

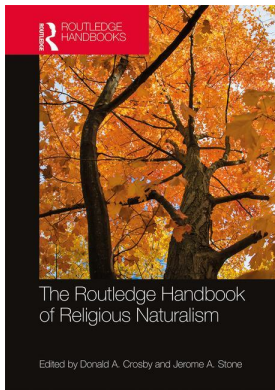
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7

JASPERS'S PHILOSOPHICAL FAITH

Toward a form of religious naturalism

Nicholas J. Wernicki

At first glance, Karl Jaspers seems out of place on a list of early contributors to contemporary religious naturalism. Current scholarship on Jaspers's work is generally associated with his early psychopathology and his post-war political philosophy, both of which still maintain some relevance in niche academic circles today. Beyond these threads Jaspers is, in my view, widely under read and subsequently underappreciated by the academy at large, and it could be argued that he never had "his moment" of philosophical fame in comparison to his existentialist counterparts of twentieth-century France and Germany. Motivated by the raw and tumultuous socio-political climate of post-war Europe, Jaspers found himself as both philosopher and public intellectual responding to the role his homeland played in the Second World War.

His public persona was befitting in view of his overarching perspective that philosophy, or what Jaspers considered the active process of *philosophizing* "exists wherever thought brings men to an awareness of their existence" (Jaspers 2000: 125). This simple conception of philosophizing becomes the cornerstone of Jaspers's philosophical theology, leading to what Jaspers calls *philosophical faith*, which develops in stark contrast to and, ultimately, as a rejection of, faith in revelation. For Jaspers, philosophical faith is both an epistemology and a philosophy of communication grounded in the possibility of transcendence.¹ Through the concept of philosophical faith, Jaspers illuminates the limits of empirical judgments while acknowledging the transcendent quality of that which lies beyond them. Jaspers writes in his *Philosophical Autobiography*:

The fundamental philosophical operation at all times is, more or less consciously, to transcend towards that out of which the objective as well as the thinking of the subject intending the objective arises. What is neither object nor act of thinking (subject), but contains both within itself I have called the Encompassing. This latter does not speak for itself either through the object or through the subject, but through both in one as that which is the Transcendence at one and the same time of consciousness as well as of Being.
(Jaspers 1981: 73)

Put simply, philosophical faith retains an existential posture, concerned with the complexities of the self, while honoring the possibility of transcendence as ultimacy. In Jaspers's words: "Philosophical faith is the indispensable source of all genuine philosophizing. From it comes the

striving of individuals in the world to experience and investigate the appearance of reality with the aim of attaining the reality of Transcendence ever more clearly" (Jaspers 1971: 89).

It is important to note that when Jaspers refers to the reality of transcendence he is not presupposing, or offering a proof of, something that is outside of nature. Rather, he is addressing a kind of epistemology of transcendence that differentiates philosophical faith from religious revelation. Jaspers uses the concept of hope as one of the many distinguishing features separating the two, which may help define philosophical faith as epistemological. For Jaspers, hope in the context of revealed religious faith is grounded in the objective actuality of a savior or a revealed promise, whereas philosophical faith is based on a truth grounded in philosophical reason. Paradoxically, I arrive at hope through the process of philosophical faith by rationally comprehending the truth and by discovering that the truth will never fully show itself. Yet, through the hope associated with philosophical faith, I am compelled to reach beyond the objectively knowable toward the ultimacy of my situation.

Jerome A. Stone points out in his text *Religious Naturalism Today: The Rebirth of a Forgotten Alternative* that religious naturalism has been experiencing a revival over the last 30 years. Along with this revival comes a renewed interest in some of the thinkers that make up the intellectual history of religious naturalism today. The broad genealogy of religious naturalism represents an amalgam of philosophers and theologians ranging from the American Transcendentalism movement and American Pragmatism to the Chicago theologians and process thinkers as well as some strains coming out of continental thought. Theories of nature can be traced back to the Ancients and the Pre-Socratic thinkers and through the Vedas of Hinduism.

However, the seedling of contemporary religious naturalism is most clearly recognized through Spinoza's philosophical treatment of *Natura Naturans* (Nature Naturing) and *Natura Naturata* (Nature Natured).² It is worth noting that Spinoza was the focus of one of Jaspers's volumes in his *The Great Philosophers* series and that in his "Philosophical Autobiography" he reminisces, "At the age of seventeen I read Spinoza. He became my philosopher" (Jaspers 1981: 7). In addition to the influence that Spinoza had on Jaspers's thinking, it is important to recognize that Jaspers's metaphysics is generally recognized as a reordering of Kant's transcendental idealism. This is most clearly represented in Jaspers's seven modes of the encompassing (*Existenz*, Transcendence, *Dasein*, Consciousness-as-such, spirit, world, and reason).

