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JASPERS' ESSENTIAL DIFFERENCES WITH HEIDEGGER

1.

One does not get the impression from Jaspers that Heidegger had any substantial seminal influence on him. As a rising image in the hermeneutic field, Heidegger would have been a good one to hone oneself on, for Jaspers had always had interests in history and religion. But there's no doubt about the essential theological differences as he shows in a very short footnote in *Philosophical Faith and Revelation*. There he classifies Heidegger with revelation-like dogmatism (p. 272). And as early as his *General Psychopathology* he criticizes Heidegger's psychology as being too methodically rigid, for his fundamental ontologism restrained the free development of students whether in the field of psychology or and most certainly in psychopathology.

2.

By the time he wrote and revised *General Psychopathology* he had come to realize fully that Mrs. Husserl's complimentary introduction to Heidegger as a budding young phenomenologist was an ill-taken embroidery. There, Jaspers mentions him in the 1959 (seventh edition) upon which the 1963 English translation was apparently based. In this edition's preface he also states the book does not seem to be outdated with an exception, e.g. some researches into the brain.

3.

He does think one might succeed in writing a better book, if a scientist "would appropriate the methodological clarification" of his book. But it would have to be some "younger scientist" who could assist physicians in learning "how to 'think' in psychopathological terms." It would have to be a younger scientist with clinical connections; but Heidegger had clearly demonstrated by this time a dogmatism reflecting poorly in methodology, philosophy, and theology—a poor attitude essential to open ended science.

4.

Though Heidegger was younger, he was not the scientist Jaspers had in mind. That main place where Jaspers mentions Heidegger was in the later edition that included the section of "The Human Being As A Whole" (p. 778). Here he criticizes Heidegger for failing the methodological clarification test mentioned above. His "theoretical structure gives no help with the individual's real historical existence (as a means to heighten or preserve a reliable way of life) but becomes a way of obscuring things once more. This is all the more disastrous since the language used is closest to Existence itself yet misses its actuality and can rob it of its true intensity." By this time too Heidegger's political intentions were more than suspect, demonstrating the practical-social-science weakness of his ontologism, and the stifling effects on the empathy and sympathy essential to a humane human research community. A metaphysical dogmatism was out of place and Heidegger, one could imagine, may have been like one of those quietly transferred out of the Heidelberg clinic where Jaspers was habilitated.

5.

Husserl too had been relegated to footnote status in Jaspers' *General Psychopathology*. (p. 3 and 55) Both go in the same way. Husserl, like Heidegger, had succumbed to faith in ontologism. Phenomenology as a method was retained by Jaspers in his psychology, but Husserl "later on...used it in the sense of the 'appearance of things' (*Wesensschau*) which is not a term we use in this book. Phenomenology is for us purely an *empirical method of enquiry* maintained solely by the fact of *patients' communications*". Jaspers then makes a differentiating comparison regarding the non-existence ("for the senses") of the phenomena the patient describes, and the phenomenology of "natural sciences". But Jaspers even in his philosophical wisdom could see the unavoidable representative ambiguities of natural science where the whole person is concerned as well as the whole persons' world.

6.

Jaspers in *Philosophical Faith and Revelation*, (p. 272) again mentions Heidegger, but in a short footnote. This reference is the 1967 English translation of his 1962 original work. In this footnote Jaspers states his intentions to address at a later time Heidegger's take off on Schelling. Jaspers died in 69. Heidegger died in 76. Some stuff he had prepared about Schelling has been translated and published in 1985 (according to of *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, Ed. Honderich, Oxford, 1995,

“Schelling’s Treatise on the Essence of Human Freedom”, Athens, Oh. Oxford U, Press, NY, p.985). Jaspers’ footnote pertains to Heidegger’s efforts to do what Schelling was unable to do, i.e., make faith in God something logical and therefore apologetic (ontologically defensible). Footnote states that Martin Heidegger has taken up Schelling’s question, discussed it in a new manner, and further enhanced it into the basic question of metaphysics. “I hope to be able to deal with this on some other occasion.”

7.

The third place Jaspers clearly declares his view of Heidegger is in the 1953 debate with Rudolf Bultmann. Bultmann had constructed a systematic theology demythologizing biblical history on the basis of Heidegger’s book *Sein and Zeit* (where existentialia is itemized). In that debate he expressed the view that Heidegger might be surprised that someone would base a systematic theology on his metaphysics, but by the time of the performance evaluation Jaspers made of Heidegger in the 1967 *General Psychopathology* book, he must have come to realize that Heidegger would not have been surprised at all that his fundamental ontology would be the bases of a theology, and certainly not disappointed to have theologians talking favorably about universally applying Heidegger’s potential religiosity to cover a multitude of late thirties and early forties war-time mistakes.

8.

Soon after Jaspers uttered the view--that Heidegger would be surprised over the religious use of his views—he seemingly realized the miscalculation. He tried quite successfully to recompense by comments in his second response to Bultmann. It is there that he, sensing the explosiveness of the religious connection, speaks bluntly saying, “the power of the Catholic world grows irresistibly” and “its kinship with totalitarianism...the free world must resist...the single rule of the Catholic church” (p. 114). He then showed the significance of Heidegger’s philosophical influence, e.g. on the Catholic Karl Rahner and the Protestant Bultmann, the latter now bearing the blunt of Jaspers reprimanding. Responding to Bultmann’s accusation that Jaspers did not understand the issue, Jaspers reminds him that “...I am living in a context of Biblical thinking...I was born in it and breathe it...and as a Protestant I enjoy the freedom to ascertain my faith, the faith on the basis of which I like to think I live, without mediators, in direct relation to transcendence, guided by the Bible and by Kant.... [W]e differ radically”. Jaspers did not need the ontologism of Bultmann, Heidegger, or Schelling.

