Karl Jaspers – *Philosophy of Existence*

This book contains three lectures delivered by Jaspers in 1937 just after his dismissal from his university position by the Nazis. Together they give a fairly complete account of all of Jaspers’ major ideas organised under three headings; the Encompassing, truth and reality.

He begins talking about science which, while important in itself, cannot fulfil the demands of philosophy which, as a discipline, serves to remind, awaken and ultimately transform the individual in the direction of authenticity. This is where the Encompassing fits in; a framework that describes human existence in immanent terms, as physical existence, consciousness as such, and spirit, all existing in relation to an immanent world. This reality is not the end for Jaspers though. There is also the possibility of transcending this immanent existence through what Jaspers calls *Existenz* and acquiring an authenticity we were formerly lacking.

Truth is more than what is specified in the almost universally accepted scientific attitude which measures veracity according to how closely concepts match physical reality. For Jaspers, each mode of the Encompassing has a different definition of truth. These truths are therefore limited in scope and admit of wholeness only through *reason*, which is a will to unity that delivers not a fixed, ultimate, doctrine-like truth, but a truth that is under perpetual tension and therefore forever open to new possibilities.

Reality is finally revealed as transcendent in nature and therefore beyond knowledge. Philosophy aims to apprehend this reality and thereby transform the individual, but religion also aims to do the same, through different means. For this reason Jaspers accommodates religion and, although he notes that it will always be in conflict with philosophy, maintains that the two are on the same level. Genuine religion is just as valid (true) as genuine philosophy and both would be impoverished if they were to reject the other.

Introduction

In the introduction, Jaspers defines the task of philosophy as being “*to catch sight of reality at its origin and to grasp it through the way in which I, in thought, deal with myself – in inner action*.”

He notes that in the nineteenth century people sought “life” and they wanted “really to live”, searching for the “genuine” and “origins”. For the past century however (mid-nineteenth to mid-twentieth centuries), things have been characterised by “levelling, mechanization, the development of a mass mentality and universal interchangeability of everything and everyone…”

Science in particular, has eclipsed philosophy and philosophy now tries to “regain its lost reputation… by means of equal exactness.” This has created a situation in which people either venerate science, believing it holds deep philosophical answers, or despair of it because it cannot provide such answers. Either a “superstitious faith in science… [or] an antagonism to science that rejects it as meaningless and attacks it as destructive.” Neither of these attitudes is productive, Jaspers says.

He praises Max Weber for showing that the “scientific method discloses facts and possibilities” and has integrity only when it clears all value judgements from its path. Science is however guided in its selection of problems and objects by valuations which it can recognise. These two features give science its power.

Nevertheless, science cannot be a substitute for philosophy. Jaspers starts from here, stating that the “way *to philosophy* had to be found once again.” He envisions this path as going from *decayed philosophy* to *science* then to *authentic philosophy*. Jaspers uses the term *philosophizing* when talking about philosophy to capture the intuition that philosophy is a process, an activity, a movement of thought that has no end point and does not aim to produce a fixed doctrine or system.

First, he needs to clarify his position on science. He starts by outlining its limits:

1. Scientific *cognition of things* is not *cognition of being*. Science is concerned with particular, determinate objects and as such cannot discern being itself.
2. Scientific cognition can provide *no goals whatever* for life. This is because it has nothing to do with values.
3. Science can give no answer to the question of its *own meaning*. Science rests on impulses which lack scientific proof.

However, science is also a positive force and indispensable for philosophy:

1. Since science has clearly demarcated its territory and achieved “methodological and critical purification” it prevents philosophy from drifting into this domain.
2. Only science can “produce compelling knowledge of objects… [and] teach me to know clearly the *way things are*.”
3. Philosophizing must “incorporate the *scientific attitude* or *approach*”, by which Jaspers means being aware of its limits and remaining open to criticism.

Even though philosophy is closely linked to science and scientific thought, it must ultimately pull away because it “demands a *different thinking*, a thinking that, in knowing, reminds me, awakens me, brings me to myself, transforms me.”

