



Dialogue and the Question of Being and Being-in-the-World: Heidegger and Jaspers

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“Social phenomenology is the science of my own and of others’ experience. It is concerned with the relation between my experience of you and your experience of me. That is, with inter-experience.”

R. D. Laing*

Abstract

Upon confronting the intellectual crisis spanning the decades of the interwar years, several German philosophers proposed a “new method” to point out the limitation of knowledge derived from the subjective and positivistic methods of philosophy. Martin Heidegger and Karl Jaspers, sympathizers of this viewpoint, were motivated to provide a new voice to the intellectual worldview of the period and, in the process, elevated the level of their contemporary philosophic atmosphere. Their voices reverberated in their respective concepts of Being and Being-in-the world, concepts which encouraged the study of human existence: Existenzphilosophie and Existential Phenomenology. This essay will examine their respective concepts of, being, being-in-the-world, selfhood, existential communication, historicity, and analyze how the family connection of these concepts pertaining to existential phenomenology invite comparisons in their philosophies of human existence to the “dialogical” principle inherent in Buber’s philosophy. Despite Buber’s criticisms, the paper makes an alternative interpretation of Heidegger’s philosophy of human existence, and argues for including the latter, with Jaspers, in the discussion of the “philosophy of dialogue.”

Keywords: Being; Ontology; Existenzphilosophie; Inter-connectedness; Existential Phenomenology; Hermeneutics

Introduction

In 1923, Martin Buber published *I and Thou*, in which he introduced his seminal concept of “dialogue.” During the 1920s and 1930s, many in Europe experienced what was considered a crisis in values and in knowledge. The cultural, political, and social crises of the 1920s and 1930s, combined with the intellectual “crisis of reason,” provided the contours of the historical context in which Buber presented his concept and demonstrated how certain precepts of

phenomenology emerged. Many were convinced that Europe was undergoing not only political and intellectual crises, but a crisis of civilization. They perceived a profound lack of direction for apprehending human existence, an emptiness in European cultural values, and demanded that philosophy become relevant to human life. The intellectual crisis, which in the decades spanning the turn of the century and interwar years, occupied philosophers, social and political theorists and philosophers of history concerned with the methodology of their disciplines, entailed challenging the

* R. D. Laing, *The Politics of Experience* (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1967), 16-17.

extra-historical principles that served as the source of theoretical coherence. Nineteenth-century rationalism and the dominance of positivism was thrown into question and philosophers felt called upon to examine their discipline from a “new” perspective. Heidegger and Jaspers were part of that “younger generation,” for whom the inter-war years signaled a turning point in how they perceived Europe and its culture. The intellectual atmosphere of German philosophy, during this period, set in motion a search for a “new interpretation of man” – a “new philosophical anthropology” – brought about by the results of additional knowledge in psychology and in the social sciences. In 1928, Max Scheler, known to be a thinker who combined philosophical principles with recent empirical research in the human and social sciences, made the following observation: “I am pleased to see that the problems of philosophical anthropology are in the center of philosophical reflections in Germany today and that, outside philosophical circles, biologists, medical men, psychologists and sociologists are at work on a new model for the essential structure of man”¹. The new models were designed to answer the perennial question: “What is a human being?” Scheler was one of the cofounding editors of *Jahrbuch für Philosophie und phänomenologische Forschung*, which began publishing essays and volumes on phenomenological studies in 1913 under Husserl’s direction. Phenomenology emerged to supplant the fallen dominance of traditional nineteenth century approaches to knowledge with a new approach to human reality. A “new method” was proposed to point out the limitation of knowledge derived from the subjective and positivistic methods of philosophy. Edmund Husserl initiated the phenomenological approach by insisting that the philosopher must cast aside presuppositions in attending to the actual concrete data of existence; an approach which aligns with Buber’s dialogical principle along the genealogical tree which stretches from *Lebensphilosophie*, phenomenology, existential philosophy, philosophical anthropology, ethics of the “other,” to existential psychiatry.

The “principle of presuppositionlessness” and the notion of Phenomenology as a “return to phenomena,” *phenomenon* understood as “what appears as such,” appealed to Martin Heidegger and Karl Jaspers. Each thinker felt impelled to provide a new voice to the intellectual “consciousness” of their period and, correspondingly, elevated the level of their contemporary philosophic atmosphere to examine human existence and intersubjective human interaction. The existential-ontological perspective spoke directly to a generation seeking novel approaches to study human reality. Their voices resounded in their respective concepts of Being and Being-in-the world, concepts which encouraged

the study of human existence: Existential Phenomenology and *Existenzphilosophie*. Martin Heidegger’s name is often associated with Karl Jaspers as founders of German existentialism. Both spurned the designation². Despite their political differences, personal and professional rifts, common philosophical influences, and interests exist between the two. They shared the philosophical purpose to study the ontological nature of human existence and how human beings orient themselves in the world and toward others. Each owes, and acknowledges, an intellectual debt to Husserl. Each, as contemporaries, sought to proceed beyond the antinomies of classical metaphysics such as rationalism/empiricism, reason/experience, theory/praxis, which their generation inherited. This article will examine their respective concepts of selfhood, being, being-in-the-world and human historicity and analyze how the family connection of these concepts pertaining to existential phenomenology invite points of comparison in their respective philosophies of human existence to the “dialogical” principle inherent in Buber’s philosophy. Although Buber has been acknowledged as one of the early critics of Heidegger’s “ontology,” the position put forward here argues for more affinities than differences within the principle of “dialogue,” a perspective which merits important consideration through a close reading of his writings and lectures in the 1920s and 1930s.

