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A Search for the Absolute in the Philosophy of Existence of Karl Jaspers

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A SEARCH FOR THE ABSOLUTE IN THE
PHILOSOPHY OF EXISTENCE
OF KARL JASPERS

by
Zigmas Ramanauskas

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>INTRODUCTION</th>
<th>POSSIBILITIES AND LIMITS OF KNOWLEDGE</th>
<th>EXISTENTIAL COGNITION OF GOD’S EXISTENCE</th>
<th>EXISTENTIAL ATTITUDE TOWARDS POSITIVE RELIGION</th>
<th>CONCLUSION</th>
<th>BIBLIOGRAPHY OF TEXTS USED</th>
<th>BIBLIOGRAPHY OF OTHER TEXTS ON EXISTENTIALISM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II.</td>
<td></td>
<td>A. Phenomenological sources of existential knowledge</td>
<td>B. “Compulsive knowledge” and “free belief”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III.</td>
<td></td>
<td>A. Symbolic significance of Jaspers’ proofs for the existence of God</td>
<td>B. Search for God through a revolt against God</td>
<td>C. Guilt, as the way to Transcendence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Page** 1 12 36 36 47 52 55 69 70 76 89 91
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Philosophy is concerned not only with the problem, "what is being," but it also strives to explain how being is known and the manner in which being exists. Hence philosophy can be characterized (1) as knowledge of being, (2) as knowledge of knowledge itself, and (3) as knowledge of existence. Although these problems usually make up the constitutive parts of every philosophical system in the sense that any one of them having been raised, immediately there arise others, yet considered from an historical standpoint, in the course of time, now one, now another has become the object of special attention.

The question "what is being" is as old as philosophy itself. Originally introduced by the Ancient Greeks (Parmenides), it has become a central point of interest in every movement through the whole history of knowledge. Also while the question of the knowledge of being is an important one in every period of inquiry, yet Kant was the first to construct a metaphysics of knowledge for the sake of knowledge (Erkennen der Erkenntnis). Later the whole of modern philosophy, especially the Hegelian rationalistic idealism, adopted and further developed this Kantian heritage. Finally, the problem of the existence of being
has found its best expression in the philosophy of existence or existentialism, which is often designated as "the philosophy of our age." This is the philosophy we shall consider in our thesis.

When we are speaking about existentialism, we are not considering something unknown, or something known only by the professional philosophers. Existentialism today, although not the only important philosophical movement, is the only philosophy which in such a short period of time has acquired the unusual stature of an independent, original and thought-provoking doctrine that it even attempts to enter into competition with much more ancient philosophical traditions. Born in Denmark, developed in Germany and France, this philosophy has broken out the narrow limitations of country and language and achieved an international reputation. Existentialism at present is the object of serious studies in all parts of the scientific world. Numerous works and articles are being published in many countries and in many differ-

1 It must be noted that general traces of existentialism can be found in every philosophical system in so far as the philosophy treats the problem of existence. In one system this existential element might be more emphasized, in other less. Some even attempt to consider St. Thomas Aquinas as an existentialist philosopher (Gilson, Maritain). The author has no intention to offer one or another answer to this question, since he is merely concerned with existentialism in the strict sense: systematically expressed philosophical doctrine.
ent languages.  

Besides this academic interest the existential movement has also reached the masses of men: it has forced its way into almost all fields of life. Art and literature (especially drama, e.g., as in the plays of Jean-Paul Sartre) are searching for new forms of expression in this direction. Even fashions in dress make an effort to follow the tenets of this system.

This widespread interest might be explained in terms of a psychology of fashion: everybody wants to be au courant of what is regarded as the "dictates of fashion." But besides this, there are other more serious reasons which have caused the popularity of existentialism and which make its appearance on the scene not something unexpected or casual. Existentialism comes into the world as a protest, as a revolt against the exaggerations of abstract reason. The various systems of philosophy of existence unanimously agree in their opposition to abstract speculative systems of thought, which pretend to explain everything by means of imposing logical constructs; to the "objectivism," where the concrete thing, the human existent, has been neglected. In common with the American pragmatists, existentialists find themselves not satisfied with the "well-tailored universe" of Hegel. The Hegelian rationalism attempts to establish one's world view

2 See Bibliography at the end of this work.
by means of a process from one clearly definable principle. But it is not able to answer the most important, vital questions of life. It is not the general definitions and rules that are important for existentialists, but the individual existent, as Rene Arnou remarks, "the existentialist is not at all interested in beauty in general or in liberty in general, any more than in existence in general, since all this is nonexistent." The general as such is merely a mental construct. "What really exists, and what really has any importance, is this individual, the real individual, which is my self," says Gabriel Marcel.

The existential movement besides protesting against the generalized theories of knowledge as ignoring life, also protests against the social order, which by its many "isms" has forced man into an impersonal, collective anonymity. The existential slogan therefore is: man cannot be reduced to a "paragraph in a system." The individual self cannot be submerged in the mechanism of society. Therefore existentialism calls for a restoration of the freedom and integrity of the human person. To the

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4 Cited by Arnou, ibid.

objective thinker it opposes the subjective thinker. The abstract is to be transformed into the concrete. The mere knowledge of a truth must be replaced by an actual practicing. The how is more important than the what.

Yet in their desire to remedy the exaggerations of rationalism and formalism existentialists sometimes go even so far as to question every kind of demonstration. They reject every form of speculative philosophy, because all that can be attained by reasoning is something general, an object of thought, abstracted from the fact that it is. It is conceivable therefore that in spite of the widespread influence and interest on the one hand, existentialism is regarded by some with a certain reservation and even suspicion, on the other. Some of the most important reasons for this attitude towards existentialism might be mentioned: (1) the newness of the philosophy, (2) its generally hostile attitude towards the elder philosophical traditions, (3) the originality of the terminology used, and (4) the atheistic character of the Sartre-Heideggerian trend, especially from the standpoint of a Christian thinker.

Yet one cannot ignore this new movement of philosophy even in spite of the fact that he would disagree with the principal tenets proposed by existentialism. We cannot classify philosophies into totally "right" and "false" ones, as we can find mathematical truths right and false. Even in the most challenged
doctrines there can be found a grain of truth. In existentialism we may find a mass of truth. In spite of the occasional aberrations and eccentricities of this philosophy, we might say in general that existentialists are quite right in putting man in the centre of all problems. Their efforts towards recovery of human dignity truly deserve our esteem. Therefore we cannot isolate ourselves from these perennial problems which the existential philosophy brings out in a new light. Not in vain therefore Msgr. Rossino, the Secretary of the Sacred Congregation of Seminaries and Universities, in his keynote address at the philosophical convention in Rome, April 8-14, 1947, warned:

Because of its widespread acceptance as an interpretation of the human situation and man's needs in the present time of unrest and insecurity, existentialism cannot be ignored by a living tradition concerned with nova et vetera ... it would be unfortunate if opposition to atheistic existentialism of the Heidegger-Sartre variety were to blind us to the genuine philosophical values that are present in existentialism as a whole.6

That studying of existentialism is not a profitless and useless work, but that it is even necessary for a Catholic, has been pointed out by Pope Pius XII in his Encyclical Humani Generis. Warning against the aberrations of existentialism and other challenged doctrines, His Holiness stated:

Catholic theologians and philosophers, whose solemn duty it is to defend natural and supernatural truth and instil in the

hearts of men, cannot afford to ignore or neglect these doctrines more or less devious. Rather they must understand them well, first because diseases are not properly treated unless they are correctly diagnosed, then, too, because false theories sometimes contain a certain amount of truth, and finally because the mind is thereby spurred on to examine and weigh certain philosophical or theological doctrines more attentively. 7

Inspired by these reasons, the author decided to devote some consideration to this modern philosophy. But it is difficult to speak about existentialism in general terms, to formulate a general definition of this philosophy that could be equally applied to all existentialists, since the different philosophers who are included in the common denominator, called "existentialism," in fact are quite different from each other, at times even radically so. Besides a great number of common characteristics, as their unanimous opposition to abstract speculative doctrines and their high evaluation of the human person, there are marked differences among existentialists, which make each of them more or less an independent, original philosopher. There is a distinction to be made between the "Existential Philosophy" (Existentialphilosophie), the chief representatives of which are Martin Heidegger and Jean-Paul Sartre, and the "Philosophy of Existence" (Existenzphilosophie or Existentielle Philosophie), under the leadership of Karl Jaspers and Gabriel Marcel.

These two groups of existentialists primarily disagree in their notion of, and the approach to, existentialism as a philosophy. The Heidegger-Sartre variety tries to develop a metaphysics, an ontology of existentialism. The problem of existence for him is only to serve as an introduction to ontology. Stefan Schimanski⁸ tells us that Heidegger once confessed to him, that his problem "is not man's existence, but 'being-in-totality' and 'being as such'". For him "existence" is merely a starting point and means for the elaboration of an ontology. Heidegger's intention is to inquire anew into the meaning of "Being." The Heidegger-Sartre variety of existentialism "is concerned not with actual things," as Collins remarks, "but with the significant structure of existence (Dasein) as capable of ontological determination, as leading to a fundamental ontology or discourse upon the meaning of being."⁹ The "Philosophy of Existence," under the leadership of Jaspers and Marcel, in contrast to the "Existential Philosophy," has its direct object of investigation existence as such. A generalized theory of being, an ontology in the Heideggerian sense means for Jaspers a destruction of existence, since neither being nor existence as such can ever be

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⁸ Kurt F. Reinhardt, The Existentialist Revolt, Bruce, Milwaukee, 1952, 132.

known by a rational investigation. Philosophy can reach only the possibilities of existence, which can be realized only by individual existents. An analysis of the concrete condition of being means for Jaspers, according to Collins, "only an intermediate step in the movement of philosophizing from a general account of reality to a clarification of the existence of this individual."

These two branches of existentialism also disagree in the way in which they solve the problem of the Divine Existence. The theistic existentialists, among whom, as it is generally agreed, the most important ones are Kierkegaard, Marcel and Jaspers, are convinced that man and his freedom essentially depend on the Divine Existence, that an apostasy from Him means a complete disintegration of the human person. The atheistic existentialism, chiefly represented by Nietzsche, Sartre and Heidegger, is inclined to replace God by "ubermensch" ("superman") and to announce the "death of God," as in the case of Nietzsche.

10 Ibid.

11 Although V. E. Smith in his critical review of the recent works of James Collins (The Existentialists) and Kurt F. Reinhardt (The Existentialist Revolt) holds that "both (i.e., Collins and Reinhardt) are concerned ... to show that the god denied by existentialism is the god of Hegel or Leibniz but not the God of the Judaeo-Christian tradition" (The Thomist, XV, 1952, 659.), yet the author questions this interpretation of Collins and Reinhardt. Men like Nietzsche and Sartre have expressed their atheistic standpoint too clearly that there could remain anything to doubt about.
For Sartre this passionate desire of man to become God remains une passion inutile.\textsuperscript{12} Hence comes the feeling of human existent as derelict or abandoned (geworfensein). Therefore man's living on the earth becomes meaningless, and ends when the limit-point, "impossibility of all possibility," namely death, is reached.

In face of the fact of these differences among the representatives of existentialism it seems therefore reasonable to pick out one of them and investigate his philosophy, since otherwise, in giving an account of existentialism in general, it would be difficult to avoid a schematism. The author's choice has fallen upon Karl Jaspers, with the intention of giving a critical analysis of his philosophy under a special aspect, namely, how he treats the problem of Divine Existence. While it is true that the real value of every philosophy essentially depends on how it solves the most important problems of man, is it not true that there are no more important problems of man than the problems concerned with God's existence? The idea of God is a central idea in every philosophy: whether philosophy will stand or fall depends on this idea. In this respect Jaspers is quite a unique thinker. He stands, it might be said, in the middle between the theistic and atheistic existentialists. On the one hand, he admits the existence of God, yet, on the other, he negates the possibility of a contact between God and man. In other words,

\textsuperscript{12} Jean-Paul Sartre, \textit{L'être et le Neant}, 40.
Jaspers rejects every form of positive religion, since God for him is a "hidden" God, an Immanent Transcendence.

