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## **METAPHYSICS WITHOUT FOUNDATIONS: JASPERS' CONFRONTATION WITH NIETZSCHE**

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In our century a number of thinkers have attempted to probe into the nature and possible validation of metaphysics. We have seen everything from a triumphal affirmation of traditional categorical claims to the radical denial of any such generic claims by movements such as Deconstruction. Outside of the more polemical debates it is increasingly clear that metaphysics is struggling toward a greater degree of self-transparency. One of the central problems lying at the heart of metaphysical query is that of the nature and scope of what has been called foundationalism. Stated or implied attacks on the supremacy of foundationalism have become common in the literature.<sup>1</sup> Yet little progress has been

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<sup>1</sup>Most discussions of foundationalism are concerned with the problem of validation in sense perception. In his article, "C.I. Lewis's Critique of Foundations in *Mind and the World Order* in the *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, Summer 1984, Christopher W. Gowans refers to the work of Alston, Bonjour, and Sosa as originative for some aspects of his own definition. Gowans' understanding of epistemological foundationalism is as follows: "Its two essential theses are (1) that some of our justified beliefs are self-justified, meaning that they are justified without being justified on the basis of other beliefs, and (2) that the remainder of our justified beliefs are justified, ultimately, on the basis of these self-justified beliefs. In addition, foundationalists have often claimed (3) that our self-justified beliefs are certain, where this means that they cannot be mistaken. Finally, foundationalists in the empiricist tradition have usually maintained (4) that our self-justified beliefs are about sensory experiences, and not about physical objects." (From p. 241). My understanding of foundationalism utilizes several of these insights but includes aspects of metaphysical foundationalism. The notion of self-evidence can apply to sense

made in determining the possibilities of metaphysics in a post-foundationalist era. It is the contention of this paper that we can begin to get a clearer picture of the future possibilities of metaphysics when we examine the writings of the German philosopher Karl Jaspers with particular attention to his monumental work on Nietzsche. In this work, Jaspers details Nietzsche's ambivalent and complex relations to the perennial tradition of metaphysics. Nietzsche is seen to mark the beginning of a radical turning within the history of metaphysics. Yet Jaspers insists that this turning is both incomplete and fragmented. It is implied that in his own writings, Jaspers completes this turning so as to open up a new era for metaphysical query. However, Jaspers makes no claims to the effect that metaphysics is at an end or that it is about to be deconstructed from within but that a new and crucial chapter is about to open in the perennial tradition itself. His position can thus be located midway between Heidegger who would picture a beginning and end to the tradition, and Derrida who would seek to work free from presence and logocentrism.

We will use the notion of foundationalism as a focus for our analysis of Jaspers' understanding of Nietzsche. It is hoped that the fruitfulness of this approach will become manifest when we examine the ways in which Jaspers takes us beyond Nietzsche while still working in and for metaphysics itself.

This essay has four specific tasks. The first is to give a brief over-view of five traits which, when part of the contour of a perspective, function to support foundationalism. The second is to detail Jaspers' understanding of Nietzsche in respect to these five traits. The third is to show how Jaspers overcomes those forms of foundationalism still exhibited by Nietzsche. The fourth and final task is to make some suggestions for radicalizing Jaspers' insights into the possibilities of a post-foundationalist metaphysics.

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perception and to general categorial analysis, i.e., the quest for first principles. Further, foundationalism remains committed to the notion that rational reflection can encompass the plurality of world-orders and arrive at a totality.

Foundationalism can be seen to embrace at least the following five traits: the belief in self-evident truths of self or world, the belief that first principles can be found, the belief that all analysis involves uniform translation into categorial primitives, the univocity of method, and the belief that the world is a knowable whole.

The first belief is manifest in those epistemologies which ground themselves in primitive intuitions of first signs or structures which are not themselves the products of inference or analysis. Either the self or its world is available to a form of knowledge which functions outside of the triadic tension between perception, conception, and interpretation. Some trait of the self becomes self-evident in such a way as to form the origin or measure for the others. For example, Descartes' isolation of the act of thinking, as the non-dubitable structure of consciousness, becomes the genesis for subsequent structures which are held to be constitutive of mental life. Further, these subsequent mental structures serve as the origin for nature and its objects. Husserl, working within the Cartesian trajectory, relies on this notion of the self-evident in order to ground an architectonic on the constitutive structures of the transcendental ego. These structures are not located within an antecedent series of such traits but stand as the generating power for any series. As such, they cannot be questioned or undermined without destroying the consequent principles.

The second belief is manifest in any epistemology or metaphysics which insists that one or more genera function to encompass the differences and distinctions which prevail in the world. Whenever the complexity of the world is reduced to a single genus or to a cluster of ontologically equal genera, a form of foundationalism is imposed which serves to blunt the account of the complexes which stand outside of the primitives.

Traditional accounts of the primacy of substance, for example, compel reflection to efface or bypass those realities which do not have the obvious support of the foundational genus. The status of complexes such as possibilities or intentions becomes problematic. This form of foundationalism need not rely on the principle of self-evidence for its defense or its articulation.

