certaine intensité et une certaine profondeur.

On voit le grand intérêt de la philosophie de Jaspers, j’espère, mais on voit aussi son danger, et c’est que toutes les visions du monde doivent prendre chacune sa place dans cette philosophie. Ce n’est pas comme chez Hegel, la succession des moments du monde qui nous révélera l’Absolu. C’est la simultanéité en quelque sorte des vues du monde qui nous mettra sur le seuil de quelque chose qui nous dépasse infiniment. Jaspers évoque non pas seulement un monde mais des mondes de pensées. C’est ainsi qu’il est source d’inspiration. Il veut, suivant un mot que Heidegger emploie aussi, revenir vers l’origine mais, pour lui, l’origine ne sont pas seulement les philosophes anti-Socratiques. C’est chez tout philosophe une source profonde. C’est ainsi que, derrière les formules de Descartes et de Nietzsche, il a essayé de saisir la pensée en acte de Descartes et de Nietzsche. Il a montré comment Nietzsche se trouve devant un double écueil, l’écueil de l’objectivité absolue du respect de la science d’autre part et l’écueil de la subjectivité absolue d’autre part. Et ce que tout lecteur de Jaspers admire en lui, c’est la façon dont il échappe à ses deux écueils activement par une méditation concentre sur elle-même et en même temps ouverte au souffle des inspirations.

Rappelons-nous aussi, puisque nous avons parlé de l’ouverture de l’esprit de Jaspers qu’il est parti de la psychopathologie, qu’il a écrit un grand traité de psychopathologie qui fut sa première œuvre. Ensuite, il a étudié Van Gogh, Strindberg, et il s’est attaché à trouver chez eux ce qui en faisait des malades. Ils ont en quelque sorte transcendi leurs maladies et révélés à nos yeux leurs visions propres du monde. On pourrait ainsi le rapprocher de William James qui a été un psychologue avant d’être un philosophe et qui au moins dans un livre, Les variétés de l’expérience religieuse, a étudié les visions du monde. Ainsi parti des cadres de la psychopathologie, Jaspers s’est rendu compte qu’elle ouvrait sur un monde, sur l’interrogation métaphysique elle-même et dans ses théories des visions du monde il avait élargi déjà ses considérations. Il avait montré comment chaque vision du monde est un monde lui-même. Les visions du monde sont chacun des mondes, et le monde de Jaspers est un monde ouvert aux autres. C’est là son grand caractère et c’est ce qui force l’admiration.

J. Wahl

KARL JASPERS*
Philosopher of Existence and of Transcendence.

JEAN WAHL

Jaspers’ thought may be better understood by following that of Kierkegaard. This does not mean, however, that the originality of Jaspers’ meditations on Kierkegaard are in any way negated. In his contemplation of Kierkegaard, he found that the narrowness of a world outlook is linked to its depth and vice versa. The problem, therefore, is not to stick to a general, although deep, philosophy, like that of Hegel, but for the philosopher to develop a stronger, more precise and concrete point of view. Such a world outlook is, unlike that of Hegel, a partial one. It can only be partial. One cannot group into a complete unity all the world outlooks, since each one is limited by its narrowness. Each world outlook is for Jaspers, like a beam originating from the transcendence, which is, as Plato said, difficult for us to fathom. We cannot be completely satisfied by science because each field has its postulates, its hypothesis and its particular knowledges. Each one delineates an aspect of the reality situation. What is

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necessary is the reaching beyond the objective thinking of science to what Jaspers calls conscience in general. Although man is conscience in general, this is not sufficient to define him. He is also what Jaspers calls concrete existence (Dasein) and also deep existence. He defined concrete existence in a rather biological way, but deep existence escapes definition. It can only be experienced in an intuitive way, in some privileged moments.

Let us remember that Jaspers wrote a series of books on the great philosophers and in each case he tried to get to the basic intuition of the philosopher. Here again, we are confronted with the relation between existence and transcendence. One cannot have a conceptual idea of transcendence and, even less, a scientific one. We can only gain some aspects or highlights of it in a series of flashes, which reveal to us the cosmic and psychic content which is in front of us and in us. I say "in front of us" and "in us" because for Jaspers we are a composite of stratified layers grading from the biologic being, to the conscience in general, to the mind and, finally, to existence. One has also to add what is out of us, if I may express myself in such a way, because there is the world and there is God. In all world outlooks, one can find those beings which are in us and, on the other hand, those two beings which are out of us, if one can use for them the term "being", namely the world and God, and in each of these systems one can find confirmation for each of these great concepts. The difficult point is, obviously, how to attain the transcendence. It is here that Jaspers reveals what are his theories of symbols. All the universe is a symbol, as certain romantics saw it before Jaspers. Everything in the universe can be converted into a symbol if we think about it with a certain intensity and depth.

One can see the stimulating aspect of Jaspers' philosophy, but also its danger, because all world outlooks must have their place in this philosophy. It is not, as in Hegel, the succession of the moments of the world which will reveal to us the absolute, it is, in a way, the simultaneity of the world outlooks which will put us in the way towards something which is far beyond our reach. Jaspers does not only evoke a world, but worlds of sorts. It is in this respect that he is a source of inspiration. He wants, according to a word that Heidegger uses also, "to come back to the origins", but for Jaspers the origins are not only the pre-Socratic philosophers, but nearly every philosopher, so that behind Descartes and Nietzsche formerly, he tries to find the translation of these ideas into acts. He shows how Nietzsche was faced with a double problem. On the one hand, the absolute objectivity of the respects of science and, on the other hand, the absolute subjectivity. What is striking to the reader of Jaspers is the active way he avoids these problems by a self-centered meditation which is, at the same time, open to inspiration. Let us remember, since we did talk about the broad-minded orientation of Jaspers, that he started with psychopathology; in fact his first work was a treatise of psychopathology and that he then studied Van Gogh and Strindberg in an endeavour to find out what it was that made them sick. They could, in a way, transcend their sickness and reveal to us their own world outlook. One can compare Jaspers with William James, who was a psychologist before becoming a philosopher and who, at least in one book The Varieties of the Religious Experience studied the world outlook. Hence, starting within the limits of psychopathology, Jaspers found that it did open onto a world of metaphysical exploration, and in his theories of the world outlook he widened these considerations. He showed how each world outlook is a world by itself and the world's outlooks are, each one, a different world and the world of Jaspers is open to all the others. This is his great originality which commands our admiration.