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**Existenz, Death and 'Deathlessness'**  
**in Karl Jaspers' Philosophy**

by

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Submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

to City University, London

School of Social Sciences, Department of Sociology

June 2004

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## A c k n o w l e d g e m e n t s

I should like to express my gratitude to a number of individuals for their support during the preparation of this thesis.

First of all, I should like to thank Dr. Alfons Grieder for his supervision of my work, valuable suggestions, and patience over the past seven years enabling me to produce this thesis.

During my research I have encountered many distinguished Jaspers scholars, each of whom gave freely of their time to discuss particular aspects of Jaspers' philosophy. I am grateful to Dr. Hans Saner, Prof. Leonard Ehrlich, Prof. Richard Wisser, Prof. Gerhard Knauss, Prof. Rainer Wiehl, Prof. Rainer Thurnher, Prof. Antony Flew, Prof. Gregory Walters, and Dr. Chris Thornhill for their helpful discussions, comments and constructive criticism of my work. I should also like to express my gratitude to Prof. Kurt Salamun for his insights and for introducing me to other Jaspers scholars.

A number of people have been kind enough to comment on various parts of this thesis. I must thank Emeritus Prof. John J. Clarke, Dr. George Ross, Richard J. Peach, Dr. Vic Chambers, Andrew Dodsworth, Richard Baron, Rick Lewis, and John D. Hazen for sparing time to read and comment on parts of this work. My thanks also go to Gary Retallick for valuable discussions on 'time and eternity'. Finally, I thank Prof. Ray Tallis for his encouragement and stimulating discussions, and Gitta Valin and Lorna Ramsay for their continued support even during the most difficult times in the writing of this thesis.

When I started this thesis at the City University in 1995 there still was a Philosophy Division within the School of Social Sciences Department. It is now a sad fact that it no longer exists and that this thesis will be one of the last to be produced at that institution.

## **D e c l a r a t i o n**

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## Abstract

Karl Jaspers' existential concept of death lies at the heart of this study. For Jaspers, a human being is not merely a physical entity but a being with a transcendent aspect, i.e. in some sense 'deathless'. It is the connection between these two aspects of the human being that governs the structure of his work. This thesis is primarily concerned with the clarification and re-assessment of Jaspers' concept of death and his claim that one's transcendent self 'knows no death'.

A major part of this study is the attempt to determine what it means for a human being to be 'deathless' within the Jaspersian framework. In this respect, some of Jaspers' key philosophical terms and concepts are critically examined, and their relationship to death is clarified. Following a discussion of the concept of death in general terms, pertinent aspects of Jaspers' existential philosophy are presented in order to provide the essential background to this investigation. Jaspers attempted to elucidate the transcendent aspect of the human being outside the boundaries of classical metaphysical and theological thought. A detailed discussion of his views on this particular aspect of humanity is undertaken and an analysis of his concept of 'deathlessness' is given. As will be shown, Jaspers developed his existential ideas regarding the transcendent realm under the influence of Plotinus and certain medieval thinkers. In support of Jaspers' view, it is argued here that his existential concept of 'deathlessness' can be presented coherently in a non-theological framework. In order to substantiate this argument an alternative model is constructed, explained, and shown to be coherent.

Finally, in order to facilitate further clarification of Jaspers' exegesis, some critical reflections on his assertions will be presented from a broader perspective. In the concluding remarks, Jaspers' significant contribution to the understanding of the most fundamental features of humanity, namely human existence and death, is highlighted.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> I have published some issues covered in this thesis in the following publications:

- 'Jaspers, Heidegger, and the Existential Significance of Death' in *Karl Jaspers' Philosophy – Rooted in the Present, Paradigm for the Future*, Ed.s R. Wisser and L.H. Ehrlich, Königshausen & Neumann, Würzburg, 2003
- 'Human Finitude and Attitudes towards Death: Jaspers' Contribution to our Understanding', in the *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Karl Jaspers Gesellschaft*, Vol. 16, Studienverlag, Innsbruck, 2003
- 'Death, Faith and Existentialism' in *Philosophy Now*, Issue 27, London, June/July 2000

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| Jaspers, K., <i>Philosophie</i> , Piper, München Zürich,<br>Volumes I, II, III, 1994  | <i>Philosophie I, II, or III</i> |
| Jaspers, K., <i>Psychology der Weltanschauungen</i> ,<br>Piper, München Zürich, 1994  | <i>PW</i>                        |
| Jaspers, K., <i>Reason and Existenz</i> ,<br>Tr. W. Earle, Noonday Press, USA, 1969   | <i>R&amp;E</i>                   |
| Jaspers, K., <i>Philosophy of Existence</i> , Tr. R.F. Grabau,<br>University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 1971                                      | <i>PEx</i>                       |
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Vol. 1 (1962), Vol.2 (1966) GPh
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*Karl Jaspers – Basic Philosophical Writings – Selections*,  
Ohio University Press, Athens, Ohio, London, 1986 BPW

## Introduction

This thesis seeks to clarify Jasper's views on death and 'deathlessness' in relation to the human being and to give a fresh assessment of his exegesis by re-examining some aspects of his philosophy of existence. However, before presenting the aims and the outline of the thesis, it will be helpful to start with an introductory overview of the concept of human finitude and death.

### 1. Human Finitude and Death – An Overview

One of the fundamental questions that have preoccupied mankind throughout history is undoubtedly human finitude. We know that we must eventually die, and sooner or later we have to confront our own mortality. However, there is no certainty as to *when* and *where* one might die.

Traditionally the ideas of finitude and death are closely associated, for it is death that marks our finitude. Human finitude is a plain biological fact and is intrinsic to human nature. But people perceive death not only as the empirical limit to existence but also as a metaphysical issue. The distinction between biological death and death as a philosophical issue is important because the empirical inquiry into death is fundamentally different from metaphysical inquiry. Death has empirical certainty so far as this certainty is based on observation of the death of others, and this is the only direct experience one has regarding death. Death as a philosophical issue, however, raises a number of questions relating to human existence and the self-understanding of human beings.<sup>1</sup> Although the certainty of death arises out of one's awareness of the fact of others' death, this cannot reveal any metaphysical insight into one's own death. The ultimate metaphysical knowledge regarding death is not accessible to human beings.

Throughout history the prospect of human death and attitudes towards it have been viewed and interpreted in various forms, not least that death is not the absolute end of an individual.<sup>2</sup> Others have held that death is indeed the absolute end of the human being.

Whatever particular view one may hold, one cannot avoid developing a position regarding one's own death.

An existential approach to the concept of death points to the intrinsic relationship between the human condition and man's confrontation with death as an 'unsurpassable' limit.<sup>3</sup> The meaning of death is sought in the inner structure of human existence and there is no pretence of providing definitive answers. From an existential viewpoint, one's relationship to death is regarded as a constitutive element of man's existence in the world. It is constitutive in the sense that the awareness of one's finitude and coming to terms with one's own inevitable death are fundamental issues in human existence. If death is understood existentially, then it becomes clear that death is not simply a biological fact that annihilates a life process. This approach to death places great emphasis upon 'this world', in that human existence is closely connected with one's choices, decisions and fulfilment in the world. It is said that awareness of our finitude can actually give us the possibility of shaping our lives and heightening the meaning of our existence.<sup>4</sup>

In this thesis, death is not viewed as merely a biological cessation of life, but as an existential issue, that is very much part of the fundamental structure of man's being in the world.<sup>5</sup> As our relationship to death undergoes modifications so too does our attitude towards it. The critical philosophical question is not the dichotomy of life and death, but rather how each one of us relates to the certainty of our own inevitable death.<sup>6</sup>

## **2. Aims**

This study aims to contribute to Jaspersian existence philosophy by focusing on human death and its significance in human existence. It should be made clear that the thesis is not a comprehensive discourse on Jaspers' philosophy as a whole.<sup>7</sup> It is rather a philosophical exploration of Jaspers' notion of death that might provide the basis for a better understanding of human existence in this world.<sup>8</sup> It is in a sense a reflection on what it means to be human, highlighting the significance of the relationship between man and death.



The thesis examines Jaspers' notion of death, and in particular the 'deathless' aspect of the human being. It proposes that Jaspers' exegesis of 'deathlessness' can be presented coherently outside a religious framework. In order to establish such a conclusion, it is necessary to clarify some fundamental issues regarding death in general terms. Against this background, Jaspers' own existential views on death together with some relevant concepts and terms will also require clarification.<sup>9</sup> Only then can one begin a detailed analysis of the notion of 'deathlessness'. This analysis will offer an interpretation of Jaspers' view on the transcendent aspect of the human being.<sup>10</sup> Connected to this central point are a number of closely related issues, such as the concept of death itself, and the notions of time and eternity. They will be discussed in the process of constructing the central argument of the thesis. Although additional areas such as Jaspers' concepts of 'existential communication' and 'ciphers' have some relevance to the notion of death they cannot be adequately addressed in this study. Therefore I shall restrict myself to the most fundamental questions that are of particular relevance to the central issue we are exploring in this thesis.

Why should one pursue Jaspers' philosophical view of death? The answer to this question is twofold. First, there is not much work in the English language dealing with Jaspers' concept of death in detail, in particular the 'deathless' aspect of the human being.<sup>11</sup> When I first read Jaspers' *Philosophy*, I was inspired but at the same time puzzled by the concept of 'eternity in time' in his analysis of death. In Jaspers' view, one is able to experience a sense of 'deathlessness' in an existential moment, the *Augenblick*, while one is alive. He considers this moment as eternal. This is philosophically an interesting view, however it gives rise to a number of problems.<sup>12</sup> Jaspers tries to address these problems by giving an account of human experiences that relate to the eternal realm.<sup>13</sup>

The philosophy of eternity and time is a complex issue that Jaspers does not deal with in an entirely satisfactory manner. When I wanted to discover more about his existential perspective on death, particularly about his concept of 'eternity in time', I could not obtain adequate sources regarding this particular issue. What does Jaspers mean by eternity? What does it mean to say that 'eternity cuts across objective time', i.e. *quer zur*

*Zeit*? What does it mean to say that *Existenz*, one's inner self, 'knows no death', i.e. it is 'deathless'? Although the subject of death is discussed in different contexts in various publications about Jaspers' philosophy, there is no in-depth analysis of 'deathlessness' in connection with 'eternity in time'. A lack of relevant information led me to think further about the issue and discuss it with some Jaspers scholars in continental Europe and in America. It eventually led me to write about it myself. This is partly why this inquiry has been undertaken, to bridge the gap as it were. In the broader scheme of things, the thesis will hopefully contribute to Jaspersian scholarship on the understanding of human finitude and death from the perspective of 'eternity in time'. During my research, however, I realised how difficult an issue it was to present Jaspers' concept of 'deathlessness' in terms of 'eternity in time' as a serious piece of scholarly work. Jaspers was right in emphasising the point that some metaphysical concepts and experiences are not easily expressible and that in some cases they are 'ineffable'.<sup>14</sup>

The second answer to the above question as to why one should pursue Jaspers' philosophical view of death is connected with the reception of Jaspers' philosophy in the English-speaking world.<sup>15</sup> In my view, he is one of the most misunderstood 20<sup>th</sup> century philosophers partly because his ideas transcend the accepted boundaries of philosophical discourse in academia.<sup>16</sup> His thinking is widely associated with existential ideas that are regarded by some philosophers as vague<sup>17</sup> and incoherent.<sup>18</sup> Some philosophers consider his philosophical statements as unverifiable assertions based on some 'existential' human experiences.<sup>19</sup> Some regard his philosophy as expressing religious views.<sup>20</sup> Some others suggest that ethics is the paramount concern in his philosophy.<sup>21</sup> Jaspers reiterates in his works, including in his *Philosophical Autobiography* that his philosophy should be understood and evaluated in a non-theological framework and that he is not doing ethics.<sup>22</sup> Nor is he offering any dogmatic moral conduct in his works. As he repeatedly says, his elucidation of human existence is *not* a kind of objective knowledge or even a logical process one should pursue. Each individual must decide for himself.<sup>23</sup>

Admittedly, some of Jaspers' views are not always explicit, but are often implicitly present in his works. His philosophical thought may not be systematically argued, nevertheless it is grounded in the concrete human being and his experiences in the world.

Although Jaspers believes that thinking is articulated in language, at times some of his assertions appear opaque and therefore open to misinterpretation.<sup>24</sup> When one is dealing with deeply contentious metaphysical issues, e.g. abstractions such as time and eternity, efforts to understand or to define the nature of such concepts become inevitably inadequate. Since we do not have the necessary vocabulary when we speak about such issues our efforts only amount to referring to some symbolic representation. But this does not mean that his ideas are 'unphilosophical' or 'meaningless'. Jaspers' lack of clarity is partly due to the inadequacy of ordinary language utilised for the expression of metaphysical issues as Jaspers himself also acknowledges. William Earle makes an astute comment in the Introduction to Jaspers' *Reason and Existenz*. Earle points out the inadequacy of language, and refers to a lack of definition in Jaspers' key terms. In his view, this is not accidental. He writes:

We are told the roles of these terms in his thought, but not what they mean in any testable fashion. But this feature of his thought is not accidental, nor is it to be ascribed to some stylistic flaw. It lies at the very heart of what he wishes to say. To give 'definitions' of these terms would be to contradict the intent of his philosophy. Nor for this reason, are they 'meaningless'; their meaning arises only at the extreme limits of reason. They designate ultimately what is 'other' to reason.<sup>25</sup>

While it is easy to be critical of Jaspers' use of language, one cannot deny the enormous difficulty of formulating such metaphysical concepts coherently. Our perception of reality is closely bound up with language, and most accounts of time, eternity and death indicate the insuperable 'language gap'. In short, one must take into account, but be critically aware of the inadequacy of ordinary language in expressing metaphysical experiences of reality.

One final important point to be made here is to acknowledge the difficulty in producing a thesis about a continental philosopher's existential ideas in an environment where the analytic approach to philosophy, which is so prominent among Anglo-American philosophers, prevails. Numerous discussions with these philosophers and Jaspers scholars on the continent confirmed that these two schools of thought sprang from very different traditions. Indeed there are some Anglo-American philosophers who find it difficult to accept existential metaphysics as 'real philosophy'.<sup>26</sup> Working in an Anglo-American environment when one's line of thinking is more in harmony with the

continental approach, adds an interesting perspective to one's work, though not surprisingly, can lead one down a lonely path.

In the elucidation of Jaspers' concept of death and 'deathlessness' I have given a detailed critical analysis which might be regarded as 'splitting hairs' or 'pseudo-linguistics' by continental philosophers. This thesis is intended to provide a critical exploration and most importantly a clarification in which one can highlight and better understand the problematic areas in Jaspers' account of human death. On the other hand some readers, particularly analytic philosophers, may find this study overly sympathetic to Jaspersian ideas. I do not believe, however, that an apology is due in respect of either reaction.

In sum, with these background considerations in mind, my principal objective in this thesis is to determine what Jaspers means by 'deathlessness', and to demonstrate that Jaspers' concepts of death and the transcendent aspect of the human being can be presented coherently. On the basis of my research on this particular area, I would propose that what Jaspers attempts to convey need not be expressed in theological terms. In the process of tackling this task, I shall also argue that Jaspers' assertions regarding the eternal aspect of the human being, i.e. 'deathlessness', need not be meaningless. What is offered in this study cannot be regarded as definitive.<sup>27</sup> One can relate, however, a set of arguments and counter arguments to various metaphysical positions in order to elucidate Jaspers' assertions. It will then be possible to illustrate the relationship between *Existenz* and death, the experience of the *Augenblick*, and one's 'deathless' aspect in a coherent manner.

### **3. Outline**

The structure and order of this thesis are set up in such a way that it starts from a broader perspective on death, narrowing down to Jaspers' philosophical concept of death. It then progressively focuses on the central issue of Jaspers' notion of 'deathlessness'.

The thesis is divided into four chapters. Chapter One concerns itself with the concept of death in general terms only. It is not primarily a critical analysis, but it raises several

philosophical questions: What is death and why does it matter? How do people relate to death? Is death a point of transformation to an eternal life? Death-awareness enables the individual to look into such questions and develop an attitude and relationship to death. In this chapter some salient features of the notion of death will be outlined, e.g. definition, criteria, human comportment and attitudes towards death. These attitudes will be illustrated with reference to various cultures, including some ancient civilisations.<sup>28</sup> The views of such influential philosophers as Heidegger, Scheler, and Epicurus will also be discussed in this chapter.<sup>29</sup> One purpose of this chapter is to provide the reader with a wider background against which the central issue of this thesis can be better understood. In particular, certain ideas that are discussed here will be linked with later discussions on Jaspers' existential analysis of death.

Chapter Two starts with a brief biographical sketch that will put Jaspers' existence philosophy into perspective.<sup>30</sup> I shall then consider some of Jaspers' existential concepts including *Existenz*, *Dasein*, and *Transcendence*.<sup>31</sup> Sometimes these concepts lack sufficient clarity and need to be explained. In the next section of Chapter Two, I turn to the specific issue of Jaspers' concept of philosophy, and outline what philosophising means to him.<sup>32</sup> The relationship between philosophy and science, and philosophy and religion is also discussed in this section. This differentiation elucidates his idea of philosophy, which in turn enables the reader to grasp his concept of 'philosophical faith'. This is an important component of Jaspers' concept of death, and is closely connected with his notions of *Existenz* and *Transcendence*.

Chapter Two continues with an examination of Jaspers' concept of *boundary situations*, which is inseparably linked with his concept of death. This will locate his concept of death within the context of his broader existence philosophy. In connection with boundary situations I also draw on the antinomic structure of existence. It is important to remember that Jaspers' elucidation of human existence presupposes the antinomic structure of reality. Next I focus on Jaspers' concept of death. After a brief discussion of human finitude, I turn to Jaspers' differentiation between death as a biological event and death as a boundary situation. This then leads to an analysis of death as a boundary situation in an existential context.

The concept of *Existenz* constitutes a significant part of the central issue in this thesis. For this reason Chapter Three is dedicated to its analysis. *Existenz* is probably the most important but least understood term in Jaspers' existence philosophy. In the first part of the analysis, the basic features of *Existenz* are critically examined and certain philosophical problems are also discussed. This is followed by an examination of the relationship between *Existenz* and death. In this context, I look closely at Jaspers' concept of the *Augenblick* experience through which one can become aware of a 'timeless' moment of eternity. Since, according to Jaspers, the relationship between *Existenz* and death has to be seen in the context of 'timelessness', the concept of 'timelessness' and eternity in connection with the *Augenblick* experience will also be examined in order to ascertain whether Jaspers' notion of eternity complies with the traditional understanding.

In the light of this discussion, I then put forward two fundamentally different interpretations of Jaspers' concept of 'deathlessness', namely the *Mystical Interpretation* and the *Existential Interpretation*.<sup>33</sup> Finally, I focus on some critical reflections and remarks on the *Existential Interpretation* of the concept of 'deathlessness' and propose that Jaspers' assertions need not be incoherent and enigmatic within this framework. Such reflections will take us very close to the heart of the thesis.

Chapter Four is the convergent point of the thesis, as it were, in that related areas that are discussed in the earlier chapters are linked together. This final chapter is an extensive discussion of Jaspers' concept of 'deathlessness'. It seeks to demonstrate that the central issue of the 'deathless' aspect of the human being can be understood coherently from an existential perspective.

The first section of the chapter starts with short introductory remarks about the concepts of time and eternity to set the background for the argument that will follow. The chapter continues with a critical analysis of what Jaspers means by 'deathlessness' placing a special focus on the 'non-temporal duration' interpretation of eternity. The concept of 'non-temporal duration' will provide the context for the subsequent argument relating

Jaspers' ideas to the philosophy of earlier thinkers.<sup>34</sup> Some of the most important findings of this analysis (of the eternal aspect of the human being) are presented here with reference to Plotinus and some medieval scholars.<sup>35</sup> It is also pointed out that although Jaspers is influenced by his predecessors, and utilises their concepts, his views need not have religious connotations.

To elucidate Jaspers' view, I take a fresh look at his concept of the *Augenblick* experience within the framework of the *Existential Interpretation*. In order to clarify the elusive nature of the *Augenblick* experience, a non-religious interpretation of 'non-temporal duration' as 'timelessness' is presented. I then examine and re-assess the *Augenblick* experience in terms of representational metaphors.

In the next section of Chapter Four, one's 'deathless' aspect is queried. To address this question, the findings of our analysis will be linked with the traditional attitudes towards death which is discussed in Chapter One. It is emphasised that one's 'deathlessness' in the Jaspersian sense has to be understood in terms of one's existential experience in the *Augenblick* in the here and now. Following this, I critically discuss and give an account of Jaspers' concept of 'deathlessness' in terms of *eternity in time*. I conclude that only in this regard can one be considered as 'deathless', and that this experience does not need to be explained in a religious context in order to be coherent. In the final section of this chapter some key points of the thesis will be reviewed.<sup>36</sup> In my concluding remarks, I also highlight the significance of Jaspers' contribution to the understanding of the most fundamental features of humanity, namely human existence and death. Finally, I draw attention to areas that are still open to further research in this field.

## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> We understand ourselves as finite and transient beings and because of this awareness we can relate ourselves to death and pose the question of infinity in terms of human finitude. Having this knowledge that we must die constitutes one of the origins of philosophy. 'Without death men would scarcely philosophise' said Schopenhauer, and he was not the first to appreciate the philosophical significance of death. (Bremer, van den Hout, and Peters, 1994, p.197) Cicero was also of the view that there would be no philosophy without death. Choron, 1963, pp.98,102

<sup>2</sup> See *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 1998, p. 669, and *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 1967, pp.817-22

<sup>3</sup> Although an existential perspective on death has relevance to this study, it should be noted that the tenets of existential philosophy will not be addressed here.

<sup>4</sup> See Fischer, 1993, p.8 for the connection between death and meaning.

<sup>5</sup> As Georg Simmel says in his *Tod und Unsterblichkeit* (1918), 'in actuality death is bound up with life from the very beginning' cited in *Death and Philosophy*, 1998, p.90

<sup>6</sup> As Kastenbaum aptly phrased it, 'death is not just destination, it is part of our getting there as well' cited in Feifel, 1977, p.6

<sup>7</sup> With a view to complementing the existing studies on Jaspers' existence philosophy, the work presented here is intended to offer an exposition and a critical but constructive analysis of some of Jaspers' metaphysical ideas.

<sup>8</sup> Not all existential philosophers would agree to being considered 'existentialists'. Jaspers did not wish to be labelled as an 'existentialist'. Throughout this thesis I shall use the terms 'existence philosophy' or 'philosophy of existence' or *Existenzphilosophie* interchangeably when I refer to Jaspers' mode of existential philosophy. For Jaspers, the philosophy of existence is concerned with the elucidation of certain aspects of human existence.

<sup>9</sup> It should be noted that only some, not all, of Jaspers' concepts and terms are taken into consideration.

<sup>10</sup> In doing so, this study also contributes, in part, to self-understanding of the human being. Jaspers' concept of self-understanding is expressed in terms of the two aspects of the self, one's empirical being in the world, i.e. *Dasein*, and one's true inner self, i.e. *Existenz*.

<sup>11</sup> One recent publication available in this particular area is G. Debrunner's doctoral thesis *Zum philosophischen Problem des Todes bei Karl Jaspers* (1996). The thesis which is not yet available in English provides a good explanation of what Jaspers says regarding the concept of death. However, it does not offer a critique of Jaspers' views on the 'deathless' aspect of the human being in terms of eternity in time.

<sup>12</sup> A metaphysical concern regarding human existence and finitude is the significance of the notion of time. The concept of time in the existential context challenges the traditional understanding of objective time.

<sup>13</sup> What is significant in Jaspers' philosophical thought is that he takes up the issue of human relatedness to death and analyses it in terms of human experiences in the world rather than searching for an answer in the afterlife.

<sup>14</sup> *Phil.2*, p.14

<sup>15</sup> Jaspers' views have not received much attention, and he is indeed 'underrepresented' as an existential philosopher as Gordon and Marsh acknowledge in their article *Faith and Existence*, 1999, p.144

<sup>16</sup> Jaspers draws a sharp distinction between 'genuine' philosophy and what is practised in academic institutions. For him, genuine philosophy is concerned with the fundamental problems of human existence that each individual is confronted with. See his *PA*, 1974, pp.45-53

<sup>17</sup> See Thyssen, 1974, p.319 and Grene, 1948, pp.137

<sup>18</sup> See Grene, 1948, pp.137,139

<sup>19</sup> These philosophers, mostly from the analytic tradition, may argue on the assumption that only scientific knowledge is valid, and that any propositions which cannot be scientifically tested and verified are 'meaningless'. (See A. J. Ayer, 1983, p.56) Jaspers discusses metaphysical assertions and their meaning in detail in his *Von der Wahrheit*, p.564. His mode of thinking is of considerable importance in existential metaphysics as far as subjective human experience is concerned. It is important because if philosophy is



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confined to theoretical knowledge and empirical experience only, then philosophy would remain devoid of an essential aspect of humanity. This particular issue will be discussed further in the final chapter, in the critical analysis of some of Jaspers' concepts.

<sup>20</sup> For example, Jaspers is listed among 'religious existential philosophers' in L. R. Gordon's 'Philosophy of Existence', 1999, (p.105). P. Ricoeur, J. Löwenstein, S. Holm, and A. Lichtigfeld are also among those who regard Jaspers' philosophy as religious. See their articles in *PKJ*, 1974, (pp. 611, 643, 667, 693) respectively. See also M. Grene, 1948, (p.136), and K. Lehmann, 1938, (p.91). Although Jaspers was opposed to the dogmatic nature of traditional Christianity, his concept of Transcendence can perhaps be compared to that of Christian God. His concept of the experience of eternity in time has been assumed by some philosophers to be the same as the traditionally accepted concept of a divine moment of unity with divine Being. Jaspers was aware of these accusations but would deny that his view was connected with divinity. See *R&E*, p.144

<sup>21</sup> C. Thornhill, 2002, (p.2), and S. Kirkbright, 1997, (pp.18-20,33) are among those philosophers who take the view that 'ethics' was underlying Jaspers' metaphysics. Although Jaspers is opposed to systematic ethics, it can be argued that there are normative presuppositions in Jaspers' philosophy – 'moral implications' as Salamun argues in his article *Moral Implications of Karl Jaspers' Existentialism*. In meta-reflection, what is not said but implied in Jaspers' assertions becomes apparent particularly in his elucidation of *Existenz*. For Jaspers, the attainment of selfhood, for example, is something unique and precious for the individual. One's experience of boundary situations and existential communication are the two conditions that enable one to achieve self-realisation. In these experiences some moral attitudes are presupposed (but never explicit) as 'moral norms and general ethical rules for human interaction'. (Salamun, 1988, p.319) Courage and dignity in the face of death; taking responsibility for one's actions in connection with guilt; and tolerance, open-mindedness and liberal attitude in existential communication are all representations of moral issues. Furthermore, it is presupposed that one's absolute freedom is not to be taken to extremes. For example, one is not expected to kill or harm others in the name of self-realisation. It is understood that the self-imposed limitation/censorship must be applied to one's unconditional action in the achievement of selfhood. In other words, it is implied that one's intellectual integrity and honesty are in operation. These presuppositions suggest implicit value judgement.

<sup>22</sup> See *PA*, 1974, pp. 75-77, 81

<sup>23</sup> Throughout this study I shall use the masculine third person singular for the sake of clarity and ease of reading. No gender bias should be inferred from this usage.

<sup>24</sup> One of the reasons for this is that there are certain philosophical terms which have specific meanings given to them by Jaspers. It is an extremely difficult task to translate such complex terminology into meaningful and coherent English. These difficulties often obscure the meaning and lead to ambiguity and misunderstanding of his ideas. Further, different translators offer different translations of Jaspers' notions and terminology, which do not necessarily concur. This can easily leave the reader in a quandary. In order to overcome, at least partially, these difficulties, a brief explanation of some of Jaspers' terms will be given in Chapter Two.

<sup>25</sup> Earle, 1969, pp.13-14

<sup>26</sup> Earle takes up this issue and points out that 'readers therefore who are habituated to certain strains of contemporary Anglo-American philosophy will certainly be irritated by what seems like a lack of definition in Jaspers' key terms. What is *Existenz*? What is the Encompassing? What is Transcendence? We are told the roles of these terms in his thought, but not what they mean in any testable fashion.' Earle, 1969, p.13

<sup>27</sup> What is offered here is a suggestion that can be included alongside other interpretations to enrich Jaspers' metaphysics.

<sup>28</sup> The brief summary of the basic attitudes of some cultures is given purely to show the diversity of human comportment towards death. It is not intended to give a detailed explanation of the subject.

<sup>29</sup> References to other thinkers that appear throughout this work are not digressions, but explications of context which are designed to provide contrast or comparison to the reading of Jaspers' views on death.

<sup>30</sup> I concur with Jaspers that the life experiences of thinkers are not irrelevant to their philosophising and therefore they should not be ignored. In his *Great Philosophers*, for example, Jaspers brings in each philosopher's biography before he starts giving his account of their philosophical ideas. Wisser is also of the opinion that great thinkers' 'leben praxis' should be brought to the fore, because he believes that this

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would enhance our understanding of their philosophical ideas. See Wisser's article 'Karl Jaspers: The Person and His Cause, Not the Person or His Cause', 1996, pp.413-427

<sup>31</sup> In an effort to make Jaspers' terminology as accessible as possible, a brief introductory explanation of some key terms and concepts will be included in this chapter. Translations of such special terms into understandable English may be unclear and even sound peculiar. For this reason, if a precise translation does not present itself the original German term will be retained throughout this thesis.

<sup>32</sup> In this study I shall be concerned with Jaspers' early philosophical thinking. All three volumes of *Philosophy* will be the main source of my exploration of his existential views regarding the concept of death. I shall also refer to his other publications, e.g. *Reason and Existenz* and *Philosophy of Existence*.

<sup>33</sup> These two interpretations aid us in the clarification of the relationship between *Existenz* and death, and provide a contrast between two opposing views.

<sup>34</sup> 'Timelessness' as 'non-temporal duration' in which eternity is presented as a single instant is by no means a new theory. Many scholars for centuries have been trying to explain God's eternity in terms of His existence in a single moment. Plotinus and Boethius are among those who defended this notion of eternity as a single 'moment' in connection with God's eternality.

<sup>35</sup> There are other distinguished thinkers whose ideas may directly be related to the main issue in this study. However, it is not feasible to bring them all into discussion. Thus, we shall refer mostly to Plotinus, Boethius and St. Augustine. Here, it is not the aim simply to present the reader with a collection of views for their purely historical interest, but rather preparing the ground for the elucidation of Jaspers' view on the subject. The main purpose is to provide contrast and to bring out some parallels between Jaspers' and his predecessors' ideas on eternity and to demonstrate their influence on Jaspers' thinking. Some aspects of their thought will be used to develop my own argument.

<sup>36</sup> In connection with Jaspers' metaphysical assertions, some important issues such as the use of language, category mistakes, and qualified negativity will be discussed.

# Chapter One

## Death – Some Preliminary Reflections

### 1. Introduction

In this chapter I shall examine some basic features of the notion of death, e.g. definition, criteria, certainty, and attitudes towards death. The issue of human relatedness to death and its various manifestations will also be discussed. There is neither a single unchangeable attitude nor a 'correct' one towards death. In recognition of their importance, traditional attitudes towards death will be presented under three headings:

- a. Death is not the absolute end of the human being
- b. Death is the absolute end of the human being
- c. Sceptical, evasive and indifferent attitudes to death

In order to illustrate diverse interpretations of attitudes, reference will be made to various cultures, including some ancient civilisations. This will provide the relevant background knowledge that will be linked with later discussions on Jaspers' existential analysis of death. In section (a) I shall refer to several manifestations of the attitude that suggests death is not the absolute end of an individual but that human existence continues beyond death. In section (b) I shall look at only two approaches to death, namely the Epicurean and Heideggerian approaches, in order to illustrate the belief that death is the absolute end of an individual. I selected the Heideggerian approach as it relates to my several references to Heidegger's existential view of death in various parts of the thesis.<sup>1</sup> The Epicurean approach will also be considered as it provides a contrast to Heidegger's existential approach. In section (c) some modern and post-modern attitudes towards death will be highlighted. Since modern attitudes to and existential views on death somewhat overlap there will also be some brief discussion of the existential approach to death.

## 2. Definition and Criteria of Death

There is a traditional view which maintains that death is the muse of philosophy.<sup>2</sup> Indeed the concept of death has inspired numerous philosophical reflections on human existence. For Plato, for example, preparing oneself for death is the most important part of philosophising.<sup>3</sup> Although it has preoccupied every society for thousands of years, death still remains one of the most mystifying phenomena. The subject of death, as a *philosophical* issue, has been examined in detail by very few contemporary thinkers.<sup>4</sup> Those philosophers who have dealt with it offer their views mostly on the *awareness* of death.

The concept of death gives rise to a variety of philosophical questions. Death is an enigmatic universal event, a mysterious prospective state, in that some aspects of it do not seem to be accessible to the human mind. What then is the nature of death? The attempt to define death or give insight into the nature of death has been around for many centuries.<sup>5</sup> The task of providing a precise definition and an adequate philosophical analysis of death is a difficult if not an impossible one.<sup>6</sup> Some thinkers argue that this difficulty is due to the lack of a sufficient understanding of life. In Confucius' words 'If you do not know life, how should you know death?'<sup>7</sup> That there is no 'inside' knowledge of death, however, does not mean that we can know *nothing* about it. Within limits some empirical knowledge is possible. Nevertheless, the ultimate concern for us may not simply be the dichotomy of life and death but rather a personal concern as to how each one of us relates to the fact that death is certain.

So what exactly is death? To begin with, death is known to us simply as the end of the life of an individual being and 'the ultimate human limitation'.<sup>8</sup> Feinberg defines it as 'the first moment of one's non-existence.'<sup>9</sup> Death is the negation of life: it is a null state. It is permanent and irreversible.<sup>10</sup> One possible definition of it which appears in the *Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology* is as follows:

**Death:** (physiological) Final cessation of the vital functions. Death of the body (somatic death) occurs when one or more functions (respiration, circulation, excretion, nervous coordination) become disturbed to such an extent as to render the harmonious working of the various organs impossible.

A tissue is said to die when it loses permanently its power of responding to its appropriate stimuli. The brain and nervous system die, in man and warm-blooded animals at the moment of somatic death; gland tissue dies very soon after. Smooth muscle retains its irritability 45 minutes, skeletal muscle some hours after death.

If by 'natural death' is meant the cessation of the existence of an individual organism as such, then death occurs universally among organized beings...But by death is more generally meant the cessation of the process of life, transforming a living being into a corpse.<sup>11</sup>

At first glance this definition of death as the 'permanent' cessation of the process of life appears to be plausible,<sup>12</sup> but death does not merely indicate bodily death. If being alive includes the mental processes of the human being, then what happens to such processes at death?<sup>13</sup> It may be rational to say that death is the loss of certain functions of an individual. However, if we try to be more precise, then we move onto an insecure terrain. In the above quote, somatic death has been defined as 'the cessation of all vital functions' such as the heart beat and respiration despite the fact that many cells continue to survive for some time after somatic death.<sup>14</sup> There are, of course, various criteria which indicate the 'presence of death' in different situations mostly within the sphere of medical expertise.<sup>15</sup> It is said that a growing consensus supports some kind of brain-oriented definition of death,<sup>16</sup> i.e. the permanent cessation of brain activities, but some aspects of this definition are far from settled.<sup>17</sup> Some thinkers would argue that death is not merely the absence of life. For Oliver Lodge, the term 'death' signifies 'departure' or 'separation' of the abstract entity from the empirical concrete realm.<sup>18</sup> Death then might be regarded as a separation of life form and vitality from a carbon-based physical organism.

The two accepted major criteria of death are 'heart-lung death' and 'brain-death'.<sup>19</sup> The former takes place when the functioning of the heart and lung ceases irreversibly. In modern times, however, this criterion has been complicated due to the scientific and technological developments in the medical field. 'Brain-death' can be described as the irreversible cessation of the functioning of the brain.<sup>20</sup> However, it does not necessarily follow that an irreversible coma should be identified with 'brain death'. There are some cases in which an individual's brain function ceases except the part of the brain which controls the respiration and circulation. In such a situation, is this individual alive or

dead? According to the 'heart-lung death' criterion he is not dead, but according to the 'brain-death' criterion he is.<sup>21</sup>

Conversely, the respiration and circulation can be maintained by means of machines while all brain functions fail irreversibly and totally. Such circumstances can lead to both philosophical and ethical problems about an individual's life and death. It is indeed problematic whether there is a specific definition of death or not. There are a number of variables concerning the occurrence of death, and nobody knows where exactly to draw the boundary between life and death.<sup>22</sup> In a state of coma, for example, it is possible that one's biological life might be preserved, but then is it reasonable to suggest that this person is 'psychologically' and 'socially' dead?<sup>23</sup>

Although we acknowledge that death is the cessation of life, it is still unclear what precisely death is. All one can claim is a partial and limited understanding of death. Perhaps we have to accept that there are diverse 'categories' of death which are defined according to their biological, psychological or sociological explanations rather than just one type of death.

So far we have been discussing the *biological* account of death. In this approach, the event of death is explained in terms of biological processes. Death is regarded as a phenomenon which belongs to, and is confined to, living organisms. This account of death presupposes that human beings function purely as a particular kind of organism and therefore man too is subject to death just as any other organism. While the organism is alive, the possibility of death is 'present' and will occur eventually. The idea here is that whichever organism comes into being perishes eventually.<sup>24</sup>

Biologically, the cell is the most basic unit that constitutes the human organism. Each cell has a structure, and is made up of molecules that are not living entities themselves. Graham Parkes claims that when the firing of neurons in the body ceases all functioning systems stop.<sup>25</sup> Is human existence in this case not reduced to a neural communication system in the body? Is life then to be defined merely as a connection or relationship of 'non-living', i.e. not independently living, basic units? Furthermore, while we are alive

there is a constant process of body cells dying and being replaced by new cells. Can it be said that we are constantly 'biologically dying'? Generally, we acknowledge that there is more to human life than the mere collection of 'non-living' molecules.

The question then is whether the biological death occurs as a result of the death of those cells. Or should it be regarded as the death of *all* cells? Medical science tells us that even after the bodily death certain cells continue to live for a while in the body; hair and nails continue to grow when one's body is already in the process of decaying.<sup>26</sup> While these cells are active, the body cannot be considered to be dead. It seems that the biological approach on its own may not be able to determine the boundary between life and death. All it can offer is a broadly based materialistic explanation of the cessation of the activities of the human body. The non-physical aspect of the human being does not seem to be part of the explanation. For example, how does the vital aspect of human life, consciousness, fit into this explanation? So far there has not been a plausible answer to such a question. As Ninian Smart says

We are still far from understanding the nature of the relationship between the psychic and the physical aspect of reality. We know merely that these two aspects coexist and this coexistence seems to be a necessary condition for the maintenance of life itself. The earthly life of a terrestrial living creature comes to an end when its psychic and physical elements part company.<sup>27</sup>

As we have seen, a set of biological criteria of death can be established. However, when we look beyond the empirical realm we find that we have to look into certain metaphysical issues, particularly when discussing the notion of human finitude. It seems necessary that the issue of human death needs to be taken up from a non-empirical standpoint as well since the biological account on its own is insufficient.<sup>28</sup>

The distinction between death as a biological and death as a philosophical issue must be emphasised, because the empirical inquiry into death is fundamentally different from its non-empirical counterpart. There are certain empirical criteria of death which are inherent within the empirical inquiry. An empirical inquiry into death is quite restricted as it operates within a specific system of scientific definitions and relies on scientific instruments and measurements. In other words, the sciences view death from the start as nothing but an empirical event. Death as a philosophical issue, however, with its

metaphysical undercurrents, raises a number of questions relevant to human existence and the self-understanding of human beings. Such philosophical concerns are beyond the scope of empirical inquiry.

Posing questions from a metaphysical viewpoint implies transcending the realm of empirical inquiry. A philosophical approach cannot simply identify death with the 'death' of a particular organ, for example.<sup>29</sup> Instead the starting point is the fundamental question of what it means to be a human being.<sup>30</sup> In this approach to human death particular emphasis is given to the understanding of 'personal identity', and the problem of 'mind and body'.<sup>31</sup> Within the framework of this philosophical understanding, a consistent theory of the nature of 'being a person' can lead to a well-grounded philosophical analysis of death although not without problems.

*Religious* accounts of death, which may be somewhat connected to the *Philosophical* approach, offer an explanation that may be tied up with the concept of the divine or supernatural. Accordingly, the meaning given to death is based, at least for some religions, on the belief that God exists and that it is His decree that we die. Assuming that the whole system of 'being' and 'non-being' is pre-established by God, any independent philosophical questioning is restricted, as it would be considered arrogant to question the omnipotent divine Being and His judgements.<sup>32</sup> Within this framework, death may be considered as the transition of the soul from the decaying body into another corporeal body, which will be the reconstitution of the person in another realm.<sup>33</sup> Death may also be considered, among other possibilities, as the separation of the immortal soul from the mortal body.<sup>34</sup>

### **3. Certainty of Death**

'The only certainty for everyone who is born', says Richard Kalish, 'is that death will occur.'<sup>35</sup> Herbert Fingarette also declares that 'there are two absolutely certain facts about this existence. On the one hand it is certain that I will die, on the other hand I will never experience my own death'.<sup>36</sup> Indeed one's bodily death is one of the few certainties in human existence. Although our knowledge regarding death itself is confined to the



biological sphere, we are certain that we all must eventually die.<sup>37</sup> It seems that the human being 'has a clear awareness of death'.<sup>38</sup> Indeed man alone, among mortal beings, is capable of reflecting on his own death, and has foreknowledge of it.<sup>39</sup>

The inevitability and certainty of death operates as ontological necessity in some philosophical analysis of death. The idea of the inevitability of death goes back to one of the most ancient testimonies known to us; a story of the third millennium BCE, namely the Mesopotamian Epic of Gilgamesh.<sup>40</sup> We recognise in the Gilgamesh Epic most of the themes regarding death including the futility of struggling for what cannot be attained, namely immortality, and the eventual acceptance of the certainty of death in human existence.

But how do we acquire this certainty of death when we say that we are certain that we will die? Where does this knowledge come from? Our certainty of death cannot be based on 'self-knowledge' since one's own death is something which is outside one's experience and which will remain as an outstanding future 'possibility', as Heidegger would say in his *Being and Time*.<sup>41</sup> Death has empirical certainty as far as this certainty is based on observation of the death of others and this is the only experience one has regarding death.<sup>42</sup> However, not everybody agrees that such empirical evidence is sufficient to give us the kind of certainty we have regarding our mortality. This empirical certainty can make the individual aware of the event of the death of others, but it cannot reveal any metaphysical insight into one's own death. My own death is something outstanding and always ahead of me so to speak.<sup>43</sup> It can be a horrific death or it can be a peaceful and timely death. However, there is no certainty at all as to *when*, *where* and *how* one might die, and the uncertainty of its occurrence paradoxically remains as something that is absolutely certain.<sup>44</sup> In the light of this uncertainty how do we comport ourselves toward death? One possible answer to this question is connected with the fear of death which manifests itself in the face of death. I shall return to the issue of the fear of death shortly.

Another dimension of death is its artistic perspective which also highlights its certainty. The all-conquering power of death can be seen in various forms of art including drama,

poetry<sup>45</sup>, music and visual arts.<sup>46</sup> Examining death in terms of arts also adds a positive dimension to the concept of death.<sup>47</sup> An example from the world of literature powerfully illustrates how the certainty of impending death affects one's existence. In one of his books Dostoyevski gives a detailed description of a condemned man who is to be executed. The individual is certain that he is going to cease 'to be' in a short while and this awareness of the certainty of his death shakes his whole being. Dostoyevski writes:

...the chief and the worst pain is perhaps not inflicted by wounds, but by your certain knowledge that in an hour, in ten minutes, in half a minute, now, this moment your soul will fly out of your body, and that you will be a human being no longer, and that that's certain - the main thing is that it is *certain*.<sup>48</sup>

Human death may be acknowledged in the abstract but when one has to face up to one's own death, and when it becomes certain as expressed in the above quote, then it turns into acute awareness of one's total extinction as a human being. This passage clearly reveals an individual's despair in the face of his certain death.

So far we have suggested that man's knowledge about the certainty of death is due to the observation and experience of the death of others. There is another school of thought that supports the view that man knows intuitively that he has to die. Assuming that there is such a thing as an *a priori* inner awareness of death, could it possibly be another source of this certainty? According to Max Scheler, even if one were all alone in the world, one would instinctively know that one would die.<sup>49</sup> In his view, there is an *a priori* awareness of death and it is an integral part of human life;<sup>50</sup> to think of life as detached from death would only be grasping it partially. Scheler also claims that each individual has an inner experience of 'death directedness' (*Erlebnis der Todesrichtung*).<sup>51</sup> The experience of 'death directedness' is closely connected with one's awareness of growing old. Landsberg takes up this issue and describes Scheler's view of the phenomenon of ageing as follows:

According to him [Scheler], the idea of death occurs only as a limiting point, which one may foresee by observing the development of the process of growing old. ...Man feels himself less and less free, ...As he grows old, he loses not only the sense of freedom but, to a certain degree, freedom itself.<sup>52</sup>

For Scheler, the basic phenomenon of ageing of human beings is significant.<sup>53</sup> He reminds us that ageing does not exist for the world of dead 'things'.<sup>54</sup> However, some

philosophers, including Landsberg, find Scheler's view unsatisfactory. Landsberg wonders whether death is for humans 'something other than the concept of the final limit of individual evolution'.<sup>55</sup> He goes on to say that the human experience of 'the necessity of death reaches beyond ... the data provided by the feeling of growing old.'<sup>56</sup>

In *Tod und Fortleben*, Scheler states that 'death is not merely an empirical ingredient of our experience, but belongs to the essence of experiencing of every other life'<sup>57</sup> as well as our own life.<sup>58</sup> Although Scheler's statement here is not entirely clear, what he seems to mean is that death is in a sense contained 'in the process of living itself'<sup>59</sup> and it is an inseparable part of human life.<sup>60</sup> In brief, according to Scheler, there is an intuitive certainty of death (*intuitiv Todesgewissheit*),<sup>61</sup> a certainty that has nothing to do with one's attitude towards death, whether death is feared or desired. Scheler thinks that the intuitive certainty of death is deeply rooted in the human psyche. For him, a person's particular attitude to death is secondary and has to do with his life history. But if there is such an intuitive certainty of death within each individual, how can we explain that in primitive societies man clings persistently to the idea that death is caused by external forces? Landsberg, for example, argues that primitive peoples, like children, lack the awareness of the necessity of death.<sup>62</sup> If one assumes that death is caused by external forces, then it is difficult to account for Scheler's view of 'intuitive certainty' of death within each individual. Scheler would reject the idea of the lack of 'intuitive certainty'. Perhaps he would attribute the absence of 'intuitive certainty' of death in any individual to the repression of this idea. In Scheler's view, it is possible to be intuitively certain of death while at the same time repressing and denying this certainty.<sup>63</sup> Although it appears to be a contradictory statement, this can also be interpreted as a dialectical tension that is part of the existential human structure.<sup>64</sup> Whichever view one may hold, there is no denial of the certainty of death.

#### 4. Some Perspectives on Human Comportment and Attitudes to Death

Throughout history the prospect of human mortality and attitudes towards it have been viewed and interpreted in various forms. Some have suggested that death is not the absolute end of an individual but that human existence continues beyond death. Historically this is a widely held position which prevailed in the ancient, medieval and early modern world and in virtually all the cultures of the Third World since pre-historic times.<sup>65</sup> Some others have held that death is the absolute end and there is no transcendental or psychic elements that endure after death, let alone the person as a whole. In other words, there is nothing beyond the here and now. Some, on the other hand, have taken either sceptical, evasive or indifferent attitudes to death. Whatever particular view one may hold, it is clear that one cannot avoid developing some kind of attitude towards one's impending death.

Death, on the whole, is regarded as an object and source of fear that terrorises humans. An often cited example to portray man's profound fear of death and acute awareness is Ivan Ilych's death.<sup>66</sup> For Ivan, death becomes an obsessive object of fear. He initially suppresses his death-anxiety during his illness. In other words, before he encounters the serious stages of his disease, death has no particular significance for Ivan but only as a biological fact which happens to other people at the end of their life. When he eventually realises that his life is coming to an end, the reality of death turns into acute existential *Angst* for him and this anxiety discloses to him the finitude of his own existence.<sup>67</sup> Ivan's *Angst* and disbelief in the face of death is expressed as follows:

The syllogism he had learnt from Kiezewetter's Logic: 'Caius is a man, men are mortal, therefore Caius is mortal', had always seemed to him correct as applied to Caius, but certainly not as applied to himself. That Caius - man in the abstract - was mortal, was perfectly correct, but he was not Caius, not an abstract man, but a creature quite, quite separate from all others. He had been little Vanya, with a mamma and a papa, with Mitya and Volodya, with the toys, a coachman and a nurse, afterwards with Katenka and with the joys, griefs, and delights of childhood, boyhood, and youth. What did Caius know of the smell of that striped leather ball Vanya had been so fond of? Had Caius kissed his mother's hand like that, and did the silk of her dress rustle so for Caius? ... Had Caius been in love like that? ... 'Caius really was mortal, and it was right for him to die; but for me, little Vanya, Ivan Ilych, with all my thoughts and emotions, it's altogether a different matter. It cannot be that I ought to die. That would be too terrible.' ... 'And now here it is! he said to himself. 'It can't be. It's impossible! But here it is. How is this? How is one to understand it?''<sup>68</sup>

Clearly, facing his own death terrifies Ivan Ilych. Although he acknowledges that all men have to die, he finds it very difficult to come to terms with his own approaching death. This stark reality of his own death leads him to re-examine his own life and discloses to him the futility of the attitude he held towards life before his illness. Ivan Ilych has the feelings of 'hope, confusion, and despair almost simultaneously'<sup>69</sup> before the final acceptance of the necessity of death.

In the analysis of human comportment towards death there is one common element which manifests itself repeatedly. It is the fact that for all of us death signifies an unavoidable situation which is outside our control. In view of the fact that we are finite beings, we are aware that each moment we are moving towards our end. It is possible that we might react to this human limitation in a desperate or resigned manner. However, we are also capable of looking to the future with a positive attitude and strive to become what we are 'not-yet'. Our awareness of death may enable us to discover the intensity of life in the here and now.<sup>70</sup> This awareness of our finitude can actually give us the possibility of shaping our lives and heightening the meaning of existence for each of us. In the light of the awareness of our finitude and the 'ever-presence' of death,<sup>71</sup> how do we relate to the grim reality of death? In order to answer this question let us survey three basic forms of attitude and comportment towards death.

#### **a. Death is not the Absolute end of the Human Being**

There is a belief that regards life on earth as only one part of human existence.<sup>72</sup> According to this view, death will not be our terminus but the beginning of a new journey.<sup>73</sup> This belief contends that death is not the absolute end, but transition to, or participation in, another realm in which at least some essential but not purely material part of the person endures.<sup>74</sup> What exactly is it that endures of a person? What endures is said to be one's 'soul' or 'spirit'. It is considered to be one's innermost non-material, and in some cases 'eternal' self. This view inevitably leads to certain questions: transition to what or where? What connection, if any, is there between one's life in the here and now and what comes after death? Answers given to such questions reflect various standpoints regarding human existence and death. One shared element in these

beliefs, however, is that death is not the absolute end of the individual. This offers support to humans in facing up to death, be it their own or those of others. It may also offer consolation, hope, and relief from death-anxiety.<sup>75</sup> On the other hand, it may give rise to fear of being punished after death in accordance with some religious beliefs. The idea that good behaviour gives human beings access to another better realm appeal to many peoples across many cultures. Thus this position, i.e. consolation on the one hand and fear on the other, is somewhat ambivalent but it can be argued that this ambivalence can actually provide moral guidance to human life.

Given that humans can reflect upon death it is possible to survey various perspectives on death including the ones that are known to us from ancient sources.<sup>76</sup> According to Landsberg, primitive man does not believe that people perish completely when they die.<sup>77</sup> In primitive societies death is regarded as accidental and caused by external forces,<sup>78</sup> not as something 'necessary or universal'.<sup>79</sup>

In all cultures, however primitive, there is a sense of relatedness to death, and this is manifested in various forms. Relatedness to death and one's preoccupation with one's own death go back many centuries in human history.<sup>80</sup> This historical feature seems to be closely connected with the fear of death. Perhaps it is the human fear of death that contributes to the specificity of human culture.<sup>81</sup> Each society develops particular beliefs, a set of value systems, ceremonies and rituals to integrate death into the culture to help individuals cope with the mysteries and fear of death.<sup>82</sup> In other words, a culture suggests ways of relating to death through social mechanisms.<sup>83</sup> In some cases this may mean that the body of the dead is dealt with and got rid of in some kind of ritual and the dead are then believed to be continuing to exist among the living in a non-physical manner.<sup>84</sup> This belief of blending the dead with the living in everyday life supports the view that some primitive societies would not accept the total annihilation of the human being.<sup>85</sup> That is, the finality of death was not fully apprehended.<sup>86</sup>

One specific culture which holds the view that death is not the absolute end is the Babylonian one. This is clearly expressed in *The Epic of Gilgamesh*. Accordingly, death is conceived as 'the separation of body and spirit'.<sup>87</sup> As Sandars points out, according to

the Babylonian tradition when people die they go to the underworld which is called the 'road of no return', or *Kur*.<sup>88</sup> The presence of the underworld is felt throughout the narrative of Gilgamesh's encounter with death. The Babylonians have grasped what death implies: they know that there is no return to this world after death.<sup>89</sup> It is also clear from the narrative that their attitude towards death stems from the fear of death.

If we look at Egyptians, we find that they were preoccupied with death and self preservation.<sup>90</sup> They regarded death as a 'negative element'.<sup>91</sup> They believed that the worldly existence would continue after death and thus they provided food, drinks, clothes, and jewellery for the dead to use.<sup>92</sup> This was one way of circumventing death based on the belief that a dead person's life can be prolonged beyond his bodily death by supplying the dead body with worldly goods and also preserving it by mummification.<sup>93</sup> Some ancient Egyptian documents, for example *The Book of the Dead*, which dates from around 3500 BCE, reveals incessant thought about death.<sup>94</sup> The book treats the journey of the human soul 'in eternity as a factual certainty'.<sup>95</sup> It seems that for Egyptians human nature is thought to be psychophysical and therefore the body is essential for human existence. Thus the body must be 'preserved for future reanimation through highly elaborate rituals'.<sup>96</sup>

There are probably as many views on death as there are civilisations, even within one civilisation views may shift from one century to another as is exemplified in ancient Greece.<sup>97</sup> Concerns about the condition of man and the acknowledgement of one's own mortality has clearly led to philosophical discussion and analysis of death. Indeed, the limitations and mortality of the human being are clearly illustrated by Greek tragedy. The relationship of the dead and the living is often depicted by showing how the dead can affect the life and consciousness of the living being.<sup>98</sup>

In early ancient Greece, death was seen as something natural and unthreatening as one of the facts of life.<sup>99</sup> Death was considered a biological fact of human condition and mortality was regarded as the frame of man's existence and as something unavoidable.<sup>100</sup> The widespread belief was that each human soul after death continued to exist as a shadow in the kingdom of the dead, Hades,<sup>101</sup> which was described as a shadowy world in

the 11th book of the *Odyssey*. The dead people were thought to become shadows wandering in the underworld, in the depths of Hades, from which there was no return.<sup>102</sup>

Within a couple of centuries, however, a change of attitude appears. The doctrine of *metempsychosis*, the transmigration of the soul, becomes more widespread.<sup>103</sup> According to this doctrine, the soul does not disintegrate with the body at death but begins in a new life.<sup>104</sup> The soul is thought to be imprisoned in the body but leaves it at death and ‘after a period of purification it re-enters another body’, and this process repeats itself several times.<sup>105</sup> The doctrine of *metempsychosis* which postulates the immortality of the soul has prevailed for many centuries, and according to Taylor, it also influenced the Christian Church.<sup>106</sup>

When analysing the notion of the immortality of the soul one cannot ignore the death of Socrates which is described in Plato’s *Phaedo*. The Platonic discussion of death in *Phaedo* entails the separation of the soul from the body.<sup>107</sup> The Platonic Socrates claims that death is the beginning of true life, at least for the philosopher. The true life demands liberation from the untrue life of our common existence. For Plato, our world is a world of shadows and the truth lies beyond.<sup>108</sup> Death is the necessary entrance into real life because for Socrates, man’s factual life is essentially unreal. On his deathbed Socrates assures us that he is perfectly capable of surviving death.<sup>109</sup> He declares that the destruction of the body does not kill the soul. In his view, people are not to be identified with their bodies, and they will survive their deaths in ‘non-bodily’ form.<sup>110</sup> Accordingly, man is strictly mortal, what is immortal is not the man but the divine element in him, i.e. the soul. Socrates’ serenity and confidence in the face of death are based on his faith.<sup>111</sup> For Socrates, the soul represents what we truly are.

A religious perspective of life and death seems to reflect the idea of the spiritual nature of man.<sup>112</sup> According to Ninian Smart, in Christianity (also in Judaism and later on in Islam) views on death and immortality have followed a different path from those of the ancient Greek world.<sup>113</sup> Smart goes on to say that ‘traditional theology and in particular doctrines of the soul lean heavily upon philosophical ideas’ which are found in the Greek tradition.<sup>114</sup> In both Greek and Christian ideology divinity and death are closely



connected.<sup>115</sup> According to the Christian theology, the myth of the 'fall' of man is linked to human mortality.<sup>116</sup> The soul is contemplated as a metaphor for permanence that human beings have been seeking for centuries. While one might accept that the concept of immortality is not found originally in Christianity or Judaism,<sup>117</sup> it has later become the view of 'popular' religion.<sup>118</sup>

Although originally, in the Old Testament death was regarded as a natural event and there was no direct reference to the afterlife,<sup>119</sup> later on various beliefs about life after death have increasingly developed through time.<sup>120</sup> The view that men are not naturally immortal gradually began to change. The concept of immortality became closely connected with the judgement of God and the idea of a final resurrection at the end of time.<sup>121</sup> The continued existence of the person was perceived by many as similar to life on earth and not as existence as a disembodied soul. According to St. Paul, there will be a 'resurrection' of the dead on the 'Last Day of Judgement',<sup>122</sup> and saint and sinner will stand before God and be judged.<sup>123</sup> In fact, Christian doctrine has asserted that man is a guilty sinner and deserves the punishment of death.<sup>124</sup> St. Anselm in the 11<sup>th</sup> century firmly attributed human death to human error.<sup>125</sup> Penalties and rewards, as the result of divine judgement, come to be associated with a future state of being. But this doctrine does not preach the immortality of the soul. Accordingly, after death not only the soul but also the body will live on.<sup>126</sup> Put another way, there is no body-soul separation in this belief which is based on the resurrection of Jesus and no other proof is required.<sup>127</sup>

Later on, however, one finds that the Christian attitude towards death takes a different turn, namely the separation of the soul from the mortal body. In the medieval period, for example, the soul was regarded as the 'form' of the body and the two were seen in natural unity.<sup>128</sup> This unity is broken up at the moment of death when the body perishes and the soul continues to exist in one form or another.<sup>129</sup> The 13<sup>th</sup> century theologian, Thomas Aquinas, tries to prove the immortality of the soul in his *Q.D. de Anima*.<sup>130</sup> Pascal also reiterates this Christian position and argues that only 'the Christian view of death can help to overcome the fear of death'.<sup>131</sup>

There is indeed a strong belief, for some, that life after death is an infinitely better existence. This belief expresses a wish to be released from the pain of this life that is tied up with the human condition.<sup>132</sup> In short, many people search for comfort and relief in religion, and man's continued existence in the afterlife is regarded as a gift of God.<sup>133</sup> Temporal life may be considered as one part of human existence and this belief may ease the fear of death and bring comfort to those who hold it.<sup>134</sup> It is clear that the belief in personal immortality is based on an act of faith.<sup>135</sup> Although many believers find comfort concerning death through their faith, not all with such beliefs are reassured.<sup>136</sup> For some, the fear of death can be a negative force in existence and it can be an existential 'nightmare' for those who are stricken by it.

There is a mystical outlook which suggests that one's true 'inner' self may merge with a cosmic or divine whole or overall totality after death.<sup>137</sup> Accordingly, worldly life in the here and now is considered part of a more embracing reality and it is believed to be complemented by some transcendent existence although not necessarily of the person as an embodied being.<sup>138</sup> This form of belief in the afterlife may appear in various forms. We see this first in Anaximander's thought in the 6th century BCE. Death means to return to the universal totality, the primeval One, which is all embracing. Everything arises from this totality, including the human being, and everything returns to it according to the order of time.<sup>139</sup> Later on, the Sufi tradition also adopted a similar approach to death.<sup>140</sup> Accordingly, the meaning of death for the Sufi is returning of the consciousness to its original source which is infinite and eternal, and being One with this totality.<sup>141</sup>

Many mystics claim that death's sequel is neither annihilation nor personal immortality, but is a 'remerger' in an ultimate 'spiritual reality' from which the human personality that lives and dies has temporarily detached itself.<sup>142</sup> This is a partial independence from its source and commensurately it is a partial alienation from it. There is a strong belief in the 'Absolute Being', namely God, which is all-encompassing.<sup>143</sup> The simile of the 'Ocean' or 'immortal sea' is often used when explaining the image of ultimate reality.<sup>144</sup> For the Sufi, all beings including the human being are ephemeral entities. They are described as nothing but just a drop from the 'Ocean' appearing in numerous forms in the observable world. Each entity is not different from the rest of the Ocean, but its temporary

identification is defined by its physical form. It is claimed that our individual life appears out of the great 'Ocean' that pervades the universe and at death merges back into this totality. For the Sufi, death is something to look forward to, because this is the way of becoming part of the divine totality and the ultimate reality.<sup>145</sup>

In sum, the meaning of death for the Sufi is returning of the soul to the universal totality and being One with the Deity. The physical body decays and disintegrates at death but the individual consciousness is absorbed in this ultimate reality and returns to its original source which is infinite and eternal.<sup>146</sup> The highest level of consciousness is the experience of the absorption of one's soul into the divine source.<sup>147</sup> This can be achieved by rising above the distinction of 'I' and 'you' and of subject and object.<sup>148</sup> It is possible for beings to re-appear in the physical world in a different form in the future. According to Sufism, whatever appears is the result of the power of renewal inherent in the boundless totality.

Now let us consider another view on immortality. There is a belief, which may be qualified as a 'compromise' mode, which expounds that death does not entirely annihilate the individual; people 'live on' in various forms in temporal existence.<sup>149</sup> There are a variety of possibilities, so the argument goes, which may enable man to 'live on' in the world. In this mode of thinking, one is not concerned with traditional concepts of immortality but with some other possibilities such as producing children or through works of art, music, poetry, philosophy, and so forth.<sup>150</sup> It is considered to be an attractive viewpoint in that one could 'live on' in the actual world through the effects that are the results of one's activities or indeed through one's offspring.<sup>151</sup> In fact, for Feuerbach the only immortality is biological immortality in one's offspring.<sup>152</sup> This may not be a strong argument but it is a kind of consolation for those who have no faith in an afterlife and who do not want to surrender to total annihilation either. This mode of 'survival' enables one to reconcile oneself to death by leaving one's mark in the world. One should remind oneself, however, that there is no guarantee of 'survival' in this form of reconciliation.<sup>153</sup> Whether one passes on one's genes, or leaves a work of art, or lives in the memory of others, none of these modes of survival can constitute personal immortality. This kind of explanation is just a metaphorical way of saying that the dead people may be remembered

in the memory of those who are left behind.<sup>154</sup> Or an outstanding artist's works may greatly be admired after his death. But this is very different from one's personal immortality since one no longer exists as a person in the world.

In recent years, there has been speculation that other modes of survival are possible. As a result of developments in contemporary medical science, biology and technology, there is a belief which tells us that people may survive death in the future by preserving their physical bodies.<sup>155</sup> In the final analysis, however, scientific and technological developments can do no more than prolonging life for a while. Human beings eventually have to face up to death.

#### **b. Death is the Absolute end of the Human Being**

According to this view, death is the absolute end of a person and there is no transcendent or psychic elements that endure after death, let alone the person as a whole. This view represents the denial of any form of afterlife. In other words, one's death is considered to be empirical but with the further qualification that there is no added dimension to it. The 'unknown' is transformed into the certainty of 'non-existence' beyond death leaving the individual to pursue worldly activities in the here and now. In this part, we shall briefly look at only two perspectives, namely the Epicurean/Lucretian argument and the Heideggerian existential view.

First, the views of Epicurus (300 BCE), and Lucretius (1 CE), exemplify the belief that death is the absolute end of human existence. The Epicurean/Lucretian argument states that death is beyond sensation and not a rational object of fear, and consequently any assumption that death occurs within human experience is regarded simply as inconsistent. This argument is based on the assumption that the dead can 'know' nothing because 'death is equated with the permanent lack of experience.'<sup>156</sup> Both thinkers insist that man should face the fact of death with serenity and he need not be troubled by hope. Epicurus and Lucretius also claim, as a reaction to the dualism of Plato, that the soul perishes with the body at death.

Thus the well-known Epicurean argument<sup>157</sup> puts forward a case for the total acceptance of death which at the same time encourages people not to be afraid of death.<sup>158</sup> Generally speaking, Epicurus' argument gives a rational account for the acceptance of death. In his *Letter to Menoeceus* Epicurus writes:

So death, the most terrifying of ills, is nothing to us, since so long as we exist death is not with us; but when death comes, then we do not exist. It does not then concern either the living or the dead, since for the former it is not, and the latter are no more.<sup>159</sup>

Lucretius also follows a similar line of argument:<sup>160</sup>

Rest assured, therefore, that we have nothing to fear in death. One who no longer is cannot suffer, or differ in any way from one who has never been born, ... Pain and sorrow will never touch you again.<sup>161</sup>

In the above passage, Lucretius makes an additional point by comparing 'non-being' after death and 'non-being' before birth. Generally speaking, one's attitude towards these two periods is quite different. On the whole, one seems to be more affected and concerned with one's future 'non-existence' than the thought of 'nothingness' before one's birth.<sup>162</sup> Given one's natural orientation towards the future, as most of one's everyday activities are directed to the future, it is not surprising that one may feel more concerned about 'non-existence' after death than about pre-natal non-existence. However, because this particular point is not central to this study, we shall not pursue it here any further.

At first glance, the Epicurean/Lucretian argument seems plausible, in that death is not considered as 'evil' as it does not cause suffering for the one who dies. Some philosophers take the view that this argument is strong and worth defending. Rosenbaum, for example, undertakes this task by reconstructing Epicurus' argument and attempts to demonstrate the validity of it.<sup>163</sup> Indeed it is true that from the first person viewpoint death remains impossible to experience. But is it also true that the fact of death has no relevance in one's life as Epicurus claims? One may accept that if one does not exist any longer then death can do no harm to one, though not everyone concurs with this idea.<sup>164</sup> According to Lucretius, death does not concern the living because it is a 'not-yet' event.<sup>165</sup> But is it true to say that death is no concern to us just because we cannot experience it?<sup>166</sup> We *are* concerned with future events that are 'not-yet' present including our own death. And this orientation towards the future is one of the most important

features of the human being. The Epicurean argument seems to neglect this important aspect. Furthermore, it does not deal with the process of dying as there is a clear distinction between death and dying.<sup>167</sup> Not every death is a clear-cut case as the Epicurean argument suggests. It is nevertheless true that if we no longer exist we cannot experience death.<sup>168</sup> Although Epicurus' argument may appeal to a limited number of people it may be argued that it does not bring relief to one's death-*Angst*.<sup>169</sup>

Having looked at the Epicurean/Lucretian argument, let us now move on to the Heideggerian existential approach to death.<sup>170</sup> Strictly speaking, it is questionable whether Heidegger's position regarding the notion of death in *Being and Time* can simply be identified with the view that death is the absolute end and there is nothing beyond death.<sup>171</sup> Although Heidegger acknowledges that death is the end of one's being-in-the-world, he does not assert whether there is or there is not anything beyond one's worldly existence; he maintains silence. Most philosophers interpret Heidegger's silence as an indication of Dasein's existence only in the 'here and now'.<sup>172</sup> Heidegger, of course, might claim that he is concerned only with the ontology of Dasein. That is, he is only interested in 'death' as an end to worldly existence and in the phenomenology of human comportment towards death.<sup>173</sup> For Heidegger, any issues regarding Dasein's beliefs about any form of afterlife are 'ontical matters' which do not concern the ontological structure of Dasein.<sup>174</sup> It makes no sense for Heidegger to talk about 'existence' beyond this world. Expressed differently, he is not interested in the question of which attitude should be adopted. In his view, Dasein understands its self as a mortal being in the world and it has to face up to it.

Heidegger's analysis of the phenomenon of death is firmly grounded in his fundamental ontology. He inquires into the basic problems of Being, human existence and truth.<sup>175</sup> He gives an existential analysis of *Dasein* in terms of its ontological structure. Human existence, for him, is 'the key to interpreting philosophical questions about Being.'<sup>176</sup> According to Heidegger, the ontological structure of Dasein can be established on a purely phenomenological basis without reference to a deity or the concept of immortality. In his approach, Heidegger avoids any form of transcendent explanation of death.<sup>177</sup> For

Heidegger, Dasein's existence is permeated by awareness of death and death is to be faced in the here and now.

Heidegger's analysis of death is not concerned with how people feel when they are about to die, nor with death as a biological event, but with the meaning and the existential-ontological significance of death to Dasein in the light of its 'being-in-the-world'.<sup>178</sup> For Heidegger, understanding the phenomenon of death involves grasping the being of Dasein as a whole. If Dasein's potentiality 'to be' is understood existentially, then it becomes clear that Dasein's being in its totality is 'being-towards-death'. Being-towards-death is Dasein's 'being-in-the-world' and its 'being-towards-the-end'. According to Heidegger, Dasein understands what it means 'to be' through facing death.

Heidegger acknowledges that facing one's own death is radically different from being concerned with the death of others.<sup>179</sup> My own death means the end of my possibilities, the total end of my 'being-in-the-world', not the end of 'world' itself.<sup>180</sup> For Heidegger, the fear of my own death comes from the fear of my extinction as a human being. I may be able to face other people's death but may find it virtually impossible to come to terms with my own death. Heidegger, like Epicurus and Lucretius, holds that Dasein cannot experience its own death.

However, not all existential thinkers concur with the Heideggerian view of death. Sartre, for example, argues that death is a 'contingent fact' which belongs to one's facticity, and that death is as absurd as life. Death cannot be one's possibility, he claims, as it always destroys all other possibilities. Sartre does not deny the reality of death but does not think that it is particularly important.<sup>181</sup> Sartre further disagrees with Heidegger's view that death belongs to the ontological structure of Dasein.<sup>182</sup>

According to Heidegger, then, ontological analysis enables us to have an understanding of our finitude, and the awareness of our finitude makes 'authentic' existence possible. For Heidegger, death is meaningful when one perceives one's existence in the light of Being. Although his existential approach to death is intelligible, it does not seem to satisfy the human need to understand and conquer death and death-*Angst*. For thousands of years

people have striven to transcend the human condition in order to grasp the mystery of death.<sup>183</sup> The need to search for something beyond the worldly existence is a feature of the human being. Heidegger seems to overlook this human need.

### **c. Sceptical, Evasive and Indifferent Attitudes to Death**

Sceptical, evasive and indifferent attitudes often manifest themselves in various forms when dealing with the 'everyday reality of death'. When such attitudes prevail, some might argue that the significance of death is 'ignored' and the issue may be left as an open-ended possibility.<sup>184</sup> With the decline in religious belief, partly due to more critical approach to ideas and the progress of science, evasive and simply indifferent attitude to death became more widespread in the western world.<sup>185</sup> We speak of a sceptical attitude if it indicates suspension of belief regarding the possibilities of an afterlife and seeing death as a merely worldly event for all. Some people remain undecided about the afterlife as long as they live.

In the 20<sup>th</sup>/21<sup>st</sup> century, death is seen from a different perspective. Talking about death does not necessarily involve referring to immortality, i.e. any form of life after death, or to a divine Being any longer. The issue of human death might now be understood not in terms of what comes after life but mostly as an issue to consider in the here and now. This is perhaps one of the reasons why what is beyond death is not questioned as it seems incompatible with modernity. People try to free themselves from certain basic presuppositions or suspend belief regarding the concepts of God and divine eternity. Their interest is focused on what the consequences and implications of death might be in their lives and how death affects the structure of their everyday life.<sup>186</sup>

In the post-modern era we seem to be pathologically averse to death. As Feifel suggests, in the presence of death 'Western culture has tended to run, hide and seek refuge in group norms'.<sup>187</sup> Many Westerners seem to have lost the ability to face the fact of death with serenity. Modern death and the process of dying are mostly taken care of in hospitals nowadays and it has been removed, in most cases, away from the family unit.<sup>188</sup> Thus the whole process has become 'medicalised' and rather impersonal. It has been suggested



that death and dying have been removed from the 'realm of normality' and placed in a 'realm of unreality'.<sup>189</sup>

One way of dealing with the fear of death is the suppression of the issue consciously or unconsciously. A typical manifestation of this suppression is the evasive activities of the individual in order to avoid the subject.<sup>190</sup> On the whole, there seems to be an ambivalent attitude towards death. On the one hand, there is some interest in the subject and it may be discussed as a general topic. On the other hand, there is a sense of detachment from it and it is treated as an external aspect of modern life. In other words, it is not internalised and not regarded as a personal issue. In its indistinct form, death loses its philosophical impact. However, we cannot entirely ignore death as it often occurs around us and thus we inevitably experience the death of the other. This encounter with the death of the other can be experienced at different levels.<sup>191</sup> In *The Outsider*, Camus identifies and expresses a cool and detached reaction to death where the main character, *Meursault*, behaves as a totally detached observer without any kind of emotion in the event of his mother's death.<sup>192</sup> *Meursault's* indifferent attitude is a clear exemplification of one's distance and disconnection from the dead.

Finally, some people may adopt an attitude of denying their own death.<sup>193</sup> Although this attitude may be thought to be self-deceptive, it seems to help people to have the will to get on with and 'prolong' their lives. This is particularly noticeable in the case of the people who have terminal illnesses.<sup>194</sup>

Having surveyed some salient points of the general notion of death, it becomes clear that there is no final answer to, or one ultimate perspective on, death. However, the discussion in this part will provide a helpful background material and relevant connections with later chapters in this thesis.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Heidegger's views will be brought in only to provide a useful comparison to Jaspers' views on the subject and to represent a particular human attitude towards death. There will not be an analysis of Heidegger's notion of death in the thesis.

<sup>2</sup> See 'Death' in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Edwards, 1967, p.307. As I mentioned in the Introduction, both Cicero (106-43 BCE) and Schopenhauer (1788-1860) claimed that 'there would be no philosophy if there were no death'. *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Vol.2, p.358 (also cited in *Hidden Futures*, 1994, p.197). See also Choron, 1963, pp.163,267

<sup>3</sup> Plato states that '...the soul has been a true disciple of philosophy; and therefore has in fact been always engaged in the practice of dying. For is not philosophy the study of death?' (*Phaedo*, p.105) In *Phaedo*, Plato further suggests that a true philosopher should be spending his whole life contemplating death. (Ibid. p.82) In his *Essays*, 1958, Montaigne too argues that 'to philosophize is to learn to die', p.56 (also cited in Fischer, 1993, p.43), as does Jaspers. *WW*, pp.125-126

<sup>4</sup> This may be due to a number of reasons. For example, some philosophers might claim that metaphysical inquiry into death is highly speculative and even 'meaningless' due to the lack of sufficient knowledge about it. Since one cannot have direct experience of death, it might be argued that death remains as an epistemologically inaccessible field of knowledge. It might be further argued that various aspects of death belong to different disciplines, e.g. the nature of death belongs to biology and the fear of death belongs to psychology and psychopathology, not philosophy.

<sup>5</sup> Historically, death has been a productive focus of meditation but its definition and perspectives on it have changed over time.

<sup>6</sup> According to Brown, 'the ordinary concept of death is indeterminate'. (Brown, 1987, p.155) Rilke expresses this more poetically: 'death is the side of life which is turned away from us and unilluminated. The shape of life reaches through both domains'. Rilke, 1935, p.332

<sup>7</sup> This statement is taken from the 'Confucian Analects' (*Analects* 11/12) quoted in *Death and Philosophy*, 1998, p.60. Choron, however, regards this statement as an 'evasion' of the subject of death. (Choron, 1963, p.271) See also *GPh*, Vol.1, 1962, p.55, and *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, Band 10, 1997, p.1228

<sup>8</sup> Kalish, 1980, p.91

<sup>9</sup> Feinberg, 1993, p.172

<sup>10</sup> Fischer, 1993, p.6. See also *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, Band 10, 1997, p.1247

<sup>11</sup> *Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology*, Vol 1, 1940, p.256. A detailed account of the definition and criteria of death can also be found in Walton's *On Defining Death*, 1979, pp.5-6, 15-45

<sup>12</sup> For further details of death as 'permanent cessation of life' see Feldman's article 'Death' in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, pp.818-819

<sup>13</sup> Van Till argues that the criterion for 'declaration of death must be decided ...on the objective basis of whether or not a person has certain faculties.' 1975, p.136, see also Walton, 1979, p.68

<sup>14</sup> See Mant's *The Medical Definition of Death*, 1968, p.19

<sup>15</sup> Walton, 1979, pp.19, 69. In fact, medical and legal authorities have been seeking to establish generally accepted criteria which have scientific validity for the event of death. Those authorities examine the fact of biological death from different perspectives in order to reach an overall agreement. See Veith, et al, 1977, pp. 1651-55, cited in *Death and Dying – A Bibliographical Survey*, 1991, p.401. See also Lamb, 1985, pp.10-15

<sup>16</sup> Malpas and Solomon, 1998, p.1, and Lamb, 1985, pp.10-15

<sup>17</sup> Southard, 1991, p.402, and Lamb, 1985, pp.20-22

<sup>18</sup> Lodge, 1916, p.296ff. See also Frazer, 1913, p.468

<sup>19</sup> Walton, 1979, pp. 20-21. The criteria of death are also analysed by Feldman in his article 'Death' cited in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, pp.817-822. See also Fischer, 1993, pp.4-8

<sup>20</sup> 'Brain-death' seems to be an accepted technical definition of death according to Malpas and Solomon. They suggest that in the context of bioethics 'technical definitions of death (for example, 'brain-death') have become important in the negotiation of several legal and ethical issues'. Malpas and Solomon, 1998, p.1, and *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, 1995, p.818

<sup>21</sup> This is supposing that we mean by 'brain death' not the whole of the brain ceases to function but merely those areas which are responsible for consciousness and the functioning of most of the brain activities.

<sup>22</sup> Alistair Brown gives an example in order to illustrate the difficulty regarding life/death boundary. In this context, Brown first distinguishes between Jones the person, a being who has self-awareness, and Jones the patient who lies on the hospital bed. Let us suppose that Jones first has Alzheimer's disease. Then he develops a serious form of dementia which is followed by brain-death. Finally, heart-lung death occurs. According to Brown, Jones the person 'went partly out of existence at the first stage, and wholly so at the second', whereas Jones the patient continues his existence even after his brain-death. It is difficult to say at what stage Jones actually died. Brown, 1987, pp.155-164. See also Lamb, 1985, p.7

<sup>23</sup> This difficulty regarding the determinacy of the point of death can be illustrated by a tragic real life case. In a newspaper article (*Daily Mail*, November 26, 1999) it was reported that a young woman who had had a car accident at the age of 19 sank into a deep coma and remained in a vegetative state for 34 years. Finally in 1999 she died as a result of 'pneumonia' and 'brain degeneration'. Some may argue that she died 34 years ago at the time of her accident since she had no consciousness whatsoever. But she continued to exist bodily therefore she could not be defined as being dead either. It seems that the criterion of death remains an open question.

<sup>24</sup> Most living organisms must and do die but is it true that this applies to all living organisms? According to Feldman, the micro organism amoeba, for example, does not seem to experience perishing at all. It perpetuates itself not by reproduction but by cell division. Strictly speaking, then, amoeba is not subject to death as man is and can be described as somewhat an 'immortal living organism'. (Feldman, '89-'90, p.375) Weisemann also argues on the same lines and suggests that 'unicellular plants and animals do not die.' in the *Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology*, 1940, Vol.1, p.256

<sup>25</sup> Parkes, 1998, p.87. This point is also taken up by Van Till who thinks that the 'physiological factor of critical importance is the functioning of synapses and neurons in the brain'. Van Till-Daulnis de Bourouill, 1975, p.136, cited in Walton's *On Defining Death*, 1979, p.69. See also Malpas and Solomon, 1998, p.87

<sup>26</sup> *Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology*, Vol.1, 1940, p.256

<sup>27</sup> Smart, 1968, p.138

<sup>28</sup> Indeed, while biological death is universal, one's attitudes towards death and beliefs related to death are subject to change. Various attitudes toward death influence criteria of death. See Bremer, van den Hout, and Peters, 1994, p. 94

<sup>29</sup> In the *Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology* the definition of death is offered in terms of the cessation of certain organs, e.g. heart-lung or brain. But this is not a sufficient criterion for the condition of being dead. It seems implausible to describe an individual's death on the basis of the dysfunction of a specific organ, as one would not define a human being in terms of an organ or organs. It can be argued that the death of a part of the body can imply one's 'incomplete death'. The notion of one's 'partial death' is absurd and would be unacceptable to most of us.

<sup>30</sup> Some philosophers, for example existential philosophers, adopt a different perspective and investigate death in terms of one's relationship to one's own death.

<sup>31</sup> Lamb, 1985, pp.83-93. The discussion of the philosophical problems of *Mind and Body* and *Personal Identity* are beyond the scope of this thesis therefore will be left out.

<sup>32</sup> According to the doctrine of St. Paul, there is no escape from God's judgement. He says that 'there will be a resurrection of the dead on the Last Day of Judgement, and saint and sinner will stand before the son of God and be judged.' Walton, 1979, p.75

<sup>33</sup> For further details see Walton, 1979, p.75ff

<sup>34</sup> This is exemplified in Plato's metaphysics. According to this view, during one's life the soul is imprisoned in the body. After death, the soul, the 'real self', is free to exist independently in the realm of immortal spirit. See 'Immortality' in the *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Flew, 1967, pp.139-141. See also *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, Band 10, 1997, p.1229

<sup>35</sup> Kalish, 1980, p.iii

<sup>36</sup> Fingarette, 1996, p.7

<sup>37</sup> Walton, 1979, p.49. Thomas Mann too discusses our lack of knowledge about death in *The Magic Mountain*: 'But about death – no one who came back from it could tell you anything, ... We come out of the dark and go into the dark again, and in between lie the experiences of our life. But ... birth and death, we do not experience' cited in *The Oxford Book of Death*, Enright, 1983, p.71

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<sup>38</sup> Olson, 1967, p.307

<sup>39</sup> As Voltaire said 'the human race is the only one that knows it must die.' *Dictionnaire Philosophique*, Vol.14, p.63, quoted by Landsberg, 1966, p.193. This statement also appears in *The Oxford Book of Death*, 1983, p.ix. Nevertheless, it is sometimes argued that some 'higher' mammals too have some such understanding regarding death-awareness, e.g. elephants. See Mason, 1995, cited by Malpas and Solomon, 1998, p.171

<sup>40</sup> Sandars, 1960. See also *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, Band 10, 1997, p.1227

<sup>41</sup> Heidegger, 1995, pp.285-6

<sup>42</sup> In his discussion regarding the certainty of death Landsberg states that 'it is only through the experience of the death of another that we learn the qualitative nature of absence and separation. It sweeps our soul into an unknown world, into a new dimension. We discover that our life is a bridge between two worlds.' (Landsberg, 1966, p.203) Choron also states that it is through the 'observation of the death of the other' that we arrive at the conclusion that death is certain. Choron, 1963, p.16

<sup>43</sup> For further details of this Heideggerian view see Heidegger, 1995, pp.236, 279,285-6

<sup>44</sup> Hans Saner in one of his articles, *Das Philosophische Problem des Todes* (1975) exemplifies this certain uncertainty. He discusses various interpretations and the imagery of the possibility of one's death in terms of various models. He illustrates, as does Jaspers, the certainty of death as a 'limiting situation' in existence.

<sup>45</sup> The literary side of existentialism offers the poetry of Rilke, particularly his *Duino Elegies*, which elegantly articulates man's confrontation with his impending death. (Rilke, 10<sup>th</sup> Elegy,1975) It should also be noted that sometimes the concept of death can be romanticised due to its melancholic characteristic. For example, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century the concept of death was glorified by the 'Romantics' who believed that death was the beginning of eternal life and 'life existed for the sake of death.' (Choron, 1963, pp.156-9) Death was conceived as something peaceful, beautiful and mysterious which led to the romantic love of death. Keats, for instance, was 'half in love with death' as he himself stated in his poems. See *Ode to a Nightingale*, 1942, p.40

<sup>46</sup> A medieval allegorical concept of 'Dance Macabre', also called the 'Dance of Death', depicted the power of death in the poetry, music and visual arts of western Europe mainly in the late Middleages (13<sup>th</sup> - 15<sup>th</sup> century). See Choron, 1963, p.92 and Kalish, 1980, p.66. It is a literary and pictorial representation of a procession or dance of both living and dead figures. According to Huizinga, death and the dead people are symbolized in the medieval 'Dance of Death'. (Huizinga, 'Le declin du moyen age, Chap. II, La vision de la Mort', Paris, 1932), cited in *The Experience of Death*, Landsberg, 1966, p.197. Accordingly, the living arranged in order of their rank in society, from Pope and Emperor to child, and the dead leading them to the grave. 14<sup>th</sup> century poems combined the essential ideas of the inevitability and the impartiality of death. The concept of 'Dance of Death' was fully developed in a series of paintings in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. This was considered as a stern reminder of the imminence of death and a summons to repentance. In music, the dance of death was performed frequently in compositions associated with death. The music of one German 'Totentanz' has survived from the early 16<sup>th</sup> century. (Aries, 1974, pp.39,57) This aspect of death is discussed in detail by Bohl in *Vom Schönen Tod*, 2000

<sup>47</sup> This was clearly demonstrated at a major symposium, *The Art of Dying (ars moriendi)*, at King's College London between October 2002-July 2003. The symposium covered a variety of topics on death and how it manifested itself throughout history. The topics included the nature of death, changing attitudes, music and death in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, death and dying in antiquity and the middle ages, and various other discussions on it including drama. This thought provoking symposium highlighted the significance of death as part of human existence.

