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## **SEARCH FOR A COMMON GROUND: JASPERS ON HUMAN EXISTENCE, COSMOPOLITANISM AND PHILOSOPHICAL FAITH**

### ***EN BUSCA DE UN TERRENO COMÚN: JASPERS SOBRE LA EXISTENCIA HUMANA, EL COSMOPOLITISMO Y LA FE FILOSÓFICA***

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#### **ABSTRACT**

In the wake of Kant's Copernican Turn, Karl Jaspers underscores the inherent limits of human cognition and action. To navigate these limitations, he advocates for intercultural communication at a global level. Jaspers' early model of the Axial Age presents a vision of simultaneous yet independent breakthroughs to transcendence within the competing spiritual traditions of classical Eurasian civilizations, aiming to reconcile the universality and diversity inherent in the experience of human freedom and finitude. His lesser-known late work on philosophical faith transforms this model, where he posits a harmonious complementarity among revelation-based religions. This paper explores the tension between Jaspers' earlier dialogical model of intercultural encounter and his later assumption of harmony among revelation-based traditions.

*Keywords:* Axial Age, Jaspers, Philosophical Faith, World Philosophy

## RESUMEN

Tras el giro copernicano de Kant, Karl Jaspers subraya los límites inherentes a la cognición y la acción humanas. Para superar estas limitaciones, aboga por la comunicación intercultural a escala mundial. El primer modelo de Jaspers sobre la era axial presenta una visión de avances simultáneos pero independientes hacia la trascendencia dentro de las tradiciones espirituales rivales de las civilizaciones euroasiáticas clásicas, con el objetivo de reconciliar la universalidad y la diversidad inherentes a la experiencia de la libertad y la finitud humanas. Su obra tardía menos conocida sobre la fe filosófica transforma este modelo, donde postula una complementariedad armoniosa entre las religiones basadas en la revelación. Este artículo explora la tensión entre el anterior modelo dialógico de Jaspers de encuentro intercultural y su posterior suposición de armonía entre las tradiciones basadas en la revelación.

*Palabras clave:* era axial, Jaspers, fe filosófica, filosofía del mundo.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The philosophical discourse of modernity grapples with the tension between those striving to revive claims of a reality that surpasses human experience and those who seek to overcome metaphysics. Following Kant, who established the conditions for philosophizing in a modern context, the pursuit of knowledge regarding ultimate reality is constrained by the limits of human cognition. Metaphysical ideas, while immensely significant for human lives, cannot be validated or refuted solely by mere reason or reason alone (*bloße Vernunft*). The challenge of carrying forward the metaphysical tradition after Kant's transcendental turn is not confined to Western thought but resonates across other traditions. For instance, in Eastern philosophy, engaging with Yin Yang metaphysics from the Chinese classic *Yijing*, the Dao as the root pattern of the cosmos or the relationship between Atman and Brahman in Hinduism raise parallel challenges to whether one should revive or move beyond Parmenides' conception of Being or Plato's theory of forms.<sup>1</sup> To think

<sup>1</sup> Recognizing a similarity in the discussion between metaphysics and philosophies overcoming metaphysics in the East and the West does not undermine the considerable variations in the foundations and evolution of these debates in different contexts. The fundamental definitions of metaphysics and post-metaphysical thought differ within as well as across civilizational contexts. For example, Feng Youlan inherits the Chinese metaphysical tradition, especially in its Neo-Confucian current while Lao Sze-Kwang presented a postmetaphysical attempt of reconstructing the Chinese philosophy of subjectivity and relate it to global or

philosophically in a modern spirit after Kant implies acknowledging that that which transcends experiential limits while also recognizing human reason's constitutive claims and limitations in knowing what lies beyond. Kant's Copernican turn has not only changed the relationship towards metaphysics, but also catalyzed a cosmopolitan turn. To philosophize after Kant means to take seriously philosophy's pretensions to universality while remaining sensitive to the perspectival nature of all human cognition.