Jaspers now turns to a discussion of *philosophy’s origins*, specifically, how we are to approach them today. He asserts that, although we must read and engage with the philosophers who came before us, we must not simply adopt their doctrines “ready-made”, as it were. Rather, philosophical thinking must always be original by expressing itself “historically under new conditions in every age.”

Present-day philosophizing is a quest for *reality* (an authentic fulfilment derived from transcending ordinary things) through thinking as *inner action*. This reality will not be a “*determinate content of knowledge*”, like the sciences; rather, it “presses on reflectively to the point where *thinking becomes the experience of reality itself*.”

Philosophy is the objectification of this *philosophizing* process but it cannot be defined or outlined like scientific knowledge. So Jaspers resolves to “point *by way of example* to a few *basic ideas* with which it is concerned.” The first lecture addresses the question of *being*, where we encounter it in the widest realm of the *encompassing*. The second lecture discusses *truth*, that is, “the *way* to the being that we encounter.” The third lecture closes in on *reality*, which is “the *goal* and *source* in which all our thought and life find rest.”

I. The Being of the Encompassing

Whatever can become an object for us, that is, a determinate being among others, is only a *mode* of being. It is not *being itself*. Being itself therefore always stands beyond the *horizon* of our knowledge and, as such, continually eludes our grasp. The encompassing is not just the horizon of our knowledge though, for it is also the source from which new horizons continually emerge. Crucially, the encompassing can *never* become an object.

The problem is that the “structure of our thought forces us to make whatever we want to know into a determinate object.” So, if we should try to come to the encompassing through knowledge, we will inevitably distort it such that we only see an objective aspect of it.

Jaspers thinks, therefore, that the act of philosophizing (the “execution of the thought”) allows us to “become aware of that being itself which is no longer a determinate being”, i.e. the encompassing. Every determinate, particular thing which has “being for us in being known acquires a depth from its relation to this realm, from which it comes to meet us, announcing being without being identical to it.” This will be an important theme picked up on by later thinkers; that the world of things around us “indicates” or “points to” Being while being different from it.

The encompassing appears to us initially as being divided into two objective, determinate appearances called *modes of the encompassing*. The first mode is where *being itself* appears and is called *world*. The second is the mode *I am* and which conditions all objects we think about. This is *consciousness in general*.

However the encompassing which I am is not exhausted by *consciousness in general*; it also includes *existence* (Jaspers calls this *Dasein* in German), which is the “basis of consciousness” and indicates the physical existing being we are, and *spirit*, which reflects our membership with “ideal totalities” into which “everything thought by consciousness and real as existence can be incorporated.”

The above “comprise the immanent being of both myself – existence, consciousness in general, spirit – and of my objects – the world.” There is also a transcendent dimension to life though, which we access “in two ways at once: from the *world* to *deity* and from the *existence* of the conscious spirit to *Existenz*.”

Richard F. Grabau summarises the encompassing with the following table:

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| THE ENCOMPASSING |
| *The Encompassing of Subjectivity*A. Immanent Modes:Existence (*Dasein*)Consciousness in generalSpiritB. Transcendent Mode:Existenz | *The Encompassing of Objectivity*A. Immanent Mode:WorldB. Transcendent Mode:Transcendence |

Next, Jaspers outlines three important consequences of philosophizing:

1. Ontological concepts are no longer sufficient to capture the totality of being.

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| *Ontology*Being is an order of objects or sense unitiesEverything is captured and expressed by thoughtThe meaning of statements is clarified by referring back to a first beingAttempts objective clarification through immanent thoughtThe model is an ordered table of static categories | *Philosophizing*The immanent realm is where we discover what being isEverything is permeated by the encompassing and is therefore beyond thoughtClarifies the encompassing in which statements have their source and groundEncounters being indirectly by transcending thoughtThe model is an “interlacing band of clarifying lines that move as though in suspension.” |

1. Our knowledge of existence and spirit is not knowledge of the encompassing. It is merely knowledge of an *appearance* (or *mode* of the encompassing) whose being we can access in two ways; external knowledge of it as appearance, and inner awareness. Jaspers gives the examples of anthropology, aesthetic theory and science of religion. None of the above, as the subjects of scientific knowledge, can really be *known* through this study. We understand real, lived existence by *being* human not by studying humans and appreciate the reality of religion by believing, not studying beliefs or those who do believe.