It is important to pay close attention to Jaspers's primary dialogue partners (Spinoza, Kant, Kierkegaard, and Nietzsche) in order to properly situate him in the lineage of early religious naturalists. Jaspers remains grounded in metaphysics while maintaining that philosophizing is a personal, existential pursuit, which for some seems incongruent at best. The challenge here is that, for some, metaphysics should remain separate from our historical situation. Jaspers overcomes this objection through what he calls *Existenz-philosophy*. He tasks himself with illuminating the encompassing by putting science, theology, and reason in productive tension with one another, thus honoring metaphysics in the context of our historical, existential situation. The encompassing for Jaspers is reality that shows itself always as a limit; it gives notice of itself and recedes at once. It is a subject for both metaphysical and existential inquiry. For Jaspers:

The Encompassing is that in which all Being is for us. Said another way, it is the very condition under which Being becomes Being for us. It is not everything in the sense of the sum total of Being, but rather the whole – which remains open for us – as the ground of Being.

(Jaspers 2000: 27)

Jaspers's use of the term "ground of Being" may raise some eyebrows for religious naturalists because he remains somewhat ambiguous about what this term implies. This usage might be especially problematic if Jaspers were to categorize this concept as ontologically distinct from all other realities, which he does not. Furthermore, if we maintain that Jaspers's mode of inquiry remains a limit epistemology, he is merely implying that philosophizing requires that inquiry remain in an open system. He is not objectifying the ground of Being in a way that presupposes a reality outside of or ontologically distinct from nature. In doing so, Jaspers attempts to move beyond ontology, which he recognizes as limited for probing into what objectively is. Jaspers extends traditional ontology to what he terms *periechontology*, which is a cognitive process of attempting to apprehend the unknowable by transcending the merely objectifiable.³ For Jaspers traditional ontology "demonstrates what, in immanent thought, is *virtually visible*" while periechontology "makes palpable what, in transcending thought, is hit upon indirectly" (Jaspers 2000: 199). The palpability or indefinable awareness of possible transcendence is the primary focus of Jaspers's inquiry. It is the examination of the resulting non-knowledge, which opens us to the possibility of transcendence. This examination is the task of philosophical faith.

With the exception of a few contemporary thinkers, Robert S. Corrington for example, existential thinkers such as Jaspers, Heidegger and Tillich remain, at best, on the margins of current conversations on religious naturalism. My aim is to bring Karl Jaspers's *Existenz-Philosophy* more fully into the fold of contemporary religious naturalism through the engagement of his critically important and lesser-known text *Philosophical Faith and Revelation* and his overarching theory of the encompassing.

When I refer to naturalism I am referring to the assumption that – put simply – nature is all that there is.⁴ This position rejects any metaphysical dualism that leaves the door open for a complex that is over, above, prior to, or outside of the limitlessness confines of nature; and, in my connotation, naturalism cannot support a reality subject to any kind of ontological priority.

I do however remain open to the possibility of transcendence through Jaspers's treatment of the encompassing. For Jaspers, transcendence is in relation to the encompassing of all encompassing while standing at the same time in rejection of *supranatura*. I am especially friendly to what Donald Crosby refers to as epistemological or noetic transcendence, which not only plays a powerful role in my conception of naturalism; it delineates my conception as a *religious* naturalism (Crosby 2003: 253).

In an effort to define what constitutes a religious disposition from those human and historical constructs that are merely important or relevant Crosby offers some "role functional categories" of religious naturalism. They are: Uniqueness, Primacy, Pervasiveness, Rightness, Permanence, and Hiddenness, each having an interrelated personal and cosmic side. Jaspers's *Existenz-philosophy* falls into a number of Crosby's religious categories but Jaspers's thinking is most active in the categories of Primacy and Hiddenness. Jaspers thinking is also grounded in the interrelatedness of the personal and the cosmic represented in various modes of the encompassing (*Existenz* and World).

When Crosby is referring to the personal side of Primacy, for example, he is referring to the idea that an object of interest is "not just one concern among many others but the ultimate concern of that person" (Crosby 2002: 119). Crosby, following Paul Tillich's lead, firmly posits the religious in the realm of the existential on the personal side of Primacy while also recognizing the cosmic side as ultimacy. Crosby's use of the term *object* here is used in the most generic sense to denote a focus of concern and not an object in the empirical sense. Crosby goes on to describe the personal side of Hiddenness as the individual confrontation with the object as

being overpowered with mystery and awe much like the sublime. He describes the cosmic side this way:

Hiddenness as a cosmic function points to the religious object as the most mysterious of all realities, impervious to full exploration because it is the secret wellspring of all that is, the primordial source of existence, meaning, and value for the cosmos as a whole.

