PHILOSOPHY AND FAITH:
A CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF KARL JASPERS' PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

by

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For Michael, my father.
# PHILOSOPHY AND FAITH

A Critical Examination of Karl Jaspers' Philosophy of Religion

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Ours is a century in which scientific and technological advances have made global communicative exchanges and global military exchanges respectively a reality and an enduring possibility. We have been made almost suddenly aware of the pluralistic nature of the world's peoples, and even more suddenly aware of the necessity of finding common grounds between them in the interest of avoiding a nuclear holocaust with its unpleasant means of "equalizing" all of these differences. This question of cultural plurality in the face of our newly acquired world community challenges us to re-evaluate much of what we previously held to be fact in a variety of areas: politically, ethically, aesthetically, economically, psychologically, sociologically, and religiously.

The German psychiatrist and philosopher Karl Jaspers (1883-1968) found himself in such a world faced with such questions and challenges. Much of his work, and particularly much of his later work, specifically addressed this new world situation and sought to find a ground upon which humanity could found itself as a co-humanity and thereby avoid the disasters of nuclear confrontation, totalitarianism, and dehumanization that Jaspers believed the use of the new technologies made possible. His 1962 book *Der Philosophische Glaube angesichts der Offenbarung*, called in translation *Philosophical Faith and Revelation*, seeks such a foundation in the area of religion\(^1\), one of the areas that Jaspers felt to be particularly important.

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\(^1\) What Jaspers means by religion will need to be made more explicit later in the paper (see page 59). For now it should be kept in mind that what in general Jaspers means by religion is that which involves the presence of God or gods in the world in whatever form rather than merely that which constitutes one's ultimate commitment. For Jaspers religion entails a supernatural element that impinges upon the natural.
if the attainment of global cooperation, or at least global toleration, was to be realized.

This paper is intended to come to terms with Jaspers' proposals in the area of religion from a perspective, namely a Christian perspective, that is sympathetic to the importance of the subject matter, that tries, as far as is possible, to remain sympathetic to Jaspers' sentiments, but that approaches the problematics from a position quite alien to, and, as will be seen, at times quite antagonistic towards, Jaspers' own perspective.

Very briefly stated, Jaspers' position is that religion must find its place in terms of what mankind can discover about itself philosophically, because for Jaspers philosophical knowledge, unlike religious revelation, is universally accessible and therefore eminently better suited to act as the bridge between the divergent segments of humanity than is any particular religion belonging to only a few. Jaspers therefore pleads with those of the occident to recognize that "Der christliche Glaube ist ein Glaube, nichte der Glaube der Menschheit"\(^2\), so that its place in relation to philosophy can be properly conceived of. Gabriel Simon describes Jaspers' goal in respect to this situation as follows: "Ein wahrhaft universales Geschichtsbild aber muss diesen Rahmen sprengen, weiter ausgreifen und alle Völker und Kulturen, alle Glaubensgemeinschaften, die ganze Menschheit umfassen".\(^3\)

Jaspers' desire is to establish a place for religions whereby they can


exist as carriers and promoters of that which through the ages has made humanity free, rational, and communicative. If all of humanity is to share in these qualities, and if all are to be provided fair and equal access to them, then no one religion must be allowed to claim exclusivity. None can be authoritative and dictatorial. Religion must assume the position of service to these ideals, and must be checked whenever it attempts to usurp the place of ultimate value rightly belonging to the free individual and his or her existential relationship to the Transcendent.

The thesis of this paper, in response to these assertions by Jaspers, is that Jaspers fails to provide an adequate solution to the problems raised by the reality of religious pluralism, and concomitantly that he fails to find a solution in the area of religion to the problems of mutual human understanding that characterize our present world situation. I will argue this thesis on three grounds: First, I will argue that the basic structure of Jaspers' thought does not meet the demands of much present day philosophy of science, leaving his dualistic anthropology open to criticisms and alternative suggestions. Second, I will propose that Jaspers' thought rests not upon the generally accessible foundations he believed it to, but rather upon a faith that is at root humanistically driven. Third, I will attempt to demonstrate that Jaspers' philosophy, contrary to his own assertions, can in several significant ways be conceived of as a religious position among other religious positions, and is therefore subject itself to many of the same criticisms that Jaspers levels against religion.

My method in this paper will be to proceed toward these conclusions in three chapters. The first chapter will serve as an introduction and
explication of Jaspers' thought as a whole by means of determining and explaining his anthropological model. This chapter will then act as a foundation upon which the second chapter, a discussion of Jaspers' views of religion, will rest, as Jaspers' philosophy of religion can be shown to flow almost directly from the categories he utilizes anthropologically. In the third chapter I discuss and criticize Jaspers' philosophy of religion in terms of the theses listed above. I follow this chapter with an epilogue in which the challenge of religious pluralism, that prompted both Jaspers' work in this area and this paper, is conceived as an enduring one. Here an attempt is made to maintain a critical posture in respect to both Jaspers' position and my own without disregarding either his experiences or mine, the contributions that each of our positions can bring to the challenge we are faced with, or the challenges we pose to each other.

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4 Where I wish to criticize Jaspers, and these criticisms do not bear directly on Jasper's philosophy of religion, I will do so in the notes. That these criticisms appear only in the notes does not mean, however, that they have no bearing on Jaspers' philosophy of religion, for, as shall be seen, the intimate kinship that exists between Jaspers' general paradigm and his religious thought makes any criticism of the former also a criticism of the latter.
CHAPTER ONE

JASPERS' ANTHROPOLOGY

As stated in the introduction, the framework of Karl Jaspers' philosophy as a whole must be established before I will be able to effectively discuss Jaspers' position in respect to religion. Such a general orientation is the aim of this chapter.

Since Jaspers' philosophy has no one obvious central tenet his thought can be organized around any one of his main themes, and commentators have chosen a variety of them for this purpose. Ehrlich discusses Jaspers' philosophy in terms of faith, Knudsen in terms of the idea of transcendence, Samay in terms of reason. In each case the house that is Jaspers' philosophy is entered by a different door. I have chosen another way of entry: Jaspers' anthropology. My motivation for this choice is the way in which an anthropological study opens up to us Jaspers' periechontology. ¹ [by means of a microcosm (the human individual)/macrocosm

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¹ The reason for Jaspers' preference of the term periechontology over ontology is his aversion to static ontological categories. Jaspers writes, "When we bring the modes of encompassing to mind we are not looking for steps in categories of objective data, as in the metaphysical scales taught ever since Aristotle... [W]e do not want to find layers of Being, but origins of the subject-object relationship. Ours is not an ontological search for objective definitions, but a periechontological one for the source of subject and object, for their relationships and interrelations". Karl Jaspers, Philosophical Faith and Revelation (London: Collins, 1967), p. 75. Gerhard Knauss is also helpful here. "The fundamental difference, thus, between 'periechontology' and the ordinary form of ontology is that the former does not assert directly what Being is, but how Being could be for us...We are no longer concerned with the methodological ascertainment of scientific world investigation, but with the ways in which we can encounter what is". Gerhard Knauss, "The Concept of the Encompassing"."The
(Being as such) relationship\(^2\), and the way in which an analysis of Jaspers' anthropology reveals to us the structural foundations of his philosophy of religion.

Readers familiar with the basic structure of Karl Jaspers' thought may wish to bypass this rather lengthy but necessary introduction to his philosophy and begin reading on page 47 where this exposition becomes more interpretive. Those unfamiliar with Jaspers will find this introductory material necessary to an understanding of the later chapters.

A. PHILOSOPHY: THE PROCESS OF TRANSCENDING

I do not begin at the beginning when I ask questions such as "What is being?" or "Why is anything at all? Why not nothing?" or "Who am I?" or "What do I really want?" These questions arise from a situation in which, coming from a past, I find myself.

When I become aware of myself I see that I am in a world in which I take my bearings.

So begins Jaspers' "Introduction to Philosophy" in volume I of his Philosophy. This short section concludes:

Awakening to myself, in my situation, I raised the question of being. Finding myself in the situation as an indeterminate possibility, I must search for being if I

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\(^2\) This microcosm-macrocosm idea, discussed later at greater length, arises out of Jaspers' use of the ancient homoion theorem "that the object of our cognition must at the same time be present within ourselves". While Jaspers asserts that "taken literally, it is absurd", he does affirm it in the sense that "The truth of the objectivity that appears in each mode of the encompassing depends on the presence of the corresponding subjectivity". For Jaspers each mode of reality must possess a subjective and an objective side. Jaspers, Philosophical Faith and Revelation, pp. 262-263.
want to find my real self. But it is not till I fail in this search for intrinsic being that I begin to philosophize. This is what we call philosophizing on the ground of possible Existenz, and the method used is transcending.\textsuperscript{3}

Into this brief description of the process of philosophizing the whole of Jaspers' thought finds its place, and as I proceed through this first chapter I will describe the structural elements of Jaspers' anthropology in terms of how they fit into this description of philosophizing. To prepare the ground for such descriptions, however, the process introduced above will need to be expanded and clarified. This I will do by introducing four essential elements for philosophizing implicit in the above description: 1. the subject-object relationship, 2. the concept of encompassing, 3. the concept of foundering, and 4. the concept of transcending.

1. The subject-object relationship

When Jaspers tells us that we do not begin by asking such questions as "What is being?", but that we rather begin by awakening to a situation, the situation he is referring to is that of the subject-object relationship. As subjects, not something we choose to be but merely something that we are, we discover about us objects that comprise our world. "The subject-object dichotomy is our stage for the appearance of all that is and can be. In realizing the stage, we simultaneously become aware of the phenominality of whatever appears on it".\textsuperscript{4}


\textsuperscript{4} Jaspers, \textit{Philosophical Faith and Revelation}, p. 67.
Jaspers here is inheriting the Kantian insight that leads us "back to the things to which we were at first completely and blindly attached, to the consciousness of these things; from the representations (Vorstellungen) to the possibility of representation...[W]e determine the form in which things come to us". 5

Jaspers also inherits the connotations Kant tied to this insight, namely a delineation of that which may be considered within the scope of human knowledge and that which must be considered outside of the scope of knowledge. This distinction, of vital importance to my later discussions of Jaspers' views of religion, will be discussed at length later in this chapter. Let it now suffice to say that the subject-object relationship, as the initial starting point of Jaspers' philosophizing6, sets the agenda for the whole movement of his thought.

2. The concept of the encompassing

"We have a word for that which, split into subject and object, becomes appearance. We call it encompassing."7 The encompassing (das Umgreifende) is the summation of the subject and its object, and as such is neither subject nor object. It is, rather, the "encompassing" of them both. The

5 Knauss, p. 148. Knauss points out that this occupation with the subject-object dichotomy is not exclusive to Jaspers but has become a leitmotiv of philosophy since Kant, and mentions Heidegger and the phenomenologists Brentano and Husserl as among those for whom this emphasis has become essential.

6 The phrase "initial starting point" is not a pleonasm. My thesis that Jaspers utilizes other starting points in his philosophy, even if he were to deny this to be the case, will be argued in chapter 3.

7 Jaspers, Philosophical Faith and Revelation, p. 61.
limitations of human thought, thought being trapped always in the dichotomy of subject and object, does not allow us to truly conceptualize the encompassing. In thought we always bring the encompassing to mind as an object. Realizing this limitation gives us a "feel", however, for a horizon, a horizon in which a subject corresponds to an object, a horizon that delineates one of the ways of being in the world.

Since there is more than one way of being in the world there is more than one encompassing, and these encompassings interrelate and in some cases contain one another. Jaspers speaks of two major divisions within the encompassings: the immanent and the transcendent. The encompassing known as immanence, or world, is the encompassing that refers to the whole of empirical reality. Within this larger encompassing are contained the constitutive encompassings of existence, consciousness as such, and spirit.

The transcendent encompassings are Transcendence, the encompassing equated with being in itself, and Existenz, the human encompassing corresponding to Being.\(^8\) Within these six realms moves Jaspers' philosophical thought, and

\(^8\) Knauss speaks of the seven encompassings that are developed by Jaspers in: Karl Jaspers, Reason and Existenz (The Noonday Press, 1955). He notes that these modes are retained by Jaspers throughout his career but that "the inner relationships have changed". Knauss, p. 152. I find it more helpful to speak of six encompassings, and consider "Reason" (Knauss' seventh) not as an encompassing at all, but rather as the glue that holds the rest of the encompassings together, an orchestrator that mediates between the modes. I see Reason more as a capacity, or will, than as an encompassing (see page 30). However, Knauss is helpful in demonstrating to us why we speak not only of "the" Encompassing (Transcendence) but also of "the encompassings" when he says: "If by then there can be only one Encompassing. There cannot exist another Encompassing next to the Encompassing. For, in the change-over to the Encompassing we abandon precisely this multiplicity of objects. In transcending object-being we suspend the possibility of separation and variation. But from the manner of the transcending movement there arise for us various manners of the Encompassing. These manners are not the Encompassing itself, but the expression of our finite approach to the Encompassing. For finite thinking the One again and again assumes finite perspectives." Knauss, p. 152.
a description of their content and interrelation is one of the tasks of this first chapter.

3. The concept of foundering

The realization that we operate in all of these encompassings is not automatic. Rather, as indicated, we find ourselves as immanent subjects operating with the immanent objects that comprise our world. In the course of questioning this initial way of being in the world we encounter situations, called by Jaspers boundary situations (Grenzsituationen), in which reference to the encompassing we find ourselves in fails to provide a satisfactory answer. These experiences of inadequacy, restraint, or limitation are referred to by Jaspers as foundering (Scheitern), sometimes translated as shipwreck.

4. The concept of transcending

If foundering were the last word for the boundary situations we find ourselves in the result would be a positivistic nihilism; we would be limited to a world of objects that would fail to answer the questions of being and meaning that we as humans find ourselves asking. According to Jaspers, the failure of the immanent encompassing to satisfy such queries provides the impetus for us to go beyond the limitations of this encompassing and enter the domain of another, a process called by Jaspers transcending. Jaspers informs us that "the thought that transcends must
really fail me, although this failure need not always be one of thought. Any experience inexplicable in an existing encompassing forces us to founder, and, if we are to deal honestly with the experience, forces a corresponding transcending.

As will be seen, this process occurs on two levels. First, we must in philosophizing transcend the immanent encompassing to discover ourselves as Existenz, the distinctly and authentically human mode of being. We discover, however, that we also founder as Existenz and are again driven to transcend, this time to Transcendence, the very ground of Being. In these acts of transcending we as humans discover the encompassings and interrelationships that comprise Being. In the descriptions that follow I will show more precisely how this process unfolds anthropologically.

B. IMMANENCE: THE ENCOMPASSING OF KNOWLEDGE

Jaspers, as we have seen, believes that philosophizing begins in immanence, in the world as it is given to us in objects that we apprehend as subjects. As subjects we discover that these objects are of three kinds. These Jaspers refers to as the encompassings of existence, consciousness as such, and spirit. A description of these encompassings immediately follows. After these descriptions I will proceed to suggest why I choose to characterize immanence as the encompassing of knowledge, and in what way this characterization is important to Jaspers' conception of science. These conceptions of knowledge and science will in turn be a

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9 Jaspers, Philosophy, v. 3., p. 39.
vital step in understanding Jaspers' position regarding religion, the subject matter of the second chapter of this paper.

1. The immanent encompassings

a. The encompassing of existence

Jaspers begins to delineate modes within immanence by pointing towards empirical existence, referred to as dasein. Existence is objectivity at its most fundamental level. There is nothing intended to be complicated about this encompassing at all; it is the mere "otherness" of physicality, the "out there" quality of "hard" reality.

Empirical existence means the actual taken comprehensively, which immediately shows itself to empirical consciousness in the particularities of matter, living body, and soul, but which, as such particularities, is no longer the encompassing of empirical existence. Everything which is empirically actual for me must in some sense be actual as a part of my being, as, for example, in the continually perceptible presence of my body as it is touched, altered, or as it is perceiving.

Empirical existence, as the overpowering Other which determines me, is the world.\(^\text{10}\)

Thus existence, as the first mode of being in immanence, consists of the foundational "stuff" of the other immanent modes.

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\(^\text{10}\) Jaspers, *Reason and Existenz*, pp. 54-55. Beginning here, and hereafter, please refer to the diagram on page 54 where the interrelationship between the various constituents of Jaspers' anthropological model is diagramed.
b. The encompassing of consciousness as such

There is a sense in which it could be said that existence as an encompassing founders in our experience of our consciousness of this existence, and this foundering encourages us to transcend to the next mode of immanent reality -- consciousness as such. Truly, the terms foundering and transcending are generally reserved for later and more grandiose steps in philosophizing, but, I believe, are already occurring at this fundamental level.

We thus break into the horizon referred to as consciousness as such (Bewusstsein Überhaupt), sometimes rendered consciousness in general, when we realize that

Only what appears to our consciousness as experienceable, as an object, has being for us. What does not appear to consciousness, what can in no wise touch our cognition, is as good as nothing for us. Hence, everything which exists for us must take on that form in which it can be thought or experienced by consciousness. ...That all being for us must appear in those forms under which it can enter into consciousness is what imprisons us in the encompassing of thinkability. 11

This realization so far, however, merely points to consciousness and not to consciousness as such, or consciousness in general. This "leap between the multiplicity of subjective consciousness and the universal validity of that true consciousness which can only be one" occurs when "we

11 Ibid., pp. 55-56.
JASPERS' ANTHROPOLOGY

think we can refer to Being, not only in similar ways of perception and feeling, but in an identical way."\(^{12}\)

In our consciousness, therefore, we are not the captives of the endless particular realities that confront us as individuals, not the prisoners of our subjectivities, but, rather, participants in the encompassing of consciousness as such, in "a universally recognized, formal lawfulness in willing, action, and feeling."\(^{13}\) While in no individual, nor in any group, is this universally valid truth completed for consciousness (as an "infinite encompassing" it is never completed), there is a strong sense in which for Jaspers participation in consciousness as such does lead to a

\(^{12}\) Ibid., p. 56.

\(^{13}\) Ibid., p. 57. There is, I think, some question as to how Jaspers conceived of the universally valid truth that comprises this encompassing. At times it appears as if this general consciousness is a hypothetical pooling of all human consciousness, a composite of all that is conscious to everyone at any one time, a conglomerate to which we each contribute and from which, in logical/analytical activity, we can all draw. This appears to be the case when Jaspers speaks of consciousness as such as being in itself nothing independent, but as pointing to spirit and existence, or being in itself an unreal articulation of the Encompassing. (Reason and Existenze, pp. 58 and 59) At other times the idea of consciousness in general is given more of the flavour of an entity containing all timeless truth that may or may not be a part of anyone's current consciousness. Jaspers tells us that "truth is timeless, and our temporal activity is more or less complete actualization of this timeless permanence", and he calls consciousness as such "the site of the timeless meaning of the one common truth." (p. 57.)

The question seems to be whether or not consciousness as such is better understood as an entity with some independence from human conscious subjectivity (more like an objective reality that needs to be uncovered), or as the gathering of all present human consciousness. This problem of whether consciousness in general is best characterized objectively (seen from the side of spirit) is transcended in Jaspers when he claims that as part of "the Encompassing" any encompassing, consciousness as such included, is realized only as it exists in both its subjective and objective poles. Here Jaspers avoids the ontological question by making it into a periechontological one. This leaves Jaspers unable, however, to answer the question: "If all human life was to cease would there still be universally valid truth?" Perhaps he could answer: "Who, then, would be asking
generally valid truth, and this conviction on the part of Jaspers plays a central role, as we shall see, in his writings on the nature of philosophy and of religion.

c. The encompassing of spirit

The third mode within immanence is spirit (Geist). It arises from the realization that in consciousness as such we have not achieved timeless, universally valid truth, but only temporal, and thus limited, approximations of it. These approximations, directed towards universality, make up the encompassing of spirit.

Spirit attempts to capture for us the totality of intelligible thought, action, and feeling, but in this attempt never succeeds in capturing all as a known object. Rather, spirit remains Idea. Spirit is moved by Ideas which bring everything into clarity and connection. Spirit is the comprehensive reality of activity which is actualized by itself and by which it encounters a world which is always given yet always being changed. It is the process of fusing and reconstructing all totalities in a present which is never finished yet always fulfilled...Since it pushes toward the whole, spirit would preserve, enhance, and relate everything to everything else, excluding nothing, and give to everything its place and limits...[A]s spirit we are consciously related to everything which is comprehensible to us. We transform the world and ourselves into the intelligible, which encloses totalities.¹⁴

¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 57-58.
Jaspers desires us to realize that the distinction between the three modes does not imply separable facts, but rather "they represent three starting points through which we can come to feel that comprehensive Being which we are and in which all being and everything scientifically investigable appears." In the section that follows the workings of these objectifiable modalities and their relationship to science and knowing is further explicated in order to demonstrate the place they assume in Jaspers' anthropology, and ultimately in his philosophy of religion.