For this reason the author considers the following plan as the best approach for his thesis: the first part is to consider Jaspers' theory of knowledge as such, its particular characteristics, its possibilities and limits. The second part will attempt to present Jaspers' answers to the following questions: (1) whether God can be known, (2) in what manner He can be known and what is the extent of our knowledge of God's existence, and (3) what is God. In the third part we will investigate Jaspers' position on the possibility of a positive religion.
CHAPTER II

POSSIBILITIES AND LIMITS OF KNOWLEDGE

The questions, "what we know" and "how we know" are of fundamental importance in every system of philosophy: the concept of knowledge essentially determines the direction of the whole system. Before taking up any of the philosophical problems treated in a system one must be previously acquainted with the theory of knowledge of that system. Hence, before we speak about the cognition of God's existence in Jaspers' philosophy, we will dedicate this chapter to an investigation of the problem of knowledge in general, trying to discern in what this knowledge essentially consists and what are its principal characteristics.

Jaspers in his basic philosophical works, consisting mainly of the two monumental publications,¹ and the four series of lectures,²


gives us an unambiguous picture of his philosophical Creed, providing us with good information on the problems we are concerned with here.

A. Phenomenological sources of existential Knowledge.
In the development of his philosophical thought Jaspers has no doubt been strongly influenced by his fellow-existentialists, especially Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, yet the philosopher par excellence for him is Immanuel Kant. Kant's presupposition that das Ding an sich, "the thing in itself," cannot be known, is of fundamental importance for Jaspers' philosophy. Jaspers argues that we are able to know being only as it appears to us, but not as it is in itself. The reason is that we cannot know being as such neither immediately nor mediately. We cannot know being immediately, because our knowledge is essentially an intermediate knowledge. We can know that which comes into our consciousness and thus receives its categories. But precisely therefore everything that we know, is only das Sein fuer uns, "being for us," and never das Sein an sich, "being in itself."

3 Kant for Jaspers is "der Philosoph schlechthin," "The Philosopher," see Jaspers, Philosophie, Einleitung, VI.
4 The author will use his own translations.
5 "Kein Gegenstand ist an sich, keiner losgelöst, sondern, was er als Gegenstand ist, ist er immer fuer ein Subjekt, das ihn denkt.", Jaspers, Von der Wahrheit, 236; see also ibid., 248.
6 Jaspers, Der Philosophische Glaube, 14.
What the subject knows is only the object. But no object is being in itself, since every object is only a certain determinate being. And yet no determinate being is being absolutely. Therefore Jaspers declares: "I can never know being; what I know is always a being." In other words, we know objects and therefore we never know being in itself.

We also cannot know being as it is in itself through the mediation of objects. We should regard the objects as the appearances of being: the object is nothing else but being as it reveals itself to us. But the "revelation" of being in itself through objects is essentially different from the "revelation" of any object in the empirical world. This revelation has one meaning when we speak about the singular objects of the world, for example, when we regard color as an expression of certain light-undulation; it has another meaning when we regard the world as an expression of being in itself. In the first case we

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"Being in itself" or "absolute Being" is in fact nothing else but God or "Transcendence." This confusion of the finite being with the Infinite Being is fatal for the whole philosophy of Jaspers. For further elucidation of this problem see Chapter III, where the possibility of the knowledge of the Absolute Being is more extensively discussed.

8 "The world in its totality is not an object for us. All objects are in the world, but none of them is the world.", Jaspers, *Der Philosophische Glaube*, 32; see also Jaspers, *Von der Wahrheit*, 236-237.
have a simple relation between two objects, one of which is thought by the principle of another. But being in itself in regard to the world is not such a principle as light-undulation is the principle of color. Therefore in the latter case we cannot derive from the world being in itself. "It is rather, as if being would escape from us each time we attempt to grasp it; as if it would remain in the form of objects, which are only the footprints and remains." To express this "impalpability" of being by our knowledge, Jaspers calls being in itself das Umgreifende, "the all-enveloping." Although being embraces all objects, yet itself it does not become an object of knowledge. Everything we know, is known in being, but we never know being itself. Therefore our knowledge always remains horizontally limited. And whenever we attempt to break out of the horizont, the horizont itself moves along with us. So we can never arrive at the point from which we could survey being as something in itself a closed totality.

In short, Jaspers' fundamental principle that we are able to know the object and never being in itself, means that we can only know empirical being, but absolute being, which we call God, is inaccessible to our knowledge. What is then the fate of philosophy in this case? While the separate sciences have as their object of knowledge empirical being, philosophy as such

9 Jaspers, Von der Wahrheit, 37.
10 Ibid., 37-38.
has absolute being as the object of its knowledge. It seems to
deny for us the possibility of knowing being in itself and hence
means the rejection of philosophy as such.

On the one hand, Jaspers rejects the traditional notion
of philosophy, as the science of being, with which properly ontol-
ogy is concerned. "Ontology must fall," proclaims Jaspers. ¹¹
Those who are attempting to grasp being in itself, remain for him
"alchemists:" "As the alchemists could not succeed in finding
the stone of the wisemen, so also philosophy will never succeed
in its efforts to grasp the substance of being." ¹² But, on the
other hand, by condemning traditional philosophy as incapable of
knowing being, Jaspers does not reject the possibility of philo-
sophy as such. He only thinks that he has found a new, original
method for philosophizing. Although we can know only that which
can be an object of our knowledge, he says, yet we can think of
that also which is not an object of our knowledge. Since we can-
not think of a thing without making it an object for us, a being
for us, therefore when we think of being in itself, we are
compelled to think of it in terms of these finite objects. ¹³
But since we cannot identify the finite object with infinite

¹¹ Jaspers, Philosophie, 814.
¹² Jaspers, Von der Wahrheit, 500.
¹³ Ibid., 231; see also Jaspers, Vernunft und Wider-
vernunft in unserer Zeit, 23.
being, therefore in order to be able to think of being in itself, we must in our thinking let every object "disappear." And because of this "disappearing" of the objects being itself will be revealed to us, which now will be no more a certain, definite being, but being in itself or being absolutely speaking.

This, of course, involves a contradiction: to think of an object and at the same time to let it disappear. But we must admit this contradiction, says Jaspers, if we want to be able to think of being in itself. We cannot think of being in itself in any definite category, because it would be equally necessary to define being in itself through a contrary category. But to think of being through contrary categories means to admit the "destruction" (das Scheitern) of our knowledge. "Yet," declares Jaspers, "only through failure in the search for being in itself do I come to philosophize." Through the forms of our limited knowledge we can reach the infinite being only by admitting the failure of these forms of thinking. If, on the one hand, by philosophical speculation we are going from finite objects to infinite being, so, on the other hand, it means an irrevocable failure: the invincible contradictions involved in our knowledge

14 Jaspers, Von der Wahrheit, 40; see also ibid., 257.

15 Jaspers, Der Philosophische Glaube, 21; see also Jaspers, Philosophie, 705-732; Jaspers, Von der Wahrheit, 20, 67, 74, 232, 260, 726, 1030 ff.

16 Jaspers, Philosophie, 3.
prove the impossibility of reaching being in itself by our ordinary knowledge. We cannot regard our philosophical speculation as objective knowledge, because the contradictions involved there destroy every value of that knowledge. It is difficult, complains Jaspers, for us to resist the temptation to regard philosophical knowledge as an objective knowledge, because this temptation is rooted in the very nature of our knowledge: our knowledge naturally tends to separate objects, and strives against such knowledge in which these objects should "disappear." We are shocked when we leave objects and confront "the infinity of being in itself." Although we are inclined to regard philosophical ideas as objective ideas, yet if we remain in this state, we remain isolated, and never will "open" ourselves for being.17

If philosophical knowledge in fact is no knowledge, what is then its destination? The very meaning of philosophizing for Jaspers consists rather in the process than in the result. This explains his paradoxical notion of knowledge. Instead of revealing to us absolute being, philosophy only reveals to us the symbolic phenomena of being. Philosophy has to show us that the things we know are not being in itself but only the "ciphers" (Chiffre)18 of being. Philosophical knowledge cannot transfer us

17 Jaspers, Von der Wahrheit, 257; see also ibid., 40, 108; Jaspers, Der Philosophische Glaube, 21.

18 In some of his earlier works Jaspers spells it "Chiffre".
into an other world, since there is only one world, but it rather "illuminates" (erhellit) the objects with a new light, so that objects obscure in themselves (they remain "obscure" as long as they remain only "objects" with no reference to "being in itself") transform into the ciphers of absolute being.19 Therefore "being can be illuminated but never known."20

What does this "illumination" consist in? It does not enrich us with any new knowledge, it does not add anything to our knowledge, but it changes us thoroughly, makes us "new men." If everything which we know is to be considered as a separate object, then we ourselves, too, would be such an object, the slave of determinism of empirical reality. But when we consider empirical reality only as the relative ciphers revealing to us absolute being, by this we free ourselves from the slavery of empirical reality; by this we become aware of our freedom.21 In this sense the illumination of being is also an illumination of ourselves, reminding us to be ourselves. Here Jaspers sees the justification of his philosophy: while the traditional philosophy was concerned with abstract speculation, his existential philosophy calls man

19 The nature of ciphers and how they transform into the "language" of Transcendence will be properly discussed in Chapter III.

20 "Das Sein kann wohl erhellit, aber nicht erkannt werden.", Jaspers, Von der Wahrheit, 159.

21 Ibid., 257; see also Jaspers, Der Philosophische Glaube, 32.
to the freedom of belief, since instead of the pretense of ontology to reach being by knowledge, Jaspers proposes a new method of knowing: to search for being through a free belief.

B. "Compulsive knowledge" and "free belief." Since the proper object of philosophy, being as such, is inaccessible to knowledge, then the only way to come to it is by philosophical belief. This belief for Jaspers has a specific meaning. First of all, this belief has a moral character: it means a moral conviction, free from every dogmatic content. In order to gain a better insight into his philosophical belief, it is necessary to point out the distinction which Jaspers makes between the truth of "consciousness in general" (Bewusstsein ueberhaupt) and "existential" truth, or between "compulsory" (Zwingende Wahrheit) and "free" truth. The truth of "consciousness in general" is the kind of truth which results from the knowledge of separate objects of empirical reality. This type of truth is achieved by sense experience and logical evidence. In both cases we arrive at an objective correspondence between our mind and the reality. But this correspondence confers upon our knowledge the character of compulsiveness (Zwang), since every judgment based on sense experience and logical evidence must be accepted. We are forced to acknowledge the certainty of an established fact or a logical syllogism. "As Bewusstsein ueberhaupt ... I experience the compulsion of the 'non possibility to be otherwise'
when I judge of something as true or false." This truth is equally valid for all. It is atemporal and impersonal, since it is not based on our personal conviction but on the objective evidence of our knowledge. But practically, says Jaspers, it turns out to be the least important for us, since our freedom is not engaged in it. Therefore we regard it most indifferently. This compulsive knowledge enables us to govern nature, yet it does not suffice for us, because it leaves us without any engagement and purpose. This sort of knowledge is proper to Science but not to Philosophy. Therefore "real truth" for Jaspers "begins where the violence of consciousness in general is removed." This is achieved when we replace the compulsiveness of knowledge by the freedom of belief: the "consciousness in general" by "existent" (Existenz). While by consciousness in general Jaspers understands the general principles of logical knowledge which equally specifies everything (since it offers us "objective" and "compulsory" truth resulted from the knowledge of separate objects of empirical reality with no personal engagement), so existent for him is a synonym for man in his unrepeat-

22 "Als Bewusstsein ueberhaupt ... erfahre ich den Zwang des Nicht-anders-Koennens als dies fuer richtig oder unrichtig zu erkennen.", Jaspers, Der Philosophische Glaube, 20.

23 Jaspers, Von der Wahrheit, 607.

24 Some commentators of Jaspers (Reinhardt, Collins) translate the German term "Existenz" into English as "existence."
able unique individuality (Selbst). I ascend into the rank of existent when I become myself (Selbst), when all activities of my life become free self-determinations. To be existent and to be myself are used by Jaspers as two interchangeable terms. But to be myself means to be free. Therefore to raise the question: am I in the truth of existence, means the same as to ask: is my life truly an expression of my freedom, and not an impersonal process. In short, truth for Jaspers consists in my fidelity to myself, "in conformity between the realization of myself and the possible existence of myself."