He was demonstrating an authentic membership in the Protestant community.

9.

Jaspers realized then the need for “radical characterizations” in order to make communication practical, and due to limitations of space and time, “apodictical statements can hardly be avoided” and are meant to encourage communication by way of “challenge” (Pp. 109-112). What is at issue is the infiltration of dangerous attitudes as ready-made maxims to be revered unquestionably. The time was ripe for the more public candor Jaspers was used to in the scientific family. Thus his more thorough mention of Heidegger in *General Psychopathology*, and then the downgrading to footnote-status in *Philosophical Faith and Revelation*. He had already addressed the essentials of the issue in the debate with Bultmann, and now in detail in the body of the *Philosophical Faith and Revelation*.

10.

The same bluntness is needed to downgrade clichéd emphases in organizations bearing his name where under the guise of freedom of expression and cordial words an amiableness tolerates misrepresentations, like constructivism and post-modernity trends, the likes of which Jaspers would have no part.

11.

Jaspers shattered the Bultmann/Heidegger dogmatism in 1953 and showing how these arguments were just as applicable to the dogmatic ontologism of Heidegger’s metaphysical science. The theologians embracement of Heidegger was like a hit between the eyes for Jaspers, which he could see clearly when applying the Heideggarian methodology to the science of the whole person whether sick as in psychopathology or ill ideologically such as shown in the *Future of Mankind*.

12.

Heidegger’s constructionism was an ism “ a definite framework, which he referred to as ‘fundamental ontology’” (*General Psychopathology*, p. 777). It loses value as a possible construct for particular meaningful connections.

13.

Heidegger’s ‘existententials’ Being-in-the-world (Dasein), Emotional tone (Stimmung), Anxiety (Angst), Care or Concern (Sorge) were to characterize

the ontological element, which preconditions all human existence and conduct, and determines them, whether they are close to source and primary or watered down, derived and secondary in the ways of the 'average man'. Of course that does not work for psychopathology nor for the student of psychology, for "it does not lead the student on to philosophize in his turn but offers him a total schema of human life as if it were knowledge".

14.

The latter statement shows the ism of Heidegger's constructionism, and Jaspers processive structuring is more amenable to life by the fact of its flexibility and function; his structuring rolls with the circularity life's experiences and has no derivation in the sense of a fixed ontology or rigid view of life. That's the sort of methodological philosophical attitude needed for psychology and especially for psychopathology, for there is no such thing as an average person in a physician to patient relationship nor to the one to one relationship of normal humans.

15.

So, here again, too, we can see the appropriateness of Kirkbright's inclusion of empathy in her book on Jaspers. Being-in-the-world, Emotional limited tonal variations, uncomfortable feelings, and concerns, are inadequate compared to being in the world and suspended too, identifying with others' pain, feeling guilty about being guilty, and never losing the grip on learned ignorance such as the limitations of thinking itself to solve all problems for self alone let alone all others.

16.

Here to we can see Jaspers' methodical categories of form and content are not rigid but accommodating to complexities which leaves room for some trust that the patient or other person before us has the potential that should not be restrained by ontological preexisting conditions determining the approach and determining the cope-ability and prognosis—that the silence of another may not mean one is hopelessly confined to an emotional state. And much manifestation might be a radical rationalization to defend and secure ones' fixated self-image existence in the world and at the expense of all others. Existenz, as the thinking exercise resulting from being suspended between any idea of self and the transcendent, and as dependent on others, avoids that.

17.

When I functioned as a clinician in the Northwest Alcoholism Clinic in Gary Indiana, I tried to use Existenz counseling in one to one counseling sessions, and would begin while getting a current biographical picture of the patient that included the drinking history. An attempt at times was made to reestablish what might have been lost regarding the encompassing feelings prior to the habitual use and dependency. The therapist can, though tactfully, silently, approach the current status of being in the world if the current situation has gotten out of hand. One does not forget the way one's life ought to be thought, felt, or hoped for, and in some cases can empathetically aid in the recollection of events prior to addiction such as problems that contributed to the dependency.

18.

The methodology Jaspers uses in his book—books for that matter—includes experimentation, biography, and statistics. All three methods are applicable because of the autonomy of the other individual. Experimentation was not something like what might be carried out in a death camp to aid the average super-race at the expense of the institutionalized. The method included applying preexisting methods loosened from any ontological preconditions, fixations, which required categorizing without enough respect for the limitations of diagnoses when applied to the variation in patients. Statistical analysis is perpetually valuable unless such things as averages intervenes with and restrains empathy and sympathy. Biography and statistics also can be inadequate: for instance, the acting administrator of the Alcoholism Clinic didn't believe in the value of biographical information and would say he could not remember anything before the age of 16. The problem with that was that because he would or could not, neither should nor would the patients. His criticism showed the danger of using too broad a biographical minimized approach, for some could benefit by memories, but some might suppress memories, and for proper reasons. In those cases, where real memories might be confused with false memories, supportive groups could be more successful initially than one to one counseling--along with prudent medical support as needed.