<sup>48</sup> Dostoyevski, 1955, p.46

<sup>49</sup> Scheler, 'Tod und Fortleben', Band 1, 1957, p.12 (This section was translated for me by Dr. A. Grieder). Similarly, Levinas argues that one's death is 'not deduced from the death of others by analogy.' In his view, one's 'knowledge' of death is 'instinctive'. Levinas, 1979, p.233

<sup>50</sup> See *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, Band 10, 1997, p.1235

<sup>51</sup> Choron, 1963, p.16

<sup>52</sup> Landsberg, 1966, p.195

- <sup>53</sup> Likewise, Alden puts emphasis on this point and suggests that 'in the cycle of every living organism there is a descending as well as an ascending movement, age as well as youth.' Alden, 1895, p.23
- <sup>54</sup> Choron, 1963, p.16. See also Hanfling, *The Quest for Meaning*, 1987, pp.64-65
- <sup>55</sup> For further details see Landsberg, 1966, p.195
- <sup>56</sup> Landsberg then concludes that death is 'in no sense linked with the process of growing old'. See Landsberg, 1966, pp.195-6
- <sup>57</sup> This is cited in Choron's *Death and Western Thought*, 1963, p.16
- <sup>58</sup> According to Landsberg, the content of human experience, for Scheler, is not 'the mere co-existence of isolated data, but also essential structures and relationships'. Landsberg, 1966, p.195
- <sup>59</sup> Choron, 1963, p.17
- <sup>60</sup> Scheler holds the view that survival after death is plausible. For Scheler, although 'immortality cannot be proved', the evidence for survival can be 'derived from an inner experience' (*Erleben*). Choron, 1963, pp.212-3. See 'Scheler' in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, pp.500-502, and see also Scheler's *On the Eternal in Man*, 1960
- <sup>61</sup> Choron, 1963, p.17
- <sup>62</sup> Landsberg, 1966, p.195
- <sup>63</sup> Choron, 1963, p.17
- <sup>64</sup> This particular aspect of human existence points to the antinomical structure of existence which will be addressed in the next chapter. In one of his essays, A. Koestler discusses certain contradictions one encounters in life. He calls them 'pathogenic factors' in man's existence. One of these factors he considers is 'man's awareness of his mortality, the discovery of death'. He says that 'one should rather say: its discovery by the intellect, and its rejection by instinct and emotion.' He also says that 'emotion rebels against the idea of personal non-existence. This simultaneous acceptance and refusal of death reflects perhaps the deepest split in man's split mind.' Koestler, 1974, p.23
- <sup>65</sup> See Fingarette, 1996, p.7. Freud also takes the view that 'in the unconscious everyone is convinced of our immortality.' Freud, 1925, pp.288-317
- <sup>66</sup> Tolstoy, 1934, pp. 44-45
- <sup>67</sup> Tolstoy accentuates the significance of finitude and man's transitory nature in another book by asking the question: *How Much Land Does a Man Need?* His poignant answer is 'six feet from head to heel' to be buried in, no more no less. Tolstoy, 1993, p.110
- <sup>68</sup> Tolstoy, 1934, pp. 44-45. This passage is also quoted in Phillips' *Death and Immortality*, 1970, p.51
- <sup>69</sup> See Southard, 1991, p.175
- <sup>70</sup> In his contemplation of death, Unamuno expresses strong passion for life here and the afterlife. He finds it abhorrent to think that he will die within the span of a 'short' life-time. He spells out his desire for life: 'I do not want to die – no; I neither want to die nor do I want to want to die; I want to live for ever and ever and ever.' Unamuno, 1931, pp. xxix, 45
- <sup>71</sup> Graham Parkes considers death 'as an integral part of life, an ever-present aspect that is normally kept hidden.' Parkes, 1998, p.83
- <sup>72</sup> Sir John Eccles, a distinguished brain specialist, proclaims that he 'cannot believe that the gift of conscious experience has no further future, no possibility of another existence under some other intangible conditions. At least, I [Eccles] would maintain that this possibility of a future existence cannot be denied on scientific grounds.' Eccles, 1963, pp.42-3
- <sup>73</sup> In different societies the possibility of continued existence has been articulated in various forms through their myths. In ancient Egypt, for instance, the significance of preparing for the life after death was at its height. Evidence such as food, drink and some other personal objects found at the burial site of the dead indicates their strong belief in the afterlife. The dead was well provided for in case they needed such objects in their future existence. For further details see Southard, 1991, pp.14,57
- <sup>74</sup> Rudolph Steiner calls this transition point 'the gate of death' in his lectures. He claims that 'when a man passes through the gate of death he comes into a spiritual world that is not, so to speak, more devoid of happenings and beings than our physical world, but infinitely richer.' *Lectures*, Vol.5, Lecture 3, 1955, p.35. Similar statements can be found in Vol.4, Lecture 7, pp.103, 110-113
- <sup>75</sup> Taylor, 1978, p.3

<sup>76</sup> For example from Egyptian and Babylonian sources. For details see Southard, p.106, and Choron, 1963, pp.19-30. Ancient sources regarding death is also discussed in detail by Bailey in *Biblical Perspectives on Death*, 1979

<sup>77</sup> Landsberg, 1966, p.196, Southard, 1991, p.60, see also Malinowski, 1954

<sup>78</sup> Landsberg, 1966, p.196 and Choron, 1963, pp.17. See also Alden, 1895, pp.29,38

<sup>79</sup> Olson, 1967, p.307

<sup>80</sup> Hinton, 1967, pp.34-36

<sup>81</sup> Fingarette, 1996, p.21

<sup>82</sup> Kastenbaum, 1976, p.61. According to Malpas and Solomon, the Neanderthals 'recognized the significance of death and practised not only burial but also ceremonies and mourning.' p.166. See also Kalish, 1980, p.iv

<sup>83</sup> According to Arthur Koestler one's attitudes are shaped by the social environment one happens to be in. He says that 'historically speaking, for the vast majority of mankind, the belief-system which they accepted, for which they were prepared to live or die, was not of their own choice, but imposed upon them by the hazards of the social environment, just as their tribal or ethnic identity was determined by the hazards of birth'. *Essays*, 1974, p.17

<sup>84</sup> Choron, 1963, p. 21, see also Alden, 1895, p.56, and Hinton, 1967, p.25

<sup>85</sup> In the earliest thought of man the dead were considered mightier than the living and it is said that there is an 'intermingling of the memory of the dead'. Southard, 1991, p.60

<sup>86</sup> Dastur, 1996, pp.8-9

<sup>87</sup> Choron, 1963, p.19

<sup>88</sup> Sandars, 1960, p. 27

<sup>89</sup> For details see Choron's *Death and Western Thought*, 1963, pp. 18-19

<sup>90</sup> For further details see Bremer, van den Hout, and Peters, 1994, pp. 8,25,78

<sup>91</sup> *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, 1987, p.253

<sup>92</sup> Hinton, *Dying*, 1967, p.35. For more details see also Wilson, 1956, p.78. A study of *The Book of the Dead* indicates that according to Pyramid Texts there is strong belief in life beyond death. See Southard, 1991, p.14. See also Feifel, 1977, p.285ff

<sup>93</sup> Ironically, however, it was the living, rather than the dead, who benefited from the contents of graves and tombs. Tomb robbers became very skillful as they relieved the wealthy dead from their worldly possessions.

<sup>94</sup> Choron, 1963, pp.21-22

<sup>95</sup> Milde describes *The Book of the Dead* as a 'traveller's guide for the hereafter, aiming at the deceased's safe arrival in a paradise'. Milde, 1994, p.25. But around the year 1200 BCE we suddenly find an entirely different attitude to death and a scepticism toward the hereafter. It is conceivable that death might have been viewed then as total destruction. Choron, 1963, p.22

<sup>96</sup> See Southard, 1991, p.14. For a detailed scholarly study of Egyptian views of death and religion see A.J. Spencer's *Death in Ancient Egypt*, 1982

<sup>97</sup> The Greeks in various poems spoke with very different voices about the afterlife, e.g. 'black nothingness' and 'radiant immortality' being the two extremes, cited in *Hidden Futures*, Bremer, van den Hout, and Peters, 1994, p.122. See also Alden, 1895, p.39. According to Alden, we know only 'the Hades of later mythology, peopled by shades, weak wanderers shivering between two worlds, being neither wholly alive nor wholly dead but held in an empty dream'. Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> The Greek poet Sophocles, for example, has quite a pessimistic view of death. He deals with the mortality of the human being and the helplessness of certain situations in his *Antigone* and *Oedipus*. In the early period human beings were so intimately blended with the divine that the distinction between them was blurred. This distinction was lost even in the death of the mortal human beings. Later on the dead and the divine became remote. Sophocles contrasts the mortal man with the realm of the immortal gods, and the general view is that it would be better for a human being to be dead than to be alive. Despite this pessimism, however, evidence suggests that there was enjoyment of life among the Greeks in the 5th and 6th century BCE. See Alden, 1895, pp.38,56

<sup>99</sup> Bremer, van den Hout, and Peters, 1994, p. 101. The *Iliad* of Homer, for example, represents man's concern with death. In many passages throughout this work either the poet himself or his characters reflect upon death. Ibid. p.109

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Plato, *Phaedo*, 1972, p.58, and see Choron, 1963, p.31

<sup>102</sup> Alden, 1895, p.39, and Choron, 1963, p.31

<sup>103</sup> See Choron, 1963, p.33, and Bremer, van den Hout, and Peters, 1994, p.102

<sup>104</sup> Taylor takes up this issue in connection with Plato's theory of the immortality of the soul in his *Introductory Readings in Metaphysics* and provides a helpful discussion. Taylor, 1978, pp.21-22, 244

<sup>105</sup> Choron, 1963, p.33 and Flew, 1967, pp.139-142

<sup>106</sup> Taylor, 1978, p.21

<sup>107</sup> Plato, *Phaedo*, 1972, p.44

<sup>108</sup> For a detailed discussion see Walton, 1979, p.74

<sup>109</sup> Clearly not everyone is reassured about this. Eugene Ionesco (1912-1994), French playwright, declares in his *Fragments of a Journal*, 1968, that Socrates has not 'managed to convince' him 'that the soul is immortal and that he is going to live in a better world.' For details see Fingarette, 1996, p.128

<sup>110</sup> Socrates thinks of his real self as something distinct from his body. Descartes also shared this view. For Descartes his essence

consists solely in the fact that I am a thinking thing. It is true that I may have (or to anticipate, that I certainly have) a body that is very closely joined me. But nevertheless, on the one hand I have a clear and distinct idea of myself, in so far as I am simply thinking, non-extended thing; and on the other hand I have a distinct idea of body, in so far as this is simply an extended, non-thinking thing. And accordingly, it is certain that I am really distinct from my body and can exist without it. (Descartes, Meditation VI)

<sup>111</sup> Plato, *Phaedo*, 1972, p.16

<sup>112</sup> Choron claims that the problem of the nature of death is 'traditionally in the province of religion.' Choron, 1963, pp.81-86

<sup>113</sup> Smart, 1968, p.132. See also *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, 1987, Vol.4, pp. 251-52, and Hinton, 1967, p.37ff

<sup>114</sup> Smart, 1968, p.133

<sup>115</sup> See *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, Band 10, 1997, pp.1230-31

<sup>116</sup> *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, 1987, Vol.4, p.257

<sup>117</sup> Smart suggests that there may be grounds for saying that 'the idea of an immortal soul is not characteristic of biblical thinking'. (Smart, 1968, p.138) Choron also concurs with this view, Choron, 1963, p.81. See also Hinton, 1967, p. 37

<sup>118</sup> Bremer, van den Hout, and Peters, 1994, p.7

<sup>119</sup> According to Choron, death occupied an important place in the thoughts of the ancient Hebrews but there was no room for belief in immortality in the Old Testament. The dominant view was that there was no escape from death and there was nothing beyond death. Accordingly, man's mortality came to being through the fault of man. But even before the Christian era, the belief in immortality of the soul and the belief in the resurrection of the dead after death became a widespread doctrine of the Pharisees. Even transmigration found its way into Judaism as a popular belief but Jewish thinkers often attacked this idea. (Choron, 1963, pp.81-82) Nico van Uchelen also claims that there is no reference to immortality in the sense of continued existence after death in the Old Testament. See van Uchelen, 1994, pp.77-89, and Southard, 1991, p.119

<sup>120</sup> Bremer, van den Hout, and Peters, 1994, pp.77-89. See also Southard, 1991, p.119

<sup>121</sup> All the references cited here regarding the Christian view of the afterlife are based on *The New Jerusalem Bible*, Darton, Longman and Todd, 1985, and Hinton, 1967, p.37

<sup>122</sup> There are clear references to the resurrection of people in St. John- Chapter 21, St. Luke-Chapter 24-Verse 34 and 46, St. Paul-Chapter 4 (...from Lord's speech at the signal, ...Lord will wake people up who believe in Jesus), Matthew-Chapter 22-Verse 23, *The New Jerusalem Bible*, 1985. St. Paul's views are also discussed in Walton's *On Defining Death*, 1979, pp.75-76. See also *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, Band 10, 1997, Band 10, p.1231

<sup>123</sup> According to Alden, St. Paul's 'chief theme was the resurrection'. (Alden, 1895, pp.276-7) Alden suggests that St. Paul's faith was fixed upon the 'invisible and eternal' and the visible universe for him was unstable. (Toynbee, 1968, p.129) Toynbee, in his discussion of the judgement by God, refers to some

Roman Catholic monks and their strong belief in immortality. He states that they talk about death and accept it tranquilly but this does not indicate any arrogance or insensitivity on their part towards the subject. They regard the grief inflicted by death as something temporary in the world and therefore endurable. The important issue for them is the judgement by God after death and their destiny, which depends upon their moral conduct in this world.

<sup>124</sup> Hinton, 1967, p.39. The view that death is punishment for sin became dominant in the Christian world through St. Augustine in the 5<sup>th</sup> century. Aquinas claims that there will be an individual judgement. (Aquinas, 1957) But this view has changed over many centuries. Karl Barth, for example, argues that 'physical death is a fact of our finite existence, and is not a punishment of sin as the New Testament suggests.' (Barth, 1960), cited in *Death and Dying – A Bibliographical Survey*, Southard, 1991, p.113. See also *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, Band 10, 1997, p.1231

<sup>125</sup> St. Anselm, 'Cur Deus Homo' cited in *Approaches to Ethics*, 1962, pp.142-144. See also Hinton, 1967, p.39

<sup>126</sup> It is claimed in this doctrine that rebirth cannot be attained.

<sup>127</sup> According to Noel Moore, in traditional Catholic theology, 'the belief in personal survival is frequently said to be grounded both on purported historical fact and revealed truth. ...What traditional Catholicism promises is that there will be a resurrection, that it will be for all men, and that all men will arise in the same bodies they now have.' (Moore, 1981, p.79) Moore's principal source of this statement is H.M. McElwain's 'Resurrection of the Dead' in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1967, Vol. XII, pp.419-427. See also Choron, 1963, pp.84-86

<sup>128</sup> According to the popularly-held religious view of death, a person's death is not seen as the end and the immortality of the soul is commonly accepted. This view is based purely on an act of faith. Choron, 1963, pp.116-7, 129

<sup>129</sup> Expressed differently, 'Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.' (Ecclesiastes, 12) cited in *The Oxford Book of Death*, 1983, p.44

<sup>130</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, a.14 and Ia, 75, 2, 6, see also McCabe, 1969, p.297

<sup>131</sup> This is cited in *Death and Western Thought*, Choron, 1963, pp.116-7

<sup>132</sup> The profound sense of dissatisfaction with life and a strong belief in the eternal existence of the soul are strongly defended by Thomas Amory in his *Sermon*:

...as God shall call them up to a better state, and prepare them for a joyful meeting in that world, where sorrow and death will be known no more; where the spirits of the just are made perfect, and the saints are like the angels, and where the patience, resignation, and fidelity of a few days will be rewarded with an immortality of blessedness, perfect and divine. (Amory, 1754, p.vi)

<sup>133</sup> Taylor, 1978, p.3

<sup>134</sup> Fingarette, 1996, pp.84-85 and Hinton, 1967, p.38. I do not doubt the appeal of such beliefs. Nevertheless, I want to suggest that belief in an afterlife, in the absence of evidence, might well be considered a form of the denial of death. Sometimes 'death as sleep' is used as a metaphor for death. The Greeks maintained the notion that sleep (Morpheus) and death (Thanatos) were brothers. (*The Encyclopedia of Religion*, 1987, Vol.4, p. 255) In Plato's *Apology* (40d), for example, death is compared to a dreamless sleep. (See also Harrison, 2000, p.210) As Fingarette suggests, however, this idea is self-deceptive. (Fingarette, 1996, p.18) Indeed, one wakes up after sleep, but there is no awakening from death. Hanfling too thinks that it is inappropriate to compare death with sleep. In his view 'an obvious difference is that whereas death is the end of life, sleep is merely an interruption of it.' Hanfling, *The Quest for Meaning*, 1987, p.68

<sup>135</sup> Ibid. See also Lodge, 1916, p.296ff, and Hinton, 1967, p.38

<sup>136</sup> Choron gives Hume's view of death as an example. He points out that for Hume there is no such thing as 'the self' and thus there cannot be immortality for man. In Hume's view, the term 'I' is nothing but a 'bundle of perceptions' and he does not expect them to survive. Choron, 1963, p.137

<sup>137</sup> This idea of death as a 'dissolution' of life goes back to Marcus Aurelius (121-180CE) who was a Roman Emperor and a 'philosophically reflective writer'. The following is quoted from Aurelius' *Meditations* by Fingarette: 'Do not disdain death, but be content to accept it, since it too is one of the processes which nature ordains. For dissolution of life is part of nature, just as it is part of nature to be



young and to be old.' (Fingarette, 1996, pp.159-162) Aurelius is also discussed in a similar light in Choron's *Death and Western Thought*, 1963, pp.73-75

<sup>138</sup> As Marcus Aurelius claims 'things cease to be, but do not perish', as he thinks that death is the dissolution of the living organism. This is quoted in Landsberg's *The Experience of Death*, 1966, p.217. See also Choron, 1963, p.73ff

<sup>139</sup> Choron, 1963, p.34. A similar view has been suggested by M.W.A. in *The Threshold-Reflections on Death*, 1923, p.267. Accordingly, there is 'nothing that dies except the appearance of matter. Only appearances perish. Matter is energy, and energy is undying.' Ibid.

<sup>140</sup> Sufism developed by the Muslims from the 7th century onwards. This doctrine emphasises 'Oneness' of everything, the sense of union with the One, and the sense of one's own nothingness as an individual. A clear account of Sufism can be found in Qadir's *The History of Philosophy in Islam*, 1988, pp.89-94, and de Boer's *The History of Philosophy in Islam*, 1967, pp.62-63

<sup>141</sup> The Sufi's version of this belief will be discussed in Chapter Three.

<sup>142</sup> See *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, Band 10, 1997, p.1232

<sup>143</sup> The idea that everything is from the same origin was expressed as *Enel-Hakk* (I am God) by Mansoor and Nesimi, both 13th century Ottoman/Turkish mystics. They were entirely misunderstood; one was skinned alive and the other burnt and beheaded by the authorities.

<sup>144</sup> 'You are not a single You,

good Friend, you are a Sky and an Ocean'

(Rumi, 1988, p.49. Rumi is a well-known 13th century Ottoman/Turkish mystic who contributed much to Sufism)

<sup>145</sup> Qadir, 1988, pp.92-93. Although Spinoza is not a mystic, his views on death bear some similarities to the Sufi's way of thinking. For Spinoza death destroys our earth-bound body but the rational self, the mind, which he thinks it is our true being, endures and becomes one with God. For him, immortality and eternity do not imply living on forever and ever after death but transcending time and becoming one with the infinite whole of reality, i.e. God. In his *Ethics* he writes 'The human mind cannot be absolutely destroyed with the body, but something of it remains which is eternal.' Spinoza, *Ethics*, Part 5, Prop.XXIII, 1974, p.268. See also *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, Band 10, 1997, p.130

<sup>146</sup> This mystical image of dissolving into 'true Being' can also be found in the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*. According to Ted Harrison, the book suggests using the 'imagination to dissolve into realms of pure light...' and 'Let go gently, gently without the least force. ... it is without birth, without death. Do not pull back in fear from the immensity of your true being', as quoted in Harrison's *Beyond Dying-The Mystery of Eternity*, 2000, p.154

<sup>147</sup> Qadir, 1988, pp.89,91

<sup>148</sup> Ibid. pp.92,93. When the Sufi reaches the state of union with the Absolute Being, this can be manifested in a state of ecstatic trance.

<sup>149</sup> Feifel discusses this symbolic form of 'immortality' in his *New Meanings of Death*, 1977, p.278

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

<sup>151</sup> Hinton, 1967, p.44. Hinton claims that the elderly get comfort when they see themselves as links in a 'potentially immortal chain' through passing on their genetic endowment. See also Choron, 1963, p.55

<sup>152</sup> This view is clearly expressed in Feuerbach's *Thoughts on Death and Immortality*, 1980, pp.140-41 (also cited in Choron's *Death and Western Thought*, 1963, p.186, taken from Feuerbach's *Sämtliche Werke*, Vol.III, 1847-1866, pp. 15,17). Feuerbach in his later works adds that the 'only immortality open to us is a full, active and creative life'. See also Southard, 1991, p.101

<sup>153</sup> First, one's work may never be recognized or accepted in society during one's lifetime and/or after one's death. Even if one's works of art are well known master pieces they may be destroyed by fire, earthquakes, or wars. Or what might seem all important and immortal at a particular time may lose its importance altogether and disappear some time later. A good example to illustrate this point is the story of *Ozymandias* which is depicted in Shelley's well-known sonnet:

My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:

Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!

Ozymandias was once proud of a huge monumental building which he had it built to demonstrate his power. He thought that this work of art would immortalize his name and glory and it would be eternal. Sadly, however, only a few fragments of this monument remain according to Hanfling. It is interesting that

Shelley's sonnet about Ozymandias is still intact, more informative and longer lasting than Ozymandias' monument itself. (Hanfling, 1987, p.23. See also *Ozymandias: Poems*, 1973) Secondly, let us reflect on the view that man survives death in so far as he continues in his offspring. According to this view, the human being survives itself through its descendants by means of self-preservation and reproduction. People find it comforting when they have perpetuated their genetic make up and thus get a sense of immortality in the biological sense. (Hinton, 1967, p.44) But not everybody has an offspring. It is also possible that one might lose one's child as a result of an accident or due to some illness. This would destroy one's hope of living on through one's offspring. Even if the chain of reproduction continues, with each new generation one is removed a step further away from the original 'I' and one is remembered less and less.

<sup>154</sup> See Sanders, *Death and Dying*, 1990, pp. 14,24. In *The Dominion of the Dead*, Harrison refers to the 'contract between the living and the dead that has traditionally been one of the mutual indebtedness'. For Harrison, the dead 'depend upon the living to preserve their authority, heed their concerns, and keep them going in their afterlives'. In return, he says, 'they help us to know ourselves, give form to our lives, organize our social relations, and restrain our destructive impulses. They do this through whatever images of them survive in the minds and expectations of the living'. *New York Review of Books*, 2004, p.67 (Harrison's book is reviewed by Merwin)

<sup>155</sup> Some people actually pay a lot of money to have their bodies, or parts of their bodies, preserved in the hope that one day their bodies may be brought back to life with the fast development in the field of cryonics. (Harrison, 2000, p. 32) At present, it sounds like a naively optimistic belief, but one has to keep an open mind about such futuristic developments however unlikely they may sound. For example, in the field of *Cryobiology*, living organisms can be preserved by suspended animation or freezing. However, the process of reviving human cells without any damage is at the moment far from being actualised. *Cloning and genetic engineering* also indicate some possibilities for survival of human beings. This mode of creating 'copied' organisms from an original one is a well established technique, and it has been successfully applied to some animals, e.g. Dolly the sheep. However, there are some philosophical problems with this method. Although the clone may be genetically identical to the original organism from which the cell came, it would be wrong to say that it is actually identical with the original organism. Here, we are not referring to one and the same person continuing to exist without any interruption but to copies of an original entity. Furthermore, memories and experiences of the clone, or any other replicated individual, will be very different from the ones which belong to the donor of the cell. Memories and experiences of the clone cannot be identical with those of the original entity. Finally, life can be significantly lengthened by the application of *Transplantation* technology. This biological process involves replacing diseased or malfunctioning bodily parts with healthy ones by means of transplantation. However, at present there are still problems with reactivating of severed nerves in the body. It is possible that in the near future medical scientists will overcome this problem. Even if such biological processes were successfully executed, the result could not be classified as 'survival' but merely a mode of postponing one's death. Details of the above accounts can be found in *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, 1995, p.819, and in Fischer, 1993, p.62

<sup>156</sup> Walton, 1979, p.83

<sup>157</sup> Epicurus argues that 'when death is I am no more, when I am there is no death' since one cannot experience one's own death. Williams presents a good account of this argument. Williams, 1993, p.73ff. See also Rosenbaum, 1993, p.119

<sup>158</sup> According to Walton, Epicurus pointed out that 'religion is a major factor in promoting the idea of fear of death.' Walton, 1979, p.88

<sup>159</sup> Epicurus' 'Letter to Menoeceus' appears in its entirety in *Approaches to Ethics*, 1962, p.85

<sup>160</sup> The views of Epicurus and Lucretius are at odds with the Christian view of death. It is interesting to juxtapose these two opposing views about life and death that were around at approximately the same time. While Lucretius was expressing his rational argument of life in the 'here and now', Christ was emphasising the significance of God's judgement on human behaviour with appropriate reward and punishment which implied life after death. So, people had two major opposing views about life and death to contemplate. And they chose one rather than the other which consequently shaped the world history in a particular way. It is clear that Lucretius' argument of life in the 'here and now' and nothing beyond was not sufficiently convincing for the majority of people, whereas Christ's teaching of the faith in one God, and indication of life after death were quite appealing to many. A vast number of people identified themselves with and

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chose to follow the 'security' of the religious faith. The interesting question is why should one particular view prevail rather than the other? Why is there belief, without any evidence, for another realm after death? These questions require, at least to a certain extent, historical answers. Looking at them philosophically, however, we may find that perhaps the answer lies with people's need for consolation, or in belief that life beyond death makes life in the 'here and now' more meaningful and worthwhile. Or if it is viewed cynically, people's religious beliefs can be regarded as an insurance policy, so to speak, just in case there is a realm beyond this world and there is a God who might punish non-believers. This idea is expressed in terms of Pascal's 'wager', i.e. if God exists we win, if he does not, nothing is lost. For details see Choron, 1963, pp.116-117

<sup>161</sup> Lucretius, *The Nature of the Universe*, 1951, p.122

<sup>162</sup> As Nagel says 'no one finds it disturbing to contemplate the eternity preceding his own birth' regarding the problem of temporal asymmetry pointed out by Lucretius. Nagel, 1993, p.67

<sup>163</sup> Rosenbaum, 1993, pp.121-125. See also *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, Band 10, 1997, pp.129,1229

<sup>164</sup> Nagel objects to Epicurus' and Lucretius' reasoning on the grounds that one *can* be affected or harmed even if one has no knowledge of the harm after one's death. The examples he gives are being betrayed, deceived, and ridiculed behind one's back. (Nagel, 1979, pp. 1-10) Feinberg also argues that one can be harmed posthumously. See *Harm and Self Interest*, 1980, p. 68

<sup>165</sup> Similar to the Epicurean/Lucretian view, Sartre too regards death as a 'factual limit' that does not really concern us. He sees death as an external limit that can never be experienced by the human being (*for-itself*). Sartre, 1969, pp.540-545

<sup>166</sup> One might be concerned about the thought of pain in the process of dying which might lead to death. So there might be a combination of apprehension about a painful death and what death may or may not mean regarding immortality.

<sup>167</sup> Indeed, death and dying are two different issues and must be distinguished. It is generally accepted that death is an event. Dying, on the other hand, is ambiguous and is considered to be a process rather than an event, which may take a long time. Dying does not necessarily lead to death. In other words, there is no causal connection between death and the process of dying. (See 'On Dying as a Process', Feldman, 1989-1990, p.375, and Choron, 1963, p.62) Rosenbaum too makes a clear distinction between 'death' and 'dying' in his 'How To Be Dead and Not Care: A Defense of Epicurus', 1993, pp.120-121. According to Fischer, the state of 'being dead' must also be distinguished from 'death' and 'dying', because they all refer to different states of being. He explains that 'being dead is a condition or state' and that 'death intervenes between dying and being dead.' 'Being dead' cannot be experienced by the individual at all, and he uses the term 'experiential blanks' for death and being dead. Fischer, 1993, pp.3-4

<sup>168</sup> As Wittgenstein says 'my own death is not event in life', *Tractatus*, 6.4311

<sup>169</sup> Parfit finds the Epicurean argument implausible. In his view, it does not get rid of death-anxiety. See Parfit, 1993, p.193

<sup>170</sup> It must be emphasised that Heidegger's analysis of death cannot be covered in its entirety, and that only the salient points which are relevant to the particular attitude under discussion here will be mentioned.

<sup>171</sup> Heidegger seems to have developed an evasive strategy in this respect.

<sup>172</sup> Heidegger's notion of Dasein refers to any individual human being in the world along with other beings, but it is quite different from Jaspers' notion of Dasein. We shall return to the distinction in the next chapter.

<sup>173</sup> In a similar way, Scheler provides a phenomenological account of our relationship with death in *Tod und Fortleben*. As we discussed earlier, Scheler claims that there is an intuitive awareness of death and finitude in living beings. Heidegger, like Scheler, is of the view that death-awareness is an inherent structure of our being. Such similarities between Heidegger and Scheler indicate that perhaps Heidegger was indebted to Scheler for some of his existential ideas. They differ, however, on a particular point: Scheler thinks that our future potentialities and our sense of freedom diminish as we grow old, and we have an awareness of this. He also thinks that one grasps the idea of death by observing the experience of getting older, i.e. the natural end of the living being. Heidegger does not take up this point in his analysis.

<sup>174</sup> According to Macquarrie & Robinson, the terms 'ontical' and 'ontological' are not 'explicitly defined' but generally understood as follows: 'Ontological inquiry is concerned primarily with *Being*; ontical inquiry is concerned primarily with *entities* and the facts about them.' See footnote 3 in *Being and Time*, 1995, p.31

<sup>175</sup> Langan, 1959, p.11

<sup>176</sup> Ibid. p.10ff.

<sup>177</sup> *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Vol.9, p.669

<sup>178</sup> Heidegger interprets the existential significance of death as follows. For Dasein, death is the ultimate possibility in a threefold sense:

a) it is 'one's ownmost possibility' and one dies alone

b) it is non-relational, i.e. it cannot be shared by anybody

c) death is inevitable, it cannot be outstripped. (*Being and Time*, 1995, p.294)

See also Southard, 1991, p.93

<sup>179</sup> *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, Band 10, 1997, pp.1235-36

<sup>180</sup> The Heideggerian concept of 'my ownness' is an important one and has been articulated by Fingarette as follows: 'In the end I am alone. ...No one can truly share my perspective on the world, ...have my perceptions or my consciousness. They live in my world but my world is mine, mine alone. No one else can die for me. Moving towards my own death is my task alone.' Fingarette, 1996, p.37

<sup>181</sup> *Being and Nothingness*, pp.539-540. It is clear that Sartre sees death as a destructive force which cannot be regarded positively. It annihilates one's opportunities in existence and ends one's freedom. According to Sartre, death is a 'factual limit' that should not really concern us.

<sup>182</sup> According to Sartre 'death cannot therefore belong to the ontological structure of the for-itself. ...it refers to a fact, ... but totally contingent. We should not know this death if the Other did not exist;...This contingency at once puts death out of reach of all ontological conjectures. ...Death is a pure fact as is birth; it comes to us from outside and it transforms us into the outside.' *Being and Nothingness*, p.545

<sup>183</sup> Levinas, for example, argues that death is a mystery. (Levinas, 1979, p.235) See also Anderson who expresses the mystery of death as follows:

All alone,

In a world unknown,

Weaving a web that none discovereth,

Sit two silent Weavers, Birth and Death. (Anderson, 1904, p.23)

<sup>184</sup> Schlick (1882-1936), for example, expresses his suspended judgement and suggests that death may or may not be the end, and considers death as an open-ended possibility. He regards survival as an 'empirical hypothesis' which he needs to verify after his death. Schlick has been dead for almost 70 years and so far he has neither verified nor falsified his 'empirical hypothesis', thus death still remains an open-ended possibility. Schlick, 'On the Meaning of Life', Vol. II, p.470, also cited in Hanfling's *The Quest for Meaning*, 1987, p.59

<sup>185</sup> *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, 1987, Vol.4, p.251

<sup>186</sup> A cynic might say that in today's society when death occurs there are other issues to consider. For example, the event of death generates different kinds of business, namely funeral and burial arrangements, religious ceremonies, gatherings of people after the funeral, and so on. (Harrison, 2000, p.180) Even the grieving process can be a lucrative business. I am referring here to an article which appeared in *New Zealand Herald* (3 February 1998) under the heading of 'Professional mourners find business booming'. Apparently the phenomenon of 'rented tears' at funerals is Vietnam's growing prosperity.

<sup>187</sup> Feifel, *The Meaning of Death*, 1965, p.xiv (Introduction)

<sup>188</sup> Bremer, van den Hout, and Peters, 1994, pp. 94,95. See also Aries, 1974, p.87, Malpas and Solomon, 1998, p.161, and Kalish, 1980, pp.99-100

<sup>189</sup> See Southard, 1991, p. xxvi. Ebeling too discusses 'modern death' in detail in his 'The Strategic Defense Initiative and the Art of Dying' in *Ars Moriendi*, 1989

<sup>190</sup> Aries describes it as a characteristic of modernity. Aries, 1974, p.100

<sup>191</sup> See Hinton, 1967, pp.171-174

<sup>192</sup> Camus, 1972

<sup>193</sup> In this respect, there are numerous case studies presented by Kübler-Ross, 1969

<sup>194</sup> Austin has highlighted this attitude by citing a seriously ill woman who is faced with death. This woman points out why she denies death: 'When I analysed my state of mind, I recognised several separate urges leading me to deny death. One was unwillingness to leave a world so abounding in beauty that I could frame no image of any other in which I would prefer to live. ... Another was the impetus to survive, the will to prolong the life processes I had begun.' Austin, 1931, p.19

## Chapter Two

### Karl Jaspers' Philosophy of Existence

#### 1. Introduction

Chapter Two begins with brief biographical remarks to put Jaspers' philosophical thought into perspective. I will then give an introductory explanation of Jaspers' key terminology and some basic concepts in his philosophy in so far as they are relevant to his analysis of death.<sup>1</sup> In order to understand and appreciate Jaspers' conception of human finitude and death adequately, it is necessary to grasp his terminology and some related metaphysical notions he uses in his work. Philosophically complex terms such as *Existenz*, *Dasein*, and *Transcendence* are explained. I then turn to Jaspers' concept of philosophy and what 'philosophising' means to him. Subsequently, Jaspers' views on the relationship between philosophy and science, and philosophy and religion will be discussed. This differentiation will lead to the understanding of his concept of 'philosophical faith' which is closely connected with his notions of *Existenz* and *Transcendence*. The connection between the concept of 'philosophical faith' and one's existential experience of the *Augenblick*<sup>2</sup> will become apparent in Chapters Three and Four.

I will continue with an examination of Jaspers' concept of *boundary situations*, which is inseparably linked with his concept of death. In connection with boundary situations the antinomic structure of existence will also be discussed. I will then focus on Jaspers' concept of death. After a brief discussion of the notion of human finitude, an analysis of death as a boundary situation will be presented.

But first, let us say a few words about Jaspers himself and his life. This will illustrate how certain events and experiences affected his mode of thinking and his philosophy of existence.

## 2. Brief Biographical Remarks

Jaspers is one of the influential German thinkers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>3</sup> As Chris Thornhill points out, he is a 'figure of central importance in modern German intellectual history.'<sup>4</sup> Jaspers' contribution to the medical, psychiatric, and philosophical fields is extensive. His *General Psychopathology*, for example, is still used today in psychiatry. It is nonetheless unfortunate that as a philosopher, he has not been fully appreciated or fully explored in the English-speaking countries. In his outlook and mode of inquiry, Jaspers' primary focus was on the concrete individual. He believed that one's personal experience is one's fundamental source of truth about reality. His interest in humanity, the individual, freedom, and communication remained with him throughout his life.

One of the crucial factors which affected his philosophical thinking profoundly was his incurable disease, which forced him to live constantly in the face of death. His fragile condition may have made him acutely aware of his 'limiting situation' and its significance in life. Reflections on limiting situations such as suffering, struggle, guilt, and in particular death, which are important features of human existence, shaped his existential thoughts. He expresses his suffering as a young boy in his *Philosophical Autobiography*:

All of life's decisions were partially conditioned for me by a basic fact of my existence. From childhood I had been organically ill (bronchiectasis with cardiac decompensation). While hunting I sat many times bitterly crying somewhere in the seclusion of the forest, as the strength of my body failed me.<sup>5</sup>

Jaspers was born in 1883 in Oldenburg. After his graduation from the *Gymnasium* he studied law for a short period. Then he changed over to medicine and then turned to psychiatry, psychology, and finally to philosophy. His views on academic philosophy were quite critical: he thought it lacked original thinking and any significant value.<sup>6</sup> He strongly expressed his disappointment with German Universities in his *Autobiography*.<sup>7</sup>

In 1909, he worked as a voluntary research assistant in the Department of Psychiatry at Heidelberg. In 1913 he obtained a teaching post as a psychologist within the Heidelberg Philosophical Faculty under Wilhelm Windelband. His first substantial work, *General Psychopathology* (*Allgemeine Psychopathologie*), which is one of the classics of 20th

century psychiatry, was published in 1913. In this book, Jaspers' use of phenomenology as a descriptive tool is an empirical method of inquiry applied to his patients' communications. He was interested in his patients' 'lived experiences' (*Erlebnis*) and mental processes, and he delineated various psychological procedures and descriptions. Jaspers acknowledges that Husserl's 'descriptive psychology' as a method was useful to him.<sup>8</sup> Later on, however, he rejects Husserl's phenomenology on the grounds that it had changed from an empirical 'descriptive psychology' to an 'intuition of essences', *Wesensschau*, and a philosophical 'rigorous science'.<sup>9</sup>

In 1913, he started to give lectures on psychology in the philosophical faculty at Heidelberg University, and in 1919 he published *Psychology of World Views* (*Psychologie der Weltanschauungen*) in which he dealt with different views on and attitudes towards life. One can also find here his elucidation of self-reflection and the early version of his concept of 'limiting situations'. He considered this particular book to be a 'partially' philosophical work which offered a basis for his early existential philosophical thinking.<sup>10</sup> It is interesting to note that Heidegger read *Psychology of World Views* soon after its publication with much interest and wrote a critical article on it.<sup>11</sup>

Jaspers began to teach philosophy in 1921 at Heidelberg University and continued to do so until he was removed from his post by the National Socialists in 1937. During these years, he published his best known major work *Philosophy* (*Philosophie*) in three volumes in 1932. Jaspers said that he had explored different ways of philosophical thinking in *Philosophy* according to modes of transcending.<sup>12</sup> In Volume 1, he discusses philosophical world orientation (*Philosophische Weltorientierung*), the limits of science, and what man can know. In Volume 2, he deals with the elucidation of *Existenz* (*Existenzerhellung*), one's true self, and the potentialities of the self. In Volume 3, he addresses some metaphysical questions which will lead to the understanding of Transcendence. Such issues include human capacity to transcend the empirical realm, and philosophical faith; these constitute the central part of his metaphysics (*Metaphysik*).

Jaspers' philosophising was greatly influenced by what he called 'those years of distress and suffering' during the period of National Socialism. He writes in his *Autobiography*:

Another turning point in our life came by way of the transformation of our sense of existence by the continuous threat on the part of the National-Socialist criminal-state, which could make our personal future appear as hopeless.<sup>13</sup>

In 1933, as a result of the Nazi interference, he could not continue with administrative duties at the University and finally in 1937 he was excluded from all his teaching activities. After that he had to pursue his philosophical work alone.

In 1948 Jaspers went to Switzerland and taught at the University of Basel until his death in February 1969. In the last period of his life Jaspers' existence philosophy underwent a gradual change, which had begun in the 1930s, into a philosophy of reason (*Vernunft*). During the late period of his philosophising, he often commented on controversial political issues.<sup>14</sup> Although Jaspers' later period of philosophical thinking is not without interest, we shall not be concerned with it in this study.

### **3. Jaspers' Philosophical Terminology**

Although Jaspers knows that thinking is articulated in language, one finds that, at times, the philosophical terms he uses can be ambiguous.<sup>15</sup> Such ambiguity may lead to obscurity, confusion and miscomprehension of his ideas. Although it is difficult to give a precise definition of Jaspers' terms, the following is what is generally understood and used to explain his philosophical ideas.<sup>16</sup>

#### **a. Existence/Dasein<sup>17</sup>**

The term 'existence', or 'Dasein', is one of the key elements of Jaspers' metaphysical construction of the human being.<sup>18</sup> For Jaspers, Dasein is a mode of Being<sup>19</sup> which manifests itself as one's empirical self in the world with a temporal dimension. In other words, Dasein is man's everyday concrete mode of being among other entities.<sup>20</sup> Dasein is embedded in the world of experience, involved in practical aspects of everyday life,



and always in a situation.<sup>21</sup> According to Jaspers there is a hierarchical structure of the modes of Being which are:<sup>22</sup>

- Existence (Dasein)
- Consciousness-as-such
- Spirit
- *Existenz*

One of Jaspers' definitions of Dasein comes from his *Von der Wahrheit*:

Existence is the Encompassing which I am as a living human being, having a beginning and an end; as such it is the space of my actuality in which there is everything that I am ...<sup>23</sup>

In the above passage, what is discerned by Jaspers is Dasein's finite aspect in the world. Indeed, for Jaspers, finitude<sup>24</sup> is a fundamental feature of Dasein. Man, on the whole, is aware of his temporal 'reality' and the limitations of his empirical existence.

In Jaspers' view, man is the only entity in the world to whom Being is 'manifested through his empirical existence.'<sup>25</sup> Man as Dasein is 'confronted with the world and as such he has needs and wants'<sup>26</sup> and makes decisions accordingly. Put another way, empirical existence is involved in 'worldly' activities and it constitutes man's 'mundane being'.<sup>27</sup> Jaspers explains what he means by 'empirical existence' in his *Reason and Existenz* as follows:

I am, first of all, an empirical existent. Empirical existence means the actual taken comprehensively, which immediately shows itself to empirical consciousness in the particularities of matter, living body, and soul, ...<sup>28</sup>

Empirical existence, i.e. Dasein, represents one's 'self' as a concrete, physical and sociological being.<sup>29</sup> According to Jaspers, Dasein cannot be understood as an object in isolation, but rather as a being among other beings in the world. It is important, however, that one must not identify Jaspers' concept of 'Dasein' with the Heideggerian one. Although in both cases 'Dasein' is an empirical mode of Being, Jaspers' concept of Dasein has a 'transcendent'<sup>30</sup> aspect which Heideggerian Dasein lacks.<sup>31</sup> Jaspers indicates this transcendent aspect of the human being by stating that 'empirical existence' as such is not human reality as a whole, but only human reality as it appears to us.<sup>32</sup> He also suggests that there must be more than mere appearances. In other words, 'reality' as

a whole includes a 'transcendent' realm that is connected to the 'transcendent' aspect of man. This is the main difference between Jaspers' and Heidegger's 'Dasein'.

Let us now turn to the use of the term 'existence' and its various meanings in different contexts in Jaspers' works. It is necessary to be aware that the term 'existence' may mean:

- The existent being in the world who is responsible for his actions, i.e. Dasein
- The 'unsatisfactory' human condition revealed by boundary situations
- The everyday use of the word, that is 'existing', 'being' or 'having presence in the world'.

The interchangeable use of the term 'existence' may lead to ambiguity in Jaspers' texts.<sup>33</sup> As long as one is aware of the multiple usage of this term in different contexts, then perhaps the risk of ambiguity and misunderstanding in Jaspers' explanations may be reduced.

#### **b. Consciousness-as-such/Consciousness-in-general (*Bewußtsein überhaupt*)**

Consciousness-as-such is the second mode of Being which is also related to the empirical aspect of man in the world. Jaspers describes it as a form of consciousness in which 'universal truths' and 'objective knowledge'<sup>34</sup> can be cognized and, in principle, shared by everyone who has the intellectual capacity to reflect. By 'objective knowledge' Jaspers means logic, mathematical and scientific knowledge in general. The concepts and methods concerned in these areas of 'knowledge' are publicly shared and verifiable. Jaspers explains:

What appears to our consciousness as experienceable, as an object, has being for us. Hence, everything which exists for us must take on that form in which it can be thought or experienced by consciousness.<sup>35</sup>

and

As consciousness in general, ... we participate in the Encompassing through the possibility of knowledge and through the possibility of common knowledge of Being in every form in which it appears to consciousness. And, indeed, we participate, not only in the validity of the knowable, but also in a universally recognized, formal lawfulness in willing, action, and feeling.<sup>36</sup>

Jaspers distinguishes, albeit not clearly, between the two meanings of consciousness:

... (i) we are conscious as living existents .....we are not only countless single consciousnesses, which are more or less similar to one another; we are also therein (ii) consciousness-as-such.<sup>37</sup>

Jaspers further explains in *Von der Wahrheit* that by 'Consciousness-in-general' he does not mean that we are a collection of numerous 'consciousnesses', as indicated above, but we are individual consciousnesses each of which participates in a universal consciousness. In Jaspers' own words:

Consciousness-as-such is the Encompassing which we are, not as the multiplicity of the living consciousness of countless individuals more or less similar yet different in kind, but which we are by virtue of participation in the one consciousness-as-such.<sup>38</sup>

The important point Jaspers attempts to make here is that as 'Consciousness-as-such' we have the intellectual capacity to take part in the realm of what he calls 'objective knowledge'. In other words, as Wallraff expresses 'the operations of the scientific understanding'<sup>39</sup> take place at the level of Consciousness-as-such.

### c. Spirit (*Geist*)

Spirit is the third mode of Being and is closely connected with Dasein and Consciousness-as-such. Jaspers states that 'the distinctions of empirical existence, consciousness-as-such, and spirit do not imply separable facts'.<sup>40</sup> These three modes are related in the sense that as 'Spirit' we share the characteristics of being concrete and historical with Dasein,<sup>41</sup> and its universality is similar to that of Consciousness-as-such.<sup>42</sup> 'Spirit' can also be described as a kind of 'concrete universal' mode of Being in which man is able to comprehend various phenomena in terms of unities.<sup>43</sup> Oswald Schrag explains it in terms of 'the drive for wholeness and unity, for coherent totality of all experience.'<sup>44</sup> As Jaspers says, it is 'the totality of intelligible thought, action, and feeling - a totality which is not a closed object for knowledge'.<sup>45</sup> Some examples Salamun cites for such unities or organisations are religion, political ideologies, arts and cultural traditions that point to man's involvement in such groups as a member of totalities.<sup>46</sup> Jaspers explains in his *Von der Wahrheit*:

Spirit is the Encompassing which we are as beings which actualize wholeness in a movement of understanding and being understood. This actualization occurs in one's inwardness as well as in the form of a world penetrated by

spirit. Spirit is as actual as existence and as inward as thought (consciousness-as-such) but, springing from another source, it is more than existence and thought.<sup>47</sup>

In *Reason and Existenz* Jaspers explains further:

...as spirit we are consciously related to everything which is comprehensible to us. We transform the world and ourselves into the intelligible, which encloses totalities.<sup>48</sup>

According to Jaspers then 'Dasein', 'Consciousness-as-such', and 'Spirit' are the modes of Being in which we see ourselves as rooted in the world, and we participate in the worldly events as 'possible *Existenz*' without any transcendent experience. At the same time, all three modes of Being are inseparably connected with *Existenz*, one's inner self. In sum, 'Spirit' is closely linked with the concepts of universality and totality which are part of our 'worldly' existence.<sup>49</sup> In Wallraff's view, 'Spirit' refers to 'the centre of creativity as well as the source of social organisation.'<sup>50</sup>

#### d. *Existenz*<sup>51</sup>

*Existenz* is a special technical term the meaning of which is difficult to describe clearly. Nevertheless, this mode of Being is crucial for Jaspers' entire philosophy. *Existenz* is the non-empirical and non-objective dimension of the human being. It is an ineffable inner core of the individual. As Jaspers himself acknowledges, it is something that is 'unintelligible'.<sup>52</sup> It is unintelligible in the sense that one cannot give a precise definition, partly due to the limitation of language and partly to the absence of an 'object' to refer to. Jaspers states that it is 'at the bounds of the intelligible'<sup>53</sup> and that it is something which is not demonstrable. *Existenz* does not refer to any particular individual, it is not a possession, as Jeanne Hersch points out; it is a 'presence'.<sup>54</sup> It is said to be a unique existential possibility which can be actualised in every individual.<sup>55</sup> Hersch holds that its reality depends on the actual moment of choice and decision.<sup>56</sup> *Existenz* has no 'appearance' without Dasein, and only through Dasein can it be represented in the empirical world.<sup>57</sup> Jaspers explains in *Von der Wahrheit*:

What I truly am, that is the Encompassing of self-being. Existenz is the source of true actuality without which that scope and actuality of existence would evaporate. As Existenz I can in no way become my own object of research, cannot know myself; I can only become actual or I can lose myself. I can never possess Existenz through my knowledge of it, yet it conveys the content of my every mode of the Encompassing which I am.<sup>58</sup>

Self-being, as Jaspers refers to in the above passage, is another important term used for one's inner self. It is another way of expressing one's mode of Being as *Existenz*.<sup>59</sup> As Hartt remarks, *Existenz* is 'the real core of self-being'.<sup>60</sup> The achievement of 'self-being' indicates one's 'authentic' mode of Being. Although this cannot be achieved once-and-for-all, it can be experienced in short 'moments' in time, i.e. the *Augenblick*. Since authentic mode of Being is difficult to attain, and man often falls back into his empirical existence, *Existenz* remains mostly as a possibility.<sup>61</sup> Hence Jaspers often refers to *Existenz* as 'possible *Existenz*'.<sup>62</sup> For Jaspers, possible *Existenz* provides the ground for freedom of thought and action for one's true self.

As mentioned earlier, *Existenz* is interconnected with the other modes of Being, namely Dasein, Consciousness-as-such, and Spirit. The relationship between the four modes of Being can sometimes be puzzling rather than revealing in Jaspers' existential analysis. It may be helpful to the reader to examine Jaspers' own representation of the relationship between these modes in a diagram.<sup>63</sup> A detailed analysis of *Existenz* will be presented in Chapter Three.

#### e. World and Transcendence

In his description of 'world orientation' in the first volume of *Philosophy*, Jaspers distinguishes between three forms of Being: being an object, being a self and 'Being-in-itself'.<sup>64</sup> He describes the first two forms of Being as parts of the empirical world, e.g. things, persons and even thoughts. But at the same time they constitute, as 'empirical existence', inseparable parts of Being in the world.<sup>65</sup> He claims that we are 'immersed' and involved in the world,<sup>66</sup> and that the world is the 'origin of all reality.'<sup>67</sup> However, the world is not the whole of what there is. Jaspers' views on 'world orientation' reflect philosophical thinking on the level of empirical existence. But the empirical world and knowledge about it are not sufficient to give an account of Being itself. Jaspers claims that human beings are able to transcend the empirical world by means of philosophical thinking. But to achieve this experience one first must have a clear understanding of the 'immanent', which in turn may lead to the awareness of Transcendence.<sup>68</sup> Alan Olson

suggests that Transcendence is ‘not only present to human experience but in fact, accounts for its very possibility.’<sup>69</sup> According to Olson, Transcendence signifies ‘a dimension of reality that is ultimately non-objectifiable.’<sup>70</sup>

For Jaspers, Transcendence is not a separate external realm to the actual world we occupy. This all-encompassing and non-empirical dimension of reality is inseparable from the empirical world yet it is ‘beyond all objectivity’.<sup>71</sup> Jaspers insists that without the world there can be no Transcendence. What Jaspers means is that Transcendence cannot be severed from the empirical world, otherwise it would be a meaningless abstraction.<sup>72</sup> Wallraff describes Jaspers’ meaning of ‘Transcendence’ as follows:

Beyond our horizon lies “transcendence” or God, which, together with the world, constitutes “the encompassing that is being itself.”<sup>73</sup>

Although the above description is close to what Jaspers has in mind, Jaspers does not refer to Transcendence as ‘God’. For him, Transcendence is hidden in that it cannot be a finite object of knowledge.<sup>74</sup> As Hartt declares Transcendence ‘eludes standard cognizing.’<sup>75</sup> In Jaspers’ view, it manifests itself as different modes of Being as they appear to man,<sup>76</sup> and only through its modes can it be apprehended. Accordingly, neither our being nor Being itself can be derived from any entity which merely appears to us. In Jaspers’ words:

...Being itself is that which shows an immeasurable number of appearances to inquiry, but it itself always recedes and only manifests itself indirectly as that determinate empirical existence we encounter in the progress of our experiences ...We call it the World. ...Being itself is the Transcendence which shows itself to no investigative experience, not even indirectly.<sup>77</sup>

According to Jaspers, Transcendence is that which cannot be investigated as subject or as object, nor can it be grasped fully in any context.<sup>78</sup> It seems that we can only have an intimation of Transcendence. It is a dimension which is intertwined with the empirical world and to which we are related but in which we have no part. In short, Transcendence remains indeterminate.<sup>79</sup>

f. **The Encompassing** (*das Umgreifende*)<sup>80</sup>

In Jaspers' metaphysics the concepts of the Encompassing, Being and Transcendence are intimately connected. For Jaspers, the Encompassing is not only that which embraces and underlies everything empirically knowable and objectifiable in the world, but also it is that which transcends the subject-object dichotomy:

We call the being that is neither only subject nor only object, that is rather on both sides of the subject-object split, *das Umgreifende*, the Comprehensive.<sup>81</sup>

Sometimes Jaspers uses the term 'the Encompassing' in the sense of 'Being itself'<sup>82</sup> which envelops everything conceivable. And sometimes he refers to 'the Encompassing' as something emerging from the horizon of Being that is elusive and not reachable in human existence.<sup>83</sup> In *Von der Wahrheit* Jaspers explains this metaphysical concept in his attempt to answer the question 'what is Being?':

Each time we grasp positively something particular ...we experience at the same time what Being is not. ...This Being, which is neither an ...object nor a whole that is formed within a ... horizon, we call the *Encompassing*. ...The Encompassing can be sensed because there is a horizon, i.e., something always shows itself beyond each horizon which encloses each attained horizon without itself being horizon. The Encompassing is then never the horizon within which our knowledge is located and in which we encounter any definite mode of Being, for the Encompassing is never visible as a horizon. What encompasses, then, is Being, from which - as that which encompasses absolutely - all new horizons emerge.<sup>84</sup>

'The Encompassing' does not refer to any particular entity but points to a horizon<sup>85</sup> in which 'every mode of Being appears to us'.<sup>86</sup> According to Jaspers, it is itself not entirely 'graspable' by us, and when we try to think of it, it tends to split into its modes and becomes objectified. As a result, we can have access only to its manifestation in its different modes in the world.<sup>87</sup> This, in Jaspers' view, highlights our inadequacy of grasping reality as a whole.<sup>88</sup> According to Jaspers, then, the Encompassing remains 'unseen and unknown' for us.<sup>89</sup> Only through philosophical thinking, he says, can the awareness of the Encompassing be indirectly attained and the relationship between subject and object be clarified. The two major modes of the Encompassing are: 'Being that we are' and 'Being in itself.'<sup>90</sup>

### **g. Existential Communication**

Jaspers considers existential communication as one of the fundamental aspects of human existence.<sup>91</sup> It is fundamental because existential communication is above all concerned with self-being and is a necessary condition for its realisation.<sup>92</sup> For Jaspers, communication occurs on different levels in accordance with the modes of Being.<sup>93</sup> Only by going through the 'basic level' of communication can existential communication between *Existenzen* be achieved.<sup>94</sup> For Jaspers, existential communication has its roots in the relationship with the other self in the attainment of selfhood, i.e. *Existenz*.<sup>95</sup> Existential communication does not involve expressing or exchanging 'fixed truths' but entails critically questioning, reflecting on and discussing 'philosophical truths'.<sup>96</sup> Superiority or victory is not the desired end in this form of existential relationship and interaction.<sup>97</sup> This existential experience can also be described as a 'struggle' of mutual understanding. Jaspers calls this cooperative exploration of truth 'loving struggle' (*liebender Kampf*)<sup>98</sup> which is a matter of awakening and challenging the 'other' in the clarification of *Existenz* and the actualisation of 'truth'.<sup>99</sup>

For Jaspers, existential communication is a matter of 'being with others',<sup>100</sup> while actualising one's potential being. He thinks that one's relation to other human beings and the way in which one deals with others shape one's everyday existence. He goes on to say that the goal of philosophy is philosophising in communication, not in isolation.<sup>101</sup> In Jaspers' view:

Man comes to himself only together with the other man, never by mere knowledge alone.<sup>102</sup>

Jaspers maintains that in existential communication philosophising helps to establish 'the bond of communication',<sup>103</sup> with others in the attainment of authentic selfhood.<sup>104</sup>

### **h. Historicity (*Geschichtlichkeit*)**

The existential concept of historicity is another basic feature of the human being in Jaspers' philosophy. It is, however, difficult to explain what exactly it is because Jaspers hardly gives a clear definition of this complex notion.<sup>105</sup> Jaspers' notions of history and



historicity are intertwined. Although these concepts are interrelated, they are, at the same time, quite different from each other. In order to understand what Jaspers means by historicity, it is important to grasp his existential views of the self and Transcendence. He formulates his concept of historicity in his attempt to explicate his view that man can achieve self-being in the here and now.<sup>106</sup> In this respect, the unity of the two distinct aspects of the human being, namely *Existenz* and *Dasein*, is crucial because one cannot attain self-being without their unity.<sup>107</sup> Jaspers also indicates that to be aware of the two aspects of the self is to be aware of one's historicity. He writes:

I become bound to the depths of Being in its individual-universal character, become existentially "historical", only if I enter into and accept the restrictions of my empirical existence.<sup>108</sup>

For Jaspers, then, man is an 'historic being'<sup>109</sup> in the sense that his being in the world in a concrete situation is closely connected with his historicity.<sup>110</sup> Jaspers further suggests that man's freedom is inseparably tied to his individual historicity in temporal existence.<sup>111</sup> What Jaspers means is that *Existenz*, one's true self, is inseparably connected with the individual's freedom to choose and make decisions 'as an activity that displays human subjectivity at work.'<sup>112</sup> For Jaspers, *Existenz* represents one's existential freedom.

At this point, one must make a distinction between 'history' and 'historicity.' Jaspers differentiates 'a sense of history' from the individual's 'historicity'.<sup>113</sup> He asserts that 'the knowledge of history aims at public affairs.'<sup>114</sup> He also states that the 'historicality' of the world is based on its contingency, and is the 'impersonal aspect of temporal existence'<sup>115</sup>, whereas 'historicity' points to the individual and the unity of freedom and necessity.<sup>116</sup> Jaspers maintains that whatever the individual does, his freedom in his choices and decisions shapes his existence and historicity. He reiterates that historicity must be 'personal in origin.'<sup>117</sup> Jaspers says that historicity involves the apprehension of one's own history, lucid comprehension of one's past actions.<sup>118</sup> In brief, man, as 'concrete being' in the world, becomes aware that his past actions affect his future possible choices. Whatever the individual does, his choices shape his historicity. In turn, one's historicity indicates the specificity of the individual's 'self-being' which is unique.<sup>119</sup>

Jaspers often refers to the awareness of one's personal historicity as 'existential historic consciousness'.<sup>120</sup> In *Philosophy* he writes:

Something quite different is the existential historic consciousness proper, in which the self becomes aware of its *historicity* as the only reality it has. This historic consciousness of Existenz must be personal in origin. It makes me aware of myself in communication with other historic self-being; I as myself am phenomenally bound in time to a sequence of singular situations, my given situations.<sup>121</sup>

As this passage indicates, one exists in specific historical time, and occupies a historical and sociological position. According to Jaspers, this is the 'givenness' of human existence which identifies and signifies one's historicity. The first statement in the above quotation seems to suggest that the only 'historic consciousness' which is significant is one's personal 'historicity'.<sup>122</sup> Although Jaspers does not elucidate this point, it is clear in *The Origin and Goal of History* that he does not disregard world history. In other words, the awareness of one's historicity should *not* be considered as 'the only reality'. Indeed, he is aware that the world history, directly or indirectly, affects human existence even if it is not specifically individual and personal in origin and that world history too plays an important role in our individual existence.<sup>123</sup> He often reminds us that we cannot live apart from the world or outside of history.

#### **i. Reason (*Vernunft*)**

Jaspers defines 'reason' as:

...the *bond* which unites all modes of the Encompassing ...<sup>124</sup>

According to Jaspers, 'reason' is a medium through which all existential concepts are recognized and clarified. It is the binding power that unites diverse modes of Being.<sup>125</sup> It also facilitates existential communication between *Existenzen*.<sup>126</sup> Jaspers asserts that 'reason' is present in all modes of Being and furthermore the relationship between the different modes of Being is managed by it. And it is through 'reason' that it is possible for us to become aware of the interconnection of the modes of Being.<sup>127</sup> In Jaspers' view, 'reason' is 'the indispensable' component of the structure of human existence.<sup>128</sup>

For Jaspers, reason and *Existenz* are complementary features of one's existence. He distinguishes 'reason' (*Vernunft*), which is inherent in *Existenz*, from 'understanding' (*Verstand*) which belongs to 'Consciousness-as-such'.<sup>129</sup> He attempts to clarify the distinction as follows:

If reason means clear, objective thinking, ...then it is nothing more than the Encompassing of consciousness as such. So considered, it would be better to call it, ...understanding [Verstand].  
...But if reason means the pre-eminence of thought in all modes of the Encompassing, then more is included than mere thinking. It is then what goes beyond all limits,  
...Existenz only becomes clear through reason; reason only has content through Existenz.<sup>130</sup>

According to Jaspers, both 'reality' and 'reason' are embraced by the Encompassing. At the same time, however, he recognizes the limits of reason.<sup>131</sup> He believes that reason alone is not sufficient for grasping reality as a whole. Since Being itself is not accessible to human consciousness, Jaspers argues that man is not capable of apprehending reality fully.<sup>132</sup>

#### j. Ciphers (*Chiffreschrift*)

Jaspers often reminds us that Transcendence cannot be objectively known. Furthermore, what insights we may have regarding Transcendence cannot be adequately expressed in ordinary language. As Kierkegaard says existential reality is incommunicable.<sup>133</sup> Accordingly, the only way we can express our awareness of, and insights into this realm is by means of symbols, or what he calls 'ciphers'.<sup>134</sup> The cipher, then, is the veiled language of Transcendence through which Being presents itself.<sup>135</sup> The language of ciphers can be intuited<sup>136</sup> and/or read by possible *Existenz*.<sup>137</sup> For Jaspers:

Each cipher is merely a signpost or a guiding light. ...Each cipher is also appearance, foreground, a language.<sup>138</sup>

In Jaspers' view, *Existenz* and Transcendence are in communication through the phenomena, i.e. appearance, in the empirical world. In this respect, ciphers provide one with a metaphysical link or a 'bridge', so to speak, to the transcendent realm.<sup>139</sup> Accordingly, by reading ciphers, which constitute the indirect language of the phenomena, reality can partly be revealed to *Existenz*.<sup>140</sup> Despite the ambiguity of ciphers,<sup>141</sup> Jaspers claims that one is capable of deciphering such 'signposts' through

one's 'inner action',<sup>142</sup> or rather through transcending-thinking. As Wallraff suggests, ciphers have 'a kind of meaning, but they never mean any specific "objects", for what they refer to can not be objectified.'<sup>143</sup> Jaspers holds that Being can be made transparent,<sup>144</sup> to some extent, by *Existenz* through such a 'cipher language', and in turn 'cipher language' points to Transcendence itself.<sup>145</sup>

According to Jaspers, everything in the world is capable of becoming a cipher from Transcendence,<sup>146</sup> and each cipher is open to interpretation. In other words, they can be read in multifarious ways depending on the individual who reads them.<sup>147</sup> Man, *Existenz*, God, Transcendence,<sup>148</sup> nature, temporality and eternity, myth, theology and rationality are some of the ciphers that Jaspers gives as examples.<sup>149</sup>

**k. Boundary/Limit Situations (*Grenzsituationen*)<sup>150</sup>**

According to Jaspers, we human beings are always in situations.<sup>151</sup> General situations are 'temporary' situations which are always changing.<sup>152</sup> Boundary situations, however, are unclear<sup>153</sup> and oppressive situations that one cannot modify.<sup>154</sup> They are the situations which mark the limits of our finitude. They can also be seen as the crises in human existence in which antinomies become poignantly clear. A boundary situation can be described as an inescapable limit of our empirical existence with an uncertain future.<sup>155</sup> A situation becomes a boundary situation 'when it succeeds in awakening the individual self to its existential content.'<sup>156</sup> There are four specific boundary situations; namely suffering, guilt, struggle, and death. Boundary situations are closely connected with *Existenz* whereas general situations relate to Dasein.<sup>157</sup> In Jaspers' words:

The boundary situation belongs to *Existenz*, just as the situations belong to the consciousness that stays immanent.<sup>158</sup>

Boundary situations arise, says Jaspers, because there is no absolute security and stability in this world; most things we encounter in the world are finite and split into subject-object duality, which in turn may lead to contradictions.<sup>159</sup> Jaspers emphasizes this point further:

Whatever happens in the world is doubtful; everything fades away, my own existence included.<sup>160</sup>

Lichtigfeld elaborates this 'precarious character of finite existence' by stating that boundary situations occur when 'life is broken up by events that cannot be mastered by human agency, human wisdom or power.'<sup>161</sup>

Facing one's own death is the ultimate boundary situation, in Jaspers' view; it entirely differs from the biological fact of death. The boundary situation of death is significant for him because it signals the end of man's being-in-the-world and confronts the individual with this inevitable certain event. Boundary situations, in particular the boundary situation of death, will be discussed in detail later in this chapter.

#### **4. Jaspers' Concept of Philosophy**

Jaspers holds the view that philosophy, science, and religion are three related areas of knowledge which contribute, each in its own way, to our understanding of 'reality'. He acknowledges the significance of the relationship between them, but at the same time he emphasises the differentiating features of each discipline and how they affect each other.<sup>162</sup> In this section, first I shall restate what 'philosophy' means to Jaspers. I shall then outline his views on the relationship between philosophy and science, and philosophy and religion.

##### **a. Jaspers on 'Philosophising'**

The core of Jaspers' philosophical thinking is 'human existence',<sup>163</sup> in particular, *Existenz*. All his other philosophical ideas are related to this central issue. Gerhard Huber expresses Jaspers' view of philosophy as follows:

Genuine philosophy is concerned with the fundamental problems of human existence that every human being is confronted with at any time in any historical situation.<sup>164</sup>

This is an accurate description of Jaspers' view on philosophy. One also finds that Jaspers' thought structure is multi-layered, in the sense that his concepts like the empirical reality, the transcendent realm, and Being itself are inseparably interwoven.

His philosophical inquiry engages in human existence in multiple modes of Being, Being itself as ultimate reality, and the metaphysical realm of Transcendence and *Existenz*, all of which manifest themselves, in terms of ciphers, in the empirical world.

First and foremost, however, we must note that throughout his works Jaspers often uses the term ‘philosophising’, *philosophieren*, rather than ‘philosophy’<sup>165</sup> in order to highlight the active nature of philosophical thinking.<sup>166</sup> For him, philosophising is a mental activity, a constant movement of thought processes. Philosophising, he says, is thinking that ‘occurs in movements that accomplish and confirm an ethos’.<sup>167</sup> True philosophy, for Jaspers, cannot offer absolute solutions; it remains ‘inconclusive’,<sup>168</sup> i.e. it remains unfixed without any ‘objective determinacy’.<sup>169</sup> Philosophy is, in a sense, on-going philosophical reflection in solitude and in communication,<sup>170</sup> and is an open-ended process rather than dogma.<sup>171</sup> Schilpp acknowledges this point by stating that philosophising, for Jaspers, is ‘an activity in which a philosophically inclined mind engages,<sup>172</sup> it is not a position he holds, defends, or teaches’.<sup>173</sup> Jaspers also maintains that philosophising is ‘by no means merely contemplative.’<sup>174</sup> In his *Philosophical Autobiography* he writes:

all philosophy – because it is an activity of the human spirit – is in its themes as well as its causes, intimately connected with the life of the person who is philosophizing.<sup>175</sup>

Jaspers considers philosophising as an ever present ‘life activity’<sup>176</sup> which springs from man’s awareness of being in the world and of Being itself. In Alan Olson’s view, true philosophising for Jaspers is ‘always rooted in *Lebenpraxis* (‘life practice’), i.e. that the kind of metaphysics being proposed is not a new esoteric gnosticism but grounded fully in-der-Welt-sein.’<sup>177</sup> In his *Way to Wisdom*, Jaspers further describes philosophy as follows:

We can determine the nature of philosophy only by actually experiencing it. Philosophy then becomes the realization of the living idea and the reflection upon this idea, action and discourse on action in one.<sup>178</sup>

It is clear enough that philosophising, for Jaspers, is closely connected with the activities and experiences of one’s life.<sup>179</sup> Jaspers states that philosophy is the thinking ‘in which we ascertain what we live by, ...what makes us be’.<sup>180</sup> In his view, philosophising is a reflective activity by means of which we may elucidate our own existence, and it can help

clarify our thinking processes. Jaspers reiterates that existence philosophy arises from the way man contemplates and questions his existence in the world.<sup>181</sup> Man's being in the world provides the grounds for his awareness of his predicament and the limitations of his empirical existence.<sup>182</sup> Through such awareness, Jaspers claims, one is capable of examining one's inner self and one's inner attitude.<sup>183</sup> And this 'inner activity' may lead to 'transcending-thinking' and to the realisation of one's true self, namely *Existenz*.<sup>184</sup> This is Jaspers' way of appealing to man to find his true self, and he emphasises that the choice belongs to the individual.<sup>185</sup>

Let us now turn to the 'historical' aspect of philosophy. Jaspers respects the history of philosophical thinking,<sup>186</sup> and claims that genuine philosophising has to be based on an 'understanding of history'.<sup>187</sup> According to Olson, Jaspers believes that there is a 'perennial scope of philosophy' (*philosophia perennis*) which has to do with 'transcending-thinking in relation to Transcendence which is formally the same throughout history'.<sup>188</sup> Indeed, for Jaspers philosophy is *philosophia perennis*,<sup>189</sup> 'timeless philosophy'.<sup>190</sup> Wallraff asserts, as Jaspers himself does, that this term means 'simple, ancient, eternal philosophy',<sup>191</sup> which provides the secure grounds for philosophical thinking.

Jaspers acknowledges that his *Existenzphilosophie* is not something new but just another form of presenting 'the one, primordial philosophy'.<sup>192</sup> He maintains some prominent elements of the Western philosophical tradition, tries to adapt them to a new milieu and re-articulates them in a different form. In this context, Huber suggests that in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, philosophers such as Husserl, Scheler and Whitehead, as well as Jaspers, 'though very different among themselves, share in the common effort of restating the fundamental problematic of the perennial philosophy.'<sup>193</sup>

In Jaspers' philosophical analysis, it is clear that he is disappointed in traditional metaphysics,<sup>194</sup> because in his view it fails to take note of the human mode of being.<sup>195</sup> He observes that traditional metaphysics is concerned with *beings* rather than *Being itself*, and tends to assimilate human existence into the mode of being of entities.<sup>196</sup> Jaspers

rejects the idea that an empirical description of a human being as an object is sufficient to understand man in his entirety.<sup>197</sup>

According to Jaspers, reality can be explained without objectifying either the individual being or existence itself within the framework of the Encompassing that transcends the subject-object dichotomy<sup>198</sup> and encompasses both subject and object.<sup>199</sup> To express his own kind of metaphysics,<sup>200</sup> Jaspers uses a specific term, 'periechontology',<sup>201</sup> which concerns his notion of the Encompassing. In *Von der Wahrheit*, Jaspers declares that his goal is 'not ontology, but "periechontology" – an account of the encompassing.'<sup>202</sup> Indeed, there is a clear distinction between his concepts of 'ontology' and 'periechontology'.<sup>203</sup> Jaspers is critical of how the term 'ontology' is used. In his view

Ontology purports to be a doctrine of being itself as such and as a whole. In practice, however, it inevitably becomes a particular knowledge of something within being, not a knowledge of being itself.<sup>204</sup>

And he concludes that

Ontology, even when it includes God, is ultimately a doctrine of immanence, of the subsisting, not of Being but of the Existent, in so far as it is known by man. True philosophy must not be confused with this ontological perversion of philosophical elucidation.<sup>205</sup>

The ultimate goal in Jaspers' philosophy is to explore, search for, and unveil Being itself<sup>206</sup> which mostly escapes one's grasp.<sup>207</sup> Jaspers' main contention is that Being itself cannot be apprehended directly as an entity, but it should be considered as a presence elicited dialogically in communication.<sup>208</sup> Although it may be difficult to grasp Being itself,<sup>209</sup> as there is no direct access to it, Jaspers thinks that it is possible for the human being to have some intimation of it, even though it may only be momentarily in the *Augenblick*.<sup>210</sup> In order to achieve this, it is necessary to understand the relationship between *Existenz* and Transcendence. Jaspers also asserts that the only reality one has is that one exists 'in Being' and Being appears in the 'immediacy of the present'.<sup>211</sup> Thus one can have awareness of Being only through its appearance, and the search for Being gives rise to transcending-thinking:

Awakening to myself, in my situation, I raised the questions of being. Finding myself in the situation as an indeterminate possibility, I must *search for being*, if I 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*.<sup>212</sup>



For Jaspers 'transcending' is cognitive transcending, that is, transcending through an existential-phenomenological experience of 'transcending-thinking' (*transzendierenden Denken*).<sup>213</sup> Jaspers' method of 'transcending-thinking'<sup>214</sup> mirrors the Kantian concept of reality and the self, in the sense that transcending is grounded in the world of human experience.<sup>215</sup> In other words, Kant's critical philosophy provides the foundation of the method of transcending-thinking for Jaspers.<sup>216</sup> Kant postulates that neither the phenomenal world nor the world of 'Ideas' is sufficient to explain the true nature of reality.<sup>217</sup> However, when these two realms are viewed in the context of a dialectical relationship, then these dimensions of existence provide the ground for human experience.<sup>218</sup> For Jaspers, immanence and Transcendence, which are inseparable, operate within dialectical dualities in transcending-thinking. In his *Way to Wisdom* Jaspers writes:

Fundamentally we can express the reality of the world as the *phenomenality* of empirical existence. Everything we have said thus far: that there is an element of suspension in all modes of reality; that world systems represent merely relative perspectives; that knowledge has the character of interpretation; that being is manifested in the dichotomy of subject and object - our whole characterization of the knowledge to which man can attain - implies that objects are mere appearances; no being that we know is being in itself and as a whole.<sup>219</sup>

The task of metaphysics is to bring out the nature of the boundary within these dialectical dualities.<sup>220</sup> Jaspers seems to adopt certain Kantian critical epistemological insights, such as the Kantian distinction between 'appearance, *phenomenon*, and the thing-in-itself, *noumenon*'. Like Kant, he emphasises that 'the structure of knowledge begins with sensibility'.<sup>221</sup> In the Jaspersian sense, this signifies the dialectic of immanence and Transcendence for possible *Existenz*. In short, as Olson suggests, Jaspers' concept of transcending-thinking is 'firmly rooted in Kant's understanding of rationality'.<sup>222</sup>

Jaspers often emphasises that the world is not 'illusion' but 'appearance', and that the phenomenal world is not intrinsic Being. He is convinced that human beings are able to transcend 'everyday reality' by means of transcending-thinking.<sup>223</sup> Since this existential experience is inexpressible in propositions in ordinary language, one needs the language of ciphers. As Schrag points out metaphysics for Jaspers 'becomes the reading of ciphers'.<sup>224</sup> Thus, according to Jaspers, only through reading ciphers can Transcendence

make itself present to us, and philosophic truth can only be communicated indirectly through existential communication of *Existenz*.

In Jaspers' philosophy, the principle of 'transcending-thinking' in the here and now has three dimensions: World Orientation, Elucidation of *Existenz*, and Speculative metaphysics.<sup>225</sup> These modes of transcending are inseparable and 'united in the single task of becoming *Existenz* in relation to Transcendence or Being itself.'<sup>226</sup> Jaspers' *Philosophy* is arranged in three volumes<sup>227</sup> corresponding to these three dimensions in accordance with the mode of transcending.<sup>228</sup>

The modalities of 'World', 'Self' and 'Speculative Metaphysics' complement each other and they are representatives of one's 'heightened' consciousness.<sup>229</sup> They manifest themselves in moments of existential experience. Such moments indicate different levels of man's philosophical reflection upon his being-in-the-world and existence in general.<sup>230</sup> The initial formal mode of transcending in world orientation is connected with the awareness of man's dissatisfaction with the empirical realm. This is due to the uncertain and inconclusive nature of the empirical world and its limitation.<sup>231</sup> This, in turn, throws back the individual upon himself and man begins to raise questions which involve thinking beyond the boundaries of the objectively and empirically given.<sup>232</sup> As Jaspers says 'consciousness is self-reflexive.'<sup>233</sup> In his view, *Existenz* can be made clear only through *Existenzerhellung*, elucidation of *Existenz*.<sup>234</sup> *Existenzerhellung* gives a description of the subjective experience of transcending one's empirical mode of being. This mode of transcending elucidates one's understanding of self-being, but not of Being-itself. For Jaspers, the questions of Being and *Existenz* cannot be resolved at the level of 'Daseinanalysis' alone; as he says 'the self is always more than I can know.'<sup>235</sup> And this is the crux of Jaspers' existence philosophy that points to an 'other', i.e. Transcendence, which is 'more than the world and self'.<sup>236</sup>

As mentioned earlier, Jaspers' philosophy is concerned with human experience and questions about Being. He thus develops his metaphysics of Transcendence that attempts to elucidate Being itself through an existential human experience that occurs through 'transcending-thinking'. In his view, one's awareness of Being and Transcendence is

'something intrinsic to the process of transcending-thinking'.<sup>237</sup> Olson succinctly summarises Jaspers' position on the dual nature of reality:

It makes no sense whatsoever to attempt to understand the nature of self-Being or Being-Itself as ultimate reality before one becomes aware of what it means to be- in-a-world.<sup>238</sup>

This assertion truly captures Jaspers' metaphysical stand: true philosophising starts in a specific situation of 'being in a world.'<sup>239</sup>

Now let us turn to the relationship between philosophy and science, and philosophy and religion. As noted earlier, Jaspers' notion of transcending-thinking manifests itself in three basic modalities of human experience; namely world orientation, elucidation of *Existenz*, and metaphysics. These three modalities are closely connected with the realms of science, philosophy, and religion respectively.

#### **b. Philosophy and Science**

The development of Jaspers' philosophy of existence stemmed from his disappointment with the philosophy that was taught at universities at the time.<sup>240</sup> In Jaspers' view, philosophy was treated as if it were a science trying to prove generally valid theses.<sup>241</sup> Jaspers believed that philosophy, as a discipline, could not be scientific by simply adopting the methods of the sciences. It would be futile, in his view, if philosophy were an attempt to investigate man as an object, as is the case in other disciplines such as sociology, psychology and anthropology:

Man is an object of inquiry for anatomy, physiology, psychology and sociology. Anthropology – ethnology and morphology – studies his physical existence as a whole. ...the insights remain scattered, do not combine into a complete system. Consequently this knowledge of man always goes astray when it leads to total judgments on man, to supposed understanding of the whole.<sup>242</sup>

Jaspers holds that empirical sciences do not touch upon the very basic questions of human existence. In his view, empirical disciplines reduce man to the status of a member of a class, or species, in society or in a cultural unit.<sup>243</sup> In other words, man becomes an object of empirical inquiry. Such disciplines, he argues, cannot adequately explain

certain aspects of human existence, e.g. man's being in the world in its entirety, and cannot provide objective knowledge about the self.

Science, it is true, shows us remarkable and highly surprising things about man, but as it attains greater clarity, the more evident it becomes that man as a whole can never become the object of scientific investigation.<sup>244</sup>

There is 'no law of nature', says Jaspers, 'and no law of history that determines the nature of human beings as a whole.'<sup>245</sup> Although Jaspers insists that an empirical approach to human existence cannot wholly represent a human being as an integrated personality, he often reiterates that philosophy need not be at odds with science. Being a scientist himself, he never denies the significance and validity of science. Nor does he want to undermine 'scientific truths'; he often repeats that science is essential to philosophy and that they need each other.<sup>246</sup> Both in his *Philosophical Autobiography* and *Way to Wisdom*, he repeatedly stresses the importance of science in philosophical thinking but thinks that philosophy should be independent of science.<sup>247</sup> Jaspers gives a detailed explanation of the relationship between philosophy and science in his *Perennial Scope of Philosophy*:

Today the purity of philosophy must be gained along with the purity of science. The two are inseparable, but they are not the same thing; philosophy is neither a specialized science along with others, nor a crowning science resulting from the others, nor a foundation-laying science by which the others are secured.

Philosophy is bound to science and thinks in the medium of all sciences. Without the purity of scientific truth, the truth of philosophy is inaccessible. Science has its own realm and is guided by philosophical ideas which grow up in all the sciences, though they themselves can never be scientifically justified.<sup>248</sup>

As indicated in the above passage, Jaspers acknowledges the interdependence between philosophy and science, but at the same time he highlights basic differences between them:

The one [science] requires us only as intellect, which obtains compelling insights valid for everyone. The other [philosophy] requires us with our whole being, which encounters other beings in the multiplicity of existence. The one implicates us impersonally in the work of establishing what is universally valid. The other implicates us personally in the continuity of human history.<sup>249</sup>

In Jaspers' view, philosophy requires a different kind of thinking.<sup>250</sup> Although philosophising originates from man's being in the world, from his world orientation, he says, man is capable of transcending the limits of the empirical reality. Once activated,

one's philosophical thinking process may eventually lead to transcending-thinking, i.e. thinking that goes beyond the realm of empirical facts and beyond science. Huber puts this point across as follows:

In contradistinction to science, the cognitive intention of philosophy is directed towards the total being. This opens up a sphere of reality which transcends scientific reality and scientific knowledge. It is the sphere of the 'encompassing' which in its various forms is indirectly present in and beyond the subject-object relation.<sup>251</sup>

According to Huber, Jaspers tries to 'reaffirm the specific character of philosophy as against scientific knowledge, from which philosophy is at the same time inseparable.'<sup>252</sup>

For Jaspers, all scientific investigations and methods employed are operational within the confines of the objectively knowable. He points out that the methodology and procedures of science are prejudgemental and have their limits:

...scientific knowledge is an indispensable factor in all philosophizing. Without science no veracity is possible today. The accuracy of knowledge in the sciences is entirely independent of philosophical truth; it is, however, relevant for the latter, yes even indispensable. Science, on the other hand, cannot understand why it itself exists. It does not reveal the meaning of life, provides no guidance. It has limits of which it is itself aware insofar as it is clearly conscious of its methods.<sup>253</sup>

In his discussion of the relationship between philosophy and science, Jaspers often uses the term 'knowledge', which also appears in the above quotation. 'Knowledge' has various meanings that require some clarification. Jaspers' concept of 'knowledge' is complex, and his use of the term may not always be consistent. He uses terms such as 'objective knowledge' and 'basic knowledge' (*Grundwissen*)<sup>254</sup> in contrast to 'philosophical faith' which represents one's intuitive apprehension of Being, i.e. intuitive insight. For Jaspers, objective knowledge, which includes logic and mathematical knowledge, is reliable and based on the first premises.<sup>255</sup> Included in objective knowledge are empirical sciences which deal with the facts of nature and provide knowledge about the world. Empirical inquiry is involved in observation, experimentation and accurate recording of accumulated data. Jaspers reiterates that scientific reality is attained through an act of objectification. He claims that as Consciousness-in-general our views are based on objective knowledge which is 'compellingly certain'<sup>256</sup> and universally recognized',<sup>257</sup> and shareable.<sup>258</sup>

In contradistinction to objective knowledge, Jaspers is concerned with non-objective forms of 'knowledge' that can be attained through philosophical thinking and based on philosophical faith (*Glaube*):

Philosophical faith, the faith of the thinking man, has always this distinguishing feature: it is allied with knowledge.<sup>259</sup>

In Jaspers' view, some subjective human experiences, e.g. the experience of the *Augenblick*, are matters of philosophical faith that goes beyond what is objectively known.<sup>260</sup> This ties in with Jaspers' view that true philosophy, unlike science, cannot offer any objective knowledge.<sup>261</sup> He acknowledges that philosophical faith is not 'knowledge' in the strict sense of the word, and that it cannot, like empirical sciences, provide us with an objective account of reality. Jaspers' notion of philosophical faith is a contentious issue among some philosophers. In this respect, Wallraff argues that faith is not knowledge but 'non-knowledge'.<sup>262</sup>

As for *Grundwissen*, Jaspers maintains that it is neither objective knowledge nor philosophical faith, but something in between that reveals a common ground for human beings in acquiring knowledge, i.e. prior to acquiring scientific knowledge. Accordingly, *Grundwissen* is concerned with categories and the general forms of whatever appears to our consciousness.<sup>263</sup> It is also concerned with the basic thought structure and general condition of human beings in the world and with the elucidation of these structures. He explains in his *Philosophical Faith and Revelation*:

Unlike science, the unfolding basic knowledge does not lead to any cogent, generally valid cognition. Even so it does not mean to state a faith. It lies on the borderline of scientific cognition and existential philosophy.

and he continues:

In the basic knowledge we work out the forms in which, for ourselves, we are in the world - comparable to the categories or forms of appearance of whatever is thinkable for consciousness at large.<sup>264</sup>

So according to Jaspers, *Grundwissen* is a kind of 'knowledge' that lies 'between scientific knowledge and philosophical faith.'<sup>265</sup> Expressed differently, *Grundwissen* cannot be identified with scientific knowledge nor is it the expression of one's personal faith. Wallraff says that our 'fundamental knowledge' functions simply as 'an attempt to make us aware of the human condition.'<sup>266</sup>

What else does Jaspers say about science? He tells us that 'scientific knowledge' has certain characteristics including 'compelling certainty' and 'universal validity'<sup>267</sup>:

First, modern science is methodical cognition in which we are aware of the methods we use. Second, it is compelling: no one who understands it can deny it without intellectual dishonesty. Third, its general validity is not a mere claim as was made for all past cognition. It is a fact: scientific results alone will spread as comprehensible to everyone. And fourth, it is universal, affecting all that is real and conceivable.<sup>268</sup>

Thus, according to Jaspers, scientific truths<sup>269</sup> are compelling, certain, shareable, that is, publicly verifiable, and evident to those who understand them. Scientific truths belong to Consciousness-in-general and, as such, these truths are concerned with objective entities within the world.<sup>270</sup> For Jaspers, 'the truth for empirical existence is the truth of pragmatism.'<sup>271</sup>

Philosophical truths, however, unlike scientific truths, are subjective and concerned with *Existenz*, Transcendence and Being.<sup>272</sup> In Jaspers' view, philosophical truth is closely connected with man's ultimate awareness of self-being in his philosophical reflections. Only in such a state of consciousness can man, as *Existenz*, momentarily experience the ultimate reality, that is, when possible *Existenz* achieves selfhood. For Jaspers, philosophical truth is 'inseparable from the individual.'<sup>273</sup> This subjective notion of truth, which echoes Kierkegaard's view of truth, is a manifestation of one's faith and commitment in the world. In view of the fact that *Existenz*, Transcendence and Being are not objects in the world, any truths concerning those cannot, unlike scientific truths, be articulated as objective propositions or theories.<sup>274</sup> Philosophical truth, for Jaspers, can only be communicated through existential communication between *Existenz* and *Existenz*. To acquire philosophical truth through dialogical praxis in such communication is an important feature of Jaspers' philosophy.<sup>275</sup>

To summarise, then, according to Jaspers, philosophy cannot be scientific; it does not yield universally valid knowledge. As Wallraff states 'philosophy has no fixed and final set of truths to offer.'<sup>276</sup> Thus, science offers us 'knowledge' of objects in the world whereas philosophy is grounded in our awareness of Being in a non-objective manner. Philosophical truth belongs to *Existenz*, and is closely connected with philosophical

faith.<sup>277</sup> For Jaspers, philosophical truth, philosophical faith, and one's awareness of Transcendence are inseparably linked.<sup>278</sup> Jaspers' existence philosophy is a reflective activity which transcends the objective world, and moves into the realm of the non-objective. It can also be described as transition from empirical being to 'transcendent' awareness which points to one's authentic self.

