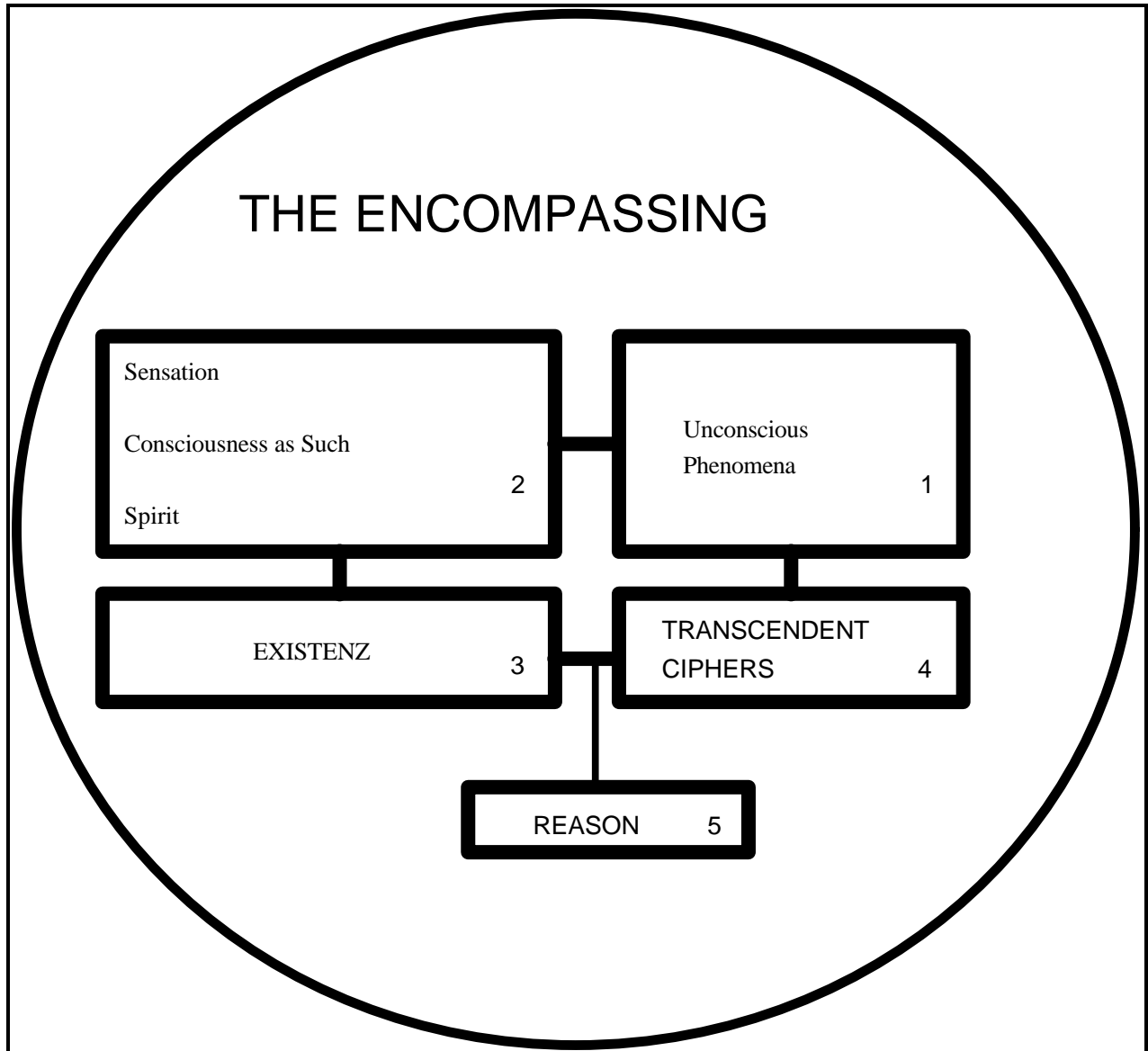
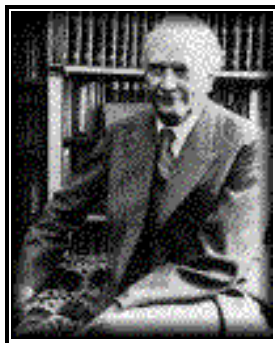


