

## THE JASPERS GERHARD KNAUSS EXCHANGE

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THE JASPERS GERHARD KNAUSS EXCHANGE (from the Schilpp The Library of Living Philosophers' The Philosophy of Karl Jaspers, 1957, Tudor)

THE ISSUE: THE POSSIBILITY OF IMPROVING ON PHILOSOPHICAL THERAPEUTIC LOGIC vs. THE MYSTIC RADICAL CONSTRUCTIONISM OF KNAUSS

ALSO; THE ESSENTIAL (ESSENCE) UNAVOIDABLE (ESSENCE) IN CONSTRUCTIONISM

An easy reading of Jaspers' reply to his critic Knauss could lead to a misunderstanding. This is the problem when a dialogue attempts to avoid what might be taken as insults, when kindness replaces forthrightness; it can result in being so sociably amiable the issue is missed (see Muller's recent censuring Short Notes on the KJF). Two essential comments by Jaspers need attention before concluding Jaspers' endorsed the assumed improved formulations of which Knauss thought himself capable.

First, Jaspers received Knauss' critique after the completion of his replies. Second, when he refers to Knauss' essay as beautiful he has abstract artistic style in mind, which could make "sense only in factual performance". Knauss did not make that practical application.

Regarding the second, Knauss had only hinted at the possibility of a philosophical logic. Logic here means logistics, or handling data systematically, and philosophy here means wisdom and reason that is not consumable by data, and something more than generalizations from particulars. The data can be modified by wisdom. Knauss seems to believe that he can abstract from experience an infallible formula that would predict and avoid errors and improve on Jaspers' systematic structuring. That is, given enough educated experience in structuring, Knauss thought, one should be able to awaken from slumber flailing with exact precision, habitually avoiding less errors as one emerges into reality.

This is essentially constructivism (note the ism), and it's an ism due to a given presumption that solipsist thinking (subjectivism), individual experience is adequate in itself—essentially one's experience (personal existential data) has primacy over what preexists universally as regards others' experience and descriptions. However, radical constructivism participates in essentialism by assuming there's something inherent in the brain which contributes less fallibly toward the effectiveness of one's (student's) structuring if what has been accepted as essential in the objective historical sense is primarily ignored. (Schilpp p. 803)

Regarding the first, it is probably due to editorial design--with some input by Jaspers--that Jaspers' reply follows Collins' regarding the issue of catholicity (universality), and that Knauss follows immediately Collins' critique. There is no arrangement by dates or alphabetically, so it's more by comprehensible design on the part of the Editor and Jaspers. The likelihood of Jaspers' input is demonstrated by what immediately follows his reply to Collins and Knauss. Jaspers goes immediately into "About Psychology" as if to remind the reader that he had been immersed in the techniques of therapeutics, and with initiations or habilitation within the atmosphere of the psychiatric-clinical community.

So what are further reasons for this arrangement? Primarily, the variation of overt differences and nuances shows up in his systematizing which had become second nature to Jaspers. He is reputed the most systematic of existential thinkers. It has to do with the logistics of experience, experience in particular, experience in general, and experience in some universal sense involving others. It also includes the experience of the Encompassing of the encompassings, both in the immanent and transcendental sense, the content of which includes varying intensities of experience, and here the perspective becomes one of philosophical logic, which is not disposable due content voids in abstraction systems.

In this exchange, a modified radical constructivism of Knauss comes to fore. It's the same argument that others and I have offered on the KJF pointing at the exclusivity of constructivism. Jaspers sums it up in two linguistic styles. (Ibid. 803) "It is the big problem of the beginning of philosophy as well as in thinking. The beginning is a presupposition, something previously given, a pre-conscious, something that was before; cognate things return in analogous forms: if I awaken, it is out of preceding sleep; if as a child I become conscious, it is out of a world which produced me; if history starts,

it is out of prehistoric conditions. With each beginning a prior is presupposed.” This is not a description of radical constructivism, but of real some preconditions for reason’s systematization efforts.

But lest one interpret Jaspers’ words here in a derivational sense like a naturalism, he qualifies it by saying that accepting precedents does mean one quits questioning. He further qualifies reasoning about origins by, “We always begin in the middle” but we must jump into the midst to see factually where and how we are. Jaspers’ then includes talk about God’s creation—because Knauss talks about it--that other linguistic mode, which when applied to the totality of being amounts to admitting we never forget we don’t know while not succumbing to fatalism, nihilism, or the empty infinity of implosive constructionism. (Ibid. 803) (The reader here is referred to my early life experiences—soon to be added--which Mr. Muller on his KJF minimized and seemingly they were deleted in earlier Comments to that website.)

Jaspers having received the “beautiful” essay late, suggests timing presented a problem--making Jaspers’ reply unsatisfactory unless one reads reasonably between the lines. Jaspers would not mention that he received the essay late without good reason. Connectivity is a constant in Jaspers works. Submitting comments untimely is an understood manipulative tactic, and where deadlines are imposed, if one makes sure one’s contribution arrives on the last day, or even later if the receiver is considered graceful and lenient, there can be an advantage. If I wanted to give as little time as possible for Jaspers reply, I’d turn a critique in late too.

For instance the Knauss critical treatment of the encompassing shows a misunderstanding of the flexibility of the concepts, or the alleged seven modes or manners of handling the encompassing. He perhaps too conveniently passes over the separating, overlapping, superimposing, and flexibility of the concepts. Knauss’ “beautiful essay” suggests this is not his failure to comprehend but rather designed to make room for something to critique and then hint of something better to come from someone better, namely himself.