Despite inevitable methodological challenges, engaging in cross-civilizational dialogue about inheriting metaphysical traditions from East and West while also remaining conscious of human limitations is not only fruitful but essential to uphold the cosmopolitan ethos that underpins philosophical inquiry. Karl Jaspers, who was described by Hannah Arendt as the only legitimate heir of Kant, meets this challenge by striving to reconcile the existential and cognitive claims of religion and spirituality within a post-metaphysical and cosmopolitan framework. This article addresses his views on human existence, world philosophy and faith for two key reasons: first, Jaspers is a pioneer of intercultural or comparative philosophy, and his conception of world philosophy (*Weltphilosophie*) anticipates contemporary attempts to globalize philosophy (Teoharova 2005). While philosophies outside the "West" tend to situate themselves relative to modern Occidental thought, this has not been self-evident in Western academia until fairly recently. Jaspers stands apart from a largely self-absorbed Eurocentric tradition.<sup>2</sup> As Andreas Cesana notes, Jaspers opens up a "post-European philosophy of the future" (Cesana 2009). This philosophy of the future is characterized by its cosmopolitan ethos, notably expressed in Jaspers' Axial Age hypothesis of simultaneous, independent cultural breakthroughs in China, India, and the Mediterranean around 500 BC (Jaspers 1953, Assmann 2018, Wenning 2017). Secondly, in addition to Jaspers' axial age theorem and its significance for engaging in world philosophy, he introduced an innovative existential metaphysics that resists neatly categorizing it as either metaphysical or post-metaphysical. Human existence entails engagement with the world while acknowledging an "immanent transcendence" that cannot be overlooked. Let us begin by turning to Jaspers' existential

world philosophy (*shijie zhexue* 世界哲學). These attempts are distantly related to Habermas' post-metaphysical thinking, even though Habermas diverges from subject-centered philosophy, whereas Lao Sze-Kwang views subjectivity as a central element in his postmetaphysical reinterpretation of the history of Chinese philosophy.

2 To mention an example of a characteristic occidental forgetfulness of other traditions, in his monumental study *A Secular Age*, Charles Taylor does not mention, let alone address, parallel as well as independent secularization processes outside the West.

metaphysics (section 2) before turning to its relationship to world philosophy (section 3) and philosophical faith (section 4).

## II. JASPERS' EXISTENTIAL METAPHYSICS

Jaspers charted a unique course distinct from the prevailing metaphysical or postmetaphysical binary of contemporary philosophy. Unlike Kant, Jaspers did not seek to reinterpret metaphysical experience through self-legislating subjects; instead, he framed existence as fundamentally dialogical. Human beings are inherently addressed by others and share the potential of responding through speech. For Jaspers, existential communication is not grounded in harmony or consensus, but in a loving struggle (*liebender Kampf*) that is committed to seeking truth while knowing that humans can never claim to possess such truth and share a joint responsibility to engage in the committed probing of claims to truth in the present and throughout history.

The third volume of Jaspers' three-volume opus magnum *Philosophie* is dedicated to the task of reformulating what metaphysics may mean when being understood from the perspective of possible human existence. As Chris Thornhill interprets Jaspers' complex inheritance of the metaphysical tradition, "Clearly, Jaspers does not defend metaphysics as an independent sphere of values or truths, to which human existence is heteronomously accountable; in fact, he invariably identifies metaphysical contents as elements of human-being, human experience and human self-interpretation." (Thornhill 2002, 29) Jaspers conceives of possible human existence as implying a complex self-relation that is, at the same time, open to what lies beyond individual human experience. The "meta" of metaphysics is interpreted as that which transcends individual as well as collective human existence. Such acts of transcendence originate, for Jaspers, from within secular human experience. He thereby reveals what one could call an immanent notion of transcendence as a key dimension of human engagement with themselves, others and the world, including manifestations of divinity. In the third volume of *Philosophie*, Jaspers states "The ways of searching for being out of possible existence are *paths* to transcendence. Their *illumination* is philosophical *metaphysics*" (Jaspers 1973, 5). Jaspers distinguishes three dimensions of transcendence: transcendence in world orientation, transcendence in the illumination of existence and transcendence in metaphysics. These dimensions of transcendence correspond to the three postulates: "The world ought to be known to see what Being is!"; "I find myself only with others and through the world in which I am active"; "I can search for God." (Ibid., 52)

As we have seen, Jaspers' early philosophy of human existence emphasizes communicative relationships and the openness to transcendence to the world, to oneself and to the open-ended search for god or, as Jaspers often puts it, deity (*Gotttheit*). As possible existence, communication and the threefold openness to transcendence can never be finalized. He does insist on the assumption that contemporary philosophy needs to limit knowledge to make room for a particular kind of faith, one that Jaspers refers to as "philosophical faith" (*philosophischer Glaube*). The relationship between metaphysics and human experience needs to be recast to account for the existential limits as well as the potential to reach beyond human condition. Humans are marked by confronting limit situations, *Grenzsituationen*, while also reaching beyond these limits in acts of communication and faith.