**THE I / NOT-I DISCOURSE:
THE WORLD OF EXISTENCE
AND THE WORLD OF EXISTENZ**



by
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**Philosophizing is the activity of thought itself,
by which the essence of man, in its entirety,
is realized in the individual man.**

Existenzphilosophie, 1938

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At the end of the twentieth century, humanity looks around itself and asks the questions, “Where do we go from here?” and “How did we get here in the first place?” We have made ourselves more aware of the physical world in which we live as well as more cognizant of each other, inter- and intra-culturally. Nonetheless, as bright as such a scientific broadening of the mind may appear, the problems of past/present neglect and/or abuse of the earth, not to mention each other, communicates to us the great probability of a dim future. How are we to change the course of environmental suicide and/or cultural homogenization? While the

emphasis for reform has run the gambit between individual awareness (existentialism and eco-anarchism) to an over-riding community involvement (Marxism, certain deep ecologies, and eco-feminism), the general consensus has been that humanity cannot continue on the same path(s).

The purpose of this paper is to examine the steps between mere existence and Self-Actualization (***Existenz***). Such an examination opens possibilities for future ***Existenzial*** discourse amidst humanity, among human beings and the earth, and between ***Existenzen*** and ***BE-ing***. The key figure for the purpose of this study will be the German psychiatrist and existentialist Karl Jaspers (1883-1969). It is my contention that Jaspers has been overlooked, by many Americans at least, as providing the general framework within which a productive dialogue can be expressed for the creation of an enlightened environment. In support of this idea, I shall establish an epistemology for the grounding of the study and examine the various levels of world orientation and phenomenological method necessary for philosophizing possible ***Existenz***.

Establishing first an epistemology before moving directly to the problem of Self-Actualization is not a side-bar: The current contextualism and relativism of many human beings--academics and non-academics--makes the solution to our problems extremely difficult. As in the oldest days, human beings start their progress by coming to agreement on one point and moving forward and upward from there. If every point of reference is made to be the same, however, humanity stagnates and the world around us may stagnate as well. One Archimedean point, an unmovable spot, gives us the vector from which all other experience may

be approached and judged. As ironic to the counterpoint of relativism as this may seem, I propose as the unmovable spot the *I*.

To say that *I* is an unmovable spot is only to posit that the one thing humans as a whole are cognizant of is their *I*-ness. It is not to say that there is one overriding, universal *I* nor to admit that there is in each of us an unchanging, individual *I*. The empirical experience of *I* is that of a fluxing awareness wherein a presentized consciousness links actual past events with possible future events. This singular, ever-changing *I-ness* is that which is meant by the label “I.” While Buddha and Heraclitus bear witness to this opinion, Hume’s discourse on Descartes’ immortal Ego is one of the best examples for developing a common starting point from an evolving *I*.

At the time of Hume’s publication of *A Treatise Concerning Human Nature*, the minds of Europe and a young America were still considering the arguments not only of Descartes toward some concrete self-identity, but also the philosophic holdovers of the essentialist philosophy of the middle ages and the Renaissance (not to mention the “common sense knowledge” of those humans less philosophical in orientation):

There are some philosophers, who imagine we are every moment intimately conscious of what we call our SELF; that we feel its existence and its continuance in existence; and are certain, beyond the evidence of demonstration, both of its perfect identity and simplicity. (*THN*, 299)

Yet Hume cannot account for how anyone would be able to make a philosophical claim such as this without it being pure assertion. Certainly it is unreflective of what is demonstrable within the realm of our most basic communication of experience. And really this is probably Hume’s

purpose: to put the idea of self back into the realm of grammar rather than philosophy. That is, it is a tool of how we communicate with each other. A sign. A cipher.