### c. Philosophy and Religion

In his attempt to elucidate his concept of existence philosophy, Jaspers asserts that philosophy and religion are connected through faith.<sup>279</sup> He often repeats that philosophy is 'the expression of an unconditional faith'<sup>280</sup> and that in essence 'both philosophy and theology are explications of a faith.'<sup>281</sup> Although Jaspers maintains that religion is another source of philosophising, he points out that there is a tension between philosophy and religion as there is between philosophy and science. He says:

Throughout the millennia philosophy and religion have stood in alliance with, or in hostility to one another. For philosophy, the struggle can only take the form of a striving for truth...<sup>282</sup>

and

The philosophical-religious tension is absolute; a genuinely religious person may become a theologian, but without an inner break he cannot become a philosopher, and the philosopher as such cannot without such a break become a religious person.<sup>283</sup>

But despite this tension between philosophy and religion, unlike Heidegger, Jaspers does not break the relationship between the two. Heidegger categorically avoids dealing with the concepts of 'faith' and 'transcendence' in his *Being and Time*, and leaves them entirely to the confines of religion. Jaspers on the other hand believes that this tension between the two enables man to develop his own philosophical worldview. Jaspers marks the difference between philosophy and religion in his *Perennial Scope of Philosophy*:

Religion has its cult, is bound up with a peculiar community of men, arising from the cult, and it is inseparable from the myth. Religion always embodies man's practical relation to the transcendent, in the shape of something holy in the world, ...Philosophy proper, on the other hand, knows no cult, no community led by a priesthood, no existent invested with a sacred character,... Philosophy is a product of the individual's freedom, not of socially determined conditions...<sup>284</sup>



Here Jaspers connects religion with the 'myth' and divine authority, both of which in his view disregard the unconditional freedom of the individual. The quintessential feature of philosophy, from Jaspers' perspective, is the freedom of the individual. He takes the view that philosophy 'sees itself as exposed, without safeguard and shelter', which indicates a lack of 'scientific' certainty in philosophy.<sup>285</sup> Jaspers reiterates this point in *The Perennial Scope of Philosophy*:

Philosophical faith lies in the subjective thinking of each individual, and faith is not supported or sheltered by philosophy. The only strength faith acquires from philosophy is reflection.<sup>286</sup>

Religion, on the other hand, provides comfort and security to many people, particularly in difficult situations.<sup>287</sup> Throughout history man has been able to turn to religion through difficult times in his life in order to feel protected, or purely to achieve self-realisation through his religious commitment.<sup>288</sup> Jaspers does not deny the possibility that man can transcend the empirical world by means of religious faith, and elevate himself to a higher level of consciousness.<sup>289</sup> He acknowledges that religious acts, prayers for example, can enable people to transcend worldly existence albeit in a different form:

What the religions accomplish in prayer and worship has its philosophical analogy in explicit immersion, in inner communion with being itself. ...Unlike religious contemplation, philosophical contemplation has no holy object, no sacred place, no fixed form. The order which we give to it does not become a rule, it remains potentiality in free motion.<sup>290</sup>

Jaspers argues that philosophy does not impose itself upon 'mankind as the whole and exclusive truth for all man'.<sup>291</sup> In his view, many religions are 'a sum of untruths or at best of partial truths'.<sup>292</sup> And he goes on to say that

I do not understand how anyone can maintain an attitude of neutrality toward the claim to exclusivity.<sup>293</sup>

Jaspers points out that 'the claim to exclusivity' does not belong only to Christianity.<sup>294</sup> Although he is critical of 'Biblical truth', he acknowledges the influence of 'Biblical religion' upon philosophy, and their connection:

The Bible and Biblical religion are a foundation of our philosophy, a lasting orientation and a source of irreplaceable contents. Western philosophy - ...is always with the Bible, even when it combats it.<sup>295</sup>

For Jaspers, then, philosophy is different from both religion and science, but at the same time all three disciplines are intimately connected. Despite their differences each one

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Jaspers argues that philosophy does not impose itself upon 'mankind as the whole and exclusive truth for all man'.<sup>291</sup> In his view, many religions are 'a sum of untruths or at best of partial truths'.<sup>292</sup> And he goes on to say that

I do not understand how anyone can maintain an attitude of neutrality toward the claim to exclusivity.<sup>293</sup>

Jaspers points out that 'the claim to exclusivity' does not belong only to Christianity.<sup>294</sup> Although he is critical of 'Biblical truth', he acknowledges the influence of 'Biblical religion' upon philosophy, and their connection:

The Bible and Biblical religion are a foundation of our philosophy, a lasting orientation and a source of irreplaceable contents. Western philosophy - ... is always with the Bible, even when it combats it.<sup>295</sup>

For Jaspers, then, philosophy is different from both religion and science, but at the same time all three disciplines are intimately connected. Despite their differences each one

contributes to the others.<sup>296</sup> Although philosophy benefits from the other two disciplines, states Jaspers, it is one of the tasks of philosophy to reveal their limitations and flaws.

#### **d. Philosophical Faith**

Having briefly surveyed Jaspers' views on philosophy, science and religion, I now turn to his notion of philosophical faith. Jaspers' concept of 'philosophical faith' is a fundamental feature of his existence philosophy, and is closely connected with *Existenz* and Transcendence. Essentially, faith can be described as one's attitude, belief and commitment to that which goes beyond what is objectively known. One could also describe one's faith, in the Jaspersian sense, as one's 'worldview' (*Weltanschauung*) which represents what one holds to be true through reflection. For Jaspers, faith is immediate 'in contrast to everything that is mediated by the understanding'.<sup>297</sup> He explains:

Faith in its appearance is not a matter of believing something but believing in something. In faith one does not possess an uncertain knowledge of an object, such as believing that something exists that is not visible; faith is, rather, the certainty of Being within present existence, where one believes in that existence as the appearance of an *Existenz* or an idea. Instead of leaving, in certain knowledge, this world in favor of a world beyond this one, the man of faith remains in this world; in it he perceives what he can believe in its relationship to transcendence.<sup>298</sup>

It is important for Jaspers to 'remain in the world' to develop a sense of faith and to achieve self-being and authenticity. Expressed differently, man's being-in-the-world is the necessary ground for any development in human existence. But at the same time, man is aware of the limitations of his finite existence, and he knows that the empirical world will not reveal truths about human freedom or 'any individual man'.<sup>299</sup> Jaspers thinks that such issues are matters of philosophical faith and the truth of faith is a matter of personal commitment. Since philosophical faith cannot be universally valid, it does not relate to anything objective within the empirical realm.<sup>300</sup> As Jaspers repeatedly states, matters of faith transcend what can be evidentially known:

The phenomenality of the empirical world is a basic insight of philosophical thought. This insight is not empirical; it can be attained only by an act of transcendence, ...<sup>301</sup>

In his formulation of the concept of 'philosophical faith', Jaspers often links it with Transcendence and self-being. He emphasises that existential reflections drive the analysis of human existence to its extreme boundaries where faith arises.<sup>302</sup> The recognition of the limitation of empirical 'knowledge' highlights the significance and the role of faith.<sup>303</sup> In his view, by preparing ourselves in philosophical thinking, we can face certain threatening situations more consciously, particularly in boundary situations. This kind of philosophical reflection, namely transcending-thinking, belongs to self-awareness and indeed it can help the individual to realise his potentialities and self-being. In this respect, philosophical faith is also connected with what Jaspers calls 'unconditional acts'.<sup>304</sup> What does Jaspers mean by 'unconditional acts'? Although he thinks that there can be no adequate definition of 'unconditional acts', he gives a brief explanation as follows:

Instinctive action is our animal nature in the form of human consciousness; ...it is devoid of transcendence. Unconditional action, on the other hand, is an expression of self-conscious Existenz doing in phenomenal existence, with reference to its transcendence, what it considers essential for all eternity.

Unconditional action, ...is willed as such; when it serves a purpose in the world, the purpose will not be reason enough for the act. In purposive acts I should like to know a final goal, though I can never find one; but unconditional acts need no such goal, since they express a being.<sup>305</sup>

On the basis of his explanation above, we understand that 'unconditional acts' do not require an ultimate goal, since such acts, as he says, are the expression of a unique being, namely one's transcendent aspect. Unconditional actions, then, are closely connected with *Existenz* and Transcendence as opposed to 'ordinary' actions, which are linked to one's empirical existence. As Jaspers asserts, ordinary actions are 'tied to situations in the world. As unconditional acts they occur simultaneously in boundary situations.'<sup>306</sup>

Jaspers claims that there is a tension and struggle between the poles of faith and unbelief,<sup>307</sup> and this tension between the two is an essential component of the process of attaining one's self-being. He writes:

In unfaith the human condition becomes a biological fact among other biological facts; ... Philosophical faith, on the other hand, is the faith of man in his potentialities. In it breathes his freedom.<sup>308</sup>

If the faith-unbelief polarity disappears, according to Jaspers, then 'faithlessness' appears and this greatly undermines one's transcending-thinking:

Faith and unbelief are the poles of self-being; when the tension between them comes to an end, when they eliminate each other as antitheses, philosophy also comes to an end ... for it springs as much from unbelief as from faith.<sup>309</sup>

Jaspers expresses this kind of tension in philosophical faith as a constant dialectical movement whereby various conflicts in existence may turn into 'insoluble antinomies'.<sup>310</sup>

As he puts it:

Accordingly, philosophical faith is forever immersed in a dialectical process of fusion and negation.<sup>311</sup>

In other words, the conceptual articulation of philosophical faith may lead to antinomies of thought and experience which may not be resolved. It may also lead to a form of discourse which may not comply with the rules of formal logic.<sup>312</sup> Jaspers says that one faces *Angst* when one is confronted with such crises in boundary situations.<sup>313</sup> On the other hand, through this experience, one may find oneself connected with Transcendence and may realise selfhood. Jaspers states that through transcending-thinking man's 'authentic being becomes faith, and faith becomes the apprehension of Being'.<sup>314</sup>

One of the most notable characteristics of philosophical faith is its irreducibly subjective roots within each individual.<sup>315</sup> In Jaspers' words:

Philosophical faith is real only in the individual himself, in his experience and insight, and in his reason based upon his possible Existenz. It is in the roots of the whole human being, not by the mere intellect of consciousness at large, that philosophical ideas are heard and understood.<sup>316</sup>

It should be noted that Jaspers' concept of 'faith' does not point to 'blind faith' in something beyond one's comprehension.<sup>317</sup> Nor should it be taken to mean 'irrational'.<sup>318</sup> On the contrary, Jaspers believes that 'philosophical faith must also *elucidate* itself'<sup>319</sup> for each individual in his reasoning to reveal its subjective truth. Reason, he adds, is a vital part of one's philosophical faith.

In Jaspers' view, questioning and seeking truth through transcending-thinking, existential communication,<sup>320</sup> and the unconditional freedom of the individual are cardinal elements that separate philosophical faith from religious faith and dogma. In fact, Jaspers carefully distinguishes philosophical faith from religious faith.<sup>321</sup> In religious faith what is given as

'truth' by the mediators of religion is accepted as 'truth' for everybody, within particular communities, without further questioning. For Jaspers philosophical faith is personal. He reminds us that religious faith is based on revelation, and that it is mediated by Scriptures, institutions and the clergy,<sup>322</sup> whereas the most important notion in philosophical faith is freedom which negates the certainty and protection that religion claims to offer to individuals.<sup>323</sup> The very essence of Jaspers' philosophy is the free spirit of exploration (of human existence and Being) that rejects all authority.<sup>324</sup> Jaspers dissociates himself from religious faith because of its tendency to objectify Transcendence and its symbols. He also rejects the idea of one set of truths that are valid for everybody within a specific religious group. For Jaspers, philosophical faith, unlike religious faith, does not rely on revelation and institutionalisation, but on the individual's subjective truth within the framework of his unconditional freedom.

Jaspers' conceptions of faith and subjective truth seem to be largely inspired by Kierkegaard. But there is a distinction between Jaspers' notion of philosophical faith and Kierkegaard's concept of religious faith.<sup>325</sup> At times Jaspers is openly critical of Kierkegaard's notion of religious faith on the grounds that it is mediated in the name of divine authority. Kierkegaard's notion of 'faith' is connected with the concept of an omnipotent Being, God,<sup>326</sup> within a strict framework that is not compatible with Jaspers' concept of faith.<sup>327</sup> For Jaspers, then, philosophical faith is an expression of one's attitude towards life, one's conduct towards the Encompassing of subject and object,<sup>328</sup> but without a religious commitment.

To sum up, then, for Jaspers, philosophy is fundamentally different from both religion and science. Philosophy, unlike religion, 'has no institutional embodiment' nor can philosophical propositions 'ever be universal and necessary.'<sup>329</sup> Philosophical faith does not relate to anything objective or finite within the world, therefore cannot be objectively known or proven.<sup>330</sup> Jaspers maintains that the content of philosophical faith is 'historic' in that it is closely connected with the individual's concrete historical situation.<sup>331</sup> For Jaspers, philosophical faith is self-reflective and must clearly manifest itself to the individual in his reasoning to reveal its truth. In turn, he believes that this will lead to a



higher level of self-awareness in which man can achieve selfhood. In his view, this is possible through the intuitive apprehension of Being.

So far we have familiarised ourselves with Jaspers' terminology and his views on philosophy, science and religion. In the following section we shall be focusing on Jaspers' notion of 'boundary situations' and the 'boundary situation of death' which will prepare the way to the subsequent discussion of the relationship between *Existenz* and death.

## **5. Jaspers' Concepts of Antinomies and Boundary Situations**

Jaspers' concept of death is inseparable from his notion of 'boundary situations', *Grenzsituationen*. And his notion of 'boundary situations' is closely connected with 'antinomies'. In view of this close connection, I propose looking first at the antinomical structure of human existence and then turn to the main features of boundary situations before we proceed to the analysis of his notion of death.

### **a. The Antinomical Structure of Existence**

In order to appreciate Jaspers' concept of boundary situations, one must bear in mind the importance of the antinomical structure of existence. What are antinomies? By 'antinomies', Jaspers means the 'unresolvable' conflicts and irreducible discrepancies we confront in existence, which constitute a fundamental part of human existence. The notion of antinomical structure is crucial to Jaspers' philosophy, because not only does his elucidation of human existence presuppose this structure, but also the related concept of 'opposites' permeates much of his work.<sup>332</sup>

In both *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen* (1919) and *Philosophy* (1932), Jaspers presents impressive phenomenological descriptions of, and new insights into, boundary situations in connection with the antinomic structure of existence.<sup>333</sup> The notion of 'boundary situations' was first introduced in *Psychologie*. In this book, Jaspers postulates his earlier account of the antinomical structure of existence and the relationship between boundary situations and the subject-object dichotomy as follows:<sup>334</sup>

No matter how true this may seem to the acting human being, he stands beyond all particular situations in certain decisive, essential situations, which are related to man's being as such, a being which is unavoidably given with finite existence; situations beyond which his vision does not carry, since his gaze is directed upon objective things within the subject-object dichotomy. These situations, which are felt, experienced, conceived, everywhere at the limits of our existence, we call "ultimate situations." What they have in common is that - within the objective world as dichotomized into subject and object - there is nothing *firm* or *stable*, no indubitable absolute, no enduring support for experience and thought. Everything is in flux, in the restless movement of question and answer; everything is relative, finite, split into opposites - nothing is whole, absolute, essential.<sup>335</sup>

In *Philosophy, Vol. 2*, we encounter a later version of the antinomial structure of existence. Although the arrangements of the chapters and sections differ in *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen* and *Philosophy*, the underlying principle of this concept remains the same in both versions. The explanations of the boundary situations themselves do not differ much either.<sup>336</sup>

Jaspers points out that when one encounters 'unresolvable' situations, contradictions,<sup>337</sup> and underlying tensions, then the problem of antinomy arises.<sup>338</sup> He describes an antinomy as follows:

An antinomy, ... is what we call an incompatibility that cannot be overcome, a contradiction that will not be resolved but exacerbated by clear thinking, an antithesis that does not round itself into a whole but remains an irreducible fraction at the bounds of thinking. The antinomial structure of existence means that solutions can only be finite, can resolve only particular conflicts in existence, while a look at the whole will always show the limiting insolubilities.<sup>339</sup>

Jaspers' statements in the above passage may seem puzzling. If the antinomies of existence are unresolvable and insoluble, how can one transcend them in world orientation? The answer lies in the understanding of the subject-object dichotomy (*Subject-Object Spaltung*).<sup>340</sup> The subject-object dichotomy points to the connection between *Dasein* and *Existenz*, and between different spheres of experience and knowledge. When one encounters limitations or boundaries of the empirical world, one becomes aware of the interconnection between the 'subjective' and the 'objective' realms. Although Jaspers does not spell it out, what he tries to convey is that antinomies are 'unresolvable' when we try to grasp the *whole* of Being in our finite existence.<sup>341</sup> He insists that Being can be grasped in its appearance only, i.e. 'in the form of determinate

objectivity'.<sup>342</sup> When it is thought of, it splits into subject and object, and never perceived as a whole.<sup>343</sup> Ehrlich elaborates this point as follows:

In thinking, in our pursuit of being, we never grasp being itself; ... It is split into subject and object, into being oneself directed toward another and being as it appears to us. And being in its appearance is always in the form of a determinate objectivity (*Gegenständlichkeit*). Whatever comes to our attention, ... must take the form of a determinate object of thought; the intellect, as form and medium of all thought, requires it. ... Taking this form may be a matter of intimating what cannot appear, cannot be an object, cannot be thought.<sup>344</sup>

Jaspers calls such determinate objects, as they appear to us, *phenomena of reality*.<sup>345</sup> But Being itself cannot be a determinate object,<sup>346</sup> 'as such it would be a phenomenon'.<sup>347</sup> In other words, Being is reducible neither to subject nor object. As Ehrlich remarks, 'Being-in-itself transcends the subject-object dichotomy wherein all being that is for us makes its determinate appearance'.<sup>348</sup> Ehrlich further suggests that Jaspers' periechontology 'builds on the opposition-pairs Being-in-itself and appearance, object and subject, transcendence and immanence'.<sup>349</sup>

It is not clear, however, whether one can actually transcend the subject-object dichotomy or not. On the one hand, Jaspers tells us that it can *never* be overcome.<sup>350</sup> On the other hand, we are told that it is possible to transcend it through achieving selfhood, for example, in boundary situations.<sup>351</sup> But one must remind oneself that 'transcending' for Jaspers indicates transcending in thought. He takes 'transcending' to mean 'to go beyond objectiveness into non-objectiveness'.<sup>352</sup> Transcending is 'a motion of the mind in real existence'.<sup>353</sup> Although Jaspers' assertions are not always clear regarding the issue of transcending, one understands that the Jaspersian concept of 'transcending' refers to 'transcending-thinking' that occurs when one is driven to the boundaries of one's empirical realm.<sup>354</sup> But this does not mean that the individual can literally go beyond or 'out-of-the-world'.<sup>355</sup> In other words, through transcending-thinking the individual realises the impossibility of the unity of opposites.<sup>356</sup> Paradoxically, the awareness of this impossibility makes it possible for the individual to have an awareness of this unity only for a split second, in the *Augenblick*.<sup>357</sup> Only in this sense can one 'transcend' one's limitations and the antinomies of existence. As mentioned earlier, Jaspers thinks that these opposite tendencies are inherent in the antinomical structure of existence.<sup>358</sup> In his view, we think and articulate our thoughts in terms of opposite possibilities and we make

choices. We try to eliminate contradictions and try to achieve objectivity.<sup>359</sup> For Jaspers, these ‘contradictions’ can be partially reconciled and this difficulty can only be partially overcome through transcending-thinking in boundary situations. It is crucial to grasp that antinomies cannot be *wholly* transcended.<sup>360</sup> In this respect, Jaspers is postulating the compossibility of ‘opposing concepts’ in thought in boundary situations. Jaspers reiterates that transcending is possible only for *Existenz* in boundary situations; it is not accessible to *Dasein*.<sup>361</sup> In sum, although one cannot entirely transcend the boundary itself in the strict sense, it is not impossible to transcend, albeit within limits, antinomies in existence by means of transcending-thinking.<sup>362</sup> Transcending is a pure thinking process, it is not *going* beyond the empirical, rather it is *thinking* beyond the empirical.<sup>363</sup>

At this point, I wish to call attention to the concept of ‘boundary’ itself. In his analysis of boundary situations, Jaspers regards the term ‘boundary’ as a metaphor which signifies a ‘critical threshold, not as a barrier to individual achievement’.<sup>364</sup> Kirkbright reflects on Jaspers’ view of ‘boundaries’ as follows:

Jaspers challenged the idea that the ‘border’ is a barrier, or instrument of division, because of the consciousness of thresholds that lead to the discovery of other interpretations of being.<sup>365</sup>

Kirkbright goes on to say that boundary situations reveal that ‘border experience is achieved at a threshold that leads to other areas of knowledge’ by which she means the transcendent realm.<sup>366</sup> In fact, Jaspers acknowledges the existential implication of ‘otherness’ by the term *Grenze*.<sup>367</sup> ‘Otherness’ may imply a realm beyond this temporal existence, and in a sense it is, yet it is to be found in this world.<sup>368</sup> The awareness of ‘otherness’ affirms an inner metaphysical movement away from ignorance of what is not immediately comprehensible.<sup>369</sup> But since this ‘otherness’ is ‘beyond the reach of consciousness in existence’; one is, ‘as Consciousness-as-such’, unable to grasp ‘the specific limiting character of ultimate situations’.<sup>370</sup> Boundary situations require a fundamental shift in one’s mode of thinking and attitude towards situations. This acute awareness of ‘boundaries’ urges one to view them in a new light, and in some cases, enables one to transcend these boundaries in terms of transcending-thinking since *Existenz* is a ‘transcendent’, *Das Transzendente*,<sup>371</sup> mode of the Encompassing. Jaspers tells us that when human thought attempts to comprehend what is non-objective, the

transcendent, it inevitably leads to the objectification of the transcendent, as one grapples with contradictions and antinomies.<sup>372</sup> Jaspers maintains that life is a process of 'experiencing thresholds',<sup>373</sup> and this in turn gives way to 'foundering',<sup>374</sup> in thought. For Jaspers, 'foundering' too is an inevitable part of human experience in the process of transcending-thinking. Through such 'threshold' experiences in boundary situations the individual can achieve authentic existence.

In his discussion of limitations of existence, Jaspers often emphasises the human inability to grasp Being as a totality. Yet in his attempt to understand the world, man becomes absorbed in 'objectifying thinking'.<sup>375</sup> He fails, because Being itself as a whole cannot be grasped by the finite human mind.<sup>376</sup> Jaspers reiterates that Being always appears to us divided into 'subject-object', and not as Being itself. He expresses his view regarding this inevitable split as follows:

We call this basic condition of our thinking the subject-object dichotomy. ...What is the meaning of this ever-present subject-object dichotomy? It can only mean that being as a whole is neither subject nor object but must be the Comprehensive, which is manifested in this dichotomy.<sup>377</sup>

The human condition and limitations in the world make man aware of 'the fragmentary character of being-there', and of the disharmony in world orientation.<sup>378</sup> Jaspers emphasises that as Consciousness-as-such, we do not engage in matters beyond the boundaries of scientific realm. He holds that objective knowledge is insufficient to provide adequate guidance and insight into antinomies. According to Schrag, we think in terms of categories, e.g. 'the categories of objectivity' and 'the categories of actuality'.<sup>379</sup> He goes on to say that concepts like Being itself and Transcendence do not belong to any of the categories. Schrag then asserts that Being 'must frequently have been regarded in terms of some form of objectivity, either as object-being, self-being or being in itself'.<sup>380</sup> However, in his view, 'both self and object remain obscure'.<sup>381</sup> In short, for Jaspers, the absolute unity of 'Being as world or as self remains out of reach' for the individual.<sup>382</sup> As regards the self, man is aware of his finitude and of the impossibility of his becoming 'complete' or 'whole' (*Ganzwerdenwollen*).<sup>383</sup>

In his analysis of the antinomical structure of existence, Jaspers investigates the empirical and the existential self within the framework of subject-object dichotomy.<sup>384</sup> He argues

that Dasein has to be understood in terms of inner conflicts and opposites. He reflects on the inherent 'contradictions' in the self, and asserts that 'Self-being is the union of two opposites: of standing on my own feet and of yielding to the world and to transcendence.'<sup>385</sup> In other words, the concrete human being stands between two realms, the objective and the subjective.<sup>386</sup> As an empirical self, man is in the objectivity of mundane being.<sup>387</sup> He cannot exist without the world, yet he can never achieve self-being without Transcendence. Jaspers reiterates that man gains existential awareness and comes to himself by encountering conflicts, raising questions about the limitation of his existence, and by philosophising. Jaspers says that this is possible through transcending-thinking.<sup>388</sup>

Antinomies, as Kant also declared, signify the limits of understanding in the empirical realm.<sup>389</sup> At the same time however, Jaspers points out, as does Kant, that antinomies are 'a source of strength' and that one should not ignore them.<sup>390</sup> The underlying tension of antinomies, in Jaspers' view, stimulates the thinking mind, and this can lead to 'foundering'. The limitations of existence and knowledge give an impetus to the individual to turn inwards, contemplate, and explore his own 'subjectivity' which is an integral part of transcending-thinking. Jaspers adds that this kind of transcending in world orientation happens 'in a *leap*'.<sup>391</sup> Such existential experiences can ultimately lead to the attainment of self-being.<sup>392</sup>

This brings us to the last point that we shall consider in this section, namely Jaspers' concept of 'foundering', *Scheitern*. 'Foundering' has close connections with both the antinomical structure of existence and boundary situations. It is an important existential concept because the underlying tension of antinomies, in particular the subject-object split, leads to 'foundering'. Jaspers tells us that without 'foundering' one may not be able to achieve self-realisation:

*Everything founders...although the thought that all things founder will initially express despair in the boundary situation, an Existenz cannot come to itself if it has not been in boundary situations.*<sup>393</sup>

Jaspers explains 'foundering' thus: boundary situations draw our attention to the precarious status of our 'everyday' existence. These situations bring out the awareness of

one's transient nature and the inadequacy of the human condition, which accentuate the limitation and predicament of the human being. As Jaspers often says, when we find ourselves in situations that are not in our control, we are faced with profound dissatisfaction and crises. He observes that when we encounter crises, we often fail to come to terms with the situation we are in. In Jaspers' words:

In every boundary situation, I have the ground pulled out from under my feet, so to speak. There is no solidly extant existence I might grasp as being.<sup>394</sup>

Jaspers calls this awareness of inadequacy and the sense of failure 'foundering', *Scheitern*.<sup>395</sup> This sense of failure is an important aspect of boundary situations because such crises can lead to the achievement of selfhood through 'foundering'. According to Jaspers, in boundary situations when one has the experience of 'foundering', one's 'possibilities and freedom cease.'<sup>396</sup> 'Foundering' shows the presence of 'nothingness' and this makes one aware of Being itself.<sup>397</sup> Despite the negative connotation of failure, however, Jaspers turns the notion of *Scheitern* around in a positive way, and discusses the possibility of breaking through the boundaries of extreme situations.<sup>398</sup> He suggests that as a result of reflecting on these unavoidable extreme situations true philosophising can arise.<sup>399</sup> This in turn may open the gateway, as it were, to the realm of Transcendence. For Lichtigfeld, too, 'this concept of limit is the only condition under which we can experience the possibility of Transcendence.'<sup>400</sup>

In boundary situations, then, one may 'founder' in one's confrontation with the antinomies of existence. In other words, when we are confronted with discrepancies and 'contradictions', we sense that 'reason fails us or has suffered shipwreck.'<sup>401</sup> 'Foundering' should be considered as a metaphor for an attempt, as Thyssen suggests, 'to arrive at a conclusive account of Being by way of thinking'.<sup>402</sup> Thyssen notes that 'foundering' confronts us with

the fruitlessness of all endeavors to reach, from a finite basis such as consciousness-as-such or even from self-sufficient *Existenz*, a satisfactory access to Being, i.e., to arrive at the absolute.<sup>403</sup>

Thyssen considers 'foundering' itself as cipher and suggests that 'foundering' is 'a cipher determining all other ciphers.' Thyssen further points out the connection between

‘foundering’ and the eternal aspect of *Existenz*. He asserts that in the experience of foundering ‘*Existenz* touches Transcendence and therein lies eternalization.’<sup>404</sup>

I shall now summarise the main points of the discussion, which are of direct concern to this study. Thus far, we have seen that Jaspers’ concepts of the ‘antinomical structure of existence’, the ‘subject-object polarity’, and ‘foundering’ are inseparably connected with his notion of boundary situations. As already indicated, Dasein is one of the specific modes of the Encompassing that may encounter a threshold which may be revealed in boundary situations. When one becomes ‘entangled in antinomies’<sup>405</sup>, one is thrown back upon oneself, and one’s self-being becomes an issue. Schrag describes it as ‘a movement of transcendence inwards, a desperate grasp for subjectivity’.<sup>406</sup> We noted that antinomies play a crucial role in one’s experience of ‘foundering’ in boundary situations. In these circumstances, the individual will be driven to the threshold of his existence where he may experience ‘boundary awareness’. According to Jaspers, this boundary experience may occur through transcending-thinking. He emphasises that it is *only* in this respect that one may attempt to reconcile contradictions, and be able to transcend antinomies in thought. Jaspers’ notion of ‘boundary experience’ is crucial to our understanding of his existence philosophy and it will be further discussed in the following section.

#### **b. Situations and Boundary Situations**<sup>407</sup>

Jaspers makes a distinction between ‘a situation’ and ‘a boundary situation’.<sup>408</sup> He states that a situation is ‘the concrete reality’<sup>409</sup> which affects human existence psychologically and physically in a positive or negative way. He explains as follows:

What we call a situation is not just a reality governed by natural laws. It is a *sense-related reality* - neither psychological nor physical, but both in one. It is the concrete reality which means advantage or detriment, opportunity or obstacle, to my existence.<sup>410</sup>

According to Jaspers, situations are unavoidable conditions of man’s existence, which may be connected with each other.<sup>411</sup> For example, some situations might be the outcome of actions taken in other situations with which we are faced. In fact, Jaspers claims that ‘existence means to be in situations.’<sup>412</sup> In this statement he hints at the universal feature



of 'being in situations', in the sense that 'being in a situation' applies to every human being. However, these situations may take different forms for different individuals. Jaspers states that our consciousness is an important part of being in a situation because it affects the nature of the situation we are in.<sup>413</sup> In a particular situation, I can evaluate and react in a particular way, but other people's reaction to the same situation may be different from mine. Thus, Jaspers maintains that each situation will be unique for each individual due to our consciousness of, and reaction to, each particular situation.<sup>414</sup>

For Jaspers, boundary situations are notably different from general situations, in that they shake our sense of security and the foundation of our existence; they threaten our entire being.<sup>415</sup> One may experience boundary situations when one's life is shattered by some extreme circumstances that one cannot 'master'.<sup>416</sup> These situations cannot be 'wholly' grasped or penetrated by the individual as Consciousness-as-such, and cannot be resolved by objective solutions.<sup>417</sup> Jaspers describes boundary situations as follows:

Situations like the following: that I am always in situations; that I cannot live without struggling and suffering; that I cannot avoid guilt; that I must die - these are what I call boundary situations. They never change, except in appearance. There is no way to survey them in existence, no way to see anything behind them.<sup>418</sup>

He calls some particular situations, namely struggle, suffering, guilt, and death 'specific boundary situations' to which we shall return later in this section.

According to Jaspers, boundary situations are 'historically definite and unique'.<sup>419</sup> They are an inevitable part of our existence, and we attempt to clarify them.<sup>420</sup> In the clarification of boundary situations, Jaspers observes some fundamental features which are common to all of them.<sup>421</sup> These features include

- the inevitability of the boundary situation,<sup>422</sup>
- the 'unresolvability' of the boundary situation by objective means<sup>423</sup>
- the dual aspect of the boundary situation,<sup>424</sup> and
- the possibility of achieving selfhood in the boundary situation.<sup>425</sup>

The question is whether the general features of boundary situations can apply to each specific case. Although each boundary situation may contain some common features,

they cannot hold for all cases, since each situation is unique. What Jaspers offers here is *not* a scientific theory which can apply to all cases universally. As he often reminds us, we are dealing with human existence and experiences that are individual. Since one cannot ‘plan or calculate’ boundary situations, all one can do is, as and when they occur, to engage with them accordingly.<sup>426</sup> Thus, for Jaspers, ‘the meaningful way to react to boundary situations’ is to face up to them with courage. This in turn, he says, will enable one to achieve true selfhood in such extreme situations.<sup>427</sup>

Let us ponder what it means to be in a boundary situation. What are the conditions for it to occur? Is there a necessary condition? Is it sufficient to be aware of, and reflect on, a specific boundary situation? In order to answer these questions we must draw a distinction between *Grundsituationen* and *Grenzsituationen*.<sup>428</sup> *Grundsituationen* are potential boundary situations, not actual ones. According to Hans Saner, if potential *Grenzsituationen* are not ‘lived’ (‘erlebte’) or ‘reflected on’ then these particular situations remain as *Grundsituationen*.<sup>429</sup> However, if they deeply affect the very being of the individual then they become actual *Grenzsituationen*.

For Jaspers, boundary situations highlight the significance of one’s attitude towards critical situations in life and one’s self-understanding. As discussed before, he claims that in boundary situations, we become profoundly aware of our limitations in the world. But being aware of one’s limitations is quite different from being in boundary situations. Jaspers does not provide a clear differentiation in this respect. He maintains that when we confront these situations as possible *Existenz*, we are thrown back upon ourselves, and a tension emerges from this. Consequently, he says, one’s existential awareness can provoke certain inner action through philosophical thinking.<sup>430</sup> This transition, in turn, may lead to ‘transcending’ (in thought) one’s limitations in the world, which is the initial step towards attaining selfhood.<sup>431</sup> Jaspers reiterates that man gains an acute sense of awareness of Being and can come to himself by encountering conflicts, raising questions about the limitation of existence, and through transcending-thinking. On the other hand, it is possible to ignore such situations rather than face up to them, and to continue with worldly activities in one’s mundane existence.<sup>432</sup> When this is the case, a potential *Grenzsituation* is not ‘lived’ (‘erlebte’) or ‘reflected on’ and the situation remains as

*Grundsituation* for the individual. When Jaspers says boundary situations are inevitable and necessary,<sup>433</sup> he means that it is inevitable that one often finds oneself in *potential* boundary situations. As we pointed out, not all potential boundary situations become *actual* boundary situations.

What exactly does it mean to face up to a boundary situation or 'live' it? Is it sufficient to reflect on it? Or is the term 'living it' used in a more specific sense? Can anybody be said to be in a boundary situation without facing up to it? Are we, for example, in the boundary situation of death only when we are dying?<sup>434</sup> Suppose a dying person, who is sure that he is dying, reflects on his situation. Does it mean that he is in a boundary situation of death? Does it also mean that he is facing up to this situation, 'living' it? If so, one might argue that everybody who is in such a situation 'lives' it. Whether this situation is a potential *Grenzsituation* or actual *Grenzsituation* will depend on the attitude of the dying person. The crucial point here is the awareness of the individual's own finitude. One may reflect on one's situation and be resigned to it in a defeated manner, or deny one's condition in an indifferent way. In these situations, according to Jaspers' criteria, the person would remain in a potential, not actual, *Grenzsituation*. For Jaspers, a 'lived', 'erlebte', *Grundsituation* has a much more specific sense. This situation is such that one *lives* the situation only if one's self-being is in question, and if one experiences existential *Angst* in the face of one's finitude.<sup>435</sup> It is not clear, however, whether the achievement of self-being is a necessary condition in a boundary situation. Can one be in a boundary situation and not achieve self-being? It is indeed possible to be in a potential boundary situation without achieving selfhood. But then one cannot have the existential experience in the *Augenblick* unless one achieves self-being, i.e. *Existenz*. So, it seems the achievement of self-being is a necessary condition for *Grenzsituationen*. In actual boundary situations one's way of being is shattered, there is no security in anything, and one has a profound sense of *Angst*. Existential *Angst* throws one into a sense of 'nothingness' from which an awareness of Being arises. As Jaspers says one has 'the ground pulled out' from under one's feet.<sup>436</sup> He also says that one suffers 'shipwreck', *Scheitern*, which is an integral component of actual boundary situations. If so, then it seems that *Scheitern* is also a necessary condition for a person to be in a boundary

situation. We also understand that facing up to a boundary situation, for example facing up to the boundary situation of death, is to acknowledge such an extreme situation with courage and dignity, and come to terms with it.<sup>437</sup> According to Jaspers, this is possible when one engages in transcending-thinking as a consequence of being in this particular situation. Transcending-thinking enables one to contemplate one's limitation as a finite being as well as one's relationship to Being itself. Facing up to boundary situations then indicates accepting, enduring, and coming to terms with one's particular extreme situation. This also indicates a necessary part of being in a boundary situation. Thus this is the meaning we will follow in this study when we refer to 'boundary situations' and 'facing up to them'.

There is an important point that needs to be clarified here. We understand that one can achieve self-being, *Existenz*, in the *Augenblick* experience in boundary situations. On the other hand, only as *Existenz* is one able to confront boundary situations. But one cannot have the *Augenblick* experience unless one experiences existential *Angst* in boundary situations, which belong to *Existenz*. So, does one achieve self-being before one confronts boundary situations? Or does one go through the experience of existential *Angst*, and face up to the boundary situation before one can attain self-being? Although Jaspers does not spell it out, our understanding is as follows. It is one's possible *Existenz* that experiences existential *Angst* in possible boundary situations. Again, it is one's possible *Existenz* that may face up to the boundary situation. If possible *Existenz* has a transcendent experience of the *Augenblick*, then it can be actualised only momentarily, and only then can one achieve self-being, i.e. become *Existenz*. It should be remembered that this existential experience is a possibility for the human being. It may or may not occur. Perhaps it is more appropriate to call it a 'border experience', as it remains mostly as a possibility. We shall further discuss the possibility and actuality of *Existenz* in the next chapter.

### **c. Specific Boundary Situations**

As we have already noted, Jaspers presents us with four major boundary situations: struggle, suffering, guilt, and death. In this section, we shall only briefly outline these

specific boundary situations. Since the boundary situation of death is the most relevant one to this study, we shall look into it separately and in more detail later in this chapter.

According to Jaspers, in the boundary situation of *struggle*, as possible *Existenz*, we become aware that 'existence is a struggle'.<sup>438</sup> He claims that the boundary situations of struggle and guilt, unlike the boundary situations of death and suffering, are brought about by ourselves.<sup>439</sup> In his view, whatever we pursue in life we pursue with egocentric motives. Sooner or later our objectives may conflict with the objectives of the others. Such conflict, even if serious, may not yet constitute a boundary situation. Serious conflicts manifest themselves in various forms, such as fighting wars, struggling for power in the political and economic sphere, and so on.<sup>440</sup>

Jaspers mentions three kinds of struggle: the struggle for material goods, the struggle for intellectual and social status, and the internal struggle in the 'process of *self-becoming*'.<sup>441</sup> Since 'existence is a struggle',<sup>442</sup> according to Jaspers, when one confronts this predicament one can try to deal with it existentially by taking decisions that are derived from one's own historical background.<sup>443</sup> Existential struggle, for Jaspers, is entirely different from the materially motivated struggle. Existential struggle is not 'power struggle', but it is what Jaspers calls a 'loving struggle', *liebender Kampf*, i.e. a peaceful/non-violent and non-coercive form of struggle in which personal gains are not pursued.<sup>444</sup> For Jaspers, the 'loving struggle' between *Existenz* and *Existenz* brings about a profound sense of self-awareness and reassurance. He asserts that in 'loving struggle', which depends on solidarity,<sup>445</sup> neither side wins or loses, and there is no sense of superiority or inferiority. There is respect between human beings, as *Existenzen*, and they understand each other's potential being through existential communication.<sup>446</sup> As he often reminds us, self-realisation is possible not only in boundary situations but also in existential communication.<sup>447</sup> For Jaspers, the boundary situation of struggle, despite its misery, is inevitable and necessary for human beings to achieve authenticity.

*Suffering* is another specific boundary situation, says Jaspers, which we cannot ignore. He goes on to say that suffering can happen to us without any action on our part,<sup>448</sup> and that it can affect our lives in different forms. It can be physical or mental, either or both

of which may be experienced by all of us at some stage in life with varied intensity.<sup>449</sup> Whether it is physical or psychological, it is clear that suffering can be a distressing and 'limiting' situation in existence.<sup>450</sup> For Jaspers, the boundary situation of suffering is significant because it can be instrumental in one's achievement of selfhood. Jaspers claims that the boundary situation of suffering can awaken one's *Existenz*, so to speak, and bring out 'existential awareness of Being'.<sup>451</sup> For him, since suffering is an inevitable part of human existence, the best way of dealing with it is to accept it and face the situation, rather than evade it.<sup>452</sup>

Jaspers' analysis of the boundary situation of suffering in his *Philosophy* differs somewhat from the one he provides in his *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen*. According to Ehrlich, Jaspers in his early work

characterises limit-situations as being essentially suffering; other limit-situations - such as death, failure, struggle - are here [i.e. in *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen*] regarded as instances of suffering.<sup>453</sup>

It is not clear why Jaspers changed his mind but in *Philosophy* suffering as a boundary situation is one of the four specific boundary situations, rather than being the main boundary situation as mentioned above.

The boundary situation of *guilt* is explained by Jaspers as follows. 'Every act has consequences in the world',<sup>454</sup> and as acting agents in the world we often operate in a self-centred way. We pursue our own advantage for our satisfaction and we cannot fully get away from our egocentric tendencies.<sup>455</sup> As agents, while pursuing our objectives, we may get into situations in which, whatever we do, we fail to meet certain obligations. As a result, Jaspers continues, we feel guilty. In view of the consequences of our actions, we feel responsible for what happens.<sup>456</sup> The sense of guilt, in his view, is an intrinsic part of human beings.<sup>457</sup> According to Jaspers, we cannot always work out the consequences of our actions, which may be detrimental to other human beings. Although we too may suffer at times, as a result of others' actions, we cannot avoid feeling guilty.<sup>458</sup>

Why does one feel guilty then? In Jaspers' view, the boundary situation of guilt makes man acutely aware that his action, or inaction, has consequences that he may not anticipate.<sup>459</sup> Man knows that as a result of his action, or inaction, he may cause someone

to suffer. Such intentional and unintentional consequences make him feel guilty. This is what Jaspers calls 'unavoidable guilt'.<sup>460</sup> He argues that one's sense of guilt imposes on one certain responsibilities.<sup>461</sup> Man, he says, has a number of possibilities to choose in any situation. By choosing one he rejects the other possibilities. If he decides not to choose then there will be other consequences.<sup>462</sup> So, whether he acts or does not act there will be consequences, and he feels guilty. For Jaspers, freedom and guilt are closely and necessarily connected,<sup>463</sup> and man's freedom lies at the heart of his sense of guilt. Since one's sense of guilt cannot be avoided, Jaspers adds, one must, as possible *Existenz*, take responsibility for the consequences of one's actions; one must confront and deal with the 'unavoidable guilt' existentially.<sup>464</sup> It is possible to evade the boundary situation of guilt by ignoring the consequences of one's actions or by disowning one's sense of guilt. However, in Jaspers' view, such kind of avoidance takes possible *Existenz* out of the boundary situation of guilt,<sup>465</sup> and an opportunity of achieving selfhood will thereby be lost.<sup>466</sup>

For Jaspers, *death* is the ultimate boundary situation which may become a distinct 'boundary experience' for possible *Existenz*.<sup>467</sup> The constant presence of one's future death is an intrinsic part of the human condition, and it confronts one with the inevitable fact that one has to die.<sup>468</sup> This certainty of one's finitude can cause existential *Angst* which can be described as the fear of sinking into nothingness. Although one can never experience one's own death, existential *Angst* of 'non-being' in the face of death can be a powerful boundary experience. But at the same time, one's acute awareness of one's finitude may give strength to one. Subsequently, the individual may find courage to face death with dignity, and come to terms with it.<sup>469</sup> Thus, it may be possible for the individual to transcend the fear of death by facing up to it, and to live with the awareness of his own finitude. We shall examine the boundary situation of death in detail shortly.

#### **d. Reflections on Boundary Situations**

Now let us further explore Jaspers' concept of boundary situations. We understand that boundary situations enable one to experience 'the transcendent' momentarily. We are

also told that it is in boundary situations that authentic human nature is revealed when selfhood is attained. The question is whether one has to be in boundary situations to experience such moments. It could be argued that those are not the only situations in which one may experience a heightened state of awareness. It is possible for the individual to have moments of subjective 'ineffable' experiences beyond temporal explanation without actually being in boundary situations. For example, when one is absorbed in a piece of moving music or admiring a magnificent painting, one may find that such experiences are 'timeless' moments that are entirely inexpressible, or 'ineffable' as Jaspers would say. Such profound experiences can activate one's inner thought processes and can indeed be described as heightened awareness of Being.<sup>470</sup> They enable one to experience an altered state of Being in which, as Jaspers says, one dares 'to penetrate the inaccessible ground of human self-awareness.'<sup>471</sup> It is not easy to discern qualitatively what is experienced in these situations from what is experienced in boundary situations in the *Augenblick*. If the success of authentic existence depends on the achievement of selfhood, and if selfhood can be attained in another kind of subjective experience, then boundary situations may not be the only situations<sup>472</sup> in which authentic existence can be achieved as Jaspers claims.<sup>473</sup> In Jaspers' view, however, these situations would not be equivalent to boundary situations.

Could one's experience of boundary situations be related to one's cultural background? Let us consider the boundary situation of death. Death is a universal event and it is a common element which forms a bond between different cultures. In each culture death takes a particular socialised form and is specific; this is inevitable. Thus death as a public fact manifests itself always mediated and always in a social context.<sup>474</sup> So, empirical dying is shaped by the culture. The question is whether there is an underlying existential structure that does not appear without being mediated. According to social norms, the individual interprets death and gives a meaning to his particular situation. It is possible that death may not constitute a boundary situation in some cultures.<sup>475</sup> Or boundary situations may be changed, weakened or may disappear altogether. Similarly, struggle, suffering or guilt may not be regarded as extreme situations in other cultures. In Buddhist tradition, for instance, death is not considered to be a human limitation nor is it significant



for a human being, but rebirth is regarded as an undesirable repetitious human condition.<sup>476</sup> Suffering, on the other hand, is accepted as part of one's karma.<sup>477</sup> The important point here is that one must take cultural differences into account in the discussion of boundary situations, particularly the boundary situation of death. It seems that one's attitude towards death is mediated and shaped by one's specific culture.

Another point that needs to be clarified is the following. In one of his assertions quoted earlier,<sup>478</sup> Jaspers speaks of some major boundary situations including 'being always in situations' and calls this particular one 'the first boundary situation'.<sup>479</sup> It is not clear, however, whether this situation really belongs to major specific boundary situations or to a different category. Jaspers' short explanation of this first boundary situation is ambiguous. It is curious that in Jaspers' view it is expressed as a boundary situation. Some might argue that 'being always in situations' is not as significant as, say, the boundary situation of 'death', and it is questionable whether it constitutes a boundary situation. By Jaspers' own criteria, it seems more like a *potential Grenzsituation*. Being always in a situation perhaps limits one's existence and is inescapable, as long as one is alive, but it does not seem to have the same impact as suffering or death. But we must note that Jaspers himself lays more emphasis on the four major boundary situations: struggle, suffering, guilt, and death.<sup>480</sup>

Related to the above, another question arises. Is 'being in a state of suffering' or 'being in a struggle' a boundary situation, or is the situation 'that I cannot live without them'<sup>481</sup> a boundary situation? From Jaspers' statements it looks as if 'being unable to avoid guilt', for example, is the boundary situation and not the state of 'being guilty' itself. This ambiguity may be due to the translation of the text. It is understood, on the whole, from other parts of his works that 'struggle', 'suffering', 'guilt' and 'death' themselves are specific boundary situations.<sup>482</sup>

Regarding the ambiguity of boundary situations, Paul Ricoeur makes some critical comments that may be considered valid. In his *Relation of Philosophy to Religion*, he discusses Jaspers' 'confusion of specific boundary situations'. Ricoeur argues that human 'finitude' is an ontological concept whereas 'guilt' is an ethical notion. He writes:

Jaspers derives guilt from the primitive, unfathomable, unchosen constitution of existence. Guilt is that very limitation of existence which is espoused by freedom. This confusion of guilt and finitude appears to me to be one of the gravest confusions of contemporary 'existential' philosophy. ...Finitude as such was an ontological notion, guilt an ethical notion. ...In modern philosophy guilt loses its character as a bad *use* of freedom to become the constitutional limitation of existence.<sup>483</sup>

In Ricoeur's view, these two different notions, namely 'death' and 'guilt', should not be analysed under the same title of 'specific boundary situations'. Ricoeur may be right in his observation of Jaspers' undifferentiated terms in his analysis. However, one must note that Ricoeur's own concept of 'guilt' is based on the traditional Christian view and is closely connected with 'original sin'.<sup>484</sup> He does not take into account that the notion of 'guilt' has different interpretations. He seems to overlook the fact that Jaspers' notion of 'guilt' is used in a wider context, and is analysed from an existential perspective.

Another point to consider here is regarding Jaspers' assertion that boundary situations do not change 'except in appearance.'<sup>485</sup> Some philosophers might object to it on the grounds that certain real life concrete situations *can* be changed, at least to some extent. It can indeed be argued that if one's attitude is part of the situation as Jaspers suggests, then the situation can be modifiable. But what Jaspers means is quite specific in this regard, that is we cannot change such situations sufficiently so as to eliminate their character *as* 'boundary situations'. Sooner or later, we all have to face some situations that profoundly affect our lives. In other words, boundary situations *per se* are unavoidable. Nevertheless, each particular situation will appear in a different form for different individuals, and each individual will respond to his situation in a different way. In Jaspers' view, one may adopt either a positive attitude, i.e. facing up to the situation, or a negative one, i.e. resigning oneself to the situation.

A final question one might ask here is whether Jaspers' theory of boundary situations can successfully clarify extreme situations of life. Helmut Plessner, another 20<sup>th</sup> century existential thinker, does not think so.<sup>486</sup> Although Plessner also writes about *Grenzsituationen*, in a similar way to Jaspers' ideas, he argues that such 'boundary experiences' cannot be elucidated by metaphysical theory alone.<sup>487</sup> Plessner's approach to boundary situations focuses on the physical aspect<sup>488</sup> of such extreme circumstances

that confront us in our lifetime.<sup>489</sup> In his analysis of 'boundary experience', Plessner introduces the concept of *Exzentrizität*<sup>490</sup> which implies, according to Kirkbright, 'the striving to reconcile mutually antagonistic perceptions of life [as] part of the inevitable reality of being.'<sup>491</sup> Plessner's objective is to tackle contradictions and obstacles in life in a pragmatic fashion, which he believes is a realistic way of achieving 'authenticity'.<sup>492</sup> However, Kirkbright questions Plessner's concept of *Exzentrizität* as a pragmatic perspective on the perception of reality. She acknowledges that ultimately 'Plessner's concepts concur with Jaspers' *Grenzsituationen*'.<sup>493</sup> Despite Plessner's objection to Jaspers' concept of boundary situations, there are close parallels between the two thinkers. And in the final analysis, Jaspers' concept of boundary situations illuminates extreme situations of life. One cannot deny that reflection on such extreme situations of life provide valuable insight into the human condition.

Having surveyed the basic characteristics of boundary situations, one can see that 'boundary awareness' is a fundamental feature of Jaspers' existence philosophy. One common factor that links all boundary situations is that they are extreme situations of human existence that bring out acute 'boundary awareness' in the individual, and highlight the limitations of the human being within the empirical realm. Jaspers contends that boundary situations provide the necessary ground for transcending-thinking in the process of understanding reality and attaining selfhood. With these background considerations in mind, let us now examine the boundary situation of death more closely. The relationship between *Existenz* and the boundary situation of death will thereby become clearer in the next section.

## **5. Jaspers' concept of death**

In the previous section, we outlined the concepts of the antinomical structure of existence, situations and boundary situations, all of which are indispensable to Jaspers' concept of death. In this section, I shall consider first human finitude in general terms to set the background, which will help to put Jaspers' views in perspective. I shall then move on to Jaspers' distinction between two different meanings of death, and finally focus on the

specific boundary situation of death. This distinction is crucial to the understanding of Jaspers' existential concept of death. A critical analysis will then follow in Chapters Three and Four.

### **a. Reflections on Human Finitude**

Human finitude is a plain biological fact of life. It is one's ultimate limit which signifies the certainty of the end of one's being-in-the-world. As Simone de Beauvoir reminds us 'From the hour you are born you begin to die. But between birth and death there is life.'<sup>494</sup> This undeniable statement supports the view that the awareness of one's finitude constitutes one of the most fundamental features of human existence.

According to some philosophers, including Kierkegaard and Jaspers, human finitude and death are inwardly apprehended.<sup>495</sup> 'Inward apprehension' of death implies the awareness of human finitude, and it requires an understanding of the way in which we deal with *Angst* in the face of vanishing into 'nothing'. In the face of death, empirical studies have little relevance to the individual's profound death-anxiety. It seems that we fear nothingness, and dread its inevitable approach. At the same time, however, inwardly, death gives us a 'sharpened' awareness of existence in the light of the ultimate end.<sup>496</sup>

Death-anxiety profoundly affects existence, says Jean Wahl.<sup>497</sup> It seems that *Angst* in the face of death is quite different from 'the multiple anxieties of daily life'.<sup>498</sup> Existential *Angst* can be described as

the awareness of mortality, of death, that constitutes decision and acceptance.  
...the acceptance of what is.<sup>499</sup>

Wahl follows, in a sense, the Heideggerian approach to human finitude. He argues that if we accept 'what is' then we arrive at 'authenticity' which reveals reality as it is and what we are.<sup>500</sup> Similarly, Françoise Dastur examines the concept of existential *Angst* in her analysis of human finitude, and she connects death-anxiety with *Dasein*'s awareness of 'authentic' existence. She holds that 'it is in anxiety, bringing *Dasein* before itself, that mortality is disclosed 'authentically'.<sup>501</sup> We shall say more about existential *Angst* later in this section. The distinction between *Angst* and fear will also be made clearer then.<sup>502</sup>

Human finitude can be examined in a number of ways. A philosophical approach to human finitude involves metaphysical thought. For example, if death is interpreted as a boundary between the here and the beyond, then perhaps this dividing metaphysical boundary can be transcended in thought.<sup>503</sup> As Olson suggests, one may face 'nothingness' beyond the metaphysical boundary.<sup>504</sup> This mode of thinking implies transcending the realm of finite human conditions and the 'sense' experiences we have. People often perceive death not only as the biological limit to organic life, but also as a metaphysical limit. Finitude as a metaphysical structure highlights man's inadequacy and fragility in the face of death.

There is a traditional view which suggests that any analysis of finitude presupposes the concept of infinity.<sup>505</sup> Accordingly, finitude implies something limited, incomplete and imperfect which indicates a dialectical relationship with infinity, something which is boundless, perfect and complete. It is said that man understands himself as a finite being, and this understanding is based on his relation to an infinite Other.<sup>506</sup> Descartes, for example, offers this kind of argument in his *Third Meditation*.<sup>507</sup> He regards the idea of infinity as an innate idea, which does not presuppose empirical experience. The finitude of the *cogito* is revealed not by the thought of the mortality of the human being, but through its contrast with the concept of an infinite Being. In other words, for Descartes, and for several Christian thinkers, temporal finitude and mortality are not considered as issues arising from man's existence.

In this regard, there has been a considerable reaction to Descartes' assumptions from some of the 20<sup>th</sup> century existential philosophers.<sup>508</sup> Heidegger, for example, rejects this traditional account of finitude and explains his existential account in *Being and Time* in terms of temporal finitude and mortality. For Heidegger, human finitude has nothing to do with God or 'divine infinity'. As Wahl says 'Heidegger's man is a man without metaphysics and religion.'<sup>509</sup> Death, for Heidegger, is the ultimate limiting condition of the possibilities in our existence.<sup>510</sup> He argues that human finitude is absolute; when one dies it is the absolute end of one's being-in-the-world.<sup>511</sup> Although Dasein<sup>512</sup> is free to make choices, Heidegger writes, it is not entirely free, in the sense that its existence is

finite - it is already given.<sup>513</sup> Heidegger insists that 'dying' belongs to Dasein alone,<sup>514</sup> and no one can take it away from Dasein.<sup>515</sup> He proposes that we should face up to our own mortality, and the way to meet this authentically is to accept our finitude and to live in the light of death.<sup>516</sup>

For Jaspers, human finitude occupies a central place in his existence philosophy. In his analysis of death, his philosophising deviates not only from the Heideggerian approach, but deviates to some degree also from the traditional view, such as Descartes'. He differs from the Heideggerian approach by emphasising the 'transcendent' aspect of the self, which is not addressed by Heidegger. In Jaspers' view, *Daseinanalysis* alone cannot resolve the questions of Being and the self. He also dissociates his views from the traditional view of the dialectic of 'finite-infinite'.<sup>517</sup> Put another way, Jaspers' concept of finitude does not depend on the infinity of a 'deathless and timeless' God.<sup>518</sup> He holds, rather, that man is a finite being with a potential to experience infinity/eternity in the here and now.<sup>519</sup> He insists that his concept of infinity does not necessarily imply a Godhead or endless duration in an afterlife. For Jaspers, man's awareness of, and his relationship to death is a constitutive element of his existence in the world. It is constitutive in the sense that the awareness of one's finitude and coming to terms with one's own inevitable death are fundamental issues in human existence. He regards man's existence as a potentiality springing from his finitude, which, he reiterates, is an essential dimension of the human condition.

One of the important aspects of human finitude is that one's own death is not 'experienceable'. It is absolutely invisible and 'non-actual' for the one who dies,<sup>520</sup> but it has a strong 'presence' in one's life. At times, its 'presence' can be more profoundly sensed than actual physical entities in the world.<sup>521</sup> The 'presence' of this invisible power, this 'nothingness', poses a very real threat to the human being as it can strike anybody at any moment. This 'phenomenological'<sup>522</sup> absence and 'presence' at the same time constitute a significant antinomy in human life.<sup>523</sup> Although life and death appear to be mutually exclusive, in reality they are inseparably entwined.<sup>524</sup> Death becomes a part of life through its 'invisible presence'.<sup>525</sup> The permanent possibility of death in human existence and the threat of annihilation bring human beings and death closer, and one is

inevitably related to it. Jaspers acknowledges that even if one cannot experience one's own death, the certainty of death makes it possible to examine one's relationship to one's own mortality. Human finitude matters to Jaspers because the awareness of 'finiteness' not only enriches one's self-understanding, but also enables one to move forward toward achievement and creativity. What is important here is to grasp the existential relevance and the fundamental universality of human finitude regardless of differences of faith and culture and what death means to us individually in our specific situations. For Jaspers, conquering human finitude is a matter of looking death in the face, not evading it.

Having looked at some issues concerning human finitude, let us now move on to the next section in which we shall consider Jaspers' differentiation of two meanings of death.

#### **b. Two aspects of death**

In his *Philosophy*, Jaspers makes an explicit distinction between 'death as an objective fact of existence' and 'death as a boundary situation'.<sup>526</sup> For Jaspers, the fact that biological death occurs is not existentially significant, because the event of death *per se* is a 'general' situation in mundane existence.<sup>527</sup> If I am facing my own death or the death of a loved one, however, then death as a biological fact can give rise to existential significance, or 'existential awakening'.<sup>528</sup> Death then becomes a subjective and a fundamental issue for the individual. Consequently, Jaspers says, death can give rise to a boundary situation.<sup>529</sup> We know that our physical being in the world has to come to an end, and we must acknowledge the finite nature of our being.<sup>530</sup> However, if man seeks to avoid facing up to his own death, then it is no longer a boundary situation.<sup>531</sup> Jaspers' distinction between 'objective event of death' and 'existential death',<sup>532</sup> highlights the distinction between Dasein's concerns regarding death and one's existential comprehension of death, as *Existenz*. Despite this distinction, however, 'the fact of death' remains the same in the boundary situation except its form may be varied. As Jaspers says:

Only the fact of death is always the same. In the boundary situation it does not stop being a fact, but its form is changeable - it is what I am at the time, as *Existenz*.<sup>533</sup>

What Jaspers means here is that death as a biological event is a precondition for it to have existential significance in certain situations. In boundary situations, we are not dealing with 'biological death' but rather how we relate to our own death and what it means to us in our individual situation. Thus in a boundary situation each individual's reaction to his own death will be different. This is what Jaspers means when he says 'its form is changeable'.

Jaspers' distinction regarding death manifests itself in terms of two aspects of the self,<sup>534</sup> i.e. phenomenal/empirical self and inner/true self in the context of two aspects of reality,<sup>535</sup> i.e. 'empirical' world and 'transcendent' realm. This division constitutes an important part of Jaspers' metaphysics, similar to that of some earlier thinkers such as Plotinus, Aquinas and St. Augustine, in the exegesis of human mortality.<sup>536</sup>

For Jaspers, then, the fact of biological death concerns Dasein, whereas the boundary situation of death, which may lead to the realisation of one's true self, belongs to *Existenz*.<sup>537</sup> As we noted earlier, Dasein is an empirical mode of Being in a temporal dimension. It is a part of the world but cannot be understood as an object in isolation. *Existenz*, however, is the non-objective, historical and free self that can transcend objective time. As *Existenz*, one stands timelessly in the temporal order of events. According to Jaspers, as Dasein I am finite: I live and then perish. But my *Existenz* is 'unaware of death', and its 'infinity is unrounded'.<sup>538</sup> In his assertions, Jaspers qualifies *Existenz* as 'deathless' and 'infinite', and contrasts it with Dasein's finitude.<sup>539</sup> But Jaspers' concept of 'deathlessness' is not to be taken to mean 'immortality' in the traditional sense of the term.<sup>540</sup> Jaspers does not suggest an afterlife in another realm. In his view, man is a transitory being, but at the same time there is an eternal aspect to him, of which he can have awareness.<sup>541</sup> For Jaspers, the eternal aspect of *Existenz* is a *possibility* that can be actualised in the here and now.<sup>542</sup> Jaspers' intended meaning here is to stress that *there is* a 'transcendent' aspect of the human being and that man is not something that is reducible to a mere physical entity in space and time. For Jaspers, since one's *Existenz* does not belong to objective reality, it is not subject to the rules of the empirical world. *Existenz* is a mode of Being.



In an earlier section, we noted that in his analysis of world orientation, Jaspers tells us that man is, above all, an empirical existent that has a social and cultural context.<sup>543</sup> This existent being is the subject who is concretely located in space and time, is confronted with the world, and is limited by death.<sup>544</sup> As a temporal and finite empirical being, one always finds oneself in situations, and one is often faced with incompatible possibilities. As Consciousness-as-such, one is connected with the cognitive function of Dasein and deals with general situations. We also noted that as Consciousness-as-such, one cannot go beyond the boundaries of empirical reality. In other words, objective knowledge is insufficient to provide adequate guidance and existential solutions to one's conflicts in everyday life. But Jaspers argues that out of the conflicts of mundane existence boundary situations can arise through transcending-thinking:

The breakthrough occurs at the *limits* of mundane existence. Philosophical thinking leads up to such limits and puts us in mind of the experiences they involve and of the appeal they issue. From the situation in the world, it leads to "boundary situations."<sup>545</sup>

The point here is that the boundary situation of death arises from man's *Angst* in the face of his future death, since death is the ultimate limit in human existence. According to Jaspers, death has empirical certainty as far as this certainty is based on an empirical observation of the death of others, and this is the only direct experience one has regarding death. Although this empirical certainty can make the individual aware of the fact of the other's death, it cannot reveal any metaphysical insight into one's own death. It becomes clear that the ultimate metaphysical knowledge regarding death is not attainable.

When we look beyond the empirical realm, we find that human finitude prompts us to contemplate certain issues, such as confronting our own death, the fear of death, existential *Angst* in the face of death, and so on. The awareness of one's future physical decay and the inevitable disappearance into nothingness causes one a great deal of death-anxiety, what Jaspers calls *existentielle Angst*.<sup>546</sup> He says that as possible *Existenz* when we encounter antinomies, we may find ourselves in 'solitude'.<sup>547</sup> In our solitude, we may also experience 'helplessness' and despair.<sup>548</sup> Jaspers articulates one's dissatisfaction with one's mundane being and confrontation with one's own nothingness as follows:

No reason will sufficiently explain this feeling. It expresses the being of possible *Existenz*, which understands itself, not something else, when it

declares itself unsatisfied. What I feel then is not the impotence of knowledge. It is not the emptiness at the end of all my achievements in a world in which I face the brink of nothingness.<sup>549</sup>

What he feels instead is 'an inexplicable discontent' which leads him into the 'solitude of possibility.'<sup>550</sup> This 'emptiness' and 'nothingness' is one's sense of despair caused by existential *Angst* in the face of death. In these situations, one may try to avoid facing 'nothingness', and may take action in order to move away from the ever-present threat to one's being. As Jaspers says, we can evade boundary situations only by 'closing our eyes to them'.<sup>551</sup> By doing so, however, we also evade the possibility of selfhood, and consequently the *Angst* of boundary situations will not arise for Dasein. In short, in the absence of existential *Angst* the dialectical nature of reality is lost as well as the possibility of attaining selfhood.<sup>552</sup> What is important for Jaspers is that in the face of death one should maintain one's dual aspect of existence in balance. As he says, as possible *Existenz* 'I am real only when I exist phenomenally, but so that in this phenomenality I am more than a phenomenon.'<sup>553</sup> This emphasises Jaspers' point that man is not a mere physical being in the world.

Man's attitude can change towards death, as well as towards life, depending on his views about the world and his own being. He may even hold opposing views regarding his mortality. For example, he may see death as something that he should not be frightened of, and at the same time, he may see it as his greatest enemy.<sup>554</sup> On the one hand, he may feel despair, and on the other, he may feel courage about his death *Angst*. Holding two opposing stands at the same time may seem contradictory to most of us, but Jaspers argues that this is a manifestation of the antinomical structure of existence, and that man is not contradicting himself by adopting two conflicting worldviews in this antinomic tension of human existence.<sup>555</sup>

### **c. Death as a Boundary Situation**

Now let us turn to the specific boundary situation of death and consider it in the light of what we have said so far. Jaspers acknowledges that death is a constant possibility in existence, which can strike anyone anytime and anywhere. For him, death is the ultimate

boundary situation which signifies the end of one's being-in-the-world.<sup>556</sup> However, when Jaspers speaks of 'the boundary situation of death', it is not always clear whether he is referring to death *itself* as the boundary situation, or whether confronting one's own death constitutes the boundary situation. This can give rise to ambiguity, but on closer examination, one can infer that Jaspers' intended meaning is the latter, i.e. facing up to one's own death.<sup>557</sup> Although the death of a loved one is also considered as a boundary situation, Jaspers emphasises that 'the crucial boundary situation remains my death'.<sup>558</sup> He points out that confronting 'my own death' is very different from the experience of the death of someone else. My death means the end of all my possibilities, experiences and the end of *my* world, not the world itself.<sup>559</sup> For Jaspers, the boundary situation of death reveals the existential relevance of death and what it means to the individual.

D.Z. Phillips says that death is 'an event for spectators, not for participants'.<sup>560</sup> To 'experience' the death of other people, which is the only way to experience death, brings forth the reality and 'definiteness' of our own future death.<sup>561</sup> For Jaspers, confronting one's own death is a definite boundary situation and it is personal.<sup>562</sup> He argues that in boundary situations the reality of death is personal because one has a sense of historicity and an acute awareness of the temporal and transient nature of one's empirical existence.<sup>563</sup>

What does it mean to say that one is in the boundary situation of death? One's starting point is that man is a finite being in the world and cannot escape from death. This is a *potential Grenzsituation*, i.e. *Grundsituation* for everyone. If one begins to reflect upon one's finitude and limitations in the world, one may experience an acute sense of existential *Angst* or 'nothingness'. One may have to grapple with conflicts and contradictions, i.e. antinomies of existence, related to one's particular circumstances. This kind of anxiety may be experienced even when there is no clear and immediate danger to the individual. We understand that when one is in the boundary situation of death, one's whole way of being is shaken from the roots and one feels insecure. Jaspers' assertions imply that ultimately, being in the boundary situation of death means experiencing a profound sense of 'non-being', or one's extinction as a human being, in the face of one's impending death. The prospect of death inevitably arouses anxiety in

human beings. As a result of one's foundering, one's sense of nothingness manifests itself as existential *Angst*.<sup>564</sup> This particular anxiety is partly due to our survival instincts and partly to the fear of the unknown, nothingness. Existential *Angst* constitutes one of the distinctive components of existential thinking, which became prominent through Kierkegaard.<sup>565</sup> The phenomenon of *Angst*, the fear of death (thanatophobia) and despair are closely connected with the notion of death. They provide relevant philosophical insights into the human condition and man's relationship to death.<sup>566</sup> It is not clear, however, whether the fear of death implies man's desire for immortality or whether it is simply the fear of the unknown.

Let us now point out the difference between existential *Angst* and fear, as indeed they differ in their characteristics. Fear, in general terms, is considered as a phenomenon in which one is confronted with and aware of a definite object that can be identified as the source for the experience of fear. In the phenomenon of existential *Angst*, on the other hand, no such definite object can be found; there is nothing. This is the fundamental difference between the two phenomena. Existential *Angst*, which can be described as 'indeterminate fear' must be understood in terms of one's confrontation with one's own possible 'non-being'. For Jaspers, existential *Angst* is a necessary component of the boundary situation of death as it signifies one's confrontation with 'nothingness' in the face of one's own death. This *nothingness* is not an object of one's consciousness; it is 'no-thing'. And it is in this state of existential *Angst* that man confronts his finitude and feels despair.<sup>567</sup> Jaspers reiterates that the inevitability of death is 'reason enough to despair'.<sup>568</sup>

There are close similarities between Jaspers' description of despair and that of Kierkegaard.<sup>569</sup> For both, despair is an integral part of one's existence and as such cannot be ignored. They are both of the view that despair should be faced courageously. When one confronts 'nothingness', they say, one has to come to terms with it in silence.<sup>570</sup> Again, for both Kierkegaard and Jaspers, despair in extreme situations forces us to realise that we have an inner sense of emptiness that cannot be filled by worldly pleasures and activities.<sup>571</sup> Nor can this vacuum be filled by any amount of consolation provided by religion. The sense of existential emptiness highlights the fragility of human existence.

At the same time, Jaspers believes that one's sense of despair provides one with self assurance.<sup>572</sup> In his words, despair is 'the font from which we draw the assurance of being'.<sup>573</sup> Thus, existential *Angst* and despair in boundary situations, according to Jaspers, bring us closer to consciousness of the true self.<sup>574</sup> Kierkegaard's influence on Jaspers' philosophical thinking, particularly regarding the notion of despair, is clear. However, unlike Kierkegaard, he presents his notion of despair in a non-theological framework. This contrast between Jaspers' and Kierkegaard's strategy stands out in Jaspers' sharp comment on Kierkegaard. He states that Kierkegaard is 'violently Christian.'<sup>575</sup>

According to Jaspers, existential *Angst* and one's sense of 'despair' are important parts of one's boundary experience. He refers to existential *Angst* as 'the horror of *not being*'.<sup>576</sup> He goes on to say

Nothing but the assurance that will fulfill existential fear can relativize the fear of existence. By its certainty of being, Existenz enables me to control my craving for life and to find peace in facing death with the calm knowledge that it is the end.<sup>577</sup>

But is the source of existential *Angst* necessarily connected with confronting one's own non-being? Can it be said that one's existential *Angst* may also be interconnected with the fear of dying which can involve suffering, and/or afterlife anxiety that comes with religious ideas? Jaspers addresses these questions by distinguishing Dasein's *fear* of death from the '*fear of existential nonbeing*'.<sup>578</sup> He suggests that Dasein's fear of death may be based on the fear of the process of dying, which can be painful.<sup>579</sup> It may also be based on the belief that there will be 'punishment' after death.<sup>580</sup> In Jaspers' view, in these cases 'fear of death rests on a simple error'.<sup>581</sup> He, then, observes several ways of overcoming Dasein's fear of death. One may console oneself with the Epicurean approach to death, Jaspers writes, by adopting the view that as long as one is alive one cannot experience one's own death, and once one ceases to be alive one cannot experience it either.<sup>582</sup> According to this approach, since the experience of one's own death is impossible, there is no need to fear death. But, as Jaspers points out, this line of argument does not eliminate one's existential *Angst* by simply clinging on to one's worldly activities.<sup>583</sup> Man, on the whole, keeps himself preoccupied with his 'worldly phenomena' in order not to confront boundary situations. By doing so, one evades

existential *Angst* as well as the boundary situation of death. Jaspers adds that in one's empirical realm, one may get so involved in such strong emotions as jealousy, pride and ambition that one may lose one's potentiality for, and connection with, one's possible *Existenz*.<sup>584</sup>

Another way of combating the 'vital fear' of death,<sup>585</sup> according to Jaspers, is to ignore the worldly aspect of the self and immerse oneself into a 'transcendent' realm, as some mystics do,<sup>586</sup> or 'yield to nihilistic despair'.<sup>587</sup> But Jaspers thinks that in confronting one's own death, one must not 'leave' the world, so to speak.<sup>588</sup> In his view, mystics lose touch with the world by being absorbed in the transcendent realm. Jaspers considers this kind of approach to death as 'self deceptive'.<sup>589</sup> As he repeatedly claims, possible *Existenz* has an antinomic relationship with the world: it cannot be separated from it nor can it be entirely unified with it. In other words, *Existenz* is in a dialectical relationship between the empirical and the transcendent realm, and the balance between the two must be maintained. For Jaspers, the relationship between the two aspects of reality is vital, without the sensible world Transcendence would be empty.<sup>590</sup> Ehrlich also shares Jaspers' view regarding this point, and states that the mystic 'though he is a being in time and space, is in possession of transcendence'.<sup>591</sup> Being entirely absorbed in the transcendent realm, then, is just another way of evading existential *Angst* and the boundary situation of death.

According to Jaspers, another way of overcoming the fear of death is belief in 'sensory immortality', which may 'lift the horror from the mere thought of not being'.<sup>592</sup> As we discussed in Chapter One, this is a widely held belief in some form of continued existence after death, or as Jaspers calls it, '*a sensory, temporal immortality*'.<sup>593</sup> This belief is generally connected with religious faith or personal 'psychic' experiences. But Jaspers finds any belief in immortality, in this traditional sense, 'unfounded' and 'false'.<sup>594</sup> Although for some, it may be an effective way of combating the fear of death, Jaspers argues that this 'unfounded'<sup>595</sup> false belief will '*transform the meaning of death as a boundary*'.<sup>596</sup> That is, facing up to one's finitude will no longer be an existential boundary experience, i.e. the boundary situation of death, for the individual, and one's opportunity to attain selfhood will thereby be diminished.<sup>597</sup>

The question is whether all beliefs in immortality are 'unfounded' and 'false' as Jaspers assumes.<sup>598</sup> There is indeed no conclusive objective evidence to indicate that there is any kind of existence beyond death.<sup>599</sup> Despite the lack of evidence, however, there are believers who defend their belief on the basis of their faith. In his remarks, Jaspers too is concerned with a matter of individual faith. Some of the Jaspersian notions, such as *Existenz*, Transcendence and Being, are also closely connected with faith - philosophical faith but faith nonetheless. And these are central concepts in Jaspers' existence philosophy. In theory, it could be argued that his basis for his 'philosophical faith' is not much different from the basis of the belief of those individuals who believe in immortality.

According to Jaspers, the individual's 'unfounded belief' will 'deprive death of its boundary character', and the 'horror of not being is then lost. True dying ceases.'<sup>600</sup> One could argue that human beings understand the horror and misery of confronting death whatever their belief is. However much they may believe in immortality, can anybody have absolute certainty regarding the afterlife? If one comes face to face with death, one may still feel despair. In the face of death, can any belief give full relief or a sense of 'exemption' to the individual? The individual may still find himself in the boundary situation of death despite his belief. Moreover, it is not impossible for man to seek his true self, and actually transcend his physical being within the framework of his own belief system, whether it is theological or philosophical. For example, the 13th century Turkish humanist thinker, and Sufi, Mevlana Celaleddin-i Rumi did not need boundary situations in order to transcend his worldly being and become one with the all-Encompassing (God).<sup>601</sup> He was able to find his true self through meditation and dissolving himself into the 'One', i.e. ultimate Being.<sup>602</sup> This brings us to the question we asked earlier whether it is absolutely necessary to be in boundary situations in order to attain one's true self. It is difficult to give a definitive answer. However, for Jaspers' existential philosophy boundary situations are prerequisites for the attainment of selfhood. As Jaspers often repeats, in order to achieve selfhood, the transformation of 'possible *Existenz*' into 'real *Existenz*' has to occur in boundary situations.<sup>603</sup>

In the boundary situation of death what I confront cannot be my 'actual death', since I cannot experience my own death. As Wittgenstein says 'my own death is not an event in my life – we do not live to experience death'.<sup>604</sup> When Jaspers talks about confronting one's own death, he means confronting one's future 'non-being', nothingness, not the state of 'being dead'. Clearly, the state of being dead is different from dying and death itself. Unlike dying, being dead is not painful or fearful, it simply cannot be experienced. In Jaspers' view, there is no doubt that one can experience situations closely related to death, such as extreme physical suffering, being close to death, and the death of others.<sup>605</sup> These experiences, he admits, do not amount to an 'experience' of one's own actual death.<sup>606</sup> Nor do they constitute a boundary situation. He reiterates that death gains its existential meaning in boundary situations when one faces one's future 'non-being'.<sup>607</sup> He goes on to explain that as possible *Existenz*, we grasp what it means to be a finite being in the world through the constant presence of our potential death and our awareness of its necessity.<sup>608</sup> My relation to *my own* death discloses the phenomenon of mortality,<sup>609</sup> and this personal relationship is revealed in the boundary situation of death.<sup>610</sup> In other words, as *Existenz*, one is capable of facing up to one's future 'non-being' in boundary situations, and this is what Jaspers means by *facing up to the boundary situation of death*.

Jaspers emphasises that boundary situations can provide us with a heightened awareness of the choices before us<sup>611</sup> and open up the possibility of 'authentic existence'. Facing the finitude of our *Dasein* releases the potential for 'self-being', but this potential may or may not be realised. In this ultimate boundary situation, what is metaphysically significant is confronting *my own* death as a boundary. Olson describes this boundary experience as follows:

The mere fact that death happens is not metaphysically significant but the fact that in death even "appearance disappears". The phenomenal character of reality does not exist any more and any point beyond this boundary is the bleak nothingness. The effect is the existential awakening which ... indicates the boundary of human experience and points beyond it.<sup>612</sup>

The above passage articulates Jaspers' line of thinking accurately. 'The boundary of human experience' is an important issue for Jaspers because it leads to facing up to one's 'non-being', and this sense of 'nothingness', experienced by the individual, can be



‘existentially shattering’.<sup>613</sup> Jaspers asserts that man’s profound awareness of his finitude in boundary situations causes a great deal of anxiety and despair, which in turn will make him contemplate his own being in solitude.<sup>614</sup> This ‘inner activity’ is the process of transcending-thinking. Furthermore, as Jaspers says, one’s sense of despair in boundary situations may take man towards his selfhood,<sup>615</sup> and through this experience one gains courage and integrity in the face of death.<sup>616</sup>

Jaspers claims that in the boundary situation of death one puts the notion of death into perspective in order to come to terms with it.<sup>617</sup> In other words, one acknowledges, as *Existenz*, one’s ‘phenomenal disappearance’ with courage.<sup>618</sup> Jaspers also observes that no knowledge or assurance can entirely eliminate the fear of death. As Phillips puts it

All the factual knowledge I possess about death as a clinical phenomenon does not help me to come to terms with the certain knowledge that I too shall die.<sup>619</sup>

Jaspers goes on to say that, as *Existenz*, we also have an awareness that if there were no end, no dying, then there would be no *Existenz*. In his view, ‘if there were no disappearance, my being would be endless duration rather than *Existenz*.’<sup>620</sup> In other words, there would be no selfhood without the finitude of life and having to come to terms with it.<sup>621</sup> In short, facing up to one’s own death implies one’s coming to terms with one’s finitude, and accepting one’s inevitable future death with dignity.

For Jaspers, not only facing up to one’s own death, but also the death of a loved one can become a boundary situation.<sup>622</sup> Unlike Heidegger, Jaspers is philosophically concerned with the death of the other.<sup>623</sup> When the person one loves dies, life becomes a lonely worldly existence for the one who stays behind.<sup>624</sup> In Jaspers’ words: ‘The loneliness at the point of death seems total, for the dying as well as for the ones left behind.’<sup>625</sup> The sense of loneliness brings forth the unequivocal truth: *everybody dies alone*. It is, at the same time, a potent reminder of an irreversible situation; *it is the end*. This ‘existentially shattering’ experience is not just another ‘objective event’ that may cause emotional upset.<sup>626</sup> It is an experience that shakes one’s whole being. In the face of the death of a loved one, one may fall into despair, and the grief and pain one feels may give rise to a boundary experience. Expressed differently, one might find oneself in the boundary situation of death. Jaspers tells us, however, that as possible *Existenz*, we may, in despair,

acquire strength from this kind of experience. He contends that although 'what death destroys is phenomenal'<sup>627</sup>, existential communication with the loved one will remain as 'an eternal reality'.<sup>628</sup> That is, when the loved one physically perishes, existential communication is preserved, it will 'survive death',<sup>629</sup> in the sense that memories of the loved one will continue to exist. In this respect, despite the passage of time, one can see remarkable parallels between Jaspers' views and what is conveyed in the story of Gilgamesh as discussed in Chapter One.<sup>630</sup> It is interesting that Gilgamesh's relationship to, and confrontation with death is expressed existentially in terms of 'the death of the other.' When the great friendship between Gilgamesh and Enkidu is severed by the death of the latter, Gilgamesh is left alone, and finds himself in despair. The realisation of the loss of the dead friend brings not only grief for him but also the reality of his own death. Indeed, the death of a loved one brings us to a recognition of our common destiny. Gilgamesh's experience could certainly be described as a 'boundary situation' in Jaspers' terminology. Initially, Gilgamesh does not seem to grasp the necessity of death, but eventually he confronts the fact that all human beings must die, and die alone. He acknowledges that what they had was a profound relationship and this will remain with him as long as he lives. In other words, their existential communication, as Jaspers would say, will not perish with the death of the loved one. Here one can recognise Jaspers' insights into existential communication and human comportment towards death in boundary situations. The death of a loved one may be a potent experience, and may constitute a boundary situation. Nevertheless, as already mentioned, Jaspers emphasises that 'the crucial boundary situation remains my death.'<sup>631</sup> As Dastur says the death of the other can 'never coincide with my own.'<sup>632</sup>

To sum up, we acknowledge that we human beings are finite with a finite span of time, and there is no escape from death. We all are related to death in one way or another, and this relationship shapes our comportment towards death, and in particular to our own death. Jaspers' existential concept of death is centred on the notion of boundary situations in which one has to face up to one's own, or a loved one's, death.<sup>633</sup> Jaspers holds that since one cannot escape from death, one should face up to it with dignity, accept it and come to terms with it, instead of living with the fear of death. Owning up to

one's own death and integrating it into one's existence may lead to the fullness and richness of the experience of life.

