

## **JASPERS APPLIED TO JOHN LANDON'S EONICISM (11-22-2005)**

This page is under construction and is subject to revision at any time. My intention is to indicate dates of revisions. I've not read John Landon's book, and refer you to the final two comments 25 and 26 of CONSTRUCTIVIST FOUNDATION JOURNAL (see Site Map). Mr. Landon's "World History And The Eonic Effect" now a second edition, is like a different book compared to the first, he says. I have a slight aversion to investing in any new book but would be glad to review any work involving Jaspers (I'm remote from a Barnes and Nobles and cannot sit and read it) and from a Jaspers' perspective as I see it. The alternative is using the Internet (but not necessarily Google). Mr. Landon has provided enough information on the Internet for one to judge whether it is worth the investment. I suspect there's some valuable information in it, but my purpose is to portray Jaspers properly.

### **KARL JASPERS AND THE AXIAL PERIOD--NOT AGE**

Prefatory remarks—We come to this Web Page from my Web Page on Constructivist Foundation's Journal where a "radical constructivist", H. Muller, has made the charge that Jaspers approaches the study of humankind from the stance of biological evolutionism. In a sense, John Landon is called here as a gently hostile but invaluable witness for the defense of Karl Jaspers against a prosecutor's charge of evolutionism. I hope this defense-use of Mr. Landon will not be taken as an offense. In a sense, John Landon perceptively declares Jaspers is/was not given to evolutionism. Evolution as ontology, a metaphysic of being, as seen in Mr. Landon's "we start by accepting the reality of evolution" can be translated "evolutionism". For that reason his testimony is considered gently hostile. Jaspers does not start the in-depth study of humankind with preconceptions of that sort, but does bring to the study what he has seen after years of research involving the great philosophers, worldviews, and a general application of clinical experience within the field of psychopathology. I'll continually be grateful to John Landon because he has provided, though unintentionally perhaps, an excellent opportunity for me to continue an application of Karl Jaspers' works to prevailing ideas.

1. How John Landon Perceptively declares Jaspers is not given to evolutionism.

In Mr. Landon's second edition of "World History And The Eonic Effect" he departs from Jaspers on an essential point, and in that sense Jaspers becomes the axial point though there's an effort to transfer the pivotal point to Kant—whom Jaspers has effectively and thoroughly critiqued. In other words to develop a different style of evolutionism, Jaspers has to be dealt with. I had stated a tendency to disagree with Jaspers on the independent and parallel phenomena of the axial period for it assumes an absence of communication, such as the capacity for travel. For instance, an Apache could run 100 miles in a day if the mission was felt vital to an individual or community. However unless I can empirically substantiate that such interaction actually occurred it is not admissible except as something falsifiable. Perhaps Mr. Landon's research has established such an empirical connection, like archeological data showing economic trade routes etc. That information would be welcomed, but could not support an evolutionism. It could in fact support the spread of revelation's revolutionary effects. But that sort of revelation would not be of an authoritarian/institutional sort, for that is what Jaspers objects to and distinguishes religious faith from philosophical faith.

### 1.1. Why the author of "eonic" evolution chooses Jaspers.

Why he has chosen Jaspers to make a case for evolutionism ("smart evolution" as a solution or explanation) is to be found in references such as "Jaspers treatment is constricted by a flaw...". "[He]stumbles". "Jaspers fumbled...". And, the understanding Mr. Landon has was "almost seen by Jaspers" which hints that Jaspers had not yet smartly developed. But yet though "smart evolution" "evolution of civilization" "axial age" (rather than Jaspers' "Axial Period") and "eonic", though representing mitigations of evolutionism, intellectual honesty is seen mostly in the admission that phases of transformation, the evolutionary dynamic, the axial age, evolutionary parallelism is "more baffling than before". Mr. Landon's language, to me, suggests his change in the milieu of conceptualization--from Darwinianism's concepts to historical concepts—quantum-codifies gaps that Darwinianism leaves hanging. He may do it with postmodern modern concepts such as that involved in the acceptability of not being able to measure precisely complex phenomena, i.e., the principle of probability for small physics is applied to big bio phenomena and then considered to have filled in definite bio gaps. The idea of an uncertainty in measurement and location is seemingly presumed to be a principle; if one can observe historical phenomena--though immeasurable—it can still be made popular

enough to be accepted as filler material. It's an interested effort. But it's up against a philosophical logic applied to history, an enlightened logic resulting from Jaspers systematic process of hitting bottom in the area of reason, that is, the systematic cathartic process Jaspers has shown in the limits of historical determinateness. The limits of reason are established and without that critique any competitor is handicapped. Jaspers' critique is more critical than Kant's.