Between 1921 and 1928, the main themes of Heidegger’s lectures at the Universities of Freiburg and Marburg were an existential phenomenological interpretation of Aristotle, the Greek “interpretation of existence” and “human life.” These themes eventually carried him along the path of “rethinking” the fundamental tenets underlying phenomenology and of challenging the Neo-Kantian emphasis on the epistemological and methodical facets of philosophy. The renewal of Kant’s philosophy in the 1860s to the 1920s led, he argued, “to the formation of the philosophical discipline now known as ‘epistemology’ or ‘theory of knowledge.’” Heidegger viewed this “epistemological” interpretation of Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* as “essentially the ground-laying of the mathematical natural sciences, as theory of science. At the same time,” he continued, “Kant was understood as the ‘shatterer’ of the old metaphysics and of empty speculation”³.

2 In one of his later letters to Jaspers, Heidegger conveys his reaction to an instance when his name had been associated with existentialism: “Ortega y Gasset told me in a letter a few weeks ago that everywhere, when he speaks against existentialism, he never means Heidegger. That is indeed a little naïve, but I take note of it.” *The Heidegger-Jaspers Correspondence (1920-1963)*, ed. by Walter Biemel and Hans Saner, trans. by Gary E. Aylesworth (Amherst, New York: Humanity Books, 2003), 182. For Ortega’s comments, see, José Ortega y Gasset, *Obras Completas* (Madrid: Revista de Occidente, 1964-65) VII, 495, n. 4; VIII, 296-298; IX, 215-16, 566-67.

3 Martin Heidegger, *Phenomenological Interpretation of Aristotle: Initiation into Phenomenological Research*, trans. Richard Rojcewicz (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 5.

1 Max Scheler, *Man’s Place in Nature*, trans. Hans Meyerhoff (New York: Noonday Press, 1962), 3-4.

The philosophical shift from process to epistemology, in identifying the historical character of human existence, signified the philosophic disposition to view the distinction between the natural-scientific and philosophical view of things as a logical distinction in the ways of perceiving reality “as a unified whole” rather than a distinction between two kinds of reality.

Heidegger’s critical reading of Kant’s “critical philosophy” continued the year following his last lecture on Aristotle. In 1929, Heidegger participated in the second annual international *Davoser Hochshulekurse*, held in Davos, Switzerland, where both he and noted Neo-Kantian philosopher Ernst Cassirer delivered lectures and engaged in a disputation over Neo-Kantian transcendental philosophy. The “protocols” of the Davos lectures entailed demonstrating the thesis: “Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* and The Task of a Laying The Ground for Metaphysics.” Heidegger defended an “ontological” reading of Kant’s *Critique* against the epistemological reading promoted by the Neo-Kantians. Heidegger understood Neo-Kantians by “that conception of the *Critique*” for the purpose of theorizing about mathematical sciences, instead of pursuing “the question concerning the possibility of Ontology,” which was central to his philosophical project. The Davos philosophical exchange on the question, “what is a human being?” also highlighted the contrast between Heidegger’s philosophy of being and Cassirer’s philosophy of culture. In response to Kant’s question, “what is man?” Heidegger argues that “the possibility of metaphysics demands a metaphysics of Dasein.” Cassirer’s interpretation of the *Critique* emphasized “the language of factum,” more of a philosophy of culture than a philosophical anthropology⁴. The disputation, referred to by some as an epochal shift in worldviews, engaged in such diverging readings of Kant, the human condition, and the purpose of philosophy. Emmanuel Lévinas attended the debate and recounted that, as “a young [graduate] student,” he “could have had the impression that he witnessed the creation and the end of the world”⁵. Heidegger averts the nineteenth century concept of philosophy as “the science” and the distinction between metaphysics, as traditional

philosophy, and “fundamental ontology;” the ontology of Being which constituted his philosophical program. He criticizes the “metaphysics of presence” which he identifies in Kant’s anthropological question: “what is man?” For Heidegger, “the guiding problem of Western philosophy is the question: “What is a being?”⁶. In pursuit of the question of being, he traverses from a phenomenological hermeneutic of human beings to a fundamental ontology of “Being.” By promoting the “new perspective” of phenomenology, Heidegger, and later, Jaspers posited the ultimate and irreducible variety of individuality of all human affairs, while emphasizing the connectedness of human reality.

Heidegger acknowledges that his immediate experience of phenomenology occurred, during his student years in Freiburg, through early dialogues and collaboration with Husserl in the *Jahrbuch für Philosophie und phänomenologische Forschung*. He dedicated *Being and Time* to Husserl and remarks: “The following investigation would not have been possible if the ground had not been prepared by Edmund Husserl, with whose *Logische Untersuchungen* phenomenology first emerged. Our comments on the preliminary conception of phenomenology have shown that what is essential in it does not lie in *actuality* as a philosophical ‘movement.’ Higher than actuality stands possibility. We can understand phenomenology only by seizing it as a possibility”⁷. Heidegger found this disclosive aspect of the essential possibilities, in phenomenology, appealing. Through this alluring aspect of phenomenology, he also found it essential to renounce Husserl’s earlier formulations of the “transcendental Ego,” the undifferentiated “pure I,” who perceives and constructs the world but remains uninvolved in it.

In moving beyond the epistemological concern of Neo-Kantianism, and the methodological approach of philosophy as a “rigorous science,” to the “new concept of being,” Heidegger proceeded beyond Husserl to combine the approaches of Friedrich Nietzsche, Henri Bergson, Wilhelm Dilthey and Max Scheler. The new concept of being, when retraced to its foundation in ancient philosophy, makes explicit the phenomenological connection to human existence. The nature of being, of the individual, becomes central solely as a means of elucidating an extended problem concerning the nature of all beings. Accordingly, it is no longer sufficient to consider how the world is constituted for human “consciousness;” rather, one must consider how human beings, not merely human consciousness, may provide some insight into the nature of totally different kinds

4 Martin Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, 5th ed. enlarged, trans. Richard Taft (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 193-94, 202-06. The appendixes of this edition contain the format of the debate, 191-207. See also Ernst Cassirer, *Kant’s Life and Thought*, trans. James Haden (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), and his *An Essay on Man: An Introduction to a Philosophy of Human Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1944). For a comprehensive philosophical account of Davos debate, see, Simon Truwant, *Cassirer, and Heidegger in Davos: The philosophical Arguments* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2022). Compare Peter E. Gordon *Continental Divide: Heidegger, Cassirer, Davos* (Cambridge/London: Harvard University Press, 2010).