“No known being is being itself…Whatever is known has become known; it is thus a particular that we have grasped, but also something that conceals [being] and restricts [our access to it].”

1. We must *decide* whether to “reject the *leap* from the totality of *immanence* to *transcendence*, or make the performance of this leap the starting point of philosophizing.” Jaspers has a nice summarising paragraph worth repeating in full here:

It is the leap from the encompassing that *we are* as existence, consciousness, spirit, to the encompassing that *we can be*, or authentically are, as *Existenz*. And it is thus also the leap from the encompassing that we know as world to the encompassing that being in itself is.

It is this leap which secures my *freedom* because “freedom exists only with and by transcendence”; in other words, we can only be free when we *are* the “origin on which thought founders”.

In this section, Jaspers also notes something interesting about time; the immanent modes of the encompassing can only be experienced in time, while the transcendent realm of “real and eternal being itself… [is] not knowable in temporal existence”.

Jaspers speaks of philosophizing as a *resolution* we must make to break through to the “open, horizonless realm encompassing all horizons.” However, the various modes of the encompassing aren’t to be disregarded as meaningless, rather, they act as “flashing signals that point, warn, tempt” to something beyond themselves. He also refers to human *ideals* as “guides” which point beyond themselves, beyond all ideals, “to the abiding realm of the encompassing.” This transcendent realm all things point to without explaining is “*our own possibility*”.

II. Truth

We are after *truth itself* here, not particular truths which are necessarily limited in scope. This means we must apprehend truth as it emerges from all *modes* of the encompassing. Each truth is presented with the realm with which it is associated, the method of *communication* for one speaking from this realm, and the associated *untruth* and *dissatisfaction*.

Truth, as Jaspers conceives it, is therefore quite different from our modern “correspondence” notion of truth. Truth, for Jaspers, is something more like the true (as in genuine or authentic) revelation of the being of the encompassing.

Existence (*Dasein*): Existence is always particular. It wills to a) preserve and extend itself and b) its own happiness. It also c) manifests and expresses itself as consciousness or soul. In this realm, truth is pragmatic and related to suitable conduct for a) the preservation and enhancement of existence (life), b) lasting satisfaction, and c) how adequately this particular existence is expressed. This truth, unlike that of consciousness in general, is neither universally valid nor admitting of certainty.

It arises as a function of preservation of existence and proves itself through its effectiveness in achieving this.

Communication: The truth of existence is characterised by a self-interested speaker coming from a position of either conflict with an interlocutor or one in which they share common interests. It is primarily concerned with practicalities and wants to persuade, suggest, strengthen or weaken.

Untruth: The pain of failing to live a fulfilled existence.

Dissatisfaction: Mere existence, boredom of repetition, and dread of failure. The meaninglessness of a forever desiring will with no ultimate goal.

Consciousness in General: This is the realm which we typically associate with truth. Truth here lies in the “*validity of statements* made on the ground of visual experience and logical evidence”.

It arises with demonstrable certainty and proves itself by evidence.

Communication: The truth of consciousness in general is characterised by “an interchangeable point” of thought, lacking a particular focus. It primarily uses rational argument in communication and aims at the universal.

Untruth: Repudiation of incorrectness.

Dissatisfaction: Tedium of correctness because it is unessential, trivial and ultimately meaningless.

Spirit: In this realm, truth is not universally valid. “Truth of the spirit exists by virtue of membership in a self-elucidating and self-contained whole… *Truth* is what produces wholeness.”

It arises as *conviction* in a protective totality and proves itself to the extent that it submits to the wholeness of ideas.