We have now reached the end of Chapter Two in which we considered Jaspers' basic philosophical terms, his concept of philosophy, and his concept of death. As we noted at the beginning of this section, Jaspers' conception of 'two-fold death'<sup>634</sup> implies that as Dasein I die and perish, but as *Existenz*, I 'know no death', i. e. 'deathless'. But what does it mean to say that *Existenz* is 'deathless'? This is the question we shall address in Chapter Three.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> In order to avoid repetition, *only* the basic features of Jaspers' terminology will be given in this section.

<sup>2</sup> 'Augenblick' is a term which signifies a very short moment of 'transcendent' experience of *Existenz* in temporal existence. Details of the *Augenblick* experience will be discussed in Chapters Three and Four.

<sup>3</sup> His influence is noticeable in the works of Hannah Arendt, Gadamer, Habermas, Jeanne Hersch, Helmut Plessner, and Paul Tillich among other 20<sup>th</sup> century thinkers.

<sup>4</sup> Thornhill, 2002, p.4

<sup>5</sup> *PA*, p.9. Jaspers' concept of 'limit situations', or 'boundary situations' as they are sometimes called, will later be discussed in detail in this Chapter.

<sup>6</sup> *WW*, p.134. According to Wallraff, at the universities he attended, Jaspers found the philosophy professors 'pretentious and dogmatic.' Wallraff, 1970, p.4

<sup>7</sup> *PA*, pp.45-52

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* p.18

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* p.55

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* pp.34-5

<sup>11</sup> Although Heidegger criticised Jaspers for his lack of clarity, he acknowledged that Jaspers was addressing some very important issues concerning human existence. Heidegger was particularly impressed by the section on 'limiting situations'. See Heidegger, *Anmerkungen zu Karl Jaspers' 'Psychologie der Weltanschauungen', 1919/21, 1973, p.70*

<sup>12</sup> *PA.*, p.39

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* p.84. He and his wife were under threat, because his wife was Jewish.

<sup>14</sup> For example, in *Die Atombombe und die Zukunft des Menschen* (1958) he expressed his critical views of the 'modern' times and his concern about the future of mankind. In *Wohin Treibt die Bundesrepublik?* (1966) he openly criticised German politics, and emphasised the importance of communication and philosophy in the political realm.

<sup>15</sup> This difficulty is mentioned in *PKJ*. Schilpp asserts that 'the uniqueness of Jaspers' procedure comes out, moreover, in his style of writing and in the use of a terminology which is peculiarly Jaspersian. This fact has led to difficulties of translation ...' Schilpp, 1974, Preface, p.xi

<sup>16</sup> Jaspers himself acknowledges that metaphysically 'loaded' terms do not lend themselves to being expressed absolutely clearly. One must, he states, be aware of the limitations of language. The inadequacy of language is often expressed in his *R&E*, *PSP*, and *Phil.3*, pp.92,131

<sup>17</sup> Jaspers uses these two terms interchangeably which may cause confusion at times. In order to avoid ambiguity, throughout this thesis I shall use the term 'Dasein' to refer to the empirical mode of human being, except in quotations from Jaspers' works. I shall use the term 'existence' cautiously since it might be misconstrued. It should be noted, however, that it will inevitably be used in the ontological sense, as in actual presence in the world or as in 'human existence'.

<sup>18</sup> Jaspers discusses characteristics of Dasein mostly in his *Phil.1* and *2*, as well as in *R&E*, *WW* and in *VW*.

<sup>19</sup> I shall use 'Being' (with capital 'B') to denote 'Being itself' as a metaphysical concept, and 'being' to refer to 'existent entities' or 'things in the world' and as a verbal noun (of the verb 'to be') throughout this thesis. It should be noted that Jaspers does not always use these terms consistently.

<sup>20</sup> *R&E*, p.10

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.* p.55

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.* p.107. Jaspers sometimes uses 'modes of the Encompassing' instead of 'modes of Being'.

<sup>23</sup> This translation is cited in *BPW*, 1986, p.141

<sup>24</sup> By 'finitude' one means limits of man's power and his transitoriness in the world.

<sup>25</sup> *PSP*, p.73

<sup>26</sup> Hersch, 1986, p.3

<sup>27</sup> *Phil.2*, p.4

<sup>28</sup> *R&E*, p.54

<sup>29</sup> One clear definition of the term 'concrete individual' comes from Miguel de Unamuno in *The Tragic Sense of Life*. In his view, the 'concrete substantive' is 'the man of flesh and bone; the man who is born, suffers, and dies – above all, who dies; the man who eats and drinks and plays and sleeps and thinks and wills; the man who is seen and heard', Unamuno, 1931, p.1. This is also what Jaspers means by 'concrete individual'.

<sup>30</sup>I shall use the adjective 'transcendent', not 'transcendental', when I refer to one's non-empirical/existential experience or metaphysical realm. The use of the latter may cause confusion with the Kantian metaphysical categories. Kant uses the adjective 'transcendental' in his epistemological inquiry to qualify *a priori* concepts which allows the possibility of experience in the empirical world. As Thornhill also points out these two adjectives are 'synonymous for Jaspers'. Thornhill, 2002, p. 9

<sup>31</sup>The difference between the two concepts of 'Dasein' is such that, for Heidegger, Dasein as an empirical entity can relate itself to Being itself. Accordingly, even if Dasein transcends itself in some sense, it is firmly grounded in the world, and there is no transcendent experience for Dasein. See *Being and Time*, p.78. Jaspers' 'Dasein' is also grounded in the world as one's empirical self. However, this empirical self can transcend the empirical realm and relate to Being in transcending-thinking but only as *Existenz* in the *Augenblick*. For Jaspers, the distinction between Dasein and *Existenz* is crucial. For Heidegger, however, there is no differentiation in this regard. See van Duerzen, 1999, p.115

<sup>32</sup>*R&E*, p.54

<sup>33</sup>Here is a confusing example: 'It is thus not my existence that is *Existenz*; but, *being human*, I am possible *Existenz* in *existence*. I exist or I do not exist, but my *Existenz* as a possibility, takes a step toward being or away from being.' *Phil.2*, p.4

<sup>34</sup>*R&E*, p. 54

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.* p. 55

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.* pp. 56-57

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.* p.56

<sup>38</sup>*BPW*, 1986, p.147. For further details see *R&E*, pp.54-59

<sup>39</sup>Wallraff, 1970, p.194

<sup>40</sup>*R&E*, p.58

<sup>41</sup>According to Jaspers, 'spirit' is historical 'by representing itself in retrospect as a transparent totality'. *R&E*, p.62. What Jaspers means is that 'spirit' in part belongs to the empirical being of Dasein in the world as an integral part of a whole. For Jaspers, the desire to be 'whole' is an important aspect of human existence. In *Reason and Existenz* Jaspers asserts that 'Spirit is the will to become *whole*'. *Ibid.*p.62

<sup>42</sup>Jaspers claims that the individual as 'spirit' is 'the unity of contingent individuals and of the necessary universal.' *R&E*, p.62

<sup>43</sup>*R&E*, p.57

<sup>44</sup>Schrag, 1965, p.168

<sup>45</sup>*R&E*, p.57

<sup>46</sup>Salamun, 1988, p.318, and Salamun, 1998, p.218. This is also discussed in Kiel's conference paper, *Drei Thesen zur philosophischen Logik von Karl Jaspers*, 1998, Schema V, p.2

<sup>47</sup>*BPW*, 1986, pp.149-150

<sup>48</sup>*R&E*, p.58

<sup>49</sup>*Ibid.* p.62

<sup>50</sup>Wallraff, 1970, p.206

<sup>51</sup>It must be made absolutely clear at the outset that *Existenz* is a term used to refer to the transcendent aspect of one's self, and *not* to a particular existent person. The term '*Existenz*' does not reify this particular mode of human being as a distinct entity. Jaspers has been criticised for using the term *Existenz* as if it were a human being, e.g. in phrases of the kind '*Existenz* does such and such'. In order to avoid this kind of criticism I shall use the term *Existenz* in *italics* throughout this thesis (except in quotations). Assertions regarding '*Existenz* does such and such' should therefore be interpreted as 'the human individual as *Existenz*, i.e. having, at least momentarily, realised his self-being, does such and such'.

<sup>52</sup>*Phil.1*, pp.12-14, and *R&E*, p.62

<sup>53</sup>*Phil.1*, p.13

<sup>54</sup>Hersch, 1986, p.5. See also *PFR*, 1967, p.107

<sup>55</sup>The issue of the possibility and actuality of *Existenz* will be discussed in Chapter Three.

<sup>56</sup>Hersch, 1986, p.4

<sup>57</sup>*Phil.2*, pp.196-197 and *R&E*, p.111

<sup>58</sup>*BPW*, 1986, p.154

<sup>59</sup>Jaspers discusses the concept of 'self-being' in *Phil.2*, p.34 and uses the terms '*Existenz*' and 'self-being' interchangeably. He writes in *VW* that 'Self-being is *Existenz*', p.76. Since *Existenz* is a mode of being, an

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aspect of the self, at times Jaspers also refers to it as one's 'inner self' or 'true self'. It should be noted that at times both of these terms will also be used to refer to *Existenz* in this study.

<sup>60</sup> Hartt, 1950, p.250. See also *VW*, pp.50,77

<sup>61</sup> *Phil.2*, pp.6-7

<sup>62</sup> *Phil.2*, pp.7-9

<sup>63</sup> The diagram is in *VW*, p.142

<sup>64</sup> *Phil.1*, p.48. It should be noted that Jaspers uses 'Being itself' and 'Being in itself' interchangeably.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> *PSP*, p.12, and *VW*, p.85

<sup>67</sup> In *Von der Wahrheit* Jaspers writes: 'Die Welt macht möglich, daß wir sind, und was wir sind und sein können.' *VW*, p.92 which may be translated as: 'The world makes it possible that we are, what we are, and what we can be.'

<sup>68</sup> Wallraff, 1970, p.194. See also *VW*, p.110

<sup>69</sup> Olson, 1979, p.111

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> *Phil.1*, p.77

<sup>72</sup> This is similar to Plato's view that the Intelligible is necessarily related to the 'Sensible' world. *Parmenides* 135B (see also Stewart, 1964, p.79)

<sup>73</sup> Wallraff, 1970, p.33

<sup>74</sup> *R&E*, p.59

<sup>75</sup> Hartt, 1950, p.248. It is true that for Jaspers, both Transcendence and *Existenz* cannot be defined because any definition would make them what they cannot become, i.e. an object of thought. Transcendence, like *Existenz*, is a presence that can manifest itself through one's awareness.

<sup>76</sup> *Phil.1*, p.62

<sup>77</sup> *R&E*, p.60

<sup>78</sup> Jaspers emphasises that Transcendence cannot be defined by any 'predicate'. *Phil.3*, p.35. Wallraff stresses this point by asserting that Transcendence is not 'a relation or a ground, and it is not one, not many, not being, not nothing', Wallraff, 1970, p.183. In Jaspers' view, thinking individuals become aware that there is another realm which goes beyond empirical existence. This realm cannot be defined precisely, but one can say something about it in negative terms. In other words, it is expressed in terms of 'what it is not' and not 'what it is'. We shall discuss the issue of expressing metaphysical concepts in negative terminology under the heading of 'Qualified Negativity' in Chapter Four.

<sup>79</sup> Wallraff, 1970, p.183

<sup>80</sup> *das Umgreifende* is translated sometimes as 'the Encompassing' and sometimes as 'the Comprehensive'. I shall use the term 'the Encompassing' throughout the thesis except in quotations. For fully detailed account of the Encompassing see *R&E*, pp.51-76

<sup>81</sup> *PSP*, p.9. Another description of it is as follows: 'The encompassing is the one transcendence and the one source that brings and holds all beings together.' *A Companion to the Philosophers*, 1999, p.336

<sup>82</sup> *R&E*, p.60,74

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.* p.52

<sup>84</sup> *BPW*, 1986, pp.26-27 (in *VW*, pp.37-42)

<sup>85</sup> Wallraff makes some useful comments regarding Jaspers' notion of 'horizon': 'One can never remove the horizon though he can expand it by climbing higher. ...Beyond the horizon lies a limitless expanse that, though unseen, is somehow patently *there*. If we allow the visible area to represent the scientific world within which we orient ourselves, the horizon to stand for the boundary that limits our orientations, and the territory beyond the horizon to signify the field allotted to philosophy, then we can think of philosophy as initially and basically an obscure but overpowering awareness of the untold immensity and portentousness of that which encompasses all that is present to us.' Wallraff, 1970, p.192

<sup>86</sup> *R&E*, p.52

<sup>87</sup> Hartt, 1950, p.248

<sup>88</sup> *R&E*, p.62

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.* p.60

- <sup>90</sup> *PSP*, p.12. Jaspers makes a distinction as follows: a) 'Being that we are' indicates that one becomes conscious of one's own being in different modes, namely, 'Dasein', 'Consciousness-as-such', 'Spirit' and *Existenz*. And b) 'Being in itself' that which surrounds us is called 'Transcendence'.
- <sup>91</sup> According to Lewis Gordon, Jaspers 'locates truth in the dialogical reality of communication'. Gordon and Marsh, 1999, p.145. For a detailed analysis of existential communication see *Phil.2*, pp.47-100
- <sup>92</sup> *Phil.2*, p.56. According to Jaspers, the actualisation of self-being, *Existenz*, is possible on two conditions: in existential communication and in boundary situations.
- <sup>93</sup> *Ibid.* pp.50-55
- <sup>94</sup> *Phil. 2*, p.54 and also in *VW*, pp.377, 546
- <sup>95</sup> *Phil.2*, pp.56-57,73
- <sup>96</sup> *Ibid.* pp.98-99. Jaspers calls this mode of communication a form of 'essentially philosophical dialogue'. *Ibid.* p.101
- <sup>97</sup> *Ibid.* pp.82-84. Jaspers often reminds us that there is no 'fixed formula' about questions regarding man's existence. (*WW*, p.169) Kurt Salamun emphasises this point in his article by stating that one must not 'force one's own dogmatic standards of behaviour upon others'. Salamun, 1998, p.220
- <sup>98</sup> *Phil.2*, p.65
- <sup>99</sup> Jaspers seems to overlook the view that communication between individuals is not always constructive; in fact it can be a hindering factor in one's self-actualisation. Kirkbright picks up this point and points out that 'The situations when other individuals and their opinions become barriers to self-development remain largely unaccounted for by Jaspers' theory of existence.' Kirkbright, 1997, p.52
- <sup>100</sup> *Phil.2*, p.56
- <sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>102</sup> *PA*, 1974, p.85
- <sup>103</sup> *Phil.2*, p.56
- <sup>104</sup> *Ibid.* pp.56-57
- <sup>105</sup> Jaspers' account of historicity can be found in his *Phil.2*, pp.104-107, in *BPW*, 1986, pp.104-128, 79-87, and in *VW*, p.82
- <sup>106</sup> *BPW*, 1986, p.79
- <sup>107</sup> Walraff, 1970, p.208. For Jaspers, the unity of *Existenz* and Dasein becomes a 'historic' phenomenon. Although Jaspers considers this unity as a paradoxical occurrence, he contends that the synthesis of opposites is possible. *Phil.2*, pp.121-122
- <sup>108</sup> *R&E*, p. 118
- <sup>109</sup> See *BPW*, 1986, pp.80-81. Ehrlich makes a clear distinction between 'historical' and 'historic' as follows. 'Historical' is correlative with the noun 'history', meaning the course, the account and the interpretation of events; it corresponds to the German 'Geschichte'. 'Historic', on the other hand, is correlative with the noun 'historicity', in German 'Geschichtlichkeit', meaning the circumstance that realities transcending the temporality of events – such as ideas, purposes, selfhood – become actual only in time and by virtue of deliberate human activity.' *Ibid.* p.241, footnote 50
- <sup>110</sup> *Phil.2*, p.105 and see *BPW*, 1986, p.82
- <sup>111</sup> *Phil.2*, pp.110, 116
- <sup>112</sup> *Armour*, 2003, p.13
- <sup>113</sup> *Phil.2*, p.104. A reasonable description of the relationship between *Existenz* and historicity is as follows: 'Existenz as historicity, is the reality of the lived moment, over against the traditional view of history as the flow of both time and events. It is the non-repeatable personal history of the self's moments, including risks, decisions and anticipated consequences.' (Arrington, 1999, p.335) Ehrlich refers to 'historicity' as one's 'active decision which is in time but of eternal validity.' Ehrlich, 1975, p.43
- <sup>114</sup> *Phil.2*, p. 104. Jaspers regards 'knowledge about history' as 'historical consciousness'. *BPW*, 1986, p.80. This is in contrast to 'historic consciousness' which is 'personal in origin'. *Ibid.* p.81
- <sup>115</sup> Olson, 1979, p.25. Historicity is the non-repeatable personal history of the self's moments.
- <sup>116</sup> *Phil.2*, pp.109-110, See also Walraff, 1970, p.209. When Jaspers speaks of freedom, he is referring to the individual's freedom of choice. Accordingly, in this world I am limited, yet I am free to make my own choices. At the same time, my freedom is always limited by my circumstances.
- <sup>117</sup> *Phil.2*, p.105 and *BPW*, 1986, p.81
- <sup>118</sup> *Phil.2*, p.105. Jaspers considers man as the product of the past.

<sup>119</sup> *Phil.2*, p.106 and *BPW*, 1986, p.81. See also Olson, 1979, p.25

<sup>120</sup> *Phil.2*, pp.108,116

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.* pp.104-105

<sup>122</sup> Bollnow criticises Jaspers regarding the 'existential interpretation of history' in his article *Existenzphilosophie und Geschichte*, 1973, pp.235-273. Bollnow seems to suggest that Jaspers' view of history is somewhat 'limited', and has no 'practical purpose'. (*Ibid.* p.263) However, according to Kirkbright, Bollnow 'overlooked how Jaspers stressed the ability of individuals to change and shape the course of history'. Kirkbright, 1997, pp.49-50, (fn. 67,68)

<sup>123</sup> *WW*, p.96. See also *OGH*

<sup>124</sup> *R&E*, p. 64

<sup>125</sup> In Wallraff's view, because of the radical tensions and conflicts in our empirical existence, we need to seek 'as much unity as possible' and this is the 'task of reason.' Wallraff, 1970, p.213

<sup>126</sup> *R&E*, p. 66

<sup>127</sup> Schrag, 1965, p.172

<sup>128</sup> *R&E*, p.110

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.* p.67

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.* pp.64-67

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 66-67

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.* pp.69-70. In this respect, Jaspers closely follows the Kantian distinction of appearance and Being-in-itself, i.e. what Kant calls 'the unknowable reality'. See *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, 1995, p.557

<sup>133</sup> *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, p.320

<sup>134</sup> See *Phil.3*, pp.113-158. Jaspers distinguishes 'symbols' from 'ciphers'. He claims that 'symbols' objectify what they symbolise whereas 'ciphers' do not. *Phil.3*, pp.118,128. Ciphers are a kind of 'intuitive symbols'. See Ehrlich & Wisser, 1988, p.203

<sup>135</sup> It should be noted that Jaspers uses the term 'cipher' in two ways: sometimes it refers to the existential language (of Transcendence) by means of which we read or interpret things in the world, what exists. Sometimes, however, it refers to the entity that exists. See *Phil.3*, p.106. Although this may give rise to complications, if one is aware of this distinction, Jaspers' intended meaning can be understood depending on the context in which it appears. At times ciphers will be brought into discussion, but to deal with them comprehensively would be beyond the scope of this study.

<sup>136</sup> *Phil.3*, p.114

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.* pp.113, 129. Wallraff thinks that only *Existenz* 'can read them as they were originally intended to be read.' Wallraff, 1970, p.187

<sup>138</sup> *BPW*, 1986, p.330

<sup>139</sup> *Phil.3*, p.120

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.* p.148. Wallraff adds that ciphers are 'meaningful and "transparent" to those who have learned to respond to them.' Wallraff, 1970, p.186

<sup>141</sup> *Phil.3*, pp.123, 129, 131. Jaspers makes it clear that ciphers remain ambiguous, indefinite and in 'unfixed forms', i.e. open ended.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.* p.132

<sup>143</sup> Wallraff, 1970, p.186

<sup>144</sup> *Phil.3*, p.114. Also see Salamun, 1998, pp.218-219

<sup>145</sup> According to Jean Wahl, ciphers represent 'a symbolic knowledge far removed from any rational ontology.' Wahl, 1949, p.36

<sup>146</sup> *Phil.3*, pp.132,147. Jaspers says that 'there is nothing that could not be a cipher.'

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.* p.132

<sup>148</sup> For Jaspers, Transcendence is itself 'in the original cipher'. *Phil.3*, p.123

<sup>149</sup> *Phil.3*, pp.116-133

<sup>150</sup> 'Grenzsituation' is translated sometimes as 'boundary situation' or 'limit situation' or 'ultimate situation' and sometimes as 'border situation'. I shall mostly be using the term 'boundary situation', however, at times the other terms will also be used depending on the context and the translation. This should not make a difference to the meaning of the term. In order to avoid repetition, we shall only briefly outline boundary situations here, since they will be discussed in detail later in this chapter.



- <sup>151</sup> *Phil.2*, p.178
- <sup>152</sup> Kaegi, 2002, p.5. See also *Phil.2*, p.178
- <sup>153</sup> Jaspers calls them 'nontransparent', *Phil.2*, p.181
- <sup>154</sup> *Ibid.* p.178
- <sup>155</sup> *Ibid.* p.183
- <sup>156</sup> Lichtigfeld, 1954, pp.21-24
- <sup>157</sup> *Phil.2*, p.178
- <sup>158</sup> *Ibid.* p.179
- <sup>159</sup> Jaspers calls these conflicts or opposing tendencies 'antinomies' which will be discussed later in this Chapter. See also *Phil.2*, pp.182-184 where Jaspers talks about the contradictions involved in the duality of existence, e.g. immanence and Transcendence, life and death, and so on. For him 'Seeming contradictions coexist in the duality'. *Ibid.* p.183
- <sup>160</sup> *Phil.2*, p.179
- <sup>161</sup> Lichtigfeld, 1954, p.21
- <sup>162</sup> Jaspers discusses this relationship in *Phil.1*, *WW*, and *PSP*
- <sup>163</sup> A full account of Jaspers' concept of existence philosophy cannot be given here. For our present purposes, only the relevant aspects to this thesis will be covered.
- <sup>164</sup> Huber, 1986, p.10
- <sup>165</sup> According to Weiss, the term 'philosophising' highlights 'the activity of doing philosophy' whereas the term 'philosophy' 'suggests an existing body of doctrine'. Weiss, 1999, p.253
- <sup>166</sup> Grabau also makes an astute comment on this particular point in Jaspers' *Philosophy of Existence*: 'By using this term Jaspers stresses the fact that philosophy is an activity, a movement of thought that knows no end and produces no set of doctrines, theories, or even concepts. Philosophizing is a process of thinking as inner action in which the thinker comes to an authentic awareness of himself and reality by pressing beyond or transcending everything objective.' See Preface, p.xii. See also Kaufmann, 1968, p.25
- <sup>167</sup> *Phil.1*, p.13
- <sup>168</sup> *Ibid.* p.21
- <sup>169</sup> *Ibid.* p.xiv
- <sup>170</sup> *Ibid.* pp.xv, 2. One can delineate Jaspers' notion of philosophy, in a sense, as a way of life which helps to comprehend reality in one's comportment toward oneself and also in communication between individuals since existence involves 'being-with-others'. Eleanor Atcherley expresses remarkably similar thoughts in her *Life and Death – Musings*. Atcherley, 1937, p.4ff
- <sup>171</sup> Jaspers' philosophical ideas do not comply with the traditional schools of thought. He takes neither a 'Rationalist' nor an 'Empiricist' stand. He develops a different perspective in his philosophising, which he sees as relevant to modern society. He attempts to take philosophy out of its 'ivory tower' and relate it to the concrete individual in the world. This is an indication of his genuine concern with the human condition.
- <sup>172</sup> *Phil.1*, p.52
- <sup>173</sup> Schilpp, 1974, Preface, p.xi. Wittgenstein too regards philosophy as an activity rather than a 'body of doctrine' and maintains that the task of philosophy is elucidation of thought and talk. *Tractatus*, 4.112
- <sup>174</sup> See *PA*, 1974, p.26. For Jaspers, philosophy should be of practical use in one's life rather than a theoretical issue. *Phil.1*, pp.7,10,17. Wallraff too concurs with Jaspers' view that 'philosophy is not primarily an academic matter.' Wallraff, 1970, p.131
- <sup>175</sup> *PA*, 1974, p.5
- <sup>176</sup> *Phil.1*, pp.10,13,17. It is interesting to note that this concept of 'life activity' is also articulated by Oscar Wilde. He says that 'life cannot be written; life can only be lived.' See McCann, 1969, p.105
- <sup>177</sup> Olson, 1979, p.7
- <sup>178</sup> *WW*, p.13
- <sup>179</sup> *Phil.1*, p.7. Wallraff calls this practical aspect of Dasein '*Lebenswelt*' or 'world of lived experience'. Wallraff, 1970, p.194
- <sup>180</sup> *Phil.1*, p.21
- <sup>181</sup> *Ibid.* pp.44-45
- <sup>182</sup> Jaspers discusses man's situation in the world and his awareness of his predicament extensively in *The Perennial Scope of Philosophy*, pp. 47-74 under the heading of 'Man'. Sometimes Jaspers' existence philosophy is characterized as a description of the predicament and crises of human existence. Some

philosophers, on the other hand, do not find human existence problematic. For example, Antony Flew's comments on this are as follows: 'What is the problem of human existence, when it is not the scientific problem of the origin of species but a philosophical problem? How would Jaspers have had to begin had he seen his problem as one which could be set and solved in a businesslike way?', Flew, *Personal Communication*, p.3, 2004

<sup>183</sup> In this respect, Plotinus too writes about 'the movement of the soul' in the sense of one's inner activity. Cf. Smith, 1996, p.205

<sup>184</sup> Jaspers writes in his *Man in the Modern Age*: 'Existence philosophy is the way of thought by means of which man seeks to become himself'. *MMA*, p.159

<sup>185</sup> *WW*, p.15

<sup>186</sup> *PSP*, pp.20-21

<sup>187</sup> Olson, 1979, p.45. Olson asserts that, for Jaspers, 'Plato represents the first decisive breakthrough in the history of philosophy.' He goes on to say that 'Plato turned from the materialistic orientation of Pre-Socratic philosophy towards an investigation of the nature of thinking itself, i.e. reflective thinking.' *Ibid.*p.59. The reflective aspect of philosophy attracts Jaspers. See *WW*, p.138

<sup>188</sup> Olson, 1979, p.45. Olson suggests that transcending-thinking would not be possible 'without historical consciousness' *Ibid.* p.53. See also *Phil. 1*, pp. 2,11. According to Wisser, Jaspers' philosophy is not only 'the appropriation of tradition' but also 'the differentiation, i.e. the consciousness of "one's own philosophizing"'. Wisser, 1997, p.328

<sup>189</sup> *Phil. 1*, p.11

<sup>190</sup> It is, in Jaspers' own words, 'the one eternal philosophy' *WW*, p.16. Wallraff too speaks of the significance of 'timeless philosophy'. He says that 'timeless philosophy – *philosophia perennis* as it is frequently called – provides no generally accepted and infeasible conclusions. Philosophy is, as Diotima told Socrates, the love rather than the possession of wisdom. It is the activity of philosophising and not any specific philosophic creed that counts.' Wallraff, 1970, Preface, p.xii

<sup>191</sup> Wallraff, 1970, p. 212. See also *R&E*, p.153 and *WW*, p.16

<sup>192</sup> *PEx*, p.3

<sup>193</sup> Huber, 1986, p.10

<sup>194</sup> Jaspers describes his concept of metaphysics as follows: 'Metaphysics is that part of my philosophy which ... involves the elucidation of the consciousness of Being in terms of the structure of the world.' This description appears in the Foreword of Lichtigfeld's *Jaspers' Metaphysics*, 1954

<sup>195</sup> *Phil. 1*, p.43. Both Jaspers and Heidegger challenge the mode of traditional philosophising and question its relevance in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>196</sup> Jaspers explains what he means by 'Being itself': 'When I conceive of this being in the abstract, the way it is independently of its being an object for a subject –that is to say, not as a phenomenon for something else-I call it *being in itself*.' *Phil. 1*, p.47

<sup>197</sup> *PSP*, pp.54,60 and *Phil. 1*, p.44

<sup>198</sup> Jaspers' philosophy of existence involves transcending the subject-object division, i.e. thinking beyond boundaries. The question of subject-object dichotomy will be discussed later in this chapter in connection with the antinomic structure of existence.

<sup>199</sup> As we already noted, for Jaspers, the Encompassing is the totality 'as the ground of all Being and as such it is the basic philosophical ground.' Schrag, 1965, p.165, and also in the *PSP*, pp.9-12

<sup>200</sup> Jaspers is not 'anti-metaphysics'. He says that metaphysics is 'not to be rejected, but appropriated.' *VW*, p.39

<sup>201</sup> Gerhard Knauss gives a full account of Jaspers' concept of 'periechontology' in his article, *The Concept of the 'Encompassing' in Jaspers' Philosophy*, 1974, pp.141-175

<sup>202</sup> *VW*, p.158, cited in Wallraff's, *K.Jaspers - An Introduction*, 1970, p.198

<sup>203</sup> *Phil. 1*, p.64

<sup>204</sup> *PSP*, p.148

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.* p.149. Schrag expresses Jaspers' view on ontology as 'an order which is structured, determined and thought in categories' whereas periechontology makes room for us to be confronted by 'the multiple modes of Being that asserts no determinateness.' Being is thought of as that which precedes all determined beings. Schrag, 1965, p.180

<sup>206</sup> As Hersch aptly puts it 'The central gesture of Jaspers is an attempt to reach the totality and unity of Being as world or as self, a move towards a whole which cannot be grasped by the human mind.' Hersch, 1986, p.5. According to Knauss, Jaspers and early Heidegger share this perspective in philosophising. Knauss says that 'the philosophizing of thinkers revolves around the difference between 'Being-in-itself' (*Sein an sich*) and 'what is' (things) [*Seiendes (Dinge)*].' Knauss, 1974, pp.146

<sup>207</sup> *Phil.1*, pp.43-49. Usually the notion of 'unveiling Being itself' is considered to be ontological but not for Jaspers. For him, such an enterprise is involved in the unity of 'immanence' and 'transcendence'. See also Wallraff, 1970, p.192. The unity of the two realms is also taken up by Rilke more poetically in his *Briefe aus Muzot*: 'there is neither the here nor the beyond, but the great unity in which the angels are at home'. Rilke, 1935, p.333

<sup>208</sup> For Jaspers, 'the certainty of authentic being resides' in existential communication. (*PSP*, p.26) We understand that Being reveals itself also in boundary situations.

<sup>209</sup> Jean Wahl's comment on Being seems appropriate here. He says that 'Being is not produced by us; Being is not simply an interpretation; rather Being is in a certain sense that which produces our interpretation or our judgement by its impact.' Wahl, 1974, p.402

<sup>210</sup> Details of the *Augenblick* experience are in Chapters Three and Four.

<sup>211</sup> *Phil.1*, p.44 and *WW*, 144. The unity of the transcendent and worldly aspects of human existence is important for Jaspers. He often reminds us that 'Man is the only being in the world to whom being is manifested through his empirical existence'. *PSP*, p.73

<sup>212</sup> *Phil.1*, p.45

<sup>213</sup> According to Jaspers, we must understand transcending-thinking in terms of the development of historical consciousness by means of which transcending-thinking becomes possible. See *Phil.1*, pp.52-53. Alan Olson discusses this point in his Introduction and says: 'Indeed, upon a clear comprehension of both the formal and existential modalities of *transzendierenden Denken*, Jaspers' overall philosophy of Transcendence clearly rests.' Olson, 1979, pp.xix, 45

<sup>214</sup> I shall make only a few cursory remarks about the method Jaspers uses in his work. His method is the description, exploration and analysis of subjective experiences which do not stop at the boundary of empirical knowledge but transcend it in thought, namely transcending-thinking. Jaspers' method of 'transcending-thinking' is transcending through philosophical reflection. He uses transcending-thinking as a tool to unfold his notions of *Existenz*, Transcendence and the *Augenblick*. Jaspers did not think, particularly in his later period, that Husserl's 'phenomenological method' was applicable to his philosophy of existence. He acknowledges that he used Husserl's method of 'descriptive psychology' as a method in his earlier works, (e.g. *General Psychopathology, PA*, pp.18-20) Jaspers does not refer to his philosophy as 'hermeneutical' either, but it is possible to argue that his descriptions are hermeneutical in some respect, as they are 'interpretative descriptions' of human experiences within the world. In a way, as Olson suggests 'all knowledge is an interpretation of Being'. (Olson, 1979, pp.53,37) In fact, Jaspers himself acknowledges this particular point by stating that 'Whatever we know is only a beam of light cast by our interpretation into being, or, we might say, the capture of an opportunity for interpretation.' *WW*, p.78

<sup>215</sup> Lichtigfeld suggests that 'Jaspers took his starting point from Kant.' Lichtigfeld, 1963, p.24

<sup>216</sup> Lichtigfeld also suggests that 'Jaspers alone of all post-Kantian thinkers not only, by understanding Kant, has gone beyond him, but, at the same time, has become, according to general consent, the originator of what is now understood as the philosophy of Existence.' Lichtigfeld, 1954, p. xvii

<sup>217</sup> *Critique of Pure Reason*, 1968, pp.58-9

<sup>218</sup> In this respect, Olson suggests that existential experiences can lead to certain speculative questions such as 'what can and cannot we know?' Olson, 1979, p.86. Jaspers is interested in such questions and this clearly indicates his indebtedness to Kant's epistemology.

<sup>219</sup> *WW*, p.79

<sup>220</sup> *PFR*, 1967, pp.112-113

<sup>221</sup> *Phil.3*, p.13. Interestingly, Otto Friedrich Bollnow seems to misinterpret Jaspers' method of transcending-thinking, in that he suggests that Jaspers' method is focused on theory and that it neglects experience. (Bollnow, 1973, p.187) But as Kirkbright points out, Bollnow overlooks 'the interconnected scope of Jaspers' ideas'. (Kirkbright, 1997, pp.33, 42-43) Indeed, Jaspers' notion of transcending-thinking clearly stems from, and is grounded in, man's being in the world and human experience. Jaspers does not

exclude Dasein's 'life experience' in his philosophising. Lichtigfeld takes up this point and discusses the philosophy of existence described by Bollnow. For further details see Lichtigfeld, 1963, p.15

<sup>222</sup> Olson, 1979, p.79

<sup>223</sup> Ehrlich gives a good account of Jaspers' notion of 'formal transcending' as a method as follows:

Formal transcending is a thought-operation. Thought is essentially determinative by virtue of its categorizing activity and in what is known by virtue of categorization. Determination displays Being in fragmentation. If thought is directed towards transcendence, it is directed toward the unity of Being which underlies this dismemberment. The mark of fragmented Being is determinacy; the mark of being in its oneness and fullness is indeterminacy. But, since thought is determinative, the indeterminate is unthinkable. Formal transcending, as a method of grounding the determinate in the indeterminate, is an attempt to think the unthinkable. Hence it cannot and does not lead to an awareness of the transcendent ground except in a negative way, in the form of an intimation which is the counterpart of the failure of thought. (*Philosophy as Faith*, 1975, p.141)

<sup>224</sup> Schrag, 1965, p.163

<sup>225</sup> In other words, transcending-thinking may occur at three levels; namely, in an attempt to grasp the world, in the elucidation of subjective experiences and the self, and in the metaphysical act of cognition. See Lichtigfeld, 1954, p.11

<sup>226</sup> Olson, 1979, p.3

<sup>227</sup> Vol.1 is 'World Orientation' (*Weltorientierung*), Vol.2 is 'Elucidation of Existenz' (*Existenzerhellung*), and Vol.3 is 'Metaphysics' (*Metaphysik*).

<sup>228</sup> Jaspers clarifies what these dimensions are as follows: 'In my published work, *Philosophie*, I intended to make a systematic study of the act of transcending: in philosophical world-orientation in order to loosen any possible enchainment to known things in the world; in the clarification of Existenz in order to recall and awaken to what man himself really is; in metaphysics in order to experience final limits and give intimations of Transcendence.' *R&E*, p.155

<sup>229</sup> See *Phil. I*, pp.49-54

<sup>230</sup> *Ibid.* pp.43-44

<sup>231</sup> *Ibid.* p.43. Jaspers' concern regarding the uncertainty of the empirical realm is clearly shared by some contemporary thinkers. An interesting article by Barlow in the *Financial Times* exemplifies this issue: 'Our level of reliable knowledge about the world ... has never been greater. ... Yet, for all that we seem to know, ... the world is becoming an increasingly uncertain place.' The article refers to this state of affairs as a 'rather unusual paradox': 'And herein lies the paradox: the very knowledge that we acquire about the world increasingly allows us to change it, and in changing it, we seem peculiarly adept at making it incomprehensible again. Certainty breeds uncertainty.' *FT*, 12/13 May 2001, p.11

<sup>232</sup> *Phil. 2*, p.3, see also Olson, 1979, p.18

<sup>233</sup> *Phil. I*, p.504

<sup>234</sup> In Olson's view Jaspers' elucidation of *Existenz* is 'neither an ontology of existence nor a psychology of selfhood. It is rather the phenomenological description of the experience of transcending within and through the categories of subjectivity.' Olson, 1979, p.18. Olson goes on to say that for *Existenzerhellung*, 'there can be no objective criteria of truth. Each *Existenz* is unique, irreplaceable.' *Ibid.*, p.45

<sup>235</sup> *Phil. I*, p.44

<sup>236</sup> Olson, 1979, p.23. Olson suggests that this view of the presence of an 'other' makes Jaspers' metaphysical position different from that of Sartre and Heidegger.

<sup>237</sup> Olson, 1979, p.7. See also *PE*, p.60. We shall discuss the issue of 'transcending' later in this chapter in connection with the subject-object division in the empirical realm.

<sup>238</sup> Olson, 1979, p.4

<sup>239</sup> *Phil. I*, pp.43-45

<sup>240</sup> *PA*, 1974, pp.16-19

<sup>241</sup> This issue has been taken up by Estling in *New Scientist*. He defends the view that science is very different from philosophy and that philosophers should leave science to scientists. He also argues that some

philosophers are 'out of their depth with science'. He accuses philosophers of making 'uninformed and unacceptable' scientific assertions. For further details see Estling, 1996, p.44

<sup>242</sup> *PSP*, p.54

<sup>243</sup> Olson, 1979, p.12

<sup>244</sup> *PSP*, p.60

<sup>245</sup> *PA*, 1974, p.69, also see *PSP*, pp.54-60

<sup>246</sup> Jaspers writes: 'Philosophy and science are tied to each other but divided in their source of certainty.'

*Phil.1*, Epilogue, p.12

<sup>247</sup> He says that philosophy should be understood 'as independent, as allied with, but distinct from, the sciences.' *Phil.1*, pp.24,13

<sup>248</sup> *PSP*, p.179

<sup>249</sup> *PE*, p.60

<sup>250</sup> *PA*, 1974, p.69, also see *PSP*, p.35

<sup>251</sup> Huber, 1986, p.11

<sup>252</sup> *Ibid.* p.12

<sup>253</sup> *PA*, 1974, p.38

<sup>254</sup> *Grundwissen* is sometimes translated as 'ground knowledge', sometimes as 'fundamental knowledge', and sometimes as 'basic knowledge' – I shall use the original term '*Grundwissen*' in our discourse here. Wallraff suggests that *Grundwissen* is not metaphysical in the traditional sense. He claims that 'it says nothing about those things that we might well wish to know', Wallraff, 1970, p.198

<sup>255</sup> This form of 'knowledge', which is based on the truth of the first premises, is supposed to be reliable and universal. But the question is, if the first principles are chosen arbitrarily then this kind of 'knowledge' becomes relative and is confined to a particular system. Then conclusions that are elicited from the first premises lose their universal validity, e.g. non-Euclidean geometry.

<sup>256</sup> *Phil.1*, p.13. Not everybody agrees, however, that there is certainty in science. For example, a distinguished physicist/mathematician, David Deutsch, argues that it is a 'fundamental mistake' to assume that 'mathematical knowledge is more certain than any other form of knowledge.' (Deutsch, 1997, p.248) He goes on to say that 'neither the theorems of mathematics, nor the process of mathematical proof, nor the experience of mathematical intuition, confers any certainty. Nothing does. Our mathematical knowledge may, just like our scientific knowledge, be ...uncontroversially accepted; but it cannot be certain.' *Ibid.* p.247.

<sup>257</sup> *WW*, p.7

<sup>258</sup> *PFR*, p.50. By 'shareable' Jaspers means intersubjectively accepted.

<sup>259</sup> *PSP*, p.7

<sup>260</sup> Jaspers refers to faith as 'inner experience of the Comprehensive'. *PSP*, p.66. His concept of philosophical faith will be discussed later in this section.

<sup>261</sup> See Wallraff, 1970, p.149 and *VW*, p.974

<sup>262</sup> Wallraff, 1970, p.182. Nevertheless, Wallraff adds that 'science fails to discover the extent and importance of the area disclosed by non-knowledge, i.e. by modes of awareness such as opinion, and belief..' *Ibid.* p.41

<sup>263</sup> Alfons Grieder describes *Grundwissen* as the 'general fundamental knowledge concerns the general forms of what is thinkable at all, and it comprises in particular the investigations of the senses of truth and their connections with the encompassing.' Grieder, 1986, p.28

<sup>264</sup> *PFR*, p.89

<sup>265</sup> See Grieder, 1986, p.28

<sup>266</sup> Wallraff, 1970, p.198

<sup>267</sup> The validity of scientific truth claims is controversial. Jaspers uses the attributes of 'universal validity' and 'compelling certainty' for scientific propositions. These comments raise a number of questions. First, Jaspers does not explain clearly what he means by 'valid'. Does he mean 'true' or 'believed to be true'? A proposition may be true without being necessarily proven. Secondly, it would be incorrect to assume that all scientific truth claims, including empirical theories, are self evident and 'compellingly certain'. Mathematical statements and certain forms of logical propositions, e.g.  $a > b$ ,  $b > c$ , therefore  $a > c$ , are considered valid. But not all logical propositions have true premises, and this may not hold true in all cases of empirical theories. In empirical theories there is no absolute certainty, as Deutsch remarks (see fn. 256),

regarding the truth of scientific propositions. Furthermore, as far as intersubjective testability is concerned, a condition which scientific truth claims should satisfy, it does not guarantee truth let alone absolute certainty. It is quite possible to have some tested and confirmed truth claims which may turn out to be false. The truth claims of empirical sciences are speculative and conjectural, as Popper pointed out. *Popper*, 1983, p.136. Although scientific knowledge claims are not necessarily certain they can be classified as probable. A science offers theories and laws about a certain range of entities in the world but can never give an account of the world as a whole. This, Jaspers claims, demonstrates the limitations of scientific thinking.

<sup>268</sup> *PFR*, p.50

<sup>269</sup> In connection with his concept of 'knowledge', Jaspers also reflects on the concept of 'truth' in his analysis. There are different senses of 'truth' in Jaspers' writings. He speaks of four major types of truth each of which corresponds to a specific mode of the Encompassing, namely Dasein, Consciousness-as-such, Spirit and *Existenz*. We cannot, however, deal with his concept of truth in this discourse. For a detailed explanation of Jaspers' concept of truth, see Grieder, 1986 pp.17-33, and Wallraff, 1970, p.149

<sup>270</sup> Grieder finds Jaspers' account of scientific truths 'grossly inadequate.' For a detailed discussion see Grieder, 1986 p.26

<sup>271</sup> *VW*, p.608, see also Schrag, 1965, p.167

<sup>272</sup> This ties in with Jaspers' view that true philosophy, unlike science, cannot offer any objective knowledge. Jaspers discusses the sources of philosophy and the process of gaining insight into the world in his *Way to Wisdom*. See *WW*, p.18

<sup>273</sup> Grieder, 1986 p.27

<sup>274</sup> In this respect, Jaspers seems to be following Kant's views. Kant wrote that he found it necessary 'to deny *knowledge*, in order to make room for *faith*.' Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 1968, in the preface to the second edition, p.29

<sup>275</sup> *WW*, p.26

<sup>276</sup> Wallraff, 1970, p.198

<sup>277</sup> Since there is no universal validity, there is no absolute agreement on philosophical truth, and since each *Existenz* is unique, then certain truths which hold true for one *Existenz* may not be true for another. To highlight the subjective notion of truth, Olson suggests that the truth of *Existenz* 'is present to Existenz when in the fullness of historical consciousness' and he goes on to say 'then the truth is my truth', Olson, 1979, p.54 and see Wallraff, 1970, p.131

<sup>278</sup> *PSP*, pp.28-29

<sup>279</sup> Jaspers expresses the connection between the two as follows: 'Philosophy must be *at odds with religion*. What it recognizes in religion is downright alien, but something to which it is by no means indifferent. The two are not side by side, for there is no standpoint from which both would be surveyable; but when philosophy tries to communicate with religion, it will be strongly repelled and then again attracted. In philosophy, religion will not let us rest, and we keep thinking in reference to religion.' (*Phil. I*, p.295) Unamuno concurs with Jaspers by stating that 'there is no religion without some philosophic basis, no philosophy without roots in religion. Each lives by its contrary.' Unamuno, 1931, p. 114

<sup>280</sup> *Phil. I*, p.263

<sup>281</sup> *Ibid.* pp.311,313. Maurice Nicoll refers to the significance of faith discussed in the Bible, which is remarkably close to Jaspers' explanation of philosophical faith. 'Now faith is ... a conviction of the reality of things which we do not see.' He adds that faith is 'clearly the recognition of scale, the certain knowledge that there is *that which is above and that which is beneath*', Nicoll, 1971, p.210 (Hebrews 11.1-3)

<sup>282</sup> *PSP*, p.75

<sup>283</sup> *Phil. I*, p.295

<sup>284</sup> *PSP*, p.78

<sup>285</sup> *Ibid.* p.21

<sup>286</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>287</sup> Feifel, for example, claims that 'religious conviction is a great source of strength for those who believe.' Feifel, 1977, p.104. However, the problem is that, as Kirkbright rightly points out, 'religious faith cannot easily be contradicted, since there is no way of arguing with individuals who believe in the existence of God.' Kirkbright, 1997, p.56

<sup>288</sup> In one of his interviews, a famous musician, Tom Robinson, made a comment regarding one's faith. (BBC2, May 2001) He said that 'faith is *all* you've got in the hour of darkness', which captures precisely the function of 'faith' in existence.

<sup>289</sup> *Phil. 1*, p.297

<sup>290</sup> *WW*, p.122

<sup>291</sup> *PSP*, p.112

<sup>292</sup> *Ibid.* p.93

<sup>293</sup> *Ibid.* p.94

<sup>294</sup> *Ibid.* p.96

<sup>295</sup> *Ibid.* p.97

<sup>296</sup> Although science and religion sometimes seem to be diametrically opposed to each other, and in some cases they are, some thinkers argue that they do not need to be at odds with each other. Some scientists have religious convictions of various sorts, and may even believe that science supports those convictions. However, they recognise, on the whole, that their religious convictions do not count as evidence for their scientific theories, and they keep them separate. In other words, they acknowledge the distinction between their scientific theories and their faith commitments. It should also be noted that some religious scientists find their faith inspiring. For example, in a BBC documentary (*Horizon*, 2001) the US geneticist Dr. F. Collins (he is one of the pioneers of the human genome project) argued that religion and science could indeed benefit each other. He said that the initial idea for the genome project was inspired by his religious faith. He also said that his guiding principle was to be of benefit to mankind in overcoming disease and so on. He claimed that his religious faith helped him with his research to make the project a success. He insisted that he was a rigorous scientist, and 'the revelation of such scientific information came to him from God and that it was known to God.' Although his last statement here may sound dubious to some of us, the point here is that religious faith can be beneficial to scientific progress. One just has to make a 'leap of faith'.

<sup>297</sup> *PSP*, p.9

<sup>298</sup> See *BPW*, 1986, p.117. Ehrlich's translation here seems clearer than Ashton's, *Phil. 2*, p.244

<sup>299</sup> Jaspers also says that even in philosophical faith we cannot conceptualise reality as a whole and there is no ultimate explanation of why anything exists at all and why things are as they are. *PSP*, p.60 and *VW*, p.974

<sup>300</sup> In Jaspers' words 'Faith cannot, to be sure, become universally valid knowledge, but it should become clearly present to me by self-conviction.' *PSP*, p.7

<sup>301</sup> *PSP*, p.34

<sup>302</sup> *Ibid.* pp.14-16. He also maintains that we human beings are constantly aware of our predicament and the uncertainty in our lives.

<sup>303</sup> Jaspers discusses his view of faith extensively in *PSP*

<sup>304</sup> *Phil 2*, pp.255-261

<sup>305</sup> *Ibid.* p.256

<sup>306</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>307</sup> *Phil. 1*, p.256

<sup>308</sup> *PSP*, p.74

<sup>309</sup> *Phil. 1*, p.256

<sup>310</sup> *PSP*, p.19. We shall have more to say about 'antinomies' shortly.

<sup>311</sup> *Ibid.* p.18

<sup>312</sup> As mentioned before, according to Jaspers, illumination of *Existenz* is not objective knowledge or a logical process one should pursue.

<sup>313</sup> For Jaspers, human existence involves conflicting situations, including man's empirical limitations, and a vast number of choices he has to make, all of which constitute the central characteristics of human nature. The future of the individual is shaped by the responsibility for the decisions taken by the individual himself. This in turn can cause existential *Angst* for the person, that is to say making choices arouses *Angst* in man. Kastenbaum defines *Angst* as 'a state of cognition and revelation'. 1976, p.158

<sup>314</sup> *PSP*, p.19. Jaspers adds that in order to understand faith adequately, one must have a grasp of the 'Encompassing' in its multiple modes and the relationship between *Existenz* and Transcendence.

<sup>315</sup> According to Kierkegaard, faith is 'the highest passion in the sphere of human subjectivity.' *Concept of Dread*, p.118. This concept of individual subjectivity is also discussed by Kim and Sosa in *A Companion to Metaphysics*, 1995, p.151-152

<sup>316</sup> *Phil. I*, p.19

<sup>317</sup> Jaspers expresses this in his *Philosophical Autobiography*: 'When I grasped that philosophy is not science in the sense of a compelling and universally valid knowledge, this was by no means to imply that philosophy is abandoned to arbitrariness, whim, or the subjectivity of taste.' *PA*, 1974, p.70. See also *Phil. I* p.13

<sup>318</sup> *PSP*, p.6

<sup>319</sup> *Ibid.* p.7

<sup>320</sup> As mentioned before, the realisation of one's true self can be achieved in communication which is a struggle of mutual understanding. This 'loving struggle' is a matter of awakening and challenging the other in the clarification of *Existenz*.

<sup>321</sup> This distinction is discussed in both *PSP* and *PFR*

<sup>322</sup> *PFR*, pp.110-111, 120, and *WW*, pp.14, 41, 72,73

<sup>323</sup> In this respect, Kierkegaard and Jaspers share the same view. In *Sickness Unto Death*, Kierkegaard remarks: 'At the same time they are Christians, tranquilized by the parson with regard to their salvation.' Bretall, 1946, p. 357. See also Nussbaum, 89/90, p.303

<sup>324</sup> *WW*, p.14

<sup>325</sup> Kierkegaard's concept of religious faith is based on the relationship between the individual and God. Jaspers writes: 'For Kierkegaard an essential attribute of faith is that it relates to a unique historical event and is itself historical. It is not experience, not something immediate that can be described as given.' *PSP*, p.10

<sup>326</sup> Jaspers says that 'Kierkegaard gave us an interpretation of Christianity as a faith of the absurd, a faith of the negative decision ...- an interpretation which, where adopted, means the end of Christianity.' *PSP*, p.172

<sup>327</sup> *WW*, p.188

<sup>328</sup> Jaspers expresses the connection between faith and the Encompassing as follows: 'Faith that springs from the Comprehensive is free, because it is not fixed in any finite thing that has been made into an absolute. It has a character of indetermination ...' *PSP*, p.17

<sup>329</sup> See Wallraff, 1970, pp.18,6. Wallraff concurs with Jaspers' views on this issue.

<sup>330</sup> *PSP*, pp.4,11

<sup>331</sup> In fact, for Jaspers, 'all faith is historical'. *PSP*, p.113

<sup>332</sup> An antinomic concept is necessarily involved with its opposite and cannot be understood without it. For example, life could not be fully grasped without death. Similarly, communication is inseparable from solitude, freedom from dependence, and Dasein from *Existenz*. Since neither side seems to be adequate on its own, some kind of synthesis must take place in human experiences. In this sense, Jaspers' treatment of antinomies is reminiscent of the concepts of the Kantian 'transcendental', as well as the Hegelian 'dialectic'.

<sup>333</sup> Latzel examines the concept of boundary situations in detail, and says that '...in the *Psychologie*, where Jaspers examines the phenomenon of ultimate situations for the first time, this phenomenon is so profoundly grasped and systematically thought out that ...in his *Philosophie* of 1932 – although it represents a new arrangement of the material – introduces no substantial modifications.' Latzel, 1974, p.184

<sup>334</sup> *PW*, Chapter III, Section 2 contains a detailed account of the antinomical structure of existence, concepts of opposition, and concept of the antinomies.

<sup>335</sup> *PW*, p.229 cited in 'The Concept of Ultimate Situations', Latzel, 1974, p.184

<sup>336</sup> In his *PA*, Jaspers points out that *PW* is more psychological than philosophical in character. However, he also acknowledges that there were some fundamental philosophical ideas in the book, but he did not consider them 'philosophical' at the time. Many philosophers agree that Jaspers' *PW* contains a number of original philosophical insights which constitute the basis of his later philosophical thought. *PA*, 1974, pp.26-27

<sup>337</sup> Jaspers' use of the word 'contradiction' may raise a question: Is he using this term as equivalent to the terms 'opposites' or 'antinomies'? When Jaspers deals with concepts such as communication and solitude, freedom and dependence, and Dasein and *Existenz*, he speaks of 'contradictions', 'opposites' and



'antinomies' interchangeably. Such concepts may be opposing notions, but they may not necessarily be contradictions. The principle of contradiction dictates that a proposition and its negation cannot both be true, e.g. A and not-A cannot both be true. Suggesting otherwise would be a logical contradiction. Contradiction may occur between propositions but it is not clear whether it can also be applied to concepts. Indeed, some opposing concepts may be in diametrically opposite positions, but may not necessarily imply logical contradiction. It is clear that when Jaspers uses the term 'contradiction' in the existential context, the meaning he gives to it should not be restricted to that of 'logical contradiction'. It should be understood in terms of 'dialectical relationship'. For further details see *PA*, 1974, p.930, *R&E*, pp.113-114, and Latzel, 1974, p.202

<sup>338</sup> *Phil.2*, pp.14, 218

<sup>339</sup> *Ibid.* p.218. Ehrlich too states that antinomies 'come in contradictory pairs.' Ehrlich, 1975, p.16

<sup>340</sup> The issue of the subject-object dichotomy and antinomies are intertwined in that the subject-object dichotomy itself is antinomial. See *Phil.2*, pp. 295-300 and *WW*, pp.30-33

<sup>341</sup> *PSP*, p.62 and *WW*, p.75

<sup>342</sup> Ehrlich, 1975, pp.157-158

<sup>343</sup> Jaspers, in this respect, is very close to the Kantian idea that both the human being and the world cannot be 'object' for us, and that we cannot grasp the world as a whole as we inevitably encounter the antinomies of existence.

<sup>344</sup> Ehrlich, 1975, pp.157-158

<sup>345</sup> *PFR*, 1967, p.94, *VW*, pp.255-56, and Ehrlich, 1975, p.158

<sup>346</sup> He takes the Kantian transcendental view that reality is neither the object nor the subject, but that which envelops both.

<sup>347</sup> Ehrlich, 1975, p.159 and *VW*, p.256

<sup>348</sup> Ehrlich, 1975, p.159

<sup>349</sup> *Ibid.* p.7

<sup>350</sup> For example, in his discussion of *Subject-Object Spaltung* in *VW*, he writes 'niemals wirklich aufhebbar sind', p.235

<sup>351</sup> See *Phil.3*, pp.197-199, and *WW*, p.33 and *MMA*, p.159

<sup>352</sup> *Phil.1*, p.77

<sup>353</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>354</sup> Jaspers describes his transcending philosophy as 'not looking for an object beyond the boundary, so its transcending is only an act, not a result.' *Phil.1*, p.78

<sup>355</sup> Kunz describes transcending as an experience of 'being suspended between being-in-the-world and being-out-of-the-world'. For details see Kunz, 1974, p.512. It is clear that one cannot transcend human finitude, and Jaspers acknowledges this. *R&E*, p.145

<sup>356</sup> As Wallraff suggests, antinomies 'show the presence of a boundary and the impossibility of going beyond it.' Wallraff, 1970, p.160

<sup>357</sup> Jaspers says that in transcending reflection 'I gain awareness of authentic being, ...and seek to touch upon the source of my freedom and through it upon being itself'. *WW*, pp.123-124

<sup>358</sup> *WW*, p.25

<sup>359</sup> According to Schrag, the cipher is 'the only means of overcoming the subject-object polarity'. In his view, it is a matter of awareness of the objective reality which is 'subject to further unveiling'. In other words, it is a matter of subjective interpretation of the objective reality. See Schrag, 1965, p.163

<sup>360</sup> *VW*, p.235 and *Phil.2*, p.218. Jaspers often repeats that we have no direct 'transcendental' knowledge, but only 'limited' experience. (*Phil.2*, p.299) In A.J. Ayer's view, however, this is 'fruitlessness of attempting to transcend the limits of possible sense-experience.' Ayer, 1983, p.47

<sup>361</sup> *Phil.1*, p.78

<sup>362</sup> Kirkbright draws our attention to this point and says that 'the disruptive influence of the [*Subject-Object Spaltung*] is superficial, for its underlying quality conveys a sense of continuity, coherence ...Significantly, the *Subject-Object-Spaltung* does not imply the separation of the individual from his ability to interpret ideas as objective principles of thought'. Kirkbright, 1997, p.30. See also *Phil.3*, p.197

<sup>363</sup> See *R&E*, p.111

<sup>364</sup> Kirkbright, 1997, pp.17, 37. Hans Saner also makes a distinction between a 'barrier' and a 'boundary' (in the Jaspersian sense) in his 1975 article. For Saner, a barrier cannot be overcome. A boundary, on the

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other hand, is a line of temporal and spatial division which can be transcended. He writes: 'Eine Grenze ist zeitlich die Trennungslinie zwischen einem Vorher und Nachher, örtlich die Trennungslinie zwischen einem Diesseits und Jenseits. Grenzen sind überschreitbar.' Saner, 1975, p.2

<sup>365</sup> Kirkbright, 1997, p.38

<sup>366</sup> Ibid. p.45

<sup>367</sup> Jaspers says that 'the word *boundary* implies that there is something else, but it indicates at the same time that this other thing is not for an existing consciousness.' *Phil.2*, p.178. In this regard, Wittgenstein says that 'in order to draw a limit to thinking, we should have to think both sides of this limit.' *Tractatus*, Preface.

<sup>368</sup> This concept of 'otherness' does not mean that 'Transcendence might be located ... in some hypothetical otherworld. ...it is precisely a *this-worldly* form of transcendence'. Clack, 2002, p.40

<sup>369</sup> Ibid. p.20

<sup>370</sup> Latzel, 1974, p.188

<sup>371</sup> *VW*, pp.50, 77

<sup>372</sup> Unamuno affirms the reality of contradiction in existence. He writes: 'Contradiction! Of course! Since we only live in and by contradictions, since life is tragedy and the tragedy is perpetual struggle, ... life is contradiction.' Unamuno, 1931, p.14

<sup>373</sup> Kirkbright, 1997, p.59

<sup>374</sup> We shall say more on 'foundering' later in this section. See pp.94-96

<sup>375</sup> *PSP*, p.17

<sup>376</sup> Ibid. p.62, and *WW*, p.75

<sup>377</sup> *WW*, pp.29-30. It is interesting to note that Arthur Koestler too discusses antinomies and contradictions of human existence in a similar way in one of his essays. He calls them 'pathogenic factors in man's existence'. In order to emphasise the significance of such contradictions he adds that these 'phenomena are species-specific', that they are uniquely human, not found in any other animal species.' In this regard, his views are almost identical to that of Jaspers. Koestler, *Essays*, 1968-1973, p.23

<sup>378</sup> Lichtigfeld, 1954, p.21

<sup>379</sup> Schrag, 1965, p.175. See also *Phil. 3*, pp.39-45

<sup>380</sup> Schrag adds that 'I refrain from making such concepts as the absolute being. They are modes of Being and not the source of being. They can be differentiated from each other but also they complement each other. What we experience, says Jaspers, is always appearance of being but not being in itself. Whatever there is, always presents itself in the veiled language of appearance. The being that appears remains in a temporal duality, namely the inaccessible-in-itself of transcendence and possible *Existenz*. Being cannot become comprehensible through the knowledge of universal structures.' Schrag, 1965, pp.164-165

<sup>381</sup> The self remains obscure in the sense that one never becomes 'an integrated whole.' Schrag, 1965, p.177

<sup>382</sup> Hersch, 1986, pp.3,5

<sup>383</sup> *VW*, p.75 and *Phil.2*, p.200. Latzel also acknowledges this point thus: 'Man as a finite creature can never round out the reality of his existence into an encompassing and harmonious whole.' Latzel, 1974, p.193

<sup>384</sup> See *Phil 2*, pp.43-45 in the section called *Antinomies of Self-being*

<sup>385</sup> Ibid. p.45

<sup>386</sup> *Philosophie II*, p.337

<sup>387</sup> *Phil. 2*, p.45

<sup>388</sup> Ibid.

<sup>389</sup> Wallraff, 1970, p.165

<sup>390</sup> Feifel, 1977, p.105, see also *VW*, p.164 and *PW*, p.241

<sup>391</sup> *Phil.2*, pp.179,180-182. When Jaspers speaks of a 'leap', he is referring to the inner activity which originates in man's despair in three stages, corresponding to the three levels of transcending-thinking. Jaspers' concept of 'existential leap' represents the breakthrough, or 'transcendence', in each stage of man's thinking processes. These three stages are 'tied to each other.' (*Phil.2*, p.182) The first stage arises from man's being in the world in a specific situation. The uncertainty of the things and events in the world including his own existence makes him dissatisfied with his being in the world. (*Phil.2*, pp.7, 179,181) Further dissatisfaction arises from 'the experience of disjointness' of the self (Olson, p.10), that is, he is a part of the world but at the same time he is a separate being. (*Phil.2*, p.5) The individual endeavours to have a unified world orientation. The realisation of his limitation within the world leads him to the initial

mode of transcending. He then finds himself in solitude in which he contemplates. (*Phil.2*, pp.7-8, 179) This stage of existence, which Jaspers calls the 'first leap' (*Phil.2*, p.180), enables man, as possible *Existenz*, to expose his mind to limitations of existence, and to transcend his mundane existence. (*Phil.2*, pp.7, 181) This stage corresponds to transcending world orientation.

The second stage of transcending-thinking takes place when one's very own being is radically shaken, e.g. in the boundary situation of death. One turns inwards and reflects on one's extreme situation and realises that there are situations one cannot modify or control. (*Phil.2*, pp.9-11) As possible *Existenz*, one tries to clarify one's circumstances and possibilities through this reflective thinking, and has the urge to discover one's origin. (*Phil.2*, p.11) In the process, one's possible *Existenz* has been activated, and one becomes aware that there is another aspect of one's being, one's true inner self, that needs to be elucidated. As Hersch says, 'Existenz is awakened by the failure against the limit of empirical reality', (Hersch, 1986, p. 4) At this stage one has not yet achieved existential self-realisation but one can transcend, albeit partially, one's inner conflicts in boundary situations. This is, what Jaspers calls, the 'second leap' in transcending-thinking. (*Phil.2*, pp.180, 182)

The third stage is fundamentally important because it is at this stage that possible *Existenz* can become 'real *Existenz*' in boundary situations or in existential communication by one's philosophising and reflective thoughts. (*Phil.2*, p.181) Possible *Existenz* will try to penetrate the limits of existence as much as possible, (*Phil.2*, p.187) accept them, tolerate them, and deal with them. For Jaspers, by philosophising one can 'live philosophically as Existenz' by which he means one can actualise self-being. (*Phil.2*, p.182) According to Jaspers, after the leap 'an insoluble duality' takes place, i.e. the empirical and transcendent reality. (*Phil.2*, p.182) For Jaspers, it is crucial to keep the right balance in this duality in the sense that if one ignores everyday existence entirely one will end up with nihilism or mysticism. (*Phil.2*, p.182) This will merely be a way out of the boundary situation that one is facing. If, on the other hand, one is absorbed in the worldly pursuits in mundane existence one will remain as an empirical phenomenon only, without any depth. As a result, boundary situations will be covered up and ignored. Jaspers suggests that the 'two wings' of existential thinking should beat together, that is the balance must be right in the unity of the empirical and transcendent aspects of existence. (*Phil.1*, p.16 and *Phil.2*, p.12) At this stage of transcending-thinking, one is able to interpret ciphers of Transcendence and communicate existential truths with another *Existenz*.

<sup>392</sup> *Phil.2*, p.182

<sup>393</sup> *Phil.3*, p.198

<sup>394</sup> *Phil.2*, p.218, see also *Phil.3*, pp.195-197. A similar description can be found in the writings of an Eastern thinker, Hakuin Ekaku (1686-1769), in his analysis of the nature of the true self. He writes: '...don't think that [non-ego] is something that can be known so easily ... Supposing a man should find himself in some desolate area where no one has ever walked before. Below him are the perpendicular walls of a bottomless chasm. His feet rest precariously on a patch of slippery moss, and there is not spot of earth on which he can steady himself. He can neither advance nor retreat; he faces death.' Hakuin, 1971, p.135

<sup>395</sup> According to Schrag, foundering is 'the last and the most decisive cipher'. Schrag, 1965, p.181. Schrag goes on to say that 'Foundering as an uninterpretable cipher becomes silence. In this silence there is a possible leap from anguish to calm. ...This groundless of foundering is what really makes our freedom significant. It creates the room for the openness of knowledge. We become free for the world, free for ourselves and free in relation to Transcendence.' (Ibid. p.182) Regarding one's silence, Olson also thinks that in boundary situations 'an unutterable dimension of experience which cannot be communicated occurs.' Olson, 1979, p.14. See also *WW*, p.49

<sup>396</sup> Schrag, 1965, p.181

<sup>397</sup> *Phil.3*, p. 204

<sup>398</sup> Ibid. pp.197-199

<sup>399</sup> It is in such extreme situations that authentic human nature is revealed to the individual.

<sup>400</sup> Lichtigfeld, 1954, p.16. Schrag also concurs with Lichtigfeld and Jaspers by claiming that one founders when one confronts 'the antinomic structure of the existential relations to Transcendence'. Schrag, 1965, p.181

<sup>401</sup> Kaufmann, 1968 pp.30-31. It is noteworthy that Plotinus also uses the analogy of 'shipwreck' in his discussion of extreme situations one might experience in a similar way to Jaspers. *Enneads* (IV.3.17.23-6)

<sup>402</sup> Thyssen, 1974, p.314

- <sup>403</sup> Ibid. p.312. In this respect, Arrington too notes that 'Foundering is the inability to arrive at absolute Being.' Arrington, 1999, p.336
- <sup>404</sup> Thyssen, 1974, p.321. The eternal aspect of *Existenz* will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.
- <sup>405</sup> *Phil.2*, p.220
- <sup>406</sup> Schrag, 1965, p.176
- <sup>407</sup> Jaspers deals with the concept of 'boundary situations' in *Phil.2*, pp.177-222. See also Kirkbright's account of Jaspers' concept of boundary situations. Kirkbright, 1997, pp. 27-63
- <sup>408</sup> *Phil.2*, pp.177-79,184-85. For a detailed explanation, see also Latzel, 1974, pp.177-207. Latzel's article is an expository discourse that lays out the fundamentals of Jaspers' concept of boundary situations and metaphysical implications of them.
- <sup>409</sup> *Phil.2*, p.177
- <sup>410</sup> Ibid. When Jaspers speaks of 'sense-relatedness', he is referring to our consciousness of the situation we are in as well as of the empirical environment. He says that 'What is existence to us is determined by the world of the senses, by memory, by volition and consciousness.' (*Phil.2*, p.197) In the above, he is also referring to the effect consciousness has on the nature of each situation.
- <sup>411</sup> *Phil.2*, p.178
- <sup>412</sup> Ibid. He observes that 'I can never get out of one without *entering into another*.' Jaspers also adds that there is a degree of awareness of one's being in a situation.
- <sup>413</sup> Ibid. This view ties in with Jaspers' description of a situation as 'a sense-related reality' in the above.
- <sup>414</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>415</sup> Ibid. Jaspers sees boundary situations as obstacles like a wall, 'a wall on which we founder.' Ibid.
- <sup>416</sup> Lichtigfeld, 1954, p.21
- <sup>417</sup> *Phil.2*, p.185
- <sup>418</sup> Ibid. p.178
- <sup>419</sup> Jaspers makes a distinction between 'general and typical' and 'historically definite and unique' situations in existence. (*Phil.2*, p.177) He indicates that the latter description applies to boundary situations. A definite situation, for him, 'cannot wholly be comprehensible', and it is connected with one's historicity. (*Phil.2*, pp.184-185) Jaspers describes boundary situations as 'impenetrable, inaccessible and unresolvable situations' in which the empirical order and the unity of the world collapse for the individual who experiences them. The difficulty here is that if a situation is unresolvable or inaccessible, it should mean that there is no solution or access to it. But we should bear in mind that when Jaspers uses the term 'inaccessible', for example, what he means is 'inaccessible to objective inquiry'. Again, if these situations become an issue of subjectivity, then the individual may be able to attain boundary experiences through his philosophical faith, transcending-thinking and existential communication. Seen in this light, they may be 'solvable' or rather 'reconcilable' subjectively and only in a finite manner.
- <sup>420</sup> *Phil.2*, p.178
- <sup>421</sup> Latzel, 1974, pp.197-202
- <sup>422</sup> *Phil.2*, p.193
- <sup>423</sup> Ibid. p.185
- <sup>424</sup> In the sense that in boundary situations one can either seize the moment and achieve a heightened awareness of Being, or, as Olson says, resign to 'apathia' in mundane existence. The latter option, in Jaspers' view, annihilates 'the dialectical nature of reality'. Olson, 1979, p.21
- <sup>425</sup> But Jaspers makes it clear that one cannot seek out the boundary situation in order to attain selfhood.
- <sup>426</sup> *Phil.2*, p.179
- <sup>427</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>428</sup> This distinction has often been taken up by some Jaspers scholars. For example, Hans Saner remarked on it in his paper at the International Karl Jaspers Conference in Basel, 2002. He said that 'Die Grenzen der menschlichen Situationen als "Grundsituationen", die als erlebte und reflektierte zu Grenzsituationen werden.' What Saner says is that when *Grundsituationen* are 'lived' ('erlebte') or 'reflected on' then these particular situations become *Grenzsituationen*. (His article also appears in *Basler Zeitung*, Teil IV, 19/20 October, 2002, p.41) The distinction between 'Grundsituationen' and 'Grenzsituationen' has also been discussed in Dominic Kaegi's paper, *Grenzsituationskompetenz*, particularly pp.4-8, at the same conference. Kaegi expresses his views similar to that of Saner. See also Gabriel Marcel, 1973, pp.156-180

- <sup>429</sup> Saner, 2002, p.41. Jaspers' method of 'existential elucidation' is greatly influenced by Kierkegaard. Jaspers stresses the importance of the concept of 'lived experience'. In this respect, Wahl claims that this view originated in Kierkegaard's thought, and that 'all the Kierkegaardian concepts originate in a lived experience'. Wahl, 1974, p.396 (footnote 18)
- <sup>430</sup> *Phil.2*, pp.180-181
- <sup>431</sup> *Ibid.* p.180
- <sup>432</sup> *WW*, pp.20,22
- <sup>433</sup> *Phil.2*, p.193
- <sup>434</sup> Death and dying are two separate issues and must be distinguished. See Chapter One, footnote 167
- <sup>435</sup> Man's inadequacy in the face of extreme situations is expressed as existential *Angst*. We shall discuss 'existential *Angst*' in connection with the boundary situation of death shortly.
- <sup>436</sup> *Phil.2*, p.218
- <sup>437</sup> *Ibid.* pp.197-199
- <sup>438</sup> *Ibid.* p.212
- <sup>439</sup> *Ibid.* p.204. For a detailed explanation see pp.204-215
- <sup>440</sup> *Ibid.* p.205. He adds that we may struggle consciously or unconsciously. For example, we may have to struggle passively just to live in peace and harmony in the world, or we may fight against another person in order to increase our material gains. Neither the state of passivity nor active fighting, Jaspers says, would constitute a boundary situation. As a result, possible *Existenz* remains dormant in a potential boundary situation. *Phil.2*, pp.204-5
- <sup>441</sup> *Ibid.* pp.205-206. In the process of self-realisation, one may struggle with oneself internally. For example, we may suddenly find ourselves struggling with certain values that we hold. In facing a boundary situation, our value system may change radically or even collapse. This uncertainty pushes man to question his possibilities, his actions and his being. See Wallraff, 1970, p.150
- <sup>442</sup> *Phil.2*, p.212
- <sup>443</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>444</sup> *Ibid.* pp.212-213
- <sup>445</sup> *Ibid.* p.213
- <sup>446</sup> Jaspers claims that through existential communication one can, as possible *Existenz*, achieve higher existential awareness. *Phil.2*, pp.188,214
- <sup>447</sup> *Ibid.* p.212
- <sup>448</sup> *Ibid.* p.201
- <sup>449</sup> The physical pain we may endure can be caused either by an illness or by other people who may exercise their power and inflict harm on us. *Phil.2*, p.202
- <sup>450</sup> It is not clear whether all forms of suffering should be considered as boundary situations irrespective of whether they are reflected on. For example, would self-inflicted suffering be a boundary situation? Or would it be more like a *Grundsituation*? This issue is not discussed by Jaspers.
- <sup>451</sup> *Phil.2*, p.203
- <sup>452</sup> *Ibid.* pp.202-203
- <sup>453</sup> Ehrlich, 1975, p.177
- <sup>454</sup> *Phil.2*, p.215
- <sup>455</sup> *Ibid.* pp.215-216
- <sup>456</sup> *Ibid.* pp.215-217. Some might argue that not everybody is solely responsible for the consequences of their actions, especially if they are remote consequences.
- <sup>457</sup> *Ibid.* p.217. This particular view of guilt, i.e. its being an intrinsic part of man, may be disputed by some thinkers. Indeed, there are some individuals without any sense of guilt whatsoever.
- <sup>458</sup> Wallraff, 1970, p.156
- <sup>459</sup> *Phil.2*, p.216
- <sup>460</sup> *Ibid.* p.217
- <sup>461</sup> *Ibid.* In Jaspers' words: 'But in the boundary situation he will call himself *responsible* for his act. Responsibility is our word for a man's readiness to take the guilt upon himself.' (*Ibid.*) Wallraff too argues that 'free action involves responsibility.' Wallraff, 1970, p.156
- <sup>462</sup> *Phil.2*, pp.216-217
- <sup>463</sup> *Ibid.* p.171

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<sup>464</sup> Ibid. p.217

<sup>465</sup> In other words, the person would remain in a potential *Grenzsituation* rather than an actual boundary situation.

<sup>466</sup> Ibid.

<sup>467</sup> Ibid. pp.193-201

<sup>468</sup> As Lichtigfeld suggests 'we are doomed to live in constant expectation of death.' Lichtigfeld, 1963, p.12

<sup>469</sup> *Phil.2*, pp.193,195,197-199. One may be inclined to think that there is an element of moral dimension in Jaspers' existence philosophy. For example, being in boundary situations may give rise to certain moral attitudes, e.g. courage and dignity in the face of death. Having personal responsibility for one's choices, and attainment of selfhood and authentic existence also carry ethical overtones. Indeed, the way in which we deal with boundary experiences may point to the moral sphere of existence. Some philosophers see this as an essential dimension of Jaspers' philosophy. Jaspers, however, would deny that he is engaged in moral philosophy or expressing ethical norms. His philosophical system is never explicit and therefore it is not an easy task to present a settled view on this issue. It is not the aim of this thesis to discuss this particular aspect of his philosophy for its own sake. What is important is that Jaspers does not present these existential attitudes as dogma, nor does he offer ethical norms. He encourages each individual to fulfil his potential in order to enhance his life.

<sup>470</sup> Feifel considers such experiences as an expression of 'symbolic immortality'. He explains that this kind of state of mind is so intense that in it 'time and death disappear'. It can also be described as an experience of 'a sense of 'deathlessness' in a moment of timelessness' which is similar to Jaspers' concept of the *Augenblick*. Feifel, 1977, p.279

<sup>471</sup> *Phil.1*, p.1. Robertson finds this kind of experience analogous to prayer which is 'to pierce that cloud of unknowing between ourselves and the infinite mystery.' Robertson, 1999, p.63. She refers to such experiences as 'windows into eternity' as they point beyond temporality.

<sup>472</sup> apart from existential communication

<sup>473</sup> If we look at the Sufi, we find that they do not need boundary situations in order to attain true selfhood as they have other means of achieving it.

<sup>474</sup> As Kastenbaum suggests 'the mood and quality of death is learned'. He also suggests that culture teaches us 'how to experience it.' Kastenbaum, 1976, p.61

<sup>475</sup> See Hanfling, *The Quest for Meaning*, 1987, p. 79. In some Islamic societies, some people, e.g. suicide bombers do not consider death as a boundary situation.

<sup>476</sup> Landsberg, 1966, p.198. See also Ikeda, 1976, p.117

<sup>477</sup> *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 1967, Vol.1, p.417, Snelling, 1987, pp.69, 72,75

<sup>478</sup> *Phil.2*, p.178

<sup>479</sup> Ibid. pp.178, 183-184

<sup>480</sup> One can use the same line of argument here and claim that the boundary situations of 'struggle', 'suffering' and 'guilt' do not have the same impact as the boundary situation of 'death'.

<sup>481</sup> *Phil.2*, p.178

<sup>482</sup> Ibid. p.184

<sup>483</sup> Ricoeur, 1974, pp.632-633

<sup>484</sup> Ibid. p.633. Here Kierkegaard also comes to mind. He too connects some existential concepts, guilt and death, with 'original sin'. See *The Concept of Dread*, p.47

<sup>485</sup> *Phil.2*, p.178

<sup>486</sup> It seems that Plessner is influenced by Jaspers' concept of 'boundary situations', but there are some differences between the two thinkers in their presentation of 'boundary experiences'. For details see Kirkbright, 1997, (pp.20, 108-112) According to Kirkbright, Plessner's principal work, *Die Stufen des Organischen und der Mensch*, (1928), offers 'a valuable critique of existence'. Kirkbright explains: 'Plessner regarded life as an inevitable border experience and a challenge to personal achievement, because of the constraint of what he called *Exzentrizität* which is a given and unchanging condition of life. Plessner concentrated on describing discrepancies and contradictions as a given part of life, while Jaspers focused on these problems in an existential theory.' For further details see Kirkbright, 1997, p.20

<sup>487</sup> Kirkbright, 1997, p.111. 'Boundary experience' indicates what is experienced in boundary situations.

<sup>488</sup> According to Kirkbright, 'Plessner's version of "border situations" is different to Jaspers' understanding of extreme circumstances for the reason that, in Plessner's view, border experience is because of physical,

rather than “metaphysical” pressures. The situations of “laughter” and “tears” are founded on the basis of an irresolvable antinomy’, (Kirkbright, 1997, p.110) and they are physical manifestations of such experiences. See also Plessner, 1970

<sup>489</sup> Although Jaspers lays emphasis on the ‘metaphysical’ aspect of boundary situations, he does not dismiss the physical aspect and the effects of such powerful situations on human beings, e.g. suffering. See *Phil.2*, p.177

<sup>490</sup> A well-informed and detailed account of the concept of *Exzentrizität* can be found in an article by Krüger, 2002

<sup>491</sup> Kirkbright, 1997, p.109. She also says that ‘*Exzentrizität* implies an authentic experience of borders as an existential situation.’ Ibid. p.112

<sup>492</sup> Ibid. p.110

<sup>493</sup> Kirkbright qualifies her statement by adding that ‘in so far as Plessner summarized border experience in the context of what he called “Grenzsituationen des Übermannwerden”.’ See Kirkbright, 1997, p.110, and Plessner, 1928, p.179

<sup>494</sup> de Beauvoir, 1995, p.135. In fact, Jaspers too makes a similar comment: ‘All life is encompassed within birth and death. But only man knows it.’ (*PE*, 1969, p.106) Likewise, Ludwig Klages is of the view that ‘the individual existence is constant dying’, cited in Choron, 1963, p.210. See also Alden, 1895, pp.16-17

<sup>495</sup> *Phil.2*, p.193. Jaspers’ concepts of ‘inwardness’ and ‘subjectivity’ as regards to human finitude originate from Kierkegaard’s philosophical thoughts. ‘Inwardness’ in this context is to be taken to mean ‘comprehension without mediation’ which originates from one’s inner self. (See Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, 1941, pp. 147-160, 171, 175-177, 182-183, 201) For Kierkegaard, the question of immortality is ‘essentially not a learned question, rather it is a question of inwardness’. (Ibid. p.154) Kierkegaard does not take immortality to mean ‘an eternal identity’ in some form of ‘metamorphosis’ as he puts it. (Ibid. p.155) Jaspers, too, uses the term ‘inwardness’ not only with reference to Kierkegaard but also to St. Augustine. In his *WW*, he praises St. Augustine’s works which, in his view, express ‘meditative inwardness that is lacking in ancient philosophy’. *WW*, p.179. But as Gerhard Knauss points out inwardness for Jaspers is not ‘the introspection (*Verinnerlichung*) of the mystics.’ It is rather existential reflection on one’s self-being in the world. Knauss, 1974, p. 150

<sup>496</sup> Landsberg, 1966, p.206

<sup>497</sup> Wahl, 1949, pp.40-43

<sup>498</sup> See Wahl’s *A Short History of Existentialism*, 1949, pp.40-41

<sup>499</sup> Ibid. p.41

<sup>500</sup> Ibid.

<sup>501</sup> Dastur, 1996, p.56. Dastur too seems to be closely following the Heideggerian approach to human finitude and existential *Angst*.

<sup>502</sup> Indeed there is a distinction between the fear of death and existential *Angst* which must be emphasised.

<sup>503</sup> For Jaspers, for example, the infinite ‘which though unfathomable does enter into man’s consciousness, causes man to transcend his finiteness by becoming aware of it.’ (*PSP*, p.64) This does not necessarily imply that man can wholly transcend his finitude and become infinite, but rather his awareness of his finitude would enable him to confront death and come to terms with it.

<sup>504</sup> Olson, 1979, p.22

<sup>505</sup> Dastur, 1996, p.77

<sup>506</sup> Ibid.

<sup>507</sup> See *Discourse on Method and Meditations*, 1968, p.124. Likewise, Spinoza regards God as absolutely infinite Being with ‘eternal and infinite essence.’ Spinoza, *Ethics*, Definitions, VI, p.227

<sup>508</sup> See Wahl’s discussion on Heidegger’s and Jaspers’ reactions to Descartes in his ‘Notes on some Relations of Jaspers to Kierkegaard and Heidegger’, 1974, p.405

<sup>509</sup> Wahl, 1949, p. 42

<sup>510</sup> In one of his articles, Gerlach stresses Heidegger’s link with Kierkegaard’s view of death and argues that Heidegger’s views were influenced by Kierkegaard. Gerlach writes ‘Er [Heidegger] findet theoretisch vor allem seinen Anknüpfungspunkt in der Philosophie des Dänen Sören A. Kierkegaard’. Gerlach, 1993, p.39

<sup>511</sup> *Being and Time*, p.303

<sup>512</sup> Here I am referring to the Heideggerian concept of *Dasein*.

<sup>513</sup> This relates to what Heidegger calls 'facticity'. For further details see *Being and Time*, pp.173-175. Schalow takes the Heideggerian term 'facticity' to mean 'man's *situatedness* in the world', which seems to be an accurate description of 'facticity'. Schalow, 1986, p.161

<sup>514</sup> *Being and Time*, pp.290-292

<sup>515</sup> *Ibid.* pp.283-284. For Heidegger, facing up to one's own death is something very individual and unique, which he calls *Jemeinigkeit* (mineness), and it cannot be transferred to anybody else. He writes: 'Dying is something that every Dasein itself must take upon itself at the time. By its very essence, death is in every case mine, in so far as it 'is' at all.' (*Being and Time*, p. 284). This awareness of 'mineness' is best exemplified in *The Death of Ivan Ilych* which is documented in Chapter One of this study. What terrified Ivan Ilych was not the way in which he might die, but he *had to* die. See pp. 31-32

<sup>516</sup> Unlike Heidegger, Sartre thinks that death and finitude are two separate concepts which are not interconnected. Finitude, for Sartre, is an inherent part of the being of the *for-itself* whereas death is, as a contingent fact, outside the possibilities of the *for-itself*. But does human finitude not arise through death? Sartre seems to overlook this close relationship between death and finitude. For further details see Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, p.545. See also Dastur, 1996, pp.62-63

<sup>517</sup> Granted, Jaspers holds that one becomes aware of one's finitude 'by comparison with something that is not finite, with the absolute and the infinite'. But the infinite, in his view, is not connected with a divine Being. The *infinite* which is 'touched, though not apprehended' can be experienced through making decisions and fulfilling one's potentiality in the world. (*PSP*, pp.63-64) In this connection Ehrlich's observation of Jaspers' view of finitude seems accurate. Ehrlich says that 'for Jaspers 'the nearness of infinity' lies in free activity in the finitude of time.' Ehrlich, 1975, p.226

<sup>518</sup> Dastur, 1996, p.79

<sup>519</sup> *Phil.2*, p.111. One's experience of the eternal will be discussed in the next chapter.