2. Immanence and knowledge

For Karl Jaspers philosophy is distinguished from religion in that the former begins with what he calls "the basic knowledge" that the latter ignores, and much of his critique of religion, the subject matter of my second chapter, rests upon this assertion. The basic knowledge is the result of the delineation of the encompassings, and it yields to us an understanding of which of the encompassings can be said to be known, that is, in a cognitive sense, and which of them cannot. This distinction, founded upon the basic knowledge, is so foundational to the whole of Jaspers' philosophy that I have chosen to characterize this explication of immanence as the encompassing of knowledge, for it is its accessibility to knowledge that most clearly distinguishes immanence from the other modes of Being. The idea of knowledge in Jaspers requires, therefore, a rather

15 Ibid., p. 58.

16 Knowledge, in Jaspers, and in this paper, is used in the sense of evidential knowledge, that is, universally valid, compelling knowledge. This usage is discussed at greater length later in this chapter.
extensive treatment. Toward arriving at a description of knowledge I will:
a. trace the idea of knowledge in Jaspers from its Kantian heritage, and b.
explain why Jaspers, with Kant, rejects the idea that a total world image
can ever become an object of knowledge.

a. Jaspers' Kantian heritage

Jaspers interprets the history of philosophy in terms of his belief
that philosophy is rightly defined as the search for Being as such. This
search, however, has through the ages been encumbered by the frequent
misunderstanding that such a search would end in a comprehensive and
systematic knowledge of Being, a total view of Being possessed by the
knower. Much of Jaspers’ admiration for Kant arises from Jaspers’ belief
that Kant had not been seduced by this temptation, and Kant’s systematics
in respect to knowing are thus taken over by Jaspers in large measure.

In response to the critique of Cartesian rationalism by the empiricists
culminating in Hume, Kant sought a new ground for necessity and
universalty that could avoid the pitfalls of the one so easily corroded by
empiricism.¹⁷ Kant’s solution was to set the world (the Ding an sich) over
against the thinking self which in turn constituted the world in terms of
the transcendental categories. In this famous revolution, the thinking
self was not the individual, subjective self (the empirical I) but
consciousness in general (Bewusstsein Überhaupt). "The fundamental

¹⁷ The history of this Kantian project, and its importance for
Jaspers’ thought is more carefully outlined in: R.D. Knudsen, The Idea of
Transcendence in the Philosophy of Karl Jaspers (Oakland, 1958). I rely
heavily upon this work for the general structure of this part of my
discussion.
relation of experience thus came to be that of subject and object. These were no longer considered to be two substances, existing in themselves, but two correlative moments in the knowing situation.\footnote{18}{Knudsen, p. 24.}

The universality lost in the critique of rationalism by empiricism was re-established in Kant. Since the necessary and universal conditions of thought are applied to reality out of the human mind the constitution of the world can be known in that this constitution is immanent to the subject. The subject knows the world and judgements objectively, therefore, in so far as he or she is in agreement with the universal and necessary conditions of thought. But in that no self ever attains a full correspondence of itself with the transcendental, theoretical self, there remains behind it the free subject striving for, but not attaining, this correspondence. "The world was relativized in terms of the infinitely striving subject; and because of this relativization, the subject came to stand free over against the world."\footnote{19}{Ibid., p. 25.} As free subject the self becomes the concentration point of Being not in its striving after identification with \textit{Bewusstsein Überhaupt}, but rather when this self subjects itself autonomously to the moral law of the categorical imperative. Only in this subservience to its own self-imposed law can the self rise above the world of mere cause and effect and attain its freedom.\footnote{20}{Ibid., p. 25.}

In this way Kant established the foundations for the doctrine of the limits of knowledge so essential to Jaspers' own conception of limits. For Jaspers, "[t]here are no restraints or limits (\textit{Schräcken}) placed upon

\begin{itemize}
\item \textbf{18} Knudsen, p. 24.
\item \textbf{19} Ibid., p. 25.
\item \textbf{20} Ibid., p. 25.
\end{itemize}
scientific research at the intramundane level, but there are essential boundaries (Grenze) which it cannot trespass". The same could be said of Kant in whose philosophy the doctrine of the limits of knowledge was supposed proven by the doctrine of antinomies.

Kant explained the limits of knowledge by referring to the categories in which we constitute judgements. Since we can only know that to which a category can be applied (for only by the application of the categories is knowledge possible) and since we apply categories only within the world and never to the world at large, absolute knowledge of the world, or for that matter absolute knowledge of absolutes, is not possible. Since these absolutes can never become the objects of a knowing subject they may only be known as ideas, for example, in terms of extending the concepts found in immanent judgements and projecting them continuously to extremes. These concepts are not then concepts in the strict sense because they do not apply to the world of experience, rather they are limiting concepts. When such a limiting concept is wrongly taken for knowledge proper, as an object of the knowing subject, the result, according to Kant, is an antinomy. Antinomies reveal the limits of knowledge because in them arise conflicting claims neither of which can be eliminated through logical argument. They can only be eliminated by uncovering the transgression of


the principle boundaries of knowledge and stripping knowledge of its pretensions. 23

While Jaspers, as we shall see, prefers to speak of the immanent modes and boundary situations rather than transcendental categories and limiting concepts, and also pulls the ideas of foundering and transcending into the discussion, to a great degree Jaspers assumes this Kantian position in respect to the limits of knowledge, and works, therefore, extensively with the subject-object relationship as conceived by Kant.

b. Knowledge and science

For Jaspers, then, knowledge becomes specifically the "stuff" of scientific investigations, rather than a more general term referring to a broader spectrum of experience.

Science (wissen-schaft) is concerned only with knowledge (wissen, Erkenntnis) or what is knowable (wissbar). "Knowledge" is not an indeterminate general term, conveying every relation between the mind and things. Instead, it connotes one definite sort of thought: that in which a polar relationship is set up between the subject and the phenomenal object...[T]his dichotomy governs what can be known about the subject, as well as the object. 24

23 Ibid., p. 27. Knudsen notes that among the followers of Kant Schelling maintained the idea of dialectic as "vain contradictions", whereas Fichte and Hegel abandoned this idea adopting dialectics as "an all-embracing method in the development of an all-embracing metaphysical system."

24 Collins, p. 122. I accept Collins' view of this narrow usage of knowledge in Jaspers over against Ehrlich's opinion that "the term 'knowledge' is, usually and in Jaspers, used in a much broader sense than 'evidential knowledge'." Leonard Ehrlich, Karl Jaspers: Philosophy as Faith (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1975), p. 12. Where Jaspers does use knowledge in a broader sense it is usually in
Only as objectification takes place is the term knowledge applicable for Jaspers, and this objectification of necessity means a setting of the object of knowledge in correspondence to the general "I", the consciousness in general, in a \textit{gegenstand} type of relationship.

What this means for Jaspers' concept of naive experience and how it relates to knowledge is best explained in terms of the way in which he brings presuppositional thinking into play as a factor in this matter. Jaspers recognizes that all facts are already theories, and that no thinking can be without presuppositions. However, thinking is freed from its presuppositions to the degree to which it approaches the standards of consciousness as such, as it is freed from tradition and superstition. Therefore, logic and mathematics are perceived as the closest thing to presuppositionless thinking (consciousness as such thinking about itself). To a lesser degree can consciousness as such be realized in the natural sciences, and to a lesser degree still in the human sciences. Perfect truth would result if consciousness as such were purely applied in each area, and this, according to Jaspers, should be the goal of the scientist. This ideal, however, is never achieved (and cannot be in time) and the scientist must, therefore, have as his or her realistic goal attaining as close an identity between this ideal and his or her results as is possible.

reference to knowing God or some other Being to which the term knowledge in the narrower sense could not, by Jaspers' definition, apply. These instances are rare and easily distinguished from the more common sense of knowledge as evidential.

25 "One of Jaspers' chief doctrines is that human existence and all its modes are involved in various situations." Collins, p. 116. Collins is speaking here of both philosophic and scientific thinking.

26 This does not mean that tradition is always a hindrance, however. While it is a hindrance to science, it is essential to philosophy.
Given this, naive experience is not knowledge outside of a gegenstand relationship (for there is no knowledge outside of such a relationship), but is knowledge laden with tradition and superstition, that which an effective scientific method is meant to eliminate. Since knowledge is most true when it approaches the purity of consciousness in general, when it is able to cast off the weight of presuppositions, naive experience is seen as elementary, and humanly necessary, but essentially tainted knowledge.

So, while Jaspers does not believe in the possibility of presuppositionless science, I think he can still be said to believe in the autonomy of science in that these presuppositions are not for him necessary in a positive way (as they will be when I later present an alternative to Jaspers' model where I recognize that my science is affected by my faith commitment and that both are a part of my human integrality), but are necessary in a negative way (as that which disrupts science) and in every possible fashion need to be eliminated. Jaspers may then, given this paradigm, speak of the increasing cogency and universality of science as science itself becomes increasingly pure. Indeed, cogency and universality are core concepts in Jaspers' view of science because they are the defining concepts of consciousness as such.

c. The absolutizations

After expounding upon the nature of knowledge using the consciousness as such concept borrowed from Kant, Jaspers sets out to establish a place for faith by pointing to the limits of knowledge, much as Kant pointed to the limits of knowledge in establishing a place for morality, a point
Jaspers opens the door to the encompassing of Existenz, the encompassing of faith, by demonstrating how each attempt to explain the whole of the world in terms of immanence (the encompassing of knowledge) founders in its attempt to do justice to the whole of human experience. To illustrate this point Jaspers reviews quickly the history of philosophy since Kant.

In establishing the subject-object relationship as a primary category, Kant in many ways set the agenda for much of the philosophy that would come after him. It is Jaspers' belief, however, that philosophers after Kant took from Kant only a part of his philosophy and absolutized it. Two such camps arose: the positivists, those absolutizing the object of the subject (natural science), and the idealists, those absolutizing the subject as object. Not only did these groups take only a part of knowledge and make it the whole, but, perhaps more disastrously, forgetting or dismissing Kant's doctrine of the limitations of knowledge, they identified Being itself with that part of reality they made the study of their knowing.

d. The total world image

No total world orientation can, in Jaspers' estimation, stand up to the exceptions that must of necessity arise when any attempt is made to capture the whole of the world in a known system. There are two reasons why Jaspers believes this to be the case.

As for the first, we have seen how for Kant, and subsequently for Jaspers, consciousness in general is applicable only to parts of the world and never to the whole of the world or to any absolute, both of which
always remain as idea. In our science, therefore, we are continually theorizing about only a segment of the whole, but never the whole itself. The nature of knowledge is such that it can never embrace the whole of the world, and the nature of the whole is such that it can never be explained in terms of a known part. Even the concept of the unity of science is "idea" and not a part of science itself.27

Secondly, and as important for Jaspers, is his conviction that the sciences are neutral, and as such require, if one is to engage in them, an impetus from beyond the sciences themselves. Since consciousness as such is in Jaspers' scheme a value free universality, as long as we stay within the realm of knowledge we have no drive towards that knowledge, but find only bare and boring facts with no meaning or philosophic power. And since the value of, and drive towards, knowledge must come from beyond knowledge, it makes no sense to then reappropriate this beyond back into knowledge, for it is then no longer a beyond. Jaspers mentions the idea of the whole world raised in the preceding paragraph as an example of such a beyond. That is, the idea of the whole is a driving force behind the sciences but can never become a part of the science itself. In this second way also, then, a total world knowledge is claimed to be impossible.

These limits, to be sure, must be distinguished in Jaspers' thought from the temporary limits which science runs up against continually in the form of that which is not yet known but which theoretically could be known.

27 Jaspers, Philosophy, v. 1., p. 157. "If science can know things in the world and laws about the world, but never the total being of the world as such, then the unity of science cannot be realized through a single scientific method and body of doctrine." Collins, p. 126.
These temporary limits are not to be confused with the ultimate, theoretically impregnable limits of which I speak in this section.

e. Proper science

Jaspers recognizes as legitimate the current divisions among the sciences (for example: history, psychology, and sociology in the human sciences, and biology, chemistry, and physics in the natural sciences) and grants to each a legitimate place in the task of science at large. Each of these disciplines is charged with the task of discovering, as best as it is presently able, cogent and universal knowledge within its own field. In the course of these investigations properly conducted science will also discover its limits, not only the limits of its own particular field of investigation but also the limits of science in general as it tries to unite with the other sciences in a universal science, although this latter task, as we have noted, is ultimately unattainable.

When the sciences are cut off from any unifying philosophic principle, they lack a guiding idea that can establish order and hierarchy among them. Consequently, each separate science tries to absolutize itself and impose its perspective on the other sciences. Jaspers singles out anthropology, psychoanalysis and Marxism as prime examples of scientific imperialism.28

In such absolutizing a particular field within science assumes at least four roles which it cannot legitimately take on. Put in Jaspers' terms, any particular science, if it tries to stand alone, founders in its explanation of Being at four points. First, the science pretends not only

to be the unity of all the sciences, but to be the unity of Being itself.
Second, the science illegitimately claims to provide itself with its own
impetus; it claims to be able to explain itself in terms of its own
tenets. Third, the science falsely claims to give an explanation of, or
simply ignores, the knowing subject that must in Jaspers' way of thinking
be standing behind any objectification, even the objectification of
subjects that occurs in the human sciences. Fourth, and finally, the
science tries to construct a morality out of its own value free
discoveries. That the sciences feel the need to fill these roles, but
are unable adequately to do so, opens us up to the reality that may
properly fill them - the reality of faith.

C. EXISTENZ: THE ENCOMPASSING OF FAITH

When in our philosophizing knowledge and science, the legitimate means
of investigating immanence, fail to provide an adequate explanation of our
larger experience of Being we discover that another way of seeking Being is
required. We founder in immanence and thereby create the opportunity to
transcend this mode of Being to the mode of Being that Jaspers calls
Existenz, a mode of Being that I here characterize as the encompassing of

29 "For the sciences themselves are incapable of seizing upon the
fundamental significance of their own form of thought. This is a task
performable only by philosophy." Collins, p. 124.

30 Collins speaks to both points three and four from Jaspers'
perspective in saying that "Free 'existential' decision does not lie within
the range of objective universality, necessity and certainty. It opens up
a view of being that is determined through the unique and free activity of
the individual, who is confronted with moral conflict and uncertainty." 
Collins, p. 130.
faith. In this section I will begin by showing how in philosophizing we come to Existenz. I will then explain the relationships that Existenz has to several of Jaspers' most important concepts: freedom, Reason, Truth, historicity, and communication.

1. Existenz and Faith

When foundering immanence drives us into boundary situations we stand at a crossroads. For here we must decide the fate of our humanity.

The wrong step, according to Jaspers, is to seek to overcome the boundary situations by means of planning and calculating within immanence, which is itself the cause of our shipwreck.

As existence we can avoid the boundary situations only by closing our eyes to them. In the world we seek to preserve our existence by expanding it; we relate to it unquestioningly, mastering and enjoying or suffering under and succumbing to it - but in the end we can do nothing but surrender. 31

The authentic reaction to boundary situations is a leap of faith. Jaspers says that when a boundary situation is approached with open eyes, we find "a unique translation of the situation," and that

unlike acting out of a finite situation, which is particular, transparent, and a case of something general, acting out of a boundary situation involves Existenz as a whole. It is incomprehensible and admits no substitution. I am no longer an individual finitely concerned with particular situations; I grasp the

31 Jaspers, Philosophy, v.2., p. 179.
This leap is in a faith that assures us that we are more than immanent beings, a faith that is both the impetus and reward for such a leap. Our potential selves become actual. "After the leap my life seems to me to be different from what I am if I simply exist. I say 'I myself' in a new sense."33

This "I" in a new sense is called by Jaspers Existenz, and is the transcendent aspect of humanity. Here humanity begins to share in "the Transcendent", the comprehensive ground of Being mentioned earlier in my introduction to the process of transcending. Thus, Existenz is beyond the objectification possible in immanence and therefore impossible to conceptualize or define. This lack of conceptuality is explicable also in the sense that the "I" that is Existenz is not the subject "I" with which we intend objects, nor is it the object "I" that we intend as a subject objectifying itself. Existenz is rather an "I" behind each of these, the subject "I" and the objectified "I", an "I" that, in fact, encompasses both subject and object, a self that is prior to the subject - object fracturing that occurs in its subjection to cognition. (Jaspers tells us of Existenzen: "They need not be nothing even though they are unknown. They could be objects of thought if not of cognition."34)

32 Ibid., p. 181.
33 Ibid., p. 181.
Jaspers informs us that Existenz is that part of a human that is essential and authentic. It is the Archimedean point from which the modes of immanence are governed. It is the self, ego, the unobjectifiable "I" that is involved in, but distinct from, the immanent aspects.

I am Existenz if I do not become an object for myself. In Existenz I know, without being able to see it, that what I call my "self" is independent. The possibility of Existenz is what I live by; it is only in its realization that I am myself. Attempts to comprehend it make it vanish, for it is not a psychological subject. I feel more deeply rooted in its possibility than in my self-objectifying grasp of my nature and my character.³⁵

It is as deeply rooted Existenz that we as humans come to see that the transcendent self we have come to be is not due to our own doings, but rather is the gift of another: the Source, God, the Transcendent. It is as freedom and Reason work in Existenz that this realization is made.

2. Existenz and Freedom

As Existenz alone can we as individuals become aware of, and possess, freedom. As existence, consciousness as such, and spirit our lives are at the disposal of the cause and effect laws that govern each of the aspects. "There is no freedom outside of self being. The objective world has neither a place nor a gap for it."³⁶

³⁵ Jaspers, Philosophy, v.2., p. 3. For Jaspers, and in this paper, the term existential is best read Existenz-ial because of the connection the word has for Jaspers to Existenz.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 167.
Ironically, it is in being addressed with the imperatives of Being that we first become aware of our Existential freedom. Also ironically, it is in the freedom of these imperatives that we first sense our dependence upon the Source. For

where in our freedom we decide through ourselves and are not automatically subordinated to a natural law, (we find that) we are not through ourselves but by virtue of being given to ourselves in our freedom. If we do not love, we do not know what we should do, we cannot force our freedom. When we decide freely and conceive of our lives as meaningful, we know that we do not owe ourselves to ourselves.37

Jaspers adds: "The more authentically free a man is, the greater his certainty of God. When I am authentically free, I am certain that I am not free through myself."38

As Existenzen we are thus made aware of the Transcendent. Yet we know that we are distinct and free from the Source. For if we were identical with Transcendence there would be no freedom of the will, no need to answer the imperatives by which our freedom was made known to us, but only automatic obedience.

3. Existenz and Reason

Reason (Vernunft) in Jaspers is the immanent mode of consciousness as such transcending itself. In other words, Reason is no longer tied to the

38 Ibid., p. 65.
immanent world order as is understanding, but is free to function in the transcendent realm as well. For Jaspers Reason is a pervasive force that can potentially penetrate all of reality.\textsuperscript{39}

Reason is only available to those of us who escape the modes of immanence by participating as transcendent Existenz. (Because not all of us achieve this step Existenz is often called potential Existenz.) At the same time, Existenz can only emerge as we engage in Reason. Reason and Existenz rise and fall always together.\textsuperscript{40}

This tool of Existenz is most succinctly described by Jaspers as the will to unity, and as such it leads Existenz into a fuller relationship with Transcendence. The impetus for this will and its goal is the Encompassing, the One which is the All. Reason is therefore a boundless openness to the whole of Being, a force that must subsume all actualities and possibilities.\textsuperscript{41} "Reason brings it about that what is and can be must unfold itself; it is that which unfolds the heart of everything. And it urges on into relation with the One that which it has unlocked, that it may not sink into the nothingness of diffusion."\textsuperscript{42}

\textsuperscript{39} Jaspers, \textit{Reason and Existenz}, p. 65.

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid., p. 67.


\textsuperscript{42} Ibid., p. 42.
4. Existenz and Truth

Karl Jaspers speaks of one Truth, but of many truths. Truth expresses itself as truths on many levels. On the level of dasein truth is a function of the preservation and extension of existence, and is realized pragmatically. As consciousness as such truth is compelling correctness and is sought in evidence. Truth as spirit is conviction, expressed in submission to the wholeness of ideas.43

Existenz too shares in truth. Existenz knows truth as faith. Jaspers writes:

Where I am no longer sheltered by a certifying effectiveness of pragmatic truth, by a demonstrable certainty of understanding, or by a protective totality of spirit, there I have come upon a truth in which I break out of all worldly immanence. Only from this experience of transcendence do I return to the world, now living both in and beyond it, and only now for the first time myself. The truth of Existenz proves itself as authentic consciousness of reality.44

These aspects of truth do not blend together to form a coherent truth, however, rather they come into conflict with each other if one is given dominion over the others. But seeing them come together in our humanity presses us to seek the one Truth in which no mode of the Encompassing is lost.45 The one Truth is then beyond all of our modes of functioning. It can only be approached as we as Existenz are open (Offenheit) to the whole

44 Ibid., p. 39.
of Being, to the Encompassing. Pure Truth is the domain of Transcendence. This Truth is, therefore, never grasped as an objective whole. It can become evident only cloudily and partially in history.

5. Existenz and Historicity

So far I have introduced Jaspers' concept of Transcendence as the Encompassing, as the totality of Being, and Truth as the expression of this wholeness. I have also introduced some of Jaspers' basic ideas about humanity: our participation in the immanent modes of reality, our unobjectifiable selves that in boundary situations become Existenz through faith. I have shown that through freedom and Reason we are made aware of the givenness of our Existenz in relation to Transcendence. Now I must discuss the stage upon which, according to Jaspers, this philosophical play is performed. This stage is history. Immanence in its modal character is temporal. Transcendence and Truth are eternal. This division leads in Jaspers to a distinction between history and historicity.

As existence in time we as humans experience history as the objective premises of our present situation. Each event is "singular in time and unique in kind". In knowing history in this way I am an observer, I am consciousness as such, a knowing subject apart from the known: history.

