On My Philosophy

Karl Jaspers (1941)

I. The Course of my Development

On February 23, 1883 I was born in Oldenburg, a son of Karl Jaspers, the former sheriff and later bank director, and his wife Henriette, nee Tantzen. I passed a well-guarded childhood in the company of my brothers and sisters, either in the country with my grandparents or at the seaside, sheltered by loved and revered parents, led by the authority of my father, brought up with a regard for truth and loyalty, for achievement and reliability, yet without church religion (except for the scanty formalities of the Protestant confession). I attended the high school of my home town, and from 1901 the University.

My path was not the normal one of professors of philosophy. I did not intend to become a doctor of philosophy by studying philosophy (I am in fact a doctor of medicine) nor did I by any means, intend originally to qualify for a professorship by a dissertation on philosophy. To decide to become a philosopher seemed as foolish to me as to decide to become a poet. Since my schooldays, however, I was guided by philosophical questions. Philosophy seemed to me the supreme, even the sole, concern of man. Yet a certain awe kept me from making it my profession.

Instead I felt that I should look for my vocation in practical life. At first I chose the study of law with the intention of becoming an attorney. At the same time I attended classes in philosophy. That proved disappointing. The lectures offered nothing of what I sought in philosophy: neither the fundamental experiences of Being, nor guidance for inner action or self-improvement, but rather, questionable opinions making claim to scientific validity. The study of law left me unsatisfied, because I did not know the aspects of life which it serves. I perceived only the intricate mental juggling with fictions that did not interest me. What I sought was perception of reality. Concern with art and poetry were incomplete substitutes; so even was an enthusiastic journey to Italy to see Roma aeterna, to sense history and to gaze on beauty (1902). This aimless way of life came to an end after my third semester. I began the study of medicine, impelled by a
desire for knowledge of facts and of man. The resolution to do disciplined work tied me to both laboratory and clinic for a long time to come. Ostensibly I was aiming at the practice of medicine; yet already with the secret thought of eventually pursuing an academic career at the university, though actually not in philosophy but in psychiatry or psychology. After some years (since 1909) I published my psycho-pathological researches. In 1913 I qualified as university lecturer in psychology.

Up until then my life had been a spiritual striving in what was, actually, politico-sociological space, untroubled by general happenings and without political consciousness, though with momentary forebodings of possible distant dangers. All intentness centred on my own private life, on the high moments of intimate communion with those closest to me. Contemplation of the works of the spirit, research, continual intercourse with things timeless, were the purpose and meaning of life's activities. Then in 1914 the World War caused the great breach in our European existence. The paradisiacal life before the World War, naive despite all its sublime spirituality, could never return: philosophy, with its seriousness, became more important than ever.

To a great extent my psychology had assumed the characteristics, without my being conscious of it, of what X subsequently called *Existenz Clarification*. This psychology was no longer merely an empirical statement of the facts and laws of events. It was an outline of the potentialities of the soul which holds a mirror up to man to show him what he can be, what he can achieve and how far he can go: such insights are meant as an appeal to freedom, to let me choose in my inner action what I really want. As the realisation overcame me that, at the time, there was no true philosophy ut the universities, I thought that facing such a vacuum even he who was too weak to create his own philosophy, had the right to hold forth about philosophy, to declare what it once was and what it could be. Only then,
II. Making Tradition Our Own

We can ask primal questions, but we can never stand near the beginning. Our questions and answers are in part determined by the historical tradition in which we find ourselves. We apprehend truth from our own source within the historical tradition.

The content of our truth depends upon our appropriating the historical foundation. Our own power of generation lies in the rebirth of what has been handed down to us. If we do not wish to slip back, nothing must be forgotten; but if philosophising is to be genuine our thoughts must arise from our own source. Hence all appropriation of tradition proceeds from the intentness of our own life. The more determinedly I exist, as myself, within the conditions of the time, the more clearly I shall hear the language of the past, the nearer I shall feel the glow of its life.

In what way the history of philosophy exists for us is a fundamental problem of our philosophising which demands a concrete solution in each age. Philosophy is tested and characterised by the way in which it appropriates its history. It might seem to us that the truth of present-day philosophy manifests itself less in the formation of new fundamental concepts (as "borderline situation," "the Encompassing") than in the new sound it makes audible for us in old thoughts.