The relationship of possible human existence confronting its limits to the cosmopolitan conception of what Jaspers, following Kant, calls world philosophy (*Weltphilosophie*) has been a subject of debate (Cesana 2009). The project of *Weltphilosophie* consists in the attempt to develop a non-eurocentric philosophy that reaches out to include multiple origins of cultural, philosophical and faith-based traditions within a global conversation. Jaspers worked intensely on the project starting during his internal emigration due to being barred from teaching by the Nazis in 1937 to respond to what he perceived as the collapse of the Eurocentric world order. He was already starting to outline the project of a global philosophy while lecturing in 31/32 on the "metaphysical logic of the encompassing". Indeed, he continued to develop his existential metaphysics and his world philosophy in parallel. It is thus justified to assume that these projects are not independent or subsequent stages of his thinking. There is a substantive connection between reflecting on individual human existence and the dialogical constellation while the nature of this connection remains a subject of discussion. Indeed, if one approaches the unfinished project of world philosophy, essential categories of Jaspers' existential metaphysics such as that of transcendence and the encompassing recur throughout.

What is the relationship between the focus on human relationships to themselves, to others and to what Jaspers calls the encompassing, *das Umgreifende*? And how do these relationships connect to the incomplete dialogue between the different civilizational traditions and powers of faith that is the leitmotif of Jaspers late work, on the other?

### III. THE PROJECT OF WORLD PHILOSOPHY

Jaspers emphasizes the contributions of the different metaphysical traditions to a shared *philosophia perennis*. He acknowledges common ground within the diversity of human experience. For example, the Confucian and Daoist conceptions of the cosmic root pattern *Dao* relate to an encompassing reality, albeit in different ways. Jaspers writes in his work on the great philosophers that forms part of his world philosophy:

“the Encompassing is a background, not a theme to work with; it is the limit and foundation to be considered with awe, not the immediate task. The essential difference is the difference between Lao-tzu’s direct way to the *tao* and Confucius’ detour by way of the human order, hence the divergent practical consequences of the same fundamental view. The *tao* which Lao-tzu puts before and above everything else is for Confucius the One. But Lao-tzu immerses himself in it, while Confucius lets himself be guided by his awe of the One as he moves among the things of the world. (...) Though the two philosophers look in opposite directions, they stand on the same ground” (Socrates, Buddha Confucius Jesus, p. 60).

In this and related passages, Jaspers emphasizes the complementary relationship between these apparently contrary positions. He emphasizes what they have in common, but also highlights their differences. Indeed, it is one of the core features of axial age civilizations such as China, for Jaspers, that they present diverse perspectives on crucial metaphysical and existential questions. Rather than forming a harmonious whole, they engage in a loving strife and provide human beings with different options of responding to the shared question what it means to be human in a world that is marked by transcendence.

In contrast to contemporary theories of multiple modernities (Eisenstadt), Jaspers emphasizes commonality. In contrast to presenting a linear history of progress culminating in the seemingly universal conception of modern freedom in the Hegelian tradition, the axial age theorem emphasizes that the axial age introduced diverse normative conceptions of what it means to live a human life. The potential of the intercultural communication was failed to be realized in history. And yet, the core element of the axial age breakthrough, the discovery of second order evaluation, the cultivation of reflexive thinking from which to critique historically embedded practices and beliefs from the perspective of normative insights continues to set up a yardstick.

Karl Jaspers’ conception of the axial age is a frequent reference point in having anticipated intercultural philosophy. (Teoharova 2005) Yet his

reflections on the space of metaphysics and religion, the open-ended search for god in the modern world are largely neglected. This is unfortunate since the multi-faceted and original attempt to search for a common ground of world religions continues to be relevant in the current postsecular constellation where religious experience takes on new forms. What Jaspers calls powers of faith, *Glaubensmächte*, continue to confront each other based on seemingly irreconcilable differences and historical trajectories, often marked by violence and a lack of dialogical encounter as one can witness all too well in the conflict in the Near East.