## 1.2 Jaspers' biological position

I take it that Mr. Landon's idea here is that if Jaspers would have been an evolutionist (which as an ontology means evolutionism) he would not have dropped the evolving ball and carried it on through the axial "age" teleologically into the new age. The distinction to be made between "age" and "period" involves phenomenological conceptualizations. "Age" implies an unfolding development whereas Jaspers "period" would be more a psyche's potential phase, and like a culture's worthwhileness, that potential can be lost if not used. And, to repeat, this is important for Mr. Landon has presented the best argument for declaring Jaspers is not an evolutionist in the popular sense of its use. Mr. Landon is saying that if Jaspers had been a biological evolutionist he would have seen things clearly. He was...that!...close to seeing evolution. Almost but lost. But Jaspers says, speaking of the axial period, regarding inherent attitudes that suddenly show up in some biological sense:

The parallel phenomena would, in that event, have to be regarded as simultaneous developments in the biological evolution of human beings who are members of a similarly endowed humanity. That which, by virtue of a common origin, is dormant in all of them, manifests itself simultaneously and independently—as happens during the life-span of identical twins who have been separated from one another.

But this idea is a mere figure of speech which explains nothing. It is empty because it provides no basis for further research. The 'evolution of the genus *homo*' is not a reality that can be apprehended as such or serve as an explanation of anything. And, above all, this 'biological evolution' would only have been accomplished by a small, scattered section of mankind, not by mankind as a whole." (Origin and Goal...p. 14.)

Regarding the idea that man changes from generation to generation in some direction Jaspers says:

But this again is simply a paraphrase of the mystery, and a bad one at that, because it sinks down completely into the realm of biology without there being the slightest basis for approaching the problem from a biological standpoint. All these explanations overlook the clear fact that it was not mankind, not all men, who by that time had occupied the entire planet, but only a few, relatively very few, who took this step forward at three points. As in the case of the ancient civilizations not mankind as such, but only a small section was involved.

Instead, therefore, of taking as a basis a biology of mankind, something falsely supposed to be held in common and valid for the whole community as such, the attempt has been made to trace back the few peoples amongst whom this revolution occurred to a *common historical origin* within mankind. This Origin is admittedly unknown to us.

## 2. Getting Readers

2.1. The axial period was not conjured by Jaspers alone. In *Origin and Goal of History*, Jaspers gives references for earlier discussions involving the axial period and considers the objections regarding a possible common element. Jaspers says although three, China, Greece, and Persia, areas are involved, “The question is whether increasing knowledge will prove this common element to go even deeper than appeared at first” (p.9). Perhaps Mr. Landon has found “that” something deeper. Or, has he seen too that mankind as being “emotionally moved” “continually beginning afresh, [with effects] incalculable”? “Every man sees that which he bears within his own heart” is a realization that can be cultivated. Thus “the higher we ascend the more clearly do we see the Axial Period” (p.10). The question is, has Mr. Landon ascended or descended (“evolution” or “involution”)? Whether Mr. Landon has, more than Jaspers, substantiated a common understanding and valuation is opened to question.

2.2 I don't know how Mr. Landon proceeds to handle the axial period but changing Jaspers terms gives some indication that there's a need to deconstruct the influence of Jaspers. My first impression is that there's a renewed effort to establish an evolutionism. This might not be the case. Key impressive and popular words can be justifiable and meaningful lures into parlors of reason. Words like "evolution" and "Jaspers was wrong" are definitely functional, and grasps at the emotional strings of humankind's heart. And his announced approach is an "empirical map of evolution" rather than a theory" and "we start by accepting the reality of evolution" and the "transition between evolution and history" and then includes a postmodern unpopular name "Jesus Christ" (Off hand I don't recall Jaspers using the phrase "Jesus Christ" but uses "Jesus" and "Christ" at times) being the axis, Mr. Landon says, of history in Jaspers view. Jaspers says, "For the consciousness of the West, Christ is the axis of history" (p.58). One cannot read Jaspers that way for it takes him out of complex context.

2.3. Mr. Landon's comment seems like a clear understanding of the emotional needs of others for knowing their origins. But Jaspers instead begins with the empirical fact that origin is utterly unknowable. And Jesus for Jaspers is not the axis in the way Mr. Landon suggests, but, true, to say Jaspers said it is something that gets attention. This is a misunderstanding of Jaspers. Jesus, Christ, has been used in the West as a localization of the imageless God, but "that the deity may become flesh and incarnate itself in a human being was believed among Hindus and Greeks as well as Christians". One could be more correct, but less alluring, to say that Jaspers believed in the imageless God, but, as with Being as such, there is no localization except in the talk, words, by those knowing better.