Thus, existential truth is not expressed by this or that content of knowledge, but only by my relation to that which I believe. This is no longer a logical truth, but a moral truth. Not what I believe but the manner in which I believe is of importance. The objective content of belief changes according to time and persons, yet all existents must be solidary in their indispensable faithfulness to what is truth for each of them.

While logical truth is valid universally and necessarily, the truth of existential belief is radically historical, that is to say, unrepeatedly personal. It cannot be otherwise: since existential truth does not consist in logical content, but merely

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25 Jaspers, Von der Wahrheit, 642.
in a personal conviction, then the belief necessarily is always my personal truth.

Yet this radical historicity of belief does not mean for Jaspers a simple relativistic subjectivism. Jaspers here rather absolutizes his belief. In so far as the truth of existential belief is unique, historically unrepeatable as my personal truth, it is the truth in which I believe unconditionally, absolutely. Although the content of this belief is only once true for me, yet at the same time it is for me absolutely true.26

So Jaspers distinguishes between the universality and absoluteness of truth. Because of his newly introduced notion of "historical absoluteness" the traditionally correlative notions of universality and absoluteness for Jaspers become problematic. In place of the traditional notion of universality he puts historicity which for him is a synonym for absoluteness. Only logical truth is universal, but it is not absolute because it is derived from the knowledge of the empirical reality. Scientific knowledge can never pretend to absolute truth, since it cannot grasp absolute being. Only the existential belief is absolute, since it alone makes us able to "read the cipher-language" of absolute being. But again, this absoluteness concerns not the content of belief, but only the believing existent.

26 Jaspers, Der Philosophische Glaube, 70-71.
On the one hand, this antinomy of the universal compulsion of scientific knowledge and the historical absoluteness of belief compels Jaspers to relativize all "logical" knowledge. "For the absoluteness of a historical truth it is necessary to relativize every content as historically finite form." Scientific knowledge is relative, because it is not able to come to absolute being and absolute truth. Relative also is philosophical knowledge in its logical expression: although it seeks absolute being, yet it fails to grasp it. Science does not reach being in itself, philosophy is not capable of knowledge of that being.

On the other hand, by relativizing logical truth, Jaspers does not negate the absoluteness as such of truth. He distinguishes between the notions of universality and absoluteness in order to show the proper place for absoluteness, namely, the proper place of absoluteness is not in knowledge but in life, not in thinking but in existing. Therefore his philosophical belief is absolute not because of its content, but because of the unconditioned faithfulness of the believing subject to himself, i.e., to his own belief. Therefore Jaspers warns against the temptation of what he terms "catholicity" (Katholizitaet) or "pretension to exclusiveness" (Ausschliesslichkeitsanspruch). 28

27 Ibid., 70.
28 Jaspers, Von der Wahrheit, 833.
"Catholics" for him are those who attribute to the truth of philosophical belief the same characteristics of universality and necessity which is proper only to the separate sciences, which are concerned with the knowledge of empirical being. It is illicit and pernicious to universalize belief, to consider it equally valid for all men, because only particular sciences can give us true knowledge which is therefore universal and compulsory. But one who tries to impose his own type of belief upon others, who regards it as an "ultimate truth," for Jaspers is a pharisee. Such a universalization of personal belief would be the source of fanaticism. "All human nobility and greatness," he says, "is where personal historicity is not absolutized." In other words, I should adhere to the truth of my personal belief with absolute faithfulness and at the same time I should avoid imposing it upon others. This is a heavy task and yet a noble one. It is heavy, because "catholicity" tempts one by "offering objective guarantees of salvation." It offers to take away one's burden of responsibility to search for and to find the truth. It replaces the risk by a tranquillity of attainment. But Jaspers is willing rather to withdraw himself from this

29 "Endgültiges Wissen.", Jaspers, Von der Wahrheit, 171.
30 Ibid., 835.
"catholic tranquillity:" "We better choose all the pain and not this illusory blessing, where the truth possessed is only imaginary; rather we choose honest sincerity with all its consequences rather than safe happiness which is only illusory." 31

Jaspers urges one to be what he is, namely, to be "himself" (Selbst). This is the way of human dignity and honesty: "I want everybody to be that which I am trying to be: to be himself in his own truth." 32 However, by this Jaspers does not try to justify the attitude of indifference towards the truth of others. Rather he means that, although I acknowledge that others have their truth, yet I must fight against it, because this truth is not mine. 33 This crusade of "believing existents" is not the fight of truth against untruth, it is rather a fight of one belief against another belief, a struggle of one absolute truth against another absolute truth. This struggle of beliefs is characterized by Jaspers as the "will of infinite communication." 34 As the belief which pretends to be exclusively valid is the source of fanaticism, so the free belief which transforms logical knowledge into historical, is the source of communication. Whoever

31 Ibid., 462.
32 Jaspers, Philosophie, 668.
33 See ibid., 696-698.
34 Jaspers, Der Philosophische Glaube, 134.
believes that he possesses ultimate truth, a priori rejects the existential equality, which is the basic prerequisite for every communication. One who already "possesses" truth does not need anybody. On the contrary, one who knows that the truth of belief is absolute only in so far as it is a principle according to which he lives, and not in so far as it is expressed by one or another logical content, such a one remains in the state of a continuous search for truth. He remains "open" (aufgeschlossen) for everything and everybody. Therefore for Jaspers free belief is belief in communication: "The idea of communication is not a utopia, but belief. It means for each one of us the question: do we strive for it, do we believe in it - the possibility - to live together, to speak together, to search for truth together and in this manner to become each one himself."  

All this philosophy of free belief is based on the distinction between logical and moral truth: between the truth of "consciousness in general" and the truth of "existent." While the one truth is exhausted by its knowledge, the other appeals to life. Pure logical truth forces us to acknowledge it, because it is based on facts, but existential truth requires confession, because it is not based on facts which would be in-

different in regard to man, but it points out and "illuminates" man's possibilities. The truth of consciousness in general exists independently from what we are and how we live; the existential truth pretending to point out what we ought to be in order that we could become ourselves, requires from us unconditioned faithfulness, faithfulness even to death. No one has to die for a pure logical truth, because no one lives according to it: "It would be foolish to die for a demonstrable truth," since "the truth the certainty of which I can prove does not need me for its existence." On the contrary, the truth which must be realized in life is one "with which I can face death itself." In this sense the distinction between logical and existential truth becomes for Jaspers a distinction between "the truth which suffers from its revocation and the truth which is not affected by the revocation."

We have noticed that Jaspers in his philosophy of existence raises anew the old problem of the relation between faith and reason, but his formulation and solution of the problem is radically different from that of the traditional philosophy.

36 Ibid., 11.
37 Jaspers, Von der Wahrheit, 652.
38 Jaspers, Der Philosophische Glaube, 11.
39 By "traditional philosophy" the author means here the Thomistic or Scholastic philosophy.
While traditional philosophy holds that reason is able to know not only empirical being, but also absolute being, Jaspers confines reason merely to the knowledge of empirical reality, leaving absolute being to be grasped by faith. The traditional reason-faith problem is concerned with the relation between rational knowledge and revealed knowledge; for Jaspers it is a relation between the scientific knowledge (i.e., knowledge, which is offered to us by separate sciences, for example, astronomy, biology, mathematics, etc.) and philosophy, which for him essentially consists not in knowledge, but in belief. For him only the separate sciences give us the true knowledge: only empirical being can be known and not being in itself. The philosopher for Jaspers cannot know, he must believe.

Passing a critical remark on Jaspers' notion of truth we can say that we must principally agree with Jaspers on the distinction between truths the meaning of which is exhausted by their logical cognition and the truths which receive their full meaning only when, besides being known, they are also realized in life. While our relation to the world ends in knowledge, our relation to God requires from us the engagement of our whole being. Empirical reality is indifferent to us, but the Absolute Reality is the very meaning of our life and not only a simple object of our knowledge. In this sense philosophy revealing to us Absolute Being reveals at the same time ourselves: i.e.,
our destination. Therefore this kind of truth requires a complete adoption of the knowing subject: not only its logical knowledge, but also its realization in life. Even though an atheist come to know the proofs for the existence of God or be an expert in theology, yet the essence of religion will remain for him hidden, as is light for a blind man, although the latter would know the theory of light.

Yet, on the other hand, it seems that it is not necessary to contrast so radically those two forms of truth as Jaspers does. His truth of the existent remains only a matter of belief and not of knowledge. Therefore in fact Jaspers' belief is always an "ignorance," since "belief is a risk, because the substrate of true belief is a perfect objective uncertainty."40 A logical relativization of philosophical thinking is considered as the essential prerequisite of true belief: "The philosopher remains free in so far as his ideas are concerned ... his thinking never becomes a dogma."41 But not to regard truths of philosophical belief as dogmas means that philosophy is no knowledge at all. It might be admitted that there are truths which require a moral engagement of the knowing subject, yet the supposition that these truths do not give us any knowledge is an exaggeration.

40 Jaspers, Philosophie, 535.
41 Jaspers, Der Philosophische Glaube, 15.
To imply a moral engagement still does not mean *eo ipso* to exclude logical knowledge. Acceptable is Jaspers' thesis that the logical aspect of knowledge does not exhaust philosophical thinking, but questionable is his passus to another thesis: philosophical knowledge is no knowledge at all, it is only a relative expression of free belief. Therefore Collins\(^4\) is right when he says: "Jaspers' denial that there can be serious philosophical truth or knowledge reflects upon his own philosophical declarations."

Moreover, this transition is also qualified as illicit, because it does not follow *eo ipso* from the distinction made between logical and existential truth. But since Jaspers bases the distinction between "the truth which suffers from its revocation and the truth which is not affected by the revocation,"\(^4\) on it, it seems to be necessary to analyze this distinction more extensively in order to grasp its true meaning.

Jaspers is right in remarking that the truth of the heliocentric system was not in the least affected when Galileo Galilei was forced to revoke it, because his revocation did not make the earth cease to move around the sun.\(^4\) But, on the other


\(^4\) See above, p. 28.

\(^4\) Jaspers, *Der Philosophische Glaube*, 11-12.
hand, it must be said that the truth of Christ did not lose its value from the fact that Judas by treason "revoked" it. Therefore in the case where truth is revoked (although it is required to be confessed in life), not the truth itself "suffers" but the person who revokes it. And just as treason of truth does not destroy the truth as such, so also faithfulness as such does not prove anything: i. e., the existence of a truth, because truth can be sold out and error can be faithfully adhered to. The theory of the heliocentric system did not have to be proved with price of the life of its author. Likewise Giordano Bruno could not make true his pantheistic mysticism by the fact that he proved his faithfulness to it by death.

But if treason does not affect truth as such and if faithfulness even until death does not prove anything, then what sense does the distinction make between the truth which suffers from the revocation and the truth which is not affected by treason? There is an essential difference. Although Galilei's revocation did not affect his personality, nevertheless Giordano Bruno could not have revoked his philosophy without a major hurt of his personality as a philosopher. In the first case there was only revocation of a simple fact, in the other case there came into consideration a decision: to betray conscience or not.

There have been people who have chosen death rather than treason, says Jaspers, but who were prompted by ideas which
were actually contrary and therefore could not be all equally true. Therefore all martyrs, without the difference of their convictions, have in common only the same heroic faithfulness to their conscience. That is right. Even one who dies for a false idea subjectively is a martyr of truth, because he dies for that which he thinks is true. In this sense an unconditioned faithfulness makes subjectively just even the one who was objectively unjust. But Jaspers is wrong in saying: if men go to die for contrary ideas, then the personal conviction as such is absolute, while the ideas in which they believe are relative, because they are historically changing. In this sense what he calls "existential truth" in fact is not the truth as such, but conviction as such. It is illicit to raise all convictions to the rank of truth, where truth is no longer contained in logical content, but in moral conviction, which can be equally applied to diverse logical contents, since to justify every conviction is to discriminate against truth. It is true that men go to death for ideas and not for facts, but, on the other hand, they die for ideas not because they could not be proved otherwise, but because they believe in the absolute certainty of these ideas. Thus, only belief in the absoluteness of truth leads to martyrdom, not a doubt or search which a priori admits the impossibility of attainment of absolute truth. Without belief in absoluteness of truth it is impossible to have unconditioned
faithfulness. If there were no absolute truth there would be no reason to die for anything. Instead of justifying all martyrs of truth every relativization of truth devaluates their sacrifice of life. Faithfulness to one's conviction is a moral value and therefore it is a measure of man, but not of truth. Therefore an elevation of every conviction to the rank of truth means an illicit transition from the moral order to the logical order. Moral justification cannot be made logical justification. Faithfulness to one's own conviction justifies the one who errs, but never the error itself. The fact that one believes something to be true still does not mean that it really is true. Therefore the beliefs or convictions do not create truths, but truth judges all beliefs and convictions. Convictions may vary like errors, but all convictions are true in so far as they participate in one and the same truth. Faithfulness to one's subjective conviction for the sake of faithfulness as such means a blind stubbornness, not in favor of one's conscience but in favor of error.

