—that is to say, the geniuses, preeminently— may "freefall," so to speak, in imaginative and speculative discoveries of the qualitative relations of the world. The discovery of inter-textual and cross-cultural syncretism in communicative reason is one example of this Identity in Metamorphosis engendered by the Poetic Ground of Nature. Having such a metaphysical ground, these imaginative and speculative discoveries are—no problem! —all cipher-scripts. But the freedom of discovery we experience at the human level draws from the encompassing freedom of Nature.

The historical role of the philosophical syncretists has been to reenact traditions of participating in this lure of the Encompassing in communicative reason, while securing the same privilege of human freedom in contemporary contexts and contingencies,—both set within the indefinitely encompassing Poetic Ground of Nature. In his inaugural work *Nature* (1836) and subsequent essays such as "The Method of Nature" (1841), "Nature" (1844) "Poetry and Imagination" (c. 1854), and "The Natural History of Intellect" (1870)—to name just a few, —Emerson rang the changes on the same affirmative principle of the philosophical and poetical life. While writing from a scientific background, Peirce's first normative principle of the *summum bonum* likewise consisted in what he called the admirable ideal of "concrete reasonableness," which drives the ethical, logical, metaphysical, and special (hard and soft) sciences. These "agapistic" trajectories are open-ended symbolic systems of "communicative reason." Any plain fallibistic theory precludes dogmatism and finalism, and of course, infallibilism—as per Peirce's regulative dictum: Do not block the road of inquiry.

Jaspers' principle of the Encompassing seems serviceable, then, as another variation on the Emersonian and Peircean principles of metaphysical Identity in Metamorphosis, — or of Nature's continuous Actualization on the "ground" of an aboriginal and inexhaustible Potentiality, constitutive of the continuum of Reality. As Jaspers himself insisted, the things of world-being are only cipher-scripts of this lure of Transcendence; if pursued for their own sake, they prove to be fatal distractions.

In conclusion, in my own transatlantic syncretism—perforce tendered here in the briefest terms—the three versions of Emerson, Peirce, and Jaspers can be further thought as a compresent cluster of potential philosophizing, and thus be appreciated as mutually interpermeating—mutually supporting and illuminating, —even though each arises in its own uniquely historic form. And especially as a historic cluster providing first principles of comparative hermeneutics, they brilliantly re-illumine the seminal, visionary metaphysical, creative systematizing, and great awakening texts of the Great Philosophers of the past, often in contrast with the impoverished technocratic agendas of the contemporary academy.

I think that Jaspers, despite his "quiddling abstemiousness" (Emerson) derived mainly from Kierkegaard, deserves recognition as contributed to one of the pioneering efforts at such a cross-cultural hermeneutical paradigm in our own times. He has joined the company of the Great Philosophers in his own version of the principle of the Encompassing—the comprehensive principle of the plasticity and potentiality of the universe, which underwrites the metaphysical freedom of the scientific, artistic, and philosophical geniuses as well as of any living creature that has any glimpse or living embodiment of the "Flying Perfect." On the whole, however, Jaspers accomplished this in a too conservative and negative tone, compared to the more progressive and affirmative metaphysics of Nature in Emerson and Peirce.