#### IV. PHILOSOPHICAL FAITH

Especially Jaspers' concept of "philosophical faith", first introduced in 1947 in a series of lectures in Basel and fully elaborated in his final major work *Philosophical Faith and Revelation* (1962), continues to be a provocative proposal. It forms the core of Jaspers' philosophy of religion and continues to be an invitation for a loving strife. For some, the notion of philosophical *faith* may seem excessively religious, as it incorporates traditional religious concepts such as guilt and divinity or deity (*Gottheit*). Conversely, others argue that a purely *philosophical* faith may lack sufficient religious depth. Jaspers explicitly emphasizes that he does not believe in religious revelation and suggests that philosophers are well advised to keep a distance from claims to divine authority. This methodological caution is premised on the need to sustain the difficult balance between or, better, equidistance to a postmetaphysical rejection of truth claims about a transcendent reality as well as sustaining respect for religious phenomena and traditions including transcendent revelations. It could strangely be the concept of philosophical faith, in being at odds with established secular and religious paradigms, that could be relevant at a time when interreligious conflicts have returned to the center stage of global politics.

As a philosopher in the Kantian tradition, Jaspers emphasizes the need for a rational approach to religion. Philosophy takes on a meditating role between secular and non-secular positions that is premised on a commitment to rationality and an openness for potential contributions from revelation-based perspectives. As Allan Olson has, I think rightly, emphasized, the English translation of Jaspers' book title *Der Philosophische Glaube angesichts der Offenbarung* (1962) may not capture the semantic nuances of the original:

"*philosophischer Glaube* and *philosophical faith* do not mean precisely the same thing in English and German. And the major difference, it seems to me,

is that the Germanic use of *Glaube* in its various forms entails a certain amount of thinking, a thinking combined with feeling as a kind of intuitive but not a rigorous or pure kind of thinking. The use of “faith” does not imply thinking in English; in fact, it can usually mean the opposite, namely, blind acceptance, trust, and even the negation of reason and rationality by way of emotivistically driven conceptions of faith.” (Olson 2011, 80)

Additionally, the German term “*Glaube*” conveys a sense of reflective confidence that can be understood as having or placing faith in something or someone. It embodies an aspirational quality. Andreas Cesana defines faith as “an inner certainty and confidence that is not validly deducible and is incapable of proof” (Cesana, 2009). This notion of faith is rooted in the reality that human beings hold ultimate convictions or dispositions, even when these cannot be objectified or substantiated through discursive means. While these convictions serve as the foundation for our thoughts and guide how we navigate the world, they are, in principle, subject to revision, and it is essential for a philosophical mode of existence to critically examine and question these beliefs.

Jaspers emphasizes that philosophical faith must be anchored in a commitment to seriousness or authenticity (*Ernst*) in one’s questioning. This seriousness forms the foundation of what he considers a philosophically viable faith. It enables the philosophical interpreter of religious truth claims to seek common ground among metaphysical traditions, even those that may seem distant from one another. This reflective yet existentially binding engagement with diverse religious truth claims carries with it a surprisingly optimistic undertone: “it will be like a new birth when genuine seriousness breaks through the façade of religious conventions and the customs of peoples” (Jaspers 1962, 82)

For Jaspers, philosophical faith is, at least in principle, universalizable, while institutionalized religion is not. Although organized religion serves as a vital reservoir of meaning for many groups, it often creates a shell (*Gehäuse*) that can limit engagement. Jaspers argues that philosophical faith respects religious traditions but aims to penetrate the shell of reified beliefs and practices. Most significantly, it fosters interreligious dialogue—a loving strife that also encompasses secular viewpoints.