Summarizing the above we can characterize Jaspers' truth as being chosen and not known. Namely, when the truth of belief comes from free choice, its essence is contained not in the content, but in the relation between the believing subject and that content. Logical content is only a medium through which one expresses his belief. It is something like a changing wrap
of philosophical belief: it changes with the philosopher. Each one expresses himself through a certain content. But every content has absolute value in so far as it is "existentially assimilated," as Jaspers says:45 "Philosophical truth is absolute in so far as it supplements life, but it is relative in so far as it is objectively known and logically expressed." This means nothing else but confinement of existential truth in a moral righteousness. The consequence of this is a radical subjectivization of knowledge and degradation of truth, in a word, the loss of truth.

45 Jaspers, Von der Wahrheit, 650.
CHAPTER III

EXISTENTIAL COGNITION OF GOD'S EXISTENCE

Admitting the alogical character of our knowledge of being Jaspers denies the possibility of our reason coming to the knowledge of Absolute Being, the Transcendence or God (these terms he uses synonymously). Reason discovers only an "empty space" (einen leeren Raum) which must be supplemented by the existent. Only an existent is capable of existential knowledge. This knowledge consists in the illumination of the existent, namely, when admitting the failure (Scheitern) of our knowledge to know being in itself or Absolute Being and so becoming aware of his freedom the existent approaches to God by a free self-determination (Entschluss): i. e., in a moral way. So in this chapter we will discuss Jaspers' reasons why God cannot be known by "logical knowledge" (i. e., our ordinary knowledge), and what is the existential cognition of God's existence.

A. Symbolic signification of Jaspers' proofs for the existence of God. The task of Jaspers' philosophy is to show that "Transcendence is not to be reached by knowledge."¹ Transcend-

¹ Jaspers, Von der Wahrheit, 109.
ence is for us in so far as we are existents the Unthinkable (der Undenkbare), "the invisible and never empirically demonstrable Other."² His efforts to keep the Deity far from our knowledge call forth a logical analysis of his attempts to demonstrate why the Absolute Being cannot be known. We cannot know God through the forms of our limited knowledge, since through these forms we can know only the separate objects and not being as such. Therefore any category by which we try to define Transcendence turns out to be an inadequate one and requires to be supplemented by a contrary category. Our efforts to grasp Transcendence by reasoning can be characterized as a "continuous tumbling towards an impossibility."³

We cannot think of God as a being without being at the same time compelled to think of Him as a non-being. In the one sense non-being means non-existence of something; in another sense non-being signifies everything that is not determined (das Nichtsein jedes bestimmten Etwas). In this latter sense non-being is the very being, since Absolute Being (or "being in itself" (das Sein an sich) or "being as such" (das Sein schlecht-hin)) is no determined being. Thus, Transcendence is being and

² "Das unanschauliche und nie empirisch nachweisbare Andere.", Jaspers, Von der Wahrheit, 107.
³ "Es ist ein immer zu erneuerndes Sichueberschlagen des Denkens zum Nichtdenkenkoennen.", Jaspers, Philosophie, 708; see also ibid., 705-732.
non-being at the same time. Only by this paradoxical formula, where "being and non-being become identical can we think of Transcendence," says Jaspers. 4

In a like manner Jaspers tries to convince us of the impossibility of defining Transcendence by any other category: we cannot think of Absolute Being as a unicity without being at the same time compelled to admit the duality, nor as a form without matter, nor necessity without contingency. Rather, according to Jaspers, we must consider Transcendence as a unicity and duality, form and matter, necessity and contingency, universality and individuality, eternity and temporality. But this is impossible to think. Therefore a categorical thinking cannot reveal to us Absolute Being. 5

Jaspers conceives another sort of categories, which he calls the "categories of freedom," such as reason (Vernunft), spirit (Geist), freedom (Freiheit), and existence (Existenz). But by these categories, too, it is impossible to reach Transcendence, because it would mean a degradation of Transcendence to the level of human finitude. 6 We have no right to absolutize

4 Jaspers, Von der Wahrheit, 260.
5 Jaspers, Philosophie, 705-728; see also Jaspers, Von der Wahrheit, 20, 286-301, 690, 1030.
6 Jaspers, Philosophie, 728-732.
our reason, "to make it Logos, Creator." Neither have we any right to imagine God as a pure spirit: although it is a more noble picture of our imagination, yet it would degrade Him. We are not even supposed to absolutize the existent himself: being free an existent is basically a possible existent (moegliche Existenz), or "a being which does not exist, but which might and must exist." But Transcendence is an absolute being which "wipes off every possibility." We cannot identify Transcendence with the existent, because the existent is conscious that he stands before Transcendence and therefore he feels that he is not Transcendence: "Where I properly am myself I know that I have been given to myself (dass ich mir geschenkt werde) by Transcendence, the power through which I exist." Therefore all our efforts to reach Transcendence by the categories of our knowledge are condemned to an inevitable failure. "There is no direct knowledge of God." We may ascribe to Divinity thousands of names, but no name is adequate. Each time we begin to think of God, He "escapes" from us. If we would be able to know God by the forms

7 Jaspers, Der Philosophische Glaube, 27; see also Jaspers, Philosophie, 729-730.
8 Jaspers, Der Philosophische Glaube, 18.
9 Jaspers, Von der Wahrheit, 110; see also Jaspers, Existenzphilosophie, 66.
10 Jaspers, Der Philosophische Glaube, 33.
of our knowledge, God would cease to be God, because "demonstrated
God is no more God."11

Yet the admission of the failure of our knowledge to
grasp God is not entirely senseless: although we cannot arise to
the knowledge of divinity by our reason, yet our reason turns us
towards Absolute Being by the very experience which we arrive at:
"It is possible that there can exist something which it is impos-
sible to know."12 If we cannot know what Transcendence is, yet
we know that Transcendence exists.13

We cannot come to know Transcendence, because Transcend-
ence does not speak directly to us, but only through ciphers.
Everything that exists proclaims Transcendence, since everything
can be considered as ciphers of Transcendence. Every object is a
cipher in so far as it is something more than what we are able to
know of it. We transform the "deaf and dumb objects" into a
symbolic language of ciphers when we relativize the objects to
phenomena, when we cease to consider them as noumena.14

11 "Ein bewiesener Gott ist kein Gott.", Jaspers,
Der Philosophische Glaube, 30.

12 "Es ist denkbar, dass es gibt, was nicht denkbar
ist.", Jaspers, Philosophie, 707.

13 Jaspers, Von der Wahrheit, 1031.

14 Ibid.
What is the relation between objects and ciphers? Every object can be transformed into a cipher of Transcendence, since "everything that exists in the world is a symbol." Although all objects can be changed into ciphers of Transcendence, nevertheless the ciphers themselves do not constitute any new world, as existing apart from the world of objects. Objects and ciphers are rather two dimensions of the one and the same world: when we consider the world as a "brutal reality," we see it constituted by objects, but when we consider the world as a symbolic language of Transcendence, we see the objects as ciphers of Transcendence. "Ciphers are not new objects, but objects filled with something new." In this sense Jaspers compares the relation existing between objects and ciphers with a relation existing between a herbarium and fresh plants, or a collection of bones and a living organism.

What kind of relation exists between ciphers and Transcendence? Ciphers are not Transcendence itself, but only its "language." Transcendence speaks to us through ciphers, itself

15 Ibid.

16 "The world ceases to be world when it is transformed into the language of Transcendence.", ibid., 634.

17 "Chiffer sind keine neue Gegenstaende, sondern neu erfuellte Gegenstaende.", ibid., 1043.

18 Ibid., 1036.
becoming no cipher: "God is not a cipher, but the very reality." Ciphers are only symbols, Transcendence is the absolute being. Ciphers are only a medium between Transcendence and us: as the knowledge in the case of consciousness in general is a mediator between the subject and the object, so the ciphers mediate between Transcendence and existent. And yet although the ciphers are not Transcendence itself, on the one hand, Transcendence is not beyond the ciphers, on the other. We cannot through ciphers get into any "other" world: "Being in itself is not another reality hiding itself behind the reality we know." Jaspers makes a distinction between ciphers and symbols or signs (Symbole oder Zeichen). While mere symbols signify things existing independently of them, in the case of ciphers it is impossible to distinguish between the cipher and the thing symbolized by it. The Absolute Being, signified by ciphers, inheres immediately in its symbol. And if we cannot identify Transcendence with any of its ciphers, it is not because Transcendence would be hidden behind the ciphers, but because every

19 Ibid., 1051.
20 Jaspers, Philosophie, 688-689.
21 Jaspers, Von der Wahrheit, 1032.
22 Ibid., 257.
cipher remains only a single aspect of Transcendence. 23

This reasoning leads Jaspers to a conclusion that we must admit an "immanent Transcendence" (die immanente Transzendenz). An "abstract monotheism" which admits an "other" world is only a "negative idea" which degrades this world. 24 Instead of distinguishing between Transcendence and the world, we must in the world itself seek for Transcendence: "The world is the place where Transcendence speaks to us." 25

It seems that admitting the "immanent Transcendence" Jaspers comes dangerously close to the pantheistic notion of God. But soon it becomes clear that this suspicion, in so far as Jaspers is concerned, is an unfounded one. He argues that an alternative such as theism or pantheism is possible only in the order of logical knowledge or knowledge of consciousness in general, where God and the world are thought of as if they were on the same level, as if they were objects of the same kind. By thinking so, says Jaspers, either the world means everything, and so the world becomes God, or it means that there exists God and the world, and in this manner God is but an "other" world. 26

23 Ibid., 108.
24 Ibid., 1050-1051.
25 Ibid., 108.
26 Ibid., 90; see also ibid., 107: "That, in which and through which 'we are there' (wir da sind), is the world. That,
But such a "double-ing" Jaspers calls a naive materialization of Transcendence, where the things belonging to this world are transferred to the "beyond," and where they are enlarged and minimized according to one's need.\textsuperscript{27} Existent finds Transcendence in unity with the world and not beyond the world. There exists neither "\textit{die blosse Welt}" (the "bare" world, the world only) nor "\textit{die reine Transzendenz}" (the pure Transcendence, Transcendence only).\textsuperscript{28} The simple identification of the world and Transcendence as well as their radical distinction is to be rejected, says Jaspers, since by admitting pure immanence or pure transcendence we degrade the world. Only when the world is changed into a language of ciphers its true value can be saved. When we distinguish the world from Transcendence, we are no longer able to evaluate the world without illusions, since the brutal reality of the world as such cannot satisfy us.\textsuperscript{29}

Only the existent is capable of reading the ciphers; only he is capable of transforming the "brutal" objects into transparent symbols, because "Transcendence reveals itself only in which and through which 'we are we-ourselves' (\textit{wir sind Selbst}) and free, is the Transcendence."

\textsuperscript{27} Jaspers, \textit{Philosophie}, 684-685; see also Jaspers, \textit{Von der Wahrheit}, 89, 107, 705.

\textsuperscript{28} Jaspers, \textit{Von der Wahrheit}, 980.

\textsuperscript{29} \textit{Ibid.}, 107.
for existent."30 In other words, as long as I remain outside of the rank of existent, I can see only the world and nothing more. Just as in sense knowledge the organ must somehow get in touch with the object in order to know it, so man must become existent or "himself" if he wants to get in touch with Transcendence. And if, on the one hand, I can understand the language of ciphers in so far as I become myself, on the other hand, I become myself in so far as I expose myself to the speech of ciphers. I am an existent in so far as I turn myself to Transcendence (by "reading its ciphers"), and vice versa: I am able to turn myself towards Transcendence in so far as I am an existent.

What does the reading of ciphers consist in? First of all, reading of ciphers does not mean any knowledge of being, since "it would be false to regard symbolism as knowledge."31 Rather reading of ciphers means producing of new ciphers: "The philosopher reads the ciphers of being by creating ciphers of mind."32 Philosophical knowledge is not an objective knowledge: philosophical concepts are only the symbols of ciphers. To make philosophical ideas knowledge means to degrade knowledge itself. If we arrive at the knowledge of Transcendence through ciphers, we

30 Ibid., 110.
31 Ibid., 1038.
32 Ibid.
arrive at the knowledge of Being as inaccessible to our logical
knowledge. Therefore Transcendence reveals itself to us as a
hidden God. "God is (i.e., exists), but Whom we neither see
nor know." Thus, the philosophical reading of ciphers is
neither true, nor false, because it is no knowledge at all in the
strict sense of the word. For this reason the reading of ciphers
cannot be subject to a logical criterion, but only to the exist­
ential criterion: does this or any other philosophy strengthen
the existent? If the answer is positive, then a philosophy is
true, and vice versa. In other words, it means: does the
existent recognize in it his Transcendence or not?

Since philosophical reading of ciphers is not a logical
knowledge of Absolute Being, it therefore cannot pretend to a
universal validity. Each existent reads the ciphers only for
himself. "An object is a sign of the Other, which is not strange
to me, but is that through which I am properly myself or I can
be properly myself." The way leading to God is not a way of
objective certainty; it is not a way of certain and universally
valid proofs of God's existence, since "after Kant all ontology

33 Jaspers, Vernunft und Existenz, 30; see also Jaspers,
Von der Wahrheit, 1049: "But the one God is distant, the entire­
ly Other, absolutely hidden."

34 Jaspers, Von der Wahrheit, 110.

35 Ibid., 257.
stands condemned.\textsuperscript{36} We can reach God only by existential belief, which is historically personal and the characteristic mark of which is its objective uncertainty.

B. Search for God through a revolt against God. Since God cannot be known by logical knowledge but only by a philosophical belief, then the whole philosophy of Jaspers is marked with an invincible tension (Spannung) between certainty and uncertainty, between a defiant revolt (Trotz) and a trusting self-resignation (Hingabe).\textsuperscript{37} Namely, I "open" myself to the cipher-language of Transcendence when I become myself, and further, I become myself when I enter the limit-situations (Grenzsituationen) such as death, pain, fight and guilt, where I experience a radical contingency of the reality which is surrounding me.\textsuperscript{38} Entering these limit-situations I am shocked. Thoughts come to my mind: why the world and everything that exists is rather imperfect, deficient and contingent instead of being perfect and absolute; why instead of truth and good there is so much untruth and evil in our life?\textsuperscript{39} Is this life where evil, pain and death prevail

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{36} Jaspers, \textit{Existenzphilosophie}, 17.
  \item \textsuperscript{37} Jaspers, \textit{Philosophie}, 736.
  \item \textsuperscript{38} Situations become limit-situations when they awaken the existent in man through a radical shock of his whole being.\" (italics of the author of the thesis), Jaspers, \textit{Philosophie}, 49.
  \item \textsuperscript{39} This pessimistic element of Schopenhauer is a note common to all existentialists.
\end{itemize}
worth living at all? I refuse to consider the life I live as mine, because it was given to me without me. Having once experienced this I no longer can live peacefully. Therefore my entering into limit-situations turns out into a revolt against that which is going on in the world. I raise a voice of protest against disorder of the world and life. But, on the other hand, while protesting against life I at the same time feel longing for life: a longing to come back to that against which I have rebelled. But that is not a logical conviction, not a logical reasoning which can reconcile me with the life. The only way to overcome my revolt against the Ground of being is the way of self-resignation, which means, I should take life as it is. I find my way back to Transcendence when I change my hateful disposition to life into a conviction that this life has been given to me and I am ready to accept it.

This resignation of myself is based on no "theodicy" which looks for arguments to explain and justify the evil. Evil has a real existence, therefore any effort to deny it would be vain. An "explanation" and "justification" of evil on the

40 Jaspers, Philosophie, 736.
41 Jaspers, Von der Wahrheit, 718-719.
42 Jaspers, Philosophie, 740.
43 Ibid.
basis of its necessity for "universal harmony" or "order" would mean to come back to the same illusions from which man once escaped by his revolt against the order of life and the world. There is no scientific explanation, since "self-resignation renounces knowledge." \(^44\) Rather the reason for such resignation is a complete ignorance. However, this does not mean a radical negation of that which it is possible to know, but it rather means that we should give up any pretense to know that which is accessible only for belief and not for knowledge. In this sense self-resignation is "an active confidence, which in ignorance turns us towards Transcendence." \(^45\)

Since self-resignation cannot be based on knowledge, we remain in a continuous tension between self-resignation and revolt. The possibility to raise a voice of protest anew can never be put aside once and for all, since in the world there is always happening something which cannot be justified according to our standards of right and wrong. Therefore our attitude towards life should be a continuous winning the self-resignation in face of the reality which always stimulates us to revolt. "Real self-resignation is possible only through a surmounted revolt." \(^46\) A complete overcoming of the tension between revolt

\(^{44}\) Ibid., 742.

\(^{45}\) Ibid.

\(^{46}\) Ibid.
and self-resignation would be possible only by an evident intervention of Transcendence itself, but if God would reveal Himself to us in a visible way, then neither revolt, nor self-resignation would be any longer possible, since there would remain for us only one possibility: a blind obedience. 47 By remaining hidden Transcendence shows us that it wants "no blind obedience, but freedom, where a revolt is always possible." 48 Existential freedom is that which stimulates the search for Transcendence. Thus, the revolt as such against Transcendence is rather a negative communication with Transcendence: "Revolt against God is already a search for God." 49

The tension between self-resignation and revolt originally is a tension between freedom and Being, between existent and Transcendence. Every attempt to surmount this tension either leads us out of the world, or it causes us to sink into brutal reality. If we absolutize the revolt and check out our longing for self-resignation we have a Promethean existent, having confidence only in himself. There is freedom without Transcendence. If, on the other hand, we absolutize self-resignation and remove

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47 Ibid.
48 Ibid.
49 "Harden mit Gott ist ein Suchen Gottes.", Jaspers, Philosophie, 743.
the possibility of a revolt we have Job's ascetic existent, who has lost his freedom in the presence of Transcendence. Here we have Transcendence without freedom.\(^50\) In either case we would destroy ourselves as existents.

If we can absolutize neither the revolt nor self-resignation, we cannot release the tension between them, for in one case we would become victims of nihilism, and in the other case we would lose ourselves in that passive slavishness, where one piously falls on his knees to worship idols.\(^51\) The existent is saved in so far as this tension is maintained. A constant possibility to revolt against Transcendence assures for the existent his freedom, and a self-resignation leads the existent to Transcendence. Therefore the true vocation of every existent is to remain free in the presence of Transcendence. "The more I am orientated towards God, the more I am myself, and the more I am myself, the more I am orientated towards God.\(^52\)

In short, we cannot arrive at God, because He remains absolutely hidden. But by this very failure of our knowledge we ascertain our freedom. By remaining hidden God presents us with

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\(^{50}\) Jaspers, Philosophie, 737-738.

\(^{51}\) Ibid., 443-444; see also ibid., 819.

\(^{52}\) "Je mehr Vorstellung von Gott, um so mehr Selbst; je mehr Selbst, um so mehr Vorstellung von Gott.", Jaspers, Von der Wahrheit, 543.
freedom which we have to appreciate, but not lose for the sake of any idol, as Jaspers warns:

Man should not fall on his knees before any sort of idol: either of his own personality, or that of mankind, or God as a person. Against all possible idols and against Transcendence revealing itself man must fight, defending his right, which he has received from the distant Transcendence: God wants that I remain myself.53

C. Guilt, as the way to Transcendence. The unknowability of Transcendence is for Jaspers the very condition of our freedom. Therefore a question arises: what sort of freedom is this, which forces him to guarantee it by an absolute hiddenness of Transcendence? The consciousness of freedom for Jaspers is essentially connected with the consciousness of guilt. When he says that we are able to come to the hidden Transcendence only through freedom, he means that the consciousness of our culpability is the very proof of the existence of God. Our feeling of culpability points out for us the fundamental truth: "When I am truly myself, then I am no longer myself alone."54 If we would be just alone, by ourselves, we would never feel guilty or responsible to anybody. But since we actually do feel guilty, then there must exist somebody else besides us to whom we feel responsible. "If there would exist no Transcendence, I would

53 Jaspers, Philosophie, 819.
54 Jaspers, Von der Wahrheit, 633; see also ibid., 108.
always ask myself why I desire something at all, or I would do everything without any feeling of guilt."55

Our feeling of culpability holds us back from absolutizing our freedom. If, on the one hand, we are free, on the other hand, we always are conscious as "being given" (geschenkt-geworden) to ourselves.56 Freedom is not absolute. Otherwise it would be "empty" if it was not confronted with anything. Instead of that, freedom rather implies a longing to be surmounted (aufgehoben). But it can be surmounted only by Transcendence, which has given to us our existence and our freedom.57

We have seen that our consciousness of guilt for Jaspers is the chief-witness that we do not exist alone in this world, but that we stay in the presence of Transcendence. But since guilt means aversion from God, by defining freedom as guilt Jaspers ultimately defines freedom as freedom against God.

In short, Jaspers' search for the Absolute Being might be summarized in this manner: if there would exist no Transcendence, there would be possible our arbitrary action, for which we would feel no responsibility or guilt. But since we actually do

55 Jaspers, Philosophie, 738.
56 Jaspers, Von der Wahrheit, 110.
57 Jaspers, Der Philosophische Glaube, 53.
feel responsible for our activities, than there must exist God to Whom we are responsible. Moreover, if God would be knowable in the strict sense, we automatically would be compelled to obey Him, and, as a result of that, we would lose our freedom. But with the loss of freedom there would disappear automatically the responsibility for our activities. Therefore God must remain hidden.
CHAPTER IV

EXISTENTIAL ATTITUDE TOWARDS POSITIVE RELIGION

Characterizing his philosophy of existence as a free belief, Jaspers separates philosophy from sciences. Philosophy is not science, because it does not give us any knowledge in the strict sense of the word. We can arrive at knowledge of the objects of empirical reality through separate sciences, but being as such, which is the object of philosophical knowledge, cannot be known by rational investigation, for it can be reached only through belief.

At first sight it may look as though Jaspers' philosophy should come nearer to religion than any other philosophy, since it is principally based on belief, which is a characteristic mark of every religion. Yet it is not so. Jaspers separates philosophy from religion as well as from sciences. Since his philosophy is a free belief, it stands in an inimical relation with religion, which is based on authority. Philosophy is a belief, but it is not an authoritative belief. Being essentially a free belief Jaspers' philosophy is incompatible with any authority. "All free knowledge rises against authority," because "it
attempts to prescribe the content of knowledge for us.\textsuperscript{1}

Although he admits a tension existing between philosophical belief and scientific knowledge, yet this tension is only a relative one: if philosophy is not science, yet it presupposes scientific knowledge in so far as it is concerned with empirical reality. Therefore there is no absolute hostility between philosophy and science. It is otherwise in the case of religion. To be a philosopher and at the same time to be a confessor of a religion for Jaspers are two alternatives radically and absolutely incompatible with each other. "For the philosopher as such faith is possible, but not religion.\textsuperscript{2}" It is necessary for a philosopher to fight against religion: "Philosophy may contract a friendship with science, but it must fight against religion."\textsuperscript{3} This hostile attitude towards religion flows from his conviction that philosophy would lose its freedom by submitting itself to the authority of Revelation. Perhaps, Jaspers admits, if the "supposed" Revelation was really "the word of God," then it would be impossible to ignore it. "If we had to choose between God and man, it would be impossible not to choose God."\textsuperscript{4} The same idea he

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\textsuperscript{1} Jaspers, \textit{Von der Wahrheit}, 813; see also \textit{ibid}., 808: "Therefore it is necessary to fight continuously against authority."
\textsuperscript{2} Jaspers, \textit{Philosophie}, 252.
\textsuperscript{3} \textit{Ibid}., 251.
\textsuperscript{4} \textit{Ibid}., 271.
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expresses in a somewhat sophistical manner: if God really had revealed Himself to us, then even the greatest absurdity itself could not be considered as an objection against this Revelation:

If that (i. e., Revelation) were an accomplished fact, Revelation would be a fundamental and ultimate truth, which could not be surpassed by any other truth, and where every question concerning its possibility, actuality or contradictoriness would be frail. The Revelation would be the beginning of all our search for truth. Our every truth then should be submitted to Revelation and not Revelation judged by our previous knowledge of truth. 5

This is a sophistical reasoning, since Jaspers admitting that even an absurdity would not be an objection against Revelation if the Revelation were an accomplished fact, rejects the possibility of a Revelation by rejecting every historical witness. Immediately he raises the question: how can we know that Revelation is truly "the word of God?" We must rely here on witnesses, answers he himself. Yet "the word of man is not the word of God." 6 In so far as Revelation is transmitted, it receives

5 "Wenn das geschehen waere, dann waere die Wirklichkeit dieser Offenbarung das erste und das letzte, das, worueber keine Wahrheit hinausgehen konnte, demgegenueber alle Frage nach der Moglichkeit, nach empirischer Faktizitaet und nach Widerspruechlichkeit aufhoerte. Die Offenbarung staende am Anfang aller unserer Wahrheit. Diese Wahrheit haette sich nach ihr, nicht die Offenbarung nach unserem vorgehenden Wahrheitswissen zu richten." Jaspers, Von der Wahrheit, 852.