Communication: The truth of spirit is characterised by the membership of both speaker and listener to an *idea* held in common. Communication is guided by this idea.

Untruth: The torment of continual incompleteness.

Dissatisfaction: Harmony and the perplexity when totalities are broken or with aspects which cannot be absorbed into the total; the contingent or the merely factual.

Existenz: The truth of this realm, being transcendent, is somewhat different from the other immanent truths. The truth of Existenz is not something I can know, precisely because I *am* Existenz. The truth of this realm of the encompassing seems to be a truth of *being*, not knowing. And what am I? My authentic self. And it is only to the extent that I am truly myself that I am able to *resolutely* grasp the truths of every other realm. In addition, since I can’t know this truth, “what I myself am… always remains a question” and yet, it is accompanied with an absolute certainty that supports and fulfils everything else.

It arises as *faith* and proves itself through its own “authentic consciousness of reality.”

Communication: The truth of Existenz is characterised by an irreplaceable individual who speaks to another irreplaceable individual in openness.

Untruth: Despair.

Dissatisfaction: Constant desire for the “peace of eternity”.

Now the truths in each mode do not simply come together to make up a tidy aggregate. Rather, they are in conflict. Jaspers gives by way of example the fact that truths of consciousness in general are not always useful, that is, true, for existence.

What this tells us is that we can never go beyond these truths, to *truth itself*, simply by “giving *precedence to one mode* of the encompassing as authentic truth.” This *one* truth would have to “permeate all modes of the encompassing and join them all together in a present unity.”

However, Jaspers immediately says, it is a “*fundamental condition* of our reality that for us this unity is not attained by means of a conceivable harmony of the whole”. The unity we grasp in Existenz can never be a harmonious whole because there is always tension in its parts and this tension is crucial in opening us up to new possibilities.

Since our existence is by nature, temporal, *the* truth is accessible to us as whole only in *historical* form. Jaspers asserts that we come near this awareness in the extreme forms of *exception* and *authority*. Our temporal existence makes the former possible (as an opposition to fixed universality) and requires the latter (in opposition to an otherwise arbitrary plurality of intention and will).

Exception: “*Exception* calls everything into question, is startling and fascinating.” The individual who is an exception is an exception to; a) universal existence, b) universally valid and certain consciousness in general, and c) to spirit where I am a member of a whole. In short, to be an exception means to break out of every universality.

The exception doesn’t desire to be an exception. Rather, he “*wills* the *universal* that he is not” however his (or her) desire to find a “*unique path of realization*… makes it necessary for him to go *against* the universal, even against his will.”

If we ask *what* the exception is, we find that it disappears. “We can perceive the exception by feeling the impact of its truth on our truthfulness” but can never “reckon with it as something known.” This is because being an exception is not a generic category we can use to define someone; rather, it is the “concept of a possibility that is a source of truth”.

In asking *who* the exception is, we learn that it is not “merely a rare borderline occurrence [e.g. Socrates]…but is the ever-present possibility for every Existenz.”

Authority: “*Authority* is the supporting, protecting and reassuring fullness.” It is a historic union of all the modes of the encompassing “with the source of Existenz which in this union knows itself to be related to transcendence.”

Authority is never a universal form for everyone at all times though. Rather, because it is historical, it can only be “an *historic unity of truth* for the person living by it.”

In addition, the historic (and therefore temporal) nature of authority means that it is in “constant *tension*, and in *motion*, due to that tension.” The first tension is between authority that desires stabilisation and authority that “*breaks out* of every fixed form to create itself anew”. The second tension is within the individual between authority and freedom. Jaspers calls this process, whereby the individual strives to make the contents of the authority which has an external source, his or her own “liberation *in* authority.” If this never happens the contents of authority remain alien.

Neither of these tensions can be overcome. Of the second, Jaspers says that we can never be completely free and autonomous because our freedom either desires authority for confirmation or uses its resistance to give it form and support and prevent arbitrariness.