A merely theoretical contemplation of the history of philosophy is insufficient. If philosophy is practice, a demand to know the manner in which its history is to be studied is entailed: a theoretical attitude toward it becomes real only in the living appropriation of its contents from the texts. To apprehend thought with indifference prevents its appropriation. Knowledge that does not concern the knower comes between the content of knowledge and its resurrection; but in the assimilation of philosophy by later ages a lapse of thought is a constant feature.
Concepts which were originally reality pass through history as pieces of learning or information. What was once life becomes a pile of dead husks of concepts and these in turn become the subject of an objective history of philosophy.

Everything depends therefore on encountering thought at its source. Such thought is the reality of man's being, which achieved consciousness and understanding of itself through it. Though one needs knowledge of the concepts that emerge in the history of philosophy, the purpose of such knowledge remains to gain entrance to the exalted living practice of these past thoughts. My own being can be judged by the depths I reach in making these historical origins my own. There is no palpable criterion for this in outward appearances. Such true thinking goes through history as a mystery which can reveal itself, however, to everyone with understanding, for this hidden thinking was once reality. Having been written down it can be rediscovered: at any time it can spark a new blaze.

The history of philosophy is not, like the history of the sciences, to be studied with the intellect alone. That which is receptive in us and that which impinges upon us from history is the reality of man's being, unfolding itself in thought.

A philosophical history of philosophy has the following characteristics:

1. The real import of history is the Great, the Unique, the Irreplaceable The great philosophers and the great works are standards for the selection of what is essential. Everything that we do in studying the history of philosophy ultimately serves their better understanding. All other questions are secondary, as, for instance, whether the Great is also the most effective, or whether, perhaps, precisely the misunderstanding of greatness has a wider public appeal because of its mediocrity and its lowered standard. How the quality of greatness appears to us, with constant transposition and questioning, in the totality of things, what we prefer and how we prefer it, that must prove its
worth by our ability to see through the remainder, the widespread, the universally prevalent, in order to judge it fairly, and to appreciate it. What remains strange and inco comprehensible to w is a limit to our own truth.

2. Understanding of the ideas demands a thorough study of the texts Philosophy can only be approached with the most concrete comprehension. A great philosopher demands unrelenting penetration into his texts. This necessitates both the realisation of a whole philosophy in its entirety, and taking pains with every single sentence in order to become conscious of its every nuance. Comprehensive perception and accurate observation are the basis of our understanding.

3. Understanding of philosophy demands a universal historical view As a universal history of philosophy, the history of philosophy must become one great unity. Philosophising, as it occurs in each historical age, involves the penetration, without limit, into the unity of the revelation of Being. This solitary, but vast, moment of a few millennia, emerging from three different sources (China, India, Occident), is real by virtue of a single internal connection. Though too immense to be envisaged as a pattern, it encompasses us nevertheless as a world. No one person can attain that concrete nearness everywhere. He can have his roots only in relatively few sublime works. The immensity of the Whole and the evocative tones of its unity are indispensable for achieving universal philosophic communication as well as for realising the truth of each individual's concrete understanding.

4. The philosopher's invisible realm of the spirit The philosopher lives, as it were, in a hidden, non-objective community to which every philosophising person secretly longs to be admitted. Philosophy has no institutional reality and is not in competition with the church, the state, the real communities of the world. Any objectification, whether it be the formation of schools or sects, is the ruin of philosophy. For the freedom that can be attained in philosophising cannot be handed down by the
doctrine of an institution. Only as an individual can man become a philosopher. From becoming a philosopher he can derive no claims. He must not have the folly to wish to be recognised as a philosopher. Professorships in philosophy are instituted for free mediation of ideas by teaching, which does not preclude their being held by philosophers (Kant, Hegel, Schelling). But in philosophy's realm of the spirit there is no objective certainty and no confirmation. In the realm of the spirit, men become companions-in-thought through the millennia, become occasions for each other to find the way to truth from their own source, although they cannot present each other with readymade truth. It is a self-development of individual in communication with individual. It is a development of the individual into community and from there to the plane of history, without breaking with contemporary life. It is the effort to live from and on behalf of the fundamental, though these become audible to him who philosophises, without objective certainty (as in religion), and only through indirect hints as possibilities in the totality of philosophy.