(Crosby 2002: 121)

Crosby's categories help frame Jaspers as a religious thinker. Jaspers's *Existenz*, the mode of the encompassing that I am, demonstrates its ultimate concern for its situation through its will to communicate and, in turn, become possible *Existenzen* in community. Furthermore, Jaspers's entire system of *Existenz-philosophy* is predicated on Crosby's treatment of his term Hiddenness. For Jaspers, the most mysterious of all realities lies beyond the boundaries of cognition of possible transcendence (the encompassing of all encompassing). Jaspers's seven modes of the encompassing are totalizing, interrelated, and representational of Crosby's categories of the cosmic and the personal. *Existenz*, Transcendence, *Dasein*, Consciousness-as-such, spirit, world, and reason are equally real although distinct in their varied features of immanence and transcendence. Most importantly they do not fall outside of the limitlessness of nature.

This position is highly contentious, and part of my aim is to argue that when Jaspers talks about the encompassing, he does so in a totalizing way that leaves room for an epistemological transcendence while remaining true to the premise that nature is all that there is. Jaspers's move beyond ontology to his method of periechontology is an attempt to illuminate that which falls outside or beyond what ontology can confirm by objective clarification, thus exposing the limits of ontology. Jaspers argues that periechontology is a mode of inquiry that asks about the objectively unknowable. I am not convinced that Jaspers would include a space for inquiry that is open to a reality other than nature, because this would require the objectification of the supernatural, which he could not reach through periechontology.

To be sure, if Jaspers is a naturalist his notion of the encompassing cannot surpass the limitlessness of nature. However, periechontology also restricts Jaspers from embracing nature through scientific dogmatism; his methodology requires an open system. According to Jaspers: "Nature ... becomes encompassing, unobjectifiable existence" (Jaspers 1967: 180). What he attempts to achieve through periechontology is a methodology that inquires into the possibility of the transcendent other. Periechontology makes no objective claims nor does it construct an edifice about the determinacy of Being. Further, it does not make explicit that the transcendent other is other than nature or some supernatural construct of transcendence.

It is important to note that *Existenz*, which constitutes one of the four modes of the encompassing that we are (*Existenz*, *Dasein*/existence, consciousness as such, and spirit/*Geist*), should not be merely conflated with our objective psychophysical existence or *Dasein*; it cannot be discovered as an object of knowledge and thus remains unknowable to us in totality. Rather, it is a mode of Being "in possibility" always qua possible *Existenz*. It is always in relation to and striving toward communication with other *Existenzen* over the meaning of Being-in-the-world and ultimately the possibility of transcendence. Through the process of philosophical faith, authentic *Existenz* unavoidably encounters a limit situation whereby reason fails and ciphers withdraw, leaving *Existenz* in an unsettled state of foundering or shipwreck. For Jaspers, to encounter possible *Existenz* is to experience a limit situation. Crosby offers a similar interpretation of what he calls cosmic hiddenness:

it is exemplified by nature's sheer givenness; we cannot account for the fact of nature's existence or creative ongoingness. We can only explain particular aspects of the universe in terms of their relation to one another. The existence of nature must remain utterly inexplicable.

(Crosby 2002: 125)

Is it possible that Crosby finds himself in a Jaspersian limit situation when confronted with the utter inexplicability of nature's existence? Crosby's characterization of nature signals the possibility that religious naturalism can be a kind of philosophical faith. Crosby's religious naturalism is a periechontological inquiry rather than a purely ontological one. It extends to the limitless boundaries of nature while making no claims about the possibility of the supernatural. The recognition of the unknowable does not necessitate an objective Other that is outside of nature. In fact, by creating metaphysics of something as undefinable as nature Jaspers would betray the very spirit of "hiddenness" upon which his periechontology is predicated. This leaves readers of Jaspers to come to their own conclusions about the relationship between the encompassing and nature by asking: how, beyond the objectifiable and immanent actualities of nature can we account for its sheer givenness? What can the process of cognition reveal about the fact that we can only comprehend certain aspects of the universe in terms of their relation to one other, as Crosby asks? These questions articulate that when confronted by the utterly inexplicable features of nature, foundering becomes an inescapable mode of being-before-nature.

For Jaspers, *Existenz* is always ensnared in a particular situation; it is a historical way of being-in-the-world. It is always situated in nature while confronted by the reality that nature, in its totality, is always also epistemologically out of reach. This fact implies that *Existenz* is always in a situation whereby nature is paradoxically present and other, illuminated and hidden at the same time. *Existenz* and nature are constantly and eternally at play in a game of periechontological "hide and go seek." Authentic *Existenz* through communication with other *Existenzen* is compelled to seek the hidden other even though there is no determined object to be found. It is only through possible transcendence that there is an awareness of that which is eternally and epistemological out of the grasp of *Existenz*.

Crosby's thinking helps delineate between two distinct yet interrelated aspects of nature, *experienced* nature and *conceptualized* nature. According to Crosby:

Therefore our epistemologies and metaphysics must deal with two sorts or aspects of nature. One is *experienced* nature, and the other is *conceptualized* nature, the nature portrayed in postulated models, analogies, metaphors, and theories.