Demonstrating remarkable foresight and insight into the implications of diminishing narratives of secularism propagating the gradual disappearance of religious phenomena and the emergence of spirituality and a marketplace of religious traditions, Jaspers emerges as a pioneering figure in promoting interreligious dialogue from a philosophical rather than religious or secular



standpoint. He seeks common ground that can bridge various religious and non-religious divides while remaining committed to the rigor and intellectual integrity of philosophical inquiry in the Enlightenment tradition:

“the common ground for the multiplicity of faiths would only consist in the clarity of the kind of thinking, sincerity and a shared ground knowledge. Only these enable the borderless communication in which the origins of faith attract each other in virtue of their seriousness.” (Jaspers 1962, 7)

The integration of intellectual and existential seriousness necessitates not only a genuine interest in understanding religious traditions that may appear unfamiliar but also a commitment among the philosophically faithful to reject the deification of religious leaders and resist the temptation to perceive "God as human" (Jaspers 1962, 227). Jaspers seeks to maintain an agnostic stance in the face of revelations concerning transcendence. Acknowledging the limitations of human cognition and existence requires a spirit of questioning and openness. As a cosmopolitan humanist, Jaspers asserts that paradigmatic figures such as Jesus, Buddha, and Confucius never claimed divinity. Philosophical faith remains respectful of religious traditions while refraining from accepting dogmatic assertions that elevate the status of religious leaders, effectively shielding them from the complexities of the human condition, which inherently includes both moments of achievement and failure.

Interestingly, for Jaspers neither Judaism or Christianity nor Islam figured explicitly among the axial age traditions, even if more recent adaptations of this heuristic model have put revealed traditions at their center. Jaspers did acknowledge that “The significance of the Christian axis” consisted in its syncretistic capacity to create a compelling union out of contradictory elements from Jewish prophetic culture, Greek philosophy and Roman organizational culture (Jaspers 1953, 58). The omission of revealed religions not only due to the temporal distance between the axial age breakthrough, *Durchbruch*, between 800 and 200 BCE and thus before the institutionalization of monotheistic traditions. At the center of Jaspers’ existential concern are individuals engaged in an existential and communicative search for transcendence rather than ossified schools of thought or organized religions. As Heiner Roetz has suggested, for Jaspers the great religions, while rooted in the ambivalent legacy of the axial age rupture (*Durchbruch*), bring with them new challenges as well as new dangers (Roetz 2022). Especially the monotheistic differentiation between undivided faith and polytheistic blasphemy enables potentially violent forms of religious zeal to emerge that have expanded the zones of conflict

between the three monotheisms (Sloterdijk 2009). This is the price to be paid by the categorical differentiations into believers and nonbelievers (Assmann 2009).

Jaspers recognized that monotheistic religions, in particular, can sometimes become excessively introspective and missionary in their zeal, which may lead to dogmatism and unleash violent impulses. However, instead of discarding religious truth claims altogether, it is essential to approach the semantic richness embedded in religious traditions in a new way—one that transcends both blind faith and outright secular dismissal and embraces interreligious dialogue unleashed by a shared commitment to philosophical faith.

For Jaspers it is thus necessary to engage the great individuals that predate established religions into a global conversation. It is in the complexity of these individuals and their relationship that the parameters for what he refers to as possible human existence emerges. Philosophical faith takes seriously the mysteriousness of humans in the world: “The world is a mystery (*Geheimnis*) just as every human being to himself” (30). Here we see that the self-relationship of individuals who are a mystery to themselves is seen in parallel to the enigmatic nature of the encompassing world that surrounds them. Becoming attentive to this double mystery and believing that there is a revelation shedding light on it is, according to Jaspers, an experience that, in different ways, is shared by the Jewish prophets, Moses as well as Buddha (35).

As mentioned before, Jaspers explicitly states that the philosophical faithful does not need to (as much as he or she can) share a faith in revelation. Faith, or *Glaube*, is perhaps better translated as having faith in the sense of placing confidence in the potentials of serious communicative openness to transcendence rather than a blind faith in revelation and religious dogma. Faith is both aspirational as well as connected to thought. Having faith in the human capacity of inquiring into the possible existence of a common ground derives from an existential gesture of hope rather than an ultimate metaphysical commitment. The person who places philosophical confidence in revelation is compelled to take religion seriously as a reservoir of meaning without thereby having to be faithful in the sense of being a believer in religious dogma. To take religion seriously implies a thorough questioning, but also the openness to the possibility of transcendence of self, world and the search for the divine. For Jaspers, the philosophical confidence in its probing approach to religion is warranted not only because religion has been of significance to many individuals and communities throughout post-axial history and continues to be a significant spiritual force at a global level, but also because of the human beings who came to be associated with religions. Paradigmatic individuals have

lived significant lives that can be appreciated as setting up a yardstick from a religious as well as secular perspective.