What it must argue is that some genera are more real than others and that this 'higher' reality makes them foundational for all others.

The third belief, a cousin of the second, reduces all distinctions to the previously isolated genera and refuses to give them a status outside of the primitives. The articulation of those actualities which are not immediately instantiated in the highest genus can only proceed when they are reduced to their foundational elements. The burden of Spinoza's categorial scheme, for example, lies in its drive to translate all of reality into modes of substance. The foundation for the distinction between mind and matter lies in the reality which is never directly manifest. To be is thus to be reducible to that which is the highest genus.

The fourth belief rejects the multi-form nature of query and interpretation and reduces all probing into nature and world to one imperial method. This method is held to be both necessary and sufficient as a pathway toward comprehension in any order of the world. For several 17th century thinkers, the method of deduction is held to be sufficiently powerful for successfully generating a comprehensive categorial framework which accounts for all of the complexes of the world. Dialectic, whether tied to a particular metaphysical perspective, or serving a hermeneutic strategy, is often held by many to be a method of methods which can govern and locate all other forms of human probing. A weaker form of foundationalism will argue that two or more methods are comprehensive and complete. Peirce, for example, insists that deduction, induction, and abduction (hypothesis formation) together serve to account for all of reality no matter how complex or recalcitrant. Any other method is held to be merely an instance of the foundational methods.

The final belief, perhaps the most difficult to maintain, drives toward a generic comprehension which denies the very possibility of categorial shipwreck. It often utilizes a cluster of metaphors and categories to preclude that which is radically novel or which has a trait constitution of great recalcitrance. Surprisingly, so-called "pluralistic" perspectives often make vigorous categorial claims for their generic spread and interpretive sensitivity which belie their deeper imperial pre-

tensions toward comprehensiveness. This form of foundationalism need not rely on static container analogies in order to reinforce the claim of comprehensiveness. Hegel's notion of Absolute Knowing does not depend on a spatial metaphor of boundaries or limits in order to 'validate' its claims to totality. Its claim is that no actuality remains unexplorable through the categories at its disposal.

One can, of course, embrace fewer than these five beliefs and still stand within the tradition of foundationalism. Jaspers argues that Nietzsche embraces several of these views in more or less strong form while remaining ambivalent about the others. Jaspers himself attempts to move past all five beliefs while still standing firmly within the perennial tradition of world philosophy.

As is well known, Nietzsche developed what has been called an extreme neo-Kantian epistemology of radical constitution. The traditional correspondence view of truth has been left behind in favor of a view which stresses the role of categorial projection. Truth is no longer able to show its face to the philosopher. In his notes from the 1880's Nietzsche states:

Against positivism, which halts at phenomena —“There are only facts”— I would say: No, facts is precisely what there is not, only interpretations. We cannot establish any fact “in itself”; perhaps it is folly to want to do such a thing.

...In so far as the word “knowledge” has any meaning, the world is knowable, but it is interpretable otherwise, it has no meaning behind it, but countless meanings— “Perspectivism.”<sup>2</sup>

The realm of 'facts' has become eclipsed by the realm of interpretation. Nothing like a singular or uniform meaning-structure is possible for knowledge of the self or of its world. Kant's “thing-in-itself” is rejected along with the view that phenomenal objects can be rendered intelligible through observation or experiment. Whatever is, is an interpretation.

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<sup>2</sup>Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, edited and translated by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), p. 267.

Nietzsche insists that neither self nor world contain structures which would lend themselves to self-evident understanding. Consciousness, itself a dubious notion, cannot escape from the fictions of its own making. Both self and world are caught in a conceptual skein which cannot be unraveled. This radical perspectivalism makes any notion of evidence suspect. Jaspers presents Nietzsche's view:

Thus conceived, truth is not something independent, unconditioned, and absolutely universal. Rather, it is inextricably involved with the being of the living subject and the world that he has constructed. But this world as it appears to us is, like ourselves, in a constant process of temporal change.<sup>3</sup>

Nietzsche does not have a structure corresponding to Jaspers' notion of consciousness-as-such (*Bewusstsein überhaupt*) which functions to provide universal categorial structures for so-called ontic reality. Rather, the self is self-undermining in that it cannot find or locate any internal structures which would provide a foundation for its understanding of the world. Further, no self-evident intuitions of its own reality are possible.

In our attempts at self-understanding, we soon discover that the so-called 'self' is something that stands outside of us and which appears to us as a gift. The idea that the self is a soul-substance with self-evident and knowable traits has been eclipsed by the experience of the protean and mysterious self of psychological constitution. Jaspers sees this 'self' as a riddle:

...what I myself really am comes to me from without as though I were given as a present to myself, Hence Nietzsche tells us that behind every psychologically analysable effect that man can have upon himself lies the incomprehensible riddle of a genuine depth which makes possible self-organization without repression and self-mastery without self-violation.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Karl Jaspers. *Nietzsche: An Introduction to the Understanding of His Philosophical Activity*, translated by C.F. Wallraff & F.J. Schmitz, (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1965; originally published in 1935), p. 185.