5 François Poirié, *Emmanuel Lévinas: Qui êtes-vous?* (Lyon: La Manufacture, 1987), 78

6 Martin Heidegger, *Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980), 10-12.

7 Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), 62-63, 72, 489, n.ii.

of beings. Heidegger articulates his central concept of human being through the word "Dasein," connoting, "being-there." By employing the expression, "being there," he means "to be absorbed in the world." Dasein "exists," and comprises "an entity which in each case I myself am." Concurrently, "I am," as an "existential expression" for Dasein's Being, means "'I reside,' or 'I dwell alongside'...." 'Being alongside' the world in the sense of being absorbed in the world," emphasize the "fact" that one cannot consider a human except as a being amid a world, as an existent entity "thrown," as it were, into the middle of other things and beings. For "Dasein," he explains, "always understands itself in terms of its existence ---- in terms of a possibility of itself: to be itself or not itself. Dasein has either chosen these possibilities itself, or got itself into them.... The understanding of oneself which leads along the way we call '*existentiell*,'"⁸.

Heidegger's "existential expression" combined Dilthey's hermeneutics with Husserl's descriptive psychology and proposes "hermeneutic phenomenology" as the philosophical method by which to attain this potential insight. To pursue an understanding of "life," philosophically, he states, is "to secure for this understanding "a hermeneutical foundation in terms of 'life' itself"; and, 'life,' by extension, "is to be understood in the historical context of its development....Hermeneutics is the way this understanding enlightens itself"⁹. As a method, hermeneutics studies the way in which one interprets and attempts to understand phenomena such as literary and legal texts, artistic creations, human actions and gestures. The method became prominent within the branch of theology that emphasizes exegesis and the symbiotic interpretation of the Bible. In recounting his theological studies at the University of Freiburg, Heidegger recalled his initial encounter with hermeneutics, Husserl's *Logical Investigations* and the work of Dilthey¹⁰. The latter had a significant impact on many of Germany's influential thinkers, among whom were Husserl, Heidegger, and Jaspers. During these early years, Heidegger displayed his interest in *Lebensphilosophie*, positing the close association of philosophy and life, and in philosophical problems concerning "human studies" and the historical world. In *Being and Time*, he acknowledged how Dilthey's revival of the discipline of hermeneutics exercised a considerable influence on his approach to the question of being and to the "categories of life." "The researches of Wilhelm Dilthey," Heidegger explains, "were stimulated by the perennial question of 'life.' Starting from 'life' itself as a whole, he tried to understand its 'Experiences' [*Erlebnisse*] in their

structural and developmental inter-connections"¹¹. Through a concerted effort to found a distinctively "historical reason," Dilthey maintained that historical experiences must be the basis of all knowledge, but he also emphasized strongly that in its original state this experience was unstructured such that only the categories of the knowing subject could furnish the form which was necessary to understand it. He referred to this methodological process as *Geisteswissenschaften* or the "Human Sciences." However, so long as Dilthey held philosophy to be based on history, he remained implicated in what he admitted to be the difficult paradox of the vicious "hermeneutical circle." The circular aspect arises in the understanding of complex wholes and their individual parts, since a whole can only be comprehended in terms of its parts while the latter acquire their proper meaning within the whole. In effect, his criterion of "openness to experience," led him to an acceptance of historical variegation that ran counter to his own emphasis upon the immanent unity of experience¹².

In considering the "openness of experience," Heidegger maintained, the fundamental phenomenological categories "and their categorical nexus," requires "an extensive interpretation of Aristotle." These "categories" are grounded in "factual life," understood in the sense that "life" qua "lived-experiences," "expresses a basic phenomenological category; it signifies a basic phenomenon"¹³. For the analytic approach to any "normal sort of inquiry," in politics, and in the other sciences, Aristotle proclaims, "the compound should always be resolved into the simple elements or least parts of the whole... He who thus considers things in the first growth and origin, whether a state or anything else, will obtain the clearest view of them. In the first place there must be a union of those who cannot exist without each other"¹⁴. To circumvent "a manifest circularity" inherent in Dilthey's "hermeneutic circle," Heidegger draws upon Aristotle suggestion to consider the "first growth and origin," in formulating the question of being in the form of "taking a look at it beforehand," and "relatedness backward or forward"¹⁵. Aristotle and philosophers of the Classical period, Heidegger contends, have already formulated the true meaning of phenomenology that he had come to understand. He makes certain to alert us to the fact that the word "phenomenology" derives from the Greek sense, "that which reveals itself." This understanding was formulated by the Greek words: *phenomenon* and *logos*. Heidegger, as

11 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 72.

12 Wilhelm Dilthey, *Selected Writings*, ed. H. P. Rickman, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 203,259,262.

13 Heidegger, *Phenomenological Interpretation of Aristotle*, 61-62, 86.

14 Aristotle, *Politics*, in *Introduction to Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1973), 595-596 [1252a 18-25].

15 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 27, 28.

8 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 26, 79, 80-81, 33.

9 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 450.

10 Martin Heidegger, *On Time and Being*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 74, 81.

with Nietzsche, demonstrated his passion for studying the etymologies of words and, in the pursuit of the meaning of “phenomenology,” devised around the word a cluster of etymologies, each possessing an internal unity of meaning that captures the very center of his thought.