5. The universal-historical view is a condition for the most decisive consciousness of one's own age. What can be experienced today becomes fully tangible only in the face of humanity's experiences—both those which can no longer be relived and those which become a living experience for the first time this very day. Only through being conscious can the contents of the past, transmuted into possibilities, become the fully real contents of the present. The life of truth in the realm of the spirit does not remove man from his world, but makes him effective for serving his historical present.

These fundamental views of history developed only slowly in me. I discovered that the study of past philosophers is of little use unless our own reality enters into it. Our reality alone allows the thinker's questions to become comprehensible. We can thereby read their works as if all philosophers were contemporaries.
The order in which the great stars of the philosophers' heaven rose for me is, perhaps, accidental. While I was still at school Spinoza was the first. Kant then became the philosopher for me and has remained so. In the voices of Plotinus, Nicholas of Cusa, Bruno, and Schelling I heard as truth the dreams of the metaphysicians. Kierkegaard located consciousness both of the Source, which is so indispensable today, and of our own historical situation. Nietzsche gained importance for me only late as the magnificent revelation of nihilism and the task of overcoming it (in my youth I had avoided him, repelled by the extremes, the rapture, and the diversity). Goethe contributed the atmosphere of *humanitas* and un-selfconsciousness. To breathe this atmosphere, to love with Goethe whatever is essential among the apparitions of the world, and like him to touch, with awe, the unveiled boundaries, was a blessing amid the unrest, and be came a source of justice and reason. Hegel for a long time remained a well-nigh inexhaustible material for study, particularly for my teaching activity in seminars. The Greeks were always there; after the discipline of their coolness, I liked to turn to Augustine; however, despite the depth of his existential clarification displeasure with his rhetoric and with his lack of all scientific objectivity and with his ugly and violent emotions drove me back again to the Greeks. Only finally I occupied myself more thoroughly with Plato, who now seemed to me perhaps the greatest of all.

Among my deceased contemporaries I owe what I am able to think—those closest to me excepted—above all to the one and only Max Weber. He alone, through his being, showed me what human greatness can be. Nissl, the brain anatomist and psychiatrist, set an example for me, in the years I worked under him, of critical research and the purest scientific method.

Even in the history of philosophy we can witness the tremendous incisiveness of our age. Hegel is a consummation of two and a half millennia of thought. True, in his basic philosophic attitude, although not in his concrete positions, Plato is as alive today as ever, perhaps more than ever. Even now we
can philosophise from Kant. In actuality, however, we cannot forget for one moment what has been brought about since by Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. We are so exposed that we constantly find ourselves facing nothingness. Our wounds are so deep that in our weak moments we wonder if we are not, in fact, dying from them.

At the present moment, the security of coherent philosophy, which existed from Parmenides to Hegel, is lost. This does not prevent us from philosophising from the single foundation of man's being on which was based the thinking of those millennia in the Occident which are now, in some sense, concluded. To become aware of this foundation in yet another way, we are referred to India and China as the two other original paths of philosophic thought. Instead of slipping into nothingness at the disintegration of millennia we should like to feel unshakeable ground beneath us. We should like to comprehend in one historical whole the only general phenomenon which may permit posterity to probe its substance more deeply than has ever been done. The alternative "nothing or everything" stands before our age as the question of man's spiritual destiny.

III. Drives to the Basic Questions

Philosophy did not mean simply cognisance of the universe (that results from the sum total of the sciences in constant indetermination and transition), nor epistemology (which is a subject of logic), nor the knowledge of the systems and texts of the history of philosophy (such knowledge touches only the surface of thinking). Philosophy grew in me through my finding myself in the midst of life itself. Philosophical thought is practical activity, although a unique kind of activity.

Philosophic meditation is an accomplishment by which I attain Being and my own self, not impartial thinking which studies a subject with indifference. To be a mere onlooker were vain. Even scientific knowledge, if there is anything to it, is not a random observation of random objects; for the critical
objectivity of significant knowledge is attained as a practice only philosophically in inner action.

Philosophy as practice does not mean its restriction to utility or applicability, that is, to what serves morality or produces serenity of soul. The process, in which knowledge is employed as a means of thinking out the possibilities that, bear upon a finite objective, is a technical, not a philosophical, activity. Philosophising is the activity of thought itself, by which the essence of man, in its entirety, is realised in the individual man. This activity originates from life in the depths where it touches Eternity inside Time, not at the surface where it moves in finite purposes, even though the depths appear to us only at the surface. It is for this reason that philosophical activity is fully real only at the summits of personal philosophising, while objectivised philosophical thought is a preparation for, and a recollection of, it. At the summits the activity is the inner action by which I become myself; it is the revelation of Being; it is the activity of being oneself which yet simultaneously experiences itself as the passivity of being given-to-oneself. The mystery of this boundary of philosophising at which alone philosophy is real, is only circumscribed by the unrolling of thoughts in the philosophical work.