As Existenz I become aware of historicity. Here, the "historic consciousness of Existenz must be personal in origin. It makes me aware of myself in communication with other historic self being;" whereas, "I myself
am phenomenally bound in time to a sequence of singular situations, my
given situation.⁴⁸ As Existenz we are no mere observers of history but
participants in historicity. "What I know theoretically about myself is
particular and objectified; it is no longer myself. It becomes myself
again when it has been grasped and accepted, melted down into the active
historic process of my possible Existenz."⁴⁹ This process is possible
because the Source of history and of the past Existenzen that shaped it is
the same as the Source of our Existenz. As Existenz we read history as
contents and images that point to us, that are expressions of the Being in
which we share. This is the meaning of historicity: the expression of
Being in immanent reality. History deals with the immanent then,
historicity with the existential now.

6. Existenz and Communication

To the degree that humans as authentic Existenzen share with each other
in this historicity, Truth, Reason, freedom, and faith, they are said by
Jaspers to be engaging in true human communication. This true, existential
communication must, therefore, be qualitatively distinguished from
communicative exchanges between individuals based upon the universality of
consciousness as such. Existential communication is qualified by Reason
(Vernunft) rather than by understanding (Verstand). It is transcendent
rather than immanent. Existential communication is the sharing by humans
of their experiences of the unity of Transcendence, the sharing of their
experiences of Being itself.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 105.
⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 105.
This sharing must, therefore, occur not on the immanent level of cognitive exchanges, but on the transcendent level that exceeds knowing. Jaspers refers to the language of the transcendent as the cipher script. The workings of this language is the subject matter of the following section where ciphers are seen as the means of access between the Transcendent and an individual Existenz. Existential communication is best understood, then, within the context of this next section, as ciphers that create a bridge not between the Transcendent and an Existenz, but as ciphers that create a bridge between Existenzen.

D. TRANSCENDENCE: THE ENCOMPASSING OF CIPHERS

1. The foundering of Existenz

To this point, where I have spoken of foundering it has been in the context of the foundering of immanence, through which we are led to encounter ourselves as Existenz. Philosophizing, however, does not end here, for we find that as Existenz we also founder. We founder in that as Existenz alone we are not able to account for the experience we have of Being in itself. This experience is explicable only as we allow room for a realm beyond Existenz, a greater and more encompassing encompassing. This encompassing is referred to as Transcendence, and while in itself it is not a part of the human person (although the human person is rightly said to share in it) it is important anthropologically in that it is that to which the human person is oriented, and upon which the human person is founded.
2. The idea of Transcendence

Jaspers is very dogmatic in his assertion that Transcendence cannot be for us an absolutization of any one part of reality, and he guards against this in terms of the subject-object relationship already discussed at length in this chapter. As we have seen, we are able to objectify only that which is immanent, that which is available to us in cognitive understanding as the immanent function of consciousness as such. Since Transcendence cannot be equated with any particular object for us as subject, it must transcend the subject-object relationship. Transcendence, for Jaspers, is the totality of subject and object, the subsuming of all subjects and all objects. Transcendence is therefore called by Jaspers the Comprehensive, the totality of Being, Being itself, or the One which is the All. Transcendence is thus not "an encompassing" but rather "the Encompassing".

For Jaspers Transcendence is equated with God. In this Jaspers follows the idea of God as the coincidence of opposites taken over from Cusanus. Jaspers distills from Cusanus that since God is beyond all antitheses, everything antithetical must coincide in God. Negative theology, the negation of all finite statements about God, merely drops the thought; but an insight into the nature of human thinking, and into its objects as split into

50 Jaspers, Philosophy, v. 3., p. 145.

antitheses, will lift our thinking to God in the forms of the unthinkable, the coincidentia oppositorum.\textsuperscript{52}

3. The systematics of the ciphers

I have already used the idea of ciphers extensively in this paper, although the word itself was not used until the closing paragraph of section C. The idea of ciphers must now become explicit, and as it becomes explicit in this section the role of ciphers in the preceding explanations will become clear. As I have already indicated, foundering in any particular encompassing is followed by a transcending to another. Ciphers, as the language of the transcendent, provide the impetus and direction for such transcending. It is in a cipher that the world of immanence founders for me and I am led to Existenz, and, as will be seen, it is in a cipher that Existenz founders for me and I am led to Transcendence.

Transcendence, then, is both the goal and the source of ciphers, and Transcendence is encountered only in them. I therefore characterize the encompassing of Transcendence as the encompassing of ciphers.

\textsuperscript{52} Jaspers, \textit{Philosophical Faith and Revelation}, p. 260.
a. The nature of ciphers

Ciphers are the language of Transcendence, but they are never Transcendence itself.\(^{53}\) Ciphers are the messages of eternal Being to the being that we are in existential awareness.

The experiencing of a cipher (called by Jaspers a metaphysical experience) involves all of the experiences of immanent reality: sense perception, living, cognition, thinking, and intuiting, but none of these are the metaphysical experience itself. "There I face the abyss and feel the desperate shortcoming when the experience remains simply one in existence. But there, too, I find present fulfillment when the experience becomes transparent, when it turns into a cipher."\(^{54}\)

This transparency of existence, (and potentially all of existence can be a cipher for me\(^{55}\)), allows the ciphers to become the objects of our Existenz, rather than objects of our subjective understanding, and as such they are called "metaphysical objectivities". Metaphysical objects are objects of Existenz in a different sense than immanent objects are objects for cognition, however, in that both Transcendence and Existenz are beyond the subject-object dichotomy that characterizes mundane reality. "The cipher is what brings transcendence to mind without obliging transcendence to become an objective being, and without obliging Existenz to become a

\(^{53}\) Jaspers, *Philosophy*, v. 3., p. 113. (Transcendence cannot appear as itself because there is no identity between God and mankind. God remains hidden. p. 120.)

\(^{54}\) Ibid., p. 114.

\(^{55}\) Ibid., p. 147. I experience ciphers in those areas in which I am open to seeing them.
subjective being."  Ciphers are a kind of unobjectifiable objectivity.

The cipher is, therefore, more than the totality of any physiognomic world picture, it goes beyond any knowing. "It puts me into a mode of being other than purely positive existence."57

While ciphers have both their source and their goal in the transcendent realm, they are for us only as they appear in immanent reality. There is nothing for us that we do not take in sensuously through immanence.58 "A pure beyond is empty; it is as if it were not. Hence the possibility of experiencing being proper requires an immanent transcendence."59

The language of Being must be brought through immanence in ciphers and then retranslated by a transcendent Existenz back into transcendent language if it is to be of value to that Existenz. "We experience being in the ciphers of existence; it takes reality to reveal transcendence. About transcendence we can know nothing in general; we can hear it only historically, in reality."60

Since the cipher is for Existenz and not for consciousness as such

Its reading is not an understanding, not a key to what lies underneath, but a real, personal involvement. Nor is it just rational ascertainment. It goes beyond that: it makes being transparent in existence, beginning in the most primitive existential immediacy; and even when this transparency is

56 Ibid., p. 120.
57 Ibid., p. 114.
58 Jaspers, Philosophy, v. 2., p. 279. Here Jaspers, while maintaining that mysticism (direct relation to God) is not possible within philosophy, admits that "No possible Existenz would dare say flatly...(that the possibility of a mystical experience is)...untrue".
59 Jaspers, Philosophy, v. 3., p. 119.
60 Ibid., p. 114.
conveyed in the most sublime thoughts, it is never a thought but a thought conveyed new immediacy. 61

This personal involvement and immediacy makes ciphers undemonstratable. The generality of consciousness as such demands questioning. The unconditionality of the cipher brings all questioning to an end.

Thus the truth of a cipher is not subject to any authority other than its being true for me.

Since the criterion (for cipher reading) is existential rather than logical, the question at each point is where I am involved, where I am made aware of that truth in my self being... the question is not, for example, which is right... the question is which I freely accept— for they are neither right nor wrong... What convinces me is not the intellect, nor is it empirical observation; it is what I am and what I want... I ask instead whether a cipher language is existentially true or existentially ruinous. 62

For Jaspers there is one Truth (which is the Encompassing) of which there are many truths. 63 I must live according to my truth, that which is revealed to me in the ciphers. I have not the right, therefore, to question another's truth even if it opposes mine in understanding, but I must have faith that both are subsumed in the Truth. My truth is

61 Ibid., p. 114.
62 Ibid., pp. 129-130.
63 We are here reminded of Polanyi's belief that there are many ways of seeing what is true but that there is only one Truth. Michael Polanyi, Personal Knowledge, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969), pp. 315-316. Also of interest in this respect is Holm's comment that "Here again we see how strongly Jaspers protests against heteronomy and professes autonomy, which for him as for Paul Tillich, in the last resort coincides with theonomy." Soren Holm, "Jaspers' Philosophy of Religion", The Philosophy of Karl Jaspers, ed. P.A. Schilpp, (New York: Tudor, 1957), p. 686.
discovered in the ciphers as I come to my self-being. "I want to touch reality, to void possibility. Full of possibilities, I proceed to reality, turning myself into a limited individual; I want to get to the point where there is no more possibility, nothing but clear-cut reality caused solely by outright being."\textsuperscript{64}

If we are to discover Being in the ciphers we may not go beyond the cipher, for its glow is that of Being. A cipher is only in the existential, historic moment. The metaphysical experience is lost if it is reduced to a cognitive understanding. "Our experience of transcendence pales in generalization; it becomes more forthright as it climbs towards the peak of something fulfilled only here and now."\textsuperscript{65}

b. The three languages of the transcendent

The three ways in which ciphers appear in immanence are called by Jaspers the three languages of Transcendence. The first language is the direct language of Transcendence, the second is that of generalization in communication, and the third is the speculative language of philosophy.

i. The first language: direct ciphers

While Jaspers maintains that an arranging of the direct ciphers of Transcendence would not help to control or survey them (for such an order would void the cipher character of the world), he does maintain that

\textsuperscript{64} Jaspers, Philosophy, v. 3., p. 115.
\textsuperscript{65} Ibid., p. 115.
philosophic analysis reveals a natural sequence of things that become ciphers. The order in which direct ciphers are opened up to us are: first, nature and history, second, consciousness at large, and third, man.

ii. The second language: generalization in communication

"It is in the echo of (the first) transcendent language - audible only in the immediacy of the present moment - that languages are created, images and thoughts intended to convey what has been heard. The language of man takes its place beside the language of being." Here the language of the Transcendent as a direct cipher is transferred into a form generalized for "transmission from Existenz to Existenz." Since the only accessible "stuff" of human experience is immanent reality, any communication between one transcendent Existenz and another, as is the case between Transcendence and any Existenz, must first be converted into a language capable of being carried in the mundane realm of immanence. It must then be translated back into a transcendent language by the receptive Existenz. While the present moment of existential awareness (first language) always passes, in these moments representations are conserved through form.

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66 Ibid., p. 149. I have undertaken an extensive analysis of the three languages of the transcendent in a paper entitled "Jaspers' Chiffre and the Hidden God," a shortened version of which appears in Anakainosis, June 1985 (7:4), under the same title.

67 Ibid., p. 169

68 Ibid., p. 113

69 Even the preservation of ciphers for a single Existenz must be put into communicable language. "What is original in immediacy is conscious only in reproduction." Ibid., p. 126
can be created that then stand in immanence waiting to be reappropriated by an Existenz who in another historic moment can grasp them from the perspective of Existenz. These extant representations of Being comprise the second language of Transcendence, and take one of three forms: as discrete myths or symbols, as revelations of the beyond, or as mythical reality.

iii. The third language: philosophic speculation

When thinking takes aim at the ciphers of the first and second languages, the result is a third "incognoscible but cogitative" language known to Jaspers as philosophic speculation or philosophic communication. This drive to think the unthinkable must remove God from the realm of the Other, and bring him by analogy into the cognitive scope of immanence usually by means of an immanent analogy. We read "the original cipher script by writing a new one."\(^{70}\)

This kind of philosophy has often been taken for reality itself, but Jaspers warns that such speculative thought must be seen only as a symbol of the cipher lying behind it. "As speculation never gets beyond the cipher, it can see transcendence in no form of being as such. In its symbols it is only nearer transcendence and farther from it."\(^{71}\) The result of such philosophizing is therefore "mysticism to the intellect that wants

\(^{70}\) Ibid., p. 117. All of the theologies of analogia fall in here as ciphers of philosophic speculation.

\(^{71}\) Ibid., p. 119
cognition, but it is lucidity to a self-being that transcends in it."\textsuperscript{72}
Jaspers speaks of three ciphers of philosophic speculation: ontology, proofs for the existence of God, and transcending in the speculation of reminiscence and foresight.\textsuperscript{73}

C. The ultimate cipher: shipwreck of Existenz

When earlier in the paper I raised the issue of foundering, or shipwreck, in boundary situations it was in the context of the limitations of immanent reality. Transcending in ciphers beyond these limitations (the content of my discussion of ciphers so far) has not yet led us to God, who has remained hidden, but rather to the mode of our being known by Jaspers as free Existenz.

But there is "a different plane"\textsuperscript{74} of foundering, the foundering leading to the ultimate cipher, the foundering of Existenz. "For world orientation the world founders as existence, being not comprehensible by and in itself; it does not become a closed, intelligible being, nor can the cognitive process round itself into a whole. What founders in existential elucidation is the being-in-itself of Existenz: where I am really myself I am not myself only."\textsuperscript{75} It is as foundering Existenz that we are prepared to discover God.

\textsuperscript{72} Ibid., p. 119

\textsuperscript{73} These are not the only ways of speculating philosophically, but the ones that Jaspers mentions at length in the Philosophy.

\textsuperscript{74} Ibid., p. 194.

\textsuperscript{75} Ibid., p. 193. Jaspers never tires of saying this.
I have also indicated how we must participate fully in existence "without reserve, suffering whatever mundane havoc that might be wrought upon me,"\(^76\) if we are to transcend to Existenz. The foundering of Existenz arises in this imperative when in an attempt to realize its freedom as transcendent Existenz it encounters the limiting duration of history that it must of necessity engage upon entering immanence. Likewise, the freedom of Existenz is faced with the reality of nature, and the infinitude of Existenz with the finitude of existence.\(^77\) This antithetical relation of Existenz to the immanent modes of being makes us aware of the lack of self-sufficiency in Existenz, and acts as a cipher urging us to look beyond Existenz for the ground of our humanity.\(^78\) But because Transcendence is hidden we cannot interpret this cipher; we cannot get beyond the being that we are, and this being is caught up in antinomies.

The threatening extreme of uninterpretable foundering is bound to crush whatever had been envisioned, conceived, constructed behind the blinders of deceptive happiness. There is no longer a reality we can live by...what foundering comes down to is the being of nothingness...The question is whether a being can shine out of total darkness.\(^79\)

\(^76\) Ibid. p. 198.

\(^77\) Ibid, pp. 201-202.

\(^78\) It is in the cross-fire of the unconditional imperatives of transcendence and the antithetical imperatives of immanence that come to us as free Existenz that we suffer guilt, making self-authentication (and thus self-sufficiency) impossible. Thus Jaspers' rejection of existentialism in favour of Existenz-philosophie. Knudsen, pp. 108-114.

\(^79\) Ibid, p. 205.
God is silent, and the only response to this silence is silence. We must not be tempted in our fear to counterfeit reality, to engage in false faith by creating false serenity, but rather we must trust in the silence as a cipher, trust that in our foundering is the being of transcendence. This leap of faith "from fear to serenity is the most tremendous one a man can make. That he succeeds in it must be due to a reason beyond the Existenz of his self-being. Undefinably, his faith ties him to transcendent being."®® Yet even in this leap there are no guarantees. "Uninterpretability is the ultimate cipher, but it is no longer a definable cipher. It remains open, hence its silence. It may as well become the absolute void as the definitive fulfillment."®¹

Even if we do find fulfillment in this leap two things must be remembered. First, there is no final solution for a truthful sense of being. "There is no answer in the great silence, no justification for what is, and for the way it is; there is no tranquillization, no unveiling in the cipher." Thus, "it is bound to vanish time and again."®² Secondly, we still know nothing of Transcendence. "Whatever we think we know about the deity is superstition; truth lies where a foundering Existenz can translate the ambiguous language of transcendence into the simplest certainty of being."®³ We cannot, nor need not, go past the mere existence of

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®® Ibid. p. 206.
®¹ Ibid. p. 206.
®² Ibid. p. 207.
®³ Ibid. p. 207.
Transcendence. "That there is being suffices." "It is enough that God is."

E. JASPERS' ANTHROPOLOGY

To this point in the paper I have described the process of philosophizing from the perspective of the human person as this process is understood by Karl Jaspers. My task now is to illustrate this process pictorially for the sake of clarifying the workings of the various elements in Jaspers' thought and their interrelationships, and for the sake of establishing a framework out of which I can effectively discuss Jaspers philosophy of religion.

1. The model pictorially illustrated

For Karl Jaspers a human being is, as with the whole of Being, divided into two distinct parts: the immanent and the transcendent. This division of the lower part, existence, from the higher part, Existenz, allows a general anthropological classification of dualism to be made. Within this classification Jaspers must be said to be a structuralist rather than a geneticist due to the emphasis he places upon the order that we find in Being, the permanence of that order, and our call to respond to that order by actualizing our Existenz in response to Transcendence.

84 Ibid, p. 207.
Of the anthropological paradigms outlined in *Models of Man in Theology and Psychology*, a paper by James Olthuis and Arnold De Graaf based upon the anthropological categories devised by D.H.T. VollenHoven, Jaspers is best described as a monarchian dualist. His anthropology fits the double dualism described in this model where God is set over against that which is merely immanent, and humans, as a part of the lower, immanent realm, are in turn divided between a lower, individual realm and a higher, universal realm. In Jaspers God, or Transcendence, as Being itself is differentiated from the world of immanence, and mankind as he or she shares in immanence is differentiated from mankind as he or she shares in transcendence as Existenz.

I conceive of Jaspers' anthropological thought as illustrated on page 54. Note here that I have not attempted to describe in this section the elements that appear on the diagram because these have already been described at length in the preceding pages. It is helpful, however, to realize that the preceding descriptions follow the diagram from the bottom to the top, beginning with the encompassing of immanence (the encompassing of knowledge) comprised of existence, consciousness as such, and spirit, proceeding by the first level of transcending to the encompassing of Existenz (the encompassing of faith), and finally moving by means of the second level of transcending (in the ultimate cipher) to the encompassing of Transcendence (the encompassing of ciphers).

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2. Anthropology and periechontology

This anthropological model is helpful also in that it opens up to us not only Jaspers' anthropological thought, but his entire conception of Being. This becomes clear to us when we realize that every mode of human functioning corresponds to a periechontological mode of reality that as humans we participate in and are incorporated by. That is to say, we as humans function as a microcosm of the macrocosm that is Being itself.

Thus existence, the human self's discovery of its physicality, is really the discovery of the self's participation in a larger network of physicality, participation as a human being in the lawed world that is explored by the physical sciences.

Likewise, as consciousness as such, we find that an awareness of our individual cognitions leads us to participation in a shared, universal consciousness where the laws of logic and understanding constrain us.

As spirit we find ourselves being shaped by the already existing social institutions and movements that comprise the world of the idea, and discover that we in our present involvement in such ideas can contribute to the shape that they will assume in the future. Spirit therefore exists also outside of any individual's participation in it. Immanence exists therefore in these three modes both for the human person and for the world.

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87 For a description of the term periechontology see note 1 of Chapter 1.

88 Whether or not it exists outside of anyone's participation in it is, I think, a question that is difficult to answer for Jaspers. A discussion about this problem in respect to the encompassing of consciousness as such is carried out in note 13 of Chapter One.
Likewise, in transcendence we as Existenz share as a microcosm in

Transcendence or Being itself which can be conceived as macrocosmic.

Jaspers makes this anthropological (microcosmic) - periechontological (macrocosmic) distinction explicitly in his writings, although in a picture that differs somewhat (in appearance but not, I think, in intent) from mine. For Jaspers the encompassing appears in "the opposed perspectives: either as Being itself, in and through which we are - or else as the Encompassing which we ourselves are."\(^{89}\) Cutting across this distinction is

another - that between immanence and transcendence, yielding, in Jaspers, a four part description of the Encompassing.

The Encompassing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The encompassing which we ourselves are</th>
<th>Being itself</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>immanence</td>
<td>existence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>the world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>transcendence</td>
<td>Existence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Transcendence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Richard Grabau, in his introduction to the Philosophy of Existence, interprets the material with a similar picture that provides yet another perspective.90

The Encompassing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Encompassing of Subjectivity</th>
<th>The Encompassing of Objectivity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Immanent modes</td>
<td>A. Immanent mode</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Existence</td>
<td>World</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consciousness as such</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spirit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Transcendent mode</td>
<td>B. Transcendent mode</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Existenz</td>
<td>Transcendence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While these pictures are helpful, I think they are misleading in the sense that for Jaspers there is no distinction between the Encompassing and Transcendence, a distinction that appears in the diagrams for the sake of showing the correlations that exist between the subjective (anthropological) and objective (periechontological) encompassings. A more

accurate picture, although an admittedly more complicated one, might look like this:

![Diagram of Transcendence, Immanence, and Existence]

In this diagram the outer box represents the boundaries of Being itself, although more accurately there would be no such boundary line because Being has no parameters. Being is all-inclusive, the One which is the All. This all-encompassing domain, as I have already discussed, is called by Jaspers Transcendence, or the Encompassing, or God. Within, and as a part of, this Encompassing exists the world in three modes: existence, consciousness as such and spirit. Immanence, or the world, is a part of Transcendence but is not the whole of Transcendence. The human person is also a part of Transcendence but not the whole of Transcendence. As humans we participate in each mode of immanence, but find that we also may transcend these modes and discover that part of ourselves that is outside of immanence, that part of our selves that shares in Transcendence. It is here that we actualize our Existenzen.