The word, “‘phenomenon,’ signifies *that which shows itself*,” and this disclosure, for Heidegger, becomes essential in apprehending human existence. The word, “logos,” connotes “word,” “concept,” “thought,” terms that connect the categories of phenomenology and truth, the understanding of appearing and the disclosure of truth. “What occurs,” he explains in his later lecture *On Time and Being*, “for the phenomenology of the acts of consciousness as the self-manifestation of phenomena is thought more originally by Aristotle and in all Greek thinking and existence as *aletheia*, as the unconcealedness of what-is present, its being revealed, its showing itself”¹⁶. Heidegger, here, understands the word, *aletheia*, in the etymological sense of “truth,” to signify “disclosing,” “uncovering,” “revealing.” More specifically: to make manifest that which in various ways remains concealed¹⁷. The disclosure of what is real and “true” thereby becomes the concern of phenomenology, and “that which phenomenological investigations rediscovered as the supporting attitude of thought proves to be the fundamental trait of Greek thinking, if not indeed of philosophy as such”¹⁸. Correspondingly, “what is given along with that is the possibility of delineating certain directions of sense, and this applies, in the case of a basic phenomenon, in a preeminent way. Certain moments of sense that will stand out in the following discussions came forth already in modern life-philosophy, which I understand to be no mere fashionable philosophy but, for its time, an actual attempt to come to philosophy rather than babble idly over academic frivolities.”

To avoid such “academic frivolities,” while reflecting on “life philosophy,” he argued, “one ought to read Nietzsche, Bergson and Dilthey and compare their orientation to Scheler, *Versuche einer Philosophie des Lebens [Attempts at a Philosophy of Life]*.” Heidegger agrees with Scheler in emphasizing that “the person is never to be thought of as a Thing or a substance” or an object. Rather, a person “is the *unity* of living-through [Er-lebens] which is immediately experienced in and with our Experiences”¹⁹. This connection to experiences, life-philosophy and, by extension, the concept of “sympathy” so characteristic of Scheler, with respect to intersubjective human interaction, recalls Hume’s comment

on “philosophical melancholy.” Hume explains how he would become subjected to this mood whenever he engaged the subjective turn in metaphysics. To extricate himself from philosophical melancholy, he would “dine, play a game of backgammon and converse with my friends.” Humans are social beings, and, thus, “the principle of sympathy” allows for the “easy communication of sentiments” between human beings. The absence of social interaction allows for “a perfect solitude,” which is “perhaps the greatest punishment we can suffer.” For, “man cannot live without society....”²⁰. Within the spirit of avoiding such “suffering,” “academic frivolities,” and “solitude,” Heidegger reinterpreted Aristotle to address issues pertinent to apprehending “life in the world:” the “factual life.” Expressed “otherwise, existing is always factual. Existentiality is essentially determined by facticity”²¹. This form of existence conveys the notion that “Being towards Others is ontologically different from Being towards Things which are present-at-hand. The entity which is ‘other’ has itself the same kind of Being as Dasein. In Being with and towards Others, there is thus a relationship of Being [*Seinsverhältnis*] from Dasein to Dasein.” Accordingly, Dasein, “as Being-in-the-world, already is with Others. ‘Empathy’ does not first constitute Being-with; only on the basis of Being-with does ‘empathy’ become possible.” Ultimately, the philosophical issue, for Heidegger, concerns the problem of living as a human being connected in the human world, -- and not about abstruse categories of philosophy.

In reaching back to Aristotle and the Greeks, Heidegger takes his concept of Being beyond the boundaries of early Husserlian phenomenology, and the prevailing influence of Descartes. As he compares his “analysis of worldhood” to Descartes’ “interpretation of the World,” Heidegger makes clear his purpose: To pursue his study of the ontological foundations of the world “until the ‘cogito sum’ has been phenomenologically destroyed”²². The destructive language Heidegger employed to dismantle traditional metaphysical approaches to the question of Being, is reminiscent of Nietzsche exhorting readers “how to philosophize with a hammer;” the subtitle of *Twilight of the Idols*. Heidegger’s characterization of his destructive purpose in identifying the “ontological defectiveness” of Descartes’ “conception of the world,” was continued through his reading of Kant. In his study of Kant, Heidegger explains how his “original” reading of Kant was based on the principle that “in order to wring from what the words say, what it is that they want to say, every interpretation must necessarily use violence.” The “violence” of his interpretation was construed to “set in

16 Heidegger *On Time and Being*, 79.

17 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 26-27, 51-56, 82-83.

18 Heidegger, *On Time and Being*, 79.

19 Heidegger, *Phenomenological Interpretation of Aristotle*, 61-62. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 73. For Heidegger’s reference to Scheler’s concept of sympathy, see *Ibid.*, 491, n. i.

20 David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed., introd. Ernest C. Mossner (London: Penguin Books, 1985), 316, 411-412, 450.

21 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 82-83.

22 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 123-35.

motion a thoughtful dialogue between thinkers"²³. By harking back to the meaning of the word, *phenomena*, as a Greek way of thinking, he replaced the study of the intentional structure of consciousness with the fundamental study of the relation between Dasein, Being itself, and Being-in-the-world.

Heidegger's analysis of the "worldhood of the world" brings, he says, "the whole phenomena of Being-in-the-world into view." This view perceives Being-in-the-world as Being-with others. "The phenomenological assertion," he argues, "that 'Dasein is essentially Being-with' has an existential-ontological meaning. It does not seek to establish ontically that factually I am not present-at-hand alone, and that Others of my kind occur.... Being-with is an existential characteristic of Dasein even when factually no Other is present-at-hand or perceived. ...Being-alone is a deficient mode of Being-with; its very possibility is the proof of this"²⁴. Through the perspectives of "*Erlebnis*," and "*Lebensphilosophie*," then, Heidegger explains how his approach springs from the phenomenological interpretation of the phenomenon, "life," which in turn, relates to "what is lived" in the "world"²⁵. The very mention of the word, "life," acknowledges it as being "world-related." "If," he argues, "the '*cogito sum*' is to serve as the point of departure for the existential analytic of Dasein, then it needs to be turned around, and furthermore its content needs new ontologico-phenomenal confirmation. The 'sum' is then asserted first, and indeed in the sense that 'I am in a world.'"²⁶ Through this effort to overcome Descartes, Dasein, the individual human being, is constituted as Being-in-the-world. "Being-in as an *existential*," constitutes the ontological and "essential structure of Dasein." An individual is in the world because, as an existing being, he/she is totally emersed in it. This absorption in the world signifies Dasein's capacity to realize its "ownmost potentiality-for-Being.... Dasein is always 'beyond itself.'" However, Heidegger quickly points out, this ontological structure "does not signify anything like an isolated tendency in a worldless 'subject,' but characterizes Being-in-the-world." A characterization which represents Being-in-the-world as constituting the "fact that it has been delivered over to itself --- that it has in each case already been thrown *into a world*."²⁷ The interrelatedness of having "been thrown *into a world*," of "life" and "world," makes explicit, for Heidegger, subsequent categories such as: "to go out into life," "out into the world"; "to live totally in one's world," "totally in one's life." Living in the world and with others, signifies in its relational aspects,