Knauss then implies something mystical to Jaspers’ use of the 7 categories. Well, assuming there was something that rigid to enumerate, rather than seeing flexibility, what is the possible force behind this criticism of the number 7? Knauss says that from a systematic point of view...the idea thus

arises that there's something presupposed and undiscussed. Knauss immediately then refers to the concept of God rather than experience. What he's implying is that some mystical concept of 7 in some biblical sense was the basis, or there's something preexisting and constant represented by the mysterious 7.

But, there are several, more or less, modes or manners of the Encompassing, but there's more than one encompassing as such for each way of handling perspectives and data. That's why Jaspers can speak of "Grasping of Being in Subject-Object Polarity" "Each Encompassing in the polarity is not solely on one side as object or subject." (Van Der Wahrheit, Truth and Symbol, College and Univ. Press, New Haven, 1959 p. 23.) And in Ciphers of Transcendence, Basic Ciphers of the Deity, he speaks of the "...Encompassing of all encompassing." (Philosophical Faith and Revelation, Collins, 1967, p. 144)

It's interesting that Knauss has to rigidify the manners, forms and contents, while considering the asymmetrical 7 lacking in beauty. Mankind could easily have concluded in prehistory that because something is beautiful, symmetry does not mean it is good. Even so, Jaspers refers to the essay as "beautiful" and manifesting buoyancy indicating he "is being led by something, which must have substance." Jaspers knows what this substance is more than Knauss. That's why he can say, "try your system" (which Knauss did not do and had the opportunity). Here, it seems to me that in Knauss there's temporal or temporary buoyancy due to the decision to see in one's consciousness of essential reality that "Being is less than I am" which results in seeing oneself as "the culmination of everything, [and]...developed out of something that was soulless, unfree, and, at first, indeed, even lifeless." (T and S, 57) The buoyancy is a bit too flighty and not enough ballast for sailing or soaring. The ballast needed is experience, contents.

The relation of Knauss and Collins here is in the area of how one handles experience beyond limits. Collins gives in to naturalism and a religious dogma with universal designs. Both gentlemen have a certain scientific strength mainly in the organization and control of experience, if science is defined as something systematic as such. Knauss is an independent constructivist in that he wants to appear independent of organized religious-like authority's commands and prohibitions. He is in the right camp, i.e., individuality, selfhood, but infinitely burdened with something that

everybody can identify with as essential to autonomous selves. This catholicity on the part of both critics precludes individual choice and soaring either on the grounds of consensus or the authority of an organization under momentum.

Jaspers' systematic "form and content" categories cannot claim "absolute validity" upon which everyone can agree. Why? Because the content can phenomenologically differ just enough to be therapeutically controlled by the suggestibility of the thinking proceeding from philosophical approaches. And it can come through the religious sects' emphasis on interpretation being something primarily private and not imposable except through one-to-one communication and not by fiat.

Thus, one's philosophical logic, i.e., logistical handling of experience including that beyond the limits of the piece-meal empirical, should participate in the ballast of history, not a radical exclusion of biblical-cultural experience. The contribution that Knauss or any individual constructivist would like to avoid includes the prehistory of current history. It can lead Jaspers to say that he sees greater hope in small sects, such as, having the potential for contributing to the fulfilling of what Jesus told his disciples "Behold the kingdom of God is within you—it is here. So it is to philosophical thinking" and what counts is the reality of the eternal, the way of life and action, as encompassing immortality. (Future of Mankind, Univ. Chicago. 1961, pp. 259, 342)

The challenge is too much for Knauss. As a therapist his experience is comparatively incomparable with Jaspers' biography. One's philosophical logic must include the encompassing of the world of self and the Encompassing of the soaring potential for authentic selfhood. But feeling states are also encompassing and some due to constitutional (physical) fundamentals and dispositions, (basic personality traits) and those too have Encompassings that are more than grounds for sublimation but also the Encompassing that is assented to as sublime and given. Here we approach the ground of buoyancy, which inspires a leaning toward the invisible while handling the visible.

A clear distinction needs to be seen between radical constructivism and Jaspers' systematic penetration of the corporeal. His structures are constructive rather than destructive of authentic selfhood. His structure, his philosophical logic, includes the historical individuality that makes for the

great men of faith and reason, a tradition well established for individuals as individuals to individuals. Exemplary Personages must not be minimized to make room for self-aggrandizement.

Jaspers concludes his reply by saying Knauss reminded him of Ludwig Wittgenstein. “[S]omething of this spirit seems to impress one rather strangely in the works of Wittgenstein”. Well, Wittgenstein became somewhat of a mystic, and it is not surprising to see this in constructionism. “The solution of the riddle on life in space and time lies outside space and time. 6.4321 “Not how the world is, is the mystical, but that it is.” 6.44 “The feeling of the world as a limited whole is the mystical feeling.” 6.45 And finally, in 7 (note the “7” the last item in “Logic and Meaning” from Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus) “Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent”.

Associating Knauss with him seems like a tit for tat response to comments about the mystical source of Jaspers misunderstood 7 modes of the encompassings. Wittgenstein said propositions about philosophical matters, are not false, but senseless...we do not understand the logic of our language.” And then he adds “they are questions like, is the good identical with beautiful.” 4.003 Here’s a manifestation of the gentlemanliness of Jaspers, for in as much as Knauss did not put up his own constructive system and risk it before Jaspers, his essay is at least referred to as “beautiful” but lacking an understanding of the therapeutic logic of language. (My first wife’s maternal grandfather used to say: “beauty is the search for beauty”.)

The logic of language for Jaspers includes the therapeutic intentionality in communication with self and others, and excludes talk that fails in that regard. But a therapist must not be robbed of the use of confrontational and purposive moving and goal orientated unkind words, such as: Constructivism is outdated because outdone and precluded by Jaspers.