<sup>520</sup> Dastur, 1996, p.41

<sup>521</sup> The 'presence' of death is not to be taken in the literal sense. Obviously, death cannot be present in the strict sense. It is in the sense that one's awareness of death is present.

<sup>522</sup> Although, at times, we refer to some 'phenomenological' explanations of human existence and death, phenomenological method itself is not central to our inquiry. Thus, the details of this aspect of philosophy will not be discussed. Jaspers cannot be said to employ a 'phenomenological' method in the Husserlian sense, in his analysis of human finitude and death. However, it is possible to argue that his descriptions are 'interpretative descriptions' of human experiences in the world, e.g. boundary situations, particularly the boundary situation of death. Indeed, Jaspers' method of 'transcending-thinking' involves the description, exploration and the analysis of subjective experiences which do not stop at the boundary of empirical existence. Olson thinks that Jaspers 'makes use of phenomenology as a descriptive tool', even though he thinks that Jaspers 'does not believe it [phenomenology] is capable of laying bare the eidetic structures of experience, as in the case of Husserl's *Wesensschau* as an 'intuition of essences'. Olson, 1979, p.125

Chris Walker has written three articles regarding Jaspers' understanding of Husserl's phenomenology. He argues that Jaspers misunderstood Husserl's phenomenology. Walker explains: 'Jaspers' view was that Husserl changed from an early interest in phenomenology as an empirical "descriptive psychology" to phenomenology as an "intuition of essences" (*Wesensschau*) and as a philosophical "rigorous science" (*strenge Wissenschaft*). Both were anathema to Jaspers. Walker's papers argue that, contrary to Jaspers' understanding, Husserl's *Logical Investigations* was committed to both of these propositions. The implication is that Husserl's phenomenology was never the phenomenology as "descriptive psychology" seen by Jaspers.' (Article 1, p.117) For further details see Walker, June 1994, pp.117-132, December 1994, pp.245-263, and also March 1995, pp.65-80

<sup>523</sup> Landsberg too refers to the 'present absence' of death, and makes a distinction between 'spatial and relative absence.' See Landsberg, 1966, p.210

<sup>524</sup> According to Feifel, 'Death and life are inseparable companions, ...because each depends upon the other.' Feifel, 1977, p.109. Rilke confirms this notion in his poetry by declaring that temporal life 'contains both death and the tendency to fight against death.' Rilke, 10<sup>th</sup> Elegy, 1975, cited by Landsberg, 1966, p.224

<sup>525</sup> Feifel also claims that the presence of death is 'unmistakably a part of being alive, and even being fully alive.' Feifel, 1977, p.111

<sup>526</sup> *Phil.2*, p.193



- <sup>527</sup> It is 'general' in the sense that it happens to other people and the event of death does not affect my way of being. *Phil.2*, p.194
- <sup>528</sup> Olson, 1979, p.22. See also *Phil.2*, p.184
- <sup>529</sup> *Phil.2*, p.194
- <sup>530</sup> *VW*, p.110
- <sup>531</sup> *Phil.2*, p.193. In this case, one's own death remains as a potential boundary situation.
- <sup>532</sup> *Ibid.* p.198. Jaspers sometimes uses the term 'existential death' instead of one's being in the boundary situation of death.
- <sup>533</sup> *Ibid.* p.201. See also *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, 1997, pp.1235-36. 'Objectiv ist der T.[od] das immer gleiche Faktum, in der Grenzsituationen wandelt er sich mit der Existenz, und es gibt Augenblicke'.
- <sup>534</sup> In many respects, Jaspers' concept of the self, particularly two aspects of the self, is closely linked with Kierkegaard's ideas. (See *VW*, p.541) Kierkegaard discusses the self in terms of 'concrete' self and 'infinite/eternal' self. (See 'The Sickness Unto Death' in *A Kierkegaard Anthology*, 1946, pp.363-366, 368) For both Jaspers and Kierkegaard the self is 'a synthesis of the infinite and the finite, of the temporal and the eternal, of freedom and necessity'. ('Postscript' in *A Kierkegaard Anthology*, 1946, p.231) This suggests that the dialectical element in Kierkegaard's metaphysical concepts is also similar to Jaspers' notion of the antinomical structure of existence. ('Sickness unto Death' in *A Kierkegaard Anthology*, 1946, pp.347-350), (See also Wahl, 1974, p.394) For Kierkegaard too, the self is never complete as long as it is alive, 'it is only that which it is to become', i.e. in the process of becoming. (*Postscript*, 1941, pp.146-147) Wahl thinks that for Kierkegaard, 'the self is openness to itself'. (Wahl, 1974, p.396) In fact, Wahl observes that existential concepts like despair, solitude, anguish, subjectivity, etc. originate from Kierkegaard's philosophy. Wahl goes on to say that 'there is not a single idea of existentialist philosophy whose origin could not be traced to Kierkegaardian thought.' (*Ibid.* p.400) See also 'The Sickness Unto Death' in *A Kierkegaard Anthology*, 1946, p.355
- <sup>535</sup> In the classical sense, reality is said to contain two orders of Being. One order of reality is the physical world of which we are a part and with which we are familiar. And the other is the 'transcendent' realm about which we have only very limited knowledge which is primarily based on *a priori* reasoning. This division of reality into two spheres depends on how each sphere stands in relation to time.
- <sup>536</sup> We shall return to this particular issue in Chapter Three.
- <sup>537</sup> *Phil.2*, p.179
- <sup>538</sup> *Ibid.* p.4
- <sup>539</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>540</sup> We shall examine *Existenz* and its 'deathlessness' in detail in Chapter Three.
- <sup>541</sup> *Phil.2*, pp.3-10
- <sup>542</sup> *Ibid.* p.181. Jaspers says that it is 'mere possibility' which can be actualised in the *Augenblick*. The existential concern here is grounded in a realm of possibilities.
- <sup>543</sup> *Phil.1*, p.47, and see Schrag, 1965, p.166
- <sup>544</sup> *PFR*, 1967, p.7
- <sup>545</sup> *Phil.2*, p.9
- <sup>546</sup> *Philosophie II*, 1994, p.226
- <sup>547</sup> *Phil.2*, p.179
- <sup>548</sup> *Ibid.* p.180
- <sup>549</sup> *Ibid.* p.7
- <sup>550</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>551</sup> *Ibid.* p.179
- <sup>552</sup> *Ibid.* p.220
- <sup>553</sup> The second part of his statement refers to the 'transcendent' aspect of man. *Phil.2*, p.194
- <sup>554</sup> *Ibid.* p.201
- <sup>555</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>556</sup> *Ibid.* p.195
- <sup>557</sup> *Ibid.* pp.193-201. One understands that *facing up to* the boundary situation of death implies accepting, enduring, and coming to terms with extreme situations. In other words, this is a matter of conquering one's death-*Angst*. The question is whether a dying person is necessarily in the boundary situation of death.

Indeed, a dying person may be fully aware of his extreme situation, may accept his finitude and endure his 'dying process'. In this case, does his 'facing up to his own death' constitute the boundary situation of death? His 'dying process' may take a long time or he may not die. Since death is not a process but an event, and since one cannot experience one's own death, then 'death' itself is not the boundary situation. Then is 'dying' a boundary situation? It seems not. Jaspers never speaks of 'boundary situation of dying'.

<sup>558</sup> Ibid. p.195. In Kunz's view, the boundary situation of death is 'a future event ...toward which I develop an attitude. In other words: Not death itself, as a future event, but only *its meaning for me*, can become an 'existentially' relevant ultimate situation.' Kunz, 1974, p.505

<sup>559</sup> Jaspers writes: 'The relation of man to his own death is different from that to all other transitoriness; only the non-existence of the world is at all a comparable idea.' This is translated from *PW* cited in *The World of Existentialism*, 1999, p.102

<sup>560</sup> Phillips, 1970, p.13

<sup>561</sup> But Jaspers does not consider the death of other people, except the death of a loved one, as boundary situations for the individual. Here the distinction between the event of general death and death as a boundary situation is emphasised.

<sup>562</sup> *Phil.2*, p.194

<sup>563</sup> Ibid. pp. 189,199

<sup>564</sup> *Angst* is not the only term used in this context. Sometimes one sees the terms 'dread' and 'anguish' are also used. They are Kierkegaardian terms which are similar in meaning. For the sake of consistency, I shall use the term '*Angst*', except in quotations, throughout this study. A definition of *Angst* can be found in *A Dictionary of Philosophy* as follows: 'In existential philosophy, the dread occasioned by man's realisation that his existence is open towards an undetermined future, the emptiness of which must be filled by his freely chosen actions. It is a state which entails constant confrontation with possibility and the need for decision with the burden of responsibility.' Flew, 1979, p.14

<sup>565</sup> Kierkegaard discusses the concept of existential *Angst*, 'dread' as he calls it, in terms of 'existential inwardness' (*The Concept of Dread*, 1967, p.240) and claims that dread is 'the possibility of freedom.' Ibid. p.139

<sup>566</sup> According to Laing, fear of death is part of man's basic existential condition, which he calls 'ontological insecurity'. Laing provides a full discussion on this issue in *The Divided Self* (Chapter Three), 1960

<sup>567</sup> *PE*, 1969, p.112

<sup>568</sup> *Phil 2*, p.196

<sup>569</sup> In his *Sickness Unto Death*, Kierkegaard gives a detailed account of the concept of 'despair'. (*A Kierkegaard Anthology*, 1946, pp.339-371) He describes the term from different perspectives. This is under a section called 'Forms of Despair'. (Ibid. p.345) One form of despair is explained in terms of the essential tension between 'necessity and possibility' which are the opposing concepts in the structure of existence. (*Postscript*, in *A Kierkegaard Anthology*, 1946, p.231) Kierkegaard further discusses the unity of necessity and possibility, and infinity and finitude regarding the self. The necessary and the finite are the limiting aspects of the self whereas the possible and infinite reveal its open character. The dialectical element of the self in Kierkegaard's notions of the infinite and the finite, of the temporal and the eternal, of freedom and necessity are similar to Jaspers' concept of the antinomical structure of existence. (*Sickness unto Death*, in *A Kierkegaard Anthology*, 1946, pp.347-350) For Kierkegaard, another form of despair is understood as alienation of the self from itself. Kierkegaard considers self as 'the ground of despair'. (Ibid. p.342) In his view, one is estranged not only from oneself, but also from God, nature and others in the world. He says that despair is a flaw in the structure of self-relatedness, i.e. in one's relation to oneself. (Ibid. pp.342-343) According to Kierkegaard, it is through this experience of estrangement in *Angst* and despair that the existential realm and possibilities disclose themselves to man. He states that 'possibility is therefore the heaviest of all categories.' (*The Concept of Dread*, 1967, p.140) One becomes aware of one's unique possibilities including one's possibility of achieving authenticity in terms of one's 'eternal self'. (Kierkegaard uses 'eternal self' as well as 'infinite self', Ibid. pp.363-366,368) For both Kierkegaard and Jaspers existential *Angst* is the gateway, as it were, to authentic existence. See also the explanation of the Kierkegaardian concept of 'despair' by Blackham who writes: 'To come into reflective existence as a self-conscious being is to despair, for it is a break with the finite, a withdrawal into uncertainty, and yet one has to proceed and without guidance'. Blackham, 1952, pp.16-17

<sup>570</sup> *Phil.2*, pp.179,182,195. For Kierkegaard, too, solitude is an essential step on the existential path to authenticity. *Sickness unto Death*, 1946, p.363

<sup>571</sup> *Phil.2*, p.195 and *Sickness unto Death*, 1946, pp.351-353. Unamuno sees despair as 'the bottom of the abyss' and 'the irreconcilable conflict between reason and vital feeling.' By 'vital feeling' he means hunger for worldly existence 'forever'. Unamuno, 1931, p.124

<sup>572</sup> *Phil.2*, p.199

<sup>573</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>574</sup> For Kierkegaard, the more conscious we are the more powerful the despair is. See *The Sickness Unto Death*, 1946, pp. 345,349

<sup>575</sup> *WW*, p.188

<sup>576</sup> *Phil.2*, p.198. One must, however, ask the question: Is it necessary that confronting one's own death must be accompanied by a sense of *Angst*? There are counter examples that demonstrate lack of *Angst* in the face of death, e.g. suicide bombers do not show any sign of anxiety in the face of their certain death, and also during the second world war Japanese *Kamikaze* pilots went gladly to their suicide missions. One could also add that Socrates was calm and assured before his death. These examples indicate that one's strong beliefs play a part in the discussion of death-*Angst*.

<sup>577</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>578</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>579</sup> *Phil.2*, p.196, and *PE*, p.107. Indeed, we worry about the pain of dying, or rather the pain that precedes dying. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross' interviews with, and case studies of, dying patients suggest that the fear of death may be more present with the living than with the dying. Dying is a process which may take a long or a short time. Many people associate dying with suffering which causes fear. Perhaps what we really fear is the process of dying rather than death itself. (Kübler-Ross, 1969, p.17ff) The issue of the fear of painful dying is also taken up by Rosenbaum and she argues that death-anxiety is a reasonable emotion. Rosenbaum, 89/90, p.353

<sup>580</sup> *Phil.2*, p.196. Belief in resurrection and judgement by God is closely tied up with the significance of the individual's actions during his lifetime. Accordingly, after death the individual's life is judged, the good are rewarded and the bad are punished. (See Chapter One) In her discussion of human finitude, Dastur also addresses the issue of 'religious punishment' and suggests that 'the idea of retribution for actions performed during one's lifetime within the framework of a 'Last Judgement' is a powerful image for the believers', which can cause anxiety. Dastur, 1994, pp.11,21. According to Rosenbaum, fear of death has 'its psychological roots in the belief in a life after death.' Rosenbaum, 1993, p.133

<sup>581</sup> *Phil.2*, p.196. This is a strange way of expressing the term 'fear'. (See also *PE*, p.107) Jaspers also suggests that 'all fear derives from the underlying fear of death.' (*Phil.2*, p.232) It is not clear, however, how this belief can be substantiated. Jaspers' assertion in this regard seems an oversimplified generalisation. It is possible to accept that one may fear death, among other reasons, because it brings separation, loneliness, sadness, loss and destruction. But are there no other situations in life that might also lead to separation, sadness, and loss, which can cause fear in the individual? It is not clear why other fears should derive from the fear of death.

<sup>582</sup> *Phil.2*, p.196, see also Chapter One, pp.39-41

<sup>583</sup> *Ibid.* p.179

<sup>584</sup> *Ibid.* p.196. Jaspers considers such emotions as insignificant. He expresses his views on this as follows: 'It is true that whatever is done is done in the world, in existence, and that it is finite and transitory and therefore insignificant.' (*Ibid.*) Jaspers' view here seems rather dismissive about 'worldly phenomena'. Firstly, as he himself admits, we are all involved in worldly events and emotions at times and we may not always be able to conceal or restrain those emotions. In fact, are those emotions not one of the fundamental characteristics of man's being? Those very emotions make us what we are. As an agent with numerous responsibilities in the world, it is difficult to sustain constant awareness of one's authentic self-being. Furthermore, as Jaspers himself suggests, some people deliberately choose to evade 'authentic existence' and submerge themselves in their empirical reality. They seem to be quite content with their choice of life in the world. If human choices are existentially significant, then should we not respect their choice of life style? Secondly, it is true that worldly things are finite and transitory but does it necessarily follow that they are insignificant? It is difficult to see a logical connection here. It could be argued that some human feelings and actions which may stem from strong emotions such as jealousy, pride or ambition can lead to

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the creation of great works of art (e.g. a painting, a poem, a musical composition and so on), which can hardly be described as insignificant.

<sup>585</sup> Ibid. p.197. Jaspers is referring to Dasein's fear of death here, not existential *Angst*.

<sup>586</sup> Ibid. p.183, see also Feifel, 1977, p.279

<sup>587</sup> *Phil.2*, p.195

<sup>588</sup> Lichtigfeld supports Jaspers' view in this respect, and says that 'despite the claims of the mystic, it must be upheld that we can only think by means of the categories as given under the forms of space and time. Lichtigfeld, 1954, p.xvi

<sup>589</sup> *Phil.2*, p.198

<sup>590</sup> Ibid. p.192

<sup>591</sup> According to Ehrlich the mystic 'transcends his own temporality.' Ehrlich, 1975, p.41

<sup>592</sup> *Phil.2*, pp.197-198

<sup>593</sup> Ibid. p.197. See also Smart, 1968, p.140

<sup>594</sup> *Phil.2*, p.197. In this regard, in his *Briefe aus Muzot*, Rilke too distances himself 'passionately' from the Christian sense of immortality. Rilke, 1935, p.334

<sup>595</sup> *Phil 2*, p.197

<sup>596</sup> Ibid. p.196

<sup>597</sup> Similarly, Simone Weil discusses this issue of belief in immortality, and she seems to concur with Jaspers in this respect. She suggests that belief in immortality may be 'harmful because it robs death of its purpose'. It is not clear however whether death can have a purpose. Weil, 1963, p.33

<sup>598</sup> *Phil 2*, p.197

<sup>599</sup> The Society for Psychical Research is a well-established organisation (since 1882) which investigates scientifically whether people can survive their bodily death and whether there is life in any form after death. In this regard, they investigate a large number of cases which cannot be explained in terms of what we call 'laws of nature'. These cases do not constitute substantial evidence for survival, however, that we are presently unable to appreciate their significance through the lack of an acceptable logical framework does not mean that we shall always be in that position. Should we allow our own limitations to lead us to a hasty rejection of possible 'evidence' we fail to understand? People like A. Koestler, Dr. J. Beloff, Prof. I. Stevenson and Dr. S. Blackmore have been members and involved in the group's research activities. There is a considerable amount of literature, collection of people's experiences and scientists' experiments. Some results are interesting, informative and thought provoking but the existing data does not seem to provide conclusive evidence. Research in this field continues.

<sup>600</sup> *Phil 2*, p.197

<sup>601</sup> Rumi, 1988. See also Chapter One, p.37, footnote 144

<sup>602</sup> Jaspers does not deny that mystics have such experiences. For example, in his discussion of 'mysticism' in his *WW* he says that 'man can transcend the subject-object dichotomy and achieve a total union of subject and object, in which all objectness vanishes and the I is extinguished. Then authentic being opens up to us, leaving behind it as we awaken from our trance a consciousness of profound ...meaning. For him who has experienced it, this becoming one is the true awakening, ...We cannot doubt the existence of mystical experience, nor can we doubt that mystics have always been unable to communicate what is most essential in their experience. The mystic is immersed in the Comprehensive.' Jaspers then takes the view that 'only in object knowledge, experiencing its limits through what it surmises at the limit, can our consciousness achieve content. Even in the thinking which transcends object knowledge we remain in it.' (*WW*, pp.33-35) Jaspers considers mystics' 'harmony of being' as 'untruth.' (*WW*, p.81)

<sup>603</sup> One must remember that achieving selfhood also involves existential communication with other *Existenzen*, which is a necessary process to become free and realise this possibility. It is essential for the self to have this existential interaction with the other self. Jaspers says that 'Existenz is realized only in communication' (*Phil.2*, p.212) Boundary situations and existential communication are the two conditions which make self-realisation possible for human beings. It should be emphasised that, in Jaspers' view, one cannot achieve self-realisation by actively searching for it; this may be possible only in an indirect way.

<sup>604</sup> Wittgenstein, *Tractatus*, 6.431

<sup>605</sup> *Phil.2*, p.195

<sup>606</sup> We must remember that for Jaspers the relation of man to his own death is 'different from that to all other transitoriness; only the non-existence of the world is at all a comparable idea...Death in general or

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the death of others he can conceive of as a physical occurrence, as the non-existence of his fellow human beings, while he himself continues to exist; he can experience physical pain, anxiety, mortal dread of unavoidable death – yet survive the danger: but he has no experience of death, always only of the relationship of the living to death; he can also circumvent all these experiences and die without noticing them.’ This passage is translated from Jaspers’ *PW* by M.Franck and A.Newton in cooperation with E.Reinitz Gossman and M.Friedman in *The World of Existentialism*, p.102

<sup>607</sup> *Phil.2*, p.194

<sup>608</sup> In his discussion of the philosophical interpretation of death, Marcuse takes up this point and expresses his view similar to that of Jaspers. He suggests that death manifests itself ‘as necessity which is to be conquered not by dissolving but by accepting it.’ For details see Marcuse, 1965, p.64

<sup>609</sup> Jaspers says that ‘only when life is shaken by the thought of death has Existenz awakened.’ (*PE*, 1969, p.111) This is similar to what Heidegger calls one’s awareness of ‘being-towards-death’ which indicates ‘the relation of the thinking being to his *own* death.’ Dastur, 1994, pp. 42-43

<sup>610</sup> For Jaspers, the question of ‘the reaction to death the individual experiences can come up only after man has faced death as a limit-situation.’ This passage is translated from Jaspers’ *PW* in *The World of Existentialism*, p.102

<sup>611</sup> In boundary situations although man is confined to limited possibilities, he is still free to choose within those possibilities, and the future depends on the decisions that he takes. In this respect, Ehrlich argues that Jaspers is indebted to Kierkegaard. Ehrlich says that ‘Kierkegaardian in Jaspers is the awareness that Existenz - the existence of selfhood - involves choice, decision, responsibility, and does not consist of mere reflection.’ Ehrlich, 1975, p.211

<sup>612</sup> Olson, 1979, p.22

<sup>613</sup> *Phil.2*, p.195

<sup>614</sup> *Ibid.* pp.179, 182

<sup>615</sup> *Ibid.* pp.197, 181

<sup>616</sup> *Ibid.* pp.196-197

<sup>617</sup> *Ibid.* p.193

<sup>618</sup> *Ibid.* pp.193-194. ‘Phenomenal disappearance’ here refers to one’s bodily death.

<sup>619</sup> Phillips, 1970, p.50

<sup>620</sup> *Phil.2*, p.193

<sup>621</sup> In order to have a clearer understanding of self-realisation, it is important to grasp the relationship between *Existenz* and *Dasein* as inseparable modes of being in man. In this relationship, possible *Existenz* stands between the empirical realm and the transcendent realm. Without Transcendence it would not be possible to achieve *Existenz*, and without *Dasein* there would be no existence for the human being, let alone a realisation of *Existenz*.

<sup>622</sup> *Phil.2*, p.194

<sup>623</sup> This is one of the major differences between Heidegger and Jaspers in their analysis of human death. Heidegger does not address the issue of the death of a loved one, he focuses only on the confrontation with one’s own death. Gerlach discusses this particular difference between Heidegger and Jaspers in his *Tod als Daseinerschließung oder als Grenzsituation?* (1993, pp.43,49) The difference between Heidegger’s and Jaspers’ approaches to death can also be seen in their approaches to ‘communication’. Existential communication is fundamental in Jaspers’ philosophy whereas Heidegger does not seem to include it in his analysis. Gerlach acknowledges Jaspers’ recognition of the importance of existential communication in his existence philosophy. *Ibid.* pp.49-50

<sup>624</sup> We should note that there is an opposing view to this claim. Indeed one cannot conclude that the death of a loved one necessarily condemns the one who stays behind to a life of excessive suffering. Feifel writes ‘we cannot even conclude that bereavement is the most disturbing event that might occur.’ (Feifel, 1977, pp.23-24) A good example is Camus’ hero, Mersault, in *The Outsider*, who feels nothing except indifference at his mother’s funeral. Mersault declares that he could not have an interest in a dead woman. He feels that his own indifference to this particular event is compatible with the indifference of the universe. Camus, 1946, pp.16-27

<sup>625</sup> *Phil.2*, p.194

<sup>626</sup> *Ibid.* p.195

<sup>627</sup> *Ibid.*

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<sup>628</sup> Ibid. p.194

<sup>629</sup> Ibid.

<sup>630</sup> Sandars, 1960, p.97, and see Chapter One, pp33-34

<sup>631</sup> *Phil. 2*, p.194

<sup>632</sup> Dastur, 1994, p.48

<sup>633</sup> The following passage summarises Jaspers' view of death: 'Death is something inconceivable, something really unthinkable. What we imagine and think about it are only negations and secondary phenomena, never anything positive. This way we do not really "experience" the death of our fellow man. He leaves us and yet remains to us the same; he is and is not. Our general knowledge of death and our experienced relation to death are quite heterogeneous: We can know death in general, and at the same time there is something in us which instinctively does not believe it necessary or possible... The question of the reaction to death the individual experiences can come up only after man has faced death as a limit-situation.' This passage is translated from Jaspers' *PW* by M.Franck and A.Newton in cooperation with E.Reinitz Gossman and M.Friedman in *The World of Existentialism*, p.102

<sup>634</sup> *Phil. 2*, p.199

## Chapter Three

### Jaspers' Concepts of Existenz and 'Deathlessness'

#### 1. Introduction

In Chapter Two we discussed Jaspers' account of the notion of death and the distinction between death as an objective fact and death that gives rise to a boundary situation. We noted that Dasein perishes at death. *Existenz*, one's true self, however, 'knows no death',<sup>1</sup> that is to say, it is 'deathless'. We also noted that the 'deathlessness' of *Existenz*, within the Jaspersian framework, does not imply immortality in the traditional sense of the term. In other words, there is no continued existence<sup>2</sup> for *Existenz* after death. My task here is to clarify Jaspers' assertions regarding this matter which are complex and are in need of exploration.

In this chapter, I shall focus on this puzzling relationship between *Existenz* and death, and examine what Jaspers means by his claim that *Existenz*, as distinct from Dasein, is not subject to death. My inquiry begins with Jaspers' assertion that

As existence I live and die; my *Existenz* is unaware of death but soars or declines in relation to its being.<sup>3</sup>

In the above statement Jaspers makes a clear distinction between Dasein and *Existenz* regarding death. As Dasein I am finite: I live and then perish. As *Existenz* 'I know no death'. What is not clear however is what happens to *Existenz*, one's true self, when one dies. Jaspers' assertion here regarding *Existenz* can be construed in different ways. My limited objective here is to call attention to the ambiguity in the relationship between *Existenz* and death, or rather 'deathlessness' of *Existenz*, and to attempt to clarify some difficulties arising from this relationship.

In the following analysis my principal task is three-fold:

1. clarify and explore Jaspers' claim that *Existenz* 'knows no death', and examine to what extent *Existenz* and the *Augenblick* experience can be considered 'eternal',<sup>4</sup>
2. present two radically different interpretations of the relationship between *Existenz* and death, and discuss whether these interpretations are compatible with Jaspers' views,<sup>5</sup>
3. assess the two interpretations and their plausibility.

Before proceeding with the main task, however, I shall review some basic features of *Existenz* and deal with some questions related to these features. I shall then turn to the central issue of one's eternal aspect as *Existenz* and 'deathlessness'.

## 2. Reflections on Some Basic Features of *Existenz*

The first issue to tackle is Jaspers' metaphorical characterising of *Existenz*. As already mentioned, Jaspers sometimes refers to *Existenz* as if it were an entity as a human individual that can take action. In so doing, is Jaspers committing a 'category mistake'?<sup>6</sup> Or is it just a metaphorical way of speaking, and if so to what extent are his assertions metaphorical? When Jaspers writes 'my *Existenz* is unaware of death but soars and declines in relation to its being' he does not mean that *Existenz* literally 'soars' or 'declines' or is 'aware' of anything. Can *Existenz* soar? Can *Existenz* decline? Can *Existenz* do anything?<sup>7</sup> The answer must be 'no'. This kind of expression comes across as if *Existenz* was a separate entity from man. One must not forget that *Existenz* is *not* a separate entity in its own right but it is a mode of being, i.e. an aspect of man's being, and thus it can take no action independently. It is *man* who makes choices and decisions, and who takes action in accordance with his free will. Granted, Jaspers frequently uses these locutions in his elucidation of *Existenz*. Just to highlight this point here are several quotes:

When *Existenz* understands itself, it is not like my understanding of another<sup>8</sup>

*Existenz* warns me to detach myself from the world lest I become its prey<sup>9</sup>

*Existenz* is certain that no part of intrinsic being can stay unsettled<sup>10</sup>



This is a recurring feature in Jaspers' writing: *Existenz* seems to perform the above quoted actions.<sup>11</sup> Can *Existenz*, a possibility of man, take any action or will anything at all?<sup>12</sup> The idea that *Existenz* performs actions is on the whole a misunderstanding of Jaspers' concept of *Existenz*, and possibly due to a 'loose' use of language on Jaspers' part. One solution to this problem is to consider *Existenz* as not actively performing such actions, despite Jaspers' way of speaking, but to consider these actions being performed by *man* as *Existenz*.<sup>13</sup>

There is a further problem here. Jaspers' claim that 'Existenz is unaware of death' seems to be contradictory, if taken literally. Can one's *Existenz*, which according to Jaspers goes together with one's self-awareness, lack awareness of death? After all, Jaspers tells us that death is one of the major boundary situations and in these situations one's awareness is said to be at its height. We also know that through boundary situations one can achieve selfhood. It would be absurd to suggest that as *Existenz* one has no awareness of a significant situation like death but could still actualise self-being. On a closer examination, however, one can see that when Jaspers speaks of *Existenz*'s 'unawareness' of death he is using the word 'unaware' in the sense that death does not affect one's *Existenz*. Clearly this does not mean that one's *Existenz* has no awareness of, or is oblivious to, one's inevitable death. In other words, the term 'unaware' is not used in the sense that one is not 'conscious of death'. It is used in the sense that as *Existenz* one is free from the clutches of death which has the power to annihilate all living entities including one's Dasein. Since *Existenz* is not a living entity, it cannot be subject to the annihilation of death. Although the statement in question appears contradictory and is open to misunderstanding, the suggested interpretation here is in line with what Jaspers says about *Existenz* and death. This apparent contradiction should be regarded as a matter of semantics and the word 'unaware' should be seen in a wider context. It should also be noted that some translations can be misleading. In this case, 'Existenz is unaware of death' (Ashton's translation) is quite different from 'Existenz knows no death'.<sup>14</sup>

Let us now turn our attention to some attributes of *Existenz* and to some difficulties arising from such attributes.

### 3. Existenz and Some Philosophical Problems Arising from it

Jaspers' concept of *Existenz* is laden with philosophical ambiguities which leave it open to diverse interpretation. Difficulties arise partly from Jaspers' occasional imprecise use of language in describing highly complex subjective experiences regarding *Existenz*. As a result, his views might come across as incoherent or ambiguous.<sup>15</sup>

*Existenz* is a complex concept. Jaspers himself states in his *Philosophy* that 'Existenz is unintelligible'.<sup>16</sup> It is not possible, he says, to explain what precisely *Existenz* amounts to. Since it is not objectifiable, Jaspers writes, it is indefinable in the sense that

to make an objective intellectual solidification and definition of Existenz [is] impossible.<sup>17</sup>

In his view, one can describe only some aspects of *Existenz*, and even this kind of description can be offered only in a limited way because the non-objectifiable dimension of human existence is 'ineffable'.<sup>18</sup> What coherent philosophical interpretations of *Existenz* can be given, then?

According to Jaspers, what one can say about *Existenz* is that it is a free,<sup>19</sup> non-objective mode of being which can transcend objective time. Let us consider what Jaspers says about these characteristics of *Existenz*, namely freedom, non-objectifiability, and its ability to transcend time.

First, freedom is a key notion for Jaspers,<sup>20</sup> and he often emphasises its importance in relation to *Existenz*. One might say that unconditional freedom is at the centre of his notion of *Existenz*. He writes in *Philosophy*:

Existence exists empirically, Existenz as freedom only.<sup>21</sup>

Man's freedom and potentialities lie at the heart of Jaspers' existence philosophy.<sup>22</sup> For him, *Existenz*, freedom, and Transcendence are inseparably connected, and they represent the transcendent aspect of the human being.<sup>23</sup> In his *Way to Wisdom* Jaspers writes:

In life, freedom gives us a sense of receiving help from transcendence.<sup>24</sup>

and

The highest freedom is experienced in freedom from the world, and this freedom is a profound bond with transcendence.<sup>25</sup>

Jaspers' statements here demonstrate a close link between *Existenz*, Transcendence and existential freedom.<sup>26</sup> Although he thinks that the origins of *Existenz* is in Transcendence, it is unclear what it means to have 'a sense of receiving help from transcendence' that can be given by freedom. One does not find clear explanations of these assertions, but freedom is to be understood within an existential context. Marjorie Grene is critical of Jaspers' notion of freedom in connection with Transcendence. The following comment comes from her *Introduction to Existentialism*:

... Nor is it at all apparent in what sense the freedom of the individual essentially involves transcendence, ...But of reasons for these necessary connections one finds no mention.<sup>27</sup>

What is this existential context within which we are to understand 'freedom'? Jaspers' notions of freedom and Transcendence point to one's decisions and choices taken as *Existenz* in authentic existence,<sup>28</sup> and this gives a new perspective to the concept of freedom. Jeanne Hersch, for example, takes the view that *Existenz* is 'real in the actual decision'<sup>29</sup> and that an existential decision is always closely related to a 'concrete given situation', which is only significant in the here and now.<sup>30</sup> In her view, freedom of the individual as *Existenz* is always related to Transcendence, as neither of them has any meaning without the other.<sup>31</sup>

For Jaspers then, human freedom lies in the individual's potentialities by which he means one's possibilities to be actualised and fulfilled in one's lifetime through one's 'unconditional' choices.<sup>32</sup> He insists that existential freedom makes sense only with reference to one's potentialities and possibilities.<sup>33</sup> As Jaspers reiterates:

Then human freedom is at the heart of all his potentialities and through transcendence, through the one, man is guided to his own inner unity.<sup>34</sup>

By 'inner unity' Jaspers means the unity of the empirical and the transcendent aspects of man. Expressed differently, he means the unity of the different modes of being, i.e. *Dasein*, Consciousness-as-such, Spirit, and *Existenz*.

In connection with one's inner unity, Jaspers also addresses the issue of self-understanding. According to Jaspers, *Existenz* is a 'process of self-understanding'.<sup>35</sup> In

the Jaspersian context, self-understanding should be taken to mean one's attitude towards oneself that involves a kind of commitment to oneself. For Jaspers, self-understanding means an awareness of one's possibilities, choices and decisions, which tie in with his concept of existential freedom.<sup>36</sup> As possible *Existenz*, each individual can realise his potentialities which are closely linked with the individual's freedom of choice.<sup>37</sup> One's potentialities include one's possibility of achieving one's true self. Thus existential freedom enables one to attain selfhood through one's decisions and choices. As Kunz remarks, for Jaspers, man has the 'innate freedom to seize and realize, or fail to develop', his potentialities.<sup>38</sup> From this viewpoint, there is a clear sense in which one's potentialities make 'a transformation of "existence" (*Dasein*) into "*Existenz*" possible.'<sup>39</sup>

Jaspers puts a lot of emphasis on existential freedom. One can argue that this can also be an unbearable liability, a burden, for the individual. As Ehrlich points out, if man is expected constantly to strive to elucidate his possibilities and potentialities, and to make authentic choices, will it not lead to 'excessive expectations of man'?<sup>40</sup> Will freedom not be an overwhelming 'burden for a finite being'?<sup>41</sup> Ehrlich holds that 'to call man beyond his finitude, beyond his actuality, is an imposition.'<sup>42</sup> Within this context, Latzel, too, thinks that 'the goal has been placed too high ever to be attainable: man as a finite creature can never round out the reality of his existence into an encompassing and harmonious whole.'<sup>43</sup> This seems to be a realistic way of evaluating Jaspers' concept of existential freedom.

The second point to consider regarding the characteristics of *Existenz* is that it is a non-objective mode of being.<sup>44</sup> In other words, *Existenz* is not an object for itself nor can it become an object of human knowledge.<sup>45</sup> In this context, Jaspers uses the term 'object' in a narrow sense, that is in the sense that *Existenz* is not an empirical entity with definitive properties. By using the term 'non-objective' Jaspers is laying emphasis on the transcendent aspect of the self which is not cognisable, since, for him, only 'objects' can be cognised.<sup>46</sup> We understand that man's existence as *Dasein* is his empirical mode of being in the world. Jaspers considers *Dasein* as '*Existenz*'s appearance'. In his words:

*Existenz* appears to itself as existence, in the polarity of subjectivity and objectivity; but it is not the appearance of an object given anywhere ...It is phenomenal only for itself and for other *Existenz*.<sup>47</sup>

In the above quote, Jaspers makes a clear distinction between one's phenomenal existence, i.e. *Dasein*, and the 'non-phenomenal' aspect of the self, i.e. *Existenz*. On first reading, it is difficult to grasp Jaspers' intended meaning when he talks of '*Existenz*'s appearing to itself as existence'. What Jaspers is expressing here is that as *Dasein* one is a phenomenal being in the world, i.e. physical and visible.<sup>48</sup> One's *Dasein* is described as 'phenomenal' in that it actually appears in the world, unlike one's *Existenz* which does not have phenomenal reality.<sup>49</sup> Since *Dasein* and *Existenz* are two distinct modes of being of the individual, their characteristics manifest themselves in different ways, i.e. one's *Dasein* is phenomenal whereas one's *Existenz* is non-objective.<sup>50</sup> In fact, in Jaspers' view, *Existenz* should be considered only as a possibility. Hersch also suggests that '*Existenz* is, in theory, only a possibility.'<sup>51</sup> If *Existenz* is considered as a possibility, then perhaps its non-phenomenal feature can make sense. But Jaspers does not seem to be consistent in his statements regarding the 'possibility' and 'actuality' of *Existenz*. Is *Existenz* then a mere possibility?

Let us reflect on this ambiguous state of the 'possibility' and 'actuality' of *Existenz*.<sup>52</sup> Jaspers sometimes asserts that *Existenz* remains mostly as a possibility for human beings in mundane existence because achieving *Existenz* is something elusive and improbable.<sup>53</sup> But at the same time, it can also be interpreted from some of his other statements that *Existenz* is a rarely actualised possibility.<sup>54</sup> It is not always clear, however, whether *Existenz* is *only* a possibility or whether it can be actualised. This ambiguity stands out in the following passage:

As *Existenz* results from the real act of breaking through mundane existence, existential elucidation is the *thinking ascertainment* of that act. The breakthrough goes from possible *Existenz* to its realization, without being able to leave the borderline possibility.<sup>55</sup>

According to this passage, *Existenz* seems to be a mere possibility rather than an actuality. The term 'borderline possibility' indicates that we, as possible *Existenz*, remain within the boundary of mundane existence, and that we may not be able to transcend this boundary to achieve selfhood. The term 'borderline possibility' points to the boundary experience of *Existenz* in boundary situations. It is possible in such situations, to experience a heightened awareness of Being. But this may not lead to transcending-

thinking and one may remain in mundane existence as possible *Existenz*. In the above passage, Jaspers refers to a 'breakthrough' for possible *Existenz* to realise itself. At the same time we are told that possible *Existenz* cannot leave the 'borderline possibility'. This seems to suggest that *Existenz* cannot be 'actual' even if it is very close to being 'actual'.<sup>56</sup> In fact, in *Basic Philosophical Writings*, the Editors come to the same conclusion:

...Jaspers discusses the methodological problem of thinking and speaking of *Existenz*, which cannot be objectified and which, insofar as it is thought, is merely "possible" *Existenz* and never its actuality.<sup>57</sup>

Gerhard Knauss too interprets *Existenz* as 'potentiality' but 'never in the mode of reality'.<sup>58</sup> By 'the mode of reality' Knauss means one's physical existence. What he says seems to be convincing:

But we are not merely reality but also potentiality. What we actually are as such potentiality Jaspers calls *Existenz*. We are never *Existenz* in the mode of reality but only in the mode of potentiality. *Existenz* is our basis. It is always ahead of us because of the factuality of our existence, but we can catch up with it by attaining our authentic being.<sup>59</sup>

Statements like 'we are never *Existenz*' supports the view that *Existenz* is a mere possibility rather than an actuality. However, Knauss clarifies his statement in the above by confining *Existenz*'s reality to 'the mode of potentiality.' Unlike Knauss, in some parts of *Philosophy* Jaspers refers to *Existenz* as 'actuality' without further qualification:

*Existenz* itself, however, exists only as the actuality of real action.<sup>60</sup>

and

Actual *Existenz* is historic actuality that ceases to speak.<sup>61</sup>

These statements suggest that *Existenz* can be actualised.<sup>62</sup> In *Philosophy*, Jaspers also speaks of the *rupture of immanence* 'in which *Existenz* at the historic moment encounters being', which indicates that *Existenz* can be actualised.<sup>63</sup> In *General Psychopathology*, Jaspers makes clear reference to the actuality of self-being.<sup>64</sup> Furthermore, in *Von der Wahrheit* it looks as though Jaspers confirms that *Existenz* is realisable when he discusses *Existenz* as the 'source of true actuality':

*Existenz* is the source of true actuality without which that scope and actuality of existence would evaporate. As *Existenz* I can in no way become my own object of research, cannot know myself; I can only become actual or I can lose myself.<sup>65</sup>

Here, Jaspers' assertions such as one's 'true actuality' and becoming 'actual' strongly suggest that *Existenz* is realisable. But even then there is still an ambiguity: to say that *Existenz* is the 'source of true actuality' is quite different from saying that '*Existenz* is actual'. Here, the assumption that *Existenz* is realisable is based on the premise that whatever is the source of actuality must itself be actual. Nevertheless it is possible that the source of actuality may not itself be actual.

Thus far on a comprehensive view, it seems that *Existenz* can be both possible and actual. It is not uncommon to find such conflicting statements in Jaspers' writings. However, Jaspers does not regard them as contradictory but as the representation of the antinomic structure of existence. Are these conflicting statements reconcilable? And to what extent can one resolve this difficulty? Let us consider the issue from Jaspers' perspective. William Earle echoes Jaspers' views regarding this particular point as follows:

And since *Existenz* is actual only in authentic self-awareness, ...*Existenz* is but a possibility for men; it is not a property with which we are endowed by nature. It must be enacted inwardly if it is to be at all; and it need not ever be. It is the possibility in men of coming to themselves, of the self rejoining itself for a moment. *Existenz* is only a possibility for human nature; things in the world have no such possibility.<sup>66</sup>

Thus, *Existenz* is a possibility for man, which may or may not be actualised depending on the individual's self-awareness in his particular situation. It seems that it is possible to actualise *Existenz*, but only 'for a moment' in one's existential experience, i.e. in the *Augenblick*.<sup>67</sup> If one's selfhood is not realised then *Existenz* remains as a possibility.

In the discussion of the possibility/actuality of *Existenz*, it is clear that the attainment of selfhood is a necessary component. As noted earlier, the attainment of selfhood can occur if one can transcend one's empirical limitations in transcending-thinking. In Jaspers' words:

The discontent of possible self-being has broken through mundane existence and cast the individual back upon himself, back to the origin that lets him deal with his world and, ...realize his *Existenz*.<sup>68</sup>

In statements such as these, it becomes clear that *Existenz* can be actualised, at least momentarily. If one can transcend one's worldly existence in thought, and has a momentary experience of transcendent awareness, then one might realise one's *Existenz*,



one's authentic self-being. It is possible then to consider *Existenz* as 'actual' only momentarily in thought, not physically, while it remains as a 'possibility' most of the time. This is what Earle means by 'Existenz is actual only in authentic self-awareness', and it seems to be a plausible interpretation.

The question of the possibility/actuality of *Existenz* may be regarded as a pseudo-problem by some Jaspers scholars.<sup>69</sup> They may argue that if *Existenz* is a 'mode of being' then it should be more than a mere possibility, since this mode of being is the transcendent aspect of man which is realisable. When Jaspers speaks of *Existenz* as a possibility, he tries to highlight the possible occurrence of the actualisation of self-being. The ambiguity of possibility/actuality of *Existenz* arises, because *Existenz* cannot be objectified in rational categories. Nor can the actualisation of *Existenz* be rationally articulated. As a result of the inadequacy of language, so the argument goes, these seemingly contradictory statements may lead to the miscomprehension of what Jaspers is trying to convey. If one considers *Existenz* as the non-phenomenal aspect of the human being, and take the lack of appropriate metaphysical language into account, then Jaspers' assertions need not imply that *Existenz* cannot be actualised. Seen in this light, Jaspers' statements regarding the possibility/actuality of *Existenz* may be reconcilable. Then it seems acceptable to say that one's *Existenz* is not only a possibility but also an 'actuality' with the qualification that it occurs in transcending-thinking. The union of possibility and actuality should also be seen as 'the active relation' between the two that represents one's *Existenz*.<sup>70</sup>

In the final analysis, it could be argued that despite some contrary statements, Jaspers on the whole is committed to the view that it is possible for human beings to actualise selfhood, i.e. become *Existenz*, as a rare momentary experience in the *Augenblick*. If that were not the case, and *Existenz* were to remain only as a possibility and never to become actuality, then *Existenz*, as one of the most central features of Jaspers' existence philosophy, would be pointless to develop as an existential aspect of the human being.<sup>71</sup> And Jaspers' appeal to man to achieve authentic selfhood would be unrealistic, even nonsensical, in the sense that it would be an appeal to achieve the unrealisable.<sup>72</sup>



Returning to the characteristics of *Existenz*, the third point to consider here is one's capability of transcending time as *Existenz*.<sup>73</sup> What does it mean to transcend time? It may mean at least two things: a) that someone or something is beyond space and time, independent of temporal existence, or b) that someone or something is not reducible to an entity in space and time. The first meaning has often been associated with a transcendent being like God, existence of which does not constitute a part of the phenomenal world as He would be eternal. Can this apply to *Existenz*? If *Existenz* is defined as a mode of being of humans, can it at the same time be said to be beyond space and time? We know that for Jaspers, human existence entails more than mere 'empirical being in the world' in that there is a transcendent dimension to human beings.<sup>74</sup> However, when Jaspers speaks of *Existenz*, he often reminds us that without one's empirical existence one cannot achieve *Existenz*.<sup>75</sup> In this respect, *Existenz* is not an entity beyond space and time, but it does not belong to objective time either; it is 'atemporal' or timeless. *Existenz* can be said to be 'timeless', or as Jaspers says, it is 'supratemporal', by which he means above temporality rather than beyond it.<sup>76</sup> Jaspers does not intend to attribute 'divine' qualities to *Existenz*, in that one's mode of being, as *Existenz*, is not considered wholly beyond space and time as expressed in the first meaning (a) above. Time for *Existenz* is existential time and not objective time. What Jaspers tries to convey is the second meaning (b) given above, i.e. one is not reducible to an entity in space and time.<sup>77</sup> He attempts to show that although man is a transitory being, there is also an eternal aspect to him, and that man is not something reducible to a mere physical entity in the world. In his attempt to explicate the transcendent aspect of the human being, Jaspers qualifies *Existenz* as 'deathless' and 'infinite' to contrast it with the finitude of *Dasein*.<sup>78</sup> However, when one reflects on this metaphysical dimension of man, a number of questions arise. For example, Jaspers claims that man is able to comprehend eternity as a timeless moment, i.e. the *Augenblick*.<sup>79</sup> Clearly, one's existential experience in the *Augenblick* and the achievement of *Existenz* require further consideration and clarification.

What does it mean to say that one has an experience of eternity in the *Augenblick*? How does the contact with eternity come into this experience? Is it plausible to suggest that the actuality of *Existenz* is confined to the *Augenblick*? It seems that there are ontological

and phenomenological strains in the explanation of the *Augenblick* experience. If one achieves selfhood, i.e. *Existenz* in the *Augenblick*, does *Existenz* continue to remain with the Dasein, or is it totally transient? This problem becomes particularly acute when analysing man's relation to death. When Dasein dies what happens to *Existenz*? This area too seems to be opaque, as death, like eternity, is an obscure notion. When Jaspers states that *Existenz* 'knows no death', i.e. 'deathless', does this imply that *Existenz* is eternal?<sup>80</sup> If so, what form of eternity does Jaspers have in mind? I shall take up these issues and address the above questions in the following section as they are of direct concern to this analysis. This brings me to the point where I can now turn to the main task, namely the analysis of the relationship between *Existenz* and death.

#### **4. The Relationship between *Existenz* and Death**

Since, according to Jaspers, the relationship between *Existenz* and death has to be seen in the context of 'timelessness/eternity',<sup>81</sup> our inquiry will begin in the first section of this analysis with an exploration of the attribute of 'deathlessness' in terms of 'present eternity'. What does it mean for *Existenz* to be 'eternal'? What does Jaspers mean by 'present eternity'? What is the eternal aspect of the human being, and what is its connection with the *Augenblick* experience? Let us now address these questions.

##### **a. Jaspers' Concepts of *Present Eternity* and the *Augenblick***

First, let us quote a key passage that will give us some clues about Jaspers' view regarding the eternal aspect of *Existenz*, and which will form an important part of our discussion:

Confronting necessity, the existence of an object at all times, we have, instead of endless time, the *fulfilled time of the moment*. As present eternity, this fulfilled time confronts Kant's time at large – the form of inertia whose correlative is substance. The latter is objective, measurable, and can be experienced as reality; the former is the depth of original, free *Existenz*. The latter is validly extant for everyone; the former turns a time that is tied to choice and decision into a phenomenon, as current time. *Existenz* has *its* time, not *time pure and simple*.<sup>82</sup>

This passage is important because it contains several major points about the eternal aspect of *Existenz*, which is closely bound up with the notion of 'present eternity'. Present

eternity is a complex idea that needs to be explained in terms of the concepts of 'time' and 'eternity'. In this context, Jaspers makes an explicit distinction between objective time as we experience it and existential time which is subjective. This distinction between time and eternity is qualitative. In his distinction Jaspers contrasts the notion of 'present eternity' with Kant's concept of 'objective' time.<sup>83</sup> For Kant, space and time are the 'pure forms of all sensible intuition'<sup>84</sup> insofar as 'the essential nature of their referents is known in advance of experience and not as a result of it'.<sup>85</sup> According to Kant, although time represents the form of inner sense, it also has 'objective validity';<sup>86</sup> moreover it is 'necessarily objective'.<sup>87</sup> For Jaspers, however, the 'objectively valid' characteristic of time does not apply to existential time. In his view, subjective time, experienced by the individual as *Existenz*, does not have the qualities of 'objectivity' and 'measurability' but *is* an existential 'moment' in objective time. The notion of time here is not what applies to Dasein; it is rather 'timelessness'.<sup>88</sup> Here Jaspers is expressing the incommensurability of different types of time. They are incommensurable because they represent different aspects of reality.<sup>89</sup>

This mode of explanation of *Existenz* and subjective time echoes Kierkegaard's concepts of the *Augenblick* and eternity in his discussion of 'subjectivity', 'inwardness', and 'time'.<sup>90</sup> Kierkegaard in his *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* distinguishes between two types of time experiences.<sup>91</sup> (1) The experience of objective time, that is the measurement of time which applies to everybody, i.e. clock time.<sup>92</sup> (2) Quite different from this objective time, we often subjectively experience another form of time: subjective time.<sup>93</sup> Kierkegaard also talks about the individual's experience of 'the eternal' in objective time. He writes:

For as the eternal came into the world at a moment of time, the existing individual does not in the course of time come into relation with the eternal and think about it, but *in time* it [the individual] comes into relation with the eternal *in time*; so that the relation is within time, and this relationship conflicts equally with all thinking.<sup>94</sup>

Jaspers' concept of the momentary experience of the eternal in objective time is almost identical to that of Kierkegaard.<sup>95</sup> Kierkegaard, like Jaspers, acknowledges the problematic nature of the relationship between objective and subjective time, and of the 'paradoxical' experience of 'the eternal' apprehended by the individual.<sup>96</sup> It seems that

Jaspers' account of the eternal aspect of *Existenz* emerges from Kierkegaard's concept of time. Jaspers' notion of subjective time *in* objective time is quite complicated. However, as we deal with closely related concepts such as 'present eternity' and the *Augenblick* experienced by *Existenz*, this complexity should unfold, and what Jaspers means should, although not without problems, become somewhat clearer.

In his statements regarding one's existential experience of the *Augenblick* in objective time, Jaspers often refers to 'present eternity'<sup>97</sup> without a clear definition of it. The meaning of the term 'present eternity' seems broader than first appears. Jaspers uses various other terms interchangeably to refer to 'present eternity'. For example, he describes it as 'timelessness'<sup>98</sup>, 'in time but more than time'<sup>99</sup>, a 'moment of eternity' and 'eternity in time'.<sup>100</sup> Nevertheless, we can surmise that 'present eternity' refers to what is experienced in the *Augenblick* that occurs in an instant in objective time, i.e. 'a moment of eternity', and that it belongs to *Existenz*.<sup>101</sup> According to Jaspers, this eternal moment in time is 'timeless' in the sense that relations of past, present and future, as we understand them, do not apply to it but are perceived simultaneously in that particular 'timeless' moment.<sup>102</sup>

At this point we need to draw attention to the ambiguity regarding 'the experience of the *Augenblick*' in relation to 'timelessness'. What does it mean to say that one's *Existenz* is able to have the *Augenblick* experience? What kind of existential experience is it? If there is an existential experience of the 'timeless', is this experience *itself* also 'timeless'? Or is it an experience of *something that is 'timeless'*? That there is an experience of the 'timeless'/'eternal'<sup>103</sup> does not necessarily imply that the experience itself is eternal. Furthermore, since this experience would be a kind of 'participation' in the eternal, could *Existenz* also be said to be 'eternal'? Let us address each question in turn.

*What is the existential experience of the Augenblick?* According to Jaspers, this existential human experience can be expressed in terms of a heightened awareness of Being,<sup>104</sup> i.e. an awareness of a moment of eternity in objective time.<sup>105</sup> Qualities and the intensity of awareness may be varied, but as an experience it remains accessible to

everyone who can break through the boundary of the empirical realm. Jaspers claims that this transcendent experience may not require any duration for it to be experienced, since it is a different kind of experience. If one can realise *Existenz*, and experience a moment of eternity in objective time, then this life experience would take place in a very short moment in terms of our earthly spatio-temporal existence that is in the ‘here and now’. In Jaspers’ words:

The moment as the identity of temporality and timelessness is the factual moment deepened to *present eternity*. A sense of historicity makes me aware of two things in one: of evanescence as a phenomenon and of eternal being by way of this phenomenon – not in the sense of a timeless validity that happens to be grasped now but would be just as capable of being grasped at some other time, not in the sense of temporality and timelessness standing disparately side by side, but in the sense that, once fulfilled, the temporal particularity is comprehended as the appearance of eternal being, that the tie between this eternity and *this* moment is absolute.<sup>106</sup>

‘Present eternity’ here indicates the experience of the ‘timeless’ moment as the appearance of eternity, as the ‘eternal now’. The feeling of *now* is the feeling of certainty for one’s *Existenz*. This notion of eternity does not indicate endless time, but rather ‘timelessness’, which is expressed by Jaspers as *quer zur Zeit*.<sup>107</sup> He explains this concept by stating that eternity cuts across time, i.e. is transverse to objective time, as we understand it, at one single point. In Jaspers’ words:

Finally, eternity means the unity of temporal actuality and timeless Being, of what in time cuts across time, temporal and timeless at once.<sup>108</sup>

If we represent this concept as a diagram it would look something like this:

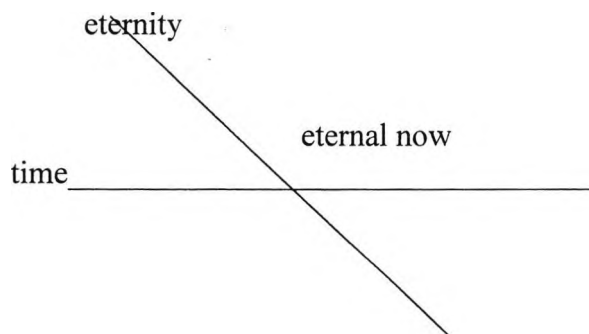


Figure 1 – *The horizontal line represents objective ‘time’ and the diagonal line represents ‘eternity’. The crossing point is where ‘a moment of eternity’ is experienced, i.e. eternal now.*

Arthur Custance's concept of time is almost identical with that of Jaspers. He elucidates this difficult concept in his discussion of time and eternity in somewhat clearer terms.<sup>109</sup> He points out that time and eternity belong to two different categories, and that if they are represented as a horizontal and a vertical line, they can 'intersect'. Custance refers to the point of intersection as 'now', which corresponds to the point of eternal moment in Jaspers' terminology. Custance writes:

Time and eternity are not such that there can be this kind of overlap because the two realities are not in the same category of experience. The only "overlap" is that point of crossover at which the line representing time (which is horizontal) crosses the line representing eternity (which is vertical). Since neither line has any width, the place of intersection is not an area but merely a point, a point that can only be described as NOW.<sup>110</sup>

Custance adds that whenever the crossing point 'now' occurs, eternity 'impinges upon our consciousness'.<sup>111</sup> He qualifies the line of eternity as having 'no width' but 'only depth and height'. He emphasises that the essential quality of the eternal moment is 'depth (not length)'.<sup>112</sup> This eternal point 'now' corresponds to Jaspers' concept of a moment of eternity experienced in the *Augenblick*.

According to Jaspers, in the attainment of selfhood, what is experienced is a momentary flashing up of a spark of eternity which is immediately extinguished.<sup>113</sup> And it is this existential experience that occurs in the *Augenblick*. In his *Philosophical Faith and Revelation*, Jaspers explains it as follows:

Overlapping the vanishing moment in a flow of time is the moment that reveals something eternal. This happens in the events we call existential – ...The vanishing Now is eternal, because it has been and will be infinitely many times.<sup>114</sup>

and

The world is the meeting point of that which is eternal and that which manifests itself in time.  
But since the encounter between existence and transcendence is an encounter in the world, it is bound to the world from the standpoint of time. Because what is for us, must manifest itself within the temporality of the world,...<sup>115</sup>

Jaspers acknowledges the paradoxical nature of the experience of the *Augenblick*.<sup>116</sup> In his discussion of transcendent reality and the experience of the *Augenblick*, he describes human experiences as one's 'encounter with being in the *rupture of immanence*'<sup>117</sup> and 'touching the infinite'.<sup>118</sup> In other words, he fuses these two aspects of reality, i.e. the

empirical and the transcendent, in human experiences.<sup>119</sup> This makes sense if we regard one's Dasein and *Existenz* as two aspects of the human being.

Thus one's existential experience in the *Augenblick* is to be understood as a manifestation of that which is eternal but which can only appear for us in objective time in the world. What is reasonably clear from Jaspers' statements is that man as *Existenz* can experience the unity of eternity and the temporal moment 'now'. This existential experience signifies a dynamic relation between the temporal and the non-temporal. However, this fleeting relational experience between the two kinds of time vanishes in a single moment. Despite its sudden disappearance this experience remains in one's memory and it can be recalled. When Jaspers says that this moment is 'eternal' and 'will be infinitely many times' he is referring to the occurrence of this type of experience from time to time.<sup>120</sup> He emphasises this point in his *Philosophical Faith and Revelation*:

In the singular passage we touch eternity only on the heights of Existenz, not as mere existence; in recurrence all things are reduced to the same level of happening over and over.<sup>121</sup>

Jaspers reiterates that the recurrence of this experience depends upon 'the presence of Existenz'.<sup>122</sup> Although there cannot be an 'objective guarantee'<sup>123</sup> that it will occur, he claims that when 'Existenz is present' it is highly likely that it will occur.<sup>124</sup>

Another point to consider in the key passage we quoted earlier<sup>125</sup> is the connection between one's experience of the *Augenblick*, and the choices and decisions one makes as *Existenz*. What does it mean to say that 'present eternity' is 'fulfilled time' and it is 'tied to choice and decision'? The answer lies in Jaspers' concept of existential freedom of the individual, which makes existential choice possible.<sup>126</sup> An existential choice, for Jaspers, is not the product of rational calculation or objective deliberation in search of definitive resolution, but an expression of one's innermost self, which originates from one's freedom.<sup>127</sup> Jaspers links one's choice and resolution with the 'immediacy of intrinsic self-being' and what he calls the 'unconditional'.<sup>128</sup> For Jaspers, unconditional decisions represent one's free will in the sense that one has a full view of all of one's possibilities, and decides in accordance with the choice of one's *Existenz*. In support of Jaspers' view,

Paul Ricoeur remarks that 'only the moment of choice, of anxious venture, of responsibility without guarantee or security, bears the stamp of authenticity'.<sup>129</sup>

For Jaspers, the authentic selfhood is one's potentiality; it involves possibilities and constant necessity of choice. Accordingly, one's relationship to one's possibilities, choices and decisions, within the context of existential freedom, is fundamental in human existence. This is because the future is shaped by the decisions one takes in different situations. In Jaspers' view, when these decisions are in accordance with one's free will, then one may fulfil one's potentialities. And this in turn may lead one to authentic existence.<sup>130</sup> Jaspers reiterates that the actualisation of selfhood is closely linked with making decisions and choices, and realising one's potential through such choices.<sup>131</sup> To emphasise this point he declares:

I am as nothing if I do not realize in the world the potentialities that are being revealed to me here by eternity.<sup>132</sup>

Jean Wahl takes up this point in his discussion of one's relationship to Transcendence and self-realisation.<sup>133</sup> He claims that one can accomplish true selfhood in the *Augenblick* through one's 'unconditional and absolute' actions and decisions in boundary situations. Wahl discusses this issue in connection with the similarities between Jaspers' and Kierkegaard's views:

Jaspers finds in Kierkegaard not only the concept of situation, but also the reality of those ultimate situations which lead us toward Transcendence. In such situations, I accomplish unconditional and absolute actions, and in so far as I act unconditionally and love unconditionally, eternity is there, eternity is in time.<sup>134</sup>

In Wahl's view then Jaspers' concept of existentially 'fulfilled moments' make it possible for the individual to experience the 'eternal' in the here and now.<sup>135</sup> Jaspers seems to have several supporters to defend this particular aspect, i.e. 'fulfilled moments', regarding one's existential experience of the *Augenblick*. For example, Kaufmann expresses this existential moment as 'free and resolute fulfillment':

The flight of time is stopped in our inner concentration, in the concreteness of the '*existential*' moment, in the free and resolute fulfillment of its present claims. In this 'present-mindedness' the eternal, the metahistorical finds its historical realization.<sup>136</sup>



Similarly, Johannes Thyssen states that one's experience of the eternal should be understood in connection with existential freedom and one's decisions and choices. For Thyssen, *Existenz* is historical and its essence is freedom, and this means:

..that I decide as someone who has developed into a particular person and who lives in a specific environment and situation. And Jaspers discloses here one of the most peculiar tenets of his teaching: namely, that "within time, decisions are made for eternity." This does not mean that Jaspers is talking of a life to come where my actions earn their reward and punishment respectively. Nor does eternity mean "abstract timelessness" as assigned to mathematical entities. It means that "I, within time, stand above it".<sup>137</sup>

In his argument Thyssen interprets Jaspers' concept of the *Augenblick* experience as neither 'abstract timelessness' nor 'everlasting duration', but as a 'free decision'<sup>138</sup> of the individual. In this regard, Thyssen insists that an existential moment of eternity can actually be experienced by the individual through his decisions and choices. His interpretation of the *Augenblick* experience seems to tie in with Jaspers' description of 'present eternity' as 'fulfilled time'.<sup>139</sup> Thus, in our discourse in this study when we refer to 'existentially fulfilled moments' within the Jaspersian framework, it should be understood in terms of decisions one takes in accordance with one's free will.

*Is the experience of the Augenblick itself timeless, or is 'what is experienced' in the Augenblick timeless?* Let us unfold what Jaspers means. When discussing the experience of the *Augenblick*, these two points need to be differentiated. Jaspers does not make a clear distinction between the two, and sometimes it is possible to interpret his assertions either way. If the latter is meant, then it is not the experience itself that is timeless, but what the experience is directed towards, i.e. an existential moment. Some, like Brentano and Husserl take the view that in human experience 'the fundamental feature of consciousness is intentionality', i.e. its directedness towards something. This indicates that 'intentional objects' are 'intrinsic' to human experience.<sup>140</sup> Since experience is a form of consciousness, there is a close connection between experience and 'intentionality'.<sup>141</sup> As Husserl holds 'something perceived can very well be itself a mental process of consciousness'.<sup>142</sup> But it does not mean that an object of an experience and the experience itself are one and the same thing. Husserl, for example, is consistent in his claim that there is a distinction between an intentional object and one's experience of that object.

In Jaspers' discussion of the unity of temporality and eternity in human experience, however, the distinction is unclear. For example, he describes the revelation of the eternal moment as an 'existential event' and an 'existential experience'.<sup>143</sup> If the 'vanishing moment', as he claims, is the moment that 'reveals something eternal'<sup>144</sup> and if 'I am in eternity'<sup>145</sup> when I experience this moment, then it is possible to interpret not only what is experienced but also the experience itself as eternal.<sup>146</sup> At times, the distinction between these two concepts seems to be blurred.<sup>147</sup>

Since according to Jaspers' notions of transcending-thinking and the experience of the *Augenblick* require 'inner experience' of Transcendence,<sup>148</sup> and since Transcendence is characterised by eternity then it is indeed possible to interpret one's 'inner experience' itself as eternal.<sup>149</sup> This is because one's *Existenz* participates in eternity through one's 'inner experience'. Furthermore, Jaspers tells us that there is no subject-object division in transcending-thinking and in the *Augenblick* experience.<sup>150</sup> If the process of self-realisation in the *Augenblick* is involved in one's participation in eternity, then it is possible that the experience of the *Augenblick* itself might be considered eternal. This kind of experience seems intertwined with what is experienced as 'eternity' to the extent that the two might appear indistinguishable.

Some mystics might claim that human experience is always experience of something and that there is no distinction between 'what is experienced' and 'experience itself'. They might argue that if one's experience is directed towards an 'intentional object' and if the 'intentional object' is part of the structure of that experience, then the distinction between experience itself and what is experienced disappears. Happold suggests that a significant 'characteristic of mystical experience is the *sense of timelessness*'.<sup>151</sup> He also suggests that mystical experiences do not fall into objective time-series. This is partly due to one's 'sense of the oneness of everything'.<sup>152</sup> He describes a mystical experience as 'a glimpse of the peace of eternity'<sup>153</sup> since the mystic sees 'the life which is in man is eternal.'<sup>154</sup> In Happold's view

the primary experience and the primary effect are the same.<sup>155</sup>

This indicates that for the mystic there is no distinction between the experience and what is experienced. There are some similarities between a mystical experience and the *Augenblick* experience, but Jaspers would not qualify the *Augenblick* as a mystical experience. Perhaps Jaspers did not think that it was necessary to make a differentiation between a 'timeless' experience and an experience of the 'timeless'. But is it reasonable to assume that the experience of the *Augenblick* is timeless? It does not seem so. We understand that the experience of an eternal moment occurs in objective time. We also understand that this is a paradox. Human experiences belong to spatio-temporal reality and they take place in objective time. Jaspers makes this point clear in the following passage:

The world is the meeting point of that which is eternal and that which manifests itself in time.  
But since the encounter between existence and transcendence is an encounter in the world, it is bound to the world from the standpoint of time. Because what is for us, must manifest itself within the temporality of the world,...<sup>156</sup>

So far it is clear that human experiences occur in objective time, and Jaspers acknowledges this. Everything that occurs in time is in past, present and future, and if an event or an entity lacks the property of being in the past, present or future, it cannot be said that this entity or event 'exists' in time. Since human experiences in the world have some duration, they are finite. If they are finite, it would be contradictory to say that they are at the same time eternal as something eternal is not considered finite. If one's experience of the *Augenblick* is not part of past, present and future in objective time, i.e. timeless, then the *Augenblick* experience must be outside of time. But Jaspers also tells us that the *Augenblick* experience occurs in time while one is alive. If the *Augenblick* experience is in time and has duration, it means that one moment in time, however short it may be, will be earlier than the experience of the *Augenblick*, and another moment will come after that. If the *Augenblick* experience is timeless, can it have duration? It must have some duration for it to be experienced. If the *Augenblick* experience has any duration at all, then it cannot be said to be outside of time and therefore the *Augenblick* experience *itself* cannot be timeless or eternal.

As Kunz claims, even if we are able to 'transcend our own existence' in some sense, in a strict sense 'being-out-of-the-world' is not experienced at all'.<sup>157</sup> According to Kunz,

some mystics might have 'ecstatic experiences' somewhat similar to the *Augenblick*. However, he goes on to say that such experiences would still have to be in the actual world.<sup>158</sup> In other words, they have to be in objective time. These experiences themselves then cannot be considered eternal or timeless, as they are finite human experiences. In brief, one can have a transcendent experience in thought but one cannot escape temporality: one is grounded in the world. As I argued here, human experience *itself* is temporal and strictly speaking it cannot be considered as eternal or timeless.

It is possible, however, to have an experience of *something eternal or timeless*. What is experienced in the *Augenblick* can be a moment of 'timelessness', or 'non-temporal duration' as Jaspers suggests.<sup>159</sup> It is possible that this kind of experience can recur when one attains selfhood.<sup>160</sup> Thus throughout this thesis when I refer to the *Augenblick* experience, it should be taken to mean that what is experienced in objective time is timeless/eternal.<sup>161</sup> I shall give a detailed analysis of one's experience of 'timelessness' and whether one can be considered eternal in Chapter Four.

#### **b. Eternity with Reference to *Existenz***

Although Jaspers gives some hints as to what one's eternal aspect entails, we still do not have a clear idea of what his notion of eternity is.<sup>162</sup> Admittedly, the philosophical concept of eternity is elusive. It is indeed a complicated issue of which it is difficult to give an adequate account.<sup>163</sup> This complex subject can only be considered here briefly and insofar as it concerns the eternal aspect of the human being and the *Augenblick* experience. We should also note that there is no uncontroversial definition of the notion of eternity. It is not surprising, therefore, that a clear definition of eternity is absent in Jaspers' exposition of the eternal aspect of *Existenz*.

As Jaspers repeatedly reminds us, when one is dealing with metaphysical issues, such as eternity and Transcendence, efforts to understand or to define the nature of such concepts are bound to be inadequate.<sup>164</sup> Some 1700 years ago the problem of the 'ineffability' of the transcendent realm was addressed by Plotinus in his *Enneads*.<sup>165</sup> In his explanation of

the concept of 'the One',<sup>166</sup> which is eternal, he gave a clear indication that it can never be adequately disclosed by language as it is 'ineffable':

We do not, it is true, grasp it by knowledge, but that does not mean that we are utterly void of it; we hold it not so as to state it, but so as to be able to speak about it. And we can and do state what it is not, while we are silent as to what it is: we are, in fact, speaking of it in the light of its sequels; unable to state it, we may still possess it.<sup>167</sup>

Since we do not have an adequate vocabulary when we speak about such issues our efforts only amount to referring to some symbolic representation.<sup>168</sup> In constructing metaphysical ideas about eternity, it is inevitable that one has to refer to objective time in the absence of any 'metaphysical lexicon' relevant to expressing eternal properties.<sup>169</sup> This can be inaccurate and misleading at times, but the point here is that discerning various attributes of eternity requires another kind of language, and this is not available to us.

Before we can put forward any coherent interpretation of the eternal aspect of the human being, we must first clarify what we mean, or do not mean, by eternity. This will enable us to assess whether or not one's *Existenz* can be qualified as 'eternal' and thereby 'deathless'. In turn, one's experience of the *Augenblick* will then begin to unfold.<sup>170</sup>

*What is eternity? How does it relate to one's Existenz?* It is difficult to say what precisely eternity is. Among possible definitions the term 'eternity' may mean:<sup>171</sup>

- i) *Sempiternitas*, i.e. endless duration/everlastingness/infinity
- ii) *Aeternitas*, i.e. timelessness/non-temporality

Let us now examine these perspectives, and assess whether they are compatible with the eternal aspect of *Existenz* within the Jaspersian framework.

- i) *Sempiternitas*, i.e. endless duration/everlastingness/infinity

Eternity, in the classical sense, is generally thought of, and often defined as, endless duration, and the attribute of 'eternality'<sup>172</sup> is linked with having endless 'existence'.<sup>173</sup> Can *Existenz*'s 'deathlessness' be explained in terms of its having endless duration? Can this kind of explanation be compatible with what Jaspers says about *Existenz*? For the sake of argument, let us accept for a moment the definition of eternity as 'endless

duration.’ If *Existenz* is eternal, and if eternity is taken to mean endless duration, then is it possible that *Existenz* has no duration at all and is outside time? What kind of ‘eternal’ reality can *Existenz* have? How can eternity be related to the *Augenblick*? Jaspers attempts to give various explanations of the eternal aspect of *Existenz*, one of which appears in *Philosophy* in connection with the *Augenblick*:

If the moment is existential as a link in a continuity, this continuity must be the realization of what exists irreplaceably at each moment of its temporally limited course: continuity may be conceived as the moment that has become *encompassing* – as a time which, limited in itself, is not endless time but timelessness fulfilled in temporal extension, *true duration between beginning and end* as the phenomenon of being.<sup>174</sup>

In this passage, Jaspers refers to the terms ‘continuity’ and ‘duration’ in his explanation of the ‘existential moment’ in the *Augenblick*. It is not clarified, however, how this ‘existential moment’ is to be linked with eternity. There is an obvious difficulty here concerning the combination of non-temporality and duration. Duration is generally thought of as a length of time and implies extension. It is paradoxical, to say the least, to suppose a unity of ‘non-temporality’ and ‘duration’ as expressed in the above. How can a ‘timeless’ moment, which has no connection with objective time, have ‘true duration between beginning and end’? The answer lies in our interpretation of the terms ‘continuity’ and ‘duration’. If we interpret these terms in the above passage in terms of temporal duration or continuity in the general sense, then Jaspers’ assertions make no sense. Jaspers is aware of this difficulty and the paradox.<sup>175</sup> He tries to convey the non-temporality of this existential moment and to distinguish it from a moment in objective time.<sup>176</sup>

Jaspers claims that one’s experience of the *Augenblick* cannot be explained in terms of objective time.<sup>177</sup> But it might be argued that everything we do in our temporal existence, including all experiences, occurs in time. Furthermore, every explanation we try to give of eternity has to rely on objective-time vocabulary.<sup>178</sup> It is also possible to argue that the term ‘eternity’ by definition indicates the concept of time, whether it is taken to mean ‘endless time’ or ‘timelessness’. In each case, reference is made to the concept of time. As *Existenz*, if one can experience a higher level of consciousness even only for a moment, then this implies a limited portion of time; that is to say, we are still referring to

the notion of time.<sup>179</sup> Since a moment is a fraction of time, it implies a kind of duration – however short this duration may be. Even if that moment is an instant without extension, we are still referring to a moment *in* objective time. If it were an ‘extensionless’ instant it would not be experienced in any case. One must acknowledge that as experience it would have to be in time. Our conception of human experience is essentially temporal in that any experience we may have occurs in time.<sup>180</sup> Then the question is whether *Existenz* can be eternal, transitory, and have no duration, all at the same time. Jaspers thinks that this is possible. He says ‘Existence is wholly temporal, while *Existenz*, in time, is more than time.’<sup>181</sup> In this respect, to talk about ‘endless duration’ seems indeed paradoxical. Jaspers acknowledges that combining temporality and eternity is a paradox.<sup>182</sup> He writes in *Philosophy*:

The paradox of the existential sense of historicity - that fleeting time includes eternal being – does not mean that there is an eternity somewhere else, aside from its temporal appearance.<sup>183</sup>

and also in *Reason and Existenz*:

Existenz is not merely this incompleteness and perversity in all temporal existence, ...but rather temporal existence thoroughly and authentically penetrated: the paradox of the unity of temporality and eternity.<sup>184</sup>

In support of Jaspers’ view, Kurt Hoffman expresses a similar opinion which suggests that the union of time and eternity is closely tied up with *Existenz*’s historicity. He writes:

...historicity stands also for the synthesis of freedom and necessity, .. and further for the union of time and eternity... Its [Existenz’s] historicity is eternity embodied in time or history at the limits of eternity.  
The paradox unity of time and eternity finds its proper expression in the high and exalted moment in which we, so to speak, transcend our own existence.<sup>185</sup>

According to Hoffman then, it seems that it is possible for the individual to experience the ‘unity of time and eternity’ even though it appears paradoxical. In his view, the experience of the *Augenblick* is possible if one can transcend one’s empirical limitations as Jaspers suggests.<sup>186</sup> The assertions cited here all suggest that *Existenz* is ‘in time and more than time.’<sup>187</sup> For Jaspers, man as *Existenz*, transcends objective time and has an awareness of eternity as ‘non-temporality’, namely as a moment of eternity in the here and now. Jaspers argues that the transcendent moment is not ‘temporal extension’ or

'duration' in objective time, and a moment of eternity should not be considered as 'endless duration' in the classical sense.<sup>188</sup> Eternity as 'non-temporality' does not have a *span* of time: eternity is not time stretched to infinity on either side.<sup>189</sup>

Seen in this light, it seems that a moment of eternity cannot be explained in terms of endless duration. If we are pursuing Jaspers' thinking correctly, then we can claim that the classical understanding of eternity as 'endless duration' is not compatible with Jaspers' views of the *Augenblick* experience.<sup>190</sup> When he refers to the existential moment, Jaspers speaks of 'a time which, limited in itself, is not endless time but timelessness'.<sup>191</sup> In short, an existential moment of eternity cannot be described as 'endless time' or 'endless duration'. Nor can *Existenz* said to be eternal in this respect.

What of the view that eternity is 'everlastingness' and 'infinity'? The attribute of 'everlastingness', within the traditional framework, is closely connected with 'infinity'.<sup>192</sup> Infinity can be taken to mean that eternity has no beginning, no end, and always exists. One finds that the definition of eternity as 'everlasting existence' is often connected with the concept of 'timelessness' and described as follows:

In certain philosophical contexts, the notion of everlasting existence is expressed rather by 'sempiternal', eternal being reserved for the sense of 'timeless'.<sup>193</sup>

If *Existenz* is eternal and if one takes eternity to mean 'everlasting', then *Existenz* continues 'to be' forever with no beginning and no end. If *Existenz* is considered to be everlasting, it means that it has always existed and will continue to exist forever. If we follow this line of thought, it indicates that when one dies, one's *Existenz* somehow will survive and continue to 'exist' infinitely since it has no beginning and no end. If this is the case, then one might even qualify *Existenz* as 'immortal'<sup>194</sup> since one's *Existenz* is not subject to death. It is reasonably clear that it would be incorrect to describe *Existenz* as 'immortal' in the sense that it exists forever. Jaspers does not propose this sort of immortality for *Existenz*. In his view:

not only are all proofs of immortality faulty and hopeless, not only is probability in a matter of such absolute importance absurd, but mortality can be proven.<sup>195</sup>



He is indeed sceptical about 'immortality' in the sense of continued existence, but sees it from an existential perspective. In *The Perennial Scope of Philosophy* he writes:

This aspect of our nature is revealed... in the consciousness of immortality, that is not a survival in another form, but a time-negating immersion in eternity, appearing to him [man] as a path of action forever continued in time.<sup>196</sup>

Thus for Jaspers 'immortality' cannot be identified with 'survival in another form', that is to say it is not 'continued existence'. His image of 'time-negating immersion in eternity', however, requires further explanation as it can be interpreted in various ways.<sup>197</sup>

Can *Existenz*'s eternal aspect be explained in terms of 'everlasting existence'? It seems that *Existenz* cannot be said to be eternal in this framework. As we said earlier, 'everlasting' means 'no beginning, no end and existing forever.' But this is clearly *not* what Jaspers means when he refers to one's *Existenz* as eternal. He is not of the view that *Existenz* has never ceased to exist before and will not cease after one's death. One must emphasise that for Jaspers, *Existenz* is not immortal in the traditional sense, and its 'eternality' does not indicate 'survival in another form.' Furthermore, in some cases, 'everlastingness' and 'infinity' are attributed to divine being. If we are suggesting that *Existenz* is everlasting, it may be construed that *Existenz* has some divine qualities.<sup>198</sup> Jaspers does not intend to portray one's *Existenz* as divine and thus it would be incorrect, within the Jaspersian framework, to present *Existenz* as a divine being. Consequently, we can assert that one's eternal aspect cannot be explained in terms of 'everlastingness' or 'infinity'. Similarly, one's existential experience of a moment of eternity cannot be regarded as everlasting or infinite for the same reasons.

ii) *Aeternitas*, i.e. timelessness/non-temporality<sup>199</sup>

In our discussion of the concept of eternity we have seen that 'timelessness' makes its appearance repeatedly in various parts of Jaspers' descriptions of eternity in relation to *Existenz* and the experience of the *Augenblick*.<sup>200</sup> Eternity as 'timelessness' is not a new concept.<sup>201</sup> In the traditional sense, eternity is something outside all time and to which no predicates of temporality (e.g. relations of before and after, duration, present, past and future) apply.<sup>202</sup>

Let us now suppose that eternity is 'timelessness', i.e. non-temporality, as Jaspers often suggests.<sup>203</sup> We understand that *Existenz* is outside objective time, that is to say *Existenz* is 'timeless' or 'eternal'. To say that *Existenz* is outside time is to confirm that *Existenz* is not a person since a human being cannot be said to exist outside time. So far, this is compatible with what Jaspers says because *Existenz* is not a person or a concrete entity but an aspect of the human being. It is worth emphasising that *Existenz*'s being outside time does not imply that *Existenz* possesses 'Godly' qualities. Another way of putting it is to say that by predicating 'timelessness' of *Existenz*, Jaspers does not intend to portray a divine being. Even in Jaspers' own terms, however, there are several problems concerning the non-temporal aspect of *Existenz*. Let us consider the following. The term 'timeless' can have two meanings:

- i) static, not subject to change, permanent
- ii) without any relation to time, beyond the temporal realm.

Let us reflect on the first meaning (i), i.e. *changelessness*, which is connected with the 'unchangeable' quality of eternity.<sup>204</sup> The idea that *Existenz* could be timeless in this sense might be considered mistaken. 'Timelessness' in this context seems incoherent because to assert that '*Existenz* is timeless' is also to assert that '*Existenz* is not subject to change', permanent. If *Existenz* is unchangeable or immutable then some of Jaspers' assertions are at odds with *Existenz*'s unchangeability.<sup>205</sup> If *Existenz* is timeless, and therefore changeless, can it be an active mode of the self? We understand from Jaspers' explanations that *Existenz* is not a static mode of being. On the contrary, it is active, e.g. in communication with other *Existenz*, and it *wills* certain activities.<sup>206</sup> According to Jaspers, *Existenz* even 'comprehends itself as unconditional.'<sup>207</sup> If *Existenz*, as Jaspers says, is a 'process of self-understanding',<sup>208</sup> then *Existenz* is undeniably in motion and changeable since any 'process' involves change. But if *Existenz* is timeless then it cannot go through any processes.

Jaspers' assertions often suggest that *Existenz* is not static but changeable. For example:

Existenz is also oriented toward an Other. It is related to Transcendence ... Without Transcendence, Existenz becomes a sterile, loveless, and demonic defiance.<sup>209</sup>

If *Existenz* can be 'oriented toward an Other' and it can 'become sterile and loveless', then it cannot be said to be changeless. In fact, Jaspers himself indicates that when *Existenz* is not oriented to reason, it is

... inactive, sleeping, and as though not there.<sup>210</sup>

It is then reasonable to assume that when *Existenz* is oriented to reason it is 'active, awake and has presence.' All these changes indicate mental activities, which in turn imply different states of mind. If *Existenz* is in a particular state of mind at one time (t1) and at a different mental state at a later time (t2) this suggests that one's *Existenz* has temporal duration between (t1) and (t2) and that it undergoes certain changes.<sup>211</sup> Then it is reasonable to suggest that *Existenz* is not immutable.<sup>212</sup> If *Existenz* is not immutable, then it cannot be timeless, for something timeless is static, cannot act and cannot go through any changes. Most importantly, it cannot be affected by anything. If we say that something is changeable, then we mean that that thing exists in time.<sup>213</sup> If *Existenz* is unchangeable, then it cannot be said to be in time. It seems that the first meaning of 'timelessness', i.e. *changelessness*, is incompatible with Jaspers' assertions regarding *Existenz*.

Let us turn to the second meaning of 'timelessness' (ii), i.e. *no relation to time*. What does it mean to say that eternity as 'timelessness' is 'beyond the temporal realm'? Strictly speaking, it means that eternity is outside objective time without any relation to it. 'Timelessness' lacks successive states and duration since eternity exists outside of time and is unchangeable. It is neither past, present, nor future. It is neither 'earlier' nor 'later' than any other event.

If *Existenz* is timeless (ii), then this will imply that *Existenz* must also be outside time and unchangeable. However, if *Existenz*, as Jaspers says, is a 'process of self-understanding'<sup>214</sup> then *Existenz* cannot be outside time, and is undeniably changeable since any 'process' involves change. That is to say, if *Existenz* is timeless it cannot go through any processes, nor can it *will* activities. Given that there is no concept of 'before' and 'after' in 'timelessness', i.e. 'before the willing' or 'after the willing', could

*Existenz* will anything at all?<sup>215</sup> It seems that the second meaning of ‘timelessness’ is also problematic, and seems incompatible with Jaspers’ assertions regarding *Existenz*.