the sense of "caring." On the basis of Dasein's awareness and concern about its own being-in-the-world, Dasein qua Being demonstrates its ability to be concerned, and to care for other beings. For Heidegger, as for Aristotle, "to live," "means to care," and "caring for" (*Sorge*), pertains to one's relation to others, all of which constitute the fundamental structure of factual life:

Every experience is in itself an encounter and indeed an encounter in and for an act of caring.... To 'surround' is the categorical determination of the world in which caring for lives. This life, possessing relucence in care, is precisely intent on having something *surrounding itself*, having the world in such a way that this world makes up the surroundings for the activity of life, surroundings we can respond to, or at least listen to, gaze upon, and talk about. The world is such that relucence is factually possible, and that makes the world a surrounding world. (The ontological sense of the 'world' as existence, *reality*, is determinable only in connection with the interpretation of facticity). From here it is understandable why our considerations can characterize even the shared world and one's own world as a surrounding world.²⁸

The word, "relucence," evokes the image of enlightening disclosure, and exemplifies Heidegger's purpose to excavate the "un-hiddenness" and to demonstrate the interconnectedness of Being-in-the-world with Others. This ontological "connectedness of life" signifies "'connectedness' between birth and death" and, consequently, "consists of a sequence of Experiences 'in time.'"²⁹The "*ontological character of life*," which manifests itself as "caring for others," or "Being of life as its 'facticity,'" was developed more thoroughly by Heidegger in *Being and Time* than in his "Early Freiburg Lectures." The word, 'care' [*Sorge*], he argues, used in an "ontologico-existential manner," expresses Being-in-the-world as "essentially care." And "'Care' cannot stand for some special attitude towards the Self..." Hence, Being-in-the-world, "implies ontologically a relation to living entities within-the-world."³⁰

In retrieving what he considered the real meaning of Aristotle's conception of the practical nature of human experience, Heidegger moved beyond the features of Husserl's phenomenology that reflected traditional metaphysics. Through the reinterpretation of Aristotle, and his later work, Heidegger maintained that the Greeks of Classical Antiquity understood the essential meaning of phenomenology as evidenced in their "openness" to study

23 Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, 141, xx.

24 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 149, 156-57.

25 Heidegger, *Phenomenological Interpretation of Aristotle* 63; Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 72-74.

26 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 254, 236-37; *Phenomenological Interpretation of Aristotle*, 65.

27 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 79-80, 236-37.

28 Heidegger, *Phenomenological Interpretations of Aristotle*, 68, 96; Compare *Being and Time*, 82-83, 156-58.

29 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 425.

30 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 237-38.

and to comprehend the essential characteristics of human experience. Furthermore, Heidegger averred, “it must be shown how this philosophical problematic [‘the question of Being’] returns the intention of *phenomenological* research to its own proper originality and how ---i.e., in what sense--- the interpretation of Aristotle qualifies as phenomenological.”³¹ Although Heidegger acknowledges Husserl’s importance in introducing him to the practice of “phenomenological seeing,” he credits Aristotle with the original meaning of the word. After having made this pronouncement, Heidegger maintains at the beginning of *Being and Time*, “this question of being has today been forgotten.” Upon realizing this neglect, Heidegger proclaims restating the question of being as an important “theme of our time,” and “*a theme for actual investigation*,” that requires the phenomenological method.³² The inquiry “raises anew” “*the meaning of Being[Sinn]*,” which has its roots in “ancient ontology.”³³ For “the work of Plato and Aristotle is evidence enough,” as the “foundation for the sciences” has already been laid, of the need to ground the inquiry into the meaning of the question of being upon a new methodological approach. Existential Phenomenology, for Heidegger, provides the proper mode of inquiry to comprehend the phenomena of concrete human lived experiences:

Inquiry, as a kind of seeking, must be guided beforehand by what is sought. So, the meaning of Being must already be available to us in some way. As we have intimated, we always conduct our activities in an understanding of Being. Out of this understanding arise both the explicit question of the meaning of Being and the tendency that leads us toward is conception.³⁴

This ontological inquiry, “the theme of our time,” signals Heidegger’s “radical” break from past traditional philosophies of the “ego” or “cogito,” (which includes Descartes, Kant, and Husserl’s “transcendental ego”), and his subsequent efforts to formulate philosophy as “*fundamental ontology*.” “If to interpret the meaning of being becomes our task,” he explains, “Dasein is not only the primary entity to be interrogated; it is also that entity which already comports itself, in its Being, towards what we are asking about when we ask the question. But in that case the question of Being is nothing other than the radicalization of an essential tendency-of-Being which belongs to Dasein itself -- the pre-ontological understanding of Being.”³⁵ In rejecting the philosophical retreat into the enclosed solitude of the ego,