(Crosby 2002: 25)

Both Crosby's and Jaspers's thinking is far too nuanced to make a blunt comparison and it would be plainly and problematically reductive to relate Crosby's theory of nature to Jaspers's theory of the encompassing although I hope that I have made some congruencies recognizable. Crosby is right to recognize a conceptualized category of nature because the hidden features of nature to which *Existenz* becomes potentially aware remain as limit situations. There would be no need for analogy and metaphor if all of nature were plainly knowable. Nature would just be plainly and objectively available in its totality.

Jaspers's conception of reality as the encompassing is bifurcated into the categories of the-being-that-we-are (*Existenz*, consciousness-as-such, spirit, reason, and *Dasein*) and the-being-that-ensnares-us (world, reason, and transcendence). Reason is noted in both categories because it is the bond between all modes of the encompassing, which further affirms the possibility of a

naturalistic philosophy coming out of his *Existenz*-philosophy. However, world and transcendence can never be the objects of our inquiry. World is a totality through which we may encounter objectivity yet always extending beyond the objective. If we consider world analogous to Crosby's treatment of nature there may be some common ground on which Crosby and Jaspers both stand. For Jaspers, *Existenz* finds itself experientially in the horizon of the limitlessness of world or, to use Crosby's words, as experienced and conceptualized nature. According to Jaspers:

When we cognize objectively the Encompassing that we are as human beings, it too becomes something different for us from the things in the world. Insofar as we are capable of investigating ourselves, we are ourselves taken up into this being-world which for us is the incomprehensible Other, i.e. nature.

(Jaspers 2000:142)

The incomprehensible Other that is nature throws authentic *Existenz* into a state of foundering. In an effort to flee from the anxiety of the unknowable and the state of epistemological shipwreck *Dasein* is tempted to objectify nature through the conceptual means of metaphor and analogy. *I cannot grasp or encounter this or that reality of nature however I know it must be like this or that thing that can be objectifiable*. On the contrary, when *Existenz* is in full existential communication with other *Existenzen* it remains open to moments of possible epistemological transcendence through philosophical faith. *Existenz* does not objectify that which is encountered through foundering but also does not fall prey to revelation as a source of truth about the inaccessible reality that lies in transcendence.

Jaspers can be read as a naturalist in that he rejects revelation and any form of religious dogmatics, which are the primary sources of supernaturalism. It is easy to jump to the conclusion that this position is threatened by the very same polemic on which it is based. In other words it would seem that if he outright rejects supernaturalism as a possibility he betrays the very character of the limit situation that is embedded in *Existenz* by closing off possible transcendence to that which is unknowable. It is important to note that foundering does not imply an epistemology that is simply open to all possible truth claims about reality. Reason bonds the modes of the encompassing and fosters possible *Existenz*. Foundering does not lead to possible *Existenz* willy-nilly. Formulating an argument against that which is other than nature requires a metaphysics in which Jaspers does not participate. There are merely various encounters with the encompassing and the one totality that is encompassing of the encompassing. For Jaspers:

The encompassing of Being-itself encompassed by the encompassing that we are is called world and Transcendence...We have no way to objectify the encompassing of Being. In the world we go in all directions, finding things we can know, ad infinitum. The world as a whole is neither comprehensible nor adequately conceivable; it is not an object of our knowledge, only an idea challenging our research. As for Transcendence, we do not explore this at all. We are touched by it, metaphorically speaking, and we touch it in turn – as the Other, the Encompassing of all encompassing.

(Jaspers 1967: 69)

It is reasonable to read *Existenz*-philosophy as a rejection of supernaturalism if the supernatural is categorized as the objectifiable "thingness" that revealed religion makes it out to be. *Existenz* in relation to the limitlessness of nature does not necessitate the possibility that what lies beyond the limits of cognition could be supernatural. The encompassing of the encompassing, that which encompasses all other modes of the encompassing could not reconcile the notion that

nature has an edge or contour that demarcates one reality and begins a supernatural Other without relying on a revealed epistemology. Foundering merely opens *Existenz* to the possibility of transcendence.

If Crosby is, in fact, a limit philosopher then his inquiry about nature and its ultimacy always results in a Jasperian shipwreck. For Crosby, it would seem, the confrontation with the utterly inexplicable character of nature is more personal and more meaningful than a mere metaphysical conundrum and foundering is an ever-present mode of philosophizing for him. This position locates the Jaspers's overarching system of periechontology in the realm of Crosby's religious naturalism. Crosby calls nature the ultimate and, as such, the ultimate hiddenness. This is reminiscent of Jaspers's earlier thinking from Volume II of *Philosophie*. He writes:

Thus we react meaningfully to limit situations not by planning and calculation in order to overcome them, but by an entirely different sort of activity: namely, by *becoming the Existenz possible within us*. We become we ourselves by entering into the limit situations with eyes open. To experience limit situations and to be *Existenz* are one and the same.
(Jaspers 2000: 97)

For the religious naturalist, metaphysics becomes religious naturalism when the encounter with nature becomes a limit situation. The result is existentialism working in concert with metaphysics rather than being estranged from it, which distinguishes Jaspers from most other thinkers coming out of the existentialist movement. Jaspers's *Existenz*-philosophy is rooted in this very marriage of existentialism and metaphysics, which supports the idea that the activity of religious naturalism is predicated on becoming the *Existenz* that we potentially are.

