

THE “KARL JASPERS UPDATE” UPDATE 25—SYSTEMATICS, AGAPE, EROS
AND BACK TO RICHARD DAWKINS (6-25-2006)

Notation: Target Article 89 was posted with permission by Eugene Webb. The Target Article is something that was published in 2001. It mentioned Jaspers several times. Primarily the references were to Jaspers’ *Psychology of Worldviews*. The author is under the impression that there is something revealed, something emphasized there not understood because not translated from German into English. Eugene drops the name of a notable personage who claims he was influenced by Jaspers’ *Psychology*. Eugene incorrectly states that Jaspers is “dated”. This “dated” work is taken to show its by-gone position relative to modernistic developments. I see in Eugene’s effort a progressive degenerative thought process. It is seen manifested clearly at the point where the words “evolve” and “evolution” enter the essay. The...generative...study degenerates when consideration is given to what he considers advanced high-tech current contributions toward understanding the development of consciousness.

1. *Psychology of Worldviews* has been systematically explored--Eugene begins by somewhat correctly stating the importance and uniqueness of Jaspers’ works on understanding and encompassing worldviews—or words to that effect. But he more than suggests that Jaspers’ *Psychology* views have not been explored in any systematic way. The proof for Eugene is that his book has not been translated into English. Eugene is essentially incorrect. The part of that posted essay that was most correct was that the book had not been translated into English. It is more incorrect, for, the systematic thoughts have been systematically interpreted and translated by Edwin Latzel and can be found in *The Library of Living Philosophers*, edited by Arthur Schilpp and has been available since 1957.

2. The systematic understanding has been prior-approved--Jaspers places his stamp of approval on Latzel’s critique. He approved it first by stating that Latzel does not improperly show the *Psychology of Worldviews* as overreaching philosophy and settling in on a psychology. The sort of overreaching Jaspers is referring to is like that done with Eugene’s take-off on the meaning of “Eros”. Eugene’s emphasis has popular erotic connotations, but it is given too prominent a suggestive place in *Psychology*. Jaspers says that those that gave too much allegiance to scientific psychology were Lefebvre, Earle, and Kunz. These three did not grasp the essence of the book. Jaspers shows approval for Latzel’s understanding of the book when he says that Latzel does not show an overreaching in psychology. He is referring to overreaching to the point where psychology becomes a metaphysical dogma in some form or other. With regard to the comprehension of Jaspers’ work, he says that Walter Kaufman “stands on precisely the opposite side from Latzel”. Latzel’s individualized comprehension, Jaspers says, “With this I agree without reservation.” Latzel has such a clear and telling insight into the line of his philosophy that the paltriness of references to Latzel in Jaspers’ reply to his critics represents “the form of highest esteem.”

3. Eugene’s argument dissipates--Latzel’s critique, approved by Jaspers, begins on Jaspers’ systematic *Psychology of Worldviews* and makes comparisons with his

systematic *Philosophy*. It must be understood that the 1919 work was more indicative of Jaspers' "fledgling" philosophy than a reduction of philosophical wisdom to some erotic élan or fixed science of psychology. But because it was extant it needed revising over the years. The argument that something "systematic" has been missed but discovered by Eugene in reading the *Psychology* in German dissipates in the systematic account by Latzel. It is groundless. One does not have to read German to grasp Jaspers' perpetual contribution to consciousness studies.

4. My dissertation was based on the system in his *Psychology*, via Latzel and Jaspers--Hitting bottom systematically in reason and emotion in essence constitutes the first and second part of my 1968 "*The Application of Karl Jaspers Existenz Philosophy to Counseling*" (Dissertation required for graduation). In other words, Eugene's statement that "'few have ventured to explore it [Psychology of Worldviews] further in a systematic way" is incorrect; a few have explored it in the most advanced systematic way through Jaspers' works beginning and continuing with his earliest and constantly revised *General Psychopathology* and enduring through his *Philosophical Faith and Revelation*. Herbert Muller says Greg Nixon brought Eugene's article to his attention. What they perhaps found so appropriate about Eugene's essay is the poor psychology of hiding behind German linguistics, and that it can be used as one professional's view that Jaspers is dated enough to avoid and then go on to consciousness studies from the evolutionism perspective.

5. The repose in "German" is not germane--Eugene drops some current names for support. Foremost is Paul Ricoeur. Though having a protestant upbringing, one of the hazards of being a protestant in France is that Paul was influenced more by the wholly non-systematic existential storyteller Gabriel Marcel than by the more systematic Jaspers. Eugene fails to mention it, but Jaspers disagrees with Paul Ricoeur on a few points and points out that Ricoeur looks inappropriately for reasons to disagree with Jaspers. It is my position here that this difference is intense enough in a nuance sense for Eugene to vector off a protestant and unto the runway and take flight into the evolution of consciousness. Namely this is done through dropping two more names: first, Eric Voegelin who wrote things agreeable to the Roman Catholic Catechesim, and second Bernard Lonergan, a well-known Thomist and Jesuit Roman Catholic priest. This sounds like I'm manifesting symptoms of a conspiracy mindset or worldview. But not really, considering the same mindset-accusation has been leveled at Eric Voegelin. He was born in notorious Cologne Germany, and eventually ending up in Max Weber's chair at Heidelberg (after Jaspers' discreet defection from the Eros trend). It is interesting that Eric Voegelin, like Dawkins, uses derogatory expletives such as "smart idiots" and "spiritually diseased", the latter being more like my reference to evolutionism as an endemic-capitalization on basal urges, i.e., evolutionism is a dis-ease.

6. Now back to Dawkins' Extended Phenotype (existential-"Darwinian"-evolutionary phenomenology)--One reason perhaps that Eugene must see Jaspers as dated is because he is dead and cannot defend himself directly. Also, Eugene has to flow with the "evolutional" pandemic, by naming more current personages that must be more developed due to what Dawkins would refer to as something taking place in Darwinian

evolutional time. Hence Eugene slips into Kegan's use of words like "evolving self" which of course diminishes inherited conscience-consciousness, but emphasizes intermediate Eros-like cultural movements. And then there's the leaning toward D. W. Winnicott who moves quickly from any possible meaning of "evolving" in the sense of unfolding or general generative thinking, to inhibiting any further descriptive studies by something that must be intrinsically compatible to "evolution". Then Eugene slips from "Eros" to immanent agape, supported by an institutionalized saint, "Saint Augustine", a canon which easily accepts what Eugene emphasizes about the "Saint's" sexual appetites (my note: and then of course comes Thomas' dictum that priest's should not marry leaving the door open for sexual perversions and institutional child abuse). The conjured principle here is "evolutionism", i.e., that change is accepted as something inevitable and progressive. Rather than referring to it as a dis-ease, it is made easy and Eugene uses the friendlier word "development"; it lightens-up on existential guilt for it might restrict "growth". What Eugene is saying in effect is that we can illuminate for ourselves the existential necessity of the ultimate situations, which Jaspers has already done in systematic detail from a wholesome philosophical and psychological perspective. The existential illumination of life's ultimate situations is Jaspers' not Eugene's. He incorrectly takes credit for a reduced concept when he says, "I have called it existential Eros". I say that is simply another way of referring to what in some learned circles is seen as the shallow side of existential anxiety that can have creative effects. But when Eugene mixes the complexity of Being with Eros, the latter becomes the dominant genitive force. Eros then disqualifies the existential, whereas the sublime of Being is agape and consciousness include inheritable conscience. He is simply saying the same thing Dawkins is saying in "*The Selfish Gene, new edition*" and "*Extended Phenotype*". But all this is old-hat stuff. For instance Howard Clinebell speaks of existential anxiety and existential religious counseling, and the advancements possible through the existential perspective—forty years ago. The theistic is the part "evolutionism" wants to dispense with.

7. Jaspers is more agape than erotic, and this brings us back to Dawkins—Let us not be mistaken about Jaspers' encompassing of "Eros". His manner of love toward Gertrude his wife was more agape than erotic, as was his love for his parents and students, and theirs' for him, not excluding the love, sympathy, and empathy he had with and toward his patients. But all this is a distraction from applying Jaspers' works, from my perspective, to my research of Dawkins' works, though this has been a meaningful worthwhile departure.