Heidegger turns to the existential engagement of human lived experiences as *Being-in-the-world*. As the point of departure for his existential analytic of Dasein, Heidegger reverses the “sum” of Descartes’ “cogito” to designate “I am in a World.”³⁶ Through the principle of the “facticity of Being-in-the-world,” he derives the historicity of Being. “Factically,” Heidegger posits, “in the very depths of its Being,” “Dasein has its ‘history.’” “Higher than actuality,” we learned earlier, “stands possibility.” As one chooses certain possibilities for oneself, “time” constitutes the “horizon” within which to understand and to interpret Being. The temporal dimensions of being and becoming, the points between being born, realizing human possibilities and death, exemplify the distinctive characteristics of the ontological connectedness of being-in-the-world. “The question of Dasein’s connectedness,” he explains, “is the ontological problem of Dasein’s historizing.”³⁷ Thus, the philosophical relevance of human sociality, for Heidegger, and the historicity of that sociality in accounting for claims of cognitive insight or even of understanding the new “ontological-phenomenal confirmation” of being-in-the-world: “The phenomenological assertion that ‘Dasein is essentially Being-with’ has an existential-ontological meaning.”³⁸ Heidegger’s fundamental concern demonstrates how temporality becomes centrally involved both in the movement of thinking and in the capacity for humans to orient themselves in the world of other beings. This new perception of human sociality and “historicity” gave rise to what Heidegger’s former student, Karl Löwith --- who had a personal relationship with both philosophers --- describes as “existential-ontological of Heidegger, and the existential-philosophical of Jaspers.”³⁹

Heidegger’s concept of Being encountered frequent criticisms from philosophers who viewed his Dasein as an individual of solitude rather than community, as a living entity whose authentic existence becomes secured in relation to itself alone and not essentially to others. Jaspers and Buber were among those critics.⁴⁰ Despite the criticisms, countervailing evidence, in several of the passages cited above, provides an alternative interpretation.

36 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 63, 254.

37 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 241, 426-27, 434-39.

38 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 156.

39 Karl Löwith, *From Hegel to Nietzsche*, trans. David E. Green (Garden City: Doubleday, 1967), 359. See also, Karl Löwith, “Heidegger: Problem and Background of Existentialism,” *Social Research*: Vol. 15, Num.3, 345-58 and *The Heidegger-Jaspers Correspondence*, 26,32, 41, 63-64 215.

40 See Buber’s explanation for why Heidegger’s concept of “existence” fails to lay ground for authentic “dialogue,” and Jaspers’ philosophy of Existenz succeeds, in his essays, “What is Man?” and *Afterword*: “The History of the Dialogical Principle,” in *Between Man and Man*, trans. Ronald Gregor Smith and Maurice Friedman (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1966), 163-81, 219-22.

31 Heidegger, *Phenomenological Interpretation of Aristotle*, 86.

32 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 21.

33 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 18, 22, 40.

34 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 25.

35 Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 35.

By contrast, Jaspers was more willing than Heidegger to raise epistemological issues concerning the question of Being. In raising these issues, Jaspers openly acknowledged his filial relationship with Immanuel Kant, Søren Kierkegaard, and Friedrich Nietzsche. While reflecting historically upon philosophy in his “contemporary situation,” Jaspers makes the following observation:

The philosophy of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries seems to work itself out in the great antitheses. But the thinkers were irreconcilable, and the ideas were mutually exclusive.... When one looks over the thought of centuries, the same thing always seems to happen: in whatever form this Other to reason appears, in the course of rational understanding it is either changed back into reason, or sometimes it is recognized as a limit in its place; but then in its consequences it is circumscribed and delimited by reason itself, or sometimes it is

seen and developed as the source of a new and better reason....

Quietly, something enormous has happened in the reality of Western man; a destruction of all

authority, a radical disillusionment in an overconfident reason, and a dissolution of bonds have made anything, absolutely anything, seem possible.... Philosophizing to be authentic must grow out of our new reality, and there take its stand.⁴¹

The “new reality,” to which Jaspers refers, pertains to the profound significance of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche in the “contemporary philosophical situation,” vis-à-vis the question: “what is man?” Philosophy, Jaspers opined, was never the same after their influence because of the degree to which each had sparked an acute awareness of the human condition. “Common to both of them,” he argues, “is a type of thought and humanity which was indissolubly connected with a moment of this epoch, and so understood by them.”⁴² This concern with the human condition, and the historical situations in which individuals find themselves, identifies the efforts Jaspers and Heidegger made to overcome the continual bifurcation of reason and experience. Jaspers reflected further upon how the “great stars of the philosophers’ heaven,” Plato, Plotinus, Augustine, Nicolas of Cusa, Giordano Bruno, Spinoza, Schelling, Goethe, Hegel, Kant and his contemporary, Max Weber were signaled as thinkers who exerted an important influence on his philosophical development. “Even in the history of philosophy,” he remarked, “we can witness the tremendous incisiveness of our age.”⁴³ Kant, especially crucial in Jaspers’ turn of mind,

made an incisive comment concerning his century often referred to as the Enlightenment in his essay, *What is the Enlightenment?* “Ages are not enlightened,” he declared, “only individuals.” The concept of rationality, associated with the period of Enlightenment, had been characterized by the confidence of rendering reality intelligible through “indubitable” categories of reason. Through his injunction, “Dare to know,” Kant’s perception of the Enlightenment became inextricably aligned with the idea of self-critique.⁴⁴ Through Kant’s project of self-critique, the concept of reason was to become aware of its boundaries. This critical way of thinking proposed by Kant, which recognized conceptual boundaries, proved appealing to Jaspers in his search for understanding how individuals become aware of being in the world

The abiding relevance of the history of philosophy, thus, indicates the degree to which the intellectual and historical contexts inform the kinds of philosophical questions raised by Jaspers concerning being in the world (*Existenz*). In this quest, Jaspers joined Heidegger and similarly minded contemporaries in recognizing that I become a self with other selves and am confirmed in my uniqueness through being made present by others in intersubjective communication. The process of self-analysis through interpersonal interaction. Husserl, a few years later, sensing “a felling of hostility” in “our vital need,” for “a genuine humanity among the younger generation,” joined the turn in phenomenology toward *Existenzphilosophie* in situating subjectivity and intersubjectivity in the life-world.⁴⁵ The relation of individual self to other selves, which Jaspers categorizes as “communication,” discloses the development of being in the world as one of “freedom” and “responsibility.” His philosophy of existence developed the methodological principle of “existential elucidation,” a method which articulated both the boundaries and “possibilities” of human existence. The concepts, “Existenz,” “boundary situations,” and communication, become central categories in Jaspers’ existential philosophy.