Jaspers struggles to identify an alternative to what he considers to be a false dilemma: either blind faith in revelation or the radical rejection of the significance in a philosophically serious engagement with revelation. The construction that he proposes to mark a missing option that reveals a commitment to the autonomous and binding ethos of communication and liberality: "Philosophical faith is of its own origin. Yet, it lets revelation matter as a possibility for others, even if it cannot understand it. It does not want animosity, but honesty; not interruption, but communication; it does not want violence, but liberality." (38)

The so-called conflict of powers of faith (*Glaubensmächte*) or, as Samuel Huntington called it, the "clash" of civilizations, poses not only a political challenge but a philosophical and indeed existential task. Jaspers believes that human beings must ground the need for and possibility of true interreligious dialogue as difficult as it appears in light of deep-seated suspicions and all too present memories of religiously justified violence. Yet, Jaspers' earlier work on *The Origin and Goal of History* (originally published in 1949 and translated into English in 1957) in which he develops the conception of the axial age, *Achsenzeit*, and especially the *Great Philosophers* focuses on the importance of communication between individuals rather than civilizations. It is the motivating and orienting force of exemplary human beings that provides guidance, even if, Jaspers emphasizes, these individuals do not exempt from the duty of a questioning critique due to their limitations as human beings. One challenge of Jaspers' mature philosophy of religion, in contrast to the earlier axial age model, is that the dialogue is restricted to monotheistic religions. To have a truly global approach, it would be necessary to also include non-monotheistic traditions such as Confucianism and Buddhism, but also indigenous traditions, many of which have emerged as oral traditions over millennia. These traditions have undergone significant changes. Some have not survived for internal reason or been replaced by textual traditions. Others have undergone fusions or transformed in radical ways that has been accelerated by processes of modernization. For Jaspers, it is during periods of civilizational crises that humanity is tasked to visit its diverse origins and bring about a renaissance.

In Jaspers' reflection about inter-cultural and inter-religious communication one can perceive an increasing transition from the earlier model of a loving strife to a model of complementarity that stresses harmonious

communication. For example, in *The Atomic Bomb and the Future of Mankind* (1958), Jaspers praises the Jesuit contribution for Sino-European communication and the “loving understanding” when he writes: “It was a significant achievement of the Jesuits in China, out of understanding for the Chinese way of thinking and believing (to express biblical thinking within it and to enable a new original religious life in China), to communicate the reality of China to the West. Their reports became a foundation for what was thought about China in Europe by philosophers such as Leibniz, Voltaire, and Hegel. This great effort of loving understanding is connected to what has happened over the centuries and what is needed today. For it is only when understanding transcends the rational thought patterns of average superficiality and engages with historical essence that communication begins.” (Jaspers 1958, 120).<sup>3</sup>

In his late philosophy of religion, Jaspers emphasizes the role of philosophy and the philosophically faithful as interpreters of the “ciphers” that are revealed in the major world religions and exemplary individuals associated with them. Ciphers call for philosophical interpretation and critique as Jaspers already emphasized in his exchange with the theologian Bultmann and his insistence on the task of a demythologizing of religious revelation, a task that is in principle open-ended and needs to be committed to reason (Bultmann and Jaspers, 1954).

In his recent attempt to reinterpret the constellation of faith and knowledge in *Also a History of Philosophy*, Jürgen Habermas has again turned to Jaspers’ conception of philosophical faith. Habermas acknowledges that Jaspers’ attempt to go beyond formal philosophy of existence by “rationally reconstructing the radical tension between transcendence and worldly existence from the secular standpoint of the ‘illumination of existence’” while objecting to Jaspers’ “assimilating the validity claim of philosophical assertion and the status of the truth of faith” (Habermas 2008, 238). For Habermas, Jaspers’ “adopts a critical attitude toward religious traditions while at the same time being open to learning from them.” (Habermas 2008, 245)