Interestingly, we can never “catch sight of [authority] as authority” because it can only be seen as such once it has already been chosen or accepted as authority. In other words, we never get to see authority from the ‘outside’, as it were.

The unity that the exception and authority bring to the modes of the encompassing is not a harmony, but a “momentary fusion within the One that still in fact permits tension to persist and provides room for new break-throughs.” Jaspers summarises their common elements:

1. They are grounded in *transcendence*.
2. They are both *incomplete* and in *motion*.
3. Both are *historic*, particular and non-interchangeable. This means the truth they contain cannot be imitated or repeated.
4. The truth content of neither can become a knowable object.

However, philosophy doesn’t seek truth *through* the exception or authority. Rather, it “penetrates them” with *Reason*. Here, Jaspers gives an interesting definition of philosophy as being the task of knowing “*what reason is* by accomplishing it”.

Jaspers now turns to reason, which he calls the *will to unity*. Truth never reveals itself to us because “the exception breaks out of it, and because authority realizes truth only in historical form”, however, reason supplies the continuous impulse “to go beyond the multiplicity to the one universal truth”.

Jaspers distinguishes between reason and the understanding; the latter being characteristic of consciousness in general only, which, as a unity itself, is just a means to reason as a *deeper unity*.

Since reason is the will to unity it must therefore also possess a means of unifying whatever is fractured. To this end reason is also the “*total will to communication*.” Through language, reason is constantly questioning and probing, an activity which creates unrest, seemingly the opposite of its goal. However, this unrest ensures that reason never becomes fixed and stagnant. Rather it allows it to preserve an “unlimited openness… [that] makes it *possible for all origins to unfold*, to open, to become clear, to find speech and to relate themselves.” This “*genuine conflict* and struggle… in and among the modes of the encompassing… become a source of new experiences of the One.”

Philosophizing leads to faith, not knowledge, and as such, it can only point the way, not give clear instructions or directions. “Just as in our description of the encompassing we ended with no more than the *broad realms* where we encounter possible being, so in the description of truth we attain nothing but *avenues* to such possibilities.” However, we are aiming not at possibilities, but at reality, and that is the subject of the final lecture.

III. Reality

So, we have elucidated the *realm of the encompassing* and outlined the *truth* that reveals being to us, but if there is nothing for the light of truth to illuminate, “I and all things with me seem to be dissolved into unreality by its radiance.” Ultimately, philosophizing directs itself at the question of *reality*.

We are only driven to philosophizing when we “become *conscious of a lack*” and desire a reality beyond what we can know or be.However, these are the two ways we typically inquire about reality:

1. A desire to *know* true reality as a whole. This proceeds by cognition.
2. A desire to *be* my authentic self. This proceeds by action.

The first route, “the pursuit of knowledge – and desire to know what *nature* really is”, fails because whatever we can know reveals itself as mere subjective appearance. Kant carried us to the ultimate conclusion in this regard by asserting that it is not just secondary qualities which are contingent on our subjectivity, more fundamental categories like space and time are also.

In addition, physical reality has become further and further removed from us, “more and more alien.” We see this in modern science where reality can no longer be imagined, only described in ever more abstract mathematical formulae and functions. “True” reality is no longer anywhere to be found in this maze.

The same thing happens when we reflect on our knowledge of *human existence*. We tend to understand our existence in terms of things like economic facts, social systems, political action, spiritual principles, etc. While all these are factors making up the whole of our existence, declaring certain of them to be basic leads us away from “true” reality. “Neither investigatable objects nor the sum-total of any arrangement of them ever comprises the whole.”

Even individual, indisputable facts can’t be the reality we are looking for. They are “*inexhaustible*, and… subject to *unlimited interpretation and re-interpretation*.” Grasping a fact requires that one construct it first.

The second route seeks reality as our own being. This is also futile because human existence reliably “leaves us unsatisfied in its continual and endless drive for more, a drive that lacks a final goal and increasingly realizes its own meaninglessness as it clearly forsees its own end.”