In this we can see why Jaspers believes that Existenz is the authentic self, for only here are we free of the constraints of cause and effect that
rule immanence. Here we make a leap of faith that determines our position in respect to Transcendence outside of the deterministic world. Here we Reason with a transcendent will to unity rather than with the divisive subject-object relationship required by consciousness as such. Here we communicate with an existential awareness of Transcendence and our unity within it rather than communicating with the divisive ideas engendered by our participation in spirit. Here we hear the ciphers of Transcendence as transcendent beings. Here we live in the eternal Now rather than as objects of a passing history. Here we partake of Truth and not only truths. Human existence outside of existential existence is, therefore, not yet fully human, but only potentially human, existence. This is why Jaspers often refers to Existenz as potential Existenz. Authentic humanity is humanity as Existenz.
1. Offenheit or openness and refers to the accessibility of Transcendence to an Existenz who shares in it.

2. The individual / universal split referred to here is the distinction between universal, compelling knowledge and individual, existential faith.

3. There is a sense also in which the reverse is true and the transcendent realm is universal in respect to the Truth and the immanent realm is individual in its truths.

4. Immanence here is distinguished from Transcendence as the division between that which is not Being itself and that which is. This is the first dualism in Jaspers.

5. Immanence here is distinguished from transcendence as the division between that which in mankind does not share in the Transcendent and that which does. This is the second dualism.
3. Ciphers and communication

Earlier we discovered that true communication between humans is existential communication, that is, communication between Existenzen. We also saw that for Jaspers ciphers carry the message of Transcendence to the seeking Existenz. In each of these cases, however, the message must, as it is transferred, pass through immanence. The importance of this process for later discussions merits, I think, that it too be pictorially set out before I move on to the next chapter.

In the case of existential communication the message is formulated by the sender as an Existenz as he or she participates in Being in faith, Reason, and Truth. But since there is no direct access between Existenzen, the message must be broken down into the elements of subject and object in order to pass through the medium of immanence. The message to be sent must, therefore, be socially contextualized (in spirit), put into an interchangeable, sensible language (in consciousness as such), and deposited into the world in a word, a sign, a gesture, or some other physical expression (in existence). To be received such a message must pass back up through this network. First, it must be heard or perceived (in existence), second it must be logically understood (in consciousness as such), and third, it must be assimilated into a social situation (in spirit). Finally, the message is ready to again be translated back into existential language (transcending the subject-object dichotomy) by the

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91 Such direct access Jaspers refers to as mysticism which, while not totally ruled out by the open Existenz, is considered philosophically impossible.
receptive hearer who has heard the message not with the ears of immanence but with the ears of Existenz.

An existential communication

The problem of mistaking scientific communications for existential ones, or vice versa, is an important aspect of Jaspers' discussions of religion. I will, therefore, diagram a scientific communication to demonstrate the distinction.

A scientific communication

The way in which the message moves through the modes of immanence does not change from the way in which it does for an existential communication. What changes is the source of the message. Rather than having its source in Existenz, a scientific message has its source in whatever mode of immanence the message is about. If the message is about one of the human sciences then it originates in spirit (as is the case with the diagram
above), if a message of logical content then in consciousness as such, and
if a message dealing with one of the human sciences then in existence.
Likewise, the goal of such a message is not the Existenz of the receiver,
but the appropriate mode of immanence to deal with the data.

Ciphers of Transcendence follow much the same course as do existential
communications, but rather than having their source in an Existenz
participating in Transcendence the source of such messages is Transcendence
itself. The pathway of ciphers can be illustrated as follows:

Finally, in the case of the ultimate cipher, the shipwreck of Existenz,
Existenz finds itself and all of its immanent aspects lacking in an attempt
to discover meaning and Being and jumps beyond itself to Transcendence in
its search. It is in this leap of faith that mankind discovers its source
and direction.

The ultimate cipher

Armed with these models, and the general explication of Jaspers'
thought that has been the task of this first chapter, we can now explore
Jaspers' philosophy of religion.
CHAPTER TWO

JASPERS' PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

I hope to have succeeded in chapter one in providing, by means of anthropological considerations, a framework out of which Karl Jaspers' philosophy of religion can be effectively discussed. Before proceeding with this discussion, however, I think it is necessary to provide a brief description of what Jaspers means when he uses the terms religion, revelation, and theology. I have already in this paper, for the sake of exposition and communication, permitted these terms to be used in the manner that Jaspers would use them, but only now, armed with an understanding of Jaspers' anthropological paradigm, are we able to see what Jaspers really means by them. While the following are not precise definitions (these I have found nowhere in Jaspers) they do, I hope, communicate the flavour of the words as they are used by Jaspers.

The term revelation is the easiest to begin with because it is foundational for the other two. For Jaspers, revelation describes the phenomenon of the divine in the world, either through an incarnation, through the giving of a divine word or law, or through a present divine spirit. Revelation is the divine as it is objectified in any of these ways,

1 To the degree that I find Jaspers' usages of these terms misleading or unfair to my own position I take issue with him in chapter three.
or in any other way. Revelation describes the presence of the divine in immanence, or there being access to the divine through immanence.

Religion, for Jaspers, is any organized belief in revelation. For religion, the objectified divinity of revelation is given an authority that is mediated by the representative of the divine in the world, be that a person, a book, a creed, a sacrament, a belief, or any combination of these. Religion is a product of the immanent encompassing of spirit as it is directed towards, and organized around, a supposed revelation.

Theology in Jaspers' perspective is the systematic investigation of a revelation and the source of that revelation, the divine. The task of theology, as Jaspers understands the theologian's understanding of his own work, is to reconcile revelation with the immanent universality of consciousness as such for the sake of a religious community.

I am now able to proceed to a discussion of Jaspers' philosophy of religion, a task I will undertake in four major sections: A. I will begin with a description of how religion fits, or rather fails to fit, into the general structure of Jaspers' philosophy as described in chapter one, B. I will then illustrate why Jaspers believes there is a necessary relationship between religion and oppressive authority, C. I will discuss Jaspers' views on Christianity as a particular expression of religion, D. I will demonstrate why Jaspers asserts that religions find their purest, and only legitimate expression as a sub-set of philosophical faith.
A. STRUCTURAL CRITICISMS OF RELIGION

1. The impossibility of revelation

The first challenge that Jaspers brings to religion is his assertion that those who view the world in terms of the reality of revelation, religion, and theology are mistaken. The mistake being made here, he proposes, is a misunderstanding of the basic knowledge, a misunderstanding of the nature and boundaries of the various encompassings. If we recall the descriptions of the encompassings outlined in chapter one, Jaspers' objections to revelation are easily seen.

According to Jaspers, immanence is an encompassing characterized by the potential subjection of its contents to a universally valid cognitive understanding, in other words, by the availability of its contents to knowledge. Given this, any particular within immanence is characterized by its potential subjection to scientific analysis. Thus, were revelation a reality, were the divine really present in immanence in whatever form, then the divine as it appeared in immanence would be subject to scientific scrutiny. The divine would be present as an object to which the universal cognitive category of consciousness as such would be applicable, and we would be able to scientifically determine both the legitimacy and nature of the divine such that anyone who had learned the needed scientific technique could arrive at a knowledge of it. But Jaspers notes that this, indeed, is not the case, that revelation is not explicable as an object in the world, nor is it comprehended by those not receiving it. "What here calls for
obedience precedes the language of general intelligibility and lies hidden, from the outset, in the revelation of the kerygma as well."^2

Since the divine is not in this way present, not subject to the potential, cognitive universality characteristic of immanent objects, Jaspers seeks to locate human perception of the divine elsewhere, in a mode he deems appropriate to such interaction. His solution is the cipher doctrine, where transcendent humanity, Existenz, encounters transcendent Being, God, in a pre-cognitive, a-cognitive fashion. Indeed, "if Transcendence relates only to Existenz-- if it is the object side of the encompassing whose subject side we call Existenz-- then this Transcendence is neither valid for consciousness at large nor a real object in existence."^3

Here revelation, the divine in immanence, is replaced by ciphers, religion, a faith in this divine presence, is replaced by existential faith, and theology, the study of this revelation, is replaced by philosophy.

a. Ciphers taken for revelations

The mistake made by believers in revelation, according to Jaspers, is that they begin the process of philosophizing in ciphers but fail to complete it. As we have seen, the language of the Transcendent on its way to Existenzen must weave its way through immanence, for only in perception

^2 Jaspers, Philosophic Faith and Revelation, p. 22.

^3 Ibid., p. 82.
is it available at all. What happens for the believer in revelation is that the object carrying the cipher through immanence is mistaken for the cipher itself, the divine is left in the object rather than being extracted from it and existentially accommodated. The divine becomes the object of knowledge for consciousness as such rather than the object of faith for Existenz. Jaspers therefore asserts that "Embodying the cipher contents is the basic confusion in our dealings with Transcendence. If the reality of Transcendence is thus captured for our own reality, we have lost transcendence." Further, revelation, as that which misses the supra-objective elements present in the objective cipher script, causes us to

4 The alleged direct routes from Transcendence to Existenz, bypassing immanence altogether, Jaspers calls mysticisms and the experiences of nirvana. This, according to Jaspers, is, like revelation, a philosophic impossibility. In fact, nirvana and revelation are opposite errors. "Nirvana cancels all embodiment. The road to it is marked by ciphers only. Revelation is embodied in the incarnate God and does not permit itself to be turned into a cipher." *Ibid.*, p. 102.

5 *Ibid.*, p. 102. In terms of a distinction I made earlier in the paper, this "basic perversion" (p. 93.) can also be understood as the confusion of history and historicity. "Revelation rests upon an absolutely unique historic embodiment (history).... But the cipher that speaks in the revealed God as 'The Eternal', this powerful, challenging, sheltering, conquering cipher, is not tied to the corporeality of revelation (but is rather historicity)." (p. 107. The bracketed words are mine.) The believer in revelation here mistakes the historic embodiment of the cipher for historic Transcendence. God as historicity is, in the embodied cipher, taken for a historic reality.

Jaspers also accuses several of the philosophical disciplines with losing their essential focus because they leave in the subject-object relationship that which at root is rightfully beyond it. "So there is original, imperishable truth in the great pattern of world, man, God, and Being, as dealt with in the philosophical disciplines of cosmology, anthropology, theology, and ontology. But in the logically construed pseudo-knowledge of complete objectification the contents have been abandoned to a lifeless conceptuality." (pp. 78-79.)
"cling to objectivity as such", so that "our thoughts will soon follow meaningless paths without end or [existential] content."\(^6\)

Treating ciphers in this fashion clearly transgresses the fundamental contributions made to the process of philosophizing by the basic knowledge. The basic knowledge demonstrates that ciphers do not refer to anything beyond themselves, nor do they permit their speaker to be known. In revelation we are led to the divine, or to God’s will, or to God’s acts, all of which are philosophic impossibilities for Jaspers.

The prescription that Jaspers provides for believers in revelation is a dose of the basic knowledge in which their categorical error of mixing the encompassings can be seen.

The basic knowledge of encompassing, in which we search for the broadest horizons granted to us, has meaning even for believers in revelation. It allows them to feel the entire strangeness of revelation, its rational absurdity as a concept. The believer is made aware of doing something extraordinary, something beyond the power of the others he finds living in the world of men. Then the conventional faith in revelation, the comfortable matter of course, will be all but unrecognizable.\(^7\)

b. Fact distinguished from belief

Jaspers is particularly adamant in demanding of Karl Barth that he decide whether revelation is a sign, likened to a cipher, or a reality, likened to a fact in immanence. In response to Barth’s claim that

\(^6\) Ibid., p. 71. His encounters with the, to him, seemingly endless and various intricacies of systematic theologies seem to have inspired in Jaspers disgust, and comments such as these.

\(^7\) Ibid., p. 100.
"revelation of God's Word is divine sign language," Jaspers insists: "Let us not be evasive. Either revelation is the spatially and temporally fixed act of God which the believer says it is-- then it is not a cipher but reality. Or it is a cipher among other ciphers and no longer a real revelation."  

Consistent with his dualistic conception of humanity, and, in fact, Being itself, Jaspers wishes to keep clear that which belongs to the immanent realm and that which belongs to the transcendent. When a believer speaks of the "fact" of revelation, Jaspers asks, "But what is a 'fact' if it is not demonstrable reality, only a revelation attested by believers?"  

Jaspers desires to clarify the situation by keeping the realms of encompassing distinct. The realm of the transcendent is the realm of belief, and no belief is fact. The realm of the immanent is the realm of fact, and no fact requires belief. Thus it becomes "a perversion to seek factual decisions on matters that can be settled only in the reality of the Existenz that makes them communicable," and a perversion to make that which is a matter for scientific proof a matter of faith. Revelation, the supposed presence of the divine in immanence, becomes inexplicable in these terms.

Cipher or reality-- that is the heart of the issue. To believers in revelation it is a reality that God himself, by performing a series of revelatory acts in time, is a historic phenomenon in the world of objective facts. This

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9 Jaspers, Philosophical Faith and Revelation, p. 108.
10 Ibid., p. 115.
11 Ibid., p. 263.
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Factual temporality of the eternal, immutable God is not, of course, recognized as generally valid, but for the faith it exists. Now the absurdities come to be insurmountable. First, any real reality is demonstrable for every intellect; it is not a matter of faith. Secondly, God as Transcendence--"The Eternal"--is not a "becoming" God. He has no history.12

Jaspers attempts to place revelation in a binding dilemma. If revelation is fact, then it is universally valid and should require no faith, if a cipher, then it may be existentially true but no longer fact in the immanent sense.

c. The impossibility of an incarnation

Jaspers, as we have seen, does not deny God, but in his thought he is forced to pit the God of philosophy against the God of religious faith. In his denial of revelation he must also deny the God of revelation. "The God who shows himself in the reality of revelation cannot be God for us. This is no denial of God as against faith in God; it is the hidden God as against the revealed one. It is the philosophic consciousness of transcendent reality opposing the material reality of revelation."13

As such, the Christian idea of Christ as the incarnated God, or for that matter the idea of an incarnated divinity in any religion, is "unthinkable", and is called by Jaspers "a philosophic impossibility", for in philosophy "we cannot conceive of such an incarnation."14

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12 Ibid., pp. 163-164.
13 Ibid., p. 324.
14 Ibid., pp. 102, 145, and 100.
JASPERS' PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

raises the same questions here as he did with revelation in general. If
Jesus is God then God is factually, immanently accessible (as was Jesus),
and no faith should be required to know God. If faith is required to know
God then God cannot be a part of factual immanence (as was Jesus). Is
Christ the object of faith or knowledge? In the former case he is not real,
in the latter he is not God.

Measured by the philosophic idea of God as hidden Transcendence "the
thesis of his [Jesus'] incarnation would, if philosophy allowed us to use
the language of believers in revelation, seem blasphemous-- as it would
have seemed to the human Jesus, as far as we know about him." 15

2. Religion conceived as a delusion

It might be the very challenge of our human condition--
into which God, to speak in the cipher, has placed us
while shrouding himself-- that we shall not seek to
escape by any kind of self-delusion or concealment. In
concrete acts, in their conduct, in their own words the
believers in revelation face the question of philosophy:
To accept your statements, your doggedly held theses,
must one perhaps delude himself at a critical point? Are
you asking the impossible? Could it be that
truthfulness, which God demands of us, oppugns phenomena
which men assert in the
name of faith in revelation? 16

15 Ibid., p. 325. Jaspers is careful to distinguish Jesus, the
historical figure, from Christ, the title given to Jesus by those who
believe he was God. Jaspers has no trouble with Jesus either as a
historical figure or as the cipher he has become. Jaspers does oppose the
idea of Christ. Jaspers gives a fairly detailed exposition of Jesus the
philosopher in Karl Jaspers, Socrates, Buddha, Confucius, Jesus (N.Y. and

16 Jaspers, Philosophic Faith and Revelation, p. 10.
Jaspers follows this challenge with the statement: "To this question there can never be a final answer." However, the lack of a final answer does not inhibit Jaspers from offering us the answer of philosophy, and this in the strongest and most self-assured terms. The answer of philosophy, according to Jaspers, is that, consistent with the assertion of the impossibility of revelation, if one is going to be a believer in a religion one must suffer from delusions on at least two fronts. First, one must be mistaken about the nature and behaviour of God, and second, one must also misunderstand himself.

a. Delusions about God

Both religion and philosophy speak of God, but in a very different fashion. The idea of a personal God found in religion is uncovered as delusional in philosophizing.

In philosophical faith we do not know about God; we hear only the language of ciphers. To this faith, God himself is a cipher. The believer in revelation thinks he knows what God did when he revealed himself for the salvation of men--when God, in other words, took particular actions in the world, tying himself to time and place.17

So God, according to philosophy, cannot be immanent, cannot be present in the world either as incarnation, word, or spirit. It is delusional to think this way of God, and, Jaspers maintains, a distortion of the biblical literature.

Jaspers claims that only in philosophical faith is the biblical commandment--"Thou shalt not make unto thee any image or likeness"--taken

17 Ibid., p 126.
Jaspers' notes that the Old Testament contains both the prohibition to making images and likenesses of God, and a wealth of such images and likenesses. Jaspers here distinguishes the commandment, which he claims refers to Transcendence, from the images and likenesses, which he claims are ciphers of that Transcendence. Jaspers thus refutes the idea of a personal God using the terminology of Martin Buber, who he very likely had in mind when he wrote: "The cipher of the personal God is the only confrontation of the human and the divine as 'I' and 'Thou'. Our thinking, entangled on ciphers, tempts us to equate the personal God with Transcendence, but no personality, no Thou, can be one with Transcendence."\(^{18}\)

The idea of a personal God is further discredited for Jaspers as he again turns to the Bible, this time to the story of Job. In Jaspers' interpretation, Job's perplexity with the dilemma of an apparently good God and the suffering of his loyal servant puts Job in the position where he must appeal to God against the God who oppresses him. This "appealing to God against God...shatters the reality of the embodied cipher,"\(^{19}\) that is, the reality of a God taken as a personal Thou.

The ambiguity of such a dilemma, in Jaspers' estimation, forced Job, and forces us, to abandon the tranquility of unequivocal thinking when it comes to God, and accept the more cognitively ambiguous relationship to Transcendence prescribed by philosophy. In the face of such ambiguity it becomes apparent "that as the cipher of the personal God grows more

\(^{18}\) Ibid., p. 141.

\(^{19}\) Ibid., p. 225.
powerful, as it becomes tangible and absolute, it breaks asunder." 20
Indeed, in Job, "the God whom the believing theologian sees, the execution
of the moral world order, is not God at all." Rather, the story confirms
the idea of God as Encompassing, where "the categories of right and wrong,
of meaning and meaninglessness, cease where the question concerns God
himself." 21

The very judgement of God in Job's story Jaspers sees as a confirmation
of the assertion that the true God is not the God of religion but the God
of the philosopher.

God casts Job back within his bounds, for asking
questions beyond the human sphere-- but Job has acted
truthfully, albeit presumptuously; so God does not
condemn him. He does spurn the theologians, however: "My
wrath is kindled...for ye have not spoken of me the thing
that is right, as my servant Job hath." Job asked what no
man can know, but the theologians claimed to know it....
God forgives the truthful questioner; but he condemns the
untruthful theologians for asserting a knowledge that is
humanly impossible. 22

b. Self-delusions

The implication derived from this exposition of the story of Job is
that the theologians, in contrast to the truthfully seeking Job, acted
untruthfully, that is, they deceived themselves, not only about God, but
about their own nature. Rather than face the task of becoming authentically
human, the theologians, lacking courage, opted for the comfort of

20 Ibid., p. 228.
21 Ibid., p. 225.
22 Ibid., pp. 226-227.
superstition. This is a crossroads that, according to Jaspers, we all face, and we must decide whether to act "distortedly...on the basis of factual error or of a delusive religious knowledge" or with our "ways of truth critically distinguished...(with) a critically clear knowledge of reality or the moving force of true ciphers." We must choose between the divine reality of religion that strikes Jaspers "as a case of magic-- that is to say, as a causality without causality, a reality without reality," and the philosophic course that leads to Transcendence. If we choose the former course we risk our very being, our Existenz, to mere, barren objectivity, and stand to lose all that is truly human about us: our freedom, Truth, Reason, and communicability. Until we choose the latter, and philosophically determine the limits of knowledge, we are doomed to be duped with every variety of pseudo-knowledge, including religion.

Three consequences result from this self-delusion, from our insistence upon surrendering our true existential nature to a pseudo-nature that loses itself in the banality of mere knowledge. The first consequence is that we become unable to rescue ourselves from the intellect we have abandoned ourselves to. In our deception we fail to see that only a self-hypostatizing intellect "totally tied to existence" needs to know

23 "A man who believes (philosophically) will precisely not realize God as some worldly oneness. This is what distinguishes his faith from superstition.... That is what superstition is: making an object of Transcendence." Ibid., p. 140.

24 Ibid., p. 206.

25 Ibid., p. 112.

26 Jaspers accuses even "such men of genius as Fichte and Hegel" of failing to mark off the limits of knowledge and thus falling prey to deception. Ibid., p. 281.
Transcendence in a way satisfying to the intellect, in a way that allows us "to know objectively, to possess tangibly, what grounds our freedom and guides our Existenz." By so doing we destroy any chance we might have "to attain what really counts: Existenz and Transcendence." 27

The second consequence of our self-delusion is that we try to attribute to God a nature, a nature that invariably becomes a projection of our own humanity, a creating of God on our own image. This anthropomorphizing of God succeeds only in making God into that which God is not. "Man feels the need to let Transcendence appear to him as a person. He finds a cipher for it: 'God'. But the cipher is inadequate, for even as the best that man knows is still debased, so to speak, into his own kind of being." 28 As we are deceived about ourselves we are deceived also about God.