In addition to emphasizing the need to interpret or translate religious ciphers, it is noteworthy that Habermas compares Jaspers’ reflection on the place of religion in modern societies to those of John Rawls. This comparison reveals a significant difference between a jaspersian commitment to philosophical faith and the commitment to a rawlsian conception of the place of religion in the

3 In fact, Matteo Ricci and other Jesuit missionaries were quite critical of Buddhism and many aspects of Neo-Confucianism following the loving strife model as it is apparent in Ricci’s *Tianzhu Shiyi*. See Cervera Jiménez, 2023.

modern liberal societies. Rawls' *Political Liberalism* revises his earlier conception of justice as fairness and limits philosophy to the domain of the political and leaves comprehensive doctrines (metaphysical statements) to the pre- or post-political private realm while Jaspers, according to Habermas, "opens the flood gates for the communicative streams that go back and forth between philosophy and religion" (Habermas 2019, 109) Habermas worries that one may pay too high of a price with the conception of philosophical faith by moving philosophy away from science and closer to religious teachings and metaphysical world views. For Habermas, Jaspers quietly moves from his earlier philosophy of human existence to a philosophy understood as a quasi-religion. There is, from Habermas' perspective, a danger that philosophical faith gives up the claim to truth and universality and is thereby reduced to simply become one kind of faith among others. For Habermas, Jaspers' approach is ambivalent since it postulates that philosophical faith claims, on the one hand, a privileged function in elaborating an intercultural discourse between competing traditions of faith while, at the same time, only being a participant of such an inter-faith dialogue. Philosophical faith communicates on equal terms with other traditions of faith while also intuiting the unobjectifiable encompassing in which both traditions are only distinctive perceptions.

Habermas points to an ambivalence in Jaspers' conception. On the one hand, Jaspers presents a Socratic as well as existential conception of philosophical faith while, on the other, elaborating the overarching conception of world philosophy that has been developed as a response to the experience of totalitarianism. And indeed, did Jaspers close the necrology he left to be read as his funeral with the words that "he (Jaspers, MW) wished to participate in the task of the times, i.e., to find the way from the end of European philosophy to a world-philosophy to come". Yet, for Jaspers, in addition to his concern for the encompassing, common grounds and world philosophy, it remained equally important to emphasize the existential and irreducibly individual dimension of the search for a shared future of humanity. It is only through *Selbstvergewisserung*, the ongoing task of confirming one's own existential convictions and commitments, that which one has faith in and the truths by which ones live by, that humans continue to exist as humans. However, this process of self-scrutiny requires the search for and engagement with larger global perspectives if *Selbstvergewisserung* is not to be reduced to self-assertive and indeed self-aggrandizing identity politics. This is why Jaspers perceived existential philosophizing or philosophical faith not as incompatible with engaging in world philosophy but as complementary dimensions of a shared

*Wahrheitssuche*, an existential as well as cosmopolitan search for truth. This search is in principle inclusive and ongoing.

Jaspers juxtaposes what is common and what is different between China, India, the Middle East and the occident. Ancient China and India which seems distantly related to us in terms of having developed: “science, the path of duty, even if it leads to certain calamity, the heroism of the unconditional, planned organization, conscious political thinking in the contest of basic principles.” Yet, according to Jaspers, subsequent history has contributed to increased differentiation between occident and orient and, we may add, the Islamic world. The difference that emerged between China and Europe, for example, is characterized as follows: “world and life are being affirmed in the belief in a basic order (the Dao) in a cosmic sense. After every disturbance the basic order reconstitutes itself. The noble human being is in harmony with the universe. According to this thinking there is neither sin nor salvation, but complementarity (*Ergänzung*). There is no dogmatic confession of faith that would be laid down in a bellicistic mode. There is no tragic consciousness and the corresponding way of thinking.” (Jaspers 1962, 326) This quote reveals that, for Jaspers, world philosophy does not only pursue a common ground but also reveals differences in approaching and provisionally answering questions arising from human finitude within an interconnected world. The task of the philosophy to come, for Jaspers, is to, again and again, recall its diverse metaphysical origins. As philosophical faith, it is neither theology nor science, neither church-creed nor secular disbelief. It expresses in loving strife as well as the fragile confidence of standing on a common ground and sharing a future.

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