The whole of this doctrine leads us to a conclusion, which is of great importance in the present affair, viz. that all the nice and subtle questions concerning personal identity can never be possibly decided, and are to be regarded rather as grammatical than as philosophical difficulties. . . All the disputes concerning the identity of connected objects are merely verbal, except so far as the relation of parts gives rise to some fiction or imaginary principle of union. . .
(*THN*, 310)

His argument in the *Treatise's Book I: Of the Understanding*, "Section VI: Of Personal Identity" is thorough and convincing. There is a fluidity of probable causal relations which human imagination sews together into a complex, almost quilted whole. This whole is of such a unique quality that each individual's reflected and resemblant memories take on the appearance of sameness called "self-identity." But he admits that it is interesting how this idea, which is very much dependent upon the personal perceptions of the individual, allows for humans to "extend our identity beyond our memory" (*THN*, 310). Herein he finds the imagination the key factor to the linking of the memories and extension of the memories. The linking is a purposed act of the imagination to ensure that the individual does not fall into the stream of consciousness and drown. When I comprehend the paradoxical fluidity of the Archimedean *I*--which no human can deny but which she may choose to not affirm--I see this:

What I know is the passing of *I*.

What I reflect is the enowment of *I*.

What I project is the coming of *I*.

The boundaries of *I-ness* within the *I* are then the past and the future as they have been and may be experienced. The boundary of *I-ness* outside the *I* is the spatio-temporal *not-I-ness* of the world. This *Other* is that which surrounds and encompasses, interacts and interchanges with the unmovable spot. In all of these cases I am dealing with objects; only objects can be known or apprehended. Even the *I* is being considered as a known object although it is also the knowing subject. The establishment of an idea of the fluid self gives me the ability to perceive, conceive, and imagine more than one absolute *Weltanschauung*.

Moreover, I know that the essence of problem solving is not taking and keeping a monocular world view. Beholding any situation as singular and unchanging from the individual perspective automatically puts stumbling blocks in the way of answers. Discourse among the perceivers allows that which is perceived--if it is dangerous, unhealthy, unaesthetic, or unethical--to be obviated by explanation and/or description. Yet this calls for human beings to look at the world as though continually climbing up and down a step ladder. To communicate with the world, within the mind, and among each other. Karl Jaspers notes that humanity cannot merely view the world as data nor can it look down from above without any established ground forever disconnected:

The fulfillment of existence is world-being. For possible Existenz the world is the arena in which it appears to itself... [T]he world, as the Other, as nothing but the world, is bleak... However, I know the world in yet another way. Here it is akin to me... World and Existenz stand in tension with each other. They can neither become one nor can they be separated one from the other... World

as that which can be known and Existenz as that which is to be illuminated are differentiated dialectically and again taken as one...
(From *Philosophy II*; quoted in *BPW*, 62)

This leads to the acknowledgement of at least four sedimented perspectival steps: 1) Science of the natural sort; 2) Science of the philosophic sort; 3) Philosophizing of possible **Existenz**.; and 4) Philosophical metaphysics. The first is a system of explanatory degrees which moves us only horizontally through causal connections. The second is a technique of descriptive degrees which speaks to that which is encountered in the encountering as it appears in consciousness-as-such and moves toward the spirit. The third is a communicative volition which moves the **Existenz** vertically toward transcendent awareness. And the last is a system of ciphers and symbols which seeks to circumnavigate and describe the encounter of **Existenz** with **BE-ing** (if indeed such is possible). Between and among all of these there is constant interchange of information and judgment through the connective of Reason. Each step may be called an interchange between modes of the **Encompassing**, i.e. that which comprehends and encompasses the **I** and the World (the **Not-I**). For Jaspers the **Encompassing** is the closest a human can come to **BE-ing** as expressed in a visualized language cipher.

A diagram of Jaspers' world view will be helpful at this point. Please note the drawing of the **Encompassing** on the cover page. The box labeled "1," **Unconscious Phenomena**, is what Jaspers refers to as "world-being." This is the repository of phenomena from which each individual draws her basic sensations. It is the first mode of the **Encompassing** in that it contains all possibilities of objective cognition.

However, since humans can only know it in part due to the vastness of its possibilities, it presents a problem for the *I*. World-being is undoubtedly the fullest source of **Not-I**. Still, there is no way of ever cataloging this **Otherness** completely in order to know **Not-I** wholly and directly. An individual can only get bits and pieces in relation to *I*. That is, one must look first at the *I* before any understanding of the **Not-I** can even be attempted. Thus, in Jaspers' exploration of world-being as a mode of the **Encompassing**, he concerns himself first with the various modes of the *I* then makes some attempt to look at world-being. Let us do the same.