The third consequence of our self-delusion occurs when we take this personalizing of God a step further and we attribute to the divine our own will, intellect, and personality. We make our cause God's cause. Here we distort the unity of Transcendence by using it to justify our battles of "one against the other". Here the sole truth, the chosen people, or the one church is used as a battle flag to justify a selfish exclusivity. "Unity, then, no longer reflects the unity of Transcendence but becomes the unity of a self-hollowing self-will." 29

27 Ibid., p. 140.
28 Ibid., p. 148.
29 Ibid., p. 139.
c. Religious experience refuted

It follows from Jaspers' contention that religion consists of delusions about God based on self-delusions that religious experience, namely the experience of the divine in immanence, is also delusional. This, indeed, is his position.

As we have seen, for Jaspers facts and universality abide in immanence, and an application of the basic knowledge will cause us, if we proceed in truthfulness and seriousness, to abandon the idea of possessing Transcendence in this mode as a tangible reality. Such a belief is philosophically, as well as in terms of empirical evidence, beyond any common experience. Any such religious experience is thus seen as a merely personal one, an encounter with a cipher that may hold great personal significance for the encountered as Existenz, but an experience that is misconstrued as divine presence, or as applicable universally.

Ciphers rightly distinguished, then, are not to be confused with religious experiences, although they must be admitted as experiences of the Transcendent, albeit existential experiences. The key is to keep the "objects" of these experiences from becoming "objects" in the immanent sense. For instance, Jaspers tells us that when we experience Transcendence or Existenz we discover that for cognition the reality is bottomless. For Jaspers this means interpreting the unfathomable as an origin rather than as a visible, determinable object.\(^{30}\) It also means that such experiences, the basis of both philosophical and theological faith, "cannot become a premise to be formulated, one from which the rest [of a system of religious

\(^{30}\) Ibid., p. 68.
[N]either in philosophical faith nor faith in revelation is there any analogy to objective cognition.... 

[T]he thinking of faith leaves everything determinable in suspension, faith itself is unconditional and undeterminable."

Given this, it makes no sense for any one of us to accept as legitimate for oneself another's experience of the Transcendent, as such could only be for us an immanent trace of the other's real experience. There is, however, the possibility of what Jaspers refers to as adoptive interpretation, that is: "original thinking, aroused by someone else's original thinking." Adoptive interpretation allows one to make one's own in an original way what was not originally one's own experience. This process, however, must occur under the conditions set out earlier for communication (where immanent expressions are only a tool of the existential) and does not open the door to "adopting" religious experiences. There is a vast difference, in Jaspers' perspective, between the open, indeterminate, and voluntary adoption of existential communication and the prescriptive, determinate, and authoritative adoption of church dogma. The authoritative dimension to religion is, for this reason, frequently criticized by Jaspers, and this criticism is the focus of the next section of this chapter.

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31 Ibid., p. 120.
32 Ibid., p. 121.
B. AUTHORITY AND RELIGION

1. The nature of religious authority

a. Religion breeds authority

Jaspers is not only concerned that individuals are bypassing their human potential as Existenzen by believing in revelation, but that the phenomenon of revelation is at the root of many great social problems as well. According to Jaspers, a belief in "concrete, superstitiously fixed gods and revelations" makes us susceptible to "all exclusivities, all fanaticisms, all acts of violence that lie hidden in the faith in a god who shows himself in time and space." 33 This is because religion, as the belief in a divine reality, of necessity construes the supposed divine visitation as an event calling for a human response, namely, obedience to the dictates left with us by the divine during the visitation. Because the believers claim to possess the factual (immanent) record of the factual event of God in the world they cannot help but cling to this belief dogmatically, to assert its universality, and to press its claims authoritatively. Since the believers think that they are dealing with fact, they find it reasonable to demand acquiescence to that fact which usually takes the form of a confession or creed.

We have seen, however, that this whole scenario, in Jaspers' perspective, is based upon an impossibility, a delusion, and is therefore rejected. This authoritative divine imperative is in Jaspers' estimation

33 Ibid., p. 325.
the result of the failure of religion to distinguish the modes of Being properly. "We can interpret the dogmatic perversions as attempts to have the truth of one encompassing in the form of the truth of another: philosophical and theological truth in the form of generally valid consciousness at large." In this attempt to keep separate from each other human participation in immanence and human participation in transcendence, Jaspers continues to insist that the tenets of philosophical faith can never turn into objectivities and call for obedience, and that the realm of immanence, of general scientific validity, never need call upon faith.

In their confessions and creeds, therefore, the religious err in trying to capture the contents of faith in thought. But, "faith cannot be forced by thought, nor can it be stated and communicated as mere content." Here faith is belittled, asked to serve the ciphers it has produced out of its own ground as if they were within the grasp of cognition. Further, when the creed is given priority over the potentially deeper link that cuts across all creeds, namely faith itself, it serves only to block the way of deeper human understanding and authenticity.

The authority that creeds assert can only be challenged, therefore, in distinguishing with care the encompassings of immanence and transcendence. "The tension between facts and ciphers is confusing if the two are confused; it is liberating if they are clearly distinguished and then related to each other." 

34 Ibid., p. 83.
36 Ibid., p. 21.
37 Ibid., p. 184.
b. Religion and ecclesiasticism

When this distinction between fact and cipher is missed and the creed is given authority, there generally arises within the religious community an arbiter of this authority who protects, propagates, and administers the creed. This is the basis of ecclesiasticism, another destructive perversion that arises, in Jaspers' view, of necessity in religion.

i. Ecclesiasticism and the will of God

The greatest mistake of ecclesiasticism is the delusion it shares with religion in general that it is somehow able to speak on God's behalf. When a cipher of Transcendence is immanently enforced, as if God's will were known, it is, according to Jaspers, "a dreadful confusion" whose result is always "endless misery."

Nothing that is claimed to be revelation or proclaimed, as by a prophet or apostle, can be valid as such. A cipher is a possibility not a reality. Whatever claims to be sacred and absolute and vested with unconditional authority is subject to criticism.... This is not...a criticism of God, a foolish human attempt to tell God what he can or cannot do. It is criticism of mundane authorities that claim to be empowered to speak in God's name. Humans, no matter what their office or creed, remain humans, and to us who cannot believe in revelation

38 Not only does Jaspers believe that church authority arises to protect the creed, but that often the creed is also designed to protect church authority.

39 Ibid., p. 353.

40 Ibid., p. 205.
they seem to be demanding falsely, as obedience to God, what would be obedience to their positions, to their church, to human handiwork. We are not judging God but the demands of men.... [W]e do not speak against God, but against human claims to speak for God.... [T]here is no direct reality of God in the world. That is to say, there is no God who speaks in the world, through a representative authority, about such things as office, word, or sacrament, and whom we are to obey by obeying those offices.41

The authority of faith is found only in ourselves, not in any external organization.

ii. Ecclesiasticism and power

As the arbiter of the creed, and thus the arbiter of the authority of God in the world, the ecclesiastical body possesses such immanent power among believers that it can crush, and historically often has crushed, the very human spirit that provided the original impetus to the cipher upon which the creed is built, and that could provide alternative ciphers that might enhance and enlighten the original one. Jaspers believes that the history of ecclesiasticism demonstrates "that any church, as a power organization and a possible tool of fanaticism and superstition merits the utmost distrust.... Even now the ecclesiastic faith, with characteristic totalitarian naivete, regards itself as the sole, authorized infallible vessel of truth and inwardly denies the equal rights of the 'heathen', the infidel, the heretic."42

41 Ibid., pp. 323-324.
42 Ibid., pp. 46-47.
Jaspers sees the churchmen with great suspicion as they cling to power, even when it means glossing over the problems they encounter intellectually in supporting their divine right to rule.

In efforts that compel our admiration as intellectual accomplishments, ecclesiastic thinking has vainly sought to compromise and void the fundamental discrepancies—to synthesize the basic antinomies, to bring them into a convincing harmony, to comprehend the encompassing in the world as its own ecclesiastic embodiment, and to stabilize it as authority.43

The confessions and creeds that the ecclesiastics are to guard are also interpreted by them in a fashion that facilitates the maintenance and expansion of church authority. Jaspers points to the history of church councils and synods to demonstrate the church's ability to decide issues in such a fashion that all Christian variations are ruled acceptable, but interpreted in such a way that the church can declare as a heretic anyone who would challenge church authority. The judgement of whether one is orthodox or heretical seems otherwise, to Jaspers, to be arbitrary.44 Finally, Jaspers calls us to see all of the above in the light of the church's unique and most powerful weapon: the threat of hell.45

43 Ibid., p. 344.

44 Ibid., pp. 40-44. It must be said, however, that Jaspers does not believe church history is explicable in political terms alone, but permits religious and philosophical motives as well. (p. 40.)

45 Ibid., p. 35.
iii. Ecclesiasticism and inhumanity

The result of this ecclesiasticism is the dehumanizing of those subjected to it. As the products of free Existenz are put down as heretical, as a morality that has become a legality makes candour and reason vanish, as the church mediates both scripture and salvation, the truly human part of our being is extinguished.46

Further, in certainty of salvation, the religious act as if they were authorized to behave inhumanly to those outside of the group. This sense of being chosen "gives this community of the saints the pride of an aristocracy, vicious because it is always right.... What comes out of this witches' brew of humility, fatalism, activism, and fanaticism is inhumanity."47 The question of ecclesiasticism ultimately leads us back to the question of the nature of the encompassings and the meaning of ciphers. Jaspers' position in this regard is clear: "In the battle of ciphers, whether it appears as theology or as philosophy, we speak of liberalism and humanism as opposed to the dogmatic, orthodox, illiberal, and inhumane. It is the difference between an ingenuous, loving battle for truth and a disingenuous, loveless one."48

46 Ibid., pp. 36, 210, 38-39.
47 Ibid., p. 238. Fanaticism Jaspers defines as the stating of divine commands as generally valid and absolute.
48 Ibid., p. 132.
2. The results of religious authority

Jaspers goes on to demonstrate how religious authority brings about the destruction of the authentic humanum by pointing out that human freedom and communication, two of the most essential elements of an Existenz, are blocked from being actualized when such an authority is exercised over them.

a. The destruction of freedom

Jaspers holds with Kant that if revelation were a reality it would be calamitous for the created freedom of mankind.49 The reason for this is clear. Jaspers, as we have seen in chapter one, believes that God has made us for freedom and Reason, that the divine imperative is not obedience to any creed or dogma, but rather to make ourselves in the face of an eternally hidden God. Our legacy from God is not the gift of revelation but the gift of our selves, and our corresponding call is not to obedience but to freedom. In religion we pervert this call; we read the ciphers of Transcendence as if they were immanent demands. In so doing we interfere with "the human course of things", we sacrifice existential freshness for dogmatic knowledge, and we lose the experience of freedom.

49 Ibid., p. 10.
us feel like traitors to our transcendent source if we betray our freedom.

We betray it if—instead of listening to the suspended, embattled ciphers and seeking the way beyond—we submit to any one, and thus to a corresponding absolute claim in the world, whether of arbitrary despotism or of perfect order. Both are totalities that wall man in instead of keeping his way open.50

The authoritative nature of religion, in Jaspers' experience, promotes an obedience that closes down the human potential for freedom exactly in the above manner. Among others, Jaspers mentions the falsely immanent interpretations of the ciphers of Jesus, dialectical theology, unity, and the eschaton as ways in which the church manages to manipulate the ciphers and, in so doing, destroy human freedom.51 Religion provides a way in which to dodge the freedom and responsibility that are a part of being truly human. We are truly human, truly liberated, according to Jaspers, only when we are able to go beyond the immanent imperatives of religion to the transcendent call to freedom, beyond God to the Godhead, beyond the ciphers to what makes them speak, beyond "the hobbles with which our own conceptions and thoughts prevent us from reaching the truth that halts all thinking."52 Only as we properly distinguish ciphers from facts are we liberated, for ciphers made tenets of faith become fetters.53 Only in this way do we cease being the obedient but misguided puppets that religion

50 Ibid., p. 155.
51 Ibid., pp. 147, 113-114, 35, 193.
52 Ibid., p. 284.
53 Ibid., p. 184.
makes us into and become the creatures of freedom and Reason that Transcendence challenges us to be.

b. The destruction of communication

Jaspers' dualistic anthropology also requires the preservation of existential communication for those who would be authentic, both communication between Transcendence and Existenz in the form of ciphers, and communication between Existenzen in the form of generalization and philosophic speculation. Again, religion causes distortion here, for as the divine appears in immanence so too is the divine language dragged into immanence and made the focus of consciousness as such. When ciphers are treated in this fashion the result is the destruction of existential communication. For, if we struggle for existential Truth in a way befitting only immanent truth, existential Truth is lost. Indeed, seeking transcendent Truth in this fashion leads to situations we have all encountered where persons of opposing faiths succeed only in talking through each other. It is entirely ruinous to communication if some article of faith has truth for one (in an immanent sense) but no such reality for another.

54 Ibid., pp. 130-131. A related but opposite error also arises in religion, that being the destruction of communication when one in a mystical experience bypasses immanence altogether and announces their truth by fiat. We have seen that this too is not permitted by Jaspers, as existential communication always requires the medium of immanence through which the ciphers are carried. (p. 79.)

55 Ibid., p. 99.
As was the case with the destruction of freedom, it is Jaspers' position that the church enforces this cutting off of communication by embracing the perversion of cipher interpretation. By accepting as reality the cipher of God in immanence and cementing it in an authoritative creed, religion commits the "truly anti-human" act of dictating belief to people and thereby dividing those who cannot believe from those who can, and further dividing those who believe any number of particular creedal statements from those who believe in others. This is because religion, in its belief in revelation, creates a closed circle, a set of dogmas, based on the immanence of a divinity, that are either believed (by the insiders) or rejected (by the outsiders). In such a situation, immanent communication is stifled by the fact that ciphers as they appear in immanence are beyond the domain of consciousness as such (resulting in endless confusions), and transcendent communication is impossible because the ciphers are not being encountered by a free Existenz (but by a misguided understanding).

That religion of necessity leads to the destruction of communication Jaspers attempts to prove by quoting an exclusivistic passage from volume one of Stadium generale written by the theologian Rudolf Bultmann, a man that Jaspers greatly admired and whom he called "one of the most tolerant of theologians." That even Bultmann would be forced to sever communication with unbelievers "may serve to show that it lies in the nature of the faith

56 Ibid., p. 49.
57 Ibid., pp. 115-116.
in revelation [to be incommunicative] to make even such a man think in this fashion.  

C. CHRISTIANITY AS A RELIGION

Most of Karl Jaspers' criticisms of religion seem to me, on closer examination, to be not so much criticisms of religion in general as they are generalized criticisms of Christianity, and very often criticisms of one particular faction of Christianity, perhaps catholicism, or Barthianism, or a rationalistic segment, rather than of a broader stretch of Christianity as such. This is apparent when one notices that almost all of his criticisms are, either explicitly or implicitly, directed against particular strains of twentieth century German Christianity, and perhaps this should not surprise us too much given the fact that Jaspers was himself a twentieth century German.

The Christian religion should, therefore, fit more easily than any other into the critical mold prepared by Jaspers as outlined in this

58 Ibid., p. 324.

59 In fairness to Jaspers, there may be no "Christianity as such" out there to criticize, but only various expressions. On the other hand, it is also unfair to think that one has dealt a death blow to the whole of Christianity by characterizing and criticizing any one, or even several of its expressions.

With respect to other religions, when Jaspers does criticize an Asian religion it is almost always for its mysticism. Most references to Asian thought, however, are positive, as are, interestingly, most of his references to historic Christian figures. Jaspers seems to feel that we are, because of modern science, now in some kind of privileged age where we are able to know ciphers from their embodiments, a distinction hitherto impossible, and he is, therefore, intolerant of modern (post-renaissance) Christians. Those Christians who had gone before seem somehow more authentic to Jaspers in their naively assumed embodied ciphers.
chapter, and Jaspers relies upon it continually for examples to make his points. I have already dealt with Jaspers' response to the Christian idea of the incarnation. In the section that follows I will outline how two other specific areas of Christian interest are utilized by Jaspers to further his critique. I will mention his view of the history of Christianity, and his position regarding Christian theologies.

1. The history of Christianity

Jaspers' first concern with the history of Christianity is to point out that the idea of the divine being present to mankind in word and spirit, the idea that so offends his sensibilities as "philosopher", rests upon grounds somewhat more tenuous than is generally accepted by Christian thinkers. The reliability of the early Christian witnesses and the inspirational selection of the canon of scripture are among the foundational elements of Christianity that Jaspers challenges.

"In a time of critical historical research we tend to question the apostolic testimony" Jaspers says in respect to belief in the accounts given by the early Christian witnesses, especially when the man Jesus preached "a faith in God based on a human attitude less radically new than the apostles' proclamation." Indeed, any witnesses who so drastically distort the message of a man who would have been appalled at his being made "Messiah", as Jaspers' interpretation of the incarnational doctrine has emphasized, are to be considered highly dubious. Jaspers asks of the

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60 Ibid., p. 16.
principle of selection in respect to the canon whether it is "due to long habit of majority evaluation, to the quality of writing, or to chance?"\textsuperscript{61}

Jaspers appeals to a broader view of history to challenge the uniqueness of Christianity. "If we want observation and thought to convince us that Christianity is unique, we will never get beyond equating its singularity in history with the singularity of all other historic phenomenon."\textsuperscript{62} The plurality of experience both religious and otherwise further pushes the Christian to admit that his "first-hand experience" of God "is not unequivocal, fixed, untouchable, and identical everywhere,"\textsuperscript{63} weakening his ability, in Jaspers' view, to claim the universality of his faith.

Further, even within the history of the Christian faith itself the question "Which Christianity?" becomes inevitable. "History shows that the faithful-- all of whom refer to the Bible-- are so much at odds that splits involving the denunciation and damnation of opponents as heretics have always been a cardinal feature of Christian reality."\textsuperscript{64} Not only does this element of history bring to mind the relativity of religious experience, but, for Jaspers, it also stands as proof that religion of necessity degenerates into a power-qualified ecclesiasticism where each faction of

\textsuperscript{61} Ibid., p. 17. "[H]istorically the selection of the Old and New Testament canon from the then extant and now only partially preserved writings is an incidental result. It is...a matter of historical rather than factual interest."

\textsuperscript{62} Ibid., p. 19.

\textsuperscript{63} Ibid., p. 17.

\textsuperscript{64} Ibid., p. 19.
the faith is forced to claim, against all odds and common wisdom, that they alone possess true revelation to the exclusion of others.

According to Jaspers, if church history teaches us anything at all, it teaches us of the church's failure "in forming a nucleus of earnest spirituality in the modern world.... The rhetoric...sounds at times like the intoxicating drumbeat savages use to ward off evil spirits, is mere superimposed noise, idling alongside the momentum of world events and the individual potential." In such a situation those who would choose to follow Jesus sincerely are blocked from doing so by the church, and those who would obey God are degraded in being demanded to obey the dictates of a church that pretends to speak for God.

2. Christian theologies

Jaspers believes that the Bible is a rich source of ciphers, and, in fact, for those of us in the west, even if we deny it, the heart of our cipher language is the Biblical God. This does not, however, justify the way in which the Bible is used by the theologians who, according to Jaspers, destroy the ciphers by transgressing the Bible's own commands. Jaspers, as we have seen, seems to take great pleasure in turning the second commandment against the theologians in claiming that this commandment—Thou shalt make no image or likeness—is disobeyed by the

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65 Ibid., p. 39. In fairness, Jaspers also accuses modern philosophy of failing to provide such an earnest spirituality, but this is because of the errors made by modern philosophers in implementing their discipline and not because of some flaw inherent in philosophy itself, as is the case with religion.

66 Ibid., p. 147.

67 Ibid., p. 143.
theologians as they objectify God and God’s will. “Throughout the Old Testament we find the tension between Transcendence—which is real without image or likeness—and Jehovah, who reveals himself bodily and concretely. This God is both: silent, incomprehensible Transcendence and the one God who speaks…. [T]he mistake lies in the effect of the identification, which erases the difference between corporeality and cipher.” When this tension is lost, when theologians believe that these words and these writings differ from all other words and writings, that they alone contain divine reality, the cipher character of scripture too is lost. In this error theologians lose touch with the fact that the Bible as a collection of ciphers “can only be true as man’s claim upon himself, not as the vindication of a claim on others,” and that a Biblical cipher “is a possibility, not a reality.”

This fundamental misunderstanding of the Bible creates a problem that necessarily, according to Jaspers, inheres in all theological methodology. For when the Bible is taken as providing generally valid immanent truths about the divine character and actions it assumes the role of a fixed point for the departure of thought rather than taking on its proper role of bringing humanity to existential seriousness. As such, antinomies naturally result, for that qualified by its cipher character rather than as a cognitively coherent whole fails when judged on the grounds of consciousness as such. Jaspers mentions specifically the doctrines of grace and providence as examples of such theological antinomies. One is given

68 Ibid., p. 143.

69 Ibid., p. 323.

70 Ibid., p. 20.
grace as a gift and yet is commanded to believe at the peril of being guilty should God withhold grace. Providence also leaves us with a paradox: history depends on what humans do, but the same history fulfills God's promise regardless.\textsuperscript{71}

Another distortion realized in theological method occurs when speculation upon the ciphers, a legitimate language of the Transcendent as demonstrated on chapter one of this paper, is further speculated upon as if the first level of speculation were fact rather than merely the immanent expression of someone's existential struggles with the original cipher script. This speculation upon the speculation present in the Bible plays a great part in most theologies, and leads to symbols that cannot even be regarded as speculative ciphers any longer, that are so far removed from the cipher script that they no longer serve any existential, and certainly no factual, purpose. The result is a clinging to objectivity in which "our thoughts will soon follow meaningless paths without end or content."\textsuperscript{72} Among such speculations on speculations Jaspers includes the doctrines of the trinity, justification by faith, and eschatology.\textsuperscript{73}

\textsuperscript{71} In regard to the doctrine of grace: \textit{Ibid.}, p. 19., and providence: \textit{Ibid.}, p. 189.