In an “existential sense,” one’s being, the “I am,” the “I myself,” is situated in concrete circumstances within which the potential of human existence becomes actualized. When Jaspers reflects on the individual as “I myself,” he

to Sartre, ed. Walter Kaufmann, trans. Felix Kaufmann, (New York: Meridian Book, 1956), 137.

44 Immanuel Kant, *Political Writings*, ed. Hans Reiss, trans. H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 54-55.

45 *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*, trans. David Carr (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970), 6, 107-110, 121-23, 151-58, 173-189, 358-89. For Husserl’s use of the term, *Existenz*, made popular by Heidegger and Jaspers, see *Ibid.*, 6-18. Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, trans. Dorian Cairns (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1967), 1-8, 157.

41 Karl Jaspers, *Reason and Existenz*, trans. William Earle (New York City, NY: Noonday Press, 1955), 22-23.

42 Jaspers, *Reason and Existenz*, 24.

43 Karl Jaspers, “On My Philosophy,” in *Existentialism from Dostoevsky*

ascribed the following conditions under which human self-realization take shape: The first occurs as the individual experiences the boundary situations of struggle, suffering, guilt, and death. The second condition takes place when the unique and individual experience of reciprocal, existential communication with another human being; an "other." To exist, as human beings, signifies to be in a "situation." And, he explains, - as "existence means to be in situations, I can never get out of one without *entering into another*. Any understanding of situations means that I proceed toward ways of transforming them; it does not mean I might change my condition itself. There is nothing I can do about my being in situations. The consequences of whatever I do will confront me as a new situation which I have helped to bring about, and which is now given."⁴⁶ Situations, such as those within which one has always existed, for Jaspers, remain constant. For, in the process of living, all human beings encounter boundary situations:

...I am always in situations; I cannot live without struggling and suffering;

I cannot avoid guilt; I must die----these are what I call boundary situations.

They *never change* except in appearance. There *is no way to survey them* in

existence, no way to see anything behind them. They are like a wall we run into,

a wall on which we founder. We cannot modify them; all that we can do is to

make them lucid, but without explaining or deducing them from something else.

They go with existence itself.⁴⁷

Jaspers' understanding of boundary situations as referring to existence points to the insights he derived from the perception of *Existenz* as a worldly Being. The position put forward through this perception makes the argument that we are unable to navigate boundary situation solely with rational and objective knowledge. "The meaningful way for us to react to boundary situations," he posited, "is therefore not by planning and calculating to overcome them but by the very different activity of *becoming the Existenz we potentially are*; we become ourselves by entering with open eyes into the boundary situations. We can know them only externally, and their reality can only be felt by *Existenz*. To experience boundary situations is the same as *Existenz*."⁴⁸ Jaspers provides a world of bounded situations in which

challenges and frustrations become insurmountable, a world filled with complexities and ambiguities in which traditional categories of science and reason appear to be insufficient, a world, as a result, which throws the individual back on him or herself with a choice between faith and despair. The experiences of struggle, suffering guilt and death explain the "anxiety" evident in the human condition. "We are so exposed," he reflected in his intellectual biography, "that we constantly find ourselves facing nothingness. Our wounds are so deep that in our weak moments we wonder if we are not, in fact, dying from them. At present moment, the security of coherent philosophy, which existed from Parmenides to Hegel, is lost."⁴⁹ A few pages later, Jaspers proffers his explanation of how the absence of coherence and meaning in life contributed to the loneliness and despair we humans experience:

The community of masses of human beings has produced an order of life in regulated channels which connects individuals in a technically functioning organization, but not inwardly from the historicity of their souls. The emptiness caused by dissatisfaction with mere achievement and the helplessness that results when the channels of relation break down have brought forth a loneliness of soul such as never existed before, a loneliness that hides itself, that seeks relief in vain in the erotic and the irrational until it leads eventually to a deep comprehension of the importance of establishing communication between man and man.⁵⁰

In *Myth of Sisyphus*, Camus offers his explanation of how, a "family of minds," from Jaspers to Heidegger, Husserl [phenomenology] to Scheler "blocked the royal road of reason in recovering the direct paths of truth."⁵¹ Camus makes the following observation of his understanding of Jaspers and the intellectual "climate that is common" to the thinkers of his generation: "In the ravaged world in which the impossibility of knowledge is established, in which everlasting nothingness seems the only reality and irremediable despair seems the only attitude, he tries to recover the Ariadne's thread that leads to divine secrets."⁵² For Camus, "the mind, when it reaches its limits, must make a judgment and choose its conclusions...The absurd is born of this confrontation between the human need and the unreasonable silence of the world...This must be clung to because the whole consequence of a life can depend on it."⁵³ In pointing the way of the "absurd" individual, and in identifying the threads of

46 Karl Jaspers, *Philosophy 2*, trans. E. B. Ashton (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 178.

47 Jaspers, *Philosophy 2*, 178.

48 Jaspers, *Philosophy 2*, 179. For Heidegger's remarks on the "existential-ontological significance" of Jaspers' "limit situation," regarding the question, "what is man?" see *Being and Time*, 495, n. vi.

49 Jaspers, "My Philosophy," 138.

50 Jaspers, "My Philosophy," 140.

51 Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, trans. Justin O'Brien (New York: Vintage Books, 1959), 17.