### 3. Protestant And Catholic Soil--Cultivating Inspiration

Perhaps the most revealing comment is that Mr. Landon thinks that in any case "the idea that modern Protestantism represents traditional religion is quite ludicrous, since it is a modern creation." To anyone with the overview perspective like Mr. Landon has, this is a reference to Jaspers' expressed view in the Future Of Mankind and in his Philosophical Faith and Revelation, that if there is to be a transformation of humankind it must begin with the conversion of each individual and that the best soil for that mission is the protestant view of independence from priestly intervention or mediators between the individual and God. I suspect Mr. Landon's reference here is no nuance. Clearly the premise has a primary inference and

creates a religious spectrum with two ends with one hidden in the inference. The other end is an inferred preference, i.e., Catholicism. Hopefully I can be corrected, for if one wants to do the empirically impressive and iconic thing, an appeal to that force even indirectly endears one to one of the most traditional political forces existing. Since institutional Catholic (universal) religionists have begun cow cowing to evolutionism, a conciliatory book making a transfer from the “evolution” to “econic” transformation would be in demand.

#### 4. Revelation, and the Axial Prototyping Period as Surrogate

4.1 Mr. Landon suggests Jaspers approach to a historical period (something historical is indicative of something outstanding from a norm such as his use of the words “attack”, “phase” and “period” in his *Psychopathology*) amounts to a search for a surrogate revelation. I’d guess he is referring to Jaspers’ preference for silent listening and thinking at the manifestations from the cypher of that period of coordinating unawareness from the depths of “Unchanging man under changing conditions” when and where several and those behind the scenes “stand outside of history” (*Philosophical Faith and Revelation* p.300). The protestant soil represents the enlightened individual as the seat of inspiration and period or point of revelation. One has to look at the axial period from that standpoint rather than some punctuated-equilibrium-impersonal-process that can be captured in a word like evolution and whatever other symbol used to modify or spin it. Individual inspiration needs a guide, though, a comparative revelation; it needs a concomitant constitution, and this is where for the West the bible comes in, for individual inspiration needs accountability by something constant but something that will not lead to serfdom and human sacrifice as a controlling mechanism.

4.2 In his work “*Philosophical Faith and Revelation*” he sets out to show in part that loss of faith in revelation “does not exclude a constant recommitment to the Bible’s irreplaceable store of truth.” (By revelation he’s speaking of the political methods of the collectives where prohibitions and commands trickle down to the individual though the organization or Church, including creeds and dogmatism, where infiltrators can sneak and speak).

4.3 The significance of punctuated personal trauma--agony phenomenal enough to arouse disconnected unparalleled phenomena--is something

incomprehensible to reflective individuals who had not forgotten their divine source. From this frame-of-thought-reference emerges man's inhumanity to man. Jaspers sees this and in the course of that understanding reminds us that human sacrifice and state-of-the-art technically enhanced suffering was prevalent, and does yet reoccur such as in Nazi Germany. It's my guess that crucifixions had reached such a base hertz intensity of groaning and moaning that it became the changing condition inspiring the unchangeable in humankind's seers and reformers. But it seems to me there had to have been an effective means of communicating the mission, the great commission that something had to be done for humankind's survival--beginning within each individual. The axial period had such a missionary endeavor.

5. I thank Mr. Landon for making available on the Internet some of his thoughts. But though I'd learn much from his book, I want to avoid possibly contributing to evolutionism. As Jaspers becomes increasingly recognized as a protestor of evolutionism, there will probably be a corresponding demand for "eonic evolution" to gain knowledge as to where Jaspers is alleged to have erred. Progressive evolutionism has a certain appeal. Mr. Landon seemingly succumbs to it but probably with intention when he refers to Jaspers "remarkable early efforts". My evaluation against evolutionism here, if I were that popular, could lead to a rush-to-buy. I'm sure there is something there worth the cost. The cost, by the way, is quite reasonable.

6. I've not been able to find much biography on Mr. Landon. His background would be of vital interest. Sharing this information tends to verify one's qualifications for participation in individual freedom and selfhood. It also could show a heroic willingness to reveal one's associations even if it endangers affiliate security. I intend to soon have a Web Page with my biographical sketch soon—for analytical purposes.

7. Finally, I'm wondering about Mr. Landon's recommended research source. Why Google and not Yahoo? The reason for my wondering is that if I search for Karl Jaspers Applied in Google there's are no results within the first couple hundred hits. But in Yahoo, the results appear in the first ten. Why is that? What forces have collected these search engines?