It is equally futile to found reality on “our *selves* as independent beings” since we cannot be ourselves through ourselves alone; rather, we are “given to ourselves.”

The above routes “lead us, if we confine ourselves to them, only *to modes* of reality through modes of knowledge that prove to be inadequate.” What we are looking for is a philosophizing that “starts by granting all the possible modes of reality, i.e., that desires to grasp and know them without limit, but transcends them to *reality itself*.” Jaspers gives three examples of this:

1. *Authentic reality cannot be thought in terms of possibility*. Possibility never reveals reality, only appearance. However, since I can think about an object only if I think of it as possibility, reality must transcend thought. This means that reality is primary to thought; “To the extent that we are real we do not subordinate ourselves to a system of thought or to an idea of being.”
2. *Reality appears to us as historicity*. Reality cannot be encountered as either timeless or permanent. Rather, it is “present *to us* as a *transition*.” Jaspers describes this transitional character of phenomenal reality in three ways:
	1. Humans as both nothing but also capable of cognising the entire universe.
	2. Human history which lacks a goal and has no possible end-state.
	3. World which resists becoming a whole for us.

All of the above highlight the transitory nature of reality and the intuition that we are “*real* only as *historic*.” This doesn’t mean knowing history and then acting on the basis of this knowledge. Rather, it means “*penetrating to the origin* by *becoming one* with the *temporally concrete appearance of the reality* in which I stand.” Some examples of how to do this include “to fulfill the moment; to meet the challenge of the day; to carry out one’s unique function; to be wholly present.”

1. *Authentic reality is for us only if it is one*.
	1. Knowledge reveals the world as full of “*discontinuities between the modes of being*” but beyond these there is a union on which they are founded.
	2. We are unable to order the world into a permanent unity, yet we continue to strive for one.
	3. We also become aware of how fragmented our own *selfhood* is and of the “plurality of truths of the *Existenzen* that encounter one another.” However, through communication we strive for the One.

The above reveal how unity is initially lost and we must strive to *transcend* the fragmented pieces for “If there is *unity*, it is *only in transcendence*.”

Jaspers now emphasises the similarities in the above three examples of philosophizing aiming at reality:

1. Reality recedes until it is revealed in *transcendence*. We never grasp reality in thought; rather, we apprehend reality only by “touching it in transcending as [we realize our] own Existenz…”
2. Seeking reality through philosophizing like this is “a *kind of thinking that uses categories to go beyond categories*.” Categories like unity, possibility, etc. are determinate forms of objects for us which we must transcend to reach reality.
3. Reality never merely *exists*. Completeness, correctness and duration are the standards we use to measure things but by these measures reality always appears *wrong* to us in some way. “Therefore, every temporal appearance of reality is also inadequate.”
4. Reality is never self-evident. For the most part we are surrounded by a “phantom reality” “*Confronting reality*, therefore, is always like *breaking out of illusion*.”
5. The inadequacy of “phantom reality” prompts us to the *peace* that is possible only in reality itself. “Ultimate satisfaction can be attained only in *reality itself*, infinite and perfect, out of and in which both we and every thing for us exist. But we are aware of this reality always *only by means of appearances* in concrete historic situations.”

Jaspers took *decisions* seriously, probably picking this theme up from Kierkegaard, and highlights two “*fundamental philosophical decisions*” I must make according to how I apprehend reality:

1. Do I think of the world as complete in itself or make the leap to transcendence? Immanence is all we can know and therefore masquerades as being itself, but it is also divided, fragmented, suffused in plurality, incomplete and fragile.
2. Does transcendence lead me “out of the world to a *denial of the world*” or does it require me to “live and work only *in the world*”? Philosophical faith demands the latter for we are bound to the world as the condition of all being for us.

Philosophy therefore never gives “true” reality. All it can do is “heighten the clarity and reliable continuity of *what [the thinker] brings with* him and *can be*”. Hence, the final “step on the return to reality must be taken *by each person himself* in ways that cannot be anticipated.” All philosophy can do is “point the *way* by which one can approach reality through truth and apprehend being”.