In 1962, Jaspers published *Der philosophische Glaube angesichts der Offenbarung*, later translated into English as *Philosophical Faith and Revelation*. In it he offers a rejection of revelational faith and forwards the methodology of philosophical faith to which I have been referring. In this text he grounds philosophical faith in the process through which *Existenz* approaches possible transcendence (the encompassing of all encompassing). Jaspers devotes a small but important section of *Philosophical Faith and Revelation* titled "The Modern Tripartition of Science, Philosophy and Theology" to an explanation of the limits of science and revelational faith in an attempt to clarify what he means by the act of philosophizing. This section also demonstrates how philosophy (philosophical faith), the "scientific attitude" (rational cognition), and theology (faith in revelation) each contribute to the process of philosophical faith.

Jaspers regards the objective facts revealed through scientific discovery as vital to philosophical faith; a move to which most religious naturalists would be friendly. However, he is quick to point out that the practice of philosophical faith illuminates the limits of science in that science is bound to objective verification. It meets a boundary situation that denies the possibility for knowledge beyond the scientifically verifiable and rejects the transcendent. The claim that "nature is all that there is" should not presume that the objectively verifiable is all that there is. Positivism, for Jaspers, is an ontological state of fleeing possible *Existenz*. It is the fleeting acknowledgement of shipwreck and the immediate retreat from possible transcendence. Theology, on the other hand, brings the idea or notion of transcendence to philosophical faith. However, theology is guilty of objectifying transcendence and, in certain circumstances, conflating it with supernaturalism through the authoritative dogmatism of supernatural revelation, which religious naturalism rejects outright.

If Jaspers's philosophical faith maintains the naturalistic tenets of contemporary religious naturalism while remaining open to the possibility of an epistemological transcendence, he may find a philosophical home among the early religious naturalists. There are many objections to

framing Jaspers's *Existenz*-philosophy this way and the contemporary critiques of Jaspers's work in relation to religious naturalism are formidable. First and foremost Jaspers never forwards a theory of nature per se, and the concept of transcendence makes even the most forgiving naturalist suspicious. However, Jaspers's concept of philosophical faith might serve the contemporary religious naturalist well as an epistemology or even a practice of religious naturalism in that it honors scientific discovery and offers a language for the confrontation with the mysteries of nature's hiddenness.

I recognize *Existenz*-philosophy as a possible practice for religious naturalism because it is grounded in the dialectic between possible *Existenzen* in communication vis-à-vis community. Philosophical faith is a uniquely personal pursuit of that incomprehensible truth, which lives beyond the intelligible limits of cognition goading Dasein toward possible *Existenz*. Jaspers argues:

Truth is that which brings about community. Furthermore, religion and philosophy agree that the merely intelligible creates only pseudo-communities based on what is known objectively. The intelligible, it is true, is the vehicle of community within the realm of the incomprehensible which the intelligible brings into an unending process of clarification.

(Jaspers 2000: 75)

Through philosophical faith, Jaspers's intention is to probe beyond the intelligible into the realm of the incomprehensible, beyond the immanent toward possible transcendence.

This inquiry, he argues, should be personal and communal, and it should draw the empirical realities of metaphysics out of the sterile historical realm into the existential realm. *Existenz*-philosophy thus opens the self to the cipher script of transcendence. This philosophical disposition can be traced back to Jaspers's early psychopathology.

In his first major text *Allgemeine Psychopathologie* (1913), translated as *General Psychopathology*, he offers a nascent treatment of the encompassing in the context of psychopathology, which also sets the stage for his later theory of communication. Jaspers describes the phenomenological encounter with the *Existenzen* as an act of *Einfühlen*, *Verstehen* (empathy of understanding). I recognize this concept of comprehension as the groundwork for his theory of communication for his *Existenz*-philosophy. The concept of *Einfühlen*, *Verstehen* is an accurate description of communication between *Existenzen*, in community, specifically for *Existenzen* in a community of philosophical faith. Fritz Kauffman correctly points out:

There are, thus, different shades of meaning, and qualitative leaps involved in the use of the word 'communication' as we ascend from nature to the personal level. But the inner connection of these different meanings can also be seen in religious experience ... Is it only our natural being – as Jaspers has it – that communicates quasi bodily with nature at large and is – by *Einsföhlung* connected with the very ground of all things?