There is, however, a different interpretation of eternity as ‘timelessness’ in the second sense, i.e. *beyond the temporal realm*. Accordingly, eternity as ‘timelessness’ is described as ‘non-temporal duration’ in the sense that past, present and future do not exist in the temporal sense but ‘thought of’ all at once as a single whole.<sup>216</sup> Put another way, past, present and future are said to be simultaneous and should be thought of as a ‘singularity’.<sup>217</sup> This concept of eternity has been presented by such medieval philosophers as Boethius, Aquinas and St. Augustine, and Plotinus before them.<sup>218</sup> In *The Consolation of Philosophy* Boethius’ definition of eternity is

...the complete, simultaneous and perfect possession of everlasting life.<sup>219</sup>

Boethius explains that by ‘everlasting life’ he means that God embraces ‘the whole of everlasting life in one simultaneous present’.<sup>220</sup> According to Boethius, what God possesses is ‘all at once of illimitable life’ and therefore God’s eternity involves no temporally successive parts but ‘all’ exist equally in an ‘eternal present’.<sup>221</sup> Although some temporal terms like ‘everlasting life’ and ‘present’ are used in his explanation, Boethius’ meaning of eternity points to ‘timelessness’.<sup>222</sup>

There are several difficulties with the medieval exegesis of eternity as ‘simultaneous present’. The most pressing difficulty lies in the concept of ‘simultaneity’. How can past, present and future be ‘simultaneous’, if eternity is beyond all time? That is to say, if eternity has no connection with temporality, then it is difficult to argue that eternity is ‘simultaneous present’. Some philosophers regard the concept of ‘simultaneous present’ as self-contradictory.<sup>223</sup> In their view, the assertion which suggests that past, present and future are simultaneous is ‘nonsensical’ because the events that happened in the past, this particular moment now and future events that have not yet happened cannot possibly be simultaneous with the whole of eternity.<sup>224</sup> But clearly these objections are formulated in terms of the limited language of temporal time. The problem is that any explanations offered in this context, or objections raised, are expressed in terms of temporal vocabulary. Our language is not sufficient as an instrument for communicating certain

metaphysical concepts. It is indeed difficult to present eternity as 'simultaneous present' or as a 'single whole' without reference to objective time: there is no adequate 'metaphysical' vocabulary.

Against the medieval view, it has been argued that the simultaneity of past, present and future, and 'duration' cannot be part of an intelligible concept of eternity.<sup>225</sup> The same objection can be raised to Jaspers' notion of an eternal moment in the *Augenblick*. It can be argued that if *Existenz* is timeless, and 'timelessness' means 'no relation to time', then *Existenz*'s 'actuality' cannot have duration, not even in the *Augenblick*, because duration implies temporal reality. But again in this objection eternity is identified with 'endless duration'. This leads us back to the earlier discussion of 'temporal/non-temporal duration'. This line of argument may seem to present an insuperable objection to *Existenz*'s 'timelessness'. However, the assumption in the argument relies on the terms used in objective time, and this assumption can be questioned. We have to remind ourselves that Jaspers' concept of 'eternity/timelessness' bears no relation to objective time, and it transcends the limit of the temporal realm. For Jaspers, the existential moment in time is not a mere extension of time. In this respect, it seems that Jaspers' metaphysical thought and views on eternity are in line with some earlier thinkers. In short, Jaspers' concept of eternity indicates that one can experience a moment of eternity as 'timelessness' in objective time. We shall return to the issue of the *Augenblick* experience in terms of 'non-temporality' in Chapter Four.

The influence of some earlier thinkers is apparent in Jaspers' account of the eternal aspect of *Existenz*.<sup>226</sup> There is, however, one crucial difference between Jaspers and his predecessors. For those earlier thinkers, there is a strong connection of eternal attributes with a divine being, namely God, whereas Jaspers often reminds us that his elucidation of *Existenz*, and Being, is not religious in character. Such existential concepts, in his view, should be considered within a non-religious framework.

Having presented some of Jaspers' key points regarding the eternal attributes of *Existenz*, and having discussed different meanings of eternity, let us now attempt to formulate two different interpretative models of Jaspers' view of 'deathlessness'.

## 5. Two Interpretations of Jaspers' Concept of 'Deathlessness'

In the light of what has been said so far, I shall now put forward two fundamentally different interpretations of the relationship between *Existenz* and death within the Jaspersian framework. The first one is the *Mystical Interpretation* in which Jaspers' concept of 'deathlessness' will be discussed from a 'mystical' perspective. In the second one, which I shall call the *Existential Interpretation*, 'deathlessness', i.e. the eternal aspect of the human being will be discussed in terms of 'timelessness/non-temporality'. This section will also include some remarks as to how each interpretative model relates to Jaspers' views.

### a. The *Mystical Interpretation*<sup>227</sup>

One possible approach to the explanation of the relationship between *Existenz* and death could be the following. We understand that one aspect of the human being is Dasein, i.e. existence in the world. This empirical existence is finite and it perishes after a while. *Existenz*, however, is a mode of Being which is connected with, and 'rooted' in,<sup>228</sup> Transcendence, that is to say it is connected with the all-encompassing realm, the overall totality.<sup>229</sup> We also understand from Jaspers' assertions that *Existenz* is not subject to death and is eternal. But if *Existenz* needs Dasein, and if Dasein is mortal, can *Existenz* be eternal? If *Existenz* 'knows no death',<sup>230</sup> as Jaspers says, then what happens to *Existenz* when Dasein perishes? Since it is not subject to death, it cannot perish with Dasein. Nor can it appear again in the world as a possibility, since each *Existenz* is unique to a particular Dasein. In order to answer these questions, we shall reconsider the intimate relationship between *Existenz* and Transcendence in terms of the *Mystical Interpretation*.

As already discussed, Transcendence is itself a mode of Being<sup>231</sup> which 'appears in a multiplicity of its modes in the empirical realm'.<sup>232</sup> For Jaspers, without Transcendence there is no possibility of achieving *Existenz*, and he adds that without *Existenz* 'the meaning of Transcendence is lost'.<sup>233</sup> He also emphasises that the origin of *Existenz* is grounded in Being itself.<sup>234</sup> If one's *Existenz* is 'immersed' in Transcendence<sup>235</sup> as Jaspers suggests, then *Existenz* would also be 'immersed' in Being itself, the ultimate

reality, since Transcendence is a mode of Being. Let us assume that when one dies, that is to say when one's Dasein perishes, *Existenz*, one's true self, returns to its original source, namely Transcendence.<sup>236</sup> Let us further assume that one's *Existenz* becomes and remains a part of Transcendence after physical death, not as a self but simply by being absorbed into the overall totality, ultimate reality. The following passage seems to support this interpretation of *Existenz*'s 'deathlessness':

We take our life from a primal source that lies beyond the being-there that becomes empirical and objective, beyond consciousness and beyond mind. This aspect of our nature is revealed...in the consciousness of immortality, that is not a survival in another form, but a time-negating immersion in eternity, appearing to him [man] as a path of action forever continued in time.<sup>237</sup>

But how can *Existenz*, a mode of Being, merge into Transcendence? If one takes Jaspers' assertion of 'time-negating immersion in eternity' to mean the return of *Existenz* to the overall totality which is timeless and eternal, then it is possible to conceptualise *Existenz* 'immersed' in Transcendence. It can be said that *Existenz* returns to the transcendent realm so to speak, and becomes one with its source, i.e. ultimate reality. Within this framework, *Existenz* can be said to be 'timeless' and 'eternal' by virtue of its being dissolved into eternity, and being part of the overall totality. Since it cannot perish with Dasein, it is possible to interpret it as becoming part of Transcendence. Although some might disagree with this viewpoint, Jaspers' concept of 'immersion in eternity' points to the idea that one's true self is capable of transcending one's finitude and become part of ultimate reality.<sup>238</sup> If the relationship between *Existenz* and Transcendence is considered within this framework, then it is possible to interpret *Existenz* as part of eternal Being and as timeless.

In view of the above interpretation, some similarities with traditional mysticism spring to mind, for example Sufism.<sup>239</sup> One could for example highlight the similarity between the Sufi's notion of the ultimate reality (God) and Jaspers' notion of Being, the all-encompassing transcendent reality in the explanation of death.<sup>240</sup> According to the Sufi tradition, the individual can transcend his worldly being and become one with the all-encompassing totality within the framework of his own belief system.<sup>241</sup> The Sufis are able to find the true self within themselves by achieving higher levels of consciousness and dissolving themselves into that Being, in the here and now, through their rituals.<sup>242</sup> In

their belief, this experience is regarded as 'the possibility of experience of God'.<sup>243</sup> When the Sufi reach the state of union with the 'Absolute Being', this can be manifested in a state of ecstatic trance which is a transcendent experience. In this respect Jaspers' notion of one's subjective experience of the *Augenblick* corresponds to the Sufi's experience of 'oneness' with the ultimate reality.<sup>244</sup>

The meaning of death for the Sufi, as we discussed in Chapter One, is returning of the inner self to the universal totality and being One with the Deity. The physical body decays and disintegrates at death but the individual consciousness is absorbed into this ultimate reality and returns to its original source which is infinite and eternal.<sup>245</sup> For the Sufi, too, there is no subject-object distinction in ultimate reality.<sup>246</sup> This view is not very different from Jaspers' view of Transcendence, the all-encompassing ultimate reality.<sup>247</sup> Since Being, the ultimate reality is eternal, and since there is no subject-object dichotomy in Being,<sup>248</sup> it could be argued that one's *Existenz*, by becoming One with the overall totality, also becomes eternal and timeless and thereby 'deathless'. Expressed in this way, Jaspers' view of *Existenz*'s 'deathlessness' can indeed be interpreted as 'a time-negating immersion in eternity'.<sup>249</sup> As Jaspers says, immortality is not to be understood as continued existence for the individual. Then it could be argued that 'time-negating immersion in eternity' suggests that one's true self unites with the overall totality, which is infinite and eternal, and becomes a part of the all-encompassing realm. Seen in this context, this explanation does not seem much different from the Sufi's perspective on death. The question, however, is whether it is philosophically justified to correlate the Sufi's mystical view of death with Jaspers' concept of *Existenz*'s 'immersion in eternity'.

One may object to this interpretation on the grounds that Jaspers' views on the eternal aspect of the human being have no connections with religious faith or mysticism.<sup>250</sup> Let us remember that Jaspers himself was critical of some mystics' 'unbalanced',<sup>251</sup> attachment to the transcendent realm. Some, on the other hand, might respond to this objection by reminding us that Jaspers' philosophical concepts of *Existenz* and Transcendence are intimately connected with his notion of philosophical faith. Given the mystical elements in Jaspers' philosophy, it is possible to claim that the philosophical faith Jaspers defends, in theory, is not much different from religious faith and mysticism.



Furthermore, it may also be claimed that Jaspers seems to have replaced religious faith by his concept of philosophical faith, which still carries religious overtones.<sup>252</sup> For example, Jaspers' existential concepts of 'Being', the 'all-encompassing', and 'Transcendence' are similar to what is in some religions called the concept of 'God'. Jaspers' term *Existenz* is not identical but not dissimilar to the traditional concept of 'soul'. Jaspers also takes the view, not unlike some religious doctrines, that one's finitude can be transcended in an existential experience as *Existenz*, non-phenomenal aspect of the self. It may be argued that all these elements in Jaspers' philosophy point to religious faith.

How should one react to the *Mystical Interpretation* of 'deathlessness'? One can affirm certain conceptual similarities between the Sufi's understanding of immortality, and Jaspers' concept of 'deathlessness' as 'immersion in eternity'. However, the Sufi's concept of eternity/infinity is not entirely consistent with Jaspers' concept of a moment of eternity in the *Augenblick* experience. The sense of 'deathlessness', for the Sufi, is not confined to one's momentary experience in the attainment of selfhood. 'Deathlessness', for the Sufi, means being immersed in the ultimate reality and becoming One with it *after* death. The ultimate reality is regarded as endless duration, and existing forever and ever as overall totality, whereas Jaspers does not see eternity as endless duration, but rather as 'non-temporal duration' in the here and now. Furthermore, Jaspers insists that a moment of eternity can be experienced while one is alive in the world, and the *Augenblick* is not necessarily a 'once-and-for-all' experience. That is, it can occur many times in one's lifetime. Most importantly, in Jaspers' view, *Existenz* and its 'deathlessness' are not to be understood in religious or mystical terms, nor is there a connection with God.<sup>253</sup> And this matters to Jaspers.

Even though there may be some similarities between the Sufi's view of 'deathlessness' and that of Jaspers, it seems that it is implausible to represent *Existenz*'s 'deathlessness' in mystical terms. Although it may be tempting to assume that *Existenz* will merge into Transcendence and become eternal, on balance, the *Mystical Interpretation* does not represent Jaspers' metaphysical thinking in this respect. One is thus led to the conclusion that the *Mystical Interpretation* of *Existenz*'s 'deathlessness' is not compatible with what Jaspers has in mind regarding this issue. But I would like to reiterate that this particular

interpretation of *Existenz*'s 'deathlessness' is useful in that it provides an alternative and a contrast to the second interpretative model to which we shall now turn.

**b. The *Existential Interpretation***

Some Jaspers scholars, in particular continental ones, take the view that Jaspers' philosophy has nothing to do with religious ideas, and that *Existenz* cannot merge into Transcendence or eternity as some forms of mysticism suggest.<sup>254</sup> The *Existential Interpretation* emphasises that *Existenz* is an integral part of Transcendence, and that *Existenz*'s 'deathlessness' is closely connected with the *Augenblick* experience of the individual as *Existenz*. The experience of a moment of eternity in life is said to have no connection with an afterlife or any form of immortality in the traditional sense.

The *Existential Interpretative* model closely follows Jaspers' views in this regard, and it runs thus. *Existenz*, one's self-being, is one's inner dimension. It is a possibility of the human being. This existential possibility can be actualised in boundary situations. As *Existenz*, one can experience a moment of eternity only in the *Augenblick*. This existential experience occurs when one's awareness of Being is at its height.<sup>255</sup> Put in Jaspers' terms, this momentary experience is expressed as *quer zur Zeit*,<sup>256</sup> i.e. as eternity cuts across objective time at a single point.<sup>257</sup> According to this interpretation, *Existenz* is not to be considered as a continual presence in one's life. One's *Existenz* is transient, in the sense that once self-realisation is achieved in the *Augenblick*, *Existenz* does not remain with one's *Dasein*, but it immediately disappears.<sup>258</sup> This existential experience can recur many times. If one actualises self-being, and experiences a moment of eternity in objective time, then this experience takes place as part of our earthly spatio-temporal existence, that is, in the here and now.<sup>259</sup> In this experience, eternity does not indicate endless duration, but 'timelessness', just as Jaspers says:

If the moment is existential as a link in a continuity, this continuity must be the realization of what exists irreplaceably at each moment of its temporally limited course: continuity may be conceived as the moment that has become *encompassing* – as a time which, limited in itself, is not endless time but timelessness ...<sup>260</sup>

According to this interpretation, 'timelessness' is to be understood as the quality of the experience of eternity in the *Augenblick* that occurs in the world. If one achieves *Existenz*, one may experience a moment of eternity which is soon extinguished. Despite its quick disappearance, this experience may remain in one's memory and can be recalled.<sup>261</sup> When one dies, one's *Existenz* also disappears with all other possibilities of one's Dasein. In short, according to this interpretation, 'eternity/timelessness' can be experienced while one is alive *only* in the here and now.<sup>262</sup> That is, the experience of eternity by the individual is the moment of 'touching' the transcendent realm, as it were, and it can recur.<sup>263</sup>

It seems that human beings can relate to 'experience of eternity' in life only with reference to objective time, as we are all time-conditioned in our worldly experiences. According to the *Existential Interpretation*, Transcendence and the experience of eternity in life do not suggest any connection with a life to come after death. Unlike the *Mystical Interpretation*, there is no reference to *Existenz*'s return to Transcendence, the ultimate reality. Construed in this way, *Existenz*'s 'deathlessness' in terms of 'touching' a moment of eternity can be understood as grounded in the subjective experience of the *Augenblick*. This experience is both internal and transcendent, and cannot possibly be quantified and measured in empirical terms, nor can it be expressed in words used in ordinary language. It is important to reiterate that in this interpretation the eternal aspect of the human being is confined only to the existential experience of the *Augenblick* in the phenomenal world.<sup>264</sup> Thus one's *Existenz* can be said to be eternal simply by virtue of the momentary connection with eternity.

### **c. Reflections on the *Existential Interpretation***

The *Existential Interpretation* closely follows Jaspers' views on the eternal aspect of the human being and 'deathlessness'. In this regard the explanation of, and support for, Jaspers' views rest on the distinction between subjective and objective time. Accordingly, if one adopts this perspective, and if one can accept the *Augenblick*

experience as a subjective existential moment in objective time, then Jaspers' view on death can perhaps be considered less problematic.

For some philosophers, however, the transcendent aspect of the human being will always remain problematic. In particular, the existential experience of the *Augenblick* generates some legitimate questions. Let us consider some of these problems. The first difficulty arises from Jaspers' assertion that the actualisation of *Existenz* occurs in a split-second in the *Augenblick* which is sometimes expressed as 'timeless duration'. One objection here might be that in order to experience something, the experience has to have some duration, otherwise one could not experience it.<sup>265</sup> But when we use the term 'duration' we are referring to objective time and trying to explain this existential experience within the confines of ordinary language. Cusance addresses the problem of object-language in expressing the notion of 'eternity in time' and 'duration'.<sup>266</sup> He gives an example to demonstrate this particular difficulty:

Physicists have recently discovered a particle that has independent existence of about one-fifteenth of a billionth of a second! Is this long enough to say that this particle, called an antiomega-minus baryon particle, is a reality? How long must a thing last to have real existence? Surely reality of existence in eternity is not measured by "how long"?<sup>267</sup>

This passage demonstrates that the term 'duration' needs to be considered in a wider context and outside object-language. The difficulty lies, as we have already pointed out, in the fact that ordinary language is inadequate in metaphysical explanations. If we suppose, as we proposed at the outset of this interpretation, that this 'momentary' experience is understood *not* in terms of objective time but as 'non-temporal duration', then what Jaspers says regarding eternity will become clearer. One has to remember that this subjective experience is private and unverifiable.<sup>268</sup> It is conceivable for man to have an existential experience of 'timelessness', even if it is almost impossible to express it successfully in the language of objective time. As already mentioned, the issue of 'timeless duration/non-temporal duration' will be analysed in detail in Chapter Four.

The second difficulty arises from Jaspers' statements regarding eternity and its temporal appearance. In *Philosophy* he writes:

The paradox of the existential sense of historicity - that fleeting time includes eternal being - does not mean that there is an eternity somewhere else, aside from its temporal appearance.<sup>269</sup>

The problem stems from Jaspers' term 'eternity in time' which seems ambiguous. Some philosophers might argue that the existence of eternity is an important philosophical issue and should be addressed clearly. Jaspers' assertions regarding eternity might be considered contradictory. On the one hand, Jaspers tells us that there is no eternity 'somewhere else' apart from its temporal appearance.<sup>270</sup> On the other hand, we are told that we can experience a moment of eternity when eternity cuts across objective time, i.e. in the *Augenblick*.<sup>271</sup> The difficulty is that if eternity cuts across objective time, then there must be something called 'eternity'. Indeed, if one were able to experience even a moment of eternity, then there must be eternity as such 'to experience'. Has eternity always been there since we can have awareness of it? If it has always been there, then it points to some kind of endurance, i.e. endless duration. If it has not been there, as Jaspers suggest, then it cannot be called eternity as it is generally understood to mean endless time that has always existed and will always exist. But this objection, as it stands, does not necessarily undermine Jaspers' views. First, Jaspers may point out that 'eternity in time' is not a contradiction because the intersection, i.e. *quer zur Zeit*, implies some relation to objective time, and it is expressed metaphorically. Thus the only relation we can establish between objective time and eternity is at the point of intersection. Secondly, Jaspers may reiterate that this kind of metaphysical concept cannot be expressed in 'object-language'. Eternity cannot be thought of as an *object* to be directly encountered, even though one may have awareness of it. In other words, eternity manifests itself in the individual's awareness of it. It seems that what might sometimes appear to us as paradox, or contradiction, can perhaps be grasped only in subjective experiences.<sup>272</sup> It is possible that there are some language-independent relationships, detectable by the individual depending on his degree of awareness.

The problem is that subjective experiences cannot be intersubjectively confirmed.<sup>273</sup> Some might insist that without a proof of the existence of eternity, one has no reason to believe that one can have awareness of eternity, let alone experience it. Some might further argue that even if we grant that eternity as such exists, what if one has no

awareness of it? Should one then accept the testimony of others? Furthermore, it is possible that one's subjective experiences could be deceptive. One may *think* that one has awareness of eternity, which can be self-deceptive. These are valid points, however, they do not actually establish that there is no eternity to be experienced just because the experience of 'eternity' cannot be intersubjectively confirmed. Is it not possible to infer the existence of something even if one may not encounter that thing directly?<sup>274</sup> For example, there are certain subjective mental processes quite distinct from observable behaviour.<sup>275</sup> Each person has some kind of awareness of his own mental processes and experiences. These experiences cannot be publicly verifiable. Above all, one must recognise that existential 'timeless' moments may be experienced by, at least, some people.<sup>276</sup> This is analogous to saying that some people are able to see and some are not (physically).<sup>277</sup> By the same token, perhaps some people are blind to awareness of a 'timeless' moment of eternity.

Furthermore, is it not conceivable that there are other states of human awareness through which one can experience things in a new way? William James, for example, argues that

our normal waking consciousness ...is one special type of consciousness, ...there are potential forms of consciousness entirely different. ...no account of the universe can ever be regarded as final which leaves out these other forms of consciousness. Nor can any view of *ourselves* be final if we accept that our present consciousness is final.<sup>278</sup>

The existence of other states of consciousness is not logically impossible. Our 'ordinary consciousness' engages with experiences related to ourselves and to things we are familiar with. But during sleep, according to Nicoll, 'the quality of our consciousness is changed' and when we are awake 'the degree of awareness and the form of relation is changed' again.<sup>279</sup> It is indeed conceivable that there might be other forms of consciousness that may enable us to have qualitatively different kinds of experiences from temporal experiences.

Another objection regarding the *Augenblick* experience might be as follows. According to Jaspers, one can, as *Existenz*, experience eternity in a vanishing 'and yet eternal' moment in the *Augenblick*.<sup>280</sup> It can be argued that Jaspers' assertions seem to imply that

he may be equating eternity with 'a moment of eternity'.<sup>281</sup> There may be an objection on the grounds that eternity cannot be identified with what is experienced in the *Augenblick*, i.e. 'a moment of eternity'. In other words, 'eternity' is not the same as 'a moment of eternity'.<sup>282</sup> This is a reasonable objection. However, it requires a closer look at the terms used. In the first place, to say that 'the vanishing Now is eternal'<sup>283</sup> does not necessarily mean that it is identical with eternity. It may merely *represent* eternity, or, as Jaspers says, *reveal* something eternal,<sup>284</sup> or *have* some eternal attributes. Secondly, whenever Jaspers refers to this 'moment of eternity',<sup>285</sup> this transcending 'moment' is experienced in the world as 'timelessness'. It is indeed difficult to avoid the word 'moment' since there is no other word to substitute, or to give the exact meaning to the word 'moment' in metaphysical language to explain this existential experience. We have to remind ourselves that the existential moment Jaspers discusses is different from what we understand when we use the word 'moment' in objective time. So, the problem of the limitation of language makes its appearance yet again. In fact, the objection itself is 'worded' in ordinary language. The term 'moment' in objective time does not cover the meaning of eternity that Jaspers is trying to put forward. The term 'moment' has to be seen in a wider context. What then is this transcending 'moment' of eternity? In Jaspers' terminology, a 'moment' is to be conceived as 'timelessness' or 'non-temporal duration' in the awareness of Being that can be experienced as *Existenz*. We shall return to the issue of what Jaspers means by the existential 'moment' in terms of 'non-temporal duration' in detail in the next chapter.

In our discussion of various aspects of eternity, the transcendent realm, and Jaspers' concept of the 'all-encompassing', there is a general presupposition that a transcendent realm exists and it is unknowable. This raises an epistemological question. How does one know that there is a transcendent realm which is 'unknowable'? Jaspers tells us that one can pick up signals or rather ciphers emanating from Transcendence, and that through these ciphers we form ideas about certain metaphysical notions, e.g. eternity in time. They are regarded as 'windows into eternity' as it were.<sup>286</sup> This assumption is based on the grounds that the human being has an awareness of a transcendent dimension in human existence. Some critics may argue that if the 'transcendent realm' is unknowable and

ineffable we have no reason for assuming that it exists at all.<sup>287</sup> One might even take an 'idealist' stance and argue that the only thing we can be certain of is that we have ideas about possible sources, but we have no secure grounds for assuming that there really is a transcendent realm that generates these ciphers.<sup>288</sup>

This is a difficult objection to deal with. Indeed, there is no certain knowledge about the existence of the transcendent realm. Given this uncertainty, it would perhaps be a more cautious approach for Jaspers to have stated that he was *hypothesising* rather than elucidating Transcendence as if its reality was unquestionably accepted by all. However, one must reiterate that Jaspers is concerned with the individual's philosophical faith and its manifestation, not with the indubitable certainty of the existence of such metaphysical concepts.<sup>289</sup>

For Jaspers, the above-mentioned objections do not seem to be problematic because he can, based on his theory of ciphers, argue that everything around us, including temporality and eternity, is a cipher from Transcendence. And ciphers are open to interpretation for each person.<sup>290</sup> Since one's inner experiences are individual and subjective, they cannot be explained in objective terms. For Jaspers, ciphers are not meaningless unintelligible symbols of the transcendent reality. He asserts that however incoherent some existential concepts may appear, man is capable of deciphering ciphers with the help of the inner 'apprehension' of *Existenz*.<sup>291</sup> Thus there is always a way, for Jaspers, out of some philosophical difficulties by means of interpreting ciphers. Accordingly, almost everything in the world, including *Existenz*, is capable of becoming a cipher, and they can be read in multifarious ways depending on the individual's degree of awareness and interpretation.

In defence of Jaspers, one can argue that the subjects we are dealing with here are matters of metaphysical issues, rather than objective knowledge, as he often states. Furthermore, there is not one single absolute truth for everyone and no absolute knowledge about Transcendence. Transcendence emerges from the individual's direct existential engagement in the world. In his view, as *Existenz* we become aware of ciphers all around us and interpret them, and this interpretation forms our beliefs about reality as it appears



to us.<sup>292</sup> Jaspers insists that it is up to each individual how he interprets ciphers in the world. Accordingly, this is the way in which we make sense of the world.<sup>293</sup>

While the *Existential Interpretative* model provides an explanation which closely echoes Jaspers' existential concept of death, clearly it is liable to some objections. Let us consider some more questions that might be posed. If *Existenz* is one's true being, the inner aspect of the self, it must have some kind of actuality. If one accepts that one can achieve selfhood at a particular existential moment in time, then what kind of reality will *Existenz* have in eternity? When *Existenz* is actualised how does it sustain its reality in the *Augenblick*? What happens to *Existenz* when man is in his mundane mode of Being? Jaspers' reply would be that *Existenz* acquires actuality in a split second and only in the existential experience of the *Augenblick*, when one makes contact with Transcendence. But even then it may be unclear as to what happens to *Existenz* when one dies, since *Existenz* is not subject to death, and since it cannot perish nor can it last in eternity. If *Existenz* perishes with Dasein then it cannot be said to be 'deathless' and eternal. But one must remind oneself that *Existenz* is not an empirical entity. If *Existenz* is understood as a possibility for the individual, then death, perishing, and lasting forever in the traditional sense will not be applicable to *Existenz*. The validity of the presence of *Existenz* belongs to the human being in the world, not in the afterlife. Jaspers emphasises that a sense of 'deathlessness' can be experienced by the individual in the existential moment of eternity in the *Augenblick*. In this respect, the *Existential Interpretative* model fits well with Jaspers' view of the eternal aspect of the human being. We shall look into the issue of one's participation in Transcendence and eternity in Chapter Four.

Following our discussion of the two interpretative models of *Existenz*'s 'deathlessness', let us now briefly recap the main points of the discussion as they stand in the context of Jaspers' views. If *Existenz* is not subject to death and is eternal, then there must be an explanation regarding its 'deathlessness' in some form or another. In this respect two interpretations were considered: the *Mystical Interpretation* and the *Existential Interpretation*. I suggested that according to the first interpretative model, *Existenz*'s 'immersion in eternity' and being part of the overall totality can be construed as a form of mystical explanation.<sup>294</sup> I brought out some similarities between the Sufi's mystical

outlook and that of Jaspers. Nevertheless, it was noted that the first interpretative model, despite certain similarities, is not compatible with Jaspers' intended meaning of *Existenz*'s 'deathlessness'. I concluded that one's eternal aspect would be better understood if one could give an account of it without sinking into the mystical realm.

In the second interpretative model, the eternal aspect of man is explained in terms of the existential experience of the *Augenblick*. Accordingly, this momentary subjective experience takes place in objective time. Here the focus of the argument is on the distinction between the two notions of time. For Jaspers, this existential moment is the instant in which one can achieve selfhood. The actualisation of *Existenz* is essential in this context, because in Jaspers' view, eternity as a sense of 'timelessness' is experienced by one's *Existenz* within the temporal realm, and this experience can occur only in the *Augenblick*. I pointed out that despite some objections, the *Existential Interpretation* of 'deathlessness' is in line with Jaspers' views. I also argued that the main objection to the eternal aspect of *Existenz* stems from the definition of eternity as 'endless duration'.

In the following chapter, I shall attempt to reformulate Jaspers' assertions in terms of 'non-temporality', and then re-assess the eternal aspect of the human being and 'deathlessness' in a non-theological framework.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> It is the direct translation of 'Existenz weiß keinen Tod' in *Philosophie II*, p.2, and it is translated as 'Existenz is unaware of death' by Ashton, *Phil.2*, p.4. Both translations indicate the 'deathlessness' of *Existenz* as opposed to Dasein's finitude.

<sup>2</sup> I use the term 'existence' here in the ontological sense, as in the verb 'to be', rather than in the Jaspersian sense of 'Dasein' as I have already explained under the heading of 'Jaspers' Terminology'.

<sup>3</sup> *Phil.2*, p.4 and *Philosophie II*, p.2

<sup>4</sup> When Jaspers writes about *Existenz*, he often indicates that *Existenz* is 'eternal in time'. See *R&E*, p.62, *PSP*, p.36, and *Phil.2*, p.4

<sup>5</sup> My purpose in presenting these two interpretations here is to demonstrate how *Existenz*'s 'deathlessness' can be construed in sharply contrasting ways.

<sup>6</sup> A 'category mistake' is defined as 'the placing of an entity in the wrong category' in *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, 1999, p.123. If one takes Jaspers' statements like '*Existenz* does such and such' literally, it may imply a 'category mistake' because *Existenz* is a technical term used to refer to a mode of being. On the whole, this is not a pressing philosophical problem for most continental philosophers. They understand that this is a metaphorical way of expressing a particular aspect of the human being. Most analytic philosophers, however, are highly critical of the use of language in this manner, and regard such statements as 'meaningless'. We shall discuss the issue of 'category mistakes' in detail in Chapter Four.

<sup>7</sup> It is necessary to explain here why these questions are significant in this analysis. When I first started working on Jaspers' philosophy, I often made assertions as if *Existenz* was a separate entity, such as 'Existenz understands' or '*Existenz* does such and such' and so on. In my view, I was following Jaspers' footsteps in his abundant use of such active verbs in his statements regarding *Existenz*. During one of our discussions, Dr. Grieder asked me 'Can *Existenz* dance too?' This amusing comment, which made me re-evaluate my own use of language, was one of the cornerstones in my research.

<sup>8</sup> *R&E*, p.63

<sup>9</sup> *Phil.2*, p.5

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* p.9

<sup>11</sup> He even declares that 'without reading ciphers, an Existenz lives blind.' *Phil.3*, p. 136. Clearly *Existenz* cannot live ('blind' or otherwise) as a separate entity.

<sup>12</sup> Jaspers considers *Existenz* mostly as a possibility in man's existence. This issue of 'possibility' and 'actuality' of *Existenz* will be elaborated later in this chapter.

<sup>13</sup> Although one endeavours to avoid such assertions (e.g. *Existenz* does such and such) at times it is inevitable that they will appear in this analysis either in quoting passages from Jaspers' work or they may occasionally slip into one's own explanatory statements. Expressions of that form should be interpreted as 'the human individual as *Existenz*, i.e. having, at least momentarily, realised his self-being does such and such'.

<sup>14</sup> The German terms 'to be aware' and 'to know' are quite different. Interestingly, Jaspers does not use the term 'Bewußt sein' but 'wissen'. It is important to point out that not all forms of knowledge are awareness, for example there is a distinction between 'wissen' and 'kennen', knowledge by description and knowledge by acquaintance.

<sup>15</sup> Jaspers himself acknowledges the problem of ambiguity in expressing attributes regarding *Existenz*. See *Phil.2*, p.21. This problem has also been acknowledged by Earle in *R&E* in the Introduction. In Earle's view 'all expressions in Existenz-philosophy are ambiguous in principle.' *R&E*, p.13

<sup>16</sup> *Phil.2*, p.12 and *R&E*, p.62

<sup>17</sup> *Phil.2*, p.14

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.* p.6

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.* p.14. Jaspers does not provide us with a clear and adequate definition of freedom. His notion of freedom should not be considered in the ordinary sense of the term. What we understand is that existential freedom focuses on one's existential choices and decisions taken as *Existenz*. Wallraff thinks that Jaspers should have clarified what he meant by 'existential freedom' as there are different shades of the meaning of the concept. He also thinks that existential freedom cannot be explained 'in terms of freedom as self-determination'. See Wallraff, 1970, p.106

<sup>20</sup> See *Phil.2*, pp.154-174. Olson too regards freedom as one of the most central features of *Existenz*. He says that freedom 'provides the basis for transcending' and 'determines the shape of one's historicity.' Olson, 1979, p.24

<sup>21</sup> *Phil.2*, p.4. Jaspers' statement here may give rise to ambiguity. By 'Existence exists empirically' he means 'as Dasein we exist (as in the verb to be) in the world', and by 'Existenz as freedom only' he is referring to the possibilities and choices of one's *Existenz*. Although from Jaspers' assertion in the above it may be construed that '*Existenz* exists', it should not be taken to mean in the ontological sense. *Existenz* cannot exist ontologically, as mentioned earlier, it is simply a mode of being. The use of the verb 'to exist', in the general sense, cannot apply to *Existenz*. To say that *Existenz* exists is not the same as saying that a table or a chair exists. In the latter, we are referring to actual physical objects that occupy space and exist in time. But if *Existenz* cannot occupy space and is not in time, can it exist in any sense at all? And if it does not exist, how can one ascribe properties to it? Here we are concerned with the transcendent aspect of man and his awareness of it, not with a physical entity such as a chair. Perhaps its existence may be compared to the existence of numbers. For example, number 7 does not occupy space in the world. Nor is it in time, it is timeless, yet number 7 exists. We use it in everyday language and we ascribe properties to it, e.g. it is a prime number. Thus one can argue that there are things that can exist non-spatially and non-temporally.

<sup>22</sup> *PSP*, pp.54,67,70-71. One finds that the freedom of the individual is a strong element also in Meister Eckhart's philosophical thought. He often speaks of freedom of the self, which he calls 'self-will'. His notion of self-will is connected with one's decisions and choices. Jaspers had great respect for Meister Eckhart, and was influenced by him in his expression of the freedom of the individual, although the latter's views are expressed in a religious framework. See *Approaches to Ethics*, 1962, p.179

<sup>23</sup> *PSP*, p.153. Kierkegaard's influence is transparent here, cf. *The Concept of Dread*, 1967, p.55

<sup>24</sup> *WW*, p.71

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.* p.45

<sup>26</sup> *PSP*, p.153

<sup>27</sup> Grene, 1948, pp.137-138

<sup>28</sup> Jaspers connects decision taking with 'the unconditional attitude' towards the self. He also connects 'lucidly taken' decisions with one's participation 'in the eternal, in being' which indicates decisions taken as *Existenz*. And this, for Jaspers, points to authentic existence. *WW*, pp.56-58

<sup>29</sup> Hersch, 1986, p.4

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> *Phil.2*, pp.199-200. Kunz too sees Jaspers' concept of freedom as man's potentialities. He asserts that 'in Jaspers' view man's being possesses "potentialities" which man has the innate freedom to seize and realize, or fail to develop; in other words, potentialities which make possible a transformation of "existence" (Dasein) into "*Existenz*".' Kunz, 1974, p.501

<sup>33</sup> *PSP*, p.71. Regarding existential freedom of *Existenz*, Olson suggests that as one begins to grasp freedom as one's possibility, one may gain insight into authentic subjectivity which includes ethical actions in everyday life. Olson thinks that in Jaspers' philosophy the moral implications are intrinsic. He adds, however, that in Jaspers' case the moral dimension is not similar to Kant's dogmatic 'ought' in his categorical imperative. Olson, 1979, p.86

<sup>34</sup> *PSP*, pp.70-71

<sup>35</sup> *Phil.2*, p.13

<sup>36</sup> Jaspers' use of the term 'process' regarding self-understanding indicates that there is an ongoing inner activity with regard to man's choices, decisions and so on. *R&E*, p.11 and *Phil.2*, pp.11,13

<sup>37</sup> Jaspers does not spell out what precisely these potentialities of the human being are. On the other hand, it may have been left deliberately open-ended in order to let the individual decide what his potentialities might be according to his changing circumstances. Jaspers would say that potentialities cannot be determined by objective definitions.

<sup>38</sup> Kunz, 1974, p.501

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> Ehrlich, 1975, p.226

<sup>41</sup> In Ehrlich's view, existential freedom can be too much of a burden for a finite being. *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p.226

<sup>43</sup> Latzel, 1974, p.193

<sup>44</sup> *Phil.2*, pp.10-12

<sup>45</sup> *R&E*, p.61, see also Earle, 1974, pp.525, 527-528

<sup>46</sup> *Phil.2*, pp.6-7. Earle concurs with Jaspers and states that 'no cognitive knowledge about man is possible'. (Earle, 1974, p.525) However, he argues that 'there is no special illumination of *Existenz* which is radically different in kind from other objective cognitions.' (Ibid. p.533) For further discussion of 'non-objectivity' of *Existenz*, see Earle, 1974, pp.529-532

<sup>47</sup> *Phil.2*, pp.3-4

<sup>48</sup> For Jaspers, 'we can express the reality of the world as the *phenomenality* of empirical existence.' *WW*, p.79

<sup>49</sup> Jaspers often reminds us that man is 'the only being in the world to whom being is manifested through his empirical existence.' *PSP*, p.73

<sup>50</sup> As Schrag puts it 'Existenz is oriented towards Transcendence, Dasein is oriented towards immanence.' And he continues 'Existenz is on the side of potentiality rather than actuality, it is differentiated from empirical existence which is my concrete actuality.' Schrag, 1961, p.170

<sup>51</sup> And she adds that 'Existenz is a presence, not a possession.' Hersch, 1986, pp.4,5

<sup>52</sup> There is a remarkable correlation between Jaspers' view of possibility/actuality and Plotinus' discussion of the same issue. In his analysis of possibility and actuality, Plotinus raises some important and relevant questions. In order to highlight this close correlation, let us look at some key statements from Plotinus' *Enneads*:

A distinction is made between things existing actually and things existing potentially; Actuality, also, is spoken of as a really existent entity.

It is indubitable that Potentiality exists in the Realm of Sense: but does the Intellectual Realm similarly include the potential or only the actual? And if the potential exists there, does it remain merely potential for ever? And if so, is this resistance to actualization due to its being precluded ... from time processes?

When a potentiality has taken a definite form, does it retain its being? Does the potentiality, itself, pass into actuality? (Plotinus, *The Enneads*, (II.5.1,2,5) pp.118-122)

Plotinus' comments and questions are directly relevant to the discussion of possibility and actuality of *Existenz*. One can ask the same questions about *Existenz*. There is more to say about Plotinus' views in relation to that of Jaspers in Chapter Four.

<sup>53</sup> *Phil.2*, pp.4,9

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.* p.4

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.* p.9

<sup>56</sup> But what does it mean for *Existenz* to be 'actual'? If one means by 'actual *Existenz*' a tangible entity like a physical being in the world, then this interpretation of *Existenz* would be a gross misunderstanding of Jaspers' existence philosophy. We know that *Existenz* is not an empirically given entity in the world; it cannot be 'actual' in this sense. Is it plausible then to question the actuality of *Existenz* in this manner? As Plotinus says 'if we introduce actualization into things whose Being and Essence is Potentiality, we destroy the foundation of their nature since their Being is Potentiality'. *The Enneads*, (II.5.1,2,5) Is it really possible to clarify *Existenz* ontologically? The more one attempts to do it, the 'fuzzier' the meaning of *Existenz* becomes. One is not suggesting to settle for this 'fuzziness', but it is important to remember that *Existenz* is not to be conceived as an object like a chair. It is, as Jaspers says, a metaphysical aspect of the human being, a part of the structure of human existence.

<sup>57</sup> *BPW*, 1986, p.62. In his *Philosophy as Faith*, however, Ehrlich writes: 'In Jaspers' view, whether man's selfhood is actualized or remains a mere possibility depends on whether or not he directs himself towards oneness.' (Ehrlich, 1975, p.67) This indicates that actualisation of *Existenz* is possible.

<sup>58</sup> Knauss, 1974, pp. 150,155

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> As cited in *BPW*, 1986, p.66 (Tr. From *Philosophie II*)

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> See also *R&E*, p.11

<sup>63</sup> *Phil.3*, p.13. In Jaspers' view, one encounters Being in the *Augenblick*, which makes it possible to achieve *Existenz*.

<sup>64</sup> 'The actuality of self-being' is translated as 'a reality of selfhood.' *GP*, 1997, Vol. 1, p. 12

<sup>65</sup> This is cited in *BPW*, 1986, p.154

<sup>66</sup> *R&E*, in the Introduction, p.11

<sup>67</sup> See *R&E*, p.11, and *Phil.2*, p.17. The *Augenblick* experience will be addressed in detail in the following section.

<sup>68</sup> *Phil.2*, p.9

<sup>69</sup> Here, I am referring to some lengthy discussions regarding this particular issue of 'possibility' and 'actuality' of *Existenz* with some philosophers at the Jaspers Conference in Graz University in 1999.

<sup>70</sup> This is similar to what John Dewey writes about God in terms of 'the union of actual with ideal'. His definition of God is 'the active relation between ideal and actual.' Dewey, 1934, p.51

<sup>71</sup> As Hartt remarks *Existenz* is 'the real core of self-being.' (Hartt, 1950, p.250) Kastenbaum too refers to *Existenz* as 'the core of the individual.' Kastenbaum, 1976, p.146

<sup>72</sup> It would be nonsensical because Jaspers' appeal to human beings to achieve selfhood is dependent upon one's actualisation of *Existenz*. If it is unrealisable or literally 'unactualisable' then Jaspers' *Existenzphilosophie* would be a pointless intellectual exercise with 'pretentious' empty words. William Earle points out that 'illumination of *Existenz*, to become meaningful, must make a final appeal to its reader to *become* that which can not be said'. (Earle, 1974, p.535). On the other hand, the possibility of *Existenz* could be regarded as an 'ideal' to be more or less approximated or to strive for, similar to the Kantian moral action and good will which may not be fully realisable. But if this were the case, it would be a perplexing issue for Jaspers because of its underlying moral implications, as he tells us that he is not doing moral philosophy. As Earle suggests, Jaspers does not wish 'to describe *Existenz* as essentially involved in moral ideals and choice'. *Ibid.* p.536. See also Dewey, 1934, pp.52-53

<sup>73</sup> This particular feature of *Existenz* is an important part of this study. The analysis of *Existenz*'s 'deathlessness' within the context of its ability to transcend objective time will be analysed in detail in the following sections. For this reason, there will only be introductory remarks here.

<sup>74</sup> Kastenbaum shares Jaspers' view in this respect. He holds that 'man has an empirical as well as transcendental dimension and death demonstrates that we participate in both temporal and eternal realm.' Kastenbaum, 1976, p.8

<sup>75</sup> This is spelled out in *VW*: 'Ich bin Existenz nur in eins mit dem Wissen um Transcendenz als um die Macht, durch die ich selbst bin.' (p.110) which can be translated as 'I am *Existenz* only in conjunction with the knowledge regarding Transcendence as the power through which I myself am.'

<sup>76</sup> *Phil.2*, p.183. Time applicable to *Existenz* is existential time. The concept of existential time as being 'above time' is also discussed by Tillich. On the whole, Tillich is in agreement with Jaspers. (Tillich, 1963) Wallraff too describes existential time as 'a synthesis of time and eternity'. (Wallraff, 1970, p.122) The concepts of time and eternity will be discussed in detail later in this chapter in connection with the eternal aspect of *Existenz*.

<sup>77</sup> In this respect, Lichtigfeld points out that Jaspers' views lead him to claim that 'the existential self is rooted in Transcendence and the ground of all things lies in the realization of the existential self in a freedom in which eternity and time coalesce.' Lichtigfeld, 1963, p.64

<sup>78</sup> *Phil.2*, p.4

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.* p.111

<sup>80</sup> In fact, Jaspers refers to the self as 'eternal', *Phil.2*, p.43

<sup>81</sup> For Jaspers, *Existenz* is 'not merely this incompleteness and perversity in all temporal existence, but ... the paradox of the unity of temporality and eternity'. *R&E*, pp.62-63 and *Phil.2*, p.43

<sup>82</sup> *Phil.2*, p.17

<sup>83</sup> Kant discusses the concept of 'time' in his *Critique of Pure Reason - Transcendental Aesthetic*, Section II. According to Kant, time is one of the fundamental 'forms of intuition' (*Ibid.* p.86) by which the mind intuits reality. He says that the human mind is structured in such a way that we impose spatio-temporal order on our perception (*Ibid.*). In other words, it is not possible for the human mind to grasp reality without a spatio-temporal order. When events occur we expect them to obey a temporal sequence. For Kant 'time has only one dimension; different times are not simultaneous but successive,' (*Ibid.* p.75). Here Kant is referring to the linear representation of time. In his view, if there were some kind of non-sequential

time (this would be analogous to Jaspers' concept of existential time) the human mind would be incapable of grasping it. In short, for Kant, time is not an aspect of external reality, but rather a man-imposed form of 'sensitivity' upon human experience in order to interpret reality as it appears.

<sup>84</sup> According to Kant, our idea of time 'represents the form of experience rather than its matter.' That is to say, the forms of perception, i.e. space and time, are *a priori* conditions in acquiring knowledge. Kant holds that concepts such as space and time arise out of the essence of the way the human mind is constituted, and this constitution is *a priori*. According to Kant, such concepts with a transcendental characteristic enable us to interpret the world around us. (See Davies, 1993, p.97) Space and time are presupposed in all human experiences. For further details see Kant, 1968, p.80, and also *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 1967, p.310

<sup>85</sup> *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 1967, p.307

<sup>86</sup> Kant, 1968, p.77

<sup>87</sup> Ibid. p.78

<sup>88</sup> The notion of 'timelessness' will be analysed in detail shortly.

<sup>89</sup> This point will be made clearer when we explain the connection between time and eternity later in this chapter.

<sup>90</sup> Kaufmann offers a detailed comparison and similarities between Kierkegaard's and Jaspers' understanding of the true self in connection with eternity. (Kaufmann, 1974, pp.215-225) Kaufmann quotes a relevant statement from *A Note in Kierkegaard's Journal of 1854-E.P. IX*, (p.240) It reads: 'The Existenz of a Christian is contact with Being'. (Kaufmann, p.219, fn.28) Although this statement is not entirely clear, it can be construed that 'contact with Being' here indicates a subjective experience of eternity by *Existenz* in objective time. He also suggests that one should compare this statement with Jaspers' views in *Philosophie II*, p.49 and *VW*, pp.49,175,677,1054 which are almost identical. See Kierkegaard's *Unscientific Postscript*, p.89, and *The Concept of Dread*, pp.193-194,183 for further details of 'inwardness'.

<sup>91</sup> See *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, pp.505-512

<sup>92</sup> The so-called 'clock time' is accurately described in a letter by R. Harris to the Editor of *The Times*. In expressing his view on 'time' Harris writes: 'We start with the movement of, say, the Earth around the Sun, or the movement of the Moon through phases. We then invent a clock of some kind, which also has moving parts that are associated in certain ways with nature's movements. ...Such measuring devices quantify nature's movements and this process is time. ...it is the alignment of one thing changing alongside another thing changing.' Harris, 1999, p.25

<sup>93</sup> For example, an hour of measurable objective time can differ, in terms of one's experience, from internal subjective time. This particular measured hour may be experienced as a very short period or as an unbearably long period depending on one's circumstances. Similar to Jaspers' and Kierkegaard's views, Daisaku Ikeda also makes a distinction and captures the difference between 'internal time' and 'objective time' as follows: 'Sometimes time passes as though in an instant, for instance, when one is out on a date or doing something he likes. ...Conversely, when a person is suffering from an illness, time seems to be without end. ...The duration we perceive varies according to the conditions of our life.' Ikeda, 1976, p.91

<sup>94</sup> *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, p.506

<sup>95</sup> Ibid. pp.193,506

<sup>96</sup> Kierkegaard writes: 'In time the individual recollects that he is eternal. This contradiction lies exclusively within immanence. ...only in existing do I become eternal.' (*Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, p. 508) Kierkegaard further states that 'this is again the paradoxical expression for how paradoxically time, and existence in time, have been accentuated.' *The Concept of Dread*, p.242

<sup>97</sup> See *Phil.2*, pp.17, 111

<sup>98</sup> *R&E*, p.62 and *Phil.2*, p.13

<sup>99</sup> *Phil.2*, p.4

<sup>100</sup> *R&E*, p.62. In order to have a better understanding of these terms we need to ascertain what is meant by 'eternity'. We shall discuss the meaning of eternity later in this chapter.

<sup>101</sup> *Phil. 2*, p.17

<sup>102</sup> Ibid. p.111

<sup>103</sup> I use the terms 'timeless' and 'eternal' interchangeably within the Jaspersian framework.

<sup>104</sup> Jaspers' exact words are: 'The experience of this eternity is granted only to existential awareness.' *PE*, 1969, p.110

<sup>105</sup> Gerhard Knauss describes this kind of existential experience as a new kind of awareness. Knauss writes 'What happens in transcending is not that thought becomes convinced, but that we become consciously aware of something which we had previously only obscurely divined. It is not so much that thought is compelled by conclusive evidence; what happens is more a liberation from thought and an entering into a new kind of consciousness.' Knauss, 1974, p.158

<sup>106</sup> *Phil.2*, p.111

<sup>107</sup> It is sometimes translated as 'eternity cuts across time', (*Phil.3*, p.128, and *PFR*, 1967, p.105) This expression '*quer zur Zeit*' in German captures precisely Jaspers' explanation of eternity as experienced in the *Augenblick*. It also appears in Jaspers' article, *Die Wandlung*, 1947 (It has not been translated into English yet), and quoted in Debrunner's *Zum philosophischen Problem des Todes bei Karl Jaspers*, 1996, p. 87 (from *PGO*, p.170). In English the translation of '*quer zur Zeit*' as 'Overlapping the vanishing moment in a flow of time is the moment that reveals something eternal', (in *PFR*, 1967, p.194) does not entirely capture the meaning of the 'moment of eternity'. It comes across as an awkward and unnatural expression. Thus, one must be aware of this inaccurate translation while reading it in English. It can easily lead to misunderstanding or leave one in a quandary.

<sup>108</sup> *PE*, 1969, p.110

<sup>109</sup> Custance, 1987, p.47

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.* p.48

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.* pp.50-51

<sup>113</sup> As Nicoll puts it 'we shall feel a 'taste' of infinity for a moment, and shall understand how inadequate and impossible it is to approach the problem of time with earthly measure.' Nicoll, 1971, p.139

<sup>114</sup> *PFR*, p.194. In this passage, by 'existential event' Jaspers means one's existential experience of the *Augenblick*, and by 'vanishing now' he refers to the point where eternity cuts across objective time.

<sup>115</sup> *PSP*, p.36

<sup>116</sup> *PFR*, p.279

<sup>117</sup> *Phil.3*, p.13

<sup>118</sup> *PSP*, p.64

<sup>119</sup> In order to grasp Jaspers' mode of thinking about the eternal aspect of *Existenz*, it is necessary to recognise not only his notion of transcending-thinking in the world, but also the dialectical perspective within which it operates. In other words, one has to grasp the possibility of experiencing a moment of eternity in the *Augenblick* within the confines of objective time through transcending-thinking. Transcending-thinking is a meditative inner action, and as we discussed earlier, this kind of experience can occur in boundary situations and existential communication.

<sup>120</sup> *PFR*, p.194

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>122</sup> *Phil.3*, p. 207. Here 'the presence of *Existenz*' indicates that one can have this experience if and only if when one realises one's self-being.

<sup>123</sup> Kunz, 1974, p.516 (from *Philosophie III*, p.236)

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>125</sup> See p. 162 (*Phil.2*, p.17)

<sup>126</sup> For Jaspers, as discussed in the previous chapter, 'unconditional' freedom is at the centre of the notion of *Existenz*. See Chapter Two, pp.84,87,88, and Chapter Three, pp.3, 154-156. See also *R&E*, p.11 and *Phil.2*, pp.11,13

<sup>127</sup> *Phil.2*, pp.158-159

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.* p.159

<sup>129</sup> Ricoeur, 1974, p. 615

<sup>130</sup> In Jaspers' words '...fulfilled time of the moment ... that is tied to choice and decision'. *Phil.2*, p.17

<sup>131</sup> *Phil.2*, pp.188,193,200. Kierkegaard's influence is clear here. According to Kaufmann, for Kierkegaard 'The self is essentially intangible and must be understood in terms of possibilities, dread, and decisions. When I behold my possibilities, I experience that dread which is "the dizziness of freedom," and my choice is made in fear and trembling.' *The Concept of Dread*, 1967, p. 55, also in Kaufmann, 1968, p.17

<sup>132</sup> The German version of it is: 'Ich bin nichts, wenn ich nicht in der Welt verwirkliche, was mir hier die Ewigkeit offenbar werden laesst.' *PGO*, 1962, pp.420-21. It is quoted by Lichtigfeld, 1963, p.40



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<sup>133</sup> Wahl, 1974, p.396

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> A similar view was expressed by Professor Rainer Thurnher (Innsbruck University) in our discussion regarding this issue through correspondence. Professor Thurnher expressed his view as follows: 'Was die Ewigkeit für Jaspers ausmacht, ist die absolute Erfüllung. Der Augenblick der Erfüllung steht dann für die Ewigkeit', i.e. 'For Jaspers, the moment of fulfillment in the *Augenblick* experience represents eternity.' *Personal Communication*, 1998

<sup>136</sup> Kaufmann, 1974, p.223

<sup>137</sup> Thyssen, 1974, p.301. See also *Phil.1*, p.57

<sup>138</sup> Thyssen, 1974, p.301

<sup>139</sup> *Phil.2*, p.17. Thyssen expresses this point as follows: 'For Jaspers (on the other hand) the strictly "historical" aspect of *Existenz* is timeless and "eternal" in the depth of "existential" deciding.' (Thyssen, 1974, p.302) Thyssen also refers to the experience of the eternal moment as 'eternity within time and 'athwart of time', i.e. *quer zur Zeit*. Ibid. p.320

<sup>140</sup> *Dictionary of Existentialism*, 1999, p.193. 'Intentionality is the characteristic of consciousness whereby it is consciousness of something.' (Ibid. p. 211) See also Husserl, 1999, pp.67-68. It should be noted that the notion of 'intentionality' will not be discussed here.

<sup>141</sup> Peter Simons puts forward the relationship between experience and intentionality as follows: 'In his *Logical Investigations* Husserl began a development of his conception of consciousness. The notion of intentionality was modified so that experiences count as intentional that, as we would say now, purport to present an OBJECT.' (Simons, *Dictionary of Existentialism*, 1999, p.211) According to Husserl, 'in a broadest sense the expression *consciousness* comprehends ...all mental processes.' Husserl, 1999, p.66

<sup>142</sup> Husserl, 1999, p.68. In Husserl's view, not all phenomena are visible, they may not necessarily appear to senses. Husserl, 1931, p.141ff

<sup>143</sup> *PFR*, p.194

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> Jaspers writes 'Unless I realize, in the world, what eternity can show me here, I am nothing. If I miss the world, I lose eternity as well. ... What is eternal - as the paradox expression goes - what I am in eternity, is settled in the world, in time.' *PFR*, p.279

<sup>146</sup> As we noted, the eternal moment is timeless because it does not occupy a temporal 'moment' and it cannot be measured in terms of objective time. At the same time, in the experience of the *Augenblick*, one is 'in eternity' which indicates that one is, as *Existenz*, also eternal. It is possible to construe that the 'existential experience' itself may be eternal. *PFR*, p.279

<sup>147</sup> See *PFR*, p.279, *Phil.2*, pp.111,112,122, and *PGO*, pp.420-21

<sup>148</sup> *PSP*, p.66

<sup>149</sup> See Latzel, 1974, p.179

<sup>150</sup> This 'inner experience' is the process of self-realisation in the *Augenblick*. Latzel, 1974, pp.177-178. See also *WW*, p.37

<sup>151</sup> Happold, 1963, p.47

<sup>152</sup> Ibid. p.53

<sup>153</sup> Ibid. p.54

<sup>154</sup> Ibid. p.55

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> *PSP*, p.36

<sup>157</sup> Kunz, 1974, p.512, see also Hoffman, 1974, p.102

<sup>158</sup> Kunz, *ibid.* p.512

<sup>159</sup> See *Phil.2*, p.111, *PE*, p.110, *PSP*, pp.36,64,66, *PFR*, p.194. The concept of 'non-temporal duration' will be analysed in Chapter Four.

<sup>160</sup> See *PFR*, p.194. Furthermore, if one participates as *Existenz* in the eternal, it is possible to argue that one's *Existenz* can be said to be 'eternal.' Jaspers seems to be committed to the view that the true self is eternal. (See *Phil.1*, p.59, *Phil.2*, p.113, and *PFR*, p.279) This point will be discussed in the next chapter.

<sup>161</sup> It is noteworthy that there are other contemporary thinkers who share Jaspers' view that it is possible for any individual to experience a moment of eternity and 'timelessness' in the here and now. Stearns, for example, makes some relevant points which support Jaspers' view of the *Augenblick* experience in her

discussion of one's experience of the 'timelessness'. She too believes that the temporal cannot be isolated from the timeless. She writes: 'Within a highly complicated experience it is possible to discern a series of gradual approximations towards a state of pure timelessness which has its position, as it were, at the base of time. The individual must be itself then be grounded in the timeless or such phenomena cannot be made explicable. Furthermore, we must not conclude from what has been said that because timelessness appears to belong peculiarly to the solitary individual it therefore belongs only to it. *Because* the timelessness of meaning belongs to individuals in themselves it can be communicated. Because it is at the base of each individual it can and must penetrate shared presents.' (Stearns, 1950-51, p.199) These remarks echoes Jaspers' views as regards to one's experience of the 'timeless' in the *Augenblick*.

<sup>162</sup> In his *Way to Wisdom*, Jaspers refers to eternity as 'depth of being', but this does not provide a clear idea of his concept of eternity. *WW*, p.24

<sup>163</sup> One good example to demonstrate the complexity and inherent difficulty in comprehending the concept of eternity is graphically illustrated by James Joyce in his *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Joyce's description of eternity is awesome. However, it is too long to cite the entire description here. See Joyce, 1985, p.135

<sup>164</sup> *Phil.3*, p.60

<sup>165</sup> I shall be referring to Plotinus' (204-270 CE) ideas, particularly the One, in connection with Jaspers' notions of eternity, Transcendence and *Existenz*. The *Enneads* (which is the Greek word for nine) are composed of nine treatises in various lengths and complexity dealing with a wide range of philosophical issues. These treatises are divided into six groups of nine by Porphyry, one of Plotinus' students. When I refer to the *Enneads*, I shall first refer to the Ennead number, then the treatise number, and then the number of the section, and finally to the lines of the section referred, e.g. (V. 2.1. 1-5). This is in line with MacKenna's presentation in his translation of *The Enneads*.

<sup>166</sup> For Plotinus, the One is an expression of the intelligible reality and the source of all beings which is infinite and eternal, and its truth is 'beyond all statement'. *The Enneads* (V.3.13.1), p.395. Cf. *Phil.3*, p.60

<sup>167</sup> *The Enneads*, (V.3.14.6-10), p.396

<sup>168</sup> Jaspers believes that despite this inadequacy, thought and language can be extended in the direction of transcendent realm by means of 'ciphers' as we have already mentioned in the previous chapter. In *The Myth of Passage* D.C. Williams expresses more formally the limitation and inadequacy of language in the articulation of metaphysical constructions. And he argues that one cannot construct a theory 'which admits the literal truth of any of them.' Williams discusses the difficulty of articulating the idea of 'the passage of time' as follows: 'Now, the most remarkable feature of all this is that while the modes of speech and thought which enshrine the idea of passage are universal and perhaps ineradicable, the instant one thinks about them one feels uneasy, and the most laborious effort cannot construct an intelligible theory which admits the literal truth of any of them.' Williams, 1993, p.137

<sup>169</sup> Eternity cannot be given a distinct ontological status. In constructing such metaphysical ideas, one must suspend all associative connections with objective time before one can begin to understand what is meant by eternity.

<sup>170</sup> Jaspers' determination to use the subjective experience of the *Augenblick* is not so much as an inquiry into the concept of eternity as for the elucidation of one's attainment of selfhood.

<sup>171</sup> The following definitions of eternity can be found in *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English*, Fifth Edition, 1964, p.415, *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 1998, p.422, and *An Introduction to Philosophy of Religion*, 1993, pp.141-145. It should also be noted that in the following discussion of the eternal aspect of one's *Existenz* for the sake of simplicity and not to break the flow of the argument the term *Existenz* will be used *as if* it were an individual.

<sup>172</sup> The term 'eternality' is sometimes used instead of 'eternity'. It is used as an attribute which indicates 'the condition of having eternity'. This definition is taken from *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 1998, p.422. This term may be used for *Existenz* as its eternal characteristic in the thesis.

<sup>173</sup> Having endless duration, or 'existence' in this context, may mean either the continuation of one's temporal existence or spiritual existence, i.e. non-empirical existence, depending on the tenets of various religious doctrines and personal beliefs.

<sup>174</sup> *Phil.2*, p.113

<sup>175</sup> *R&E*, p.62

<sup>176</sup> This idea echoes Thomas Aquinas' traditional concept of eternity which is a 'Godly' attribute. He often refers to 'simultaneous whole' and says that God can see 'simultaneously all'. [*Commentary, I, Perihermenias*, lecture 14] in *St. Thomas Aquinas—Philosophical Texts*, 1962, pp. 84-85. Aquinas also writes that 'all things in time are present to God in eternity.' [*Summa Theologica, Ia, xiv.13*] Ibid. pp.108-109. (See also *Approaches to Ethics*, 1962, pp.153-177) Although Jaspers embraces the idea of eternity as 'non-temporal duration', he does not refer to God in his statements. Further analysis of 'non-temporality' will follow in detail in Chapter Four.

<sup>177</sup> *Phil.2*, pp.17,113. This point will be discussed in connection with Jaspers' concept of 'ciphers' in the final chapter.

<sup>178</sup> Jaspers is clearly aware of this and he acknowledges that we are all time-conditioned in our worldly experiences, and that our utterances about eternal attributes and eternity itself are based on the terms which are used in the explanation of temporal order of events. Hence explanations of eternity are given, in most cases in the context of objective 'time', but do not necessarily correspond to the nature of eternity.

<sup>179</sup> We keep going back to the problem of the poverty of language. There does not seem to be any other way of discussing eternity without reference to objective time. One is conditioned by one's object-language mindset, and it is difficult to comprehend time and eternity as non-objective modes of Being.

<sup>180</sup> This raises some basic epistemological questions. Is it necessary that all human experiences are temporally related? If so, how do we become aware of temporal relations in our experiences? One answer is that we conceive all actual events as temporally related to each other as a conceptual construction of the mind. We are, in most cases, aware that one event leads to another, and that there are succession of events. It can also be said that we are aware of temporal relations through witnessing causal relations. It is generally accepted that we are aware of the existence of times in virtue of being aware of the various events that occur at those times. Can one not have an undefinable experience in a 'timeless' moment, such as an experience of a moment of heightened emotion? If one were to remove for a moment the 'mind-imposed time structure' (Here I am referring to the Kantian view that time is a *a priori* intuition. *Critique of Pure Reason*, pp.74-90 and particularly p.86) and different layers of accumulated presuppositions, then perhaps this particular experience may be conceived as a non-temporal experience. However, there is a long tradition which regards the structure of time as a necessary condition, as Kant does, of human experiences. (According to Kant it is 'not merely possible or probable, but indubitably certain, that space and time, as the necessary conditions of all outer and inner experience'. *Critique of Pure Reason*, p.86) Thus our time-conditioned minds perceive all events and changes as occurring in time, and this is what is meant by 'temporal relations' in human experiences.

<sup>181</sup> *Phil.2*, p.4

<sup>182</sup> *R&E*, p.62. Kierkegaard too comments on the paradoxical nature of time and eternity. See Kierkegaard, 1941, pp.505-512

<sup>183</sup> *Phil.2*, p.113

<sup>184</sup> *R&E*, pp.62-63. In this area Kierkegaard's influence on Jaspers is clear. It is true for Kierkegaard also that 'existence is paradoxically accentuated for the reason that the eternal itself came into the world at a moment of time.' Kierkegaard, 1941, p.505

<sup>185</sup> Hoffman, 1974, p.102. This closely echoes Jaspers' views in *Phil.2*, p.113. Jaspers also adds that 'if the moment as the phenomenon of *Existenz* has been received into historic continuity, this continuity in turn will be in peril of absorption by the unexistential continuity of the flow of time. Historicity will then be misconceived as *endless duration*.' *Phil.2*, p.112

<sup>186</sup> In this respect, Lichtigfeld too declares that Jaspers' views lead him to take the view that one's existential self represents the unity of eternity and time. Lichtigfeld, 1963, p.64

<sup>187</sup> For Jaspers, this means 'the apprehension of timelessness'. *R & E*, p.62

<sup>188</sup> In Stearns' view the concept of eternity as 'endless duration' will lead to contradiction. She says that 'if eternal is taken to mean "endless enduring" then the contradiction arises. But to interpret the timeless in such terms [i.e. in terms of time] is hopelessly to misunderstand its nature.' Stearns, 1950-51, p.197

<sup>189</sup> Time and eternity are somehow interdependent. Nevertheless, one cannot construct a concept of eternity by simply adding stretches of time together. As Wittgenstein writes in his *Philosophical Remarks* 'Infinity lies in the nature of time, it is not the extension it happens to have'. In *Philosophy of Time*, 1993, p.167

<sup>190</sup> *Phil.2*, p.112. To interpret the *Augenblick* experience as 'endless duration' or 'endless time' would be missing the point Jaspers is trying to make.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid. p.113

<sup>192</sup> Some, however, like Ted Harrison, defend the view that eternity is not infinite time, and that 'it simply is'. He adds that it is rather the absence of time. Harrison, 2000, pp. 53,59

<sup>193</sup> *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 1967, p.63. 'Sempiternity' is a technical term. A reasonable explanation of it is cited in *The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus* as follows: 'Philosophers say that 'ever' may be applied to the life of the heavens and other immortal bodies. But as applied to God it has a different meaning. He is ever, because 'ever' is with him a term of present time, and there is this great difference between 'now', which is our present, and the divine present. Our present connotes changing time and sempiternity; God's present, abiding, unmoved, and immovable, connotes eternity. Add *ever (semper)* to *eternity* and you get the constant, incessant and thereby perpetual course of our present time, that is to say, sempiternity.' (Smith, 1996, p.214) Roger Scruton's distinction between 'eternity' and 'sempiternity' is as follows: 'Something is sempiternal if it endures forever, i.e. if there is no time at which it is not. Something is eternal, however, only if it is outside time: only if temporal predicates do not truly apply to it.' Scruton gives the examples of a lump of rock which may 'last through the whole of time' and it is *in* time. But if number 2 exists, he says, 'it exists in every time, it does not exist in time, since it takes no part in temporal processes, nor does it change'. Hence it is eternal. Scruton, 1994, p.374, see also Mautner, 1996, pp.136, 392

<sup>194</sup> 'immortal' in the traditional sense.

<sup>195</sup> *Phil.2*, p.197

<sup>196</sup> *PSP*, p.15

<sup>197</sup> We shall discuss the metaphor of *Existenz*'s 'immersion in eternity' later in this chapter in connection with the *Mystical Interpretation of Jaspers*' ideas on death.

<sup>198</sup> From the fact that something is everlasting, it does not necessarily follow that it is divine. Mathematical concepts can be said to have timeless existence. They do not occupy space, and do not necessarily have any divine attributes. As already mentioned, number 7 is a prime number which is non-temporal, it is always in 'present', not 'was' and not 'will be'. See the *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 1967, p.63

<sup>199</sup> These two terms will be used interchangeably throughout this study.

<sup>200</sup> We also noted that the attribute of 'timelessness' is a common denominator in various meanings of eternity.

<sup>201</sup> For example, Plato utilised the notion of 'timelessness' in his metaphysical theories, e.g. the doctrine of Forms. He declared that eternity as 'timelessness' belongs to the realm of Forms, and is the 'genuine' duration. For Plato, the underlying reality is the realm of Forms that are eternal. In his explanations, the Intelligible is described as 'eternal' in *Timaeus* (37d1), 'always existing in the same state' (28a6) and 'remains in unity' (37d6). Anything temporal is the shadow of the eternal realm as he explains in the famous 'cave' analogy in the 7<sup>th</sup> book of the *Republic*. Parmenides' description of Being or the One in his *Way of Truth* is one of the early versions of the concept of 'timeless duration' and it predates Plato's concept of eternity which is discussed in *Timaeus*. Parmenides describes the One: 'It neither was at any time nor will be, since it is now all at once a single whole' in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 1967, p.64 Similarly, Plotinus also uses 'timelessness' in his explanation of the One.

<sup>202</sup> In traditional metaphysics, eternity is connected with the world of Being, and time with the world of 'becoming' as all things are changing in time. (*Timaeus*, 27)

<sup>203</sup> See *Phil.2*, p.113 and *R&E*, p.62

<sup>204</sup> Within a religious context, God's eternity is inseparably linked with 'unchangeability'. Aquinas claims that 'God is altogether unchangeable. Therefore He is eternal' Quoted in *Saint Thomas Aquinas – Selected Writings*, 1964, p.99

<sup>205</sup> *Phil.2*, pp.3-15

<sup>206</sup> There are many examples in *Phil.2*, see pp. 3-15, e.g. 'Existenz appears to itself' (p.3), 'takes a step forward, (p.4), 'cuts loose from the world' (p.5), 'aims at the reality' (p.10) and so on.

<sup>207</sup> *Phil.2*, p.4

<sup>208</sup> Ibid. p.13

<sup>209</sup> *R&E*, p.67. See also *Phil.2*, pp. 3-15

<sup>210</sup> *R&E*, p.68

<sup>211</sup> One can take the argument further and suggest that since *Existenz* is an aspect of the self, and the existential self is considered to be an ongoing process and 'becoming', because it is always unfolding, and

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developing in response to its changing perceptions of the world around it, then as *Existenz* one cannot be said to be immutable. For further details regarding the existential self see *The Existential Self in Society*, 1984, p.11

<sup>212</sup> But is it not possible to have an active *Existenz* in relation to an unmoving moment of time? Since there are different concepts of time, equally there must also be different concepts of eternity. Indeed, it can be argued that it is possible to conceive an active *Existenz* which can experience a 'frozen' instant of eternity as 'timelessness', even if eternity is considered outside of time. This idea will be discussed later.

<sup>213</sup> The question here is whether it is necessary that time is involved whenever there is change. In our earlier discussion we have noted that there is certainly an inseparable relationship between the two concepts; changes occur in time. 'Time is a dimension of change' says Aristotle. (Aristotle, *Physics*, Book IV, Chapter 11, 218b21, and see also Edel, 1982, p.105) Aristotle is of the view that time is a measure of change, and that the two concepts are fundamentally connected with one another. (*Readings in Philosophy – Time*, 1993, pp.65, 96) For Aristotle, 'every change and everything that moves is in time' (Ibid. p.69) and time is not 'independent of movement or change' (Ibid. p.62). Edel suggests that Aristotle 'ties the idea of time so closely to change that it becomes almost meaningless without reference to specific changes'. (Edel, 1982, p.105, and Leaman, 2002, p.65) It is a widely held view that the passage of time necessarily involves change in such a way that there could be no time if nothing changed. This is also McTaggart's view which appears in 'The Unreality of Time', 1993, p.96. It seems that the view that changes occur in time is considered to be a well-grounded view. Although it is an interesting area of inquiry, we shall have to leave it out at present.

<sup>214</sup> *Phil.2*, p.13

<sup>215</sup> What one means is that there is a time sequence involved in one's action, i.e. before, during, and after the *willing* of a particular action.

<sup>216</sup> In the traditional explanation of 'eternity', the expressions 'one', 'single', 'unity', 'wholeness' are all related and point to God.

<sup>217</sup> See St. Augustine, *Confessions* Book XI, Ch.11. The issue of non-temporality and simultaneity will be discussed in detail in Chapter Four.

<sup>218</sup> Aquinas, for example, claims that 'all things in time are present to God in eternity.' *Summa Theologica*, *Ia.xiv.13*, cited in Gilby, 1962, p.197

<sup>219</sup> This definition is to be understood in terms of God's eternal existence in such a way that He possesses all at once a 'life' that has no beginning and no end. Boethius, p.163

<sup>220</sup> Boethius, 1969, p.164. This explanation is almost identical with Aquinas' definition of eternity we quoted earlier. According to Stump and Kretzmann, Boethius' presentation of the concept of eternity 'became the *locus classicus* for later medieval discussion.' See *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, p.426

<sup>221</sup> Some philosophers regard this assertion as self-contradictory. It is argued that if God possesses life all at once that means He possesses all of it simultaneously. This suggests His life is confined to a single instant, which has no duration at all. Therefore, God cannot create, move or act in any way and He cannot be a Divine Being. (See Kenny, 1979, p.38ff) We shall return to this argument in Chapter Four.

<sup>222</sup> The distinction Boethius makes (between time and eternity) is clearly qualitative.

<sup>223</sup> See *Time, Change and Freedom*, 1995, p.45. However, not all thinkers regard the concept of 'simultaneous present' or 'timeless present' necessarily self-contradictory. Daisaku Ikeda, for example, believes that this moment of 'timeless present' contains both 'the life of the infinite past and the eternal future'. He says that 'the past and future are never separable from the present' and 'the essence of life-activity is both momentary and eternal'. Ikeda, 1976, p.113

<sup>224</sup> For further details of this argument see Kenny, 1979, p.38ff

<sup>225</sup> This kind of objection is raised mostly by analytic philosophers.

<sup>226</sup> We shall further discuss the medieval view of eternity and its influence on Jaspers in the next chapter.

<sup>227</sup> The word 'mysticism' has a number of different meanings. The term 'mystical' here refers to a contemplative state of mind that attempts to grasp reality as a whole through personal experiences which are connected with one's faith. Happold's description of mysticism is 'the assertion of an intuition which transcends the temporal categories of the understanding, relying on speculative reason.' In his view, 'rationalism cannot conduct us to the essence of things; we therefore need intellectual vision.' (Happold, 1963, p.37) In this analysis the *Mystical Interpretation* will be discussed with reference to Sufis.

<sup>228</sup> *PSP*, p.12

<sup>229</sup> Sometimes Jaspers equates Being itself, the ultimate reality, with Transcendence although it is not always obvious that they mean the same. He writes 'Absolute reality is to me transcendent' (*Phil.3*, p.9) 'Absolute reality' here refers to Being itself. See also *R&E*, p.74, and *VW*, p.42

<sup>230</sup> *Philosophie II*, p.2

<sup>231</sup> *R&E*, p.60

<sup>232</sup> *PSP*, p.11

<sup>233</sup> *R&E*, p.61

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid.* pp.60-61

<sup>235</sup> *PSP*, pp.12, 15

<sup>236</sup> It should be made clear that what is presented here is only an *interpretation* of Jaspers' statements. This view is not directly expressed in these terms in Jaspers' discussion of *Existenz's* 'deathlessness'.

<sup>237</sup> *PSP*, p.15

<sup>238</sup> Some might challenge this line of thinking and might ask questions such as 'What happened before mankind appeared in the world, what will happen when it disappears?' and 'What happens on a planet with life but no humanity?' 'To what extent is ultimate reality relevant to this interpretation?' These are interesting questions. However, any attempt to reply to them would take us away from the main concern in this study.

<sup>239</sup> The absorption into the divine source is one of the central concepts of Sufism. The Sufi desires to return to his origin as it were. (Qadir, 1988, pp.89,91) Plotinus also follows a similar mystical path.

<sup>240</sup> There are indeed parallels between the two. The similarities between the Sufi's and Jaspers' views include the manifestation of Absolute Being in the phenomenal world, dissolution of the subject-object distinction, differentiation of the true self from the empirical self, one's inwardness and introspective contemplation in solitude in the awareness of Absolute Being, one's ability to transcend one's worldly existence and finally 'immersion' of one's true self in ultimate reality after death. For further details see *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Vol.8., pp. 41-42, see also *Rumi*, 1988, and Qadir, 1988, pp.89-91

<sup>241</sup> For the Sufi being a part of the empirical world is a mode of Being and it is a necessary path one has to take in order to achieve higher levels of consciousness. They believe in the transformation of man into 'eternal substance', i.e. overall totality. They do not often use the term 'eternity' in discussing one's return to ultimate reality, but it is understood in the context of 'Total union with the Unseen'. *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Vol.8., p.42, and Qadir, 1988, pp.92,93

<sup>242</sup> Through such rituals the self is prepared for the final return to the overall totality after death. Regarding Sufi rituals see *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Vol.8., p.42, and Qadir, 1988, pp.89-91

<sup>243</sup> Leaman, 2002, p.193

<sup>244</sup> *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Vol.8., p.42, and Qadir, 1988, p.92

<sup>245</sup> Sufis believe that human beings are finite and limited, and there is no immortality in the traditional sense as a person. For them, the ultimate reality is infinite and limitless. Again, this view seems to correspond to Jaspers' view on Transcendence. This form of depersonalised immortality is also adopted by the Buddhist, and there is no divine Creator involved in Buddhism. See Snelling, 1987, p.75, Malpas and Solomon, 1998, p.165, *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 1998, Vol.2, p.70, and *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 1967, Vol.1, p.417

<sup>246</sup> As Rumi says 'Dive into the Ocean. ..You should be with them where waves and fish and pearls and seaweed and wind are all one. No linking, no hierarchy, no distinctions, no perplexed wondering, no speech.' *Rumi*, 1988, p.59, and Qadir, 1988, pp. 89,91

<sup>247</sup> The doctrine of the Sufi emphasises the Oneness of everything, the sense of union with the One. Here one can also see remarkable similarities between Plotinus' concept of the One which envelopes everything that exists and the Sufi's concept of 'oneness' with the overall totality. The influence of both expositions on Jaspers' philosophy cannot be ignored. To illustrate the underlying reality of the One, i.e. the all-encompassing Absolute Being, the metaphor of the 'Ocean' is often used. Even Rumi's well known work *The Mathnawi* itself is likened to an ocean by one of the translators, Coleman Barks, of this work: 'To use Rumi's own metaphor, the *Mathnawi* is an ocean with myriad elements swimming and adrift and growing in it'. (See *This Longing*, 1988, p.ix) Accordingly, any temporal existence is similar to the 'droplets' of the Ocean which are temporarily separated from their source. After a short period, all 'droplets' so to speak, return to their eternal source, the overall totality. (Rumi, 1988, p.49). This doctrine of 'oneness' of

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everything suggests a form of pantheism, which is unacceptable to some Sufis on the grounds that one must not identify God with the physical world. The physical world is considered illusory. (See Leaman, 2002, p.195) The quest for complete self-mergence in divinity is also discussed by Happold (1963, pp.249). The all encompassing 'ocean' as a metaphor has been used in the same context also by others. For example, one of the great English poets, Wordsworth, depicts a similar metaphor in one of his poems:

Hence in a season of calm weather  
Though inland far we be,  
Our Souls have sight of that immortal sea  
Which brought us hither. (Wordsworth, 1996, p.250)

Plotinus too uses imagery similar to that of Sufis. See the *Enneads*, (I.6.8.16-17), p.63

<sup>248</sup> *WW*, pp.30,37

<sup>249</sup> 'Time negating immersion in eternity' indicates here the rejection of objective time in the representation of eternity as the ultimate reality.

<sup>250</sup> *Phil.2*, p.192. Indeed, one might ask whether *Existenz*'s 'immersion in eternity' need to be explained in terms of religious mysticism. It can be argued that not all mysticism is tied to religion. Some pre-Socratic ideas, for example, may be compatible with what Jaspers says about the all-encompassing and 'immersion in eternity'. For example, Democritus, Anaximander and Anaximenes all advocated 'one-substance' theory in their explanations of reality. Accordingly, everything is a modification of one substance, which pervades all reality just like Plotinus' concept of the One. In their explanation of the structure of reality, varied forms of pre-Socratic one-substance theories, e.g. atoms, water, ether, Apeiron, etc, do not relate to a divine Creator but simply to laws of nature. The relevant point here is that one does not have to be limited by a religious mystical outlook in order to elucidate Jaspers' image of 'immersion in eternity'. Some might even consider the pre-Socratic 'material' explanation more appropriate than the religious mystical perspective, as there is no connection with religion or God in the former.

<sup>251</sup> In Jaspers' view, a mystical approach to reality is 'unbalanced' in the sense that it indicates 'one-sided' attachment to the transcendent reality. For Jaspers, mysticism implies the negation and the denial of the empirical world: it is an escape from being-in-the-world, as it were, and from facing up to one's responsibilities. He says that reality cannot be grasped by concentrating on only one aspect of it. *Phil 2*, p.198

<sup>252</sup> Even though these conceptions in Jaspers' analysis appear somewhat secularised, it can be argued that some religious elements are detectable.

<sup>253</sup> In his discussion of Jaspers' concept of foundering, Thyssen too thinks that Jaspers' metaphysical concepts should not be seen in a mystical context. He writes: 'Jaspers' foundering is far removed from any mystical "other worldliness" if this should have any quietistic significance.' Thyssen, 1974, p.321

<sup>254</sup> I discussed this particular point with several Jaspers scholars including Dr. Saner, Professor Ehrlich, Professor Salamun and Professor Knauss and it was clear that in their view the *Mystical Interpretation* did not represent Jaspers' views accurately. (Personal Communication)

<sup>255</sup> When Jaspers says it can be experienced 'on the heights of Existenz' he clearly indicates a different level of consciousness by stating that one can have this awareness not as mere 'existence' but *only* as *Existenz*. *PFR*, p.194

<sup>256</sup> See *PGO*, p.170

<sup>257</sup> See *Phil.3*, p. 128. It is acknowledged by most continental scholars that Jaspers favours the Kierkegaardian distinction between objective time and inwardly experienced subjective time, and the paradoxical experience of eternity in objective time. It is also recognised that for both Kierkegaard and Jaspers, this existential experience of a moment of eternity in life can be understood only with reference to objective time.

<sup>258</sup> In order to emphasise the brevity of the experience of the *Augenblick*, i.e. its immediate disappearance, we refer to it as a 'momentary' experience based on Jaspers' own terms, e.g. 'moment', 'vanishing moment', 'vanishing now', and a 'point in time', all of which indicate the shortest possible duration in objective time. The brevity of this existential experience accentuates its intensity and therefore its 'immediate disappearance' is relevant to our explanation. The term '*Augenblick*' itself indicates the brevity of the experience.

<sup>259</sup> *PSP*, p.36

<sup>260</sup> *Phil.2*, p.113

<sup>261</sup> This kind of experience might profoundly affect one's life. And as Jaspers says, it may lead to what he calls 'authentic existence'.

<sup>262</sup> *Phil.2*, p.111

<sup>263</sup> One must remember that the emphasis falls upon *this life* when it is seen in the light of recurrence. As Jaspers says in his *PFR*: 'In the singular passage we touch eternity only on the heights of Existenz, not as mere existence; in recurrence all things are reduced to the same level of happening over and over.' (*PFR*, p.194) Jaspers' metaphor of 'touching eternity' will undoubtedly attract criticism from some analytic philosophers. But this metaphor represents one's timeless experience in terms of *quer zur Zeit*, and needs to be seen in this context.

<sup>264</sup> We shall give a more detailed analysis of one's experience of the eternal moment in the next chapter.

<sup>265</sup> This objection has also been raised against the medieval exegesis of 'eternity' in a similar way. See pp. 180-181

<sup>266</sup> By 'object-language' I mean language we use in everyday life referring to objects that exist in the empirical realm. Object-language is different from the language of metaphysics in that the former is not capable of expressing metaphysical ideas adequately and the latter is not concerned with empirical objects.

<sup>267</sup> Custance, 1987, p.52

<sup>268</sup> It is private in the sense that it is internal and not open to empirical inquiry.

<sup>269</sup> *Phil.2*, p.113

<sup>270</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>271</sup> *PFR*, p.194 and *PSP*, p.36

<sup>272</sup> It is appropriate to quote Arthur Koestler here. Koestler, who is considered by Heywood as 'fiercely logical' (See Heywood, 1968, p.204), finds it difficult to admit that he has had what he calls a 'mystical experience' that cannot logically be explained and writes about it as follows:

'It is extremely embarrassing to write down a phrase like that when one has read *The Meaning of Meaning* and nibbled at logical positivism and aims at verbal precision and dislikes nebulous gushings. Yet mystical experiences, as we dubiously call them, are not nebulous, vague or maudlin; they only become so when we debase them by verbalisation. However, to communicate what is incommunicable by its nature one must somehow put it in words, and so one moves in a vicious circle. When I say the 'I' had ceased to exist I refer to a concrete experience that is verbally as incommunicable as the feeling aroused by a piano concerto, yet just as real only much more real. In fact its primary mark is the sensation that this state is more real than any other one has experienced before, for the first time the veil has fallen and one is in touch with 'real reality' the hidden order of things, normally obscured by layers of irrelevancy.