\textsuperscript{72} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 71.

\textsuperscript{73} In regard to the doctrine of the trinity: \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 165-166., the doctrine of justification by faith: p. 243., the doctrines of eschatology: pp. 279, 315. Also indicted for engaging in this type of activity, though not exclusively in theology, are anthropology, cosmology, and ontology. pp. 78-79.
D. RELIGION AS A SUB-SET OF PHILOSOPHY

Jaspers believes that his critique has taken the feet out from under religion, and particularly the Christian religion. He does not, however, dismiss the whole of religious phenomena as destructive. Rather, having taken its own feet out from under religion, he allows religious phenomena to stand, but only on the feet of philosophy.

Jaspers, therefore, prescribes for believers in religion, in a section of *Philosophical Faith and Revelation* called "A Change in the Appearance of Biblical Religion", some points of possible change to our current perceptions of religion that will bring religion into line with the dictates of philosophy, preserving those elements that engender authenticity and eliminating those that inhibit it. Here Jaspers makes three points. First, Jesus must be stripped of the designation "Christ", a title forced upon his memory by the early church and one that would have been violently rejected by the historical Jesus. Second, that which is perceived to be revelational must cease to be thus perceived. We must abandon the divinity in immanence character we have given it and recognize it as the one cipher among many ciphers that it in truth is. Third, dogmatic religious truth must cease to be exclusivistic. Faith must, in Jaspers' terms, be liberalized. 74

Only when these guidelines are taken seriously is the process of philosophizing, as set out in the first chapter, protected from the misconceptions and distortions that religious belief brings to it. Only in this way can religious phenomena be assimilated into philosophizing without

misconstruing the limits and character of the encompassings as derived from
the basic knowledge. Only in this way is the realm of knowledge
distinguished from the realm of faith, and scientific truth kept distinct
from existential Truth. Only in this way can humanity as Existenzen escape
the religious authoritarianism that restricts our potential for freedom,
Reason, and communication. And only in this way is God, as Transcendence,
permitted the unity and dignity befitting that which is beyond the
untruthful objectifications that result in religious deities. Religious
faith, and in particular the Biblical faith, can only be responsibly
realized as a sub-set of philosophy.
CHAPTER THREE

EXAMINING JASPERS' PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

A. CHALLENGING JASPERS' DUALISM

The basic structure of Jaspers' thought has been explicated from an anthropological perspective in chapter one of this paper, and Jaspers' approach to religion as he armed himself with this paradigm was the focus of the second chapter. In this my critical chapter, I wish to challenge Jaspers' anthropological (and his periechontological) conceptions by proposing that his dualistic model rests upon foundations somewhat less solid than was his belief. For if his paradigm can be placed on shakier grounds then so too can his criticisms of religion.

As we have seen already, Jaspers' basic knowledge, the philosophically truthful and responsible distinguishing of encompassings, yields two basic realms: immanence and transcendence. The human person, in Jaspers' way of thinking, participates in both realms, and I have designated these realms, for the sake of my anthropological investigation, the encompassing of knowledge and the encompassing of faith to indicate humanities' participation respectively in immanence and transcendence. According to Jaspers, it is within this knowledge/faith dualism that the whole of human experience is explicable and truthfully lived. Further, for Jaspers, this
The knowledge/faith dichotomy, as we recall from chapter one, is the result of Jaspers' philosophic starting point: the subject-object relationship where any object is potentially, if not actually, accessible to scientific investigation. As such, any immanent object can be explained in terms of scientific postulates that are universally interchangeable. A fact, in this scheme of things, is seen as a scientific description of an object by a human subject. Jaspers asks: "[W]hat is a 'fact' if it is not demonstrable reality?" Faith, we will recall, enters the picture only when fact is no longer an applicable category to apply to a particular phenomenon, that is, when an experience is no longer explicable in terms of the subject-object relationship. Faith becomes the mode of human involvement when we are no longer dealing with a phenomenon that is able to

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be captured in objectivity, when subject and object coalesce and demand a way of being not subject to the techniques of scientific method.

The question I wish to pose to Jaspers at this point is whether or not there are indeed facts as he describes them, whether or not there is a general consciousness that adjudicates facts through scientific scrutiny independent of one's faith commitment. Much of the work done in recent philosophy of science would seem to make an affirmative answer to this question rather dubious. Hendrik Hart summarizes these developments:

The contemporary scene shows a fundamental falling apart of the common worship of reason, not the least because it has become an enigma what reason is, what rationality is. Kuhn (The Structure of Scientific Revolutions) has demonstrated the importance of historically shifting paradigms in science, Feierabend calls science itself irrational, Polanyi (Personal Knowledge) has undermined the notion of knowledge as impersonal and objective, Rorty (Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature) has attacked the idea that knowledge is rational mirroring. Habermas (Knowledge and Human Interests) has demonstrated the presence of social emancipatory interests in science. There seems to be a very widespread consensus that rationality is not autonomous and not infallible and that its foundations or its origins are neither self-evident intuitions nor incorrigible sense data.¹

Thomas Kuhn is perhaps the most famous of the modern thinkers on the nature of science due to the enormous popularity of his 1962 book The Structure of Scientific Revolutions. In this book the linear, progressive view of science embraced by such thinkers as Jaspers is challenged by a historical review that points out the revolutionary changes in paradigms that constitute actual scientific practice. "Normal science is predicated

¹ Hendrik Hart, Mimeographed class notes from epistemology class, Institute for Christian Studies, 1984/85.
on the assumption that the scientific community knows what the world is like," Kuhn tells us. This knowledge of the world is not, however, as Jaspers would have it, the result of a universally recognized application of consciousness as such, but in large measure depends upon "an arbitrary element, compounded of personal and historical accident, [that] is always a formative ingredient of the beliefs espoused by a given scientific community at a given time." Kuhn asserts that scientific revolutions are not the result of a sudden jump towards a closer approximation of a universal consciousness as such, but rather are the result of fundamental paradigm shifts. "[W]hen paradigms change, the world itself changes with them.... [P]aradigm changes do cause scientists to see the world of their research-engagement differently. In so far as their only recourse to that world is through what they see and do, we may want to say that after a revolution scientists are responding to a different world." This work is a challenge to Jaspers in that the character of scientific conclusions are brought into question by the assertion that each is dependent upon a paradigm out of which the scientist works and from which his or her conclusions are drawn.

There is, however, some room within Jaspers' thought to answer such a charge, as he is not oblivious to the subjective element involved in discoveries arising out of the subject-object relationship. In realizing that any object we perceive requires a perceiving subject, Jaspers grants

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4 Ibid., p. 4.

5 Ibid., p. 111.
that objective facts are dependent upon scientific methods, and that these methods are dependent to some degree upon subjective selection. Indeed, he notes that a scientist must use the same method as another if he or she is to arrive at the same conclusions. What seems to be lacking in Jaspers is an appreciation of the fact that there are no objective criteria with which to choose one scientific method over another. In other words, one cannot use the "facts" that emerge from any particular paradigm to justify the choice of that paradigm without arguing circularly. But this is precisely what Jaspers appears to do— he claims to possess a universally accessible and necessary basic knowledge and asserts the truth of this knowledge by referring to facts (for example— the meaning and nature of knowledge) that emerge from the system they are meant to prove.

A "fact" cannot be used to justify the method from which it emerged.

Jaspers fails to see that an adoption of the basic knowledge (his paradigm) requires another source, a source outside of the facts that

6 While the internal coherence of a system of thought may speak well for its chances of being considered the truth, it does not guarantee that the system is true in the sense that Jaspers intends, that is, that it corresponds to reality. For example, the statements "I have green hair. If I have green hair then my feet are on backwards. Therefore, my feet are on backwards." are internally consistent, but they may or (hopefully) may not have anything to do with my hair and my feet. While I do not wish to enter here into the debate between the coherence and correspondence theories of truth, it should be noted that Jaspers intends the latter.
emerge from it. Michael Polanyi makes this point in his 1958 book *Personal Knowledge* where he introduces into knowing a fiduciary element. We select methods, therefore, not on the basis of fact, for facts exist only after we have applied our methods, but on the basis of faith. There is, in other words, in all knowledge the influence of a faith that must be called pre-theoretical.

If the previous analysis is accurate, then the deep chasm that Jaspers creates between knowledge and faith must be eliminated. Faith needs to be seen not as a transcendent human function that only becomes operative when human functioning in the world reaches its limits (founders), not as a way of being at the boundaries of knowledge, but rather as another way in which humans function in the world, as an integral part of our humanity that both affects and is affected by our ability to know.

Facts as Jaspers defined them, then, universally valid scientific facts, do not exist in an objective sense independent of one's faith commitment. The radical severing of knowledge and faith in Jaspers cannot be maintained, and the dualism that rests upon this division also becomes questionable, unless it can be based upon other grounds that, to my knowledge, Jaspers never provided.

2. The universal basic knowledge

What then becomes of Jaspers' assertion that a universal basic knowledge is possible, a basic knowledge wherein all who truthfully seek can find a similar starting point for a working out of humanity's problems in Reason and communication? That faith is a prerequisite for any knowledge
forces us to conclude that only as we share a faith are we able to share a knowledge. Thus Jaspers' hope that a universal basic knowledge would provide a foundation upon which those of all faiths could gather and sort out their differences in light of their common basic knowledge founders in that it fails to recognize that the elements of the divergent faiths are constitutive of any knowledge they are able to participate in. Jaspers is unsuccessful because he attempts to begin with knowledge and progress towards faith when, as we have seen, faith must be present before knowledge is possible.

3. An alternative anthropology

The main purpose of this paper is to deal with Jaspers' philosophy of religion in such a way that religion is allowed to escape the tyranny of Jaspers' "philosophical" dictates. I would like at this point to suggest in brief an anthropology that I believe can help us achieve this task, an alternative position from which Jaspers' position can be critically viewed. This anthropology I believe to be more in keeping than is Jaspers' with the demands of the philosophy of science, with the recognition of mankind as an integrated whole (a concern that seems to be coming to the fore in much modern social science), and with the experiences of those of us who profess a religious faith. Working such an alternative anthropology out in detail cannot be my aim here, for such an enterprise would take me far beyond the purpose of this paper, and well beyond my present competence. Rather, I wish to suggest a revision to Jaspers' anthropology that would bring his model more into line with a model introduced by the Dutch, calvinist
philosopher Herman Dooyeweerd and developed by the academic community at the Institute for Christian Studies.

This alternative anthropology rests upon the recognition that faith, like Jaspers' modes of existence, consciousness as such, and spirit, is another of the ways in which humans function in the world and is not, as Jaspers proposes, a transcendent function that is operable only when the human somehow manages to escape his or her worldliness. I am suggesting that no realm outside of the worldly realm need be suggested, indeed, that such a suggestion splits mankind up in a way destructive both to our experience of self unity and to a true understanding of ourselves.

Faith, indeed, is not spirit, nor is faith consciousness as such or existence any more than consciousness as such is spirit or existence is consciousness as such. Faith is a function of its own standing, irreducible to the others as the others are irreducible to each other. As such, faith is but one of the human functions and takes its place alongside of the three others suggested by Jaspers: existence, consciousness as such, and spirit.

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7 Such a reduction of all human functionings to any one of them is called a monism, a view that, in the view of the alternative anthropology, also needs to be rejected.
Here some care must be exercised to avoid misunderstanding. The human is not to be conceived solely as the modes of his or her functioning, but is a self who functions in these different ways. The practice of reducing the human to the functions alone is a position called functionalism, a position that goes against the frequently heard proposition that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Functionalism, I believe, is a mistake, as does Jaspers who argues in this regard for the experience of a self outside of the functions. "None of these objectivations will achieve an absolute identity with myself. I go beyond such schemata." But this does not mean for me that there is an entity called the self outside of its functionings. There can be no self outside of its functions. Likewise,

8 Jaspers, Philosophy, v. 2, p. 32.
there can be no functions without a functioning self. If either the self or the functions were to be taken away there would be no remainder left. Self and functions are poles of being human, and these poles exist and are explicable only in terms of each other.\(^9\)

Jaspers rightly gives the functionless self no ontological status. There is for him no self in the world outside of human functions. He rightly recognizes that our very existence depends upon our participation in immanence. Worldly death, for Jaspers, brings the end of the self. But Jaspers errs in allowing the self to function outside of its worldly human functionings. For him, Existenz functions in freedom, in communication, in Reason, and ethically, all beyond its functionings in the world. Existenz functions independently of the world. This "outside of the world" function Jaspers calls faith, and it is with this function that Jaspers associates authentic humanity.\(^10\)

What the arguments of this chapter are intended to demonstrate, however, is that this "disembodied" faith function is not, as Jaspers believes, independent of the world at all. Rather it affects the worldly functions as one of them and is affected by them. (Dooyeweerd would say that in its irreducibility faith is in indissoluble coherence with all of

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\(^10\) Adorno criticizes Jaspers, among others, for using "the jargon of authenticity" to avoid the real and pressing social problems that plague the immanent world. While my aims in this paper differ considerably from the aims Adorno brings to his critique, his critique is interesting in that it points out, from another perspective, the problems that Jaspers’ severing of faith from immanent reality brings to an attempt at understanding human phenomena. Theodor W. Adorno, *The Jargon of Authenticity* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973).
The conception of faith's transcendent independence is re-thought as we embrace the alternative anthropology so that it can be alternatively seen as another of the ways that a human functions "in" the world. With this alternative anthropology we can explain, better than Jaspers can I think, the relationship between faith and knowledge that is demanded by the discovery of the relativity of scientific paradigms. In other words, we can explain, better than can Jaspers, the foundational nature of faith for knowledge. In this view we propose that whatever freedom humanity exercises it exercises as it functions in the world, as is the case with communicating, reasoning, and ethical behavior. This fully integrated view of humanity allows us not only to deal fairly with the rich plenum of human experience but allows us to do so all within one world, without having to posit a misty second world on top of our empirical one to act as a safety net for all of those experiences not explicable "immanently". When Jaspers' anthropology and the alternative anthropology (the modal order shown is Dooyeweerd's) are seen side by side, the difference between the way in which each paradigm deals with faith can be easily seen. There is a basic equivalence between the immanent encompassings in Jaspers' model and the lower modes of the alternative anthropology. Jaspers' existence parallels approximately the more highly differentiated Dooyeweerdian modes of the arithmetic through the sensitive. The role and nature of consciousness as such corresponds basically to the logical aspect of the alternative anthropology, and Jaspers' spirit to the historical through juridical modes of Dooyeweerd. The difference arises in respect to faith. While in the alternative anthropology faith is seen as one among the other modalities, Jaspers takes
Jaspers' Anthropology

Existenz (the true self)

spirit

consciousness as such

existence

Alternative Anthropology

esthetic

judicial

economic

social

lingual

historical

logical

sensitive

biotic

physical

kinematic

spatial

arithmetic

the self
this mode (and the ethical with it), makes it transcendent, and associates
this way of being with the true self. (See diagram on page 103.)

Armed with this analysis we will now be able to examine at greater
depth the true motives behind Jaspers' anthropological paradigm, and the
true relationship that Jaspers' philosophy has to religion.

B. THE GROUND MOTIVE QUESTION

If a universal basic knowledge is indeed a fantasy, if faith is indeed
required to found any body of scientific or philosophic knowledge, then the
question that must be asked from the perspective of the alternative
anthropology is this: what leaps of faith allowed Jaspers to believe that
the basic knowledge could be constructed free of the influence of faith?
This question would no doubt sound strange to Jaspers since it would seem
to him to be asking about the content of a faith that he does not possess.
This should not surprise us, however, for we can see that Jaspers'
commitment to the foundational nature of universal knowledge is what keeps
him from recognizing the faith that directs this commitment. In other
words, from his position Jaspers cannot permit faith this foundational
role, so any faith that does exist at this level is considered by him, by
definition, to be knowledge.\footnote{Hendrik Hart points this out in respect to Kai Nielsen's commitment
to reason. "He considers his commitment to be exempt from his objections
[to religion] precisely because in his commitment to reason, his position
seems rational rather than creedal." Hendrik Hart, "Paper read to a
symposium of the Canadian Philosophical Association in Winnipeg, May 1986.", p. 2.}
1. The humanistic ground motive

To help us discover the deeply seated faith factor in Jaspers, a factor he himself fails to recognize, I think the area of Herman Dooyeweerd’s thought called ground motive analysis is instructive. According to Dooyeweerd’s analysis of the *Roots of Western Culture* there arose out of the renaissance "the humanistic religion of human personality in its freedom (from every faith that claims allegiance) and in its autonomy (that is, the pretention that human personality is a law unto itself)." As Dooyeweerd continues the analysis he points out that "Proudly conscious of his autonomy and freedom, modern man saw 'nature' as an expansive arena for the explorations of his free personality, as a field of infinite possibilities in which the sovereignty of human personality must be revealed by a complete mastery of the phenomenon of nature." Because of these two emphases, Dooyeweerd refers to this "humanistic ground motive" as the nature-freedom dialectic. The word dialectic applies because as this motive was lived and reflected upon a serious problem in maintaining both the nature and freedom poles of the motive arose. "When it became apparent that science determined all of reality as a flawless chain of cause and effect, it was clear that nothing in reality offered a place for human freedom." The "solution" to this "irresolvable dualism" came in the separation of science from faith in the philosophy of Immanuel Kant, a

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thinker whose influence on Jaspers has already been emphasized.

Freedom, according to Kant, cannot be scientifically proven. For him science is always bound to sensory experience, to 'natural reality' as understood in the limited context of Kant's own conceptions. Freedom and autonomy of personality do not lie in sensory nature. They are practical ideas of man's 'reason'; their suprasensory reality remains a matter of faith. Such a belief is not the old faith rooted in ecclesiastical authority or in divine revelation; for faith subject to authority does not agree with the motive of freedom in modern humanism. Rather, as Kant formulated it, this is a 'reasonable faith'. Rooted in autonomous reason itself, it is entirely in keeping with the autonomy of the human personality.  

2. Jaspers as humanist

This analysis seems to me to fit Jaspers exceptionally well, not only in those areas where he seems to closely follow Kant, but in others as well. As we have seen, the emphasis on the freedom and autonomy of the human person is paramount to his thought. Jaspers also has argued that nature is necessary to the expression of humanity as free Existenzen, that nature is the medium through which is realized the full potential of existential mankind in his or her relationship to Transcendence, and in his or her relationship to other Existenzen. The dialectic of nature-freedom is dealt with by Jaspers in terms of the dualism he creates between immanence and transcendence, the corresponding realms of nature and freedom, of understanding (Verstand) and faith. As immanence, mankind is subject to all of the causal chains of nature; as Existenz we are autonomous.

15 Ibid., pp. 171-172.
personalities, subject not to divine authorities, but to a reasonable (Vernunft) faith.

That Jaspers fits this category so well should not be too surprising, however, as Jaspers himself has clearly and proudly exhibited his humanism in his writings. He has called for all forms of totalitarianism to give way to humanism and liberalism. Dooyeweerd tells us that "When Kant called for a halt to the future expansion of the science ideal by keeping it out of the 'suprasensory realm of freedom'-- the shelter of the humanistic personality ideal-- he was motivated not by a respect for God's creation order but by the humanistic freedom motive." The same can be said of Jaspers, and, I think, with Jaspers' full consent.

As we have seen, Jaspers' belief in the autonomy of science, accorded to him, he thought, by the basic knowledge, kept him from recognizing that such a belief rested upon a faith that would have undermined the very notion of such autonomy. In other words, Jaspers failed to see the faith factor involved in his philosophy because the content of his faith denied the fact that it rested upon a faith. It can be seen, then, not only that the basic knowledge relies upon a faith, but what kind of faith is necessary for a belief in such a knowledge.

None of this necessarily proves that Jaspers' anthropology and his subsequent criticisms of religion are wrong, a point I will argue briefly in the epilogue of this paper. It does, however, allow the religious thinker to answer Jaspers on grounds other than Jaspers' own, because Jaspers' thought is seen to rest upon presuppositions that are not

16 Ibid., p. 173.
universally acceptable, and certainly not acceptable to a majority of religious thinkers.

C. PHILOSOPHY AS A RELIGION

On the basis of what has thus far been said, Dooyeweerd, and most other students of reformational philosophy, would have no qualms about calling Jaspers' faith a religion that rivals other religions. Dooyeweerd writes, "[T]he modern division between faith and science, which in line with Kant many accept as a kind of gospel, is itself religious throughout.... Inspired by humanistic faith...[this division leaves modern man] wrestling to find his religious anchorage and to locate the firm ground of his life."17 This, however, is a charge that Jaspers explicitly denies. Jaspers says of philosophy: "It is by no means a secularized religion. It is its own source along with humanities."18 In this section I will examine to what degree I think this Dooyeweerdian charge is fair or unfair to Jaspers' philosophy.

