



# Existenz

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## EDITORS' INTRODUCTION

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This volume provides documentation for KJSNA's initial foray into the rapidly developing sub-field in philosophy known as "Philosophy and Film." As such it runs parallel to the area in social studies known today as "Visual Culture" but has a more narrowly defined mission in philosophy, which might appropriately be aligned with what Karl Jaspers initially defined as the "philosophy of communication." During the middle of the twentieth century, visual culture or communication was in its infancy. The invention of television in the late 1930s was dramatically interrupted by WWII, so to speak, with respect to its proliferation and availability. But after 1950 or so, this visual mode of communication quickly became normative, not just in Europe and North America, but globally. When combined with the revolution in information technology in the 1980s and 1990s (especially the internet and mobile accessibility) this mode of communication now provides universal access to practically everything preserved by way of digital technology including the countless postings on social media and, correspondingly, it has profound social, political, and aesthetic implications.

This is where philosophy enters the scene, namely, to critically evaluate the nature and meaning and future implications of visual communication in its various modes and manifestations. The essays in this volume explore some aspects of this phenomenon from a variety of genres, debating the role of film for making arguments, as in the case of Carlin Romano, and by addressing history, mythmaking, narrative, or hermeneutics, as in the case of Kevin Stoehr, Robert Pippin, Tomoko Iwasawa, and Shai Biderman.

Karl Jaspers lived at the cusp of this development. As his acceptance speech for the Peace Prize of the German Book Trade in 1958 makes clear (published in English here for the first time), Jaspers was aware of the challenges, opportunities, and responsibilities of the revolution in information technology and the "loving struggle" of communication in the future.

Babette Babich focuses on a socio-political theme related to academic reality in her analysis of the visual communication about the banality of evil in Hannah Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem* as seen through the lens of Margarethe von Trotta's film, *Hannah Arendt*. Just as in film, also life stage performance can portray the human condition with visually provoking subtlety. Brayton Polka's study on the formation of values in society is seen through the staging of the paradoxical relationship between love and death in some European opera masterpieces. The volume concludes with a novella by Herbert Mason, set in France during the Algerian War, overcoming the conflict between personal values and political reality.

**Viewable on YouTube**

The Editors,  
Alan M. Olson  
Helmut Wautischer

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### **Mission Statement**

The mission of *Existenz* is to encourage research and publication on problems and topics consistent with the general overview of Karl Jaspers, namely, the history of philosophy, phenomenology, existentialism, and hermeneutics; psychology, philosophy of religion, politics, culture, and the arts. This journal serves as a publication outlet for various international Jaspers societies, including those in the United States, Germany, Austria, Great Britain, Russia, and Japan, and also considers direct submissions of articles for online publication. *Existenz* is indexed in *The Philosopher's Index*.

### **Correspondence**

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