Jaspers now turns to *religion* which is quite different in its aims. In religion, reality is experienced as certain, guaranteed by authority and apprehended in *myth* and *revelation*. Philosophy can partake in neither of these because reality is revealed in them. Jaspers discusses three features of religion as it differs from philosophy:

1. If reality is to appear for us it must acquire a *language*. But since language is based on thought this takes us to a medium in which reality cannot be expressed. So, for the language of religion to be successful in expressing reality, it must “take on the *form* of thought that at the same time ceases to be thought.” *Myths* and *fairy tales* are one such example.

It is precisely the fact that myth and fairy tale “explain nothing and are meaningless by the criteria of rational consequence, causality and end, that [they] can have great depth and infinite interpretability.” It is the language of imagination which touches reality while evading objective investigation. Philosophy can only perceive reality through the language of *ciphers of being*, religion uses *myth* and *revelation*.

Jaspers makes the point that in the same way that “the world’s actuality is accessible through the senses, that of transcendence is accessible through faith – either philosophical or religious”. However, we ought not to “hold fast” to these faith images and believe that their presentation alone secures reality for me.

Religion tends to “encounter transcendence as a sensible and particular object in the world; that is, as the specifically sacred object”. Philosophy, on the other hand, perceives transcendence through ciphers in any and everything in the world. “In principle everything can become sacred, and nothing is exclusively sacred”.

1. For philosophy, transcendence can only ever be understood *historically* which means that “its *objective* appearance cannot become valid and true *for all men*.” The opposite is true for religion though, where “transcendence in contained in a historical, unique form that is objective for all, exclusively valid, and the condition of salvation for everyone.”
2. As philosophy apprehends religion, the One appears transformed in it. “It has become a visible, objective unity in the world.”
	1. Authority is no longer a struggle but absolute and fixed.
	2. One book out of all books becomes central.
	3. All other kinds of historical faith must be false.
	4. Salvation cannot exist outside of the one true church.

In wrapping up this lecture, Jaspers asks three questions regarding his discussion of religion:

1. “*Can I in philosophizing hold as resolutely to reality as I can in religion?*”

The answer is no. “Philosophy has nothing comparable to the positive quality of religion.” However, this is not to say that philosophical faith is inferior to religion, it is perhaps just less inspiring given that the latter has recourse to heroism in suffering and action, artistic creations and poetry, etc.

1. In approaching religion from the perspective of philosophy, has Jaspers not started from an attitude of rejection of religion?

In a way, this is true. Whenever one talks of the other from the outside, as it were, the characterisation will always be inadequate. “Philosophy and religion are understood only by those who are themselves by virtue of their respective faith, either philosophical or religious.”

Jaspers acknowledges that philosophy and religion are in *conflict* but this conflict should be carried out over “truth rather than worldly existence”. He is very clear that the two “must be envisioned on the same level, not one in an exalted and the other in a degenerate form.”

He also points out that he is only concerned with genuine philosophy and religion. A philosophy which lacks Existenz and falls into immanence is no more a philosophy than a religion that “fixes upon the mindless representation of an alleged supersensible object remains religion.”

It is true that the character of religion is “essentially alien” to philosophy. The two communicate through completely different languages. However, “philosophy *cannot attack as false* a religion that remains true to its own source. In philosophizing, we recognise religion as true in a way we do not understand…”

1. The loss of religion in the modern age has destroyed authority and exception and rendered everything “doubtful and fragile.” “All forces that threaten religion are then considered ruinous for mankind generally. Among them philosophy and the sciences seem to be included.” The popularisation of philosophy has resulted in what Jaspers calls “empty enlightenment” amounting to an intellectual dogma. Reality has been reduced to “what can be known about it by natural knowledge – that is, in the end, a banal facticity.” So, the question is should philosophy be rejected as a ruinous and disintegrative way of thinking?

Jaspers rejects this. Superficial philosophy leads us away from reality but complete philosophy leads back to it. He says exactly the same thing about science.