(Kauffman 1981: 248)

Interestingly, the concept of *Einföhlung* (empathy or vicarious introspection) and *Einsföhlung* (feeling one with the objective other) are derived from German aesthetics. Possible *Existenzen* yearn for the communication of other *Existenzen* through the reciprocal features of *Einföhlung*, thus bringing about religious community in the context of philosophical faith. When confronted with the aesthetic other that nature can be, it is *Einsföhlung* that draws possible *Existenz* into communication with nature vis-à-vis philosophical faith. In this context, philosophical faith is also an aesthetic philosophy. Under special conditions, possible *Existenz* finds itself in relation

to nature through an encounter with the sublime.⁵ What makes the sublime so unique in character is that it involves two opposing feelings at once. It seduces *Existenz* into utter shipwreck by exposing the limits of cognition while drawing *Existenz* closer to transcendence than in any other mode of the encompassing. For the religious naturalist the sublime may serve as a cipher of transcendence.

Broadly conceived, communication over the aesthetic sublime of nature is a source of foundering for *Existenzen*, thus becoming a religious experience. It seems this might be particularly true for the religious naturalist in philosophical faith. With this in mind it is appropriate to ask: is Jaspers's philosophical faith a religious naturalism?

The resurgence of religious naturalism may signal a revival in Jaspers's studies in a most unlikely corner of his thought due, in no small part, to the attention paid to him in the evolving school of Ecstatic Naturalism founded by Robert S. Corrington. In his early text on Ecstatic Naturalism, *Nature and Spirit*, Corrington relies on Jaspers to explain his concept of worldhood as "that side of nature that its most directly available to the human process ... nature is the potency that enables worldhood to prevail at all" (Corrington 1992: 22). Corrington's use of Jaspers here builds an important bridge between nature and worldhood, which I read as one of the modes of the encompassing in Jaspers's thinking. Corrington's Ecstatic Naturalism breathed life into the study of Karl Jaspers for many of the same reasons he has been overlooked for so long. In some areas of his work Corrington takes the modes of the encompassing seriously and remains open to the general spirit of transcendence, with the qualification that there is no possibility of overreach toward the supernatural. I see this position particularly relevant to Corrington's later Aesthetic Naturalism.

Corrington's work is, without exception, the clearest example of Jaspers's thinking reflected in religious naturalism today. While Corrington does not claim philosophical faith as a methodology, he honors the tension between finitude and transcendence as part of the human process. In this capacity he is, like Jaspers and Crosby, a limit philosopher. Corrington parts ways with Jaspers in that Corrington features a strict and thoroughgoing description of Nature, a description that has evolved along with his development of his system of Ecstatic Naturalism. However, the similarities between Jaspers and Corrington run deep and include the recognition that there can be a productive relationship between psychoanalysis, metaphysics, and phenomenology in the context of religious naturalism.

In addition, both thinkers demonstrate a healthy admiration for Spinoza and, for Corrington more than Jaspers, a deep appreciation of Schopenhauer. This is particularly evident in Corrington's aesthetic naturalism. In it he argues that community members (for Jaspers possible *Existenzen*) become ciphers of transcendence through what Schopenhauer refers to as *Mitleid*.⁶ Corrington rightly points out that *Mitleid* is an essential feature for communication and, I would argue, a key social construct of all possible *Existenzen*. As noted, Jaspers recognizes the value of Schopenhauer's thinking, albeit to a lesser degree than Corrington does. In the closing pages of *Philosophical Faith and Revelation* Jaspers quotes Schopenhauer in response to the question of whether or not revelational faith and philosophical faith must inherently reject one another: "No one who is religious comes to philosophy," Schopenhauer writes; "he does not need it. No one who really philosophizes is religious; he walks without leading strings, dangerously, but in freedom" (Jaspers 1967: 360). In this passage Jaspers calls on Schopenhauer to make plain that revelational faith and philosophical faith can never engage in productive dialogue due to the way in which each is grounded in an uncompromising epistemology, revealed truth on one side and philosophizing on the other. Corrington would be friendly to this line of thinking not only because his system of thinking rejects supernatural revelation due to its obvious contradictions with his theory of nature. From a social philosophy perspective Corrington is also increasingly

sensitive to the inevitable reality of tribalism that comes with putatively revealed truth. Corrington's reliance on Jaspers waxes and wanes throughout Corrington's oeuvre but is never too far out of sight.