52 Camus, *Myth*, 19.

53 Camus, *Myth*, 21.

“nihilism” in Europe of the 1930’s and 40’s, both Camus and Jaspers follow Nietzsche in rejecting “suicide” and thereby, in affirming life: The “point is to live.”⁵⁴

Nietzsche’s injunction to affirm life calls for a commitment which assesses human existence in the face of its constraints and possibilities. Jaspers characterizes the boundary situation of the human condition as the inevitable fact that individuals always exist in a particular situation at a certain time in history. I exist at a specific historical moment, in certain social circumstances, and with specific inherited biological characteristics. “The boundary situation of being subject to the singular constraint of my data,” he explains,

“derives its poignancy from the contrasting thought of man at large and of his due in any state of perfection. Yet at the same time, and in every situation, the constraint allows for the possibility of an uncertain future. The unrest in the boundary situation is that what is up to me lies still ahead; my freedom in it is to assume given facts, to make them my own as if they had been my will. While the first boundary situation makes men aware of the historicity in all existential existence, *particular boundary situations* --- death, suffering, struggle, guilt --- affect each individual as general ones within his specific historicity of the moment.”⁵⁵

To explicate the individual’s existential response to the boundary of human existence, Jaspers employs the Latin expression, *amor fati*, --- a term he associated with both Machiavelli and Nietzsche --- to emphasize the existential and historic import of human proactivity. The Stoics are also relevant in this connection. For as individuals immerse themselves in the form of creating human possibilities and becoming in time, each takes the immersion as “mine: *amor fati*. I love it as I love myself, for only in my fate can I be existentially sure of myself. Here...objective constraint becomes for *Existenz* an experience of being. The sense of historicity as a sense of fate means to take concrete existence seriously.”⁵⁶ This sense of the immediacy of historic consciousness informs us that “I know myself to be identical with the particulars of my existence.” The existential situation entails “nothing but the singular and definite realization which no longer needs to be justified to generalities...” The existential reply [to “general standards”] is “*amor fati*, the historic consciousness of adopting the particular as definition turned into the depth of *Existenz* itself. Within my *amor fati*...lie the negation of specific conditions of my existence and finally of my whole fate, the possibility of

suicide, as well as the possibilities of strife and defiance”⁵⁷ The existential response thereby becomes an important component in the process of human self-realization, which leads to the recognition and understanding of “situation Being” in a social world of other individuals.

The world of social relation, or “community” in all of its ramifications ---“this society, this state, this family, this university, this profession of mine” --- encompasses Jaspers’ concept of “communication in the idea, and in its realization by *Existenz*” moves an individual closer to his/her fellow person; “I myself” and another self. For, as Jaspers continues, “when I come to myself there are two things that lie in this communication: my being I, and my being with another.”⁵⁸ Jaspers eventually makes a marked distinction between “communication in existence” and “existential communication.” The difference underscored, for him, the importance in identifying the manner in which selfhood of the person became explicit in identifying the individual’s unique selfhood with the selfhood of others:

In communication that affects me, the other is this one only. Uniqueness is the phenomenon of the substantiality of this being. Uniqueness is the phenomenon of the substantiality of this being. Existential communication is not to be modeled and is not to be copied; each time it is flatly singular. It occurs between two selves which are nothing else, are not representative, and are therefore not interchangeable. In this communication, which is absolutely historic and unrecognizable from the outside, lies the assurance of selfhood. It is the one way by which a self is for self, in mutual creation. The tie to it is a historic decision on the part of a self: to avoid its self-being as an isolated I and to enter in communicative self-being. It is only in freedom, as a possibility, that I can understand what it means to say, ‘I cannot be my free self unless the other is and wants to be himself --- and I am with him.’⁵⁹

The elucidation of *Existenz* and existential communication of the self with others allows for the moment that “I realize the particularity of my communication, and thus its limitations, I feel a shortcoming.” The self realizes that as “a single isolated consciousness I would not have communicated anything, would ask no questions and give no answers...without the self-consciousness of others.” The experience of shortcomings in existential communication, for Jaspers, “is my point of departure for the philosophical reflection in which I try to understand that to be myself I need

54 Camus, *Myth*, 48.

55 Jaspers, *Philosophy 2*, 183-84.

56 Jaspers, *Philosophy 2*, 192.

57 Jaspers, *Philosophy 2*, 192-93.

58 Jaspers, *Philosophy 2*, 49-50, 56.

59 Jaspers, *Philosophy 2*, 54.

the other for whom no one else can substitute.”⁶⁰ To avert the sense of dread and nothingness an isolated consciousness may experience, Jaspers promotes the principle that individuals become authentic when they devote themselves to the other; the other taken to mean either the community of other individuals or the limiting horizons of “situation Being.” “The thesis of my philosophizing,” he informs us, “is the individual cannot become human by himself. Self-being is only real in communication with another self-being. Alone, I sink into gloomy isolation --- only in community with others can I be revealed in the act of mutual discovery. My own freedom can only exist if the other is also free. Isolated or self-isolating Being remains mere potentiality or disappears into nothingness.”⁶¹

Thus, human life constitutes a life in the community, living in a world of shared experiences, shared environment, shared meaning. Jaspers’ philosophical insights resonate, as we have seen, in Heidegger’s concept of human existence. Where the latter philosophizes, as he designates, “existentially,” the former philosophizes “humanly.” Jaspers and Heidegger were of the generation of Europeans for whom the outbreak of the First World War, occurring in the early years of their mature life, marked a turning point in their entire way of viewing Europe and its civilization. Their writings were situated within the dual sensation of the great threat, and the great promise, of modern life presented in the 1920s and 1930s. Notwithstanding, both thinkers responded to their generation’s demand to make philosophy relevant to human reality. Each confronted the epochal shift in worldviews by formulating concepts which examined the osmotic interaction of being and being-in-the-world, embodying a social world of relations, and emphasized the interconnectedness between human beings, all of which become relevant in the philosophy of dialogue.

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60 Jaspers, *Philosophy* 2, 51.

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