6 "Das Menschenwort ist nicht mehr Gottes Wort.", Jaspers, Der Philosophische Glaube, 66.
the form of finite truth, which is the proper characteristic of every human truth. Revelation is for this world, therefore it receives all the limitations of the world. "The truth of man is subject to logic and human experience."\(^7\)

Revelation for Jaspers is an absurdity, for it preaches that which is impossible in itself, for example, the dogma of Incarnation. "It is an absurdity that God could become man or man become God."\(^8\) All the proofs concerning the Resurrection of Christ are false, because they try to prove what is impossible in the world. We cannot rely here upon witnesses, because we know from experience about witnesses who were subjectively sincere, but who witnessed pure illusions.

Having rejected the proofs of witnesses, Jaspers comes to the criticism of the content of Revelation. He rejects Christianity for moral reasons. A logical absurdity for him does not mean an ultimate condemnation, since "absurdity is the form of revelation of Transcendence through reasoning."\(^9\) Instead of rejecting categorically absurdity as such, Jaspers distinguishes between a "revealing absurdity" (das offenbarendes Absurde) and a "misguiding absurdity" (das in die Irre führendes Absurde). What does this distinction mean? Jaspers' God is a hidden God. There-

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7 Jaspers, Von der Wahrheit, 852.
8 Ibid.
9 Ibid., 853.
fore from the human standpoint it would be absurd that God could come into contact with man. But such a contact could be possible from the standpoint of God, although it would remain an absurdity for man, yet a "revealing absurdity," since God in this case would reveal Himself to us and thereby enrich our knowledge by granting us some insight into His own nature. But de facto the Biblical Revelation is not "the word of God" and hence it is a "misguiding absurdity," namely, in so far as it is based on the erroneous supposition that God has spoken to man. So for a philosopher "the myth of God-Man is a misguiding absurdity,"\textsuperscript{10} for the reason that "it does not lead us through the Agape of love to Transcendence, but rather enfetters us with empty dogmas."\textsuperscript{11}

Jaspers also makes severe objections to the personality of Jesus, not only as Messiah, but also as man. He objects that Jesus was a "world-shy" personality, that He was rather "an exception, but not complete man," because He lacked "active sense for the world and knowledge."\textsuperscript{12} To follow Christ means for Jaspers "to want a life which leads to self-destruction."\textsuperscript{13} A perfect realization of Christianity would destroy man's life. Therefore Christianity is in fact a compromise with the require-

\textsuperscript{10} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{11} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., 854.
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., 855.
ments of life. Yet Christians, Jaspers objects, although, on the one hand, they cannot themselves follow the teaching of the Gospel, by their pretension to exclusive truth are ugly fanatics, on the other. 14

Having rejected Revelation as a "misguiding absurdity," Jaspers turns his criticism towards every form of religion. First of all, he attacks dogma, designating it as "myth" (Mythus). Believing in dogma is characterized as "belief against reason, not beyond reason." 15 To accept dogma means the same as to "sacrifice the intellect." Religious cult, too, is rejected by Jaspers, because it supposes a personal God. A personal God is nothing else but anthropomorphism, where absolutized man is made God. Therefore Divine Providence is only a "sublimed magic." It is an illusion to believe that God cares about us and requires prayers from us, since "real Transcendence does not ask from us either cult, or propaganda." 16 Prayer, as assurance of divine help, hinders one from the search for God instead of encouraging him. The Church, Jaspers finally says, is a human institution,

14 Jaspers, Der Philosophische Glaube, 69-72; see also Jaspers, Von der Wahrheit, 853.

15 "Gegen den Verstand, nicht ueber den Verstand hinaus.", Jaspers, Philosophie, 262.

16 Jaspers, Philosophie, 783.
since "the word of man is not the word of God."\(^{17}\) It is rather an expression of \textit{Machtwille} ("thirst for power") of priests, who promise salvation for their subjects in return for their blind obedience. Therefore the philosopher must fight against the Church, since otherwise blind obedience would mean treason of freedom which is the most valuable gift God can give to man. For this reason Jaspers urges the philosopher to choose between the two alternatives: religion or reason.\(^{18}\) Man cannot sell out his freedom and his reason in favor of authority. The fight against the "idolization of God" is a necessity for man. This crusade is the inevitably necessary task of the philosopher, if he wants "to preserve his freedom through individual risk."\(^{19}\)

Following Jaspers' reasoning we notice his peculiar inclination of speaking in paradoxical terms: in the knowledge of being we think of it in terms of objects and yet these objects do not give us any knowledge of being as such; in the cognition of God's existence we come to know God through symbols or ciphers and yet the knowledge of ciphers cannot be regarded as knowledge at all. It seems that paradox is a necessary element in Jaspers' philosophy. Indeed, after having urged man to fight against

\(^{17}\) See above, p. 57.


\(^{19}\) Jaspers, \textit{Philosophie}, 257.
every form of religion, he unexpectedly declares: "Religion is not an enemy of philosophy." 20 Is this a contradiction or a revocation of his previous statements? Not at all. His criticism of religion, as he says, is directed only towards a certain form of religion, namely, religion in so far as it becomes rigid in its "misleading objectivity." "Philosophy fights against religion, yet always against a certain religion in its untruth." 21 Religion for Jaspers is "untrue" in so far as it is "objective"; it is "objective" in so far as it is expressed by a certain dogma, cult and Church. For this reason religion must be rejected. But the very source of all religions, from which all confessions originate, forces our philosopher to change this hostile attitude towards religion into an attitude of respect. We must respect religion as a possible truth, although a truth of others, i.e., we must respect religion as truth, although it is not my truth (die Wahrheit nicht fuer mich). "There is truth in religious existent even if it be not appropriated by me." 22 In other words, we fight against objectively expressed religion (because it is "falsification" in the sense that "the word of man is not the word of God"), but, on the other hand, we must respect religious conviction as such, since such conviction is truth for man as

20 Jaspers, Der Philosophische Glaube, 61.
21 Jaspers, Philosophie, 256-257.
22 Ibid., 257.
"religious existent."

This negative and destructive criticism of religion by Jaspers is followed by his somewhat positive approach to religion, when he says that "the contents of the supposed Revelation (die Inhalte behaupteter Offenbarung), cleansed from their characteristics of absoluteness and exclusiveness, can be substantially assimilated philosophically as ciphers."23 Although Christ was no God, yet we can regard the "myth of Christ" as a fully authorized cipher which can mediate between God and man.24 Also personal prayer approximates to philosophical contemplation, and even merges in it, when it is cleansed from its utilitarian characteristics. Yet, since prayer is to be considered as man's relation with a personal God, it is radically different from philosophical contemplation, and therefore transition from prayer to contemplation is like transition from the order of religion to the philosophical order. Although considered from a philosophical standpoint prayer is better than "the complete lack of Transcendence," yet philosopher as such can never submit himself to the practice of prayer without spoiling his personality. "He, too, would like to fall on his knees, but he cannot do it before that which is only a human product" (i.e., God, in so far as He is made an

23 Jaspers, Von der Wahrheit, 1052.

24 Ibid.
Yet our philosopher gives up prayer with a certain feeling of pity in his heart: "Prayer is a possible reality, lacking which I experience grief rather than triumph." The same sense of hardship Jaspers experiences, when he finds himself as a philosopher compelled to remain outside of the Church. He admits the tremendous role of the Church in creating and preserving culture, and the unquestionable richness of its tradition, but he cannot accept it, since it is only a human institution. Therefore he finds himself forced to fight against its pretension to exclusiveness (Ausschliesslichkeitsanspruch). "Every confession is good," since "every pious community gathers its members from all confessions." But one cannot remain in the Church, where the philosopher is excommunicated by the theologian. The best thing, says Jaspers, is to remain always a "protestant" in so far as the Church is concerned: "I dare to remain in the Church as a heretic, or, in other words, protestant par excellence." Jaspers' expression that one might remain in the Church

25 Ibid., 259.
26 Ibid., 267.
27 Jaspers, Der Philosophische Glaube, 65.
28 Ibid., 87.
29 Jaspers, Philosophie, 267.
as a "protestant" does not mean that one could belong to religion and at the same time be a philosopher. Contrariwise, even admitting the insufficiency of philosophy in solving religious problems one is not supposed to turn himself to religion for answers, because "the hidden Transcendence forbids the philosopher to return to religion."\(^{30}\) One cannot "sacrifice his intellect" and betray his freedom. Therefore Jaspers requests man to make a decision, either for philosophy or for religion. "This decision is such that no honest man can avoid it, if he does not want to remain in the darkness of indecision."\(^{31}\) But decision for philosophy cannot become denial of religion as such, Jaspers warns. It would be pernicious to philosophy, because "philosophical contents exist in masses also in the form of religious belief."\(^{32}\) Therefore the tension existing between philosophy and religion should be understood as a readiness of philosophy to lend a helping hand to religion rather than as a denial of religion. "Tendency to aid religion is a pretension of every philosophy."\(^{33}\)

This aid of philosophy to religion consists principally in the efforts of philosophy to influence religion in the sense

\(^{30}\) Ibid., 259.
\(^{31}\) Ibid., 258.
\(^{32}\) Jaspers, Der Philosophische Glaube, 85.
\(^{33}\) Ibid., 89.
that the latter should give up its pretension to the exclusiveness of truth. Religion should give up its standpoint that its truth "binds everybody" (allgemeingültige Wahrheit), since "pretension to exclusiveness is only a human product, but not founded in God, Who left many ways leading to Him." This pretension to exclusive truth is unjust as well as pernicious for us. It is the source of all fanaticism. It does not belong to the essence of any confession that any of them would be considered as the only true one and binding everybody. Biblical religions, especially Christianity, have submitted themselves to the temptation of exclusiveness. And since this will of exclusiveness is mostly rooted in the "God-Man myth," Jaspers says, "we must abandon the religion of Christ which regards Jesus as God."

This religion is true in the sense that God speaks to man through man. But God never speaks exclusively through only one man. Christ is not God, but man, the last of biblical prophets, through whom God has spoken. Therefore Jaspers would "demythize" (entmythisieren) religion: "Demythizing here cannot stop deliberately. Also the most thoughtful myth is only myth." True religion is possible only when it is cleansed from myths which

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34 Ibid., 75.
35 Ibid., 80.
36 Ibid., 81.
conceal from our eyes its essence. What then does this "true" religion consist in? Jaspers does not hesitate to present us with a general outline of the "true" religion:

Philosophical belief considers the following moments of the biblical religion as essential and true:

Acknowledgment of the one God.
Man is absolute in his decision between good and evil.
Love is an expression and realization of man's desire to live for ever.
Man's internal and external activity is his probation.
The leading ideas of the world are historically absolute, but they cease to be absolute or exclusive when they are expressed.
World is created and contingent; it is inconsistent in itself; it is lacking a perfect harmony and order, because of the limitations and imperfections involved.
We are subject to the experience of limit-situations.
God is our ultimate and only refuge.37

This sort of religion which Jaspers proposes to us is more like a philosophical doctrine than real religion. His at-

37 "Momente dieser Wahrheit, noch einmal ausgesprochen, als philosophischer Glaube, sind: der Gedanke des einen Gottes, das Bewusstsein der Unbedingtheit der Entscheidung zwischen Gut und Boese im endlichen Menschen, die Tat - inneren und äusseren Handelns - als Bewahrung des Menschen, die Ordnungsideen der Welt als zwar jeweils geschichtlich unbedingte, aber ohne Absolutheit und Alleingültigkeit ihrer Erscheinung, die Ungeschlossenheit der geschaffenen Welt, ihr Unbestand aus sich, das Versagen aller Ordnungen an Grenzen, die Erfahrung des Aeussersten, die letzte und einzige Zuflucht bei Gott."