Ecstatic Naturalism first developed in Corrington's 1992 book *Nature and Spirit* – grounded in the naturalism of Justus Buchler. Following Spinoza, Corrington produces a schema through which he categorizes two aspects of divine nature grounded in Spinoza's *Natura Naturata* and *Natura Naturans*. Since then, Corrington has published a flurry of articles and texts that advance his naturalism and that, for most, fit the criteria of religious naturalism. These texts include *Nature's Sublime: An Essay in Aesthetic Naturalism* (2013), *Deep Pantheism: Toward a New Transcendentalism* (2016), and, most recently, *Nature and Nothingness: An Essay in Ordinal Phenomenology*. The latter represents his most intimate dialogue with Jaspers on the encompassing. Jaspers is one of the few thinkers (along with Justus Buchler, Paul Tillich, and John Dewey) that remain steadfast as Corrington's sustained dialogue partners. This is specifically evident through Corrington's reliance on Jaspers's notions of the encompassing and transcendence.

There have been some important critiques of Corrington's work published within the last few years, some of which take him to task for his use of Jaspers in a naturalistic system. Examples of contemporary scholarship on Corrington's use of Jaspers include Nam T. Nguyen's *Nature's Primal Self: Peirce, Jaspers, Corrington*, Martin O.Yalcin's *Naturalism's Philosophy of the Sacred: Justus Buchler, Karl Jaspers and George Santayana*, and a collection of essays titled *A Philosophy of Sacred Nature: Prospects for Ecstatic Naturalism*, edited by Leon Niemocznski and Nam T. Nguyen.

Nguyen offers an important criticism of Jaspers's use of *Existenz* due to the special status assigned to it in his *Existenz*-philosophy. Nguyen's primary challenge to Jaspers's thinking is that features of *Existenz* are so novel and so metaphysically unique that they may not fit into a naturalistic framework. Nguyen argues,

from the standpoint of ecstatic naturalism's semiotic ontology, Jaspers's periechontology errs in privileging *Existenz* over nature. From the principle of ontological priority, Jaspers's human selfhood is more 'real' than nature; in other words, Jaspers, at true humanist, has elevated his *Existenz* to the highest metaphysical status.

(Nguyen 2011: 192–193)

When Nguyen, referring back to Justus Buchler, refers to ontological priority, he is referring to a presumed binary ontological principle of ontological priority and ontological parity. Ontological priority suggests that some complexes can be more or less real than others, whereas ontological parity claims that all complexes are equally real. Nguyen is making the argument that Jaspers's *Existenz*-philosophy so honors the process of possible *Existenz* that it must be assigned a metaphysical status of the highest degree, thus falling prey to the metaphysical trappings of ontological priority. If this is true, Jaspers may well fall outside of the parameters of naturalism proper. Nguyen is correct in that Jaspers's contributions to psychopathology, existentialism, and philosophical theology are humanistic in scope, and in that he privileges *Existenz* as a primary mode of inquiry in terms of understanding what is true. In this context, as I have argued, Jaspers aims to transcend the sterility of metaphysical inquiry in favor of a philosophical faith grounded in communication between possible *Existenzen*.

Does Jaspers "care" more deeply about an epistemology that leads to possible transcendence than a metaphysics of nature? Nguyen argues that Jaspers privileges "human meaning horizons" over what Nguyen refers to as nature's primal self. Jaspers is indeed guilty of both taking greater care to develop an epistemology (philosophical faith) instead of a metaphysics of nature and of

privileging human meaning horizons. In addition, Nguyen argues that “*Existenz* is a distinct form or mode of the encompassing; it has its own fundamental origin out of which it thinks and acts... *Existenz* is elevated to the highest metaphysical status; it cannot be defined or illuminated” (Nguyen 2011: 218). This claim is far more precarious. Jaspers does, unsurprisingly, privilege *Existenz*, but I am not convicted that *Existenz*, as one of the modes of the encompassing, has any metaphysical priority whatsoever. More relevant or more relational is not analogous to more real.

There is, according to Jaspers, a multiplicity encountered within the modes of the encompassing; however, assigned degrees of relevance and importance are different than metaphysical status. It is important not to confuse the unique features of *Existenz* with ontological priority. *Existenz* remains a mode of the encompassing different from the other modes but likewise enveloped in the encompassing of the encompassing, which I read as one encompassing natural reality. It is through the reading of ciphers that possible *Existenz* is approached through the communication with other *Existenzen* (*Einsfühlung*) and through community with nature itself (*Einsfühlung*). Jaspers describes the meaning of ciphers in the following way. “Words come to have two meanings. Nature, sex, race, drives, etc. are facts; but at the same time words are now used differently, indefinitely as indices. ‘Nature’, then, becomes encompassing unobjectifiable existence” (Jaspers 1967: 97). I read this passage as Jaspers affirming that, through the reading of ciphers, *Existenz* can only be open to those realities that make themselves available. His posture as a limit philosopher closes him off to the possibility of making a metaphysical claim about the objectifiable certainty of an ontological status in the way that Nguyen frames the problem. Jaspers can only refer to the encompassing of the encompassing and the various unique modes it envelops.