I begin then in box 2 which contains a list of three of the modes of the Encompassing as laid out by Jaspers in his *Von der Wahrheit*. This list box might be termed "*I-as-such*" just as box 1 was called subsequently world-being. This *I-as-such* begins with sensation, or mere existence, or what Jaspers calls **Dasein**. This should not be confused with Heidegger's term. Jaspers' **Dasein** is much more literal and in line with regular German usage. But still, the American reader might do well to define this **Dasein** as *being-in-the-world-as-an-I-being*. Box two is the realm of world-orientation although there is a movement contained within in it toward something Other-to-the-world: i.e. Existenz. But that is rushing.

The first mode of the Encompassing then is **Dasein**. As noted on the chart, I might call it pure sensation: the mode by which the world-being, the **Not-I**, is first sensed and comprehended even if only for brief moments. Ortega y Gasset calls this **alteracion**, the Spanish word for constant and consistent alteration of the entity in her environment. In his "Being in One's Self and Being Beside One's Self," Ortega y Gasset equates this state with that of the animal as observed in the wild or in the

zoo. The environs of the animal, the unconscious or semi-conscious creature, is one of persistent change. Nothing stays the same; the animal is forever aware of hostile surroundings:

[I]t is the objects and events in its environment which govern the animal's life, which pull and push it about like a marionette. It does not rule its life, it does not live from *itself*, but is always intent on what is happening outside it, on all that is *other* than itself. (**P&E**, 216)

In such a state, there is no reflection or even introspection for that matter. There is only pure reaction. So long as the individual is only reacting to sensations and making no attempt to conceptualize or order them, she is not as yet at the level of consciousness-as-such. It is the placing of the phenomenal world-being in some objective order--which can be described, explained, and/or repeated--that brings about the evolution from mere sensation to the acknowledged perception we call primal cognition. This cognition "brings about separation" from the world and makes the cognizer to be "concerned with specific, individual forms of reality" (From *Von der Wahrheit*, qtd in **BPW**, 142). This change in perspective between and bifurcation into unconscious and conscious, as well as the need to explain what is experienced, may be seen as the first step on the previously enumerated ladder: science of the natural sort.

Nonetheless, the fact that it is the first step does not minimize its importance. Nor should it be viewed as mere scientific knowing. The nascent first steps of human reason contained herein are the combination of pains, pleasures, and crude knowledge first gained on the crucial goal toward Self-Actualization. Jaspers' contemporary, the great German poet Rainer

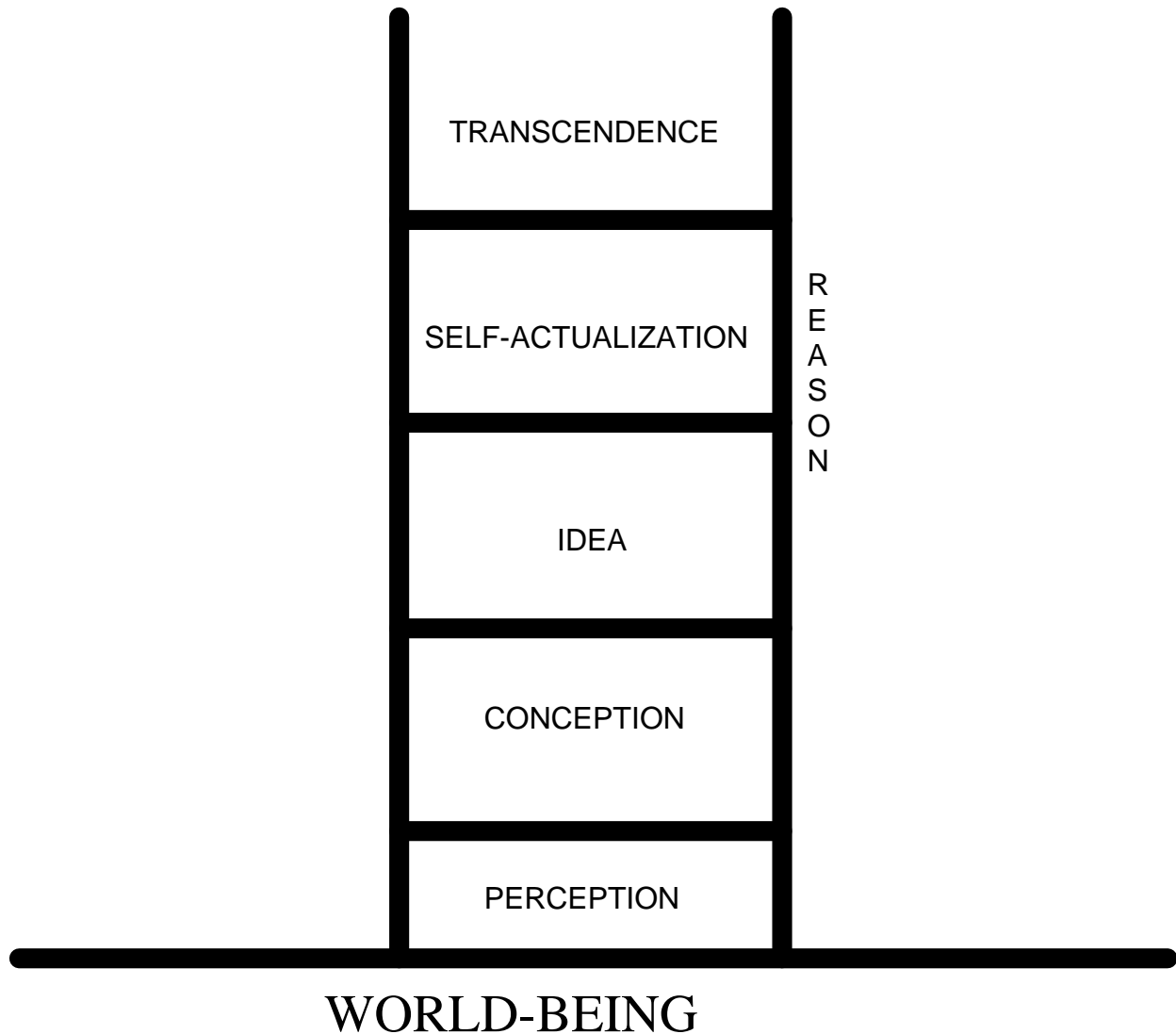
Maria Rilke (1875-1926), speaks about one aspect:

Physical pleasure is a sensual experience no different from pure seeing or the pure sensation with which a fine fruit fills the tongue; it is a great unending experience, which is given us, a knowing of the world, the fullness and the glory of all knowing. And not our acceptance of it is bad; the bad thing is that most people misuse and squander this experience and apply it as a stimulant at the tired spots of their lives and as distraction instead of a rallying toward exalted moments. (*Letters to a Young Poet*: 16 July, 1903; members.aol.com/KatharenaE/private/Philo/Rilke/rilke.html)

Please notice that this is an examination of an Existenzial ladder [*diagram 2*] of purposed actions, stepping between and among modes of the *Encompassing*. The action between *Dasein* and consciousness-as-such is the workplace for science of the natural sort. As well as seeing how Jaspers lays out these steps, we are also looking at how one might freeze, as a child or an acrophobic, on the first or second rung, scared of climbing higher and falling off, or frightened of the fatigue and “tired spots” which might ensue from a true effort, a tiredness that might not allow one to enjoy the sport of the day. But my knowing, my epistemology, does not truly begin until I am willing

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ENCOMPASSING



to climb from the world-as-purely-given to something else: A world I reflect upon. For Ortega y Gasset and for Jaspers it is the ability to go within and to take within that makes me human as well as conscious. I take the world up with me, into me, and consider its generalities as they appear to me and my fellows.

This leads directly to the second mode of the *Encompassing* considered here: consciousness-as-such or consciousness-at-large. Within this mode the concepts which interpret my percepts point back at the world and attempt to order it in a causal, historical fashion. The space recognized in *Dasein*, “the space of my actuality” (From *Von der Wahrheit*, qtd in *BPW*, 141), becomes here the stage upon which “Being as objectivity is manifest together with knowledge that is directed toward objectivity. . . [so-that t]he unfolding of consciousness-as-such takes place. . . in its manifestation” (From *Von der Wahrheit*, qtd in *BPW*, 147). It is at this point that I am most likely to founder or shipwreck as Jaspers puts it. Here, in consciousness-as-such, I first become aware of the limit situations--struggle, suffering, death, guilt--which inhabit my existence and can inhibit Existenz. At this point, “knowledge about things. . . paralyses and shows the senselessness and hopelessness of everything” (From *Von der Wahrheit*, qtd in *BPW*, 148). Yet without this consciousness which recognizes at first no hope, there would indeed be no hope. Before I am consciousness-as-such, participating as this mode of the *Encompassing*, I have no concept of anything outside or within me. Without these concepts, there is no desire nor nascent faith to go forward, even though shipwrecked. There is no recognition of the movement outside in the world which can be and is mirrored within the *I*. When consciousness-as-such meets the world, sees through perceptions and interacts with conceptions, it changes the *Not-I* as well as the *I*. It stirs to movement:

For consciousness is not only something adventitious but also something that awakens, impels upward, makes for development, and becomes the condition of new experience derived from all

modes of the Encompassing.

What is raised to consciousness is no longer what it is or was without consciousness. In an authentic instance of being raised to consciousness there arises a new originality which can now become the ground for a new potential consciousness without limit. (From *Von der Wahrheit*, qtd in **BPW**, 149)

_____ This change of all that consciousness touches literally forces the individual upward beyond the actuality of mere existence to a new stage, a new awareness, an unclosed encompassing which is movement incarnate and specific to individual enlightenment. This illumination of the specific is the turning point away from the shared, communal relations of “consciousness at large. . . [in which] we perceive the diversity of empirical consciousness. . . know[ing] it as a psychological reality whose infinite variety we penetrate” (**PFR**, 62). Now I rather take the specific phenomena as experienced in my specific individuality and examine the intersubjective movement between thing and knower-of-thing. I am at the stage of science of the philosophic sort (Husserl’s phenomenology), the rung between communal consciousness, which is universal, and spirit (**Geist**), which is individual.

This cogitating upon the phenomena revealed first in the focus of consciousness opens the world of objects up to me in a way previously impossible. Suddenly I move in and around the world in a thought. As a mode of the **Encompassing**, spirit receives revelation of the great ideas that open the first doors to human freedom. By virtue of my imagination, I enclose or bracket a world of objects in a new field of actualization which can never fully succeed or last forever, but this is the purpose of my spirit’s movement. Here in my own imaginings I first glimpse the past as

a precursor to a future that arises out of my continuously fluid present. The idea of self is born here and basks in the light of an open day as opposed to the closed darkness of mere existence. Here Jaspers is clearly in agreement with Hume's identification of self and how such an identification is sustained only in imagination. Hume states in the closing chapters of Part One of his *Treatise*:

Whatever changes he [the individual] endures, his several parts are still connected by the relation of causation. And in this view our identity with regard to the passions serves to corroborate that with regard to the imagination, by the [sic] making our distant perceptions influence each other, and by giving us a present concern for our past or future pains or pleasures.

As memory alone acquaints us with the continuance and extent of this succession of perceptions, 'tis to be considered upon that account chiefly, as the source of personal identity. Had we no memory, we never shou'd have any notion of causation, nor consequently of that chain of causes and effects, which constitute our self or person. . . (*THN*, 309)

The memory, senses, and understanding are, therefore, all of them founded on the imagination, or the vivacity of our ideas. (*THN*, 313).

Going back to the ladder metaphor, I imagine climbing the ladder. One foot is on the first rung, a hand upon the second. I look out and see the world as object and as fundament of objects. There is inspiration to climb further. One foot is now on the second while the hands rest upon the third. This grasping of the third ring influences the recognition of the movement inherit in the spirit, the mind, the imagination. I look inward

more deeply than ever before and see the world as object and as fundament of objects contained within me. The working of the fingers, along the connectors of reason and fleetingly within the realm of **Existenz**, infuses the spirit with the possibility of becoming uniquely actualized. The spirit is not closed off or enclosed away from. There is always an opening, no matter how small, toward/away-from consciousness-at-large and toward/away-from **Existenz**. Only spirit, because it is imagination, can be encompassing as well as open. Idea is paradox, “. . .infinite challenge, never to be fully met, driving into the open by the anticipatory presence of its content” (*PFR*, 64).

I am now arrived at that place Other-to-the-world, i.e. the philosophizing of possible **Existenz**. I had earlier made passing reference to this in the preliminary discussion of Box Two, Diagram One, as the movement within the I-as-such toward something beyond the realm of world-orientation. **Existenz** is historic authenticity, my unique place in the **Encompassing** and a mode thereof, that mode which encompasses “the source of true actuality. . .[that] conveys the content of every mode of the Encompassing which I am” (From *Von der Wahrheit*, qtd in *BPW*, 154). This mode is not an object of knowledge; it is the ultimate subject. It cannot be objectified in any way, shape, or form. No other mode of the **Encompassing** which I am may understand or comprehend **Existenz**.

Thus, the true axis of my being is **Existenz**. It infuses, informs, and incites my immanence with transcendent authenticity. To be authentic in this way is to be on that rung of the Existenzial ladder where I am philosophizing possible **Existenz**. even if I am connected only by a metaphorical fingernail hanging on in sureness of failure to hang-on. I am

doomed in fact to fail because I cannot philosophize pure **Existenz** only possible **Existenz**. This is because the human mind's propensity in its immanence is to objectify, understand, and know. By definition, knowledge can only occur with objects. **Existenz** is the ultimate subject; there is no potential for objectification. As soon as what was considered to be possible **Existenz** is objectified and known, the failure occurs. Even the word **Existenz** is a troublesome sign or cipher. As a symbol, the word can be flippantly thrown about and utilized to the point that it becomes so concretized it means nothing. In reality, while this word speaks of my hope and faith in a transcendent possibility, it most clearly points to my limitation to communicate authenticity beyond the unique field of my own becoming. It certainly is not an illuminated secret passage way between an unmasked, fully revealed godhead:

. . . 'Existenz' is not an individual thing of infinite objective reality. It is a reality infinite as its own challenge. Existenz does not just happen in the world; it is an origin from elsewhere come to be phenomenal in the world. . . Existenz is potential being willed out of the gift of self--not out of nothing, but in the sight of Transcendence. . . I cannot really be Existenz and know it. . . This is why men will come to feel time and again that the main point remains unsaid, the essential thing undone--not due to any omission, but because even in the impossible case that everything were said and done, it would not suffice. (*PFR*, 67-68)

I can tick off a list of things that I notice about Existenz, but there is always something beyond, beneath, behind this catalog. It is not like an inventory of the immanent qualities. These are things I share with other humans even other animals and lifeless things. **Existenz** is at bottom--

wherever this grounding may be--unique in relation to the world.

And having climbed this far, I am reminded that this ladder stands upon the encompassing fundament of unconscious phenomena: world-being. I remember, looking down, that I have not fully discussed the world-as-such. This is because I sought to illuminate *I* as best I could before a fuller comparison/contrast with **Not-I**. Having cataloged the imminent as well as the transcendent modes of *I*, what this is this world-being which is **Not-I**, so very **Other**?

Upon close inspection I realize that the modes of the **Encompassing** which I am--existence through **Existenz**--are counterpoised to the modes of the **Encompassing** which are not-I. Specifically, I speak of the world-being from which comes the objectifiable phenomena of existence and through which the Transcendent is provided with forms for its ciphers. Thus, world-being is “the ground and origin of reality” (From *Von der Wahrheit*, qtd in **BPW**, 164). It is the mode of appearance, and therefore it is the mode of illusion--certainty, causality, unity, simplicity. The darkness, the unconsciousness, from which objects come to us out of world-being is unfathomable. Still even this unconsciousness is only known by its position vis a vis consciousness. The objects which I perceive in this milieu are the appearances I cognize which are encompassed again by world-being encompassing me. For I cannot wholly encompass the unconscious depths any more than I can fully comprehend the transcendent heights. Nonetheless, I can cognize my encounters with the “objectively investigable” in such a way that I search through the depths for my freedom, my wholeness, and my immanent transcendence.

When searching the field of world-being, wherein I act through the

modes of the *Encompassing* which I am, I recognize the multiplicity of the modes, the methods, the levels of *BE-ing*. Having once turned to look back at the grounding of contradistinction which highlights my modalities, I now gaze upward at the rip in the vale which hides behind the various patches of the Transcendent. I peer at the Existenzial ladder, gripping firmly the rails of Reason, noting for the present time that my roost rests against an open sky that surrounds and envelops both *I* and World-being. *Existenz* realizes its anchorage in the ciphers that populate the transcendent. I am moved to more than grasp the final rung of the Existenzial ladder: I am compelled almost to step up and off into the open invitation before me. The top like a gate or a door, unhinged and removed, inviting me to pass inside, to partake of the hospitality offered. Yet one hesitation or one moment's holding back, not committing myself fully, and I slide back down to the ground, the breath knocked out of me in a swift descent. And like Rilke I ask myself:

Is it possible that, in spite of inventions and progress, in spite of culture, religion, and wisdom, one has remained at the surface of life? Is it possible that even this surface, which would have at least been something, has been covered with an incredibly dull material till it looks like salon furniture during the summer vacation?

Is it possible that there are people who say "God" and suppose that this is something one can have in common?---Just look at two school children: one of them buys a knife, and his neighbor buys one just like it, on the very same day. And a week later they compare their two knives, and by now they are barely similar: so differently they have developed in different hands. (Sure, says the mother of one boy, if you always get everything to look

used right away!) I see: Is it possible to believe that one can have a god without using him?

Is it possible to achieve the top rung, Transcendence, and not do everything possible to step through even for a moment, even though I must fail?

If Jaspers thought has any significance in its observations it is in reminding the individual she is a whole as well as a part of a process immanent transcendence. Having established group history, in which myths and scientific hypotheses work side by side to give some explanation of who **WE** are, Jaspers points out the necessity of philosophizing an open dialogue between the **I** and the **Not-I**. Reason, the bonding agent and connecting factor within the **Encompassing**, makes this communication possible even when words, the arch-tool of reason, must fall short and the individual remain silent to convey the message. "Actuality occurs only in the concreteness of all modes of the Encompassing, out of the historic ground of Existenz which constructs and utilizes as its tool the philosophizing manifested in configurations of thought and of writings" (From *Von der Wahrheit*, qtd. in **BPW**, 184). Developing the field of my historicity in comparison with and in contrast to the historical events of the past, I move toward a change which not only effects **I** but changes the whole of **Not-I**.

It is the static subject/object dichotomy maintained by ego's hold on I / not I, which permits a perception of other beings, events, and phenomena as somehow unrelated or hostile to us. To know that what we fear is ourselves, is to strip away false defenses. (**DDZ**, 85)

Certainly that mode of the **Encompassing** which I call Reason does tell

me and warn me of when I am in gravest danger of succumbing to one of the limit situations--guilt, struggle, suffering, and death. Yet this same Reason gives me hope in a future beyond this "foundering," after this "shipwreck." Though I display a similar temerity to that of David Hume embarking on his great inner voyage to discover or to uncover human nature (*THN*, 311), I cannot afford the luxury of FEAR--False Evidence Appearing Real. At the risk of having too many quotes and myself succumbing to another possible *Existenz*, I let Karl Jaspers conclude this paper himself:

Philosophy, the goal of true community among men who are themselves, has been wrought by lonely, distant individuals. In an extravagance of agonies and certainties, they sent us word but did not bid us follow. The experience they show us was singular and unrepeatable. They were sacrificial victims, so to speak, whose visions--translated into thought--convey to us what a less hazardous fate could not have brought to light. In our philosophizing we revere what they proved humanly possible. We want to catch their every word; they have made it impossible for us to take any knowable order for the only true one. But we ourselves philosophize in communication, not in isolation. Our point of departure is man's relation to man, the individual's way of dealing with the individual. In our world, linked fellowship seems like the true reality. Communication leads to our brightest moments and lends weight to our life. My philosophizing owes its every content to people who have come close to me. I consider it true in so far as it aids communication. Man cannot place himself above man; he can approach only those he meets on the same level. He cannot teach

them what to do, but together they can find out what they want and what they are. There can be solidarity in what must animate our existence if it is to turn into being. (*PH*, I: 2) [Nonetheless,] either I continuously risk solitude anew in order to achieve self-being in communication, or I have suspended myself with finality in another being. (*PH*, II; qtd in *BPW*, 75)

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