Jaspers, Der Philosophische Glaube, 82.
tempts to "reform" religion in their ultimate results lead to a complete denial of a positive religion, since by "cleansing" religion from "myths" Jaspers practically takes away its very essence.

In this connection it must be remarked, how superficial is the opinion of those who classify Heidegger and Sartre as chief representatives of atheistic existentialism, and regard Jaspers and Marcel as Christian thinkers. If Gabriel Marcel really merits the name of Christian existentialist, the same term cannot be ascribed to Jaspers.38

There must be acknowledged one positive characteristic in Jaspers' philosophy, namely, his logical consistency (in spite of the fact that "logic" is the object of his most serious criticism): if being as such cannot be known, then God must remain "hidden," but where a personal God is denied in a philosophy, there is no place left for a positive religion in such philosophy. But is the price not too high: to sacrifice fundamental truths for the sake of logical demands?

38 The author at the beginning of this work has purposefully characterized Jaspers as a "theistic existentialist" (see above, p. 9), but in classifying the existentialists into atheistic and Christian, as some commentators do, Jaspers should be left out.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The author does not consider this presentation of Jaspers' philosophical thought as being a complete picture of his system. This was not his original intention. He has confined himself only to the problems directly or indirectly related to the teaching of Jaspers concerning God's existence. But no philosophical consideration should be missing a critical evaluation of the method and solution of the original problem. Therefore the author will devote this chapter to a criticism of problems discussed in the previous chapters. He considered it appropriate to postpone the criticism to the end of the work rather than criticise Jaspers' philosophy portionally, since in the case of Jaspers the particular problems remain quite obscure unless they are subsumed under a somewhat general picture of his philosophy as a whole. For example, the full meaning of his distinction between objects of empirical reality and being as such becomes clearer only when he discusses the problem of God's existence and considers these objects as relative ciphers of the Absolute Being.

So in the first part of this chapter it will be pointed out that Jaspers' moral interpretation of knowledge gives us an
explanation of his position regarding the existence of God; in the second part the advantages and deficiencies of Jaspers' philosophy will be considered.

A. Jaspers' philosophy as metaphysics based on morality.
Jaspers has not found God by rational investigation. Rational cognition for him is only one part of knowledge which must be "supplemented" by the whole human being, or, in other words, complete knowledge is that which is realized in life. No philosophy for him is complete in its logical expression. It must be "supplemented" by the existent, as it has been previously "supplemented" by that philosopher, who, once through it, has expressed himself in the sense that he lived according to that which he taught. For example, I as a reader must be "supplemented" by living out the philosophy which is presented to me in Jaspers' teaching.

Also God can be approached only by the existent, which means that our knowledge alone cannot lead us to God unless it is supplemented by "existence" of the knowing subject. Therefore instead of actually knowing God Jaspers remains in a continuous search for Him. The aim of existential knowledge is not knowledge, but appeal. "The truth of existential knowledge consists not in the content as such, but in what is going on in me during the moment of knowing."¹ And what is going on in me during the

¹ Jaspers, Von der Wahrheit, 165.
process of knowing is nothing else but the awakening of myself as myself. This existential "awakening of myself" is the very measure of the authenticity of philosophical knowledge. I truly and in so far philosophically know, if and in so far as I transform myself into an existent. Therefore existential knowledge is either authentic, and then it is inseparably connected with the knowing subject, or it is unauthentic, namely, as a content of somebody other than myself. This interpretation of knowledge confers a moral character on Jaspers' whole philosophizing, since morality essentially consists in appeal. As long as moral principles are merely known and not carried out in life, they remain useless (although they do not lose their meaning even in this case). In the logical order the way of knowledge is the only way to truth, but the truth of the moral order is essentially the truth of life. In other words, as long as I do not live according to the moral principles, I am always morally unjust. Knowledge alone here is not sufficient. In this sense moral knowledge is only and in so far true, when and in so far as it is realized in life. This is the clue for the better understanding of Jaspers' philosophy. What in logical sense seem to be inconceivable paradoxes, in the moral order turn out to be serious truths.

2 Jaspers, Philosophie, 3.
3 Ibid., 676; see also Jaspers, Der Philosophische Glaube, 123.
When Jaspers demands that we relativize every truth and advises us to remain in the way of continuous search for it, it means in the logical sense an illicit elevation of the search as such into the rank of truth itself. But this is true in the moral order because of the fact that moral perfection cannot be obtained once for the whole life. Moral goodness must be strived for as long as we live, says Jaspers, and there he is right.

This moral approach to Jaspers' philosophy enables us to grasp the true meaning of his statement, that existential truth is absolute not because of its universality, but because of its historicity. Jaspersian truth is not a truth of knowledge, but it is a truth of life, a truth of concrete activity. But life is always "historical," since its place is "in time," and it cannot elevate itself to the state of atemporality, to eliminate itself from "time" as knowledge does. In this sense it would be unjust to speak of "universal activity" in the same sense in which we speak of the universality of knowledge. But we cannot affirm either that universality, in the sense of absolute validity, is a property of knowledge only, and that activity must always remain relative. Our activity, too, must somehow be made absolute. It is elevated to the rank of absoluteness in so far as

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4 "If I would stop searching, I would cease to exist." Jaspers, Philosophie, 676; see also Jaspers, Von der Wahrheit, 222.

5 See above, p. 23.
it is based on atemporal values. Thus, although moral activity takes place in time, yet there inheres in it an eternal value which obliges us so absolutely that we can face death itself. Moral values as such are absolute, yet moral activity is a most personal activity. While in other activities I can be replaced by somebody else, my moral perfection is my most personal obligation. In this sense morality is a field where absoluteness coincides with personality.

In the same moral sense we have to understand Jaspers' teaching that "existential truth is that which binds us" and that "it has its source in communication." It means that the objective criterion of truth must be replaced by a communicative criterion. "Existential knowledge requires a specific criterion of truth, which cannot be objective ... a philosophical idea is true in so far as it stirs up communication." This statement again is based on a moral interpretation of truth. It is true that moral activity is not subordinated to an objective criterion in the same sense as, for example, our social, economical or technical activity is subordinated to the ends and goals which are to be attained. This latter activity is judged according to its objective results. But the criterion of moral activity is our

6 Jaspers, Der Philosophische Glaube, 40.
7 Ibid.
conscience. Our moral acts receive their value not because of objective results, but because of the faithfulness to conscience.

Although the philosophy of existence has a moral character yet it is not just a sort of moral philosophy or ethics. Here rather is a question of a new re-evaluation of the relations existing between ethics and metaphysics. While traditional ethics takes its principles from metaphysics, the philosophy of existence bases metaphysics on ethics. Philosophical speculation has been accused of its strangeness to life, and Jaspers, following the slogan of Lebensphilosophie, tries to introduce a "philosophy of life," or, at least, one close to life. Ethics becomes the source of this philosophy, since it points to activity and not to abstract knowledge. The existential subject of knowledge is not logical, but moral personality. A logical subject of consciousness in general is limited only to the knowledge of empirical reality. The problem of Absolute Being arises only for an existential, who is a moral personality. If the way to God is an ethical way, then the truth of God has moral and not logical certainty. The certainty of God is the certainty of moral conviction and not the certainty of logical knowledge: "The reality of Being is the reality of conscience."8

This moral interpretation of Jaspers reveals to us the

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8 "Die Gewissheit des Seins ist in der Gewissheit des Gewissens.", Jaspers, Von der Wahrheit, 176.
very structure of the philosophy of existence. Jaspers preaches the impossibility of knowing being in a logical way, and the "empty space" left by logical knowledge is to be filled in by "existence." By this he confers on his doctrine of unknowability of truth the character of moral demand. When he logically "establishes" the fact that Absolute Being is unknowable, he at the same time morally demands that Absolute Being must remain unknowable. According to Jaspers, since being in itself, because of its alogical character, cannot be known in a logical way, Absolute Being also must be searched for in an alogical way, namely, through existential freedom. This logical unknowability of being is the very condition of our freedom. Therefore logos must fall in order to save ethos: God must remain hidden in order that our freedom be saved. If Transcendence had revealed itself to us, we would have ceased to be "existents" since our freedom would be destroyed. God wants us to be free, therefore He remains hidden.

Although Transcendence must remain hidden in order that we as existents be saved, yet there would be no existent without Transcendence. Transcendence is that "in which and through which we are we-ourselves and free." The human being is an existent

9 See above, p. 21 ff.

10 Jaspers, Von der Wahrheit, 107.
in so far as he is aware of his freedom; he is free in so far as
he is conscious that he "has been given to himself by Transcend-
ence." In other words, it is necessary that God exist, yet He
must remain hidden in order that we, as existents, would be saved
from destruction.

As we have seen, Jaspers' philosophy of existence, in
spite of its ethical character, is something more than a simple
theory of ethics. Instead of developing moral conclusions of a
given metaphysics, he dictates metaphysics itself in the name of
morality.

B. Way of truth, or a by-way? We cannot raise the question
in the case of Jaspers, as we could raise in the case of Sartre,
Nietzsche or Heidegger: is his philosophy atheistic, or is it
not? As we have seen, the whole philosophy of Jaspers is full of
longing to find God. Why then do all his efforts to find the
Absolute result in his fatal admission that "failure is the last
word?" We can answer that it happens because Jaspers devalu-
ates our reason (a characteristic feature common to all exist-
entialists). Existentialists, according to Jacques Maritain, have "thrown out reason," by confining it to the knowledge of

11 See above, p. 53.
12 "Das Scheitern ist das Letzte," Jaspers, Philosophie,
864.
13 Jacques Maritain, Existence and Existent, tr. by
Galantiere-Phelan, Pantheon, 1948, 60.
empirical reality only. Jaspers' proposed way to search for Absolute Being through philosophical belief is a priori marked with uncertainty, since, according to his own words, this way is the way of ignorance. But remaining ignorant one will never come to a knowledge of anything, just as a blind man will never be able to see light as long as he remains blind. Therefore it is no wonder that Jaspers' "momentary break-through of hope and confident affirmation of reality of the Ground of being," as Father Klenk remarks, "soon sinks in an icy cold possibility that this is only delusion." If "a small mistake in the beginning is a great one in the end," as St. Thomas says paraphrasing Aristotle, then is it no wonder that a system built on questionable foundations must sooner or later collapse?

Jaspers has founded his philosophy of existence on the Kantian hypothesis, according to which phenomenon can in no way manifest noumenon; that phenomenon presents only an empty objectivity and not the thing as it is in itself. This doctrine which teaches that by knowing a phenomenon or object we still cannot

14 See above, p. 17.


16 Thomas Aquinas, Saint, De Ente et Essentia, On Being and Essence, tr. with Introduction and Notes by A. Maurer, Toronto, Canada, 1949, 24.
know the thing in itself is self-contradictory. If our knowledge were really restricted only to the appearances of things, then on what ground could we posit that there are "appearances?" Is it possible that there exist "appearance" without the thing which it represents existing?