Since the basic questions of philosophy grow, as practical activity, from life, their form is at any given moment in keeping with the historical situation; but this situation is part of the continuity of tradition. The questions put earlier in history are still ours; in part identical with present ones, word for word, after thousands of years, in part more distant and strange, so that we make them our own only by translation. The basic questions were formulated by Kant with, I felt, moving simplicity: 1. What can I know? 2. What shall I do? 3. What may I hope? 4. What is man? Today these questions have been reborn for us in changed form and thus become comprehensible to us anew also in their origin. The transformation of these questions is due to our finding ourselves in the kind of life that our age produces:
1. Science has gained an ever-growing overwhelming importance; by its consequences it has become the fate of the world. Technically, it provides the basis for all human existence and compels the unpredictable transmutation of all conditions. Its contents cause wonder and ever greater wonder. Its inversions cause scientific superstitions and a desperate hatred of science. Science cannot be avoided. It extends further than in Kant's time; it is more radical than ever, both in the precision of its methods and in its consequences. The question "What can I know?" therefore becomes more concrete and at the same time more inexorable. Seen from our point of view Kant still knew too much (in Wrongly taking his own transcendental philosophy for conclusive scientific knowledge instead of philosophical insight to be accomplished in transcending) and too little (because the extraordinary mathematical, scientific and historical discoveries and possibilities of knowledge with their consequences were in great part still outside his horizon).

2. The community of masses of human beings has produced an order of life in regulated channels which connects individuals in a technically functioning organisation, but not inwardly from the historicity of their souls. The emptiness caused by dissatisfaction with mere achievement and the helplessness that results when the channels of relation break down have brought forth a loneliness of soul such as never existed before, a loneliness that hides itself, that seeks relief in vain in the erotic or the irrational until it leads eventually to a deep comprehension of the importance of establishing communication between man and man.

Even when regulating his existence man feels as if the waves of events had drawn him beyond his depth in the turbulent ocean of history and as if he now had to find a foothold in the drifting whirlpool. What was firm and certain has nowhere remained the ultimate. Morality is no longer adequately founded on generally valid laws. The laws themselves are in need of a deeper foundation. The Kantian question "What shall I do?" is no longer sufficiently answered by the categorical imperative
(though this imperative remains inevitably true), but has to be complemented by the foundation of every ethical act and knowledge in communication. For the truth of generally valid laws for my actions is conditioned by the kind of communication in which I act. 'What shall I do?' presupposes "How is communication possible? How can I reach the depth of possible communication?"

3. We experience the limits of science as the limits of our ability to know and as limits of our realisation of the world through knowledge and ability; the knowledge of science fails in the face of all ultimate questions. We experience limits of communication: something is lacking even when it succeeds. The failure of knowledge and the failure of communication cause a confusion in which Being and truth vanish. In vain a way out is sought either in obedience to rules and regulations or in thoughtlessness. The meaning of truth assumes another value. Truth is more than what we call truth (or rather correctness) in the sciences. We want to grasp truth itself; the way to it becomes a new, more urgent, more exciting task.

Our philosophising can be summarised thus within these three questions:

What can we know in the sciences?
How shall we realize the most profound communication?
How can truth become accessible to us?

The three fundamental drives for knowledge, for communication and for truth produce these questions. Through them we reach the path of searching. But the aims of this searching are man and Transcendence (or: the soul and the Deity). At them the fourth and fifth fundamental questions are aimed.

4. In the world man alone is the reality which is accessible to me. Here is presence, nearness, fullness, life. Man is the place at which and through which everything that is real exists for us at all. To fail to be human would mean to slip into nothingness. What an is and can become is a fundamental question for man.
Man, however, is not a sufficient separate entity, but is constituted by the things he rices his own. In every form of his being man is related to something other than himself: as a being to his world, as consciousness to objects, as spirit to the idea of whatever constitutes totality, as Existenz to Transcendence. Man always becomes man by devoting himself to this other. Only through his absorption in the world of Being, in the immeasurable space of objects, in ideas, in Transcendence, does he become real to himself. If he makes himself the immediate object of his efforts he is on his last and perilous path; for it is possible that in doing so he will lose the Being of the other and then no longer find anything in himself. If man wants to grasp himself directly, he ceases to understand himself, to know who he is and what he should do.