<sup>4</sup>Karl Jaspers, *Nietzsche*, p. 154.

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Radical self-organization entails that the self has no internal contour which would function as a core of resistance to govern future self-constituting acts. An infinite number of masks can emerge from the free-space of the arising self. In the drive for self-mastery, as radicalized by the Overman, the self becomes an aesthetic project with no knowable shape or *telos*.

The self is no longer an abiding reality which provides unity for sensation or knowledge. The belief in a substantive self is one of the most pervasive and recalcitrant myths of traditional metaphysics. Nietzsche rejects not only the belief in soul-substance but also the notion of an interpreter:

“Everything is subjective,” you say; but even this is interpretation. The “subject” is not something given, it is something added and invented and projected behind what there is.—Finally, is it necessary to posit an interpreter behind the interpretation. Even this is invention, hypothesis.<sup>5</sup>

In the reduction of facts to interpretation, Nietzsche denies that an interpreter exists who would be responsible for sustaining and generating any given interpretation. The ‘self’, if one may use such a formulation, is itself nothing more than a series of interpretations which have no true referent or origin. The primacy of interpretation overcomes traditional notions of independent facts and a substantive self.

Nietzsche not only questions the foundationalist notion of self-evidence and an independent reality, but goes so far as to trace the notion of truth itself back to imperial structures in the social order. In an early fragment on the problem of truth Nietzsche states:

We still do not know where the urge for truth comes from; for us as yet we have heard only of the obligations imposed by society that it should exist: to be truthful means using the customary

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<sup>5</sup>Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, p. 267.



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metaphors— in moral terms: the obligation to lie according to a fixed convention, to lie herd-like in a style obligatory for all...<sup>6</sup>

What the tradition has called "truth" becomes the realm of biologically and socially useful fictions. These fictions serve to stabilize and render intelligible that which is itself without contour or structure. Metaphor replaces category as the medium of thought and communication. Aesthetic categories stand duty for epistemic categories and convert the quest for truth to the quest for the saving metaphor or image which will clothe the realm of becoming with a luster not wholly substantial.

Nietzsche thus seems to overcome the first form of foundationalism which insists that self-evident truths of the self and or its world can be isolated and communicated without social distortion. Jaspers returns repeatedly to the point that Nietzsche undermines the possibility of genuine knowledge. Further, the possibility of world-orientation (*Weltorientierung*), that is, of our knowledge of objects and structures as understood in the empirical sciences, becomes denied in principle. Nietzsche's perspectivalism makes any attempt at systematic comprehension invalid at the outset.<sup>7</sup>

Jaspers, in his careful delineation of the modes of the Encompassing which we are, makes it clear that genuine self-knowledge is possible. We do have access to the self as existence (*dasein*), consciousness-as-such, Spirit, and, in a different

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<sup>6</sup>Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Portable Nietzsche*, edited and translated by Walter Kaufmann, (New York: The Viking Press, 1954), from essay entitled, "On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense," p. 47.

<sup>7</sup>On the positive side, however, Jaspers argues that Nietzsche's perspectivalism enables him to liberate thought from frozen forms. In defending his Nietzsche book from the criticisms of Walter Kaufmann, who argues that Jaspers uses quotes out of context to establish contradictions in Nietzsche's over-all perspective, he states, "Not by taking advantage of slips, but out of the content itself, again by proof delivered in terms of Nietzsche's own sentences, I am demonstrating the factual movement of Nietzsche's thinking as a room-making, illuminating, dialectically daring, never fixating kind of thinking". From, *The Philosophy of Karl Jaspers*, edited by Paul Arthur Schilpp, (La Salle, Illinois: Open Court Publishing Company, 1957), from Jaspers', "Reply to My Critics", p. 859.

manner, *Existenz*. Nietzsche's overemphasis on the role of constitution in self-understanding receives a striking condemnation from Jaspers. He insists that Nietzsche propels himself into the void of nothingness by his refusal to retain a positive understanding of either world-orientation or of the illumination of human existence (*Existenzerhellung*). This lack of positive, yet non-foundational, structures, forces Nietzsche into a dogmatic stance so as to save his own conceptual sanity in the face of nothingness. Jaspers sketches Nietzsche's dilemma:

It is not the flat determinacy of the immanent that provides the positivity upon which Nietzsche lays hold, but the indeterminate boundlessness that appears within an endless horizon. But as all ties are loosened and all limiting horizons are transgressed, his thought looses itself in nothingness....When, after the break and loss of all solid ground, Nietzsche finds himself entirely at sea, he clings to eternal recurrence and other dogmatic doctrines like a drowning man saved by an ice floe that is bound to melt away. When he passes on into the boundless, it is as though he wants to fly in a vacuum. In availing himself of symbols, he seems to lay hold upon lifeless masks. No one of these ways is successful.<sup>8</sup>

Nietzsche cuts himself off from genuine Transcendence and replaces this positive source and origin with the dubious categorical notions of the will-to-power and the eternal return. Jaspers argues that these twin notions do not serve to render Transcendence available to the finite self but actually function to close-off all contact with that which sustains our depth dimension, our *Existenz*.