...The 'I' ceases to exist because it has by a kind of mental osmosis established communication with and been dissolved in the universal pool. It is this process of dissolution and limitless expansion which is sensed as the 'oceanic feeling', as the draining of all tension, the absolute catharsis, the peace that passeth all understanding.' (Koestler, 1954, p.353. This passage is also cited in *Man's Concern with Death*, 1968, p.204) According to Heywood, Koestler later adds that the experience was meaningful, but 'not in verbal terms'. Verbal transcriptions that come nearest to it are: 'The unity and interlocking of everything that exists.' This is similar to what Jaspers means by the *Augenblick* experience.

<sup>273</sup> As Jaspers says 'there is nothing demonstrable about a metaphysical experience, nothing that might make it valid for everyone.' *Phil.3*, p.114

<sup>274</sup> Is it not possible to infer the existence of viruses, for example, from certain diseases, even if one may not encounter viruses directly? Most of us as non-biologists acknowledge the existence of viruses even though we may not have awareness of them directly.

<sup>275</sup> Unlike subjective mental processes, observable behaviour can be studied objectively, can be predicted, and in some cases the truth of it can be verified.

<sup>276</sup> One's experience of a timeless moment of eternity is not confined only to ancient and medieval religious ideas. Nor is the expression of these experiences restricted to some existential philosophers. It can also be found in more recent literary works. Let me offer some examples to substantiate this statement. Thomas Mann, for example, exemplifies this experience as follows: 'We walk, walk. How long, how far? Who knows? Nothing is changed by our pacing, there is the same as here, once on a time the same as now, or then; time is drowned in the measureless monotony of space, motion from point to point is not motion more, where uniformity rules; and where motion is no more motion, time is no longer time.' (From the chapter 'By the Ocean of Time' in *The Magic Mountain*, 1960. It is also cited in J.J. Clarke's *Mysticism*



and the Paradox of Survival, 1971, pp.171-172) Proust too articulates a similar view in his *Remembrance of Things Past* by describing a trivial experience of having a piece of cake. This experience invokes some childhood memories for the main character, Marcel, and at the same time gives him a sense of 'timelessness'. He writes 'at that moment the being that I had was an extra-temporal being and therefore careless of the vicissitudes of the future.' Proust writes about the use of memory and how 'involuntary' memory is not comprehended. What he describes, i.e. a momentary experience, has a timeless quality, which can be regained. (Proust, *Remembrance of Things Past: I, Swann's Way, Overture*, 1989) Likewise, Clarke discusses this concept of the experience of timeless present in his article *Sunt Lacrimae Rerum: A Study in the Logic of Pessimism*, and quotes a relevant section from Richard Jeffries as follows: 'It is eternity now. I am in the midst of it. It is about me in the sunshine; I am in it, as the butterfly floats in the light-laden air. Nothing is to come: it is now. Now is eternity; now is the immortal life. Here this moment, by this tumulus, on earth, now; I exist in it.' (Jeffries, cited by Clarke, 1970, p.202, it is also in Happold, 1963, p.392) There is also a whole section called *The Timeless Moment* which clearly articulates momentary 'timeless' experiences in Happold's *Mysticism*, 1963, (see Section 1, p.129). The important point is that the selections cited here all point to the reality of such 'non-temporal' momentary experiences, which are not necessarily involved in the existence of a divine Being. Nor is there any doubt expressed as regards to the occurrence of such existential experiences.

<sup>277</sup> I owe this analogy to Davies, 1993, p.134

<sup>278</sup> This is cited in Nicoll's *Living Time*, 1971, p.22

<sup>279</sup> Nicoll, 1971, p.23

<sup>280</sup> *PFR*, p.194

<sup>281</sup> Jaspers may not have intended to give this impression. However, the 'vanishing moment of eternity' seems to refer to eternity itself, as he uses these terms interchangeably. *PFR*, p.194

<sup>282</sup> A similar argument may be constructed against Jaspers' assertions regarding the recurrence of the *Augenblick* experience. Jaspers says that what is experienced remains in one's memory, and that it may recur from time to time depending on the individual's situation. It may be argued that eternity seems to be equated with one's memory of this particular life experience. One's memory of an experience of eternity cannot be the same as eternity itself. Furthermore, when one dies, one's memories also perish with one. Thus if one's memories represent one's experience of eternity, then neither one's memories nor one's *Existenz* can be considered eternal. Jaspers' reply to this objection would be expressed in terms of the inadequacy of object-language.

<sup>283</sup> *PFR*, p.194

<sup>284</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>285</sup> See the discussion at the beginning of Chapter Three.

<sup>286</sup> Robertson, 1999, p.63

<sup>287</sup> We shall discuss the 'ineffability' of metaphysical concepts in terms of 'qualified negativity' in Chapter Four.

<sup>288</sup> There are further related questions about the assumption of the existence of Transcendence and ciphers. How do we know that what appears to us in the world as a cipher corresponds to reality which is considered to be the ultimate source of phenomena? How can we be certain that we can accurately pick up signals/ciphers which are supposed to come from the transcendent realm? What we believe to be true, which is based on our sense perception, may well be false. One is indeed aware of one's sensory limitations, and one knows that one is not always accurate with the processing of sensory data. There are several well-established scientific claims to demonstrate this. For example, it is beyond the capacity of the human eye to register ultra-violet and infra-red colours in the spectrum. Similarly, the human ear is incapable of hearing the high-pitched sounds which a bat or a dog can hear. Scientists also tell us that the eye of a fly is constituted in such a way that the single images we see appear to the fly as multiple images. We are convinced that the fly's vision of the world is inaccurate because it does not correspond to our vision. In view of this, supposing that one accepts that there is a transcendent realm, how can one be certain that what our sensory perception picks up is a cipher which comes from Transcendence? If our senses cannot give us the full picture of empirical reality that we can experience, then might we not be basing our assumptions on 'inaccurate' premises regarding the transcendent realm? And how do we correlate what we may perceive to be 'ciphers' with the unknowable nature of the transcendent realm? Can this subjective correlation of 'appearance' and 'transcendent reality' be a false and deceptive assumption of

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the human mind? In response, Jaspers would point out that matters regarding Transcendence, *Existenz* and ciphers are a matter of philosophical faith for the individual and as he repeatedly states there is no certainty at all in such matters.

<sup>289</sup> As Kierkegaard claims, faith is 'precisely the contradiction between infinite passion of the individual's inwardness and the objective uncertainty.' See Aiken, 1963, p.239

<sup>290</sup> As explained in Chapter Two, the cipher is the veiled language of Transcendence through which Being presents itself. We should also remember that Jaspers uses the term 'cipher' in two ways: sometimes it refers to the language by means of which we speak about, or interpret, things that exist. Sometimes, however, it refers to entities themselves that exist. It is not possible to give a full analysis of 'ciphers' in this thesis. For details see Section 4 in *Phil. 3*, pp.113-208

<sup>291</sup> *R&E*, p.62. In other words, one can make sense of metaphysical concepts like 'eternity in time' or any other ciphers only as *Existenz*.

<sup>292</sup> *Phil. 3*, pp. 113,119-120

<sup>293</sup> We shall not pursue this issue any further. It will suffice to say that such metaphysical concepts are connected with one's subjective experiences and they cannot lead to empirical certainty. As we mentioned in our discussion of philosophical faith, some philosophical concepts cannot be categorised together with empirical theories and cannot be proven to be true within the scientific framework. What is real and present is relative to one's frame of reference. Scientific theories lead to predictions that can be used to settle some disputes. However, metaphysical studies do not lead to predictions and consequently one must rely on *a priori* arguments from various premises and try to demonstrate logical fallacies if appropriate. Metaphysical concepts are intellectual constructs of the mind which try to help us to understand, interpret, and make sense of reality. Furthermore, they are supposed to give meaning to our temporal lives.

<sup>294</sup> Heinemann, for example, thinks that Jaspers' philosophy points to some kind of mysticism. In his view, Jaspers' philosophising is 'potential, though not actual, mysticism. The elements are there out of which a genuine mystical philosophy could arise.' Heinemann, 1953, p.70

## Chapter Four

### Existenz, Eternity as ‘non-temporal duration’ and ‘Deathlessness’

#### 1. Introduction

We have, in the previous chapter, explored the relationship between *Existenz*, death and eternity. We also interpreted what it could mean for one’s *Existenz* to be ‘deathless’ from two different perspectives, namely the *Mystical* and *Existential Interpretations*. We can now turn to the final part of the analysis. In this chapter, I will draw on the traditional understanding of eternity as ‘non-temporal duration’. I will then take a fresh look at Jaspers’ concept of the *Augenblick* experience within the framework of the *Existential Interpretative* model. Finally, Jaspers’ assertions about the eternal aspect of one’s *Existenz* will be re-assessed.

In order to put Jaspers’ notion of eternity into sharper focus, the most prominent features of some previous ideas of eternity as ‘non-temporal duration’ will be considered. Such a reflection is relevant, and even necessary, to our analysis here, because these ideas provide the essential background to non-temporality.<sup>1</sup> We shall see that there is a close connection between Jaspers’ view of eternity and the views of some earlier thinkers. For example, there are striking similarities between Jaspers’ concept of eternity and that of some medieval philosophers. I will also draw on Plotinus’ view of eternity as it provides a particularly helpful comparison with Jaspers’ view. I will then ask in what context those earlier views relate to eternity and to what extent Jaspers shares those views.

I will approach Jaspers’ concept of eternity as ‘non-temporality/timelessness’<sup>2</sup> by utilising a metaphor that is similar to Plotinus’, Boethius’ and St. Augustine’s.<sup>3</sup> I will, however, argue that Jaspers’ assertions regarding the eternal dimension of the human being as

*Existenz* experienced in the *Augenblick*, can be coherently formulated in a non-theological framework. In this respect, I will present the experience of a moment of eternity in the *Augenblick* as 'timelessness' by putting forward a geometrical model as a metaphor. The explanation of 'timelessness' will be consistent with some earlier thinkers' concept of eternity.

First let us remind ourselves of some basic characteristics of the concepts of time and eternity, which will lead us to the concept of eternity as 'non-temporal duration'.

## **2. Towards an Understanding of the Concept of Eternity**

### **a. Time and Eternity**

The concepts of temporality and eternity are intimately interwoven. Hence explanations of 'eternity' are often given in the context of objective time as we understand it. As explained in the previous chapter, various dictionary definitions of eternity clearly demonstrate this point as they refer to the concept of time as 'infinite time', 'endless duration', 'timelessness' and so forth.<sup>4</sup> Yet it is apparent that time and eternity are two distinct concepts.

Time is often defined in terms of 'duration',<sup>5</sup> and is conceived as 'a succession of events or moments' occurring in a linear order. Within the context of objective time, a moment is 'a position in time' which is sometimes regarded as the 'moving now'.<sup>6</sup> The 'now' point is thought to be moving in a direction along the continuum of instants from past to future.<sup>7</sup> This is the concept of the so-called 'passage of time'.<sup>8</sup> The 'moving now' implies 'the transitory aspect' of time.<sup>9</sup> Eternity, on the other hand, is thought to be outside objective time and thus what applies to objective time might not apply to eternity. As we mentioned earlier, for some philosophers, including Jaspers, reality contains two aspects of Being, namely the empirical world and the transcendent realm. Such a division of reality into these two spheres depends on how each sphere stands in relation to time. Accordingly, the temporal order of events is successive: past, present and future. In the transcendent realm, on the other hand, there is no 'past', 'present' and 'future' so as to

differentiate it from objective time.<sup>10</sup> One may speak of time which has ‘passed’, but there is not such thing as eternity which has ‘passed’.

As we noted earlier in our discussion of ‘timelessness’, Plotinus, Boethius and St. Augustine present the concept of eternity as ‘timelessness’/‘non-temporal duration.’ In what context is their concept of eternity considered as ‘timelessness’? The answer is connected with a very important aspect of eternity: its historical association with divinity. When discussing metaphysical issues such as existence, time, and eternity, it is difficult to escape from religious connections.<sup>11</sup> The concept of eternity has been expressed for centuries predominantly through religious faith. Thus the basic nature of reality has often been associated with the existence of God. This divine Being is considered, in some form or other, to be the universal principle that grounds all there is, and has been given the attributes of ‘perfection’ and ‘eternity’ as His mode of existence. The meaning of ‘divine eternity’ covers a wide area including non-temporality, infinity and everlastingness within the framework of philosophical theology.<sup>12</sup> According to the traditional concept of God, this eternal Being exists timelessly.

Although Jaspers argues that his metaphysical views should not be considered religious in character, there are some similarities between his view of eternity and that of his predecessors. For example, Jaspers’ reflections on Transcendence, particularly in relation to the eternal aspect of *Existenz*, are remarkably close to Plotinus’ explanation of the notion of eternity<sup>13</sup> and the eternal attributes of the One<sup>14</sup>. Plotinus seems to provide Jaspers with the outlines of a fairly clear idea for his inquiry into the ‘transcendental’ aspect of human existence.<sup>15</sup> Let us have a closer look at the connection between Plotinus’ thought and that of Jaspers.

#### **b. Jaspers, Plotinus, and ‘Timelessness’**

Plotinus’ influence upon Jaspers’ thought is evident in two fundamental conceptions that are essential for both thinkers in their philosophising:

- i) the distinction between the two aspects of reality, namely the transcendent realm and the empirical world (which correspond to Transcendence and the world in Jaspers' philosophy)<sup>16</sup>
- ii) multiple modes of Being including different aspects of the self (which correspond to the different modes of Being in Jaspers' philosophy, namely Dasein, Consciousness-as-such, Spirit, and *Existenz*)<sup>17</sup>

Regarding (i) above, i.e. two aspects of reality, similarities between Jaspers' and Plotinus' notions of the transcendent realm and the empirical world are undeniable. Both Jaspers and Plotinus maintain that the transcendent realm is not another world separate from this one.<sup>18</sup> Transcendence is to be considered as a non-objective mode of Being.

Both Jaspers and Plotinus defend the view that the relationship between the two orders of reality, namely the empirical world and the transcendent realm, is dialectical.<sup>19</sup> Each realm requires the other and despite their 'opposition' they are inseparable.<sup>20</sup> In their explanation of the transcendent realm there is no denial of the sensible/phenomenal world, in fact there is a definite recognition of it. They hold that the 'sensible' world has its own proper reality.<sup>21</sup> For both thinkers it is important to link eternity with Transcendence, i.e. the One. It is also important to link objective time with the empirical world.<sup>22</sup>

As far as (ii) is concerned, the distinction between the two aspects of the self is central to both Jaspers' and Plotinus' philosophy.<sup>23</sup> Plotinus, like Jaspers, makes a clear distinction between an empirical aspect of the self and a true self<sup>24</sup> that is not perishable.<sup>25</sup> Although Jaspers does not talk about the 'immortality of the soul', he shares some elements of the eternal aspect of self with Plotinus. Jaspers endeavours not to associate his views in this respect with the religious framework of his predecessor. Nevertheless, in Jaspers' explanations of the concept of one's 'deathlessness', some of his assertions, due to his terminology, remain open to a religious interpretation.<sup>26</sup>

Both Jaspers and Plotinus discuss the areas of the authentic existence of the self and the 'transcendental' experience of the attainment of selfhood.<sup>27</sup> What Plotinus says about

these concepts is very similar to Jaspers' concept of one's existential experience of eternity in the *Augenblick*. Plotinus writes:

If Happiness demands the possession of the good of life, it clearly has to do with the life of Authentic-Existence, for that life is the Best. Now the life of Authentic-Existence is measurable not by time but by eternity; and eternity is not a more or a less or a thing of any magnitude but is the unchangeable, the indivisible, is timeless Being.<sup>28</sup>

For Plotinus, the realisation of one's true self, one's experience of eternity in the here and now,<sup>29</sup> and authentic existence are intimately linked. There are clear parallels between Plotinus' notion of authenticity and its connection with eternity, and what Jaspers says in this regard. For both Jaspers and Plotinus, achieving selfhood is intimately linked with an eternal moment that can be experienced in the world.<sup>30</sup> Andrew Smith in his *Time and Eternity* states that this link between eternity and the self arises from Plotinus' belief that 'we have a share in eternity.'<sup>31</sup> Smith then raises the question: 'But how can we have a share in eternity if we are in time?' The same question arises with regard to Jaspers' assertions. How can one have a share in eternity as *Existenz*? The answer is closely connected with Jaspers' and Plotinus' notions of the true self and its attainment in a transcendent experience of the eternal. For both Jaspers and Plotinus, there is a significant distinction between the eternal and the temporal self. Plotinus says that every human being is of 'twofold character'.<sup>32</sup> As we noted, Jaspers too follows the same line of thinking. One noticeable difference between the two thinkers is that Plotinus gives a detailed and systematically thought-out account of eternity and Being, while Jaspers' system in comparison, as Kaufmann suggests, is not adequately explicit.<sup>33</sup>

To summarise, for both Jaspers and Plotinus, the attainment of one's true self and a momentary experience of eternity are inseparably connected. What Plotinus says about one's true self and achieving selfhood is almost identical to Jaspers' assertions regarding *Existenz*. In this context, there is no denial of Plato's influence on their philosophy.<sup>34</sup> For example, in Plato's *Phaedo* the realisation of the true self is conditional upon the individual's rise, through contemplation, to the eternal.<sup>35</sup> Accordingly, one's experience may occur only for 'a moment as an Eternal Idea' which is unique and timeless.<sup>36</sup>

As already said before, the way Jaspers conceived of eternity was influenced not only by Plotinus, but also by the thinking of some medieval scholars. The reliance on time to divide the structure of reality into two orders gained more prominence in medieval metaphysics. God's mode of existence meant being 'eternal', and any other entity in the world existed only to the extent that it imitated the eternal mode of Being. Gerson believes that Plotinus was the thinker who laid the foundation of a 'distinctive philosophical theology' based on the Idea of Being as the One.<sup>37</sup> We shall say more about the medieval exegesis of eternity later in this chapter.

### 3. Non-temporal Duration as 'Timelessness'

I have so far considered a number of issues relevant to the central point of this study, namely the eternal aspect of the human being. But it is now time to proceed to the clarification of what eternity means as 'non-temporal duration',<sup>38</sup> since I will represent Jaspers' views based on this theory in this chapter. One definition of the 'non-temporal duration' interpretation of eternity can be found in *Time, Change and Freedom*:

Eternity is a *non-temporal duration* that has no limits, no beginning and end. To say this duration is not a temporal duration is to say that the duration has no parts that succeed one another. There is no part of the duration that is later than any other part. To say that it has duration means that it does not last for one instant only, but is *simultaneous with all instances*.<sup>39</sup>

A problem immediately confronting us in this passage is that it contains what seem to be paradoxical statements. For example, how can duration have 'no beginning and end', and not last for an instant but be 'simultaneous with all instances'? How can past, present and future be 'simultaneous'? Some argue that these statements are incoherent because the events that happened in the past, this particular moment 'now' and future events that have not yet happened cannot possibly be simultaneous with the whole of eternity.<sup>40</sup> Another strong objection to simultaneity of 'durationless instants' might be that

time cannot be composed of durationless instants since a stack of such instants cannot produce a non-zero duration.<sup>41</sup>

What should we make of these objections? In response to such objections one might wish to reply as Jaspers would, by pointing out that these objections are formulated within the confines of object-language. The difficulty lies in the lack of full understanding and the



ineffability of such a metaphysical concept as 'eternity'. The statements in the above passage seem contradictory because reference is made to such terms as 'instant' and 'duration', both of which are associated with objective time. An instant, for example, is a fraction of time, and duration indicates lasting through time. If the definition of eternity is thought of within the framework of objective time, then any statement in this regard will remain contradictory. This is, as already mentioned earlier, an unavoidable consequence of the lack of appropriate terminology in one's language regarding certain metaphysical concepts such as eternity. Although duration means persistence through time, here it has a wider meaning which accommodates the concept of duration in the 'eternal sense'. What is this eternal sense? Although it is difficult to say what precisely the eternal sense is, it is considered in the above quotation as duration which lacks past, present and future. Furthermore, there are no temporally successive parts, but an eternal durationless moment is thought to be all at once as an indivisible whole.<sup>42</sup>

How then can one explain the experience of an eternal moment in terms of 'non-temporal duration' without reference to objective time? In approaching this question, it is important to emphasise its underlying presupposition, in that the term 'duration' does not have the ordinary sense when used of the eternal.<sup>43</sup> In the eternal sense, a single 'instant' or 'moment' should not be conceived as a fragment of time in the world of the senses. In order to follow this line of thinking, one must assume that eternity is represented, in the absence of an adequate metaphysical vocabulary, by 'presentness'<sup>44</sup> and 'simultaneity'<sup>45</sup> both of which seem to be the closest terms to 'non-temporal duration' one can offer. Eternity then is conceived as a non-temporal mode of Being, i.e. 'timelessness', characterised by both the absence of succession, and by simultaneity. When re-read in the light of this assumption, then perhaps assertions regarding the attribute of 'timelessness' as 'non-temporal duration' will not be assessed in terms of objective time. It seems that only from this perspective of 'simultaneity and absence of succession' can one reconcile 'apparent contradictions' in Jaspers' assertions.<sup>46</sup> In turn, this assumption will enable one to present an explanation of the experience of the eternal in objective time.

In the classical sense, the concept of 'non-temporal duration' is conceived as 'timelessness' in a religious context. It is often expressed as follows:

Every instant of time in the created universe is present to God. It is as if God is on top of a mountain and sees all creation spread out below him; he sees all of it at once.<sup>47</sup>

Eternity in this sense has been used to characterise God's mode of existence. Plotinus,<sup>48</sup> Boethius<sup>49</sup>, and St. Augustine<sup>50</sup> are among those who defend this form of eternity as a single 'moment' in connection with God's mode of Being. They present eternity as the basis of 'unlimited life'. Boethius' definition of eternity is:

...the complete, simultaneous and perfect possession of everlasting life, all at once ...<sup>51</sup>

Boethius explains in his *Consolation of Philosophy* that by 'everlasting life' he means 'the whole of everlasting life in one simultaneous present.'<sup>52</sup> Although Boethius uses some temporal terms like 'everlasting' and 'present' in his definition, the meaning of the term 'eternity' points to 'timelessness'.

According to Boethius, then, God's eternity involves no temporally successive parts but 'all' exist equally. This definition is to be understood in terms of God's eternal existence in such a way that He possesses all at once a 'life' that has no beginning and no end, and in which there is no temporal succession. This commonly accepted medieval view of God's mode of Being and eternity is articulated by Watts in *The Consolation of Philosophy*:

...God, in Whom there is no past or future, but only timeless present, is eternal, while the world which only attains an endless series of moments, each lost as soon as it is attained, is merely perpetual.<sup>53</sup>

In the above, God's eternal attributes are such that eternity exists all at once and there is no distinction between past, present and future, and no succession of 'before' or 'after' in temporal terms. Such a description of timeless God attracts controversy. As we have already pointed out, some philosophers regard this assertion as self-contradictory.<sup>54</sup> If God possesses life all at once that means He possesses all of it simultaneously. So no one part of His life is later (or earlier) than any other part of His life. This suggests that His life is confined to a single instant, which has no duration at all. Therefore, the argument goes, God cannot create, move or act in any way, and He cannot be divine Providence.<sup>55</sup>

So far we have looked at some ideas of eternity as 'non-temporality' in the classical sense. In the first section, we have seen that Plotinus' views on eternity, the transcendent realm, and one's inner self, which are all intertwined, are similar to Jaspers' views. We have pointed out that both thinkers acknowledge the inadequacy of ordinary language to provide a comprehensive definition of this transcendent realm. We have also reflected on the medieval exegesis of eternity as 'non-temporal duration'. We noted that 'non-temporal duration' and 'timeless presence' seem contradictory metaphors used for the notion of eternity. What emerges at the end of this section is that we cannot think of, and talk about, eternity without appealing to objective time. We are told by Plotinus that 'reasoning',<sup>56</sup> in the general sense, will not adequately explain the nature of eternity and its relationship to Being, and that we must employ 'the eternal in us' since we have a share in eternity ourselves.<sup>57</sup> But what is this eternal aspect of the individual, 'the eternal in us', and how does one experience it? In order to address this question, one has to look into the nature of what is experienced as a timeless moment of eternity in the here and now, which will be clarified in the next section.

One of the questions we started with in this study was whether the theological context was a necessary condition for the clarification of the concept of 'timelessness'. Does eternity have to relate to a divine Being in one's elucidation of the concept of 'non-temporality' as 'timelessness'? It may have been appropriate to adhere to a theological framework when Jaspers' predecessors presented their views, but it now seems to many a redundant idea to support a philosophical argument. We shall consider here whether it is possible to present 'non-temporal duration' as a secular and rationally coherent concept. Although it may be conceptually difficult to consider this outside a theological framework,<sup>58</sup> I shall argue that it is possible to present a secular version of eternity as 'non-temporal duration'. If a secular approach is adopted, then perhaps Jaspers' statements regarding the notion of timeless moment may become more comprehensible and not necessarily ambiguous statements as they first appear. This does not mean, however, that the position we are considering is without difficulties.

I now turn to the 'non-temporal duration' interpretation of eternity and attempt to present it in a secular context.

#### 4. Non-temporal Duration as 'Timelessness' Revisited – Eternity as the 'Point'

In order to put forward a non-religious interpretation of 'non-temporal duration' as 'timelessness' within the Jaspersian philosophy, we need to return to the definition of 'non-temporal duration'. For the sake of clarity it is necessary to focus again on the following passage in *Time, Change and Freedom*:

Eternity is a *non-temporal duration* that has no limits, no beginning and end. To say this duration is not a temporal duration is to say that the duration has no parts that succeed one another. There is no part of the duration that is later than any other part. To say that it has duration means that it does not last for one instant only, but is *simultaneous with all instances*.<sup>59</sup>

This passage is important for two reasons: first, because it reinforces the metaphysical compatibility of eternity as 'non-temporal duration' with objective time, and secondly the explanation offered here does not necessarily imply a divine eternal Being. Furthermore, it seems to support Jaspers' assertions regarding one's experience of a moment of eternity.

Now let us consider eternity as 'all at once a single whole'.<sup>60</sup> Accordingly, eternity is the overall totality, i.e. an indivisible whole.<sup>61</sup> Here eternity is taken to mean 'timeless presence'<sup>62</sup> and 'durationless', or simultaneity. Let us now suppose that eternity *is* 'timeless duration' represented by a single moment that is outside the temporal order of events, and let us refer to this single 'moment' as 'the point'<sup>63</sup> in order to avoid misunderstanding.<sup>64</sup> Let us further suppose that this 'point' is in such a position that potentially it can have connections with any instant in temporal time, i.e. moments of t1, t2, t3 and so on, and with any part of the temporal order, i.e. past, present and future. This does not mean, however, that eternity, as 'the point' as it were, exists as different instants in the temporal order of events. It is not itself an instant that constitutes a part of earlier or later moments of objective time; it is rather a timeless point, 'above' time. In

short, eternity as the 'point' has no temporal properties of pastness, presentness, or futurity.

It must be emphasised that the term 'presentness'<sup>65</sup> in its eternal sense as the 'point', must not be assumed to be a part of the temporal order of events. It is more like the 'present now' or 'standing now', the *nunc stans* as the medieval scholars called it, rather than 'moving now' in objective time-series.<sup>66</sup> Given that eternity, in our discussion here, is taken to mean presentness and 'timeless duration', each instant of temporal time can be simultaneous with the eternal 'point' although not with each other. In order to grasp the notion of eternity that I am presenting here, it might be useful to employ a geometrical model even though eternity is not something spatial.<sup>67</sup> At the risk of excessive schematisation, it can be said that eternity is analogous to the centre of a circle, or a sphere, where the circumference of the circle represents the temporal order of events and the centre represents eternity as a singular 'point'.<sup>68</sup> Being outside of the temporal order, this eternal 'point' is not in any temporal instant but in a timeless singularity. In other words, the eternal 'point' stands *only* in relation to instants in the temporal order. From the eternal 'point' perspective, any instant in objective time can be in touch with eternity, or rather with the eternal 'point', depending on the degree of human awareness of the transcendent realm. This idea can be shown as follows:

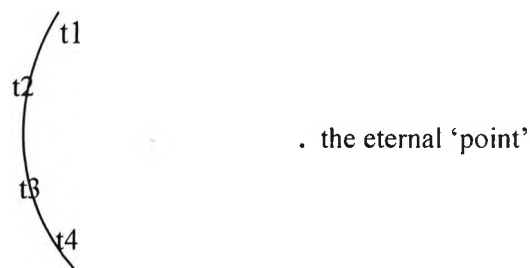


Figure 2 - *The central point represents eternity and the circumference of the circle represents the temporal order*

Although this eternal 'point' is limitless and infinite, duration in the temporal sense, as we suggested at the outset, is not involved here. It is possible to conceive of 'unlimitedness' of the eternal 'point' in the sense that there is no other part before and after the 'point' itself. This 'point' can then be described as 'nothing' and 'everything' just as Plotinus

describes it.<sup>69</sup> It can be considered as Being in its entirety, and as the totality. Does this totality have to be connected with a divine Being? There does not seem to be a necessary connection here. In order to assess whether there is necessity to ascribe eternal attributes to the 'point' in this explanation, let us first consider the following passage, which exemplifies God's eternity as 'timelessness'. Then we can try to express 'timelessness' without the concept of God, and see whether the absence of God will change the explanation of 'non-temporality':

Every instant of time in the created universe is present to God. It is as if God is on top of a mountain and sees all creation spread out below him; he sees all of it at once.<sup>70</sup>

It seems that in the above passage God is occupying the top of a 'metaphysical' mountain as it were. He is in such a position that He can see all at once past, present and future in terms of the temporal order of events. If the top of the mountain is above every instant of objective time, then it can be considered as equivalent to the single eternal 'point' in the geometrical model previously presented. A similar relationship between the eternal 'point' and the temporal order of events within the confines of the circumference of the circle is consistent. Granted, the geometrical model here is metaphorical, but the principles involved are reasonably clear. In the above passage 'presentness', or 'present eternity', is described in terms of the existence of a divine Being in a 'permanently present instant'. Nevertheless, there is nothing contradictory here to suggest that the notion of 'presentness' can be articulated without involving God, i.e. within a non-religious framework.<sup>71</sup> If one were to exclude the presence of God from the explanation of eternal 'presentness', or from the top of the mountain as it were, then the eternal moment as a single 'point' would still remain as 'presentness'. In other words, the attribute of eternal 'presentness' as 'the point' would remain the same with or without the divine characteristic of the 'point'.<sup>72</sup> And this would not change, in the functional sense, the relationship between the order of temporal events and eternity represented as a singular 'point'. Indeed, there is no plausible reason to suppose that the relationship between temporality and eternity would not function without the presence of God.

Seen from this perspective, there is no necessity for the eternal 'point' to have any connection with a divine Being. It is conceivable that eternity as a singular 'point' can

exist without cause or purpose. It might well be that, as Harrison says, *it simply is*.<sup>73</sup> Based on this assumption, one can argue that this interpretative model of eternity does not necessarily imply divine Being, nor divine attributes. Furthermore, there is nothing in this concept of 'timelessness' that contradicts or negates the reality of objective time. Nor does this assumption indicate in any way that temporal experiences of a moment of eternity are illusions. The proposed geometrical configuration of eternity as a single 'point' is a metaphor that can indeed function effectively without recourse to God. Unlike the 'divine Being' explanation there is only the single 'point', or the mountain-top so to speak.<sup>74</sup> The geometrical model thus expresses a representation of eternity as the 'point' in greater clarity and simplicity than the notion of the divinity on top of the mountain. This model also helps us to grasp that it is not the divine Being on top of the mountain but the mountain-top itself is the pivotal centre in this metaphysical relationship between objective time and eternity.

In the light of what we have said thus far, how does this 'non-temporal duration' interpretation relate to one's eternal aspect and the *Augenblick* experience? The answer has to be closely correlated with the nature of one's subjective experience of the eternal 'point' in the *Augenblick*. In the following section, I shall first explore and assess Jaspers' notions of the eternal aspect of one's *Existenz*, 'deathlessness', and the *Augenblick* experience in terms of 'non-temporal duration' from a secular perspective. I shall then go on to consider some potential difficulties arising from this interpretation.

## **5. The *Augenblick* Experience in terms of Eternity as the 'Point'**

First let us correlate the *Augenblick* experience with the above interpretation of eternity, or metaphor for eternity, as a single 'point' as 'non-temporal duration'.<sup>75</sup> According to Jaspers, *Dasein* is one's empirical mode of Being, and as such, one is in objective time, i.e. in the temporal order of events. That is to say one's experience in the world occurs within the bounds of objective time. *Existenz*, on the other hand, as we discussed earlier, is the inner self of the human being. Let us now consider these two aspects of the self in terms of the geometrical model that we presented. In view of the interpretation of eternity

as a single 'point', as Dasein one would remain within the realm of objective time, i.e. metaphorically speaking on the circumference of the circle (see figure 2). And within this realm one's experiences would occur in successive moments, t1, t2, t3, and so on. But as Dasein, one may not have any awareness of the eternal 'point', i.e. the centre of the circle as it were, even if this 'point' of eternity is there for everyone to experience it at any time in the temporal realm.<sup>76</sup> As Jaspers would say, Dasein is engaged most of the time in worldly activities and as a result the eternal 'point' remains veiled and unnoticed. What Jaspers means is that as Dasein one does not have an awareness of this eternal dimension of human existence. In other words, Dasein alone is not sufficient to experience the eternal, until, in Jaspers' view, one faces boundary situations. In boundary situations, particularly in the boundary situation of death, one becomes acutely aware of one's limitations as an empirical being in the world. The sense of inadequacy in the face of death throws one into a sense of existential *Angst*, as a result of which one may be able to transcend, in thought, empirical boundaries. In this process, one may experience a heightened awareness of Being. This, in turn, enables one to have an awareness of a moment of eternity, 'present eternity'<sup>77</sup> as Jaspers calls it. Expressed differently, one can have an existential experience of the eternal that can also be described as the awareness of the eternal 'point' through which the authentic self emerges. This experience of a moment of eternity occurs in the *Augenblick* and vanishes instantly, which indicates the 'split-second' nature of the experience.

According to Jaspers, the *Augenblick* experience does not require any duration because it is a different kind of experience, namely an existential experience which is not comparable to an experience of the phenomenal world.<sup>78</sup> In Jaspers' view, one can have such existential experiences only as *Existenz*.<sup>79</sup> In other words, as *Existenz*, again metaphorically speaking, one may 'touch' eternity or the eternal 'point' through one's awareness and transcending-thinking.<sup>80</sup> And it is in this particular sense that what is experienced can be said to be timeless.<sup>81</sup> The quality and intensity of one's awareness may be varied but the experience of eternity as such remains accessible to everyone who can break through the empirical boundary and have a subjective experience of the eternal 'point'. As we noted before, if one's *Existenz* is actualised in boundary situations, then it



is possible to experience a moment of eternity or the eternal 'point'. For Jaspers, this experience reveals what it means to 'touch' eternity. Expressed more formally, and put in terms of the geometrical model we have been using, the awareness of the eternal 'point' is something like the radius of the circle.<sup>82</sup> Metaphorically expressed, if one is in objective time, t1 or t2 on the circumference of the circle, then the awareness of this experience can be represented by the radius from t1, t2, t3 and so on to the eternal 'point' in the centre of the circle. This can be conceptualised as below:

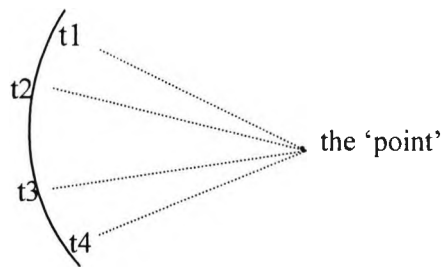


Figure 3 - The dotted lines represent the awareness of the eternal 'point'

In short, one's transcendent experience of the eternal 'point' in the *Augenblick* occurs as one becomes aware of one's existential connection with the eternal 'point'. Since as *Existenz* one is closely connected with Transcendence which has no temporal property of pastness, presentness or futurity, then one's *Existenz* can also be qualified as 'timeless' only momentarily in the *Augenblick*.<sup>83</sup> For Jaspers, the inner aspect of the self is part of the transcendent reality but can manifest itself in the *Augenblick* experience. Since one's *Existenz* is a non-temporal mode of being and is inseparable from the non-temporal realm of Transcendence, it can be argued that as *Existenz* it is possible to experience eternity as an eternal 'moment', or as the eternal 'point'. As *Existenz*, one stands timelessly in relation to the successive moments in the temporal order of events but at the same time one is also capable of experiencing a 'moment' of eternity in the world. This is what is meant by having a 'share in eternity' through one's existential experience in the here and now. It is important for Jaspers that one's identity must be recognised in the unity of transcendent self and corporeal existence.

Within this framework, one's awareness of eternity and having a subjective experience of the eternal 'point' in the here and now need not be considered as incoherent. As *Existenz*

one can be said to be 'eternal' or 'timeless'<sup>84</sup> simply by virtue of having existential awareness of eternity and thereby having a subjective experience of the eternal 'point' in the *Augenblick*. And one is capable of having this existential experience more than once depending on one's awareness and connection with the eternal 'point'. This awareness of eternity in the *Augenblick* experience is a matter of relation between one's temporal existence and the eternal 'point'. It must be reiterated that this existential experience is not a matter for an ontological investigation of eternity itself since one has no direct knowledge of eternity or absolute reality.

Let us now consider some objections arising from the concept of eternity as the 'point'. A particularly pressing objection to the interpretation of eternity as a single 'point' corresponds to the objection raised to the medieval exegesis of eternity as a single moment. The objection runs thus. According to McTaggart, events are temporally ordered in two different ways: A-series and B-series.<sup>85</sup> McTaggart explains that temporal events are ordered in terms of past, present and future (A-series) or they can be thought in terms of 'earlier than', 'simultaneous with' and 'later than' (B-series) which he calls 'time determinations'.<sup>86</sup> Given this differentiation, it might be argued that the idea that past, present and future are simultaneous with the whole of eternity seems incoherent and contradictory.<sup>87</sup> If events are simultaneous with each other then there is no 'earlier' or 'later' than this present moment. It might be said that it is not coherent to suggest that an event that took place, for example, in 1975 is simultaneous with an event that happened yesterday, or one that is happening now.<sup>88</sup>

Indeed, Jaspers' use of the term 'simultaneity' can be confusing from a logical perspective. For Kenny, the concept of a timeless eternity, 'the whole of which is simultaneous with every part of time, seems to be radically incoherent.'<sup>89</sup> Kenny writes:

For simultaneity as ordinarily understood is a transitive relation. If A happens at the same time as B, and B happens at the same time as C, then A happens at the same time as C.<sup>90</sup>

Similarly, according to Grieder, there may not be any justification for Jaspers to use the term 'simultaneity'. Grieder argues that 'for the ordinary relation of simultaneity (S) the following holds: if xSy and y earlier than z, then x not-Sz. This logical property is not

preserved in Jaspers' use of the word 'simultaneity'.<sup>91</sup> One might be right in thinking that Jaspers' use of the term suggests a flaw in terms of formal logic. But this argument has been contested purely on logical grounds. One has to bear in mind that for Jaspers subjective human experiences cannot be expressed in compliance with formal logic. In Jaspers' view, we 'only grasp the a-logical in transcending'.<sup>92</sup> In other words, one's existential experience of a moment of eternity cannot be expressed in object-language nor as a logical formula. After all, as we said before, here we are dealing with matters of philosophical faith rather than formal logic. Furthermore, Jaspers uses the term 'simultaneity' as 'non-temporal duration' in the same way as Plotinus, Boethius, Aquinas and St. Augustine did. Should one then dismiss all these philosophers' view on eternity as well as Jaspers'? It is important to note that Jaspers' term 'simultaneity', as explained before, has a different sense from the relation of 'simultaneity' in the logical sense, namely 'non-temporality'.

One might agree that the above is a plausible objection, as Jaspers' assertions in this respect are not clearly explained. However, this objection to simultaneity or 'timeless' moment is perhaps not unanswerable. One response, as I have repeatedly pointed out throughout this study, is that one must evaluate Jaspers' assertions regarding the eternal aspect of man in terms of 'non-temporality' in *contradistinction* to objective time. A moment of eternity is, according to Jaspers, *not* a moment of objective time, but simply what is experienced as a singular 'point' that occurs when one is aware of Being. Since eternity is conceived as being outside of time, it would be misleading, even incorrect, to impose temporal attributes of objective time upon eternity. The eternal 'point', one must reiterate, is in relation to objective time, but it has no temporal attributes itself. Therefore, the temporal term 'duration' does not apply to the timeless eternal 'point' as I indicated in the geometrical model of eternity. Even if the term 'duration' is used, in the absence of a more appropriate word, it does not imply a length of time. Although the experience of the eternal 'point' occurs *in* time, the 'point' itself is outside of time, i.e. it is not part of past, present, or future in objective time. It has no beginning, no end and no successive moments, i.e. timeless. Furthermore, as Jaspers maintains, duration is not necessary for the experience of this eternal 'point'.

Let us take this discussion further and examine one's experience of the eternal occurring *in time*. The terms 'in time' and 'outside time' require clarification. Relating eternity to a moment in objective time in this way, i.e. eternity in time, can blur one's vision and create confusion in the absence of a perspicuous explanation. Jaspers is not always consistent in his usage of these terms when he writes about *Existenz* and one's experience of the eternal. We understand that they are both 'in time' and 'outside time'.<sup>93</sup> Can something be both in time and outside time? If so, would it not be a contradiction? When something is described as eternal, it is widely assumed that the essence of eternity requires that this 'something' is outside of time or timeless. Although some of Jaspers' assertions might appear to defy formal logic, they can make sense in an existential context. In other words, this existential paradox, namely eternity which is *outside* time but experienced *in time*, can be acceptable when eternity is considered as 'non-temporality'. If one can have an awareness of Being in transcending-thinking, then having a momentary experience of the eternal in the *Augenblick* may be regarded as coherent. Let me explain what I mean.

What does it mean to say that the *Augenblick* experience occurs 'in time'? The answer is closely connected with one's empirical mode of being, i.e. Dasein. As Dasein, one is in the world and is part of the temporal order of events. All experiences occur in objective time and have duration. But since *Existenz* is a transcendent aspect of the human being, and since one's *Existenz* cannot manifest itself without one's physical existence in the world, i.e. as Dasein, the *Augenblick* experience must necessarily be connected with one's being in the world. This experience occurs in the world when one has an awareness of Being either in boundary situations or in existential communication. This acute awareness of Being can only be experienced as *Existenz*. Man's inner self, *Existenz*, does not belong to objective reality. The *Augenblick* experience, as *Existenz*, is *in time* in so far as one's empirical mode of being, Dasein, is in objective time. Since one's *Existenz* is inseparably connected with one's Dasein, the *Augenblick* experience occurs in objective time while one is alive in the world. What one experiences in the *Augenblick* can be said to be 'eternity in time', that is, an existential experience that manifests the property of 'timelessness' in temporality. It can be experienced in objective time, but it cannot be

measured by objective time. Thus it can be said that this is a different kind of experience which is *outside* time or 'above time' as Jaspers says.<sup>94</sup> This is the position Jaspers would defend.

When discussing the *Augenblick* experience, one must remind oneself of the importance of the dialectical relationship between the empirical world and the transcendent realm.<sup>95</sup> The tension between these two realms as well as the two aspects of the self must also be taken into account. Although some of Jaspers' statements appear to be contradictory, what Jaspers postulates regarding the eternal aspect of man can be explained in terms of the antinomical structure of existence, as explained in Chapter Two. In short, one's existential experience of the *Augenblick* occurs *in* objective time and what is experienced is a 'moment' of eternity which is *outside* of objective time, i.e. timeless. This is what Jaspers means when he says that the *Augenblick* experience occurs 'in time'.

In this discourse regarding the Jaspersian view of *Existenz* and its relation to time, 'the Kantian dimension' must be emphasised. Jaspers' philosophical position regarding the concept of the self and how self relates to time is firmly placed in the Kantian tradition. The distinction between the two aspects of the self and the two aspects of reality is central in both Kant's and Jaspers' thoughts.<sup>96</sup> As mentioned in Chapter Three, according to both thinkers, space and time are ways in which we represent the world and how it appears to us, not how things are in themselves.<sup>97</sup> According to Kant, time is one of the fundamental 'forms of intuition' by which the mind understands reality. In other words, time is a man-imposed form of 'sensibility' upon our experience in order to interpret reality.<sup>98</sup> In so far as the self is a 'thing in itself', i.e. noumenal self, it is not subject to time. Kant writes:

We must also recognise, as regards inner sense, that by means of it we intuit ourselves only as we are inwardly affected *by ourselves*; in other words, that so far as inner intuition is concerned, we know our own subject only as appearance, not as it is in itself.<sup>99</sup>

He argues that it is 'impossible' to know oneself as 'noumenon', i.e. as 'the thing-in-itself'.<sup>100</sup> In Kant's view, transcendental concepts are presupposed in all human experiences, and they enable us to interpret the world around us.<sup>101</sup> For Kant, 'transcendental thinking' is undertaken not by the 'phenomenal' self but by the 'transcendental' self. This Kantian view corresponds to Jaspers' view of 'transcending-

thinking' which applies to one's *Existenz*. Similarly, for Jaspers, one's inner self, i.e. *Existenz*, cannot be objectified.

Another objection one may encounter is whether there are any grounds to support the presentation of eternity as a single 'point', based on 'non-temporal duration'. This is a valid question and worth considering. Fundamentally, the interpretation of eternity as a single 'point' is based on the traditional understanding of eternity as a timeless moment, which *inter alia* represents one's experience of the numinous. As discussed earlier, the traditional concept of eternity as 'timelessness' was advocated by Plotinus, Boethius, and St. Augustine. I utilised their concept of eternity, but then I asked the question 'Can there be an explanation without recourse to a divine Being?' I argued that Jaspers' concept of a moment of eternity experienced in the *Augenblick* could be presented based on the traditional view but from a secular perspective. In order to clarify Jaspers' notion of eternity, I presented a geometrical model of eternity. Although the concept of a divine Being is 'excluded' from the traditional understanding of eternity, this geometrical model is firmly grounded in the traditional idea of eternity.

Besides the traditional concept of eternity, it is possible to find some other grounds to support the representation of eternity as a single 'point'.<sup>102</sup> For example, it is possible to invoke an explanation of a scientific kind.<sup>103</sup> Obviously, this requires a different kind of research and it is not particularly relevant to the central issue of this thesis. The reason it is mentioned here is just to demonstrate that the concept of the 'point' is not something absurd, meaningless or nonsensical. The important issue here is that it is possible, in theory, to provide a scientific explanation of the geometrical model of eternity as the eternal 'point' providing that one can utilise relevant theories in the elucidation of human existence. But Jaspers himself would object to the idea of employing a scientific theory in order to explain the eternal aspect of human existence. As we discussed in Chapter Two, Jaspers firmly believes that science cannot provide sufficient grounds for the explanation of human existence as a whole.

It is indeed questionable whether a scientific account of the notion of eternity can enhance our understanding of Jaspers' concept of eternity in time. Some mathematical

calculations and explanations may well advance one's understanding of the form and mechanics of an argument in the explanation of an abstract philosophical idea, e.g. eternity. However, difficulties may arise due to the lack of full understanding and the ineffability of some scientific theories.<sup>104</sup> It may be possible to express some occurrences in terms of mathematical formulae, but it may not be possible to articulate them in words that are representative of philosophical ideas. Scientific terminology is inadequate, as Jaspers says, nor is it applicable to human experiences. This is not much different from the difficulty I mentioned earlier about the articulation of some metaphysical concepts due to inadequate object-language. Using metaphorical language has its own problems in that one can always raise questions about the literal truth of statements.<sup>105</sup> But if we are discussing what is and is not reasonable to suggest in order to support a theory, then pursuing literal truth will not contribute anything to our understanding.

We have so far explored the eternal aspect of one's *Existenz* in terms of 'non-temporality'. It is now time to pose the central question.

## **6. Can the Human Being as *Existenz* be 'Deathless'?**

The discussion on 'non-temporality' might shed some light on the eternal aspect of *Existenz*. But how does one account for Jaspers' claim that '*Existenz* knows no death', i.e. 'deathless'. How does 'deathlessness' relate to 'non-temporality'? Throughout this study I have emphasised that Jaspers' concept of 'deathlessness' does not imply immortality in the traditional sense. Let us briefly remind ourselves of two main traditional attitudes towards death as discussed in Chapter One:

- a) Death is not the absolute end of an individual and human existence continues beyond death in some form or other.
- b) Death is the absolute end of an individual and there is nothing beyond the empirical realm.

Can Jaspers' view on death be compatible with either of these particular attitudes mentioned above? The answer to this question must be neither 'yes' nor 'no'. The

answer, it seems, would have to be 'no', because Jaspers' concept of death is too complicated, and his view does not correspond to traditional attitudes in a straightforward manner.<sup>106</sup> In other words, one cannot say that his concept of death can be explained in terms of (a) or (b) alone.<sup>107</sup> However, the answer to the above question could also be 'yes', because in the final analysis, one could argue that Jaspers' view of death actually falls into the second category above, namely death is the absolute end, although not without complications.<sup>108</sup> But if Jaspers' concept of death cannot be explained within the traditional framework, where does all this leave us on the question of the 'deathlessness' of the human being as *Existenz*? The answer lies in Jaspers' idea of the differentiation of the two aspects of death, which we discussed in Chapter Two.

Let us now bring together what we have explored thus far and unfold Jaspers' view of death and 'deathlessness'. As explained before, Jaspers' concept of death is two-fold corresponding to the two aspects of the self, namely *Dasein* and *Existenz*.<sup>109</sup> As *Dasein* one dies and perishes, and this aspect of death is empirical. One's *Existenz*, however, is not subject to death, i.e. 'deathless'. In Jaspers' words:

We are mortal as mere empirical beings, immortal when we appear in time as that which is eternal.<sup>110</sup>

Jaspers' assertions in this matter can give rise to some complications. For example, when he states that the human being as *Existenz* is 'eternal'<sup>111</sup> it seems that '*Existenz*' refers to one's soul in the traditional sense. Even if it is expressed as '*Existenz* knows no death', it can still be interpreted as a kind of continued existence for one's 'inner self' in another realm. And this can easily be misunderstood as one may assume that Jaspers is referring to an afterlife after one's death.<sup>112</sup> This is not what Jaspers means. When he claims that '*Existenz* knows no death', what he means is that *Existenz*, unlike *Dasein*, is not subject to empirical death. One must reiterate that Jaspers' concept of 'deathlessness' cannot be explained without reference to one's existential experience in the *Augenblick*.

Although Jaspers does not spell out what exactly he means by one's 'deathlessness' as *Existenz*, by now we should be able to surmise what he intends to convey. The key point in *Existenz*'s 'deathlessness' is that it is inseparably linked with one's existential experience in the *Augenblick*. As discussed before, as *Existenz* one can experience a



timeless 'moment' of eternity while one is alive. At the same time, this momentary experience of eternity enables one to experience a 'sense of deathlessness' which is tied to the concept of boundless eternity. In other words, one experiences a moment of 'timelessness' which points to a moment of infinity and eternity that also incapsulates a moment of 'deathlessness'. This indicates the richness of one's existential experience of eternity in the here and now. In this respect, one's 'deathlessness' does not imply any form of 'immortality', but is connected with, and experienced as, one's awareness of the eternal 'point' in the *Augenblick* experience. This is what Jaspers means by the experience of 'eternity in time'.<sup>113</sup> Accordingly, any individual, as *Existenz*, can experience the unity of eternity and the temporal moment 'now'. And it is this unique experience that gives the individual a sense of 'deathlessness'. One can also describe Jaspers' notion of 'deathlessness' as 'being part of the eternal' in the sense that there is no 'I' in this unity. As discussed in Chapter Three, Jaspers tries to explain his concept of death and 'deathlessness' in existential terms in order to mark out the eternal aspect of the human being. At the same time, he wants to remain within the framework of some already-established attitudes towards death, creating a dialectical perspective in his philosophy. In his attempt to overcome the dualism prevalent in the traditional understanding of death, Jaspers has developed an existential perspective influenced by traditional attitudes. It is his existential perspective that makes his notion of death complex and open to criticism.

What Jaspers brings out clearly is that when one dies, one's empirical self, *Dasein*, irrevocably perishes. *Existenz*, however, is not a transparent concept as it is not an 'independent' objective entity. Since it is a non-objectifiable aspect of the human being, it cannot die physically. This is the crux of the matter: *Existenz cannot and will not die in the biological sense of the word. Or to put it another way, it cannot disintegrate and perish (physically) as one's Dasein does. In this respect, it makes sense to argue that one's eternal aspect has nothing to do with immortality understood in the traditional sense, or an afterlife in any form. One's 'deathlessness', in the Jaspersian sense, has to be understood in terms of one's existential experience in the Augenblick in the here and now. When one has awareness of the eternal 'point', or touch eternity as it were, it is this*

occurrence that enables one to experience a sense of 'deathlessness' by virtue of participating in eternity in the here and now. As Jaspers' says

Immortality, however, means eternity, in which past and future are canceled. Though the moment is temporal, it nevertheless participates, when fulfilled existentially, in time-transcending eternity.<sup>114</sup>

Only in this regard can the 'deathless' aspect of one's *Existenz* be grasped, even though it seems to be an unusual way of describing one's inner self-awareness and one's experience of the eternal. For Jaspers, the certainty of this experience is 'possible when it is articulated with *Existenz*.'<sup>115</sup> In short, only as *Existenz* can one experience a sense of 'deathlessness' in a moment of eternity.

In the beginning of our discussion in this section, when we answered 'yes' and 'no' to the question as to whether Jaspers' concept of death was compatible with some traditional attitudes towards death, we had in mind the 'deathless' aspect of one's *Existenz*. It is now clear that Jaspers' concept of death and 'deathlessness' cannot be explained in terms of traditional attitudes alone. With respect to the notion of 'deathlessness' in the here and now, one can see that Jaspers endeavours to present death not as a threat to individual existence, but as a way towards a threshold, namely the limitation of the empirical reality. He sees the threshold connecting the individual with another aspect of human existence not as an obstacle that signifies the end to human existence but as a possibility. The boundary experience can be an opportunity for the individual to achieve self-being. In this regard, Jaspers argues that one's pending death highlights the intensity of one's being-in-the-world and the choices one has.

To sum up the main points of the discussion: In Jaspers' account of the relationship between one's *Existenz* and one's 'deathlessness', the awareness of eternity and infinity in relation to one's finitude, tends to become a form of paradoxical representation. According to Jaspers, the realisation of *Existenz* occurs in finite beings, in definite historical contexts and individual circumstances. When one has awareness of eternity in the *Augenblick*, one is faced with 'infinitude' that manifests itself in one's existential experience in contrast to one's finitude. 'Infinitude' is the intellectual account of infinity by which a system of relations comes into closer contact with other metaphysical notions

such as possibility and actuality. Jaspers claims that one's *Existenz* can be actualised only in moments of heightened awareness of Being in certain circumstances, i.e. boundary situations and existential communication. Those existential moments enable one to experience a moment of eternity and thereby 'deathlessness'. Providing that one accepts the presupposition that the momentary experience of eternity is considered as 'non-temporality', rather than a moment in objective time, then it is possible to consider one's *Existenz* and what one experiences as 'timeless'. It is in this momentary experience of 'timelessness' or eternity that a sense of 'deathlessness' can also be experienced. Since the experience of the eternal 'point' is firmly grounded in this world, Jaspers' concept of *Existenz*'s 'deathlessness' cannot be considered in the traditional sense of immortality. It is only in the *Augenblick* that one's *Existenz* 'knows no death'.

In the final analysis, it seems that one's *Existenz*, the transcendent dimension of the human being, will also disappear with death, just like everything else that belongs to individual human existence. My conclusion, therefore, is that *Existenz*'s 'deathlessness' is not to be taken literally in Jaspers' philosophy. One's *Existenz* cannot die in the literal sense, and one's inner self also perishes with one's empirical death. The experience of a sense of 'deathlessness' in connection with the eternal aspect of the human being belongs only in the here and now as long as one has an awareness of the transcendent realm.

## **7. Some Critical Reflections on Jaspers' Existence Philosophy**

There are many questions to be considered by anyone proposing to engage in Jaspers' existence philosophy. Within the confines of this thesis the full exploration of such questions is not possible. In this section I turn to the wider issues; of which I have chosen three. They closely relate to central aspects of Jaspers' existence philosophy, in particular *Existenz*, and might be seen to call into question the whole nature of his philosophical enterprise. The common point concerning these particular problems is the use of 'object-language' in the elucidation of *Existenz*. The first point focuses on some comments that come from a 'verificationist' position where existential/metaphysical statements are dismissed as 'meaningless'. My aim will be to consider whether Jaspers' assertions in

this regard are 'meaningless' or 'empty'.<sup>116</sup> Secondly, and closely related to the first point, I shall query whether Jaspers makes a 'category mistake' by placing the term '*Existenz*' in the 'wrong category' in his elucidation of *Existenz*. And finally, I shall draw attention to some of Jaspers' metaphysical concepts, such as *Existenz* and Transcendence, which are 'ineffable'<sup>117</sup> and discuss this issue in terms of *Qualified Negativity*.

**a. Are Jaspers' Metaphysical Assertions 'meaningless'?**

Jaspers' existential philosophy has been criticised as 'non-rational' due to his emphasis on 'philosophical faith' and 'subjective truth'.<sup>118</sup> Indeed, Jaspers' complicated metaphysical views often become a target for accusations of irrationality.<sup>119</sup> His metaphysical assertions, particularly regarding *Existenz* and Transcendence, are considered to be 'groundless' speculations based on subjective unverifiable experiences.<sup>120</sup> Some philosophers might take the view that Jaspers' existential approach to philosophy is at odds with the philosopher's duty to employ reason, logical argument and critical analysis in his philosophical investigations.<sup>121</sup> This view represents the sort of critique that might be mounted by philosophers within the logical-positivistic or analytic Anglo-American tradition.<sup>122</sup> A. J. Ayer, for example, states that

Our charge against the metaphysician is not that he attempts to employ the understanding in a field where it cannot profitably venture, but that he produces sentences which fail to conform to the conditions under which alone a sentence can be literally significant.<sup>123</sup>

Ayer holds that metaphysical statements, which may include existential assertions, are meaningless or 'nonsensical'.<sup>124</sup> In his *Language, Truth and Logic* he says:

We may accordingly define a metaphysical sentence as a sentence which purports to express a genuine proposition, but does, in fact, express neither a tautology nor an empirical hypotheses. And as tautologies and empirical hypotheses form the entire class of significant propositions, we are justified in concluding that all metaphysical assertions are nonsensical.<sup>125</sup>

According to Ayer, a statement is 'held to be literally meaningful if and only if it is either analytic or empirically verifiable.'<sup>126</sup> Ayer puts forward the principle of verification as a criterion of meaningfulness.<sup>127</sup> For Ayer, metaphysical statements are meaningless

because it is not possible, even in principle, to verify them.<sup>128</sup> Ayer describes what he means by 'verifiable':

The criterion which we use to test the genuineness of apparent statements of fact is the criterion of verifiability. We say that a sentence is factually significant to any given person, if, and only if, he knows how to verify the proposition which it purports to express – that is, if he knows what observations would lead him, under certain conditions, to accept the proposition as being true, or reject it as being false. ...The sentence expressing it may be emotionally significant to him; but it is not literally significant.<sup>129</sup>

According to Ayer's criterion, a non-analytic statement can be meaningful only if one knows what observation would confirm or refute it. In other words, a statement is factually significant if one knows what observation has to be made in order to confirm the truth of that statement. How does Ayer's criterion relate to Jaspers' assertions? Ayer's criterion is applicable to statements that express 'a genuine proposition about a matter of fact'.<sup>130</sup> Jaspers' assertions regarding *Existenz* and Transcendence, however, express a matter of faith; not a matter of fact or observation. For Jaspers, *Existenz* and Transcendence are non-objectifiable, and the truth of statements about them cannot be confirmed or refuted. As discussed earlier, matters of faith are subjective and cannot be verified or falsified. Hence, according to Ayer's criterion, most of Jaspers' assertions regarding *Existenz* and Transcendence cannot be verified, in which case they would be considered meaningless.<sup>131</sup> For Ayer, metaphysical statements which offer a description of a transcendent entity cannot 'possess any literal significance'.<sup>132</sup>

Ayer seems to put much emphasis on 'sense-experience in the world' and dismisses any other type of experience, e.g. transcendent experience. He seems particularly hostile towards the notion of there being two aspects of reality, namely the empirical world and the transcendent realm. He argues that

..anyone who condemns the sensible world as a world of mere appearance, as opposed to reality, is saying something which ...is literally nonsensical.<sup>133</sup>

According to Ayer, then, the Kantian and Jaspersian distinction between the phenomenal world and the noumenal realm, i.e. 'things-in-themselves', is nonsensical. In other words, Ayer suggests that the differentiation between how things appear in the world and how things really are should be dismissed because assertions regarding the 'transcendent' realm are 'not even false but nonsensical'.<sup>134</sup>

Is Ayer justified in his assumptions? In his approach, the focus is on whether metaphysical assertions and/or beliefs could be verified, and whether there is evidence to support the relevant arguments. His version of the verification principle, at least in *Language, Truth and Logic*, deals with the meaning of a proposition, rather than telling us about 'how things are in the world.'<sup>135</sup> In Ayer's view, one has to know what kind of observation is involved in order to confirm the truth of a statement to consider it factually significant. In its strict form, then, the verifiability principle succeeds in eliminating the propositions of metaphysics as meaningless, even if they appear meaningful. If we take Ayer's advice and dismiss metaphysical and existential propositions as 'meaningless' or 'nonsensical', would we then not risk eliminating what many people might see as valuable insights regarding human existence and experiences? Moreover, it seems that Ayer's version of the verification principle relies on too narrow an idea of what can count as verification. If one finds that some assertions regarding human existence are not compatible with Ayer's method of verification, should one then reject these claims? If one follows this line of thinking, then this version of the verifiability principle itself might be considered as 'meaningless' according to its own criterion, for the verifiability principle itself is unverifiable. Hanfling finds Ayer's verifiability criterion questionable. He argues that Ayer's criterion does not actually verify any given statement. Hanfling writes:

All sorts of observations might conceivably 'lead [someone], under certain conditions, to accept the proposition as being true, or reject it as being false'. But it would not follow that he had *verified* the proposition. The observations need to be related to the meaning of the proposition in a closer way than merely bringing it about.<sup>136</sup>

Perhaps Ayer was aware of this problem, as he later on remarked that 'observation statements would not be deducible from the statements under test'.<sup>137</sup> According to Hanfling

It would seem that Ayer thought of the matter in terms of strict deduction. It was because of the lack of such deduction *from* observation-statements *to* the statements to be tested that he rejected the idea of conclusive verifiability as the 'criterion of significance'.<sup>138</sup>

It is clear that one cannot deduce metaphysical/existential statements from 'observation statements' and that metaphysical statements, e.g. about death and God, cannot be

verified demonstrably. Lying behind the verification principle is the claim that metaphysical assertions and/or beliefs are neither true nor false, because their truth or falsity cannot be settled by certain verification criteria. But clearly this does not mean that one should abandon one's investigation regarding one's attitude, say, towards death or God. One can indeed successfully investigate what it means to adopt various assumptions about death or God and the consequences of it, even if the assumptions themselves are not known to be true or false.<sup>139</sup> It may be argued that statements like 'I believe there is God' are incapable of being verified or refuted.<sup>140</sup> So, such statements are clearly meaningful. In his discussion of 'belief in the existence of God', D.Z. Phillips suggests that 'it is not the task of the philosopher to decide whether there is a God or not, but to ask what it means to affirm or deny the existence of God.'<sup>141</sup> Phillips goes on to argue that such metaphysical statements are meaningful to many, even though they are not based on empirical grounds and cannot be verified.<sup>142</sup> He acknowledges that man's belief is 'the expression of the terms in which he meets and makes sense of the contingencies of life.'<sup>143</sup>

Another criticism of the verification principle might be that some important questions are not addressed. For example, when one speaks of 'the meaning of a statement', the term 'meaning' needs to be clarified. What is 'meaning'? What constitutes the 'meaning' of a statement?<sup>144</sup> The criterion of verifiability does not sufficiently elucidate what 'meaning' means. Nor does it follow from the principle of verification that the lack of 'verifiability' implies 'there is no meaning'. Schlick, for example, suggests that the verification of a statement requires not only its truth or falsity but a knowledge of 'when, and when not, to use a sentence'.<sup>145</sup> Hanfling maintains that 'Schlick is right in connecting the meaning of a sentence with its use; but there is more to understanding the use of a sentence than knowing its method of verification.'<sup>146</sup>

Wittgenstein brings a different perspective to the truth value of metaphysical statements. From his viewpoint, it can be argued that the validity of metaphysical/existential discourse is 'something internal to itself'.<sup>147</sup> When Wittgenstein comments on religious discourse, for example, he asserts that there is a clear distinction between propositions about physical objects and propositions about religion.<sup>148</sup> He refers to religious discourse

as a 'language-game' by which he means 'language-using activities we engage in'.<sup>149</sup> Put another way, a language-game is a 'set of practices involving agreement about the rules for the use of words.'<sup>150</sup> A language-game also presupposes a commitment to shared beliefs, what Wittgenstein calls a 'form of life'.<sup>151</sup> He finds that in religious discourse, concepts like God play 'a fundamental role, and consequently the validity of religious discourse is something internal to itself'. This point is valid not only for religious discourse but also for Jaspers' metaphysical assertions. Some religious propositions and Jaspers' existential assertions share a common point: in both, some metaphysical concepts cannot be expressed in ordinary language. The validity of such existential assertions may be considered as something 'internal to itself'. Grayling explains:

There is no question of asking, still less answering, questions about the validity of these language-games as a whole, or *from without*; they rest upon 'the form of life' – the shared experience, the agreement, the customs, the rules – which underlie them and give them their content.<sup>152</sup>

It seems that Wittgenstein, unlike logical-positivists, does not regard metaphysical assertions as 'meaningless'.<sup>153</sup> For Wittgenstein, the 'use' of words and following language 'rules' are important.<sup>154</sup> He thinks that it is possible to explain how a word is used and when its use is appropriate. If one follows the same line of argument, one can suggest that *Existenz* plays a fundamental role in Jaspers' existence philosophy and one understands how this term is used within the Jaspersian metaphysical framework. Then it is possible to argue that Jaspers' assertions regarding *Existenz* need not be 'meaningless'. As Wittgenstein states 'our talk gets its meaning from the rest of our proceedings', and the validity of such assertions can be considered as something 'internal to itself'.<sup>155</sup>

Our perception of reality is closely bound up with language and how it is used. Jaspers is aware of this observation when he makes assertions about *Existenz* and Transcendence. He tells us that such assertions about the transcendent aspect of the human being are different from the statements about the human experiences in the empirical realm. Indeed, one's existential experience of 'touching eternity' and a sense of 'deathlessness' in the *Augenblick* would seem outside the boundaries of the analytic mode of cognition. The truth of non-empirical statements is grounded in one's philosophical faith and thus these statements are not open to objective verification. In his elucidation of *Existenz*,



Jaspers presupposes the existence of a transcendent realm, and it is clear that he is committed to this view. His task as a philosopher is to ask and clarify what it means to the individual to affirm or deny the awareness of one's *Existenz* and the transcendent reality. As we discussed in Chapter Two, philosophical inquiry for Jaspers is not a matter of verification of truth claims, rather an interpretative process of understanding and elucidating human existence. His notion of philosophical faith is closely tied to broader aspects of human experiences, particularly existential ones.

There is no denying that Jaspers' existence philosophy neglects formal logical arguments, as he thinks that human existence cannot be explained in terms of formal logic and empirical sciences. This does not mean, however, that his claims are based on irrational grounds.<sup>156</sup> Jaspers is not advocating some obscure intuitive 'hunch' regarding human existence. On the contrary, his account is based on concrete human experiences. His notion of philosophising attempts to clarify itself through self-reflective thought processes. Jaspers is not a 'rationalist' in the traditional philosophical sense. He does not hold that reason alone is capable of providing certain *a priori* truths about the world and human experiences. Nor does he hold that truths can be verified by empirical experience alone. In his view, one's worldviews and beliefs constitute one's philosophical faith, i.e. 'subjective truth'. In short, Jaspers' assertions regarding *Existenz* are based on the premises that man's existence is contingent, and that it does not fit into a system constructed by logical thought alone.

To summarise the main points of the discussion: in Jaspers' view, in the elucidation of *Existenz* one might search for existential assertions as 'knowledge of something extant'. This, he thinks, is due to the '*anti-existential* craving for objective reality'.<sup>157</sup> But he maintains that when such existential assertions are 'solidified', i.e. objectified, they can be misunderstood and misleading.<sup>158</sup> Jaspers reiterates that *Existenz* is non-objective and does not belong to a valid universal.<sup>159</sup> He writes

All our confirming and rejecting, our testing and establishing by rational means and in categories, occurs in the world and aims precisely not at *Existenz*.<sup>160</sup>

He makes it clear in his elucidation of *Existenz* and Transcendence that formal logical arguments do not apply to the existential aspect of the human being. Nor, in his view, can

empirical experience alone provide a complete account of human existence. Although he acknowledges that philosophical faith is not verifiable in any scientific sense, he maintains that it can disclose or elucidate some fundamental aspects of human existence. Jaspers would argue against the positivist tradition and insist that reason, logic and empirical propositions alone cannot give a total account of human existence. He would also reiterate that his primary concern is the elucidation of what it means to be a human being in the world. He would reject a narrow verificationist view of what counts as 'meaningful'.

So far, I have tried to point out that Jaspers' metaphysical assertions need not be dismissed as 'meaningless' or 'nonsensical' on the grounds that they cannot be verified. However, this does not indicate that Jaspers' existential concepts are not problematic; far from it. They are at times ambiguous and therefore require meticulous care in clarification. This brings me to the next issue we shall be discussing, which is closely connected with the above.

**b. Does Jaspers Commit a 'category mistake'?**

As we saw in Chapter Three, there is a problem with Jaspers' assertions regarding his concept of *Existenz* and its attributes. Jaspers often speaks about *Existenz* as if it were the same kind of entity as a human individual. In our discussion of the features of *Existenz* in Chapter Three, the following examples were given: 'Existenz understands itself',<sup>161</sup> 'Existenz warns me',<sup>162</sup> 'Existenz is certain that no part of intrinsic being can stay unsettled'.<sup>163</sup> In these statements, it seems as though *Existenz* 'understands', 'warns', and is 'certain' about things just like a human being. These kinds of statements attract criticism, particularly from the philosophers of the analytic tradition. If taken literally, a statement like '*Existenz* does such and such' is indicative of a 'category mistake'. It would be regarded as a 'category mistake' because *Existenz* is a technical term used to refer to an aspect of the human being, not an entity that is capable of 'doing such and such'.

What is a 'category mistake'? Categories are said to be the most fundamental features of reality, which cover all modes of being.<sup>164</sup> A 'category mistake' can simply be defined as 'the placing of an entity in the wrong category'.<sup>165</sup> 'Category mistakes', or 'type confusions',<sup>166</sup> can also refer to attributions of properties to entities that those entities cannot have. For example, according to Aristotle one must distinguish between different categories, such as substance, quality, quantity, relation, place, etc., and for him

...an attribute that can belong to entities in one category cannot be an attribute of entities in any other category.<sup>167</sup>

The term 'category mistake', introduced by Gilbert Ryle, is in general used for statements which are 'grammatically well-formed, but nevertheless may be quite naturally classified as 'nonsense'.<sup>168</sup> For example, statements like 'The number 7 is red' or 'This mirror is a prime number' involve a misunderstanding of the nature of entities being discussed, even though the grammatical structure of the statements is correct. In Mautner's view, the concept of 'category mistake' is utilised in analytic philosophy, especially for the purpose of philosophical refutation.<sup>169</sup>

According to Ryle, a 'category mistake' is not a 'meaningless noise, but a statement that is somehow out of place when its literal meaning is taken seriously'.<sup>170</sup> In *The Concept of Mind*, Ryle defines a 'category mistake' as

The presentation of facts belonging to one category in the idioms appropriate to another.<sup>171</sup>

Flew, one of Ryle's students, takes up this issue and makes a further point:

...we can be misled by purely grammatical structure into unwarranted beliefs, such as the belief in the subsistence—a sort of shadowy existence—of actually non-existent entities.<sup>172</sup>

In the light of the above, to what extent do these comments apply to Jaspers' concept of *Existenz*? Can one claim that one's *Existenz* has 'a sort of shadowy existence'? Or is it an 'unwarranted belief' that one's *Existenz* has a form of 'subsistence' in accordance with the above quotation? In the account of metaphysical issues this kind of confusion often occurs. In a sense, one's *Existenz* appears to have a form of 'subsistence' because Jaspers makes various assertions about one's *Existenz* as if it were the same kind of entity as a human individual even though it is 'non-existent' as an entity.<sup>173</sup> This is precisely where

the problem lies. On the one hand, it can be interpreted in such a way that one's *Existenz* has 'a form of subsistence' because it can be actualised momentarily in boundary situations. On the other hand, one's *Existenz* is not an entity in any form; it is a mode of human being. As Jaspers tells us, it does not belong to any universal categories. It is simply an existential term used for an aspect of the human individual. In Jaspers' words:

There "exists" no Existenz, for instance, nor does a self-being, a freedom, an existential communication ... None of those "exist", and what the words convey if we denature into objects of our knowledge of human existence is an out and out otherness, of which the existential signs can give only confusing indications.<sup>174</sup>

It is made clear in the above passage that *Existenz* does not 'exist' as a physical entity in the world. Here Jaspers also admits that existential concepts can give rise to confusion. In fact, in his discussion of the 'ineffable' characteristics of one's *Existenz*, Jaspers refers to the misunderstanding of one's *Existenz* placed 'under general categories'.<sup>175</sup> This indicates that he was well aware of the problem of 'category mistake', and that is why he tells us that one's *Existenz* does not belong to any categories. But despite this, Jaspers repeatedly uses the term '*Existenz*' as if it were an 'existing' being.

In his discussion of the difficulty in expressing existential concepts, particularly as regards to *Existenz*, Jaspers shows awareness of the problem involved in categories. He refers to Kant's own 'testing the existential signs against his [Kant's] objective categories'.<sup>176</sup> Jaspers recognises that *Existenz* can be misconstrued as an objective category. He says that

Since existentially elucidating statements do not give us knowledge by subsuming the individual under any general cognition, there is no point either in saying, "I am an Existenz". It is an impossible statement, for the being of Existenz is not an objective category.<sup>177</sup>

and

Since attempting to elucidate Existenz we have to speak in objectivities, everything we mean existentially, in a philosophical sense, must be capable of being *misconstrued* as logic, as psychology, or as objective metaphysics.<sup>178</sup>

Jaspers often acknowledges that 'we cannot avoid using objective concepts and categories as means of expression' in the articulation of metaphysical issues.<sup>179</sup> Although in his writings *Existenz* seems to perform actions as quoted earlier,<sup>180</sup> one is aware that Jaspers does not mean that *Existenz* literally 'understands', 'warns', or is 'certain' of anything. What he means is that the individual human being, as *Existenz*, 'understands', 'warns',

and is 'certain' about occurrences. In short, I would argue that Jaspers is aware that *Existenz* cannot have properties which belong to a human being. Nor can *Existenz* perform actions like a human being. It is only *man* who makes choices and decisions and who takes action. The idea that *Existenz* performs actions would, on the whole, be a misunderstanding of Jaspers' concept of *Existenz* and his existence philosophy.

The concept of 'category' itself is not problem-free. As Lacey points out, there are some language-related difficulties concerning categories.<sup>181</sup> The problem of a 'category mistake' is ultimately related to linguistic distinctions and the focal point is the notion of 'meaning' and how it is used. Lacey claims that if categories exist at all, 'they must belong to the world and not to language, because they must be found out and not created by us.'<sup>182</sup> Lacey goes on to say that

to think of subjects and predicates that will not go together is perhaps too easy for we may reach so many categories that the doctrine becomes rather trivial, and 'category' becomes a pompous name for 'class' as often happens in ordinary speech.<sup>183</sup>

This is a valid point and it brings us back to the linguistic difficulties in expressing metaphysical concepts and terminology, and their objectification in ordinary speech. According to Jaspers, in the elucidation of *Existenz* we speak in terms of what 'cannot be generalized in the knowledge of world orientation'.<sup>184</sup> In other words, one cannot speak of *Existenz* in terms of general categories. As Jaspers says, *Existenz* is neither general nor 'generally valid'.<sup>185</sup> Nor does it belong to an 'objective category'.<sup>186</sup>

For Jaspers, metaphysical concepts are 'pure signs' which need to be unfolded and interpreted.<sup>187</sup> He explains that

On the surface, as words, the specific signs we use to elucidate *Existenz* are derived from objects of world orientation, often explicitly characterized by the adjective "existential". In the end, however, they turn out to be not object-forming categories but indices for thoughts that appeal to existential possibilities.<sup>188</sup>

What Jaspers is expressing here is that although one's *Existenz* is non-objective, it is necessary to use object-language in the elucidation of *Existenz*. For him, vocabulary and concepts of object-language can be ciphers, but as ciphers they do not belong to general categories. And it is important that ciphers are used to make existential assertions

regarding *Existenz*, because only through ciphers can one have an understanding of the transcendent realm, even though it is limited and mediated.

In view of what we have said so far, is Jaspers guilty of making a 'category mistake'? As already mentioned, he attributes certain properties to *Existenz*, which is a mode of being that cannot have those attributes. Although Jaspers' statements in this respect are grammatically well formed, they would be considered mistaken or false, if taken literally. Jaspers' critics would argue that attributes that belong to the human being cannot be predicated of *Existenz*. His assertions in this respect may mislead the reader, as both Ryle and Flew suggest, into the belief that *Existenz* is an actually existent human individual. Although Jaspers occasionally reiterates that *Existenz* is a mode of being of humans in his elucidation of *Existenz*, throughout his works he consistently refers to *Existenz* as if it were a human being. Why does Jaspers write in this style? One can only assume that his consistent use of the term in this way is for reasons of convenience and simplification of his sentence structure. It may be deliberately written in this style in order not to break the flow of the train of thought in his elucidation. If one has to specify in each statement that *Existenz* is not an actual human being but a mode of being, and that it is not *Existenz* but the human individual as *Existenz* that does 'such and such', then it may lead to unnecessarily long and dull passages that may not express one's thoughts effectively.<sup>189</sup>

Although Jaspers *seems* to commit a 'category mistake' in his characterisation of *Existenz*, it is not clear whether his assertions actually constitute a 'category mistake'. In reading Jaspers, one is aware from the outset that he is discussing a particular mode of human being when he refers to *Existenz*. One is also aware of the inadequacy of object-language. Ehrlich, for example, welcomes any contribution towards clarity and precision in the elucidation of *Existenz*. However, he holds that to think about 'different realms of what there is' requires 'different modes of clarity and precision'.<sup>190</sup> He goes on to say that

... 'existence' has functioned predominantly as a category (in the Aristotelian and Kantian sense, and in the Scholastic sense of 'transcendental'), i.e., category in the sense of 'form of concepts, or of conceptualization'. But note: Jaspers knows that, and precisely for that reason he distinguishes the categorial use of 'Existenz' from that which pertains to what he does in *Philosophy vol.2: Existenzerhellung*.<sup>191</sup>

Ehrlich is right in thinking that Jaspers was aware of the complexity of 'categories'.<sup>192</sup>

According to Ehrlich, speaking about Jaspers' existential concepts is a matter of

phenomenological reflection and characterization; ... and the characterization is a matter of metaphorical circumscription. "Existenz" is such a metaphor. Instead of 'categories' and 'concepts', Jaspers speaks of "signa of Existenz".<sup>193</sup>

'Signa of Existenz' in the above quotation refers to Jaspers' concept of 'ciphers'. We are back to the concept of ciphers. As previously mentioned, they are necessary in the use of object-language in making metaphysical assertions. Thus, if *Existenz* is considered as a metaphor rather than categorised as a human being, then Jaspers' characterisation of *Existenz* in terms of ciphers may not be regarded as a 'category mistake'. As Jaspers says, ciphers do not belong to a category that complies with a conceptual scheme. Ciphers are open to individual interpretation and they represent what cannot be expressed directly.<sup>194</sup> In other words, *Existenz* and Transcendence are not translatable into universal categories, yet they can partially be comprehended through existential experiences by means of ciphers. Even then, this kind of experience can only be expressed in indirect language. For Jaspers, ciphers are central to existential human experience in order to elucidate the nature of the transcendent realm symbolically. The reading, or interpreting, of the ciphers of Transcendence indicates the depth of the metaphysical aspect of Jaspers' existence philosophy.

As Ehrlich observes, Jaspers is not insensitive to 'the need of precision in thought and linguistic expression'. In the section called *The Reading of Ciphers in Philosophy*<sup>195</sup> Jaspers discusses the difficulty of expressing 'metaphysical experiences' clearly.<sup>196</sup> For him, a metaphysical experience is an 'intuitive experience' which signifies 'a sensing of the whole of a present reality in its situations'.<sup>197</sup> According to Jaspers, the ciphers of Transcendence and their meaning have reality for *Existenz* alone. He states that without *Existenz* 'the signs are not just empty; they are nothing'.<sup>198</sup> The question is whether one can achieve conceptual clarity through intuitive experiences as Jaspers suggests. If such experiences are merely 'intuitive' how can they be brought out of their vagueness and ambiguity? How can the individual's subjective interpretation of ciphers be clarified? It can be said that ciphers signify a kind of metaphysical 'objectification' of the transcendent realm by giving subjective 'meaning' to them. But how are these ciphers to

be interpreted? And how are they to be expressed, since the object-language is inadequate? Jaspers addresses this question by postulating the 'three languages' in which ciphers are 'conveyed'.<sup>199</sup>

1. The reading of *the first language* manifests itself in a general way in the *Augenblick* experience. Jaspers writes about this metaphysical experience as follows:

*There is nothing demonstrable about a metaphysical experience, nothing that might make it valid for everyone.*<sup>200</sup>

And he goes on to say

What is *conveyed* in this language, however, is conveyed by way of generalization; even the man who heard it originally will understand it only in generalized form.<sup>201</sup>

2. *The second language* manifests itself in existential communication. What is conveyed is transferred as 'a narrative, an image, a form, a gesture' from *Existenz* to *Existenz*.<sup>202</sup> In other words, it becomes a shared language that is objectified.<sup>203</sup>
3. *The third language* is in the form of 'metaphysical speculation'. Metaphysical speculation is the thought that is itself a cipher, but must be expressed in objective form. In other words, the content of thought itself is a symbol conveyed in the form of language. According to Jaspers, it does not indicate 'cognition of transcendence'.<sup>204</sup> Jaspers claims:

Speculation is a thinking that drives us to think the unthinkable.<sup>205</sup>

and

As speculation never gets beyond the cipher, it can see transcendence in no form of being as such.<sup>206</sup>

Thus, the interpretation of ciphers takes place at three different levels, and these metaphysical experiences are expressed through 'generalized form', existential communication and metaphysical speculation. The important point in Jaspers' discussion here is that one is not able to grasp Being itself whatever the level of language used. One can only speak of the symbolic representation of the transcendent realm. This is due to the necessity of thinking, interpreting and articulating one's subjective experiences in object-language. It seems that metaphysical speculation enables one to interpret the language of the cipher only in a limited way. If one considers *Existenz* as a cipher, for example, any assertion about it will inevitably be in object-language. And any assertion made about it will be open to misunderstanding. As a result, *Existenz* may be thought to be placed in a general category because of its attributes. Inevitably, then, Jaspers will be



accused of committing a 'category mistake'. If *Existenz* is regarded as a metaphor, however, then perhaps committing a 'category mistake' will not become an issue.

Does the interpretation of 'metaphysical experiences' through ciphers in three languages, as discussed above, make the concept of ciphers and their interpretation any clearer? To what extent does it help to grasp *Existenz* as a metaphor? Jaspers' analysis demonstrates the necessity of using ordinary language in the expression of 'metaphysical experiences'. However, it does not adequately clarify the concept of ciphers and their interpretation. First of all, it is not clear whether the three levels of language occur in a particular order, e.g. hierarchical order, or are used interchangeably. Is there a clear-cut separation between each level or do they overlap? On the one hand, it appears that they are three distinct ways of conveying the interpretation of ciphers. On the other hand, they seem to complement each other. The common point is that the interpretation of ciphers is possible only when one achieves *Existenz* in the *Augenblick* experience. It is possible to construe that both existential communication, which manifests itself in *the second language*, and metaphysical speculation, which is expressed in *the third language*, can occur at the same time in one's subjective existential experience. Furthermore, Jaspers tells us that generalisations do not apply to *Existenz*, since *Existenz* is a unique and historic mode of being. Yet we are told that in *the first language* the interpretation of ciphers is conveyed 'by way of generalisation'. This seems to be incompatible with the characterisation of *Existenz*.

There is another unclear point regarding ciphers. As mentioned earlier, sometimes ciphers refer to the language of the transcendent realm, by means of which we read or interpret things in the world. Sometimes, however, they refer to the entities that exist. Jaspers does not provide a clear distinction between Transcendence as a cipher and ciphers expressed as a language of Transcendence. A clear differentiation between the two notions would be helpful. Furthermore, how does one differentiate existential ciphers from specific religious ciphers? These two concepts are intertwined and difficult to distinguish. Such difficulties do not seem to be adequately addressed by Jaspers. In response, Jaspers would argue that ciphers are 'listened to, not cognized'.<sup>207</sup> He would also suggest that it is up to each individual to interpret ciphers within their subjective

experiences. Although a detailed analysis of ciphers is missing in Jaspers' existence philosophy, what he writes about ciphers provides valuable insight into metaphysical thought and experiences. Ciphers also provide a form of mediation between one's transcending-thinking and Being itself. Finally, whether Jaspers is committing a 'category mistake' is a contentious issue. If one considers the reaction of some analytic philosophers, such as Flew, to the characterisation of *Existenz*, Jaspers seems to be making a 'category mistake' at least according to their criteria. However, having considered Jaspers' awareness of the issue of categories and the inadequacy of object-language, I concur with Ehrlich's view that Jaspers' characterisation of *Existenz* does not constitute a 'category mistake'. Since this is a matter of interpretation, it is difficult to give a definitive answer to this question.