1. The word "religion"

The word "religion" is one of those that in our time has attracted a great deal of attention because of the variety of meanings and connotations that follow it around the academic world. While some might argue that the word has been stretched and distorted such that its usefulness in philosophy

17 Ibid., p. 172.

18 Jaspers, Philosophical Faith and Revelation, p. 320.
is now extremely limited, another possibility, and that which I think more likely, is that the application of the term to those philosophies where it has been ruled out of order reveals an impulse in those philosophies not easily seen by those who champion them.\(^9\) In any case, it is only with great care that the question of Jaspers' philosophy and its religious character can be discussed.

I have already given a description of what Jaspers seems to me to be implying by his use of the term religion, although I have yet to find an explicit definition of the term given by Jaspers anywhere in the works which I have read. To recap briefly, what Jaspers seems to suggest in his usages of the word is a belief in the presence of the divine in immanence, of an objectified deity, of an objectified word or law of the deity, or of any other immanent spiritual presence. There also exists, often explicitly, the connotation that religion assumes an authoritative and prescriptive (either moral or confessional) element as religious leaders mediate (either officially or unofficially) the divine presence. If we accept this definition of religion as the operative one then we have no alternative but to admit with Jaspers that philosophizing is not religious. Indeed, how can we argue for someone's inclusion in a category that they themselves have defined to ensure their exclusion? Jaspers specifically denies any divine presence in immanence and explicitly rejects the authoritative mediation of the same by those who believe in it.

\(^9\) Hendrik Hart makes this point in respect to Kai Nielson's Philosophy and Atheism in Hart, "Paper read to a symposium of the Canadian Philosophical Association in Winnipeg, May 1986."
However, "today there is growing awareness that 'ultimate concern' is constitutive of the religious experience,"\(^{20}\) as James Olthuis notes. In this sense, the "religious dimension" is a very part of being human. Olthuis writes:

Man is also a creature that seeks certainty. Everyone lives for something and wants to belong somewhere. Everyone seeks a cause or purpose to give his life ultimate meaning and fulfillment. Everyone seeks to anchor his or her life and achieve certainty and final validation. Everyone has the need to make the ultimate surrender to something or some power or some person. We are restless until we find a home, a resting place which gives which gives a sense of belonging and is the source of all hope, power and certainty. Belief in an ultimate certainty, a god, by which we live our lives, no questions asked, is constitutive of being human.... This feature of life, often referred to as the religious dimension, is perhaps more aptly referred to as the 'certitudinal' dimension of life.\(^{21}\)

While Jaspers might balk at the choice of some of the words used in this description of religion as a dimension of life, because I think for him they might suggest a finality of faith unavailable in philosophizing, I do not think he would have any trouble with the general direction suggested, namely that humanity as humanity necessarily seeks to find its place in respect to an ultimate, and if this process is called by some religious then so be it. On this point, Jaspers concedes that "[i]n the sense of ascertaining the absolute, of illuminating man and making him


\(^{21}\) \textit{Ibid.}, p. 4.
serious, of allying freedom with Transcendence-- in this broad sense philosophy may be called religion."\(^{22}\)

We have, then, two definitions of religion: the first, a narrower sense of the term that entails the presence of the divine in some form in immanent reality, and the second, a broader sense of religion that has to do with mankind's inherent propensity for concern with ultimates.\(^{23}\) The narrow definition does not apply to Jaspers either in his estimation nor in mine, while the broader definition does apply to him according to us both. Dooyeweerd's charge that philosophies such as Jaspers' are religious in that they rival other religions, and Jaspers' denial of the same, still stands.

2. Is philosophy religious?

The solution to this dilemma is not a simple one. In an attempt to find an answer to the question "Is philosophy religious?" we find ourselves with two definitions of religion. The broader sense of religion is so broad that everyone of necessity falls into it, and Jaspers, although this is not his preferred usage of the term, readily admits to being religious in this sense. But inclusion in this category is less than what Dooyeweerd and others mean when they call Jaspers' type of thinking religious. What they mean in making this charge is that Jaspers partakes unknowingly in something closer to the narrower sense of religion, the sense that includes


\(^{23}\) The broad and narrow uses of the term religion as I define them here do not correspond to the broad and narrow uses of the term utilized by Olthuis in *Visions of Life and Ways of Life: The Nature of Religion*. 
the ideas of revelation, divine embodiment, and authority. But Jaspers, as we have seen, seems able to hold at bay the charge of being religious in this narrower sense in that these elements are precisely those that his philosophy of religion was designed to avoid. The whole of his argument is directed towards showing us why these elements are inapplicable to, and even destructive of, philosophizing.

Jaspers' thus avoids Dooyeweerd's charge by easily admitting to being religious in the broad sense, which is really only an admission to being human, and by showing that his system explicitly avoids those elements that would make it religious in the narrow sense. In this way Jaspers is able to engage in debate on questions of ultimate concern, he is able to discuss the issues of God, revelation, immortality, eschatology, and any other issue that is considered by most as a religious issue, and while thus doing still maintain the stance that he himself is not religious.

There is, I believe, more going on here than merely the use by Jaspers of a semantic slight of hand, of his using the term religion once in the broader sense and another time in the narrower sense depending on his purposes. On the contrary, I have found Jaspers' use of the term to be quite consistent. Rather, that which allows Jaspers such flexibility on religious subject matter and simultaneously clemency from being tagged

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24 Jaspers relates the story of how a young priest who had been his student commented to Jaspers that most of what he was teaching was considered by the church to be theology. While this comment surprised Jaspers at the time, he does not deny that he shares a great deal in terms of subject matter with religious thinkers, although he asserts that the source of his involvement differs greatly from that which motivates the believer. Karl Jaspers, "Philosophical Autobiography." The Philosophy of Karl Jaspers, P. A. Schlipp, ed. (New York: Tudor, 1957), p. 77.
religious is, I believe, to be found at the heart of his system—namely, in his anthropological dualism.

For Jaspers, all questions of ultimate concern, all questions of god, all questions of human freedom and communication are questions for Existenz, questions that belong to mankind as transcendent mankind, questions to be probed in the mode of faith. These questions are, in Jaspers' terminology, specifically not religious questions. Religious questions, rather, are for him questions of transcendent concern wrongly formulated as questions of immanent concern. Religion is the product of mankind when he or she prevent[s] his or her humanity by trying to deal with questions of faith in a realm qualified by knowledge. In this fashion Jaspers believes that he is free to engage in questions of ultimate concern (as Existenz) without making these into questions that need to become religious (universally valid for immanence). He claims to deal with questions of faith without making them into questions of knowledge, as he believes the religious are fooled into doing. We see, then, that so long as Jaspers is permitted his paradigm he cannot be called religious in any but the broadest, and most meaningless, of senses.

I have, however, pointed out that this rigid delineation of the realm of faith over against the realm of knowledge fails to satisfy the demands of much recent philosophy of science and seems also to be less than convincing to many working today in philosophical and theological anthropology. When this dualistic analysis of being is opened to challenge then so too can Jaspers' defence against being called religious be opened to challenge. When faith is taken as one way of being in the world and knowledge another, and the interaction and interdependence of these modes
is realized, then Jaspers can not so quickly and easily deal with questions of faith as if they were devoid of participation in knowledge, as if they were by definition not questions with religious content. If faith functioning is not considered as a transcendent way of being but as another human way of being in the world then the dualism that Jaspers has been able to hide behind can be dismissed as illegitimate. The narrow usage of the term religion as defined by Jaspers is likewise viewed as illegitimate in light of this assault against Jaspers' dualism, for the foundation upon which his definition of religion rests, the separation of faith from knowledge, is undercut by the alternative anthropology.

This does not, however, mean that the only legitimate use of the term religion is the broader one entailing the idea of ultimate concern. There is also the narrower and more common colloquial usage having to do with belief in some being or theistic force beyond immanent reality. I believe that this usage is both legitimate and potentially helpful. What I hope to have shown here is not that a narrower definition is useless or wrong, but that it is unworkable if saddled with the framework that Jaspers brings to it. If one were to use the term religion more narrowly in reference to belief in such a theistic beyond, and then find another term for the fact that everyone must find some object of ultimate concern that shapes and directs all of one's life, then I see no reason why this should not be permitted. Daniel P. Sheridan does just this when his "solution, or containment, of these dilemmas is (1) to put the functional emphasis on 'culture' as answering questions of human existence, and (2) to put the substantive emphasis on 'religion' as theism's postulation of a
participation in the whole by the power of a specific kind of whole.\textsuperscript{25} I am satisfied with either Sheridan's tack of calling the phenomenon of ultimate concern "culture", and theistic belief "religion", or with the traditional, Dooyeweerdian tack of calling this ultimate shaping and directing function "religion". What is not permissible, in my estimation, is Jaspers' definition of religion that severs the faith function from the rest of human functioning as if it were somehow free of the influence of the other worldly functions, and as if the other worldly functions were somehow free of faith functioning.

When faith is thus detached from knowledge its influence is depreciated in respect to knowledge, and the influence of knowledge is likewise depreciated for faith. We have seen that Jaspers believes the knowledge of science to be free of faith, a belief that looks very much as if it is mistaken according to many of the current theories in the philosophy of science. Likewise, we have seen in Jaspers how scientific reflection is devoid of any influence on faith (except insofar as it creates ciphers to be dealt with in timeless, transcendent faith rather than as a faith influencing knowledge). In this way he is able to blind himself to the grounds upon which his dualism rests, and blind himself to the role that religion plays in his philosophy. If knowledge is perceived as autonomous, that is, if knowledge is believed to proceed to its boundaries before faith becomes operative, then the faith underlying this belief becomes impossible to see. Jaspers is then able to conceive of philosophical faith not as a religious faith grounding his philosophy, but

rather as a faith within the already existing confines of his philosophy. The basic knowledge is therefore wrongly perceived of as being free from faith, and religion is wrongly delegated to a sphere where its influence Jaspers can carefully control.

What I hope to have shown in this analysis is that there is a faith that precedes Jaspers' dualistic picture of being, namely, a faith in the autonomy of humanity coupled with a faith in the autonomy of science. These tenets are the objects of Jaspers' ultimate concern, and they are objects of faith that go before any philosophizing. They are the shaping and directing elements of Jaspers' thought. They establish the criteria from which his system arises. They are not, as Jaspers believed, the result of a basic knowledge that precedes faith. As the shaping and directing elements of Jaspers' thought they are, then, rightly called religious in Dooyeweerdian terminology, for they are more than just a striving after reconciliation with one's ultimate concern in the transcendent realm, they are the very foundations of Jaspers' whole system of belief.

Jaspers' thought, therefore, is rightly called religious if we mean by religious that certain elements of faith are taken as the object of commitment prior to the emergence of these elements from within the system itself. In other words, when belief "x" underlies a system "y" which in turn is used to substantiate belief "x", then belief "x" is rightly called religious.

When Jaspers claims, then, that philosophy is not merely a secularized religion but that it has its own source, what he seems to me to be claiming is that philosophy rests not on a revelation from outside of immanence but arises from some impetus within it, namely, the foundering of knowledge
that leads to transcending. But if knowledge itself requires a grounding in some sort of faith, from where, according to Jaspers, does the content of this faith arise? Jaspers as a believer in the autonomy of science, naturally fails to answer this question, because for him knowledge precedes faith. The source of Jaspers' faith, then, is unaccounted for within his own system.

I have already suggested that the faith which inspired Jaspers' philosophy was founded in his humanistic ground motive. It is now my goal to demonstrate that this faith exhibits itself in Jaspers' thought, not in a way that suggests it arises out of a universally accessible knowledge, but in a way that suggests that it is at root religious, that is, at root the shaping and directing element that underlies his system of thought.

This is, I believe, further shown to be the case in that Jaspers uses, in speaking of these things, terms that would be considered religious even by his own narrow definition of the term. Jaspers does not in his dialogues with religious thinkers use terms that suggest there is a common universal experience of being that he must lead them through in order to clear up their misunderstandings. Rather, he uses terms that suggest a militancy between the clashing paradigms at a much deeper and fundamental level. 26 This level, in my estimation, is that of the basic, presuppositional, "religious" level of faith commitment.

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26 No new examples of such language need to be added here as I have already cited a host of them in chapter two.
3. The revelational nature of ciphers

Jaspers naturally rejects the idea of revelation as divine presence in immanence because this for him would mean that an object of faith was being given status as an object of knowledge. But again, the abolishment of Jaspers' dualistic severing of faith from knowledge makes such a definition of revelation illusory, and the true meaning of revelation, and the part it may play in Jaspers' philosophy, needs to be re-examined.

Revelation in religion plays the role of God's presence in the world as the object of faith, be it as word, incarnation, spirit, or God's presence in nature. Likewise, ciphers for Jaspers play the role of the presence of Transcendence for faith, but because for Jaspers faith is itself transcendent ciphers cannot take on any of the objectified forms commonly found as the objects of religious faith. As the objects of faith, both revelations and ciphers share in being matters of certitude, as matters that found and direct our strivings for answers to questions of ultimate concern, rather than as matters of knowledge. This potential commonality is lost for Jaspers, however, when this separation of faith from knowledge keeps him from seeing that, for the integrated human functioning simultaneously in all the modes of being, matters of knowledge, to the degree that they serve one's certitudinal needs, can at once be matters of faith, and matters of faith at once matters of knowledge.

Consider the difference between the assertions "Jesus died by crucifixion" and "Jesus died to save mankind from sin." The truthfulness of the first assertion can be seen as a matter qualified by historical judgement. It is a matter primarily of knowledge. The truthfulness of the
second demands more than this, and is qualified by certitudinal decision. That both can be seen as referring to the same event is beyond possibility in Jaspers' philosophy. For Jaspers a matter must be either a matter of faith or a matter of knowledge, but never a matter of both. Jaspers' dualism forces him to keep matters of faith outside of the world, to be existentially appropriated or rejected, to appear in ciphers that, because of their lack of objectivity, are always fleeting and changing.

For Jaspers, that Jesus died of crucifixion is a matter of fact or fiction\(^7\) and faith need play no part in the determination of the statement's truthfulness. Either Jesus died on the cross or he did not. The only way to determine this is to utilize the best historical documents available and carefully decide on the basis of fact. Likewise, if one is to assert that Jesus died to save mankind from sin, one must do so with the full realization that this is a matter for Existenz (for to prove such a statement scientifically is surely impossible) and has no bearing whatsoever on questions dealing with immanent reality. Such a statement can only be true if it has existential value.

Conversely, the believer in revelation, to the degree that he or she recognizes the interplay between faith and knowledge, has the opportunity to say that both assertions are matters of both faith and knowledge. That Jesus died for the sins of mankind can be known by the believer as fact, not on the basis of historical expertise, but on the basis of one's faith enlightening one's knowledge. One's faith in the bodily death of Jesus and

\(^7\) Jaspers himself did believe that Jesus had been crucified, although this "point of interest" has no bearing on my argument. "It would take very compelling reasons to make us abandon the belief that there is a reality at the base of these moving episodes." Jaspers, Socrates, Buddha, Confucius, Jesus, p. 74.
its salvific effects can be said to guide the logical modality. Likewise, that there is good historical evidence that Jesus indeed died by crucifixion may inform and encourage one's faith in Jesus as saviour, despite the fact that such knowledge alone is not sufficient to such belief. In this case the logical is said to be foundational to the cerditudinal (faith) mode. With the alternative anthropology a matter not only can, but must, be a matter at once for faith and for knowledge. When Jaspers' faith/knowledge dichotomy is overcome the similarity between ciphers and revelation (that each are the objects of, and inform, faith) cannot be overlooked. If faith and knowledge are in fact interdependent anthropologically, as I am proposing, then the idea that ciphers transcend any interplay with the worldly functions can be seen as falacious, the difference that Jaspers proposes between ciphers and revelation is discredited, and the revelational nature of ciphers reveals itself.

This revelational nature reveals itself also in the role that ciphers play in founding Jaspers system of thought, the same role played by revelation for religious systems of thought. As I have noted, Jaspers rails against the theological structures of dogma that religion builds upon revelational givens. But if faith truly informs knowledge, as I in this paper am maintaining, then ciphers, the objects of Jaspers' faith, must also inform Jaspers' system of thought, and they also may be said to be the givens upon which Jaspers builds his "dogma", albeit philosophical dogma. In this sense also, I think, ciphers may fairly be called revelational.
4. The authoritative nature of philosophy

According to Jaspers, the authority of the church is in reality not an authority based on any divine imperative but is rather human authority in the guise of God's word. For him the unconditional imperative (the call of Transcendence to Existenz most fully realized in the command to "be yourself") is a fully existential imperative. As such there is no way in which it can be applied in immanent reality as a set of normative guidelines that could demand universal applicability. Jaspers' severing of faith response from the immanent modalities keeps him from acknowledging any call to obedience based on a supposed revelation. Jaspers is forced to reject any imperative that infringes upon the freedom that he claims justly belongs to an individual as he or she responds to the unconditional imperative.

If Jaspers' dualistic view of humanity is a mistaken view, however, we can see that the idea of the unconditional imperative (as the call of Transcendence to an individual Existenz) suggests an appeal to a part of the person that does not exist outside of the person's functional integrality. There can be no calling to the person as faith functioning alone, as Jaspers suggests. Rather, any calling, even if qualified as a demand upon the person as a certitudinal being, must be a calling to the person as that person functions in all of his or her modes.

Given this, Jaspers' claim that the unconditional imperative is exclusively existential and has no coercive, authoritative content is shown to be a falacious one. Indeed, this imperative that is supposed to appeal to mankind only in his freedom as Existenz accrues both a creed and an
authority of its own. Its creed is that there shall be no creeds, and the proof of its creedal nature, despite Jaspers' protests to the contrary, is the way in which it assumes a normative, universal stance in respect to other creeds, and its militancy towards them. Its authority is exercised not in its threat to damn dissenters to hell, a threat that Jaspers chides religions for utilizing, but in its threat to damn dissenters to inauthenticity, to essentially non-human status.

These, in Jaspers' terms, immanent manifestations of a supposedly existential imperative would be called in Dooyeweerdian terms retrocicipants from the faith mode to other areas of human functioning, and they substantiate the claim that even Jaspers himself is unable to sustain the division he creates in his dualism between faith and the other functions. That Jaspers fails to recognize this shows the depth of commitment he has to his paradigm. Even though the charge to "be yourself" applies in Jaspers' view to all mankind, even though those who transgress against it are said to be betraying their own humanity, Jaspers cannot sense that it might be an authoritative charge. In his view it cannot be so, because a call to one's faith is a call to freedom, a call that is by definition uncoercive and unauthoritative.

Jaspers' philosophy can also be seen to be authoritative when we consider the degree to which Jaspers believes he is able to legislate for all of humanity that which may be called fact and that which cannot, the true nature of philosophy, and the true nature of humanity and Being. 

Jaspers was able to do so because, as we have seen, he believed that his thought flowed out of the basic knowledge, that is, that it was based upon the foundations of universally accessible experience. We have also seen,
however, that such is not the case. His assertions in these areas rest, rather, on the content of his faith. We are then able to properly see them as assertions of a philosophical dogma that in their certainty very much parallel and rival the religious dogmas that Jaspers is so strongly offended by. They result not in the free existential ciphers that Jaspers suggests make up authentic communication, but result instead in the authoritative dictates of one professing a faith, and in a statement of the confines designating orthodoxy within that faith. Jaspers' discourses on the nature and goals of humanity are exposed for the dogma that they are when such are recognized as presuppositional objects of faith underlying his thought rather than the results of his philosophizing.

5. The incommunicative nature of "authentic" communication

One of Jaspers' major criticisms of religion, as indicated in the last chapter, is that religion is by nature incommunicative, that is, the presence of the divine in immanence becomes for the religious an unnegotiable tenet of thought that excludes all of those not sharing in its belief. This is the source of Jaspers' reference to religious thought as "a closed circle", impenetrable to those on the outside.

This exclusivity that leads to incommunicability with those on the outside is exactly what Jaspers believes philosophizing not to be. As philosophy is built upon a generally accessible basic knowledge, available to all who will seek honestly for truth, and as existential truth is available only in ciphers that never fixate into a dogma that would constitute a circle inscribing insiders and outsiders, Jaspers believes to
have set forth a system that promises optimal possibilities for communication. No one is shut out of the communicative process. Even the religious are allowed to contribute the truth that lives in their revelations, for taken as ciphers revelations possess as much truth as any of the other ciphers.

The problem arises again for Jaspers when the basic knowledge, that which is supposed to provide general accessibility to scientific certainty, and, at the limits of science, access to the cipher world of Transcendence, fails to deliver the goods. In light of the theses of the alternative anthropology, that which in Jaspers is supposed to be the basis of communication, a shared experience of reality, turns out to be dependent upon elements of faith that are, as a quick look at our world reveals, seldom shared. This realization with respect to the basic knowledge helps us to see that the whole idea of ciphers (as transcendent language at the limits of knowledge) depends not upon a generally valid knowledge, but upon the faith of one man (however many others may agree with him). It then becomes clear that the idea of ciphers serve this faith. The way in which the idea of ciphers serve this faith is by permitting everything as a legitimate contribution to the communicative process so long as it does not oppose the basic faith upon which the idea of ciphers is built. The idea of ciphers permit everyone into the conversation, but only on their own grounds.

The basic incommunicability of Jaspers' "authentic communication" is demonstrated in this way. Revelations are to be considered, but only as ciphers and never as revelations. Stripped of their nature, of the very claim they are making, they are no longer a matter of serious consideration
for Jaspers. Jaspers, by permitting them only after he has altered them to fit his paradigm, makes it impossible for the religious thinker to consider himself or herself seriously communicated with. If a claim to be considered has to be uprooted from the faith that inspired it and replanted in a foreign faith then it is not really being considered at all. As Jaspers himself asks, "What does an angry refusal to talk signify? It means either the limitation and impotence of finite being or a rupture of communication in principle, on the grounds of a truth that would, in principle, deny all other truth."  

The doctrine of ciphers in this fashion protects Jaspers' faith from being challenged, and even protects Jaspers from recognizing the role that faith plays in his philosophy. The "closed circle" created by Jaspers' faith is hidden from him, but it is as present as it is for those professing any other faith. In this way also the religious nature of Jaspers' faith is shown.

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28 For instance, in response to Martin Buber's discourse on prayer as saying "Thou" to the Divinity, Jaspers moves, in supposed communication, from calling such activity "illegitimate" to calling it "speculative assurance...wherever it became genuine contemplation." Ehrlich, p. 83., from Martin Buber, Zur Geschichte, p. 302. Bultmann shows his feelings to this end when he begins his "reply" in "the famous demythologising controversy with the accusation that Jaspers' critique of his efforts hardly displayed the spirit of genuine communication." Ehrlich, p. 72., from Karl Jaspers, Myth and Christianity, p. 57. Jaspers' response: "You know very well that this judgement is a blow at the very heart of my philosophy." Jaspers, Myth and Christianity, p. 109.

29 Jaspers, Philosophical Faith and Revelation, p. 291.

30 Again, the religious nature of Jaspers' faith is substantiated by a great many incommunicative statements that permeate his work. See almost any part of chapter two for examples.
6. Individuality versus communality

For Jaspers a religious community is an example of an immanent entity explicable in terms of the encompassing of spirit. The religious community is "idea" in that it is one of many "spirits" that embrace mankind and determine his direction. A religious community differs from other ideas, however, in that it possesses a special element, namely, the belief in a divine presence that gives it its shape and direction. Jaspers' position in respect to such a belief is already clear, and he thus regards a religious community as an expression of spirit which pretends to be more than an expression of spirit. The perversion, he believes, is that here spirit pretends to possess faith, and faith, as we have seen, is of an entirely different realm. Jaspers uses these theses to discredit religious communities and proceeds to blame them for being authoritative and incommunicative, as any group would be who was sure of their sole right to mediate the divine presence.\(^{31}\)

These problems are seen in a new light, however, when Jaspers' dualism is replaced by the alternative anthropology I am suggesting. The alternative model not only permits but demands that the human activities encapsulated in Jaspers' encompassing of spirit are affected by the human activity known as faith, and that this interdependence is not only inescapable but normal and normative, just as the faith function does and

\(^{31}\) Jaspers' charges are not without foundation in empirical evidence. Indeed, the church often has in its haughtiness become dictatorial and incommunicative. What I here hope to point out is that this problem is not, as Jaspers insists, a structural one built into the nature of religious communities, but rather a failure on the part of the church to, in the spirit of Christ, meet the calling God has given to it.
should interact with the function of consciousness as such. In this view, the human struggle to reconcile ourselves with our ultimate concern is rightly engaged in communally.

Such an appreciation is, however, beyond the scope of Jaspers' model, for faith, the exclusive domain of the individual Existenz, must be a personal struggle. It must be a struggle of freedom and authenticity against the determinism of immanence. Therefore, faith rejects the decisions of the community (faith exercised as spirit), faith rejects the creation and affirmation of creeds (faith expressed as consciousness as such), and faith rejects any idea of revelation (faith expressed as existence). Jaspers, then, has no choice but to fall into a kind of individualism, for each individual must find his or her ciphers, those that bring authenticity to him as Existenz. Surely, there is communication among Existenzen, and Jaspers speaks at times as if there were a community of participants in the philosophia perennis (although the nature of this community in Jaspers' view differs greatly from a religious community), but at base each self must make its own way, must become itself by itself as it discovers itself in the unconditional imperative: "make yourself".

For Jaspers the true self is the individual, existential self. In the alternative anthropology the true self is likewise an individual self, but a self who makes his or her personal, ultimate decisions as he or she functions pistically always in the context of functioning as spirit, that is, in community. Jaspers, like most of the existentialists, stresses, in Tillich's terms, the courage to be as an individual to the exclusion of the courage to be as a member of a whole.32 He is forced to do so, I hope to

have shown, by his dualistic model of humanity and thus naturally derides the communal nature of religious faith. Such communality, however, when seen in the light of another paradigm, loses the image of a stumbling block to truth and can be seen as the gift of the divine the religious believe it to be, and which they call the church.

D. CONCLUSION TO THE EXAMINATION OF JASPERS' PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

The purpose of this chapter has been to illustrate the inadequacy of Jaspers' anthropological model for those of us who wish to think Christianly. Jaspers' model, I have suggested, does not, as he thought, rest upon a basic knowledge (a knowledge in which we can all share and that will lead us out of the delusions and superstitions of religious belief), but rather rests upon a faith commitment. Further, this faith commitment would seem to be best described as humanistic, that is, a faith that adopts as ultimate the defence of human freedom and autonomy, a faith that is incongruent with, and necessarily militant toward, a faith in Christ as the Lord of one's life.

The result of this demonstration is meant to be a justification of religious belief, perhaps a justification in response to those like Jaspers who would charge us with being unenlightened, illiberal, and inhumane as a result of our convictions, and, more likely, a justification in response to our own doubts about similar questions. In any case, this chapter is meant to allow us to hold with personal and communal integrity our belief in revelation despite Jaspers' charge that such is a delusion inspired by ignorance and an inauthentic and cowardly search for answers to ultimate
questions. It is meant to allow us to responsibly participate in a religious community, recognizing the rightful place of authority within it. It is meant to give us distance from the charge that the religion in which we participate is structurally flawed, that such participation is a betrayal of our humanity and a transgression of our true calling, because we can see that the model from which such charges flow is built upon presuppositions incongruent with our experiences of the world. It does not remove us, however, from the responsibility of taking measures against the evils that obviously can arise, and have arisen, in religious practice, evils upon which Jaspers builds much of his case against religion. While we cannot rest comfortably in the face of the evils that are perpetrated in the name of, and practice of, religion, we can rest in our being able to show that the inhumanity, oppression, authoritarianism, destruction, divisiveness, and delusions that have accompanied religious belief in its march through history are not the result of some inherent "structural" flaw in the nature of religion itself, but rather in the "directional" practices of those who fallibly take it up. We must, I think, be encouraged by the conclusions of the third chapter without dismissing the challenges posed to us by Jaspers in the second.
EPILOGUE

THE ENDURING CHALLENGE

My task in this paper has been to examine Karl Jaspers' philosophy of religion. This I have done by setting out the basic structure of Jaspers' thought by means of an explication of his anthropological model, using this model to describe Jaspers' philosophy of religion, and showing how the inadequacy of this model from a religious perspective frees the religious thinker from having to adopt Jaspers' recommendations with respect to his or her religious beliefs and practices.

There are, however, still a few items that need to be briefly addressed before I will feel comfortable in bringing this paper to a conclusion. In this brief epilogue I will address three issues: first, the status of the alternative anthropology with respect to "the truth", second, the problem of our variant religious experiences, and third, the enduring challenge that these variant experiences pose to us in respect to the need for unity expressed in the introduction to this paper.
A. THE ALTERNATIVE ANTHROPOLOGY AND "THE TRUTH"

1. The paradigmatic circles

In chapter three I challenged Jaspers' anthropological dualism on the grounds that it was not necessarily "the truth", but rather a paradigm that reflected his humanistic ground motive. The argument consisted in showing that Jaspers' proof for the basic knowledge, and he truly believed it to be a proof, consisted of a circle that began and ended with universally accessible knowledge. The universally accessible knowledge that Jaspers believed to be the proof of his paradigm was proven to be universally accessible only from within the paradigm itself. For Jaspers "x" proved "y", and "y" was taken to prove "x".

This investigation allowed us to see the point at which Jaspers brought his faith into play, the point at which he was forced to say, even if not consciously, "That's just the way it is." This point for Jaspers proved to be his faith in a generally accessible body of immanent knowledge, a faith we might call a commitment to the autonomy of reason, or autonomy of science, and when the content of this faith is effectively challenged, as I believe it has been by Kuhn and Polanyi and others, then the system constructed upon such a faith can also be effectively challenged. We can then safely say, I think, that Jaspers' anthropology is not "the truth", at least not in the sense that Jaspers believed it to be, because it rests not

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1 "The truth" in this section I am using as most of us naively use the term, that is, as a reflection of reality in a "truth as correspondence" sense.
upon a universally accessible knowledge but, rather, upon a faith commitment to such a knowledge.

The question for me then becomes one of whether or not the alternative anthropology, that out of which Jaspers' anthropology was challenged, can then be called "the truth" in a way that Jaspers' anthropology cannot. My conclusion is that it cannot, for just as the "proof" for Jaspers' anthropology proved to be circular, so any "proof" for the alternative anthropology turns out to be circular as well. This should not surprise us, however, for if one of the main tenets of our alternative anthropology is that facts rest upon faith, we should not, and cannot, expect our anthropology to be convincing to any outside of our own faith camp. In other words, if one's facts indeed rest upon one's faith commitment, those who do not share a faith cannot share facts, and, therefore, for those of variant faiths the category of proof is inapplicable (provided that we take proof as the stuff of facts rather than as the stuff of faith).^2

Taken a little more slowly, the argument against a proof for the alternative anthropology must begin with an examination of the nature of the statement used to discredit the anthropology proposed by Jaspers, that statement being that all knowledge rests upon a prior faith commitment. This statement, if it is to have any affect upon one who thinks as Jaspers

2 That those of variant faiths do seem to share so many facts does not disprove what I am saying, but points out that there is often a large area of shared faith within these variant faiths. Most Christians, agnostics, Islamics, Hindus, and atheists agree that it is better to love our fellow humans than it is to kill them. This does not establish as fact that love is better than murder, but points to an element of shared faith, the value of the person, within these divergent faiths. The way in which these faiths divergently answer the question of how one best goes about loving others shows the degree to which these faiths continue to share in each other or go their own way.
did, must be asserted as if it were knowledge (as Jaspers uses the term), as if it were a universally accessible fact available to all who are well informed and thinking clearly. But according to the claim itself this cannot be the case. The statement "all knowledge rests upon faith commitment" must itself, according to itself, rest upon faith commitment. It cannot be knowledge in Jaspers' sense. What is it then? It cannot be other than a statement based upon a certain faith commitment, a commitment to the position that all knowledge rests upon faith. Those who oppose it, then, obviously do not share such a commitment. This is trivial and axiomatic. What is significant about it is that those who oppose it cannot be shown by means of proof that it is the case, for by its own admission such would be impossible outside of the dissenter's conversion to a position that accepts it as a tenet of faith and away from a commitment that rejects it. Those opposing this assertion cannot, and should not, be expected to recognize it by means of the evidence provided by the likes of Kuhn or Polanyi (or the argument of this paper), for such evidence, as we have seen, rests not upon an interchangeable knowledge, but knowledge conditioned by a faith commitment. The statement I heard recently from a friend that "that autonomy of science stuff is a lot of rubbish," is true if one accepts as if it were knowledge that "all knowledge rests upon faith commitment," but when it is recognized that such a statement itself is conditioned by a faith commitment, and by its own standards it must be so conditioned, then those who disagree can no longer be seen as naive so much as they must be seen as having a different faith commitment.

From the perspective of the alternative anthropology, therefore, we must assert that any attempt to prove either our own paradigm or Jaspers'
model results in a circular argument. Jaspers claims to begin with a
universal knowledge that he calls the basic knowledge, but, as my analysis
has shown, this basic knowledge rests upon a faith, a faith that turns out
to be a faith in such a basic knowledge.

Conversely, the alternative anthropology recognizes the foundational
nature of faith for knowledge, but if this relationship is to be asserted
as proven, then the statement "All knowledge rests upon faith" must assume
the character of knowledge, and, as we have seen, such a statement must (by
its own admission) in turn rest upon faith. Each paradigm, in its own way,
rests upon itself for validation. Therefore, neither may assume the status
of proven, or even provable. We might say that neither rests upon
transcendent grounds, but only internal ones. The acceptance or rejection
of either paradigm, from the perspective of this analysis, can never,
therefore, be a matter of fact, but always a matter of faith.

2. The appeal to experience

What then becomes of each paradigm's claim to be true? Both are valid
by their own criteria and invalid by the other's criteria. The claim that
all knowledge requires faith is clear for those who make such a claim a
part of their faith commitment, but is a claim based upon a faulty knowledge in Jaspers' estimation. Likewise, the claim that knowledge is autonomous and universal is clear to those who assert that it is and judge this assertion in terms of this same knowledge, but is a knowledge built upon faulty postulates according to those asserting the role of faith in knowledge.

The required third, mediating paradigm is not to be found. There is no "proof" external to our participation in one of the paradigms. At this point, in lieu of proofs, I am tempted to appeal to my belief that the alternative paradigm more faithfully describes the way that the world actually is, that is, that the alternative anthropology describes reality more "truthfully" than does Jaspers' model. After all, it is by means of this paradigm and not Jaspers' that the whole of this analysis of faith and knowledge and their relationship has been possible. That I am committed to this alternative anthropology and that it truly corresponds to my experiences should be abundantly evident in that the whole of this argument, even my assertion that there is no proof for it, has been carried on as if this anthropology were "the truth".

But Jaspers obviously experiences the world in another way, a way reflected in his anthropology. To him the world is truly described in terms of Existenz-philosophie conceived of dualistically. My faith and his, and correspondingly our models, are fundamentally at loggerheads. Even my description of this situation, my description of our disagreement in terms of conflicting faiths, is posed in terms of my own model, a model rejected

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3 And according to the alternative anthropology such a mediating paradigm will never be found, at least not until all parties share the same faith commitment.
by Jaspers. So even to claim that my model is superior on the grounds that it recognizes its own faith commitment where Jaspers is blind to his makes sense only within the model itself.

There is a temptation in light of this to abandon the struggle and embrace a position of total relativism. While some do this, there is a need in most of us, witnessed to, I think, by most of the history of thought, to discover a commonality that goes beyond the sharing of differences. Jaspers himself expresses this need in his challenge to unity that appears in the introduction to this paper, a challenge perhaps more urgent in this century than ever before given our technological potential for the destruction of heretics, be they religious, political, or racial.

What most of us do in response to this challenge, despite the difficulties involved, is to continue to appeal to our experience of the world, and continue to present this experience to others as the best evidence for the veracity of our views. In the next section, I comment upon some of what Jaspers said about the conflicts that arise between the different ways in which the world is experienced, and supplement these comments with a few of my own hopes for progress in this area.

B. EXPERIENCE VERSUS EXPERIENCE

1. A call to communication

"I do not believe in revelation; to my knowledge I have never believed in the possibility," Jaspers confesses. He states his position

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4 Jaspers, Philosophical Faith and Revelation, p. 8.
categorically and without apology, and seems to both beg and demand of us that we recognize as legitimate the experiences that led him to propound philosophical faith. He asks of believers:

> What shall we do? Try to believe what we cannot believe? If God does not grant us this grace, we cannot believe without being dishonest; and if we feel that our first and foremost obligation is truthfulness, we must not believe. We cannot understand the believer who claims to be the recipient of such grace. His every statement tells us that God is corporeal— but for us, corporeality is limited to phenomena in space and time. For us, the insight into the phenomenality of all spatial and temporal things excludes the specific reality of God in a definite appearance.  

Jaspers expects even believers in revelation to take his experience seriously. What he seems to fail to do, however, is to grant the same serious consideration to those for whom the experience of revelation is very real. Should the believers in revelation not answer Jaspers by saying: "What shall we do? Try to deny what we believe? If God does grant us this grace we cannot deny it without being dishonest; and if we feel that our first and foremost obligation is to truthfulness, we must believe." Jaspers rejects as illegitimate religious experience because it fails to mesh with his experience, and yet he expects to be taken seriously by those for whom religious experiences are legitimate. And this from the man for whom communication "lies at the heart...of the concern over truth and of the philosophical enterprise."  

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5 Ibid., p. 103.
6 Ehrlich, p. 72.
Jaspers' frustration at not being understood by religious believers is further illustrated in this paragraph written "after a futile attempt to come to terms with Rudolph Bultmann, whom he had admired for years."\(^7\)

It is among the sorrows of my life spent in the search for truth, that discussion with theologians always dries up at crucial points; they fall silent, state an incomprehensible proposition, speak of something else, make some categoric statement, engage in amiable talk...and in the last analysis they are not really interested... People like us...strike them as merely stubborn.\(^8\)

But do not we strike him as merely stubborn, we who cling to an object that cannot become an object, we who cling to illusion? Jaspers seems here to be universalizing his experience while refusing to allow others to universalize theirs.\(^9\) His excuse for this is that his model leaves human possibilities infinitely open, but as we have seen, his dogmatic openness is closed to any possibility that entails an enclosure, thus revealing its own enclosure. Perpetual openness in this way shuts itself off from the very kind of communication it makes a part of its doctrine.

It is clear to me, then, that if we are indeed going to communicate across faiths we must do so on terms other than those proposed by Jaspers. If we desire to have our experience taken seriously by those like Jaspers, we must be legitimately willing to recognize their experiences as

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\(^9\) He seems at times to be saying: "If I cannot have the grace of God then nobody can."
legitimate as well. We must, I think, resist the temptation to reject Jaspers' work solely on the grounds that it is based upon the wrong ground motive (although such analyses have a place, as I hope to have demonstrated in this paper), and declare it of no value to us. We must also resist the temptation to view Jaspers' philosophy merely as the outcome of psychological determinates, an exercise made easy by the personal and confessional data Jaspers himself provides in his "Philosophical Autobiography". We must instead find a way to take Jaspers' experiences seriously on their own grounds as we expect to be taken seriously on ours.

2. "Religious" tensions

Despite the need that many of us seem to feel for it, there is great difficulty in achieving such an understanding, for at a very fundamental level our experiences seem to be at odds. Dooyeweerd recognizes this and calls the differences religious. Jaspers too admits this in his belief that religion and philosophy are the products of entirely different sources, and as long as each source retains that which makes it a source there can be no absolute reconciliation.

Our goal today cannot be reunification, nor can it be an authoritarian direction by one side, or by a power superior to both. All that we might aim at is to regain the once unquestioned unity as a conscious unity of

10 With respect to his religious convictions see especially pages 75-79. Karl Jaspers, "Philosophical Autobiography", The Philosophy of Karl Jaspers, ed. P. A. Schilpp (New York: Tudor, 1957). This temptation is one that Jaspers was not entirely able to resist in respect to religious believers.
disparates, of communicating poles that keep not only attracting but rejecting each other. 11

The call to communication can never mean that we abandon the truth of our own experiences, and yet so long as our experiences keep us from serious consideration of the experiences of others we cannot hope to even begin to communicate. This tension between personal conviction and authentic openness creates, I believe, an enduring challenge.

C. THE ENDURING CHALLENGE

Are we left, then, with a fundamental rift in our ability to communicate until religious conversions reconcile us with each other? While this may be the case on one level, a total abandonment of our struggle for unity to such a hope would seem to me unduly pessimistic given the seemingly unrealistic chance of such an occurrence in our modern world. The question, I think, becomes one of what can be done in spite of such differences.

We have been well warned by Jaspers of the dangers of allowing those of one faith community to overrun those of another. The resulting totalitarianism, terrorism, and oppression seem unavoidable in such situations. While I do not believe that Jaspers has succeeded in coming up with a model that avoids these dangers, as in my estimation his paradigm is potentially as oppressive as any other paradigm might be, I do sympathize with his desire to come up with such a model. That such a model seems at

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11 Jaspers, Philosophical Faith and Revelation, p. 356.
this point to be absent, and perhaps will always be absent, does not to my
mind relieve us of the responsibility to communicate and to tolerate, to
discover ways in which, to whatever degree it is possible, we may continue
to live in our world in co-responsibility for it and for each other.

There is no final solution proposed in this paper. Jaspers' challenge
to us to find a unity that would allow us to co-exist in a pluralistic
world appears to be an enduring one. There are suggestions, however, that
appear both in Jaspers' material and in the present analysis of it that may
be useful as a part of that which is required to meet this enduring
challenge. We must first of all, I believe, seek to become truly aware of
the sources and deepest motivations behind our own ways of looking at the
world. In this way we are perhaps better able to become aware of the
sources and deepest motivations in the models proposed by others, and while
we are likely to discover some fundamental conflicts at this level we may
also discover some fundamental areas of agreement that do not surface at a
less foundational level of argumentation.

We must also continue to appeal to our own experiences of the world,
and simultaneously take the experiences of others seriously. This seems to
me the only ground for genuine communication. Despite our basic
disagreements we do seem to share a world, and we do seem to agree as to
much of it, at least at a naive level. It seems to me as if our attempts to
articulate the source of this agreement more often than not is the source
of our divisions. It is for this source, whatever it may be and however it
may be conceived, that I think our search will be most fruitful, even if,
as seems to be the case, it is also the cause of our greatest divergences.
Finally, with Jaspers, I believe that our search is facilitated by a seriousness that implies a sometimes painful truthfulness. Jaspers falls short of predicting that a meeting place between philosophy and religion will ever be found so long as each retain their own basic nature, because for him religion taken on its own grounds consists of a basic error. I share this pessimism, for in my way of thinking only as deeply seated religious drives are transformed will genuine unity be a possibility. Jaspers does, however, propose optimistically that much progress is possible in mutual seriousness of spirit. While my appeal for such seriousness has a different source, I too view with optimism a situation where such a call would be heeded. Perhaps in the seriousness of our common human search for being and meaning and salvation lies the only clear intersection of our divergent experiences.