In overcoming the first form of foundationalism with its alleged self-evident truths, Nietzsche is thrown into an affirmation of the second form. This second form insists that metaphysics can isolate one or more first principles for nature in its radical complexity. In stating that the world is nothing more than the will-to-power in its twin forms of enhancement and preservation, Nietzsche is defending a strong foundationalist

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<sup>8</sup>Karl Jaspers, *Nietzsche*, p. 442.

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stance.<sup>9</sup> Jaspers shows quite clearly that Nietzsche was driven into this affirmation as a necessary counter-balance to his too radical perspectivalism.

Metaphysics becomes the enterprise of delineating the possible forms of the will-to-power. Since to be is to be a constellation of will points, it follows that all complex realities can be 'reduced' to the simple trait of will-to-power. The positing of a foundation in the will-to-power thus becomes aligned to the third form of foundationalism which insists that all of reality is translatable into the categorial primitive. Whatever is, is will-to-power or derivable from it. Nietzsche states, "This world is the will to power—and nothing besides! And you yourselves are also this will to power—and nothing besides!"<sup>10</sup> An imperial principle of identity serves to undermine the genuine differences between and among complexes. Jaspers sees this utilization of the category of the will-to-power as bringing Nietzsche close to more traditional 17th century metaphysical views:

In every appearance whatsoever Nietzsche finds the will-to-power. Wherever he probes "to the bottom of things," he strikes upon this will. All world history is nothing but this will in the multiplicity of its forms... His metaphysics of the will-to-power, as he develops it, resembles the dogmatic metaphysical systems of the past. To be sure, when we compare it with the view of Leibniz, we find no monads (subject-atoms), but rather growing or diminishing systems of power units. There is indeed no harmony, except for the constant establishment of positions in the struggle between power-quanta that constitute being itself.<sup>11</sup>

In using the non-neutral language of the will, rather than that of energy and its attendant physical analysis, Nietzsche moves toward a Leibnizian panpsychism which sees all of reality as to some degree mental. While Jaspers is right in pointing out the

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<sup>9</sup>This view of the will-to-power as having the two forms of preservation and enhancement and as thereby serving as a fundamental metaphysical first principle is forcibly argued in Heidegger's work on Nietzsche.

<sup>10</sup>Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, p. 550.

<sup>11</sup>Karl Jaspers, *Nietzsche*, p. 308.

differences between monads and will points, it is equally clear that these points of will function in a way that is a least analogous to human striving. By failing to develop a notion of modes or spheres of reality, Nietzsche is forced into the second and third forms of foundationalism by insisting that the will-to-power is the one primitive trait of reality and that all 'manifestations' can be traced back to that trait. The distinction between the will in its mode of enhancement and the will in its mode of mere preservation, does not move us toward a two substance view because it functions only to describe the *ways* in which the will may function.

Hence, in order to understand the world in all of its complexity, it becomes necessary to translate any specific complex back into the first principle of the will-to-power. Anything, from a wisp of smoke, to a human action, to the emergence of an empire, to the falling of a leaf, must be rendered intelligible in terms of the two ways in which the will-to-power functions. For Jaspers, this evocation of 17th century metaphysics, is something which prevents Nietzsche from participating in the new conception of metaphysics which is emerging in our time.

Thus far we have seen that Nietzsche has overcome the first form of foundationalism only to fall prey to the second and third forms. Jaspers maintains that Nietzsche overcame the first form in too radical a way and was thus driven toward his metaphysical constants as a way of preserving his perspective from self-destruction.

It should be pointed out that the second and third forms of foundationalism almost always emerge together. If you assume that the world is ultimately constituted by one or more universal traits then it follows that all other traits are derived from the primitives. And if all complex traits are derived from the primitives it further follows that they can be translated back into their 'internal' or 'underlying' antecedents. Thus the metaphysical perspective of Nietzsche can be seen to follow this pattern by reducing all of reality to one or both modes of the will-to-power.

Nietzsche's relation to the fourth form of foundationalism, the view that there is only one method for arriving at metaphys-

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ical truths, is more difficult to define. As Jaspers points out, Nietzsche did not develop a general theory of method even though he did utilize a variety of approaches in his probing of reality. Yet Nietzsche did advance our understanding of the role of *interpretation* in framing general categorial structures. Jaspers sees Nietzsche as replacing traditional philosophic method with what can best be described as "world exegesis":

Nietzsche's exegesis, which acknowledges that all knowledge is exegesis, will assimilate this knowledge to its own exegesis by holding that the will-to-power itself is the ever operative and infinitely various urge to interpret. Nietzsche's interpretation is actually an interpretation of interpreting, and for that reason different from those of all earlier, comparatively naive interpretations which were undertaken without awareness of their own interpretive character.<sup>12</sup>