Moreover, Jaspers has confused finite being with Absolute Being or God. "Being in itself" (das Sein an sich), "being as such" (das Sein schlechthin) or "absolute being" (absolutes Sein), which he is speaking of, is nothing else but God. We attribute the term "absolute being" to God most properly. It means that God "is" absolutely, while created beings "are" only relatively. God is being, creatures only have being, since being is the very essence of God, as St. Thomas says:17 "It is impossible that in God His being should differ from His essence." But Jaspers confuses finite being with Absolute Being in the sense that he speaks of them as if they were beings of the same order. Speaking of God he uses categories of sense experience only, for example, he rejects the principle of causality for the reason that it transgresses our experience: we do not find in reality any being which would be causa sui ipsius.18 Or, when he tries

17 Thomas Aquinas, Saint, Summa Theologica, I, 3, 4; see also ibid., I, 13, 11.
to define God as "actuality without possibility," he immediately rejects this concept on the basis that there is nothing in reality which would be actuality without possibility. Therefore it is a contradiction when Jaspers tries to define God by a category of empirical reality, such as the category of time. He says that we must think of God as existing in time, since exclusion of time would mean "only a concept without reality," and at the same time we must admit that God is "timeless," since otherwise He would not be eternal.

Jaspers tries to convince us that there is an intrinsic contradiction in every name we attribute to God, since we cannot express God by any category without being compelled at the same time to express Him by a contrary category, which would destroy the former. For example, we must characterize God as a unity of being and non-being. God is no determinate being (nicht ein bestimmtes Etwas), but such being is "the very being," the most perfect being, since here is excluded every limitation and determination. Thus, God is being and non-being at the same time, which is a contradictory possibility. We can answer that this is only a supposed contradiction. We call God a "non-being" in the sense that He excludes every limitation and imperfection.

19 Ibid.
20 See above, pp. 37-38.
But this does not destroy the notion of being, since imperfection only shows that there is a lack of being. An imperfect thing is lacking being in so far as it is imperfect. Therefore when God "lacks" imperfections and limitations, it means that He is being in the most eminent way.

Jaspers' rejection of the principle of causality is fatal to his whole theodicy. His cipher-theory loses all value by denying a minimum of knowledge of what God is, since, according to Jaspers, the ciphers signify that God exists, but they do not give us the least idea of God's nature. This is a self-contradictory proposition, since if we did not have some knowledge of what God is, then how could we know that there is a similarity between the symbol and the thing symbolized, i.e., between ciphers and God? Jaspers' symbol-language speaks ambiguously of God. It is an "empty" language, as he himself admits: "symbol-knowledge is no knowledge." 21 We come to the knowledge of God's existence based on the principle of causality. In our natural knowledge we start with things which are better known to us and go to things which are less known, as St. Thomas says, 22 "beginning with easier matters, we may advance more suitably in knowledge." Since effects are better known to us than their cause

21 See above, p. 45.
22 Thomas Aquinas, Saint, De Ente et Essentia, 24.
and since no effect can exist without a cause, according to the principle of causality, we go from things in the world to God as their cause. A mutual causality of things themselves is not possible since an infinite series of finite causes cannot explain the creation of things. Therefore there must exist a *causa sui ipsius*, an uncreated cause, or God, Who is the efficient cause of all creation.

Paraphrasing Jaspers that "a demonstrated God is no God," we can also admit that this is true in the sense that if our knowledge *exhausted* God, He would no longer be God. In a certain sense we also admit a sort of "destruction" of our knowledge when we are dealing with God, i.e., when we admit the imperfection of this knowledge. Yet this destruction is not of such extent that we could not know anything of the nature of God. St. Thomas teaches that we have some positive knowledge of what God is. Perhaps we are not capable of knowledge of the essence of God as such, yet we have an essential knowledge of the absolute attributes of God, although in an imperfect manner, namely, by means of an analogy of proportionality (*analogia proportionalitatis*). How do we come to this analogical knowledge of God? Our natural knowledge of God is based on the sensible

23 See above, p. 40.
character of our knowledge: we come to the knowledge of God by means of sensible reality. Thus, all our natural knowledge of God is causal and therefore it indicates that we can have neither univocal, nor aequipvaloc knowledge of Him. Manser is right in remarking that we cannot know God univocally, since He is beyond all categories. A limited effect cannot exhaust its infinite cause. Also aequipvalacio, which designates only a similarity of names in absolute variety of things, cannot reveal to us the nature of God. But we have an analogical knowledge of God, which stands in the middle between univocatio and aequipvalacio. All the proofs of God’s existence are based on analogy. But is there really possible a bridge between ens ab alio and ens a se, between the finite and the infinite? Is there any proportion existing between effect and its cause? In other words, can we know anything of the quidditative nature of God? We cannot know by our natural knowledge, as St. Thomas says, the essence of God as such, since no ens participatum can ever exhaust the

24 "Naturalis nostra cognitio a sensu principium sumit.", Thomas Aquinas, Saint, Summa Theologica, I, 12, 12; see also ibid., ad 2: "Deus naturali cognitione cognoscitur per phantasmata effectus sui."

25 Gallus M. Manser, Das Wesen des Thomismus, Dritte Auflage, Paulusverlag, Freiburg in der Schweiz, 1949, 479.

26 Thomas Aquinas, Saint, Summa Contra Gentiles, I, 32.

27 Ibid., I, 33.

28 Ibid., III, 55; see also Thomas A., S. Theol., I, 12, 1.
ens subsistens. But we can have some positive knowledge of the
nature of God through His absolute attributes. St. Thomas de-
fines these attributes as the attributes in the definition of
which is not included any defect.\textsuperscript{29} By knowing these attributes
of God we get some knowledge of the nature of God itself. How is
that possible? There must be something quidditative common
between creatures and God. Absolute attributes designate some-
thing which in God really exists (in Deo vere existunt).\textsuperscript{30} Al-
though they do not exhaust the essence of God completely (non
totaliter totum), yet these attributes represent to us the divine
essence itself (representantes divinam essentiam).\textsuperscript{31} The absolute
attributes are to be ascribed to God substantially (substantia-
liter) and properly (proprie).\textsuperscript{32} Hence although we can know
through these attributes the divine nature essentially, yet our
knowledge is imperfect. A perfect knowledge of something pre-
supposes the knowledge of what a thing is (id quod est) and how
it is (secundum quod est).\textsuperscript{33} We can arrive at some knowledge of
the quidditative nature of God, i. e., we can have some knowledge
of what God is, but we cannot know how He is, because we cannot

\textsuperscript{29} "Id, in quorum definitione non clauditur defectus.",
\textit{Questiones disputatae de veritate}, 2, 11.

\textsuperscript{30} Thomas Aquinas, \textit{Saint}, \textit{Quest. disp. de potentia}, 7, 5.

\textsuperscript{31} Thomas Aquinas, \textit{Saint}, \textit{Quest. disp. de veritate}, 2, 1.

exhaust the divine essence which is \textit{substantiae pellagus infinitum}.\footnote{33} As finite beings we cannot exhaust the infinite being of God, since we only have being, God is ipsum esse. In so far as our natural knowledge of God is imperfect, it is negative. But this does not mean that our positive knowledge of God is false. St. Thomas agrees with the Pseudo-Dionysius that our negative knowledge of God is more real than the positive.\footnote{35} For example, we know that God is infinite, but we cannot grasp what His infinity really means. In short, we can know something of the quidditative nature of God, and in this respect our knowledge is positive, but our knowledge is imperfect, and in this sense it is negative. Hence our knowledge of God is not absolutely negative.

\textit{Perfectiones simplices} as such make possible an analogy between creatures and God. God is \textit{ens, verum, bonum}; the creatures also are \textit{ens, verum, bonum}. These perfections \textit{ut sic express no modus essendi} either of God or of creature. They only express the \textit{relation} existing between God and created things. These perfections are for both intrinsically necessary. This points to nothing else but to proportionality existing between the finite and the infinite. Although there is no identity of

\footnote{33} Thomas Aquinas, \textit{Saint, Quest. disp. de verit.}, 2, 11. \footnote{34} Thomas Aquinas, \textit{Saint, Summa Theologica}, I, 13, ad 2. \footnote{35} Ibid.
modus essendi between God and creatures, yet there is a similitude of relationship to these simple perfections.

In this sense analogy of proportionality is a bridge between ens finitum and ens infinitum. On the one hand, there is saved the immense distance between God and creature, but, on the other hand, the analogy of proportionality enables us to have some insight into the nature of God. Therefore instead of preaching a complete destruction of our knowledge of God Jaspers rather should admit only imperfection of that knowledge. This destruction comes for him not for the reason that we would not know that God exists, but only because we cannot have the least knowledge of His nature. There is denied the possibility of a contact between us and God because of the absolute infinity of the essence of God. But here again Jaspers is self-contradictory, since by this he indirectly proves at least one attribute of God, namely, His infinity.

Jaspers' attempt to "demythize" religion must be categorically rejected. When he confers on philosophy the right to "purify" religion, it means that he brings religion to trial in the court of philosophy. This means nothing else but the secularization of religion. We characterize this attempt of Jaspers as unjust, since to admit only that which can be grasped by reason and to reject everything that surpasses reason means to reject all religion as such. Divine reason cannot be brought to trial by
human reason. Although Jaspers says that he is fighting against "the untruth of objectivized religion" only, and that he respects religion as such, but as "the truth of others," nevertheless in actual fact this does not change the matter, since actually every religion is "objective" in the sense that there is no religion without dogma, cult or Church. Therefore by rejecting the "objective" form of religion Jaspers rejects religion as such. His declaration that he respects religion as "truth of others" does not change the matter: the question here is not about religion as such, but about religious conviction. We fight against a "strange truth" only when the question is not about different truths, but about truth and untruth. For example, there is no need that mathematics should fight against biology, but chemistry had to fight against alchemy, because the latter was proved as untruth. Thus, it is impossible that, fighting against religion as such, one could respect it as "the truth of others."

It is impossible to grasp the essence of a religion for one who himself remains outside of it. Jaspers remains outside of religious life confining himself to philosophy only. His philosophy itself excludes the possibility of religion, since where a personal God is denied, religion is impossible. Also he could not grasp the essence of religion, because he denied the possibility of Revelation. By the fact of his denial of Revelation Jaspers does not distinguish between natural religions
and the revealed religion. Natural religions, since they are products of human reason, principally can be questioned by our intellect. For example, Greek philosophy really demythized Greek religion. But the relation of philosophy and religion is different when we are confronted with the Revealed Religion. Here philosophy is not competent to reject Revelation. Only a certain philosophy might reject Revelation but not philosophy as such. Philosophy as such, or human reason, does not exclude a priori the possibility of Revelation since this possibility is not self-contradictory. Rather philosophically considered it is possible to admit that if there exists a God (Jaspers admits that) He can reveal Himself to us. The denial of Revelation is based usually on the absolutization of the human intellect. Here Jaspers is inconsistent: he would relativize every philosophical truth and at the same time he would absolutize philosophy to such a degree that to its court he would bring religion itself. The absolutization of philosophy leads unfortunately to relativization of philosophical truth! By rejecting Revelation because of the absolute unknowability of God Jaspers absolutizes the imperfection and limitation of our reason.

Jaspers calls all the truths and dogmas of Revelation "absurdities." But we can answer that they are not absurdities but deep truths and mysteries. Absurdity is that which is self-contradictory and hence repugnant to our reason. But mysteries
surpass our reason and therefore cannot be grasped by it. Revelation reveals to us facts not as contradictory to reason but as exceeding its limits. Hence our reason has no right to question the validity of such truths, because they are beyond the reach of reason. Just as every affirmation of reason is possible only within the limits of reason, so every negation. **Beyond its limits reason can neither affirm nor deny.**

Summarizing the thoughts expounded in this work the author comes to the following conclusions: (1) One cannot accept Jaspers' philosophy in so far as it tries to base metaphysics on morality, since that implies the impossibility of our reason to come to the knowledge of Absolute Being, but one can agree with Jaspers that the search for and finding of God is the task not of reason only but it is the task of all the faculties of man. (2) One cannot accept Jaspers' notion of truth, since by elevating to the rank of truth every subjective conviction he degrades truth itself, but Jaspers rightly emphasizes the fact that truth must be realized in life, not only known. (3) Jaspers' notion of God is unacceptable, since his immanent Transcendence is not a personal God, but his philosophy, which in solution of the problem of God's existence is psychology of search rather than metaphysics in the proper sense, allows us to understand better those who are seeking for God in an invincible tension of faith and unbelief.
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The thesis submitted by Zigmas Ramanauskas has been read and approved by three members of the Department of Philosophy.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the thesis is now given final approval with reference to content, form, and mechanical accuracy.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts.