

close to neo-Kantianism might serve to illustrate how the 'New Look' is as likely to last in philosophy as in skirts. There are some unchanging questions. Let us recognise them. Finally, there is just one reference to Edith Stein which makes us anxious to know more about this distinguished pupil of Husserl's. Jewish by race, in religion Sister Teresa Benedicta a Sancta Cruce, she was an expert on St Thomas and St John of the Cross, and she was caught up in the great holocaust of Nazi persecution. The concentration in her person of so much that is noblest in our age demands a wider public than can be reached by odd articles in *Thought* or *The Thomist*—may she rest in peace.

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## NIETZSCHE, JASPERS AND CHRISTIANITY

ONE of the first books published by authority of the British Military Government in Germany was *Nietzsche and Christianity* by Karl Jaspers.<sup>1</sup> This was the first of a number of post-war publications through which Professor Jaspers became practically the spokesman of academic Germany. He had been one of the few outstanding university professors who, though not directly discriminated for racial, religious or political reasons, had never for a moment associated themselves with National Socialism. Apart from church dignitaries and scientific technicians, he was the first German intellectual to be invited after the war for lectures abroad. When the first German university was re-opened by the Allied Military Authorities at Heidelberg, he was not only restored to his professorship but appointed Rector. Fifteen years after the publication of his chief work, Jaspers has become perhaps the most influential figure in the intellectual life of Central and Western Europe. In Switzerland, the Low Countries, Scandinavia, England and France, his Existentialism is discussed even by those who used to take but little interest in philosophical pursuits.

In these countries, it is difficult to obtain genuine information on Jaspers's philosophy. Only one small book of his has been translated into English.

1. *Nietzsche und das Christentum*. Verlag der Buecherstube Fritz Seifert, Hameln 1946. See my articles 'Das neue Denken und das neue Glauben' in *Zeitschrift fuer Theologie und Kirche*, xvii (1936), p. 30-50, 'The measure of Man', *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, viii (1946), p. 332 and 'Simplicius Simplicissimus's British associations' in *Modern Language Review*, xl (1945), p. 37.

In 1931 the publishers of *Sammlung Goeschen* asked Jaspers to write the 1,000th volume of this series of popular text-books on all branches of learning. He gave his book the title *The spiritual Situation of our Time*, which the Australian translators (E. and C. Paul) rendered by *Man in the Modern Age*. This book is long out of print.

Even more than Jaspers, Martin Heidegger is usually regarded as the initiator of Existentialism. Indeed Heidegger's chief work appeared as early as 1928, but he had been Jaspers's pupil and his work remained a grand torso. Through his close association with National Socialism, Heidegger is now somewhat discredited; indeed for some years his philosophy was in fashion with the Spanish Falangists and some of the early 'idealist' followers of Hitler believed that Heidegger supplied them with a philosophical foundation of political dynamism. Jaspers is Heidegger's senior by fifteen years or so. While Heidegger is of South German Catholic origin, Jaspers comes from a Northern family with no Christian affiliations. Heidegger began his career by studies in scholastic philosophy. Jaspers was up to his forties a medical scientist rather than a professional philosopher. Amidst the turmoil caused by Spengler's prophecy of the 'Decay of the West,' now fulfilled to an undreamt of extent in all its details, Jaspers published his *Psychology of Weltanschauung*, in which he showed that *Weltanschauung* had become the modern substitute for positive religion and was an attempt to shelter in ever new 'shells' from the onslaught of direct and vital experience.

It was in *Man in the Modern Age* that Jaspers first outlined the scope of Existential philosophy. I quote from the Paul's translation:

'Existence-philosophy is the thought, making use of or transcending all experience, by means of which man would fain become himself. This thought does not cognise objects, but illuminates and elaborates the being of the thinker. Brought into a state of suspense by having transcended the cognitions of the world (as the adoption of the *philosophical attitude towards the world*), that fixate being, appeals to its own freedom (as the *illumination of existence*) and gains space for its own unconditioned activity through conjuring up transcendentalism (as *metaphysics*'). (The words in italics are the titles of the three volumes of Jaspers *Philosophie*, the most comprehensive system of philosophy produced by our generation).

I cannot blame the translators for not even attempting to render Jaspers into idiomatic English. In fact the original Jaspers is perhaps even more difficult to read, because he, like Heidegger, has largely abandoned the traditional terminology of philosophy. It is a well known fact that right from the beginning German (vernacular) philosophy derived much of its inspiration from meditation upon the original meaning of words. Hegel's idea of dialectics, for example, loses much of its apparent arbitrariness when we consider it as a result of a meditation upon the threefold meaning

of the German word 'aufheben' (corresponding to English 'up' and 'heave'), namely 'to raise', 'to eliminate' and 'to preserve'. Heidegger and Jaspers, in analogy to contemporary poetry and prose-writing, raised this technique to the rank of a general method; ordinary life, what Hegel called 'dirty reality', supplied them with their raw material. In no respect is the relationship between 'modern art' and 'modern philosophy' more evident. The former claims to decompose natural forms into their essential components; the latter unfolds the components and aspects of vulgar and traditional usage. None of the traditional conceptions of philosophy is left its conventional meaning, though indeed none of them is completely deprived of it either. *Either* the original or literal meaning of the word is given preference, as e.g. in the word 'Existence' literally 'out-standing', therefore no longer meaning 'real being' (as in traditional studies *de existentia Dei* etc.) but those extra-ordinary moments in human life of complete truthfulness, sincerity and genuineness, for which—as every second modern novel tells us—our generation is craving. Or the traditional meaning is shaded by manifold meaning which words have in vulgar speech, especially through the various degrees of their figurative use (most noticeable in German, where one cannot escape into Latinism). Students of classical German philosophy will be aware of the fact that there is no English equivalent to the word 'erkennen', literally meaning 'to know thoroughly' also 'to beget', which Kant and Hegel used for the fundamental activity of the philosophical mind. The English translators of Jaspers followed the tradition to render this word by to 'cognise', which only shows how right Jaspers was in abandoning this word. He uses instead the expression 'es geht auf,' literally 'it opens itself,' which in German implies the following idioms: 'The sun rises', 'a door opens by itself,' 'an equation dissolves itself', 'a blister bursts', 'it dawns upon me'. In each case where Jaspers uses this expression virtually all these meanings are implied, though in each case one of them is articulated. This expression points to the three essential characteristics attributed to 'Existential' (in contrast to what is described as 'objective') thinking, namely its spontaneity (not 'I recognise' but 'it acknowledges itself'), suddenness (in contrast to the slow labours of ratiocination) and completeness (the door was closed, and now it has been flung open). This use of words in their original (perhaps long forgotten or at least obsolete) or their rudimentary vulgar and material sense is not confined to Existential philosophy. Under the influence of his early German studies, James Joyce tried to apply it to the English language, with what success readers of his *Finnegan's Wake* may decide. In *Stephen Hero*, his earliest work, posthumously published, Joyce described 'epiphanies' as the only experience life was worth living for. In Existential philosophy 'transparency' is the most outstanding characteristic of 'existence'.

The use of the word 'transparent' in modern Continental literature alone would suffice to show that Existential terminology is not the arbitrary invention of some queer German professors but the summary of a very deep and significant stratum of contemporary European thought.

As it is most difficult to translate Jaspers's *Philosophie*, those who realise the importance of Existentialism will welcome the publication of *Nietzsche and Christianity*, a series of lectures which Jaspers gave in 1938 to a meeting of Protestant clergy. Of Jaspers's numerous post-war publications this is the only one to be strictly philosophical, and also the only one which was written before the war. There are few books of this kind which could be reprinted without the slightest alteration after those eight years. Not only in Germany but also in Holland, Switzerland, Scandinavia and in these countries, Protestant clergy have been among the first students of Existential philosophy.

*Nietzsche and Christianity* would appear to be an avenue of approach to Jaspers's philosophy because it deals with a historical subject. In 1936 Jaspers had published a book on Nietzsche, implicitly a defence against the attempts then made to claim Nietzsche as a fore-runner of the 'philosophy' of Rosenberg, and a warning against the attempts made in subsequent years to list Nietzsche along with Treitschke, Bernardi, Houston Chamberlain etc. as an advocate of 'blood and iron' nationalism. In 1938 Jaspers warned his clerical listeners not to be misguided by the well-known ferocity of Nietzsche's onslaught on bourgeois Christianity. Indeed, even those who have a fairly good knowledge of Nietzsche might not be aware that right between those fierce condemnations we can hear him saying: 'Christianity has been the best piece of ideal life I have ever known. From childhood days I have sought it, and I firmly believe that I have never been mean against it in my heart'. 'The most noble type of man I have seen was the sincere Christian. I regard it as an honour to originate from families where Christianity was taken seriously in every respect.' 'The meek, the upright and chaste priest is not only the anointed and elect of the people, from whom he originated and to whom he belongs. He is sacrificed to the welfare of the people, and therefore can be trusted like no one else.' 'The self-denial which the Jesuits impose upon themselves and which is taught in their manuals, is beneficial to the laity even more than to the Society itself. Jesuitism is one of the few true forms of Christianity and indeed the only true form of democracy in the modern world.'

However, Jaspers is not really concerned with the ambiguity of Nietzsche's attitude towards Christianity. Both his hostility and his admiration are merely the superficial, outside expressions of his rational and his sentimental moods. Behind this ambiguity is his desperate search for truth, a keen awareness of the insufficiency of any position yet attained, charac-

teristic, as Jaspers believes, of the spirit of learning proper to Christian Europe. Jaspers understands Nietzsche better than Nietzsche could understand himself. The very ambiguity of Nietzsche's attitude is expressive of the fundamental tenet of Existential philosophy that truth is not simply here and not there, unambiguous at any time and to anybody. Truth in general is not an objective position but rather a specific quality which, theoretically, can appear in any position, however 'incorrect' it may appear in the 'objective' sphere. The standard of truth is not the fitting of ideas upon things or facts but the full weight of existential perspicuity. So far as Nietzsche is concerned, one can certainly agree with Jaspers that neither in his hatred nor in his praise of Christianity Nietzsche was fully himself, and that he is at his best, his deepest and perhaps his truest where he confines himself to urging upon us boundless love of truth.

It is hard to deal with Existential philosophy in the traditional forms of philosophical work. This philosophy does not claim to establish theories but to confine itself to descriptions. Dealing with history it somewhat transcends its boundaries. I believe that Existential philosophy has really discovered something which is peculiar to modern man, perhaps one of the very few things he can be proud of, namely his desire of perfect sincerity and almost Jansenist craving for personally living up to the greatness of truth. Former generations could find some peace in the distinction between *attritio* and *contritio* or of Probabilism and Probabiliorism. Modern man, in spite of his apparent weakness, has standards of truthfulness which sometimes appal the older generation. Unfortunately Existential philosophy has become what Jaspers would call a shell, an ism, by its doctrine that truth can be found *only* through existence, *only* in transparence, *only* in the fullness of sincerity. It is unaware of the tension characteristic of the modern Christian between a gigantic truth and our prayer for faith.

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NOTE. Since this article was written Professor Jaspers has gone to Basle, another work of his on the nature of truth has appeared, and his booklet on the conception of guilt has been translated into English.