Referring back to my earlier claim that for the religious naturalist “nature is all that there is,” can Jaspers be placed in the category of religious naturalism in light of Nguyen’s critique? Nguyen’s critique is critically important for understanding how we might treat *Existenz* in a system of naturalism. I remain optimistic that Jaspers’s notion of the encompassing of the encompassing does not extend beyond the limitlessness of nature. Yalcin’s text takes a friendlier position to Jaspers as a religious naturalist. He offers an important reminder that Jaspers dispenses with any truth grounded in revelation. In doing so, he greatly narrows the possibility of any supernatural reality in Jaspers’s thinking. In the same breath Yalcin solidifies Jaspers as a religious thinker. He correctly points out

For Jaspers philosophizing is a religious attitude toward life, an orientation that arises in the hidden depths of the self. Philosophy is not ontology – it does not provide a ready-made metaphysics about the nature of ultimate reality as found in positive or revealed religions.

(Yalcin 2013: 67)

Yalcin makes the case here that Jaspers’s *Existenz*-philosophy is not ontology, so there should be no expectation for a comprehensive theory of nature.

However, in order for Jaspers to be counted as an early contributor to contemporary religious naturalism he must, at least in spirit, adhere to the premise that nature is all that there is and thus reject supernaturalism outright. Yalcin offers an important retort to Nguyen’s claim that Jaspers fails to maintain a line of thinking that remains within the limits of ontological parity. I am in agreement with Yalcin when he argues:

Using Buchler’s terminology, one can see that Jaspers employs ontological parity and ordinality to his advantage. Striking similarities between Jaspers and Buchler abound.

For Jaspers, nothing in the world is more or less real, has more or less existence, or is more or less ultimate.

(Yalcin 2013: 51)

Yalcin's reading of Jaspers posits him squarely in the current of early religious naturalists. Perhaps what is most important to glean from Yalcin's commentary is that what Jaspers was hoping to accomplish was an orientation about the hidden depths of the self and perhaps of nature as the one encompassing reality. Nguyen's warnings should be heeded. However, it is critical to keep Jaspers's overarching goals in mind when reading him through the lens of religious naturalism. What Jaspers has contributed to religious naturalism far outweighs the ambiguities present in his incomplete theory of nature. Jaspers's philosophical faith is an important contribution to the genealogy of contemporary religious naturalism in that it bridges the gap between Spinoza and Schopenhauer and contemporary religious naturalists such as Crosby and Corrington.

Notes

- 1 For a comprehensive treatment of Transcendence see Jaspers's *Philosophy Volume 3*. In relation to what Jaspers calls "world-being" transcendence is the absolute other. It is what Jaspers will later call the encompassing of all encompassing that lies beyond our limits of cognition. Jaspers uses the word Transcendence as a technical term that extends beyond the standard definition. He capitalizes it in his writing, specifically when he relates it to the encompassing, so the term will remain capitalized here.
- 2 See Robert Corrington's *Nature and Spirit* (1992) for a treatment of *natura naturata* (Nature Natured) and *natura naturans* (Nature Natured) in the context of religious naturalism.
- 3 For a helpful juxtaposition of traditional ontology and periechontology see part one of Jaspers's *Von Der Wahrheit*.
- 4 This concept of nature is derived from Robert S. Corrington's Ecstatic Naturalism.
- 5 Abigail T. Wernicki's chapter, *Will, Aesthetic Contemplation and the Sublime: Reading Schopenhauer as a Religious Naturalist*, offers an important treatment of the sublime in relation to religious naturalism.
- 6 *Mitleid* is best translated as compassion but I read it in close relation to the aforementioned treatment of empathy.

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Further reading

R.S. Corrington, *Nature and Nothingness: An Essay in Ordinal Phenomenology* (Lanham MD: Lexington Books, 2017) is an extension of Corrington's ongoing system of Ecstatic Naturalism. Chapter 6, "Encompassing Nothingness" is an excellent example of contemporary religious naturalism in dialogue with Jaspers. L. Ehrlich, *Karl Jaspers: Philosophy as Faith* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1976) is a comprehensive explanation of Jaspers's notion of faith in the context of his philosophy. P.A. Schilpp (ed.) *The Philosophy of Karl Jaspers* (LaSalle, IL: Open Court Press, 1981) is part of the Library of Living Philosophers series. This is the complete collection of scholarship spanning all of Jaspers's philosophy, including chapters on the encompassing, foundering, transcendence, and the concept of ultimate situations. H. Wautischer, A.M. Olson, and G. Walters (eds) *Philosophical Faith and the Future of Humanity* (Media, BV: Springer Press, 2012) includes multiple chapters on philosophical faith including: "Reflections on Philosophical Faith in the 21st Century." H. Wautischer is the editor-in-chief of "*Existenz*": *An International Journal in Philosophy, Religion, Politics, and the Arts* devoted to the philosophy of Karl Jaspers broadly defined.