Thus Nietzsche can be seen to have developed a hermeneutic understanding of both philosophy in general and metaphysics in particular. Since he has already established an epistemology of perspectivalism it follows that a major part of systematic reflection consists in a series of hermeneutic acts by and through which world-frames are made intelligible. Since neither world nor self have an intrinsic structure, we are left with the endless sequence of logically possible conceptual frameworks and their symbolic crystallizations. Traditional methods for probing into an independently structured reality, such as those of induction, intuition, imaginative generalization, and logical analysis, become subsumed under a general hermeneutics of world-frames. Since reality can no longer be seen as a center of resistance of independent traits, methods must have as their objects the realm of human categorial projections. Methodic activity is not concerned with probing into antecedent and recalcitrant natural structures but with interpreting the vast array of human projections.

In one sense, Nietzsche cannot develop a general concept of method because he radically recasts our understanding of the 'objects' of methodic activity. In another sense, however, Niet-

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<sup>12</sup>Karl Jaspers, *Nietzsche*, pp. 294-5.

zsche has developed a univocal conception of method through his use of what Jaspers calls "world exegesis." All methods are translatable into the method of exegesis which serves to articulate the various forms of the will-to-power in its illusory self-understanding. The will-to-power can only function through interpretation. Nietzsche states:

The will to power interprets (—it is a question of interpretation when an organ is constructed): it defines limits, determines degrees, variations of power. Mere variations of power could not feel themselves to be such: there must be present something that wants to grow and interprets the value of whatever else wants to grow. Equal in that— In fact, interpretation is itself a means of becoming master of something. (The organic process constantly presupposes interpretations.)<sup>13</sup>

Each will-point interprets the relative strengths of other will-points in order to determine its own scope and possibility. Will can only function through a series of interpretive acts. The will-to-power is exegetical of its world and moves from one hermeneutic act to another in order to find stable shapes for its expression and unfolding.

Nietzsche thus both affirms and denies the fourth form of foundationalism. He affirms it by insisting that exegesis or hermeneutics is the fundamental mode of access to the meaning of reality. He denies the univocity of method in so far as he rethinks the very meaning of the role of methodic activity. By stripping away the traditional notion of an independent world, Nietzsche makes it impossible to understand method in any of the usual ways. Hence Nietzsche has an ambivalent relation to the fourth form of foundationalism. He affirms it and denies it but in different respects.

The tragedy of Nietzsche's philosophical enterprise is most clearly seen when we examine the fifth and final form of foundationalism, namely, the belief that the world is a knowable whole. Nietzsche's failure to articulate either our full depth dimension, our *Existenz*, or our Transcendence, becomes

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<sup>13</sup>Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, p. 342.

manifest in his attempt to see the will-to-power as an all encompassing category for the world as a whole. Jaspers situates Nietzsche alongside of earlier metaphysicians in their equally impossible attempt to understand the world as a knowable whole:

To answer the question of the nature of ultimate reality by proving a picture or conceptual construct of the world in its entirety is, and has always been, a mistake... Nietzsche is one of a series of metaphysicians whose conception of being purports to be all-inclusive and thus to comprehend the universe as a whole... This kind of metaphysical construct places him in conscious relation to the perennial possibilities of world-interpretation in the grand manner.<sup>14</sup>

By seeing the world as a whole in terms of the will-to-power and the eternal return, Nietzsche makes the mistake of confusing a regional analysis appropriate for world-orientation in Jaspers' sense with the attempt to talk about the world as a whole. Nietzsche fails to realize that regional categorial structures suffer shipwreck whenever they are mistakenly forced to encompass the world as a whole.

The distinction between an order and the world is fundamental for metaphysics. Jaspers reinforces this distinction through his analysis of the Encompassing and its modes. When we examine human existence we see that it is constituted by the four modes of existence, consciousness-as-such, Spirit, and *Existenz*. No one of these modes is equivalent to the Encompassing itself even though each one encompasses the finite self in its situation. The categories applicable to any mode (order) cannot be applied to the Encompassing itself. Further, the traits of one mode cannot be imposed on another mode. Thus, for example, the unifying drive of Spirit is not manifest in the bodily and social mode of existence (*dasein*). Each category is embedded in its specific order and can serve no useful role elsewhere. By the same token, an order-specific trait cannot be applied to the world as a whole. Jaspers repeatedly shows how such misapplications suffer shipwreck and drive the category back to its proper ordinal location.

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<sup>14</sup>Karl Jaspers, *Nietzsche*, p. 287.

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Jaspers hints at a tragic irony in Nietzsche's attempts to see reality as a knowable whole. On the one hand, Nietzsche is aware that such attempts must end up in a nihilistic denial of general meaning while on the other hand he is unable to refrain from such attempts. Jaspers states the first half of this dilemma as follows:

Nietzsche believes that, from a logical standpoint, the situation in which such nihilism arose can best be characterized as a result of erroneously believing that such categories as meaning and wholeness have absolute validity when applied to the world. If I falsely presuppose that this world must have some all-encompassing meaning, then, since no honest man can discover it, the result is bound to be the vacuity of a frightful disillusionment—the torture of the "in-vain."<sup>15</sup>

Nietzsche seems to affirm that meaning-as-such is regional and that no general meaning structures can be found. At the same time, he takes his empirical observations on the nature of the will and attempts to apply them to the universe per se. The result is a tragic tension between two logically incompatible conceptions of the role and scope of metaphysical articulation.

For Jaspers, this unresolved diremption within Nietzsche's enterprise forces him to absolutize that which can only be relative. Instead of pushing beyond such misplaced absolutes to the symbolic reality of the cipher script (*Chiffer*), Nietzsche can only ring himself in with the categories appropriate to the level of world-orientation. In his 1932 work, *Philosophy*, published three years before his Nietzsche analysis, Jaspers makes it clear that we can no longer ask metaphysics to provide us with a general world picture:

The world will never truly round itself into an image because in fact it is not rounded out, because it does not consist of itself and cannot help proving disjoint again and again in any world orien-

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<sup>15</sup>Karl Jaspers, *Nietzsche*, p. 243.



tation we might pursue now or in the future. A world image pictures a whole within the world, never the whole world.<sup>16</sup>

By failing to distinguish between world-orientation and metaphysics proper, Nietzsche asks of world-orientation a task which cannot be attained. The result is that Nietzsche is forced to cling ever more tenaciously to his view of the eternal return as a way of conceiving the whole. For in this doctrine Nietzsche conceives of the one reality which can absorb and control the rest. In fact, Nietzsche is driven into the very nihilism from which he has attempted to free metaphysics.

Nietzsche is left with what Jaspers calls a "radical immanence" which attempts to understand ciphers without Transcendence.<sup>17</sup> This cuts him off from any in-breaking which would serve to open out and deepen his *Existenz*. He is left to circle endlessly around the immanent world of eternal return and will-to-power. The movement of transcending is reduced to a horizontal rotation which returns endlessly to the non-centered world of becoming. In his stubborn refusal to abandon this fifth form of foundationalism, even while denying it in theory, Nietzsche founders on his own enterprise and loses both his *Existenz* and any positive relation to Transcendence.

To locate Jaspers' understanding of Nietzsche more precisely, we must briefly look at his understanding of Transcendence and the Encompassing. When these two notions have been contrasted to Nietzsche's categorial scheme, it becomes clear why foundational forms of metaphysics must suffer shipwreck.

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<sup>16</sup>Karl Jaspers, *Philosophy*, Vol. I, translated by E.B. Ashton, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969, originally published in 1931), p. 115.

<sup>17</sup>The loss of transcendence makes it impossible for Nietzsche to overcome his own nihilism. Oswald O. Schrag, in his book on Jaspers, makes this point, "But Nietzsche's nihilism can no longer be a nihilism of strength, and in fact becomes self-destructive as it loses its hold in the unconditional, as it rejects all faiths and attempts to become a vital self-sustaining faith, a dialectical movement in which everything affirmed can also be denied. It tends to be drawn toward the empirical world, especially the psychological world, in which everything becomes conditional and relative." From, *Existence Existenz and Transcendence: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Karl Jaspers*, (Pittsburgh, Pa.: Duquesne University Press, 1971), p. 22.

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Transcendence cannot be rendered intelligible through the categories of world-orientation. Nor can traditional metaphysical categories hope to evoke this elusive yet sustaining presence. Only the absolute translucency of objects can present and preserve the ever self-erasing marks of Transcendence. Metaphysics, in Jaspers' non-traditional sense, refuses to collapse into any of the five forms of foundationalism. In his careful analysis of the modes of the Encompassing which we are and the modes of the Encompassing of the world, Jaspers rejects any notion of first principles or of the world as a whole.

In so far as we still wish to retain the word "metaphysics" in the post-foundationalist era, we must be willing to radically redefine its nature. Jaspers preserves the notion of metaphysical philosophizing by turning it on a new axis. It is now to be understood as the humble attempt to give historical clothing to Transcendence as it becomes manifest to radically open *Existenz*. Jaspers states:

Metaphysics is philosophical thought regarding Transcendence; its entire substance lies in the origins of the transcendent experience, and its seriousness lies in making that experience possible. Metaphysics as a traditional possibility is not an absurd retranslation of transcendent reality into a logical and psychological possibility. It is a possibility for Existenz, a means of its self-elucidation in contact with absolute reality.<sup>18</sup>

The nature of metaphysical query shifts from that of delineating categorial structures of unlimited generality toward the evocation, through ciphers, of that which cannot be the bearer of traits or qualities. Transcendence is not to be rendered intelligible through the genera nor through the use of analogy. Jaspers adopts a form of *via negativa* which insists that categorial or analogical structures suffer a self-immolation in the face of that which can never be an object or stand under objective determinations.

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<sup>18</sup>Karl Jaspers, *Philosophy*, Vol. III, translated by E.B. Ashton, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), originally published in 1932, p.11.

