

THE “KARL JASPERS FORUM” UPDATE 33 (August, 9, 2007)—JASPERS VS. PANPSYCHISM, From Christian de Quincey to Alan Gewirth

1. A tolerable Misuse of Jaspers’ name--Christian de Quincey (hereafter Chris) reviewed Greg Nixon’s Target Article 95. This is Chris’ first contribution to Herbert Müller’s Website. Herbert presses TA writers to seek several personages to comment before the Article is posted. The request secures a sorted type of inflation for there is no posted encouragement by Herbert to relate in some dialectical sense to Karl Jaspers—except any conceptualization goes under the banner of Jaspers without recourse to his reply. Herbert must know by now that postings by Greg Nixon, J. S. Johnson, Bill Adams and almost all others will avoid Jaspers’ views, and that Greg and JSJ will dominate if the “e” word (“evolution”) can be exploited.

2. Leniency toward a newcomer--Chris’s critical remarks of Greg’s Article are made in tutorial style--up to a certain point. His harsh criticism of Greg’s logic and “nonconsciousness” suddenly dissipates in a paragraph [34] where Greg uses the “e” word in a definitive manner from which Chris cannot escape its popularity (now enhanced by vatic authority). Chris, so far as I could tell, did not use the “e” word. His failure to relate to Jaspers’ works is excusable because that which he is reviewing makes no reference and one does not know whether Chris understood that the Jaspers’ name is invoked through the masthead (Herbert’s Karl Jaspers Forum caption). Nevertheless it’s a disuse, for Jaspers addresses conceptually panpsychism, but his views are not represented.

3. The Chris-Greg common ground is not Jaspers’—What’s important to declare is that the common ground that Chris managed to extract from Greg’s article is a ground that Jaspers does not occupy either as a philosopher or psychologist.

4. Jaspers vs. Panpsychism in Chris-Greg terms--There are explicit references that relate to panpsychism—the way it’s portrayed in the Chris-Greg posting (C2). First is a quote by Jaspers in Schilpp’s 1957 Library of Living Philosophers (Karl Jaspers). In Jaspers’ reply to his critics there are two interpreters of Jaspers with whom Jaspers relatively approves. Kurt Hoffman, Jaspers says, recognizes in Jaspers’ philosophy qualified positionlessness as well as its “new objectivity”. Jaspers places “new objectivity” in quotes to show the words are Kurt’s; to Jaspers it is not a new objectivity in any emergent or development sense in the world. Jaspers says it is as though Kurt saw with Jaspers the dangers of a Hegelian boldness resulting from reaching the depths of the godhead. We see this boldness in the Chris-Greg position as they sing a few words in mono harmony.

4.1. Kurt, Jaspers, and Spinoza--The reference to panpsychism is made by Kurt; the approval by Jaspers plus Kurt’s comment means we have a two party-review of panpsychism. A third party-review is at least to be found in the concluding sentences of Jaspers’ critique of Spinoza (The Great Philosophers) where he says, “Certain psychologists of the nineteenth century mistakenly traced their sterile theory of psycho-physical parallelism back to Spinoza. Here again we cannot speak of a philosophical

influence”. (The 1995 Oxford Companion to Philosophy hints at a Spinoza connection in its resource references.) Kurt distinguishes Jaspers’ spheres of reality from Samuel Alexander’s theory of an emergent “evolution” (a word Jaspers does not repeat in his reply) “the qualities of the lower levels are, for Jaspers, not contained in the higher ones; the four spheres [My interpolation: inorganic nature, organic life, the soul as inner experience, and spirit or traditional philosophy in a total attitude toward the world] are discontinuous with each other [though also interdependent]” and each have a separate logic. Kurt states Jaspers’ “primary concern is to resist the tendency of making one of the spheres absolute and to subject others to its logic and its laws. Philosophy must avoid the pitfalls of materialism and biologism as well as those of pan-psychism and radical existentialism.” Kurt sets panpsychism along side of rationalism—and the ism is pronounced.

5. Avoidable confusion using Jasper’s nomenclature-- Although I’ve not read any of Chris’s works, his and Greg’s use of terms participates in the same ontology (ontic verbalizings). Any confusion (pathological incoherence) about psyche, consciousness, experience etc. could have been avoided using Jaspers’ meanings as used in his textbook’s case studies--terms which I have previously addressed. The Chris-Greg ontology is not in doubt and it is captured in a symbol that sneaks into consciousness through the unconscious. The fact there is no such word as nonconscious in use is perhaps the unstated safe-reason Chris objects to nonconscious, and its nonuse, being unpopular, places an idea of definitive origin too far away from the space of one’s mind’s nebulous constellations of ideas and far too remote from the nucleus of the psyche to emerge; “nonconsciousness” suggests that origin-thinking is non-emergent. So usage is the main argument. The reason nonconsciousness does not cause an empathetic cipher-reader a problem is because there is that which can never enter into consciousness but yet is manifested in empirical disturbances. Greg’s use of it smacks like an effort to gain recognition as a seminal thinker that Herbert and RC (and a special Radical Constructionist) would be glad to count as an elite member of the fold. That’s why Greg honors Herbert by a passing reference to 0-D in his conclusion--and reminds his readers he teaches students (to which Chris reacted appropriately).

6. Jaspers on archaic mind-development; it is not biological but more cultural inheritance—In the Chris-Greg union developmental-thinking has to assume something ontological or there is no basis for a rank given to complex mind, the tool being used. An ontic-base-sound has to have a system of logistics. For Greg, Chris, Roberts, and of course J. S. Johnson, thinking is given an archaic rank in biological inheritance within a process of development. Chris says, it seems, this is permissible in philosophy and psychology if it is made clear that one understands the difference--though wholly dependent on a hidden mind-ridden biology.

6.1. Where Jaspers stands is that “in archaic thinking” changes in consciousness might be observed as even mind’s development, but always as “product of culture not as biological inheritance”. (GP. 214) Jaspers is making a clear distinction between normalcy and schizophrenic thinking, but clear about the use of erroneous forms of thinking about origins. In the case of “evolution” talk the disturbance of the psychic flow is as much an

empirical fact as that occurring in schizophrenic case studies. The logic involves one sphere entering all the other spheres, and sometimes the sphere is but a satellite in the plasma of the constellation of the nucleus of thinking.

7. Believing in seeing stars—Jaspers says the one who “believes in his ‘star’ is...borne along by...coincidence; one who does not feels they mark his road to ruin”. (191 PFR) The Chris-Greg logistics is hitched to their “e” star and it is defended by a feeling of togetherness including references to something Eastern if it can be understood as atheistic. Jaspers see this too in Spinoza’s fundamental certainty (378). Once Spinoza was in possession of a reliable proof he would not fall back into ideas that once made him doubt that truth, and then he would employ the idea that everything happens through the power of the most perfect being and of His immutable decision.

8. The golden rule and a principle of generic consistency--J. S. Johnson’s TA 95, C 2 is worth a note pointing out that he well demonstrates the effectiveness of Herbert’s pushing the “e” button to rejuvenate with shock treatment his Website. JSJ also has a star-experience he cannot be released from. He still has the same song and dance but with a slight rendition in style which is not easy to equal poetically. As Herbert no doubt anticipated (I did), JSJ adds a master’s touch of eloquent, declaring his enthusiastic allegiance to the verbalizations about the role of consciousness in the cosmic process (perhaps inspired by words about the role of conversion in the information age). The cosmic process is seen in retrospect as imperative and no doubt with vatic authoritative approval he inserts the word creation, and then the “e” formula is introduced into the cosmic process and “indefinite...[development] of system complexity” is elevated to an abstract principle, i.e., “IESC” which is then used as though established throughout the narrative. It’s the old argument via repetition applied to the song. That too is popular today even in contemporary religious hymns. Penetrating JSJ’s anything but parsimonious C2 is a hermeneutician’s nightmare. So, to make the best of it:

8.1. The relevance of the golden rule as used by JSJ can be seen as an effort to distract from the biblical qualifications related to the golden rule. It has historic connotations regarding the established vatic authority rather than the biblical standard in the history of protestant/Catholic events. The emphasis on the golden rule emerging universally has catholic appeal and coincides with the emerging of church development and all the dynamics and ramifications associated; i.e., it becomes the already existing authority for determining word usage (nominalism). If that vatic-authority emerged in some sense that only rationalism can grasp, it can merge easily into the other emergent ontology if the other is willing to assent and make the ontological leap over. The world’s feeling of mutuality and solidarity over the ideals of the golden rule will be leaped upon and canonized and then the transition to Catholicity will be easily made.

9. Alan Gewirth criticism of the golden rule--Gregory Walters uses the principle of generic consistency throughout his book on Human Rights in the Information Age, a Philosophical Approach. The principle is credited to Gewirth in Gregory’s Book. Some hasty review outside his Book shows that the principle seems to have become notable

because Gewirth said something about the golden rule's ineffectiveness as philosophical therapy because there are perverts out there. That criticism could have Catholic appeal. As a biblical rule it could subtract from vatic-authority, but as something emerging and universally understood it could amount to an additive in the sense that it would be popularly obvious enough to leap on and capitalize (PGC). The universal ground can be seen as true if it were not for instances, individual instances. For instance, I was taught that the golden rule is used in the frame of reference where the biblical faith in God and loving oneself as one loves God, including a view of the Decalogue, is preparatory to the application of the second part of the golden-rule commandment. Although it must be admitted that the sinner's prayer is always engaged for effect as well.