Now let us turn to the third point of our discussion.

### **c. Jaspers and the use of Qualified Negativity**

In Jaspers' philosophy, as we noted, we often come across certain existential terms, which refer to his metaphysical concepts such as *Existenz* and Transcendence, being characterised as 'unknown', 'unutterable' or 'unthinkable', that is beyond description, beyond words. This is a problematic issue because if what these terms refer to are 'unthinkable' or 'inexpressible', can one say anything significant about them? Furthermore, how is it possible that such 'inexpressible' existential concepts can be the subject of rational discourse? Jaspers himself has various things to say about them. Hence they must be 'known' in some sense and to some extent. The question then is to what extent is it necessary that one has to know exactly what a metaphysical term means in order to have some understanding of the term? What these terms refer to may not be objectively 'known', but at the same time they are not 'nothing'.<sup>208</sup> It may not be possible to define *Existenz* precisely, and one may not be able to comprehend it fully. However, this does not mean that one cannot talk significantly about it.

Critics, nevertheless, might argue that if something is not 'thinkable', 'utterable', or 'knowable', then perhaps it is not worthwhile to investigate it.<sup>209</sup> It may also be

suggested that metaphysical concepts and terms such as *Existenz* and Transcendence are arbitrarily constructed abstractions, which are difficult to discuss coherently.<sup>210</sup> These are noteworthy objections, but at the same time one must ask whether everything that 'is' is also something that can be thought.<sup>211</sup> The answer is likely to be 'no'. As Jaspers himself says '*Es ist denkbar, daß es gibt, was nicht denkbar ist*'<sup>212</sup> which is translated as '*it is conceivable that there are things which are not conceivable*.'<sup>213</sup>

But how does one explain a metaphysical concept or a term if it is not 'thinkable' and/or 'expressible'? There is a way out of this difficulty: the *Qualified Negativity* approach.<sup>214</sup> *Qualified Negativity* is a thinking process, and a method, which enables one to make assertions about the nature of reality and some metaphysical concepts in terms not of 'what is' or 'what one knows' but 'what is not' or 'what one knows that one does not know.'<sup>215</sup> Through this form of thinking process negative predications appear. The idea behind the implementation of a *Qualified Negativity* is that negative explanations may succeed in discerning the limitations of metaphysical concepts, and in avoiding the confusion of the 'transcendent' reality with 'empirical' reality.<sup>216</sup>

In the absence of appropriate language to express his metaphysical views Jaspers turns to the method of *Qualified Negativity*,<sup>217</sup> particularly in his discussion of the experience of the eternal in relation to *Existenz* and Transcendence. He says that this negative approach is not 'the empty ignorance of someone unaware of not knowing, or indifferent to what he is incapable of knowing.'<sup>218</sup> In his view, this thinking process utilises the function of negativity as 'thinking ascertainment' by which Jaspers means an attempt to grasp the unity of Being through transcending-thinking. As noted, this experience is possible as a result of 'the act of breaking through mundane existence' in thought.<sup>219</sup> In other words, when transcending-thinking enables one to transcend the empirical realm, Being presents itself to one's awareness as a moment of eternity in the experience of the *Augenblick*. In order to convey one's existential experience of the 'inexpressible' in object-language, one may have to make assertions in negative terms, i.e. what is not. As a result of this 'negative' approach, according to Jaspers, one gains insight into the 'unknown'.

Jaspers systematically uses this method of *Qualified Negativity*, in his existential analyses, and acknowledges the use of 'a negative method' in his elucidation of *Existenz* and Transcendence. In his words:

We use a negative method of dealing with objects, in order to rebound from what is not *Existenz*.<sup>220</sup>

and

What existential elucidation has to tell a consciousness at large is strictly negative. Our dissatisfaction with the objectivities we have obtained, if they are to be all there is, results in a setting of limits. Any positive step beyond those limits, any penetration of *Existenz*, can neither be valid nor establish claims in the form of a statement; what such statements do is indirectly to communicate questions and elucidations.<sup>221</sup>

Indeed, Jaspers often speaks of *Existenz* and Transcendence in terms of what they are not. In his assertions, he qualifies *Existenz* as 'indescribable', indefinable,<sup>222</sup> and 'unintelligible'.<sup>223</sup> He also explains his notion of philosophical faith in terms of what philosophical faith 'is not'.<sup>224</sup> He maintains that the reality and meaning of these terms cannot be known as they can be reduced neither to object nor subject:

It [*Existenz*] is neither knowable as existence nor extant as validity. ...Since *Existenz* is thus inaccessible to one who asks about it in terms of the purely objective intellect, it remains subject to lasting doubt.<sup>225</sup>

and

The utterable propositions that result from such transcending are negations. ...I must not define transcendence by any predicate, must not objectify it in any idea, must not conceive it by any inference. Yet all categories may be used to say that transcendent being is neither a quality nor a quantity, neither a relation nor a cause, that it is not singular, not manifold, not being, not nothingness, and so forth.<sup>226</sup>

Jaspers spells out in the above passages that neither *Existenz* nor Transcendence is an objective category.<sup>227</sup> For Jaspers, then, transcending-thinking enables existential 'propositions' to be expressed in negative terms. He points out that it is the negations that will give 'depth to the transcending thought'.<sup>228</sup> In his *Philosophy as Faith*, Ehrlich speaks of Jaspers' concept of 'formal transcending' as a thought-operation and brings out the connection between transcending-thinking and the explanation of the 'unthinkable'. Ehrlich maintains that the awareness of the 'unthinkable' can only be expressed in a negative way:

Thought is essentially determinative by virtue of its categorizing activity and in what is known by virtue of categorization. Determination displays Being in

fragmentation. If thought is directed towards transcendence, it is directed toward the unity of Being which underlies this dismemberment. The mark of fragmented Being is determinacy; the mark of being in its oneness and fullness is indeterminacy. But, since thought is determinative, the indeterminate is unthinkable. Formal transcending, as a method of grounding the determinate in the indeterminate, is an attempt to think the unthinkable. Hence it cannot and does not lead to an awareness of the transcendent ground except in a negative way, in the form of an intimation which is the counterpart of the failure of thought.<sup>229</sup>

In this respect, Alan Olson is in agreement with Ehrlich's views. In his discussion of Jaspers' metaphysical concepts, Olson places considerable emphasis on the 'unknown' component of reality and its expression in negative terms. He points out that we do not know about 'transcendental truths'.<sup>230</sup> In his view, one may not be able to make 'positive' assertions about such truths but it may be possible to say something about them in negative terms. He adds that 'this is not a destructive negativity' in the elucidation of *Existenz* and Transcendence because it does not lead to nihilism.<sup>231</sup> When one transcends one's empirical realm through transcending-thinking, the existential awakening takes place. Olson emphasises that this experience is possible through gaining insight into the transcendent realm by means of *Qualified Negativity*. In this experience, says Olson, ciphers play an important role, in that, the act of transcending and the contact with Being are mediated by ciphers.<sup>232</sup> Ciphers also provide guidance in making assertions about such metaphysical concepts in terms of *Qualified Negativity*. He describes the delicate role of this negative method in one's existential boundary experience as follows:

The phenomenal character of reality does not exist any more and any point beyond this boundary is the bleak nothingness. The effect is the existential awakening which is understood in terms of qualified negativity which indicates the boundary of human experience and points beyond it.<sup>233</sup>

Thus 'the bleak nothingness' beyond the empirical realm need not drive the individual into nihilism. On the contrary, the awareness of 'the bleak nothingness' opens up a new horizon for the individual, which may lead to selfhood. According to Olson, 'anything within the horizon of possible experience can be a cipher of Transcendence'.<sup>234</sup> When 'existential awakening' occurs, one may be able to grasp, through ciphers, the transcendent reality in terms of *Qualified Negativity*.

In Jaspers' elucidation of *Existenz* it is important to understand the integration of the reading of ciphers into transcending-thinking and its expression in negative terms. As

Wallraff suggests, the method of *Qualified Negativity* seems helpful for reading the ciphers of Transcendence.<sup>235</sup> Wallraff maintains that the use of *Qualified Negativity* in Jaspers' philosophy 'prepares the way for reading the ciphers' which point to what cannot be said directly in ordinary speech.<sup>236</sup> He adds that only when we learn to read the ciphers of Transcendence, can we interpret the 'unknown' component of our existence.<sup>237</sup>

According to Jaspers, Being manifests itself only in the ciphers of Transcendence. Since ciphers are different from what they indicate, the interpretation of ciphers requires a thinking process which will discern them from what exists in the empirical reality. And since the transcendent reality is 'unknown', the process of discerning ciphers (from what is known in objective reality) in negative terms is an effective way of interpreting them. And the meaning of any interpretation of these ciphers is unique to each individual *Existenz*.

*Qualified Negativity* as a method was employed by Plotinus and some medieval scholars, such as St. Augustine, Boethius and Nicholas of Cusa,<sup>238</sup> mainly to formulate 'transcendental truths' and the ultimate reality, God, on the basis of the concept of 'negative theology'.<sup>239</sup> In his discussion of the concept of 'the One', Plotinus gives a clear indication that it cannot be adequately disclosed by language as it is 'ineffable':

We do not, it is true, grasp it by knowledge, but that does not mean that we are utterly void of it; we hold it not so as to state it, but so as to be able to speak about it. And we can and do state what it is not, while we are silent as to what it is: we are, in fact, speaking of it in the light of its sequels; unable to state it, we may still possess it.<sup>240</sup>

Plotinus' influence on the development of 'negative theology' is considerable as pointed out by Gerson in *The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus*:

It is probably safe to say that the influence of Plotinus, whether direct or indirect, played a major role not in founding but in securing the philosophical tradition of negative theology ...<sup>241</sup>

What is 'negative theology'? Defenders of the belief in God often appeal to the importance of negation in the characterisation of God. Negative theology tells us 'what God is not',<sup>242</sup> about the inaccessibility of God, and the limitations of the finite human mind. Boethius, for example, affirms that 'all we can say about God is *what he is not*'.<sup>243</sup>

In his discussion of religion and God, Jaspers also employs the same principle used by 'negative theology' and refers to God within the same framework. He writes:

By means of the 'not', man, in his historic Existenz, can experience the actuality of God as incomprehensible.<sup>244</sup>

According to Jaspers, God cannot be 'known' directly and it is impossible to say what God is.<sup>245</sup> He states that since God is not a finite entity, the only way in which one can express what the divine Being is through the use of metaphors, symbols and analogy.<sup>246</sup> Jaspers reiterates that the infinity of God is not accessible to the finite human mind, but 'the human intellect can touch upon it' only through metaphysical speculation, that is through transcending-thinking.<sup>247</sup>

Jeanne Hersch also takes up the issue of 'negative theology' and makes a suggestion regarding Jaspers' philosophy. She writes

If there's a 'negative theology', Jaspers offers us a 'negative philosophy' which is in his eyes the only honest way *today* to reach through the negation what is beyond nihilism.<sup>248</sup>

Indeed Jaspers often makes assertions regarding *Existenz* and Transcendence in negative terms, but does it qualify Jaspers' philosophy as a 'negative philosophy' as Hersch claims? It might seem a reasonable suggestion, but Hersch's term 'negative philosophy' requires further examination and raises some questions. How do the terms 'negative theology' and 'negative philosophy' relate to each other and to thinkers who utilise them? What are the similarities and differences between these two terms? Since they are not identical terms, a careful differentiation must be made. Would it be an accurate description of Jaspers' existence philosophy as a whole? Would Jaspers himself use the term? Although he acknowledges that he uses 'a negative method' in his elucidation of *Existenz*, he never refers to his philosophy as a 'negative philosophy'. We cannot pursue Hersch's particular view here, as addressing these questions will take us away from our main inquiry.

In his discussion of Jaspers' existential concepts, Ehrlich refers to the tradition of 'negative theology',<sup>249</sup> with reference to Maimonides, the medieval Jewish physician and philosopher.<sup>250</sup> It is interesting that Jaspers shares some of his metaphysical ideas with

Maimonides.<sup>251</sup> Ehrlich brings out the parallels between Jaspers' views on the 'unknowable' and Maimonides' 'negative theology'. In his *Guide for the Perplexed*, Maimonides strongly argues about the 'ineffability' of God and its expression in negative terms:

affirmative propositions about the nature of God cannot be made in any mode of attribution. Complete or incomplete essential attribution is impossible because it implies knowledge of determination, and God cannot be thought of as determined. ...Attribution concerning God can only be negative'.<sup>252</sup>

It is not clear whether Jaspers read Maimonides' works, but there are undeniable similarities between the 'ineffability' of Jaspers' metaphysical concepts and that of Maimonides, and the expression of such concepts in negative terms. What is clear, however, is that Jaspers was influenced by both Plotinus and Cusa in his use of *Qualified Negativity*. In this respect, Jaspers, Plotinus and Cusa occupy similar positions in the history of thought. The following passage from *Philosophy* brings out the similarities between these thinkers:

Transcendence can be defined by no predicate, objectified by no representation, and attained by no inference, although all categories are applicable as means of saying that it is not a quality or a quantity, it is not a relation or a ground, and it is not one, not many, not being, not nothing, et cetera.<sup>253</sup>

Jaspers' assertions regarding Transcendence in negative terms are not much different from the assertions of his predecessors regarding God. Nicholas of Cusa's influence on Jaspers' philosophy seems considerable.<sup>254</sup> Cusa, like Maimonides, adopts a method of discerning the 'unknowable' in negative terms in metaphysical thinking, and acknowledges one's 'ignorance' in grasping the 'unknowable'.<sup>255</sup> He calls this method of conceptual transcending 'learned ignorance', *docta ignorantia*. This is similar to Jaspers' notion of transcending-thinking. Olson thinks that transcending-thinking is 'methodically guided by the "qualified negativity" of *docta ignorantia*' and that it manifests itself in Jaspers' concept of ciphers.<sup>256</sup> According to Olson, one must note that

the significance of Cusanus' *docta ignorantia* for Jaspers is *not* based on the supposition that this conversion of consciousness is from a lower to a so-called higher ontological level. As a clearly existential conversion, both dualist and monist reductionism is avoided. Transcending-thinking thinks through and not at the expense of opposition because first, it understands itself as polymorphous, and secondly, it therefore realizes that consciousness is not exhausted by any one of its many operations, i.e. it knows where "cognition ends, thinking continues." ...Intrinsic to this recognition, then, is an intellectual conversion whereby one's conscious understanding of the nature of



potentialities of experience is transformed through the “foundering” (*Scheitern*), as Jaspers put it, that is concomitant with metaphysical insight.<sup>257</sup>

The philosophy of Cusa also concentrates on the opposites, such as ‘the finite’ and ‘the infinite’, ‘time’ and ‘eternity’, and ‘the One’ and ‘the Many’ among other metaphysical concepts.<sup>258</sup> Cusa wanted to see these oppositions united, and he called this doctrine the ‘coincidence of opposites’, or contradictories, *coincidentia oppositorum*.<sup>259</sup> There are clear parallels between the ‘coincidence of opposites’ and Jaspers’ views on the antinomic structure of reality. Like Jaspers, Cusa too was keen to break through these opposites through metaphysical speculation and find the unity ‘beyond’ them.<sup>260</sup> But unlike Jaspers, Cusa’s resolution is expressed in his doctrine of *coincidentia oppositorum* in God.<sup>261</sup> According to Olson, *coincidentia oppositorum* is the ‘paradoxical aspect of ‘learned ignorance’.<sup>262</sup> He explains:

The paradoxical effect of *docta ignorantia* is that one comes to an awareness that Being-Itself cannot be known on the basis of sense, mind or an aporetic combination of the two, neither can it be known apart from this dynamic relationship. The knowledge of Being is therefore somehow coterminous with the very movement of transcending-thinking which, as movement, apprehends Transcendence-Itself as both the origin and goal of itself.<sup>263</sup>

Jaspers discusses the issue of *Qualified Negativity* in his *Great Philosophers* with reference to Cusa’s concepts of *docta ignorantia* and the *coincidentia oppositorum*.<sup>264</sup> For Jaspers, a ‘learned ignorance’ (*docta ignorantia*) is ‘developed in thinking and can be filled with content’.<sup>265</sup> Jaspers explains:

Thus, “learned ignorance” is not resignation, not the expression of an agnosticism indifferent to the unknowable. Rather it is achieved through speculation, which provides it with content by methods that can be discerned through truly metaphysical thinking’.<sup>266</sup>

Jaspers adds that the doctrine of *coincidentia oppositorum* is

one form ignorance takes. The doctrine of the coincidence of opposites defies discursive reason which can only condemn it as absurd.<sup>267</sup>

Both Jaspers and Cusa acknowledge the ‘irrational’ nature of opposites, e.g. finite and infinite, and one and many. They both maintain that in order to grasp the ‘unknowable’ one has to adopt a new kind of thinking which is philosophical speculation.<sup>268</sup> Jaspers writes:

When discursive thinking breaks down, a different kind of thinking comes into being, which has no object. The oppositions and contradictions- which in the

world of the finite are either tied to distinction or destroy them by reducing them to absurdity – coincide in this latter kind of thinking (*coincidentia oppositorum*).<sup>269</sup>

Jaspers' position here is also within the Kantian tradition. Jaspers, like Cusa and Kant, contends that 'we always think in dichotomies'.<sup>270</sup> Kant illustrates this in his concept of 'antinomies' and Cusa in the *coincidentia oppositorum*. Jaspers, Cusa and Kant recognise a manifestation of opposites in the subject-object structure of human experience. Jaspers argues that

The absolute cannot be adequately conceived of in rational categories, but only in the *coincidentia oppositorum*; and yet the moment the absolute itself is expressed in words, it is reduced to rational opposites.<sup>271</sup>

Once again what is expressed here relates to the inadequacy of object-language. In transcending-thinking we cannot avoid the objectifying nature of language. Trying to translate metaphysical terms into words is a considerable problem.<sup>272</sup> As we are told by Jaspers, when we think of metaphysical concepts and attempt to express such thoughts, they split into opposites. And these thoughts appear contradictory within the finite human mind. For Jaspers, metaphysical concepts including *Existenz* and Transcendence are not 'translatable' into universal concepts, yet they can be grasped through existential experiences. Jaspers tells us that the apprehension of metaphysical concepts is possible, albeit in a limited way, by interpreting the ciphers of the transcendent dimension of reality.<sup>273</sup> He emphasises that the most effective way of expressing assertions about the transcendent aspect of reality can be made in negative terms. This is the connection between the *coincidentia oppositorum* and *Qualified Negativity*.

In view of what is discussed above, it seems that appeal to negation in the explanation of some metaphysical concepts can be illuminating. This appeal must be construed as an attempt to prevent misrepresenting these concepts. As noted, in his elucidation of *Existenz*, Jaspers emphasises the 'unknowability' of *Existenz* and Transcendence, and argues that though one can talk about these concepts, one can only do so by stating what they are not. But is it possible to have some understanding of *Existenz* simply by stating what it is not? It can be argued that if one can only say what *Existenz* is not, then one cannot adequately grasp what it is. Indeed, it may be true to say that 'something is not such and such' gives no indication of what that thing actually is. However, by

eliminating what *Existenz* is not, one can have an insight into what *Existenz* might be. Although this method of 'negativity' does not sufficiently clarify the 'ineffable' characteristic of both *Existenz* and Transcendence, it is helpful, in a limited way, to convey some features of such existential concepts. The method of *Qualified Negativity* has a function in Jaspers' existence philosophy in that it facilitates the apprehension and expression of at least some features of highly complex metaphysical notions. In the final analysis, speaking of *Existenz* in terms of *Qualified Negativity* has some justification, if one reflects on the way in which one's *Existenz* is understood within the context of Jaspers' existence philosophy. These comments may not entirely remove the difficulties inherent in Jaspers' metaphysical concepts and the notion of *Qualified Negativity*. However, it is important to bring out and discuss these difficulties even if one may not be able to resolve them. They are conceptual problems that require conceptual investigation and discourse. My objective in this section is to draw attention to a problematic yet central issue in Jaspers' philosophy, namely the 'language gap' in existential discourse.

In this section we have discussed three philosophical issues which are pertinent to Jaspers' existence philosophy, in particular to his concept of *Existenz*. First we questioned whether Jaspers' assertions regarding *Existenz* are 'meaningless'. We argued that although the truth of the statements about *Existenz* (and Transcendence) cannot be verified, this does not make such statements 'meaningless'. We also questioned whether Jaspers commits a 'category mistake' by placing *Existenz* in the 'wrong category'. We suggested that Jaspers' use of language might indicate that he does. However, if *Existenz* is considered as a metaphor, then whether *Existenz* as a mode of being belongs to a category becomes questionable. If *Existenz* does not belong to an objective category, then it is reasonable to assume that the question of a 'category mistake' does not arise.<sup>274</sup> We then reflected on the method of *Qualified Negativity* which is used by Jaspers in his elucidation of *Existenz*. We discussed whether *Qualified Negativity* is a plausible method of clarification regarding Jaspers' 'ineffable' existential notions, such as *Existenz* and Transcendence. Jaspers, like his medieval predecessors, attempts to clarify his metaphysical concepts by expressing them in negative terms. We suggested that the

method of *Qualified Negativity* could be helpful, albeit in a limited way, in gaining insight into some of Jaspers' assertions regarding *Existenz* and Transcendence.<sup>275</sup>

What emerges from the above discussion is that the common point concerning these particular problems is the inadequacy of object-language in the elucidation of the 'non-objective'. It manifests itself in the articulation of the characterisation of *Existenz* and the difficulty in expressing one's existential experience of the *Augenblick*. We highlighted this problem in order to emphasise the difficulty of presenting Jaspers' concept of 'deathlessness' coherently. This was necessary because a sense of 'deathlessness', experienced by one's *Existenz*, in the *Augenblick* has been articulated in a language limited by the 'objective'. We have noted that linguistic difficulties inevitably arise in this kind of discourse on the 'non-objective'. The language used to express metaphysical experiences requires a different kind of thinking from object-language. Jaspers was aware of the difficulties involved in clarity and precision in the linguistic expression of his metaphysical concepts. Despite his repeated efforts to point out that *Existenz* is only a metaphor used to elucidate the non-objective aspect of the human being, some of his assertions regarding one's *Existenz* remain ambiguous. He may be accused of using language 'loosely', but to suggest that his statements are meaningless or nonsensical may not be justified. The difficulties mentioned here seem to arise from the poverty of object-language. There does not seem to be any other way of discussing the features of the transcendent aspect of the self and one's existential experience of the eternal moment without reference to objective terms. There are no other words in one's language to replace, for example, a 'moment', or 'duration' to express these terms in metaphysical language when referring to eternity. This does not mean, however, that one cannot speculate or express ideas about metaphysical issues even if one's speculation is only an approximation to such metaphysical ideas. Jaspers' aim is to elucidate an area of philosophy which has been neglected for many centuries and to contribute an existential perspective to our understanding of human existence.

I should now like to close this section by summing up the basic ideas we examined in this chapter. We looked at the traditional concept of eternity as 'non-temporal duration', and analysed the *Augenblick* experience within the context of 'non-temporality' in a non-

religious framework. In doing so, we presented eternity in terms of a geometrical model to illustrate the relationship between one's *Existenz* and one's experience of the eternal moment. We then assessed Jaspers' concept of the eternal aspect of the human being, i.e. 'deathlessness' of *Existenz*, and one's existential experience in the *Augenblick* with reference to the eternal 'point' interpretation.

I argued that within this interpretative model it is possible to present a relatively coherent picture of Jaspers' concept of death in connection with the eternal aspect of one's inner self, *Existenz*. I then reviewed some objections raised to this interpretation. I suggested that Jaspers' concept of eternity in terms of 'non-temporality' is defensible, and some objections to it are answerable. In the final section of this chapter, some wider issues that are central to Jaspers' existence philosophy in his elucidation of *Existenz* were also reviewed. These issues are central because they focus on the problems of the articulation and clarification of the existential aspect of the human being.

Finally, having reached the end of our analysis, what conclusions can we draw from this philosophical discourse? I shall address this question in the concluding remarks in the following section.

## **8. Concluding Remarks**

It is a perilous task to attempt to summarise the path of this thesis. In summarising there is often the danger of reducing desirable 'understanding and insight' to undesirable 'listing of information'. In other words, it is a challenge to document briefly and unambiguously what insights one might have gained in this study. One can, however, usefully review some key points of the thesis and thereby derive some conclusions. Overall, this study has been directed toward the clarification and re-assessment of Jaspers' concept of death and his claim that one's transcendent self 'knows no death'. A major part of the thesis has been an attempt to determine what it means for a human being to be 'deathless' within the Jaspersian framework. Nonetheless the presentation of even a

multifaceted evaluation of Jaspers' concept of death and the implications of relevant critical analysis must be viewed as explorative rather than definitive.

In Chapter One, we surveyed some basic issues such as definition, criteria, and attitudes concerning death in general terms. This had two functions: firstly, it provided a broader context for the central theme of this study. Secondly, it enabled us to distinguish Jaspers' view of death from generally accepted traditional views. It has also helped to demonstrate that even such basic issues as definition and criteria of death can be highly controversial. In short, this chapter paved the way to the exposition of Jaspers' concept of death.

I emphasised that in order to understand the core issue of Jaspers' notion of 'deathlessness' it is essential to map out his terminology and philosophical concepts. An exposition of this area was an important step towards the clarification of the transcendent aspect of the human being. In order to elucidate this existential dimension it was necessary to grasp what Jaspers meant by 'a moment of eternity'. It was then argued that the crucial point for Jaspers was the possibility of the sense of 'deathlessness' that could be experienced in an existential 'moment' in objective time. I also argued that the claimed 'incoherence' and enigmatic nature of Jaspers' assertions rested on a traditional interpretation of the 'moment in eternity'. These reflections led us to the heart of the thesis.

In the final chapter, we saw that it was possible, as proposed at the beginning of this study, to present Jaspers' notion of the 'deathless' aspect of the human being coherently, without recourse to religious ideas. My conclusion was that, although Jaspers' concept of death was not entirely compatible with traditional attitudes, in the final analysis one's *Existenz*, as a mode of being, also perishes with the body in death. I also concluded that one's 'deathlessness' in the Jaspersian sense had to be understood existentially in terms of one's experience of the *Augenblick* in the here and now. Clearly, this is not an uncontroversial conclusion.<sup>276</sup> In the light of this discourse, some possible objections, arguments, and counter arguments were anticipated and discussed.

A major conclusion of this study has been the determination of Jaspers' notion of death and the 'deathless' aspect of the human being as a secular issue. This is important because as has been argued the exclusion of theological concepts does not preclude the construction of a coherent argument. It becomes apparent that in order to grasp Jaspers' concept of 'deathlessness' adequately and intelligibly, one must put aside conventional ideas of time, eternity, and experience. The emphasis has been on one's experience of a moment of eternity in the *Augenblick*. This existential experience must be understood in terms of 'non-temporality' to which finite minds can only approximate. Despite many conceptual difficulties, it has been argued that it is possible for man to experience a moment of eternity in objective time. Furthermore, a sense of 'deathlessness' can plausibly be part of this particular subjective experience within the Jaspersian framework. One must stress that the 'deathless' aspect of the human being is not to be taken literally. Since the experience of the eternal is firmly grounded in this world, Jaspers' concept of one's sense of 'deathlessness' cannot be considered in the traditional sense of immortality.

In the argument presented, I utilised a conceptual construction that is inspired by a geometrical model. Eternity and temporality were expressed as representational metaphors.<sup>277</sup> Fundamentally, this representation is grounded in the traditional concept of eternity as a single moment. In the construction of the geometrical model regarding the eternal 'point' representation, a number of assumptions were made.<sup>278</sup> For example, in the absence of appropriate vocabulary in explaining various meanings of eternity and the transcendent realm, we assumed eternity to be a single 'point' analogous to the centre of a circle. We also assumed that temporal events were analogous to any points on the circumference. Indeed it was helpful to utilise the geometrical model as a whole in order to clarify Jaspers' complex concepts of eternity, 'deathlessness' and the *Augenblick* experience, because it provided a representational relationship of the temporal moments in the world with the eternal 'point'. In order to test its plausibility, possible objections to this representation have been discussed. Such objections were answerable because the assumptions we made did not lead to logical contradiction and they were defensible.

One cannot claim to have resolved all the difficulties involved in Jaspers' exposition of the concept of 'deathlessness'. However, exploring and interpreting various aspects of his existential concepts provide some insights and shed some light on the issue of the transcendent aspect of the human being. Providing that one accepts the presupposition of one's experience of 'timelessness' as 'non-temporality' within the Jaspersian framework, then it is possible to grasp what Jaspers means by 'Existenz knows no death'. I have argued that it is only in this sense that one's *Existenz* can be said to be 'deathless'. In short, one can make sense of Jaspers' assertions, however perplexing they may appear, providing that one can view them within the framework of *Existential Interpretation*.

I have focused on only one specific aspect of Jaspers' multi-layered philosophical thinking leaving many areas that deserve further study. For example, as was alluded to earlier, Jaspers' concepts of 'existential communication'<sup>279</sup> and 'ciphers'<sup>280</sup> both need to be investigated in connection with his concept of death. Although some work has already been done on these concepts, particularly on 'existential communication' and its significance in modern times,<sup>281</sup> the connection between these ideas and Jaspers' concept of 'deathlessness' has not yet been fully explored. These two concepts are potential research areas that can be integrated into Jaspers' notion of death. It is hoped that this study contains the seeds of further work in these areas.

With a view to complementing the existing studies on Jaspers' existence philosophy, the work presented here is intended to offer an exposition and a critical but constructive analysis of some of Jaspers' metaphysical ideas. By presenting this interpretation of Jaspers' concept of death, I also aim to add to the scarce literature on Jaspers' philosophy in the English-speaking world where his philosophy has been undervalued. It is important that his philosophical thoughts should be available in English because the existential relevance and the fundamental universality of his metaphysical ideas go beyond differences of faith and cultures. At the same time, I hope to provoke interest in future Jaspers scholars for further research on the Jaspersian concept of death to enrich Jaspers' metaphysics. Jaspers' existential views should not be neglected as he raises important philosophical questions concerning humanity. Since this thesis is also intended to help in bringing out the significance and credibility of Jaspers' philosophy, I shall briefly



highlight the relevance of Jaspers' contribution to contemporary philosophy here in my concluding remarks.

While Jaspers may not have had the impact of a Plato or Kant, and it may even be argued in any event that it is too early to recognise his place in the history of philosophical thought, he did contribute considerably to our understanding of human existence and death. The significance of his philosophical thinking, with its roots in existence, manifests itself within the context of human reflection and experience.<sup>282</sup> What he attempted to do is significant, in that his probing into fundamental metaphysical issues such as human finitude was undertaken outside a religious framework. He brings the reality of death to the individual level in the here and now.<sup>283</sup> Whatever the merits of his thinking, and I would argue that there are many, there is no denying that his concept of *boundary situations* and his analysis of the *boundary situation of death* are original contributions to philosophical thought.<sup>284</sup> Despite his critics' dismissal,<sup>285</sup> Jaspers holds an important place in the history of thought. As Chris Thornhill says, Jaspers is

a figure of central importance in modern German intellectual history. ...his thought effectively defines one entire dimension in the tradition of existential thinking. Although subsequently overshadowed by Heidegger, his existentialism was extremely influential through the 1920s and 1930s and especially in the late 1940s and 1950s.<sup>286</sup>

The importance of Jaspers' vision lies not least in his balanced view, in that his existence philosophy shows a way of holding both aspects of reality together. In other words, he preserves a delicate balance between the empirical and transcendent aspects of humanity.<sup>287</sup> The fusion of these two aspects, in his view, indicates the possibility of a fulfilled and better-integrated human existence. His overall existential achievement can be attributed to his insights into the understanding of the human condition, in particular into the concrete and practical aspects of human life that have universal application.

One of Jaspers' main contributions to the philosophy of our time was the rethinking and reformulating of philosophical ideas appropriate to our contemporary existence, which marks him out from many other philosophers who took little account of the practical application of their philosophical thought.<sup>288</sup> For Jaspers, philosophy is a way of life, and

his intent was not to create a new philosophy, but to invite a form of philosophising leading to *philosophia perennis*.<sup>289</sup>

Finally, Jaspers' existence philosophy leads to an appeal to the individual to achieve a higher level of self-awareness in order to enhance human existence.<sup>290</sup> His appeal to humanity is philosophically significant because it represents a move towards existential freedom and self-awareness. Jaspers urges each of us to realise our potentialities in our finite existence. He is not presenting his views as dogma, nor is he offering normative moral conduct for the individual. Jaspers is the facilitator, so to speak, who challenges us to fulfil our potential by means of philosophical reflection and existential communication. This is Jaspers' way of helping us to confront human finitude. Jaspers contributes to our sense of profundity and in so doing enables us not only to confront death with integrity but also to view it positively.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> It is not the aim of this section to discuss these earlier ideas for their own sake.

<sup>2</sup> The terms 'non-temporal duration/non-temporality' and 'timelessness' will be used interchangeably throughout this analysis.

<sup>3</sup> Jaspers' thoughts on 'eternity' are clearly influenced by all these thinkers. However, he does not follow them in their style of explaining the concepts of eternity and 'timelessness'. And his account of eternity cannot be said to be as comprehensive as his predecessors' account. One reason for this could be that if he had explained eternity along the same lines as these earlier thinkers, he might have been considered as a religious exponent of such concepts. He does not wish his philosophy to be associated with religious ideas.

<sup>4</sup> See p. 173

<sup>5</sup> *The Concise Oxford English Dictionary*, 1964, p.1357

<sup>6</sup> This particular explanation comes from McTaggart, 1993, p.95

<sup>7</sup> It should be noted that another view of 'the direction of time' suggests that the 'now' moments move from the future to the past. Again, this is suggested when objective time is considered to be a linear serial of 'now' points. It is sometimes called 'temporal becoming' which is described as 'the passage of time from the far future to the near future to the present and from the present to the more distant past'. For further details regarding the movement of time, see Smith and Oaklander, 1995, p.84

<sup>8</sup> For the analysis of the relationship between the 'passage of time' and 'timelessness', see Stearns, 1950-51, pp.187-200. She argues that the passage of time cannot be understood without reference to 'timelessness'.

<sup>9</sup> See Williams, 1993, p.135

<sup>10</sup> See Plato 'The Moving Image of Eternity' in the *Timaeus*, and 'Time and the One' in the *Parmenides* discussed in *Time*, 1993, pp.52-59. See also St. Augustine, 'Time Tends Not to Be', *Ibid.* p.13ff

<sup>11</sup> With contemporary thinking, however, one finds less emphasis on eternity but more emphasis on objective time as the central feature of reality. Due to its close connection with divine attributes, the notion of eternity has not been prominent in philosophical discussions in recent years. At the same time, contemporary scientific explanations of the underlying reality which include the concepts of time and 'timelessness', in terms of quantum physics for example, have become far more sophisticated than before. Consequently scientific explanations of time, timelessness and eternity have become highly specialised and technical. This state of affairs also contributes to philosophers' silence on the subject of eternity.

Paul Ricoeur argues that the association with the theological use of the term led to the abandonment of the notion of eternity. (Ricoeur, Vol.3, 1985, pp.133-135) In his discussion, Ricoeur connects the subject of the abandonment of eternity with Heidegger's philosophy. Ricoeur remarks that 'a fundamental doctrinal point of postmodern orthodoxy that has its roots at least as far back as Martin Heidegger: the abandonment of eternity'. (This is quoted in *Temporality, Eternity and Wisdom*, Troup, 1999, p.169) Ricoeur thinks that Heidegger's existential analysis of time in his *Being and Time* concentrates on the notion of 'existential' time and that there is no mention of eternity. Indeed, in his discussion of time, Heidegger deals only with the three ekstasis of time in the existential context. Ricoeur also provides, in his *Time and Narrative*, a comprehensive comparison between St Augustine's and Heidegger's concepts of time. Ricoeur brings out Heidegger's 'abandonment of eternity' in sharp contrast to St. Augustine's reflections on eternity. (Ricoeur, Vol.3, p.135) Ricoeur points out that St. Augustine accepts the paradox of time and eternity despite his unease with the notion of time. (Troup, 1999, p.174) We find the issue of the paradox of time and eternity in Jaspers' discussion regarding one's experience of the eternal as *Existenz* similar to that of St. Augustine.

<sup>12</sup> By 'philosophical theology' I mean the methodical investigation and arrangement of the truth claims of religion as part of metaphysical studies. In this respect, Richard Rorty points out that there is an 'eternal reality' which is one of the important features of what he calls the 'ontotheological' tradition. Rorty, 1991, p.117-118. In his view, both Platonism and Christianity represent this Western 'ontotheological' tradition. Regarding the abandonment of the concept of eternity, Rorty asserts that Heidegger is one of the influential thinkers who challenged the well-established theological tradition by omitting the concept of eternity from his analysis. *Ibid.* pp. 71-72

<sup>13</sup> Plotinus gives a very detailed account of eternity in his *Enneads*. In this work, treatise III.7 is devoted to the discussion of time and eternity. Sometimes Jaspers uses the same terms used by Plotinus, e.g. 'Transcendence', 'authentic existence', 'actualisation of the true self' and even 'shipwreck' (*Scheitern*), *Enneads* (IV.3.17.23-6)

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<sup>14</sup> The One is the central concept in Plotinus' philosophy. Jaspers also uses the term the 'One' when he refers to Transcendence and the all-encompassing. For example in his *Autobiography* Jaspers writes 'The meaning of the One unites with the manifoldness of the figures of thought', (p.92). This is almost identical to what Plotinus says about the One as the Eternal. Plotinus refers to eternity as 'something in the nature of unity and yet a notion compact of diversity'. *The Enneads*, (III.5.3.5-6)

<sup>15</sup> It is perhaps not too surprising that there is a close correlation between Jaspers' and Plotinus' metaphysical concepts. Jaspers was strongly influenced by Plotinus, and similarities between his and Plotinus' metaphysical thought are considerable. He acknowledges his respect for, and his familiarity with, Plotinus' works in his *PA*, 1974, (p.86). He also refers to Plotinus in his *WW*, pp. 141, 177, 178 and allocates a whole chapter to him in *GPh*, Vol. 2, pp. 38-92

<sup>16</sup> The two aspects of reality are qualitatively very different from each other in the sense that the world is concerned with objectifiable entities whereas the transcendent aspect of Being is entirely non-objectifiable.

<sup>17</sup> Jaspers' philosophical position regarding the two aspects of the self is also within the Kantian tradition. For Kant, the transcendental ego, i.e. noumenal self, is not part of objective time. This is almost identical with the Jaspersian concept of non-objectifiable *Existenz*. We shall say more about the Kantian connection later in this chapter.

<sup>18</sup> *The Enneads*, (IV.3.24.27-9) p.281, cf. *Phil.1*, p.77

<sup>19</sup> By 'dialectical' Jaspers means a tense relationship between the two realms manifesting themselves in opposing notions. He discusses the term 'dialectic' in his *PSP*, (pp.18-19). He gives the example of 'Being and Nothingness' to show the dialectical relationship between such philosophical concepts: 'Just as Being and Nothingness are inseparable, each containing the other, yet each violently repelling the other,' *Ibid.* 19

<sup>20</sup> For both thinkers, human experiences and abstractions are not to be separated. In their view, if abstractions were cut off from the phenomenal world then they would lose their function and become empty. Jaspers often reiterates that one cannot separate the empirical realm from Transcendence.

<sup>21</sup> Plotinus thinks of physical reality first and foremost as the domain of coming to be and in constant flux, just as Jaspers says 'The realm of the objective must remain in motion.' (*PSP*, p.18) For Plotinus, true Being belongs to the everlasting, permanent and unchangeable realm. Imperfect being, on the other hand, belongs to the realm of what is transitory, and perishes in time.

<sup>22</sup> Smith, 1996, p.196. Clearly Plato's Ideas lie behind Plotinus' metaphysics. But Gerson suggests that although in this treatise 'Plotinus makes Plato his primary authority, Aristotle's views also provide an important positive foundation for his inquiries and for the notion of time.' (Gerson, 1996, p.197) For Plotinus, eternity remains as the expression of the unchanging realm throughout temporal changes. As we have already seen, it is important also for Jaspers to make this distinction between objective time in the phenomenal world and 'timelessness' which belongs to the transcendent realm.

<sup>23</sup> For Jaspers 'Becoming aware of my existential reality in relation to Transcendence, I see myself in two apparently contrary positions.' (*PE*, 1969, p.111) Plotinus' explanation of the different layers of the self is clearly comparable to Jaspers' exposition of the different modes of Being. In fact, Plotinus shares the idea of the 'inner self' with the modern world in which the self takes an introspective stance. For example, the issues of 'self-actualisation' and 'real self' from an existential-phenomenological perspective occupy an important place also in contemporary psychotherapy. Some of the major contributors are Goldstein, Binswanger, Frankl, Rogers, Boss and May. See also Spinelli's article 'Reculer Pour Mieux Sauter', 1999, pp.7-9 and his open letter 'Reply to John Rowan', 1999, pp.67,70

<sup>24</sup> Although there is a clear distinction between the phenomenal and the true self in Plotinus' metaphysics, Plotinus makes a further distinction to characterise the true self. One's true self itself has different levels of Being: the Intellectual Soul, the Reasoning Soul, and the Unreasoning Soul. *The Enneads*, p.xxx

<sup>25</sup> Plotinus says that 'nothing of Real Being is ever annulled'. *The Enneads*, (IV.3.5.6), p.264. He puts great emphasis on the connection between eternity and the individual's true, 'higher' self. This true self, which he calls the Intellectual Soul, is regarded as the highest level of self-being, and is in his view, 'it has its being in eternal Contemplation of the Divine'. (*The Enneads*, introduction, p.xxx) Smith brings out this point clearly as follows: 'The consequences of this concept of eternity are elsewhere fully exploited by Plotinus for the life of the individual, whose real self is to be located at the level of Intellect.' Smith, 1996, p.203

- <sup>26</sup> Ricoeur, Löwenstein, Holm, and Lichtigfeld are among those who consider Jaspers' philosophy as religious. See their articles in *PKJ*, 1974, pp. 611, 643, 667, 693 respectively. (See also Grene, 1948, p.136) Hartt too thinks that God is 'before us' in Jaspers' concept of Transcendence. Hartt, 1950, p.252
- <sup>27</sup> *The Enneads*, (VI.4.5). Plotinus covers 'the life of Authentic-Existence' under the heading of 'Happiness and Extension of Time'. *The Enneads*, (I.5.7.22-26), p.54
- <sup>28</sup> *The Enneads*, (I.5.7.22-26), p.54
- <sup>29</sup> For Plotinus, such metaphysical experiences are 'unextended and timeless', *The Enneads*, (I.5.7.22-26)
- <sup>30</sup> For Plotinus 'the good man enjoys the life of the true self, the level of Intellect and true Being' which is timeless and it is here and now. Smith, 1996, p.203
- <sup>31</sup> *The Enneads*, (III.7.7.7), p.228. Plotinus regards eternity as 'what is Eternal within the self.' Ibid. (III.5.5.14). Smith concurs with Plotinus: 'We can make statements about eternity only because we have a share in eternity ourselves.' Smith, 1996, p.204
- <sup>32</sup> *The Enneads*, (II.3.9.35), p.98. It is two-fold in the sense that one can have a share in eternity by experiencing an eternal moment in the here and now. Plotinus recognises that our identity is connected with our empirical corporeal existence. But he puts greater emphasis on the importance of each individual's 'inner' or 'upper' self. *The Enneads*, (I.1.10.5), p.27. In this respect, Jaspers would concur with Plotinus.
- <sup>33</sup> Kaufmann takes up this point in his article, 'A Philosophy of Communication', 1974, p.294. He maintains that there is a lack of sufficient prominence in Jaspers' philosophy regarding the 'articulation of Being' in the understanding of an all-encompassing metaphysical system. However, Kaufmann points out that 'this aspect is by no means neglected by Jaspers ... but it is not the dominant one from his 'existential' viewpoint and experience'. Ibid. p.294, footnote 296
- <sup>34</sup> Stewart, 1964, pp.6-9
- <sup>35</sup> Plato writes: 'But when returning into herself she [the soul] reflects, then she passes into the other world, the region of purity, and eternity, and immortality, and unchangeableness, which are her kindred, and with them she ever lives, when she is by herself and is not let or hindered; then she ceases from her erring ways, and being in communion with the unchanging is unchanging.' (*Phaedo*, 1955, p.102) This kind of contemplation is also seen in Plotinus' metaphysics, particularly when he asserts that 'we have a share in eternity'. (Cf. *The Enneads*, (III.7.7.7), p.228) One's experience of Plato's 'eternal Ideas/Forms' in the here and now enables one's 'soul' to have a glimpse of eternity or Being. In this respect, one's experience of 'eternal Ideas' is not dissimilar to one's experience of the *Augenblick*. Plotinus refers to this kind of experience in (V.3.11.13-20) and (V.4.2.10-15). Thus the comprehension of eternal Forms gives the individual, who can grasp them, the possibility of an experience of the eternal in this world. Plato thinks only philosophers can achieve true selfhood by contemplation (*Phaedo*, 1955, p.108) whereas Jaspers thinks that this possibility is open to everyone.
- <sup>36</sup> For Plato, objects of contemplation are 'out of time', that is timeless. He defines time as the 'moving image of eternity' which 'imitates eternity'. *The Timaeus* (37d1), quoted in *Time*, 1993, p.53. See also *The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus*, 1996, p.200
- <sup>37</sup> Gerson, 1996, p.42. Gerson quotes from *The Enneads* to demonstrate his point: 'There must be something simple before all things, and this must be other than all the things which come after it, existing by itself, not mixed with the things which derive from it.' *The Enneads*, (V.4.1.5-16)
- <sup>38</sup> 'Non-temporal duration' interpretation of eternity is sometimes called 'tenseless duration'. For further details see *Time, Change and Freedom*, 1995, pp.46-47
- <sup>39</sup> Smith and Oaklander, 1995, p.46
- <sup>40</sup> Ibid. p.46ff
- <sup>41</sup> Details of this objection can be found in the *Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, 1999, (p.921). Despite this objection, however, according to the *Block Universe Theory* which is based on Einstein's General Theory of Relativity, time can be composed of 'durationless' instants that are stacked up. (For details see Smith and Oaklander, 1995, p.186, and Deutsch, 1997, p.268) According to the *Block Universe Theory*, time is not considered as a linear form, but rather moments of time are stacked up to form a block which contains the whole of reality. Deutsch, for example, explains the *Block Universe Theory* in a remarkably similar way to that of the Medieval exegesis. He writes: 'the whole of physical reality - past, present and future - is laid out once and for all' in spacetime. (Deutsch, 1997, p.268) According to Deutsch, each event is like a 'snapshot' each of which physically exists in a particular moment and stacked to form a single block 'containing everything that happens in space and time.' Ibid. p.267

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<sup>42</sup> Put poetically, as Blake writes in *Jerusalem* 'I see the past, present and future existing all at once before me.' Blake, 1804

<sup>43</sup> It is essential that one must suspend all connections with objective time and attempt to grasp reality without a spatio-temporal order, before one can begin to understand what is meant by 'non-temporal duration'.

<sup>44</sup> In the sense that this single eternal moment is not past, not future, but in the present tense, i.e. now.

<sup>45</sup> Alfons Grieder argues that the use of the term 'simultaneity' can be a misleading and confusing term from a logical perspective. We shall address the difficulty of the concept of 'simultaneity' later in this chapter.

<sup>46</sup> For some philosophers there is no contradiction involved in 'non-temporal duration' as an eternal moment. For example, in Stearns' view 'the eternal appears to be of such a different nature from the passing that it should not even enter the same universe to discourse. Yet the timeless and the passing do enter the same experience. There is an antithesis here, but not a contradiction.' For further details of her argument see Stearns, 1950-51, p.197

<sup>47</sup> Smith and Oaklander, 1995, p.46

<sup>48</sup> According to Plotinus the concepts of eternity and time are intimately linked. For him, eternity must be without extension so that it can be differentiated from time. Plotinus regards eternity as the 'Intelligible rest'; it includes the whole at once, the totality. He writes 'All its content is in immediate concentration as at one point; ... for ever in a Now, since nothing of it has passed away or will come into being, but what it is now, that it is ever.' *The Enneads* (III.7.3. 24-28) It is clear that Plotinus apprehends eternity as a single 'durationless' present moment. This eternal moment is infinite and limitless in the sense that it has no extension.

<sup>49</sup> The image of God's seeing everything at all times is expressed by Boethius in his discussion of eternity in connection with creation and the Creator. He writes 'So it is better called providence or 'looking forth' than prevision or 'seeing beforehand'. For it is far removed from matters below and looks forth at all things as though from a lofty peak above them.' Boethius, 1969, p.165

<sup>50</sup> St. Augustine was in the Platonic tradition and he also gives a detailed analysis of time and eternity in his *Confessions* Book XI, Ch. 11. He makes a distinction between an unstable, disintegrating temporality and a stable eternity in which one finds integrity (11.30.31)

<sup>51</sup> Boethius, 1969, p.163

<sup>52</sup> Ibid. p.164

<sup>53</sup> Watts, in the 'Introduction', 1969, p.27

<sup>54</sup> Davies, 1993, p.144. Some might argue that this kind of metaphysical assertion is not self-contradictory but meaningless. See Ayer, 1983, pp.10-12

<sup>55</sup> We cannot go further into the arguments for and against this objection in the space available here. For further details see Davies, 1993, pp.141-146

<sup>56</sup> *The Enneads* (V.3.3.35-6)

<sup>57</sup> Ibid. (III.7.7.7). In this respect, Kastenbaum too supports the view that man reflects on his finitude 'with the eternal in him.' Kastenbaum, 1976, p. 11

<sup>58</sup> It is difficult because for centuries the concept of eternity has been associated with the concept of God.

<sup>59</sup> Smith and Oaklander, 1995, see p.216

<sup>60</sup> Like Plotinus and Boethius, Parmenides too takes this view of eternity in *The Way of Truth*. Further explanation can be found in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Vol.3., p.64

<sup>61</sup> This idea is the same as Jaspers' concept of the 'all-encompassing', or Anaximander's concept of the One, i.e. 'Apeiron'. The One is infinite, and the property of 'infinity' is predicated of the One without introducing complexity in its nature.

<sup>62</sup> This concept of presentness is not to be considered in the temporal sense. Another way of describing 'eternal presence' is as follows: '...the Eternal Now, which the weak and limited human mind can never grasp and conceive. But the idea of the *Eternal Now*, is not at all the idea of a cold and merciless predetermination of everything, of an exact and infallible pre-existence.' Nicoll, 1971, p.138 (quoted from Ouspensky's *A New Model of the Universe*, 1931, p.139)

<sup>63</sup> I use the term 'point' because a point is a dimensionless element in geometrical terms.

<sup>64</sup> It seems that our senses imprison us in the 'present moment' in the empirical realm. In order to separate this problematic existential 'moment' from the moment in objective time, I shall call the timeless moment

of eternity the 'point' which seems to be more neutral than the terms 'moment' or 'instant'. It must be stressed that this eternal point is purely representational and metaphorical. It is not a matter of arriving at a logical conclusion.

<sup>65</sup> Here we have to make a distinction between 'presence' and 'presentness'. 'Presence' implies the existence or awareness of something or someone. The latter refers to 'being eternal', a 'frozen' moment of 'now' as it were. In 'now' passing-time halts, so to say.

<sup>66</sup> To clarify this point further, let us cite the medieval distinction between the 'moving now' and 'standing now', and the 'presentness' of God which runs thus: 'Beings who exist in time exist in the "moving now;" first the instant is future, then it is present, and finally it is past. Nowness or presentness keeps moving from one instant to later instants, casting all existents from the light of the present into the darkness of the past. But God remains in the eternal light of presentness. The now in which God lives remains standing; it has presentness and does not lose presentness. God exists in a permanently present instant.' Smith and Oaklander, 1995, p.49

<sup>67</sup> Since we exist in a universe of relationships, the temporal moments in the world and the eternal 'point' should be seen only as a *representational* relationship. We must remember that the 'point' is a conceptual construction which is not itself a thing, but a geometrically constructed representation from which some explanations can be inferred. It is interesting to note that Hans Kunz, in discussing Jaspers' concept of 'timelessness', refers to it as 'point-like timelessness of the act of thinking', but he does not take the concept of eternity as a geometrical configuration any further.

<sup>68</sup> If this model is seen as a sphere rather than a circle, then there would be more than one circumference all of which are equally valid, and have the same relationship to the eternal 'point'. This would still be compatible with the 'point' interpretation of eternity.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. The *Enneads* (1.7.1.23) and (VI.8.18.7-30)

<sup>70</sup> Smith and Oaklander, 1995, p.46

<sup>71</sup> After all, it is conceivable that the nature of time and eternity could vary from universe to universe, depending on the laws of nature in each particular universe or the conceptual scheme employed.

<sup>72</sup> In Stearns' view 'the conception of a single simultaneous present of the entire universe is an intellectual construction'. Stearns supports the view that it is possible to construct a secular concept of eternity as a single moment. In her article, she concurs with the view that 'the temporal connects with the timeless' in a non-theological manner. Stearns, 1950-51, pp.193, 196.

<sup>73</sup> Harrison, 2000, p.59. The same idea is expressed in Hawking's *A Brief History of Time*, 1988. To some extent, Jaspers expresses a similar view. Transcendence, for example, for Jaspers 'remains indefinite, incognoscible, and unthinkable, and yet it is present in my thinking in the sense *that* it is, not *what* it is. All that we can say about its being is a formal tautological proposition whose possible fulfilment is unfathomable: "It is what it is".' *Phil. 3*, p.60

<sup>74</sup> In other words, God's being on top of the mountain is considered redundant here. This can be seen, at best, no more than the eyes of the mountain-top having the function not of being the 'point' but of helping us to comprehend the concept of the human metaphor of seeing.

<sup>75</sup> It must be emphasised again that eternity as the 'point' should not be taken in the literal sense. What I present here should be regarded as a metaphor or an analogy which may help to understand the relationship between the eternal and the temporal.

<sup>76</sup> *PE*, 1969, p.111

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.* p.112

<sup>78</sup> Stearns concurs with Jaspers' view and articulates this kind of experience as follows: 'in present moments sometimes we become aware of a timeless reality ... a reality of some other order.' Stearns, 1950-51, p.196

<sup>79</sup> Once more, let us remind ourselves of the two aspects of man, i.e. phenomenal and true self, which constitute an important part of Jaspers' metaphysics with regard to the actualisation of one's selfhood. Rudolph Steiner takes up the issue of the eternal aspect of the human being and the experience of 'timelessness/eternity' in the here and now. (Steiner, 1980, p.100) Interestingly Steiner also connects what he calls one's 'spiritual' experience with one's self-realisation. When he talks about 'spiritual' experience, this does not necessarily indicate a religious or mystical experience, but a different state of consciousness. What he has in mind is that this kind of experience is 'the product of mental activities, or one's inner expressions.' (*Ibid.* p.101) This echoes the realisation of one's selfhood in one's subjective experience of

the *Augenblick*. Steiner's concepts of having an existential momentary experience and achieving one's selfhood through this transcendent experience are almost identical with Jaspers' ideas.

<sup>80</sup> It is noteworthy that St. Augustine uses a similar image in his *Confessions* to express his experience of eternity. (*Confessions*, 9, 10 and 23) He writes: 'We did for one instant attain to touch it ... in a flash of the mind attained to touch the eternal Wisdom which abides over all.' Quoted by Billington in his *Religion Without God*, 2002, p.55

<sup>81</sup> Steiner succinctly describes the experience of 'timelessness' as one's being at a higher level. He says that at that level 'you do not experience any before or after ... and in this experience you completely lose the feeling of time that you normally have in sensory existence.' His thoughts are in line with Jaspers' notion of one's experience of 'timelessness'. Steiner, 1980, p.100

<sup>82</sup> If we assume that temporal moments, i.e. t1, t2, t3 and so on, are equidistant from the centre, then one's awareness of the eternal point will be equivalent to the radius of the circle.

<sup>83</sup> In *Phil. 2*, p.107 Jaspers refers to *Existenz* as 'timeless self-being'.

<sup>84</sup> 'Eternal' or 'timeless' aspect of *Existenz* is to be considered here in terms of 'non-temporal duration', not in the 'endless duration' sense of the concept.

<sup>85</sup> A-time series is described as the collection of all the physical and mental events in the universe in the order in which they occur, that is 'the series of positions runs from the far past through the near past to the present, and then from the present to the near future and the far future'. And the B-series refer to 'the series of positions which runs from earlier to later.' (McTaggart, 1993, p.95) McTaggart's approach to the explanation of time seems to be in line with some other earlier thinkers on the subject, e.g. St. Augustine and Kant. Regarding McTaggart's view on time see also *A Companion to Metaphysics*, 1995, p.465

<sup>86</sup> For further details see McTaggart, 1993, p.98. This is sometimes called the 'tenseless duration' theory of time. See Smith and Oaklander, 1995, p.46

<sup>87</sup> Kenny, for example, finds the concept of 'timelessness' in temporal experiences objectionable and 'incoherent'. Kenny, 1979, p.38

<sup>88</sup> For further details of this argument see Kenny, 1979, p.38ff

<sup>89</sup> Kenny, 1979, p.38ff

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> *Personal Communication*, A. Grieder, October 2003

<sup>92</sup> *R&E*, p.110

<sup>93</sup> *Phil. 2*, pp.43, 107, 110, 113, 199, and *PSP*, p.36

<sup>94</sup> Just to remind ourselves, Jaspers sometimes uses 'above time' or 'supratemporal' for *Existenz*. Jaspers' exact words are: '...that in time I stand above time.' *Phil. 1*, p.57

<sup>95</sup> As Kastenbaum states 'central to the existential view of human nature is the recognition of the fundamental "dialectic" of personal reality. Human existence consists of opposites, of polarities.' Kastenbaum, 1976, p.43

<sup>96</sup> For Kant, 'The consciousness of self (apperception) is the simple representation of the 'I', and if all that is manifold in the subject were given by the *activity of the self*, the inner intuition would be intellectual.' See Kant, 1968, p.88. For Jaspers, although the transcendent aspect of reality is unknown, one can have awareness of it through transcending-thinking and through ciphers. For Kant, the transcendent realm cannot be known at all.

<sup>97</sup> Chapter Three, pp.162-163 (and footnotes 83,84,180)

<sup>98</sup> Kant, 1968, p.86, cf. *Phil. 3*, p.114

<sup>99</sup> Kant, 1968, p.168. Kant regards one's inner self as one's soul. He says that "'I', as thinking, am an object of inner sense, and am called 'soul'." Ibid. p.329

<sup>100</sup> Kant, 1968, pp.381-82

<sup>101</sup> See Davies, 1993, p.97

<sup>102</sup> There are indeed some scientific grounds to support the argument for the eternal 'point'. According to classical physics, before the Big Bang 'space was infinitely dense and occupied only a single point'. (Deutsch, 1997, p.284) This single point is also explained as follows: 'Everything starts from here, including time itself. An infinite amount of space, time, matter and energy - everything the universe will ever know - is contained in a single point, and the universe is infinitely dense.' (See BBC Science Website <http://www.open2.net/science/finalfrontier/bigbang>, p.1) It seems it is possible to propose scientifically that there can be a single 'point' that contains everything, which in turn can also be described as eternity. One



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can argue that some current scientific theories are consistent with the model used to represent the eternal aspect of *Existenz*. However, Jaspers would reject any scientific explanation regarding human experience, particularly transcendent experience. I shall not pursue scientific grounds here, except in passing.

<sup>103</sup> Physics, and especially physical cosmology, has developed extensive theories about space-time and the universe, some of which are supported by mathematical calculations and observational data. In fact, one can cite some relevant space-time theories that physicists offer in terms of mathematics, which may actually support the interpretation that we presented, e.g. Einstein's General Theory of Relativity (See Smith and Oaklander, 1995, p.186) For a relatively non-technical account of the theory see Hawking, 1988, pp. 20-21, 30-40. See also Deutsch, 1997, pp. 2-3, 12 regarding the General Theory of Relativity, and p.290. Special Theory of Relativity, The Block Universe Theory and Hawking's Theory of Black Holes (Hawking's theory on black holes as far as its reduction to a singularity is concerned, also seems to be compatible with the interpretation of eternity as a single 'point'. (Hawking, 1988, pp.49,88,96-97,135) According to Hawking, this single micro point is nothing but at the same time it is everything. (Ibid.107-109) The reason these scientific theories mentioned here is simply to demonstrate the possibility of an alternative explanation of the 'point' interpretation of eternity.

<sup>104</sup> David Deutsch of Oxford University, who is a quantum physicist, acknowledges this problem as follows: 'I am not saying that when we understand a theory it *necessarily* follows that we understand everything it can explain.' Deutsch, 1997, p.12

<sup>105</sup> Truth of metaphysical statements in terms of their meaning will be discussed later in this chapter.

<sup>106</sup> William Earle addresses this issue in his article by stating that *Existenz* 'both dies and does not die. ...Death must be internalized as my own potentiality.' Earle, 1974, p.532

<sup>107</sup> It is possible to bring in other possibilities regarding attitudes towards death. In order to keep the analysis simple, however, we shall engage in only two possibilities here.

<sup>108</sup> Indeed, there is a considerable difference between Jaspers' concept of death and that of Heidegger for whom there is no complication of the transcendent aspect of man. For Heidegger, death is the absolute end for Dasein, and there is nothing further to discuss. See Chapter One, pp.41-43

<sup>109</sup> One must reiterate here the similarities between Jaspers' and Kierkegaard's views regarding the eternal aspect of the self. Like Jaspers, Kierkegaard emphasises the unity of the two aspects of the self: 'In time the individual recollects that he is eternal. This contradiction lies exclusively within immanence. ...only in existing do I become eternal.' *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, 1941, p.508

<sup>110</sup> *PE*, p.112, see also *Phil.2*, p.46

<sup>111</sup> *PE*, p.112

<sup>112</sup> Jaspers' use of the term 'immortal' also indicates this.

<sup>113</sup> Karl Rahner, who is a theologian, supports Jaspers' view that eternity is in time, that is to say, it is not a realm that comes after death. Rahner discusses the concept of eternity throughout his book, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, 1978. (See also Phan's analysis of Rahner's notion of eternity in *Eternity in Time*, 1988, pp. 55-57) According to Rahner, eternity should not be considered as time continuing forever, i.e. not as everlastingness or infinity. For him the traditional concept of God's eternal Being, which is based on the concept of unlimited duration and infinity, does not inspire credulity. He says that eternity 'can best be understood through the ontology of internal time'. (Phan, 1988, p.56) By 'internal time' Rahner means what we called earlier 'subjective time' in the Kierkegaardian sense. He insists that eternity should not be conceived as something after or beyond time but rather in connection with the human internal time. Here one can clearly see Jaspers' influence on Rahner's view on death.

<sup>114</sup> *PE*, p.111

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.* p.112

<sup>116</sup> This kind of critical comment is quite common in the Anglo-American philosophical tradition. In this respect, A.J.Ayer's views will be discussed.

<sup>117</sup> Jaspers often states that 'we can speak only of that which takes on object form. All else is incommunicable.' *WW*, p.34

<sup>118</sup> This claim is partly supported by my numerous discussions with Dr. A.Grieder throughout my research and with Professor A. Flew. Dr. G. Ross of Kings College also finds Jaspers' existential ideas 'vague' and not entirely philosophical. Among others J. Thyssen holds Jaspers' existence philosophy not only 'vague' but also 'irrational'. (See *The Concept of 'Foundering'*, 1974, p.334) On the other hand, it can be argued,

as Unamuno does, that reality is irrational. He claims that 'the real, the really real, is irrational, that reason builds upon irrationalities.' Unamuno, 1931, p.5

<sup>119</sup> See Thyssen, 1974, p.334. Jaspers is aware that his philosophy is labelled as 'irrational' and 'absurd' by some 'objectors' as he calls them. (*Phil. 1*, p.19) He is also aware that some existential concepts can be irrational. But he prefers to use the term 'suprarational' rather than 'irrational'. *Phil. 2*, p.115

<sup>120</sup> This kind of criticism comes mostly from logical positivists who claim that 'metaphysical statements are essentially unverifiable.' (Hanfling, 1981, p.13) They hold that 'if a statement has no method of verification -if it is unverifiable- then it has no meaning.' But of course, as Hanfling suggests, 'not every unverifiable statement is metaphysical.' (Ibid. p.8) There are of course various perspectives within the analytic tradition. But generally speaking, for logical positivists, there are only two kinds of meaningful statements: 'empirical statements, verifiable by observation', and analytic statements 'where truth and falsity can be ascertained by merely reflecting on the meanings of the relevant words.' (Ibid. p.9) Ayer makes it clear that he is highly critical of all metaphysical assertions. In his view, such assertions are 'meaningless' statements. (Ayer, 1983, pp.7-12) Ayer does not direct his criticism personally at Jaspers (presumably he never read Jaspers' works) but his comments can easily apply to Jaspers' existential assertions. Ayer's critical comments are intended mostly for philosophers from the non-analytic tradition. Flew shares Ayer's view and adds that metaphysical 'assertions' are mere 'utterances' which are incompatible with the truth of such utterances. (Flew, *Theology and Falsification*, 2000, p.29) In his view, expressing such utterances is not different from 'exercising our imaginations'. (Flew, *Personal Communication*, p.4, 2004) On the whole, Flew finds Jaspers' existential assertions 'baseless' and 'pretentious'. He says that Jaspers' approach is 'like a pretentious way of claiming that someone's strong but actually baseless beliefs are really true just because, without providing good evidence for believing, the believer claims that they are true.' Ibid. p.3

<sup>121</sup> Some philosophers, influenced by the early Wittgenstein, advocate a theory of meaning. According to Waismann, Wittgenstein's notion of a verification principle is: 'The meaning of a proposition is the method of its verification'. (This is quoted by Hanfling, 1981, p.15 from Waismann's *Ludwig Wittgenstein und der Wiener Kreis*, 1967, p.277) It is argued that meaningful statements are mathematical statements, tautologies, and logically necessary statements. Accordingly, there are also factual statements which can be confirmed through the use of the senses, especially through the methods used in sciences. If statements do not comply with these criteria, they are considered meaningless. (See Davies, 1993, p.2) However, many thinkers do not associate Wittgenstein with this form of verification principle.

<sup>122</sup> According to some logical-positivists, anything one can say about reality is either true, false, or metaphysical by which they mean 'meaningless'. (Estling, 1996, p. 44) Grayling points out that logical-positivists regard " 'metaphysics' in their usage a synonym for 'nonsense' " because they are not tautological and cannot be verified by sense experience. Grayling, 1988, p.58

<sup>123</sup> Ayer, 1983, p.47

<sup>124</sup> In his view, existential philosophers misuse the verb 'to be'. See Ayer, 1983, p.56, cited by Heinemann, 1953, p.4, and also cited in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 1967, p.153

<sup>125</sup> Ayer, 1983, p.56

<sup>126</sup> Ayer, 1983, p.12. It should be noted that I am confining myself here to Ayer's early view on 'verification' in his *Language, Truth and Logic*.

<sup>127</sup> For further details of Ayer's verification principle see *Language, Truth and Logic*, 1983, p.20

<sup>128</sup> Ayer, 1983, p.152. See also Davies, 1993, p.4

<sup>129</sup> Ayer, 1983, p.48

<sup>130</sup> Ibid. In this respect, Hume also expresses a similar view: 'Does it contain any abstract reasoning concerning quantity and number? No. Does it contain experimental reasoning concerning matter of fact of existence? No. Commit it then to the flames: for it can contain nothing but sophistry and illusion.' Hume, 1975, p.165

<sup>131</sup> Philosophy, on the whole, uses *a priori* reflection in metaphysical discourse. Aquinas, for example, holds that 'matters of faith can be supported to some extent by argument and defended from the charge of absurdity in the same way.' (*Summa Theologica*, Ia2ae, 67, 3, also cited in Davies, 1993, p.17). Indeed, one can argue that metaphysical questions can be discussed and supported by *a priori* arguments. There is no objective body of 'knowledge' in metaphysics as it is difficult to arrive at definitive and universally valid answers to metaphysical questions. Their truth or falsity cannot be established by observation or empirical methodology. By their very nature, metaphysical assertions will generate diverse speculations,

philosophical arguments, and counter arguments. It is not necessarily true that in principle every metaphysical proposition can be explicable or agreeable to others. Nor can they be verified or falsified in each case.

<sup>132</sup> Ayer, 1983, p.152

<sup>133</sup> Ibid. p.53

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> Flew, 1979, p. 214

<sup>136</sup> Hanfling, 1981, p.37

<sup>137</sup> Ibid. p.39

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> According to Flew, logical positivists would argue that 'what pretend to be assertions about God are in truth utterances without literal significance'. Flew, 'Theology and Falsification', 2000, p.28

<sup>140</sup> However, Flew argues that even if 'the truth of people's statements about God are unfalsifiable, it does not follow that their expressions of their own beliefs are equally unfalsifiable. These people may not actually believe at all.' Flew, *Personal Communication*, p.1, 2004

<sup>141</sup> See Phillips' *The Concept of Prayer*, 1981, p.1ff (it is also cited by Davies, 1993, p.11)

<sup>142</sup> Davies, p.67ff (Phillips, p.12). Phillips holds that man needs to express his emotions that affect him deeply. But if the believer claims literal truth for his religious or metaphysical assertions, Phillips argues that 'he is falling into superstition'. For a detailed discussion of this issue see Mackie, 1982, pp. 220-228

<sup>143</sup> Phillips, 1976, p.114

<sup>144</sup> Hanfling raises these questions in his *Logical Positivism*, 1981, p.33

<sup>145</sup> Ibid. p.29

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> Grayling, 1988, p.103. See also *Philosophical Investigations*, 1953

<sup>148</sup> Grayling, 1988, p.103

<sup>149</sup> Ibid. pp. 71, 95,103

<sup>150</sup> Ibid. p.95

<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid. p.104

<sup>153</sup> In fact, he asserts in the *Tractatus* that 'a word only has meaning in the context of a proposition'.

*Tractatus* 3.3

<sup>154</sup> Grayling, 1988, pp.99,100

<sup>155</sup> Wittgenstein, 1969, p.224

<sup>156</sup> See *Phil.2*, p.115

<sup>157</sup> Ibid. p.20

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid. p.21

<sup>161</sup> *R&E*, p.63

<sup>162</sup> *Phil.2*, p.5

<sup>163</sup> Ibid. p.9

<sup>164</sup> Categories are defined as 'classes, genera, or types supposed to make necessary divisions within our conceptual scheme, divisions that we must recognize if we are to make literal sense in our discourse about the world.' (*The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 1967, Vol.2, p.46) According to Lacey, 'It is mainly by being ultimate or fundamental that categories differ from mere classes.' Lacey, 1976, p.25

<sup>165</sup> *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, 1999, p.123

<sup>166</sup> 'Category mistakes' are sometimes called 'type confusions'. Lacey, 1976, p.27

<sup>167</sup> *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, 1999, p.123

<sup>168</sup> Mautner, 1996, p.67

<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

<sup>170</sup> *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 1967, Vol.2, pp. 50-51. Ryle, among others, constructed a doctrine of categories in his essay 'Categories' (1938) in order to clarify 'the distinction between the false and the meaningless.' See Lacey, 1976, p.27

<sup>171</sup> This is cited in Flew's *A Dictionary of Philosophy*, 1979, p.58

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<sup>172</sup> Flew, 1979, p.58

<sup>173</sup> According to Flew, 'what Existenz is and is not' seems 'a perplexing and pretentious way of saying what D.Z. Phillips says clearly and unpretentiously' about such issues in his works. Flew, *Personal Communication*, 2004, p.2

<sup>174</sup> *Phil. 2*, p.15

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.* p.6

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.* p.18. Jaspers points out that Kant excludes some existential concepts from 'objective categories', e.g. time, space, and coincidence. *Ibid.*

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.* p.21

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.* p.19

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.* p.18

<sup>180</sup> See Chapter Three, pp.152-153

<sup>181</sup> For a detailed explanation of these difficulties see Lacey, 1976, p.27

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>184</sup> *Phil. 2*, p.15

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.* p.16

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.* p.21

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.* p.15. Here Jaspers is referring to 'ciphers'.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>189</sup> This may also be partly due to his careless use of language. If Jaspers had spelled out clearly right at the outset that he would be using the term '*Existenz*' throughout in this style for the sake of convenience and simplicity, then perhaps he might have attracted less criticism.

<sup>190</sup> *Personal Communication*. (I discussed the issue of whether Jaspers commits a category mistake with Professor Ehrlich through correspondence. The quotations here are taken from his letter dated 4 November 2003, p.1)

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.* p.2

<sup>192</sup> *Phil. 2*, p.6

<sup>193</sup> Ehrlich, *Personal Communication*, 2003, p.2

<sup>194</sup> As Kurt Salamun says this non-objective dimension 'cannot be verbally communicated.' He goes on to say that 'the best way to interpret him [Jaspers] here is to see his position as an appeal to an anti-dogmatic way of philosophizing and to an openness which does not reduce all Being to that which can be objectively articulated.' Salamun, 1998, p.217

<sup>195</sup> *Phil. 3*, pp.113-19

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.* p.114

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>198</sup> *Phil. 2*, p.16

<sup>199</sup> *Phil. 3*, pp.113-14

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.* p.114

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid.* p.113

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>203</sup> Jaspers writes: 'The objectifications of language with a metaphysical content appear in three palpable forms: as "discrete myths," as "revelations of a beyond", and as "mythical realities".' For further details see *Phil. 3*, p.116

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.* p.118

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.* p.119

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>207</sup> Olson, 1979, p.125

<sup>208</sup> For example, despite the ineffability of the One, Plotinus talks about it and makes fundamental claims about the nature of reality.

<sup>209</sup> George Orwell once claimed in an interview that if one does not have the words one cannot have the concept, because we think in words. This suggests that it is not possible to discuss a subject that lacks vocabulary. But not everyone would concur with this view.

<sup>210</sup> Although Wittgenstein is of the view that the task of philosophy is 'to say nothing except what can be said' he does not rule out metaphysical statements as nonsensical. (*Tractatus*, 6.53) Wittgenstein acknowledges that 'there are, indeed, things that cannot be put into words.' In his view, they '*make themselves manifest*.' (*Tractatus*, 6.522) For him, such metaphysical statements lie beyond the limits of language.

<sup>211</sup> When Rilke had a 'mystical' experience in the garden of Schloss Duino in 1912, he found that words failed him in his attempt to describe it. Later on he wrote that 'the domains of the sayable did not really seem to suffice'. (Rilke, *Briefe aus den Jahren 1914-1921*, p.227) This captures the inadequacy of language in the expression of metaphysical matters.

<sup>212</sup> *Philosophie III*, p.38

<sup>213</sup> *Phil.3*, p.35

<sup>214</sup> See Olson, 1979, pp.19,95,98

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.* p.96

<sup>216</sup> Ehrlich also discusses this issue in his *Philosophy as Faith*. He says that in Jaspers' existence philosophy 'the dialectic of negation is a principal function of recalling metaphysical thought from the unfitting and potentially nihilistic fixation which the indispensable expression in the idiom of intellectual thought entails.' p.152

<sup>217</sup> Jaspers calls this method simply 'a negative method'.

<sup>218</sup> *GPh 2*, p.122

<sup>219</sup> *Phil.2*, pp. 9-10

<sup>220</sup> *Phil.2*, p.12

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid.* p.22

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.* p.14

<sup>223</sup> *Ibid.* p.12

<sup>224</sup> For Jaspers it is important that the notion of philosophical faith must be distinguished from religious faith and this requires a negative description. See *PSP*, p.10

<sup>225</sup> *Phil.2*, p.6

<sup>226</sup> *Phil.3*, p.35

<sup>227</sup> See also *Phil.2*, p.21

<sup>228</sup> *Phil.3*, p.35

<sup>229</sup> Ehrlich, 1975, p.141

<sup>230</sup> Olson, 1979, pp.95,98

<sup>231</sup> *Ibid.* p.19

<sup>232</sup> *Ibid.* p.129

<sup>233</sup> *Ibid.* p.22

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid.* p.129

<sup>235</sup> Wallraff, 1970, pp. 182-183. Both Wallraff and Ehrlich suggest this.

<sup>236</sup> Wallraff, 1970, p.183

<sup>237</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>238</sup> Sometimes he is called 'Cusanus'

<sup>239</sup> See *WW*, p.182, *PSP*, p.33, and Wallraff, 1970, p.182

<sup>240</sup> *The Enneads*, (V.3.14.6-10), p.396

<sup>241</sup> Gerson, 1996, p.391

<sup>242</sup> *PSP*, p.33

<sup>243</sup> This is cited in Billington's *Religion Without God*, 2002, p.49

<sup>244</sup> This is quoted in Ehrlich's *Philosophy as Faith*, 1975, p.153 (translated by Ehrlich from *PGO*, 1963, p.213) Ehrlich also compares Jaspers' concept of ciphers 'in the tradition of negative theology' with that of Master Eckhart and Nicholas of Cusa. Ehrlich, 1975, p.153

<sup>245</sup> For example, he writes in *VW*: 'Das Wahrsein von Welt und Gott ist durch die Weise der Mitteilung nur negativ zu charakterisieren.' *VW*, p.644. This can be translated as 'The truth of world and God, through our communication, can only be negatively characterised.' See also *PSP*, p.33

<sup>246</sup> *PSP*, p.33

<sup>247</sup> *GPh 2*, p.122

<sup>248</sup> Hersch, 1986, p.8

- <sup>249</sup> Ehrlich, 1975, pp.153-155. See also Lichtigfeld's paper read at the Fourteenth International Congress of Philosophy in Vienna, Sept. 1968. (An abstract can be found in the *Proceedings of the Congress*, Vol. V, Vienna 1970, pp.487 ff)
- <sup>250</sup> Maimonides' (1138-1204) best known work is *The Guide for the Perplexed*. For further details see Leaman, 2002, pp.30, 126-129, 223-224, *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Vol.5, 1967, pp. 129-134 and *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Vol.6, 1998, pp. 40-47
- <sup>251</sup> Maimonides attempts to unify 'problems about transcendence and immanence within a religious framework.' (See *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 1998, p.43) He also writes about the inadequacy of grasping reality by the finite human mind. In this respect, he writes: 'Matter is a strong veil preventing the apprehension of that which is separate from matter as it truly is ... Hence whenever our intellect aspires to apprehend the Deity or one of the intellects, there subsists the great veil interposed between the two.' Maimonides, pt.III, 9,436-7, quoted by Leaman, 2002, p.126
- <sup>252</sup> Maimonides, *The Guide for the Perplexed*, pt. I, chap. 2, cited by Ehrlich, 1975, pp.154-155
- <sup>253</sup> *Philosophie 3*, p.38-9. This is translated by Wallraff, 1970, p.183, which seems clearer than Ashton's version of it in *Phil.3*, p.35
- <sup>254</sup> *GPh 2*, pp.122-3. Jaspers devoted a large section of *The Great Philosophers* to Cusa's life, his philosophy and his place in the history of philosophy. He also refers to Cusa in *Phil.1*, p.21
- <sup>255</sup> Happold, 1963, p.42. In Cusa's view 'those who think they have affirmative knowledge of God are truly ignorant.' *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, 1995, p.619
- <sup>256</sup> Olson, 1979, p.98. Olson also thinks that the expression of *docta ignorantia* is 'metaphorical for it is analogous to the Plotinian One or Transcendence-Itself which Jaspers characterizes "the origin that has no origin and is the origin of the origin".' Ibid. (Quoted from *GPh 2*, p. 170)
- <sup>257</sup> Olson, 1979, pp.97-98
- <sup>258</sup> Ibid. pp.95,98
- <sup>259</sup> Happold, 1963, p.47
- <sup>260</sup> *GPh 2*, pp.122-25
- <sup>261</sup> For further details see *GPh 2*, pp.122-4
- <sup>262</sup> Olson, 1979, p.99
- <sup>263</sup> Ibid. p.101
- <sup>264</sup> Jaspers acknowledges that these two concepts in Cusa's philosophy are not new. The term *docta ignorantia* is used by St. Augustine, and the *coincidentia oppositorum* can be found in 'Neoplatonic writings'. However, Jaspers holds that one can gain original insights into the metaphysical realm through Cusa's philosophical speculations. See *GPh 2*, pp.120-1
- <sup>265</sup> *GPh 2*, p.122
- <sup>266</sup> Ibid. pp.122-3.
- <sup>267</sup> Ibid. p.123
- <sup>268</sup> Ibid. pp.122-3
- <sup>269</sup> Ibid. p.122
- <sup>270</sup> Ibid. p.121
- <sup>271</sup> Ibid. p.125
- <sup>272</sup> Jaspers is right when he says that the use of everyday language inevitably leads to miscomprehension of such terms.
- <sup>273</sup> Wallraff, 1970, p.183
- <sup>274</sup> However, in view of Flew's strong opposition, and he is not alone, to Jaspers' statements regarding *Existenz*, perhaps this controversial issue should remain open to interpretation.
- <sup>275</sup> Despite Jaspers' attempts to demystify the concepts of *Existenz*, Transcendence, Being and eternity, at times the articulation of his views come across as complicated and enigmatic.
- <sup>276</sup> Considering one cannot expect a universal agreement, Jaspers himself acknowledges that not everyone will be satisfied with this form of philosophy. He says 'dissatisfaction is bound to remain whenever such knowledge is measured by the absolute total knowledge which has so often been deceptively attempted'. See 'Reply to my Critics', in *PKJ*, 1974, p.803. He was well aware that his views would attract much criticism.
- <sup>277</sup> As well as metaphor and analogy, the methods of description, illustration and quotation have been used in this study.

<sup>278</sup> With respect to one's assumptions, it should be reiterated that Jaspers' concepts of *Existenz* and *eternity* require special attention. It is essential that one must not assume that *Existenz* is a physical entity. As repeatedly mentioned before, *Existenz* is only a mode of being. Referring to *Existenz* as if it were a human agent, as Jaspers does, is an easy mistake to make for anyone who writes about it. This point *must* always be kept in mind. As far as Jaspers' concept of *eternity* is concerned, it should be noted that his use of the term is unconventional in the sense that it does not conform to the general understanding of the meaning of eternity. As a result, certain assumptions have to be made in the explication of these concepts.

<sup>279</sup> Existential communication is an important concept in Jaspers' philosophy, and has been discussed extensively in its own right. It can be incorporated into the explanation of the 'deathless' aspect of the human being in connection with the achievement of selfhood. According to Jaspers, one can attain selfhood only in boundary situations or existential communication. In other words, there is no true selfhood without these two features in human existence. We have taken boundary situations into consideration in our analysis of 'deathlessness' but it has not been possible to engage in existential communication. A detailed study of the relationship between existential communication and the 'deathless' aspect of the human being can provide valuable insights in the area of self-understanding. For Jaspers, communication is the medium through which the transcendent aspect of the human being can be disclosed.

<sup>280</sup> Jaspers' concept of ciphers is connected with the representation of the transcendent reality. Sometimes ciphers are interpreted as a mystical element in his philosophy and needs to be elucidated. If they are clarified and re-interpreted in a non-mystical way, perhaps the relationship between ciphers and Jaspers' exposition of human death and 'deathlessness' can be better understood. This is an interesting and worthwhile challenge that can open up other avenues.

<sup>281</sup> The most up-to-date work on this issue is written by G. Walters. (See his 'Communication and the Third Industrial Revolution: Technology and the End of Work?', 2003, pp.251-264) Existential communication is also discussed in S. Hanyu's paper 'Jaspers' Existenz-Philosophy in the Information Age' presented at the Klingenthal Conference in 2000, and in H. Erdem's paper 'Jaspers' Weltphilosophie und ihre Bedeutung für die universale Kommunikation' at the 5th International Jaspers Conference in Istanbul in 2003.

<sup>282</sup> Jaspers was interested in shared human experiences grounded in history and he believed that this would provide a historical basis for the unity of mankind. In his philosophical enquiry he successfully articulates the human condition which is relevant to all of us.

<sup>283</sup> Rather than leaving the issue of death to some other thinkers to be discussed as a purely 'academic' exercise.

<sup>284</sup> Heinemann is in agreement with this view, and acknowledges that Jaspers 'reveals a deep understanding, not only for the situation of persons, but for the human condition, and discovers certain situations, connected with the finite human existence as such, which he calls "limit situations".' Heinemann, 1953, p.60

<sup>285</sup> For example, Jaspers' work has been seen by some philosophers as 'unproductive', and regarded as a 'work without impact' (*Werk ohne Wirkung*) by Schneiders in his *Karl Jaspers in der Kritik*, 1965, pp.1-11, (cited by Thornhill, 2002, p.4). Some others, including Grene, claim that existential philosophers, Jaspers would be included, had nothing new to contribute to the 20<sup>th</sup> century philosophy. Grene also claims that Jaspers' work was 'infinitely dull'. See Grene, 1948, p.140

<sup>286</sup> Thornhill, 2002, p.4

<sup>287</sup> Jaspers' metaphysics brings out and acknowledges man's 'non-empirical aspect' without raising any hopes of immortality. Unlike Heidegger, Jaspers addresses the human need to believe in something that transcends mere empirical human existence. For Heidegger, existential analysis does not require an appeal to faith to explain human finitude. Heidegger has developed an evasive strategy in that he overlooks this historical perspective of human existence. Jaspers, on the other hand, addresses this issue by integrating it into his existence philosophy. Jaspers' contribution to the understanding of the self in this respect turns the negative aspect of death into something positive.

<sup>288</sup> Jaspers is of the view that 'philosophy is essentially concerned with the present.' *WW*, p.144. One of Jaspers' assistants, Gerhard Huber, succinctly articulates this point in 'The Significance of Jaspers' Philosophy for our Times', 1986, p.10

<sup>289</sup> Arrington, 1999, p.337. Jaspers actually acknowledges it in *Phil. I*, p.9

<sup>290</sup> See *WW*, pp.118,144,169, and Earle, 1974, p.534

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