Clearly, Jaspers rejects any understanding of metaphysics which would posit first principles. The genera function to stabilize world-orientation and to constitute regional ontologies but they cannot be extended to deal with the world as a whole. Hence neither first principles nor talk of the world as a closed totality can function within Jaspers' post-foundational understanding of metaphysics. The categorial delineations appropriate to consciousness-as-such, while to some degree universal, are limited to inner-worldly structures. Even Spirit in its drive toward unity between and among the symbolic forms fails to sustain a proper relation to Transcendence. Only in the fitful emergence of radical *Existenz*, with its own internal *via negativa*, does it become possible to engage in the process of metaphysical probing of Transcendence. The elusive traces of the ever originating power continue to haunt the evolving self in its drive toward co-transparency.

Transcendence stands as the measure for the bound unfolding of *Existenz*. Outside of its manifestation, *Existenz* remains a mute possibility. Yet even with the twin flowering of *Existenz* and Transcendence, we have not arrived at the measureless measure which governs the very meaning of this unfolding. Jaspers drives beyond Transcendence to that which is itself the source of both horizons and the Divine. In his 1935 Holland lectures, published as *Reason and Existenz*, Jaspers distinguishes between horizons and that which cannot be a horizon or even a horizon-of-horizons:

We always live and think within a horizon. But the very fact that it is a horizon indicates something further which again surrounds the given horizon. From this situation arises the question about the Encompassing. The Encompassing is not a horizon within which every determinate mode of Being and truth emerges for us, but rather that within which every particular horizon is enclosed as in something absolutely comprehensive which is no longer visible as a horizon at all.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>Karl Jaspers, *Reason and Existenz*, translated by William Earle, (New York: Noonday Press, Inc., 1955, originally published in 1935), p. 52.

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The thought/experience of the Encompassing cannot be reduced to a topological notion of place. It cannot function as a categorial Archimedean point which somehow enables us to generate a hierarchy of place. Rather, it functions as a lure which serves to shatter the self-aggrandizement of the finite. The Encompassing always turns its face away from our categorial gaze. It not only cannot be the bearer of traits or predicates, but it functions to actively overturn such designations. Yet, in its turning away, it functions inversely as the lure which gives the siren-call to all finite categorial structures. Curiously, Jaspers brings us to the point within metaphysics where it willingly founders on the illusory rocks of its own history. In this foundering it leaves all forms of foundationalism behind as it rises up into the lure of the Encompassing.<sup>20</sup>

In his *Von der Wahrheit*, published in 1947, Jaspers details the ways in which our grasp of the Encompassing moves us away from all artificial grounds:

Therefore, we must take the philosophic step of completely removing the firm ground from under all objective, i.e., cognizable, Being. The bottomlessness of world-being must become manifest to us so that we may gain the truth of the cognition of the world. But together with the clarity of individual cognition, the bottomlessness of the whole points to the Encompassing which sustains all appearance. The Encompassing of the world-being extends

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<sup>20</sup>Sebastian Samay gives the following succinct account of the Encompassing (using the term "Enveloping" as his translation of *das Umgreifende*), "For the time being, two essential points should be kept in mind: first that the Enveloping is for Jaspers the symbolical image of total reality which encompasses and conditions both subject and object; and secondly that thinking of the Enveloping requires a new mode of thinking which transcends the ordinary intentional mode of thinking." From *Reason Revisited: The Philosophy of Karl Jaspers*, (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1971), p. 54. This new type of thinking breaks free from the noesis/noema structure in order to recoil back upon itself and experience the shattering lure of the unconditioned Encompassing. For an analysis of the Encompassing which shows its correlation to certain forms of Christian mysticism, cf., Alan M. Olson, *Transcendence and Hermeneutics*, (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1979).

beyond cognizability even though it is endlessly manifest to cognition in appearances.<sup>21</sup>

We locate the validity of our world-orientation and its attendant regional ontologies, which can only be foundational in a merely stipulative sense, when we sense that the world is itself the gift of the Encompassing. Jaspers is careful not to conflate traditional notions of God with his own understanding of the Encompassing itself. However, there is an analogical connection in that the Encompassing frees us from too great a dependence on that which is not ultimate. Our categorial drive to master the totality of all beings is only humbled when it recognizes that such a totality is mere appearance. Foundationalism can only exert its privileged sway when we turn away from that which governs and empowers all origins and their attendant structures.

Jaspers thus completes the turning away from foundations which was initiated by Nietzsche. The experience of the Encompassing, as that which provides the measure for metaphysics, enables thought to emerge on the other side of the consecrated horizons of the tradition. In radicalizing Jaspers' own move beyond foundationalism we can deepen further his fundamental experience of the Encompassing lure which both sustains and shatters place. A few words about this further radicalization are in order.

In shifting the emphasis of categorial analysis toward a delineation of the modes of the Encompassing, Jaspers strikes down any analogy or metaphor which would serve to overcome difference and regionality in our apprehension of Nature or world. From this it follows that to be is to be constituted by regional or ordinal traits.<sup>22</sup> Any use of analogy or metaphor must remain attuned to the ordinal structure of Nature. The world itself, if such a general notion can remain, is to be understood as

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<sup>21</sup>As taken from, *Karl Jaspers: Basic Philosophical Writings*, ed. and trans. by Edith Ehrlich, Leonard H. Ehrlich, & George B. Pepper, (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1986), p. 169.

<sup>22</sup>For an analysis of ordinality and its relation to the Encompassing, cf., my "Naturalism, Measure, and the Ontological Difference," *The Southern Journal of Philosophy*, Spring 1985, pp. 19-32.

having neither center nor circumference. It can best be seen as constituted by a number of shifting centers. No overall contour for these shifting centers can be isolated by human probing no matter how methodic or powerful. World-orientation stands in the service of the ordinal structure of Nature and cannot reach beyond it to an imperial instantiation of place or location.

The role of metaphysical categories must shift toward an understanding of how these categories relate to the Encompassing. Unlike Nietzsche, he would insist that genuine metaphysical categories provide a clearing on the complexes of nature rather than stand in an act of radical constitution which would claim to generate either nature or its categories. The categorial clearing provides the ever mobile open space within which Nature can emerge in all of its plenitude and richness. But another role now becomes possible for these same categorial structures. In addition to providing a clearing through which the complexes of Nature may emerge, these metaphysical categories can also turn outward from their source and stand in the gathering pressure of the non-located lure which functions as the measure for all measures. By providing both a clearing and a propulsive lure, these categories stand between that which is measured and that which cannot itself be measured. They do not provide a foundation for our apprehension of the world but gather together our regional locations into the sustaining lure of the ever emptying Encompassing.

The Encompassing stands over against the tradition of metaphysics and serves as its measure. The movement of the Encompassing through metaphysics is one which de-objectifies the categorial realities while opening them out to something more akin to a clearing than to a solid foundation. My depth dimension, my radical *Existenz*, becomes the source and goal of a new kind of thinking which hovers 'beneath' the subject/object split. This thinking from out of the lure of the Encompassing reworks the tradition without destroying it. Jaspers states:

The history of metaphysics, therefore, is not, as in science, the field for acquainting myself with the general side of its existence. It is the field for penetrating, on the grounds of my own potential, the historic *Existenz* which is always one and always singular. The

historically determined, and in the above-mentioned sense not at all general, element is here the truth, but not as a case of a universal possibility. It is truth as the one-time revelation of an *Existenz* that is now addressing me, questioning me, and making demands on me. It is a truth of which new forms of truth are transformations or transpositions.<sup>23</sup>

Revelation emerges from out of my contact with other historically active *Existenzen* who themselves speak of the power of the Encompassing. The categories are not validated by my depth dimension but they do achieve a translucency which holds them up to the light of the Encompassing which cannot itself be illuminated by the self or its intentional acts.

Jaspers' critique of Nietzsche serves to open out a conception of metaphysics which moves away from foundationalism while remaining within the tradition itself. His own categorial scheme hovers above those structures which have tied thought to an insufficiently generic account of the world in its radical complexity. He has liberated our understanding of the finite human self from the intuitionism which would bind us to a historically conditioned self-picture. The evocation of radical *Existenz* stands on the other side of those false anthropologies which would reduce the self to a pre-given container of specific traits. Further, Jaspers drives beyond any world-frame which would claim to isolate either the fundamental 'what' of nature or the ultimate categorial 'circumference'. In a very real sense, thought is cast adrift into a world that cannot be measured by human reflection. The Encompassing, as the ever receding lure, remains as a non-foundational measure for the self and its world.

Nature can be understood as that which supports and guides the extension of categorial analysis. It cannot be reduced to the realm of projection or to a skein of sense-data. Yet, nature cannot be understood as a closed totality with a finite list of traits and structures. To speak of nature is to speak of that which is indefinitely complex and endlessly ramified.<sup>24</sup> Metaphysical

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<sup>23</sup>Karl Jaspers, *Philosophy*, Vol. III, p. 20.

<sup>24</sup>For an account of the complexity of nature and its proper metaphysical analysis, cf. my, "Justus Büchler's Ordinal Metaphysics and the Eclipse of

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categories are bound to this complexity and must honor regional and ordinal differences. At the same time metaphysics must find its deeper measure in the Encompassing which is not a complex within nature. It stands between a nature not of its own making and the Encompassing which is neither made nor serves as a foundation.

By standing in this between, the categories of metaphysics allow themselves to become unfounded. The gathering pressures of the regional dimensions of Nature push the categories away from the hubris of the drive for totality. On the other side, the ever persuasive lure of the Encompassing pulls the categories away from the arrogance which would claim that such categories are self-grounding. From the side of an ordinal Nature and from the side of the Encompassing, metaphysics receives a new sense of place. By serving both faithfully, metaphysics becomes the bond which holds Nature and the Encompassing together.

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