This confusion was intensified as a result of the process of education in the nineteenth century. The wealth of knowledge of everything that was produced a state in which it seemed that man could gain mastery over all Being without yet being anything himself. This happened because he no longer devoted himself to the thing as it was, but made it a function of his education. Where humanity founds itself only on its elf, it is experienced again that it has no ground beneath it.

The question about humanity is pushed forward. It no longer suffices to ask beyond oneself with Kant "What may I hope?" Man strives more decisively than ever for a certainty that he lacks, for the certainty that there is that which is eternal, that there is a Being through which alone he himself is. If the Deity is, then all hope is possible.

5. Hence the question "What is man?" must be complemented by the essential question whether and what Transcendence (Deity) is. The thesis becomes possible: Transcendence alone is the real Being. That the Deity is suffices. To be certain of that is the only thing that matters. Everything else follows from that. Man is not worth considering. In the Deity alone there is reality, truth, and the immutability of being itself. In the Deity there is
peace, as well as the origin and aim of man who, by himself, is nothing, and what he is he is only in relation to the Deity.

But time and again it is seen: for us the Deity, if it exists, is only as it appears to us in the world, as it speaks to us in the language of man and the world. It exists for us only in the way in which it assumes concrete shape, which by human measure and thought always serves to hide it at the same time. Only in ways that man can grasp does the Deity appear.

Thus it is seen that it is wrong to play off against each other the question about man and the question about the Deity. Although in the world only man is reality for us that does not preclude that precisely the quest for man leads to Transcendence. That the Deity alone is truly reality does not preclude that this reality is accessible to us only in the world; as it were, as an image in the mirror of man, because something of the Deity must be in him for him to be able to respond to the Deity. Thus the theme of philosophy is oriented, in polar alternation, in two directions: deum et animam scire cupio [I desire knowledge of God and the soul].

In taking up again Kant's fundamental questions five questions arose: the question of science, of communication, of truth, of man, and of Transcendence. I shall now go a little further into the meaning of these questions, both into the impulses that lead to them and into the preliminaries of a philosophical answer:

1. What is science? -In my youth I sought philosophy as knowledge. The doctrines which I heard and read seemed to meet this claim. They reasoned, proved, refuted; they were analogous with all other knowledge; yet they aimed at the whole rather than at single subjects.

I soon found out that most philosophical and many scientific doctrines failed to yield certainty. My doubting did not become absolute and radical. It was not doubt in the style of Descartes; such doubt, which I encountered later, I did not entertain in reality, but only as a kind of game. Commencing at first with the
sciences, my doubt questioned single assertions, each doubt being by way of an experiment.

It shook my faith in the representatives of science, though not in science itself, to discover that famous scientists propounded many things in their textbooks which they passed off as the results of scientific investigation although they were by no means proven. I perceived the endless babble, the supposed "knowledge". In school already I was astonished, rightly or wrongly, when the teachers' answers to objections remained unsatisfactory. The parson proved the existence of God from the failure of the stars to collide and paid no heed to the objection that the stars' great distance from each other makes the probability of a collision small, or that maybe there are collisions which we do not observe because they have not yet involved us. I observed the pathos of historians when they conclude a series of explications with the words "Now things necessarily had to happen in this way", while actually this statement was merely suggestive *ex post facto*, but not at all convincing in itself: alternatives seemed equally possible, and there was always the element of chance. As a physician and psychiatrist I saw the precarious foundation of so many statements and actions, and beheld the reign of imagined insights, e.g. the causation of all mental illnesses by brain processes (I called all this talk about the brain, as it was fashionable then, brain mythology; it was succeeded later by the mythology of psychoanalysis), and realised with horror how, in our expert opinions, we based ourselves on positions which were far from certain, because we had always to come to a conclusion even when we did not know, in order that science might provide a cover, however unproved, for decisions the state found necessary. I was surprised that so much of medical advice and the majority of prescriptions were based, not on rational knowledge, but merely on the patient's wish for treatment.

From these experiences the basic question emerged: What is science? What can it do? Where are its limits? It became clear
that science, to deserve its name, must be cogent and universally valid. Self-discipline in making assertions is necessary above everything to maintain the sharpest criticism, the clearest consciousness of method, the knowledge in which way, for what reasons, and with what certainty, I know in each case. Neither sceptically to surrender everything, nor to seize something dogmatically as a conclusion in advance, but rather to retain the attitude of the researcher, accepting knowledge only on the way, with its reasons, and relative to its viewpoints and methods, turned out to be far from easy. This attitude of mind is attainable only with an ever-active intellectual conscience. As a consequence of this procedure, it appeared that cogent validity does indeed exist and that it is a great privilege of man to be able to grasp it with clear judgment. It appeared, however, that such scientific knowledge is always particularised, that it does not embrace the totality of Being but only a specific subject, that it affords no aim to life, has no answer to the essential problems that move man, that it cannot even furnish a compelling insight into its own importance and significance. Man is reduced to a condition of perplexity by confusing the knowledge that he can prove with the convictions by which he lives.

If science, with its limitation to cogent and universally valid knowledge, can do so little, failing as it does in the essentials, in the eternal problems: why then science at all?

Firstly, there is an irrepressible urge to know the knowable, to view the facts as they are, to learn about the events that happen to us: for example, mental illnesses how they manifest themselves in association with those that harbour them, or how mental illness might be connected with mental creativity. The force of the original quest for knowledge disappears in the grand anticipatory gestures of seeming total knowledge and increases in mastering what is concretely knowable.

Secondly, science has had tremendously far-reaching effects. The state of our whole world, especially for the last one hundred years, is conditioned by science and its technical consequences:
the inner attitude of all humanity is determined by the way and content of its knowledge. I can grasp the fate of the world only if I can grasp science. There is a fundamental question: why, although there is rationalism and intellectualisation wherever there are humans, has science emerged only in the Occident, taking former worlds off their hinges in its consequences and forcing humanity to obey it or perish? Only through science and face-to-face with science can I acquire an intensified consciousness of the historical situation, can I truly live in the spiritual situation of my time.

Thirdly, I have to turn to science in order to learn what it is, in all science, that impels and guides, without itself being cogent knowledge. The ideas that master infinity, the selection of what is essential, the comprehension of knowledge in the totality of the sciences; all this is not scientific insight, but reaches clear consciousness only through the pursuit of the sciences. Only by way of the sciences can I free myself from the bondage of a limited, dogmatic view of the world in order to arrive at the totality of the world and its reality.

The experience of the indispensability and compelling power of science caused me to regard throughout my life the following demands as valid for all philosophising: there must be freedom for all sciences, so that there may be freedom from scientific superstition, i.e. from false absolutes and pseudoknowledge. By freely espousing the sciences I become receptive to that which is beyond science but which can only become clear by way of it. Although I should pursue one science thoroughly, I should nevertheless turn to all the others as well, not in order to amass encyclopedic knowledge, but rather in order to become familiar with the fundamental possibilities, principles of knowledge, and the multiplicity of methods. The ultimate objective is to work out a methodology, which arises from the ground of a universal consciousness of Being and points up and illuminates Being.

Above all, the sciences are to be employed as a tool of philosophy. Philosophy is not to be ranged alongside them as
merely another science. For even though it is linked to science and never occurs without it, philosophy is wholly different from science. Philosophy is the thinking by which I become aware of Being itself through inner action; or rather it is the thinking which prepares the ascent to Transcendence, remembers it, and in an exalted moment accomplishes the ascent itself as a thinking act of the whole human being.

2. How is communication possible? I do not know which impulse was stronger in me when I began to think: the original thirst for knowledge or the urge to communicate with man. Knowledge attains its full meaning only through the bond that unites men; however, the urge to achieve agreement with another human being was so hard to satisfy. I was shocked by the lack of understanding, paralysed, as it were, by every reconciliation in which what had gone before was not fully cleared up. Early in my life and then later again and again I was perplexed by people's rigid inaccessibility and their failure to listen to reasons, their disregard of facts, their indifference which prohibited discussion, their defensive attitude which kept you at a distance and at the decisive moment buried any possibility of a close approach, and finally their shamelessness, that bares its own soul without reserve, as though no one were present. When ready assent occurred I remained unsatisfied, because it was not based on true insight but on yielding to persuasion; because it was the consequence of friendly cooperation, not a meeting of two selves. True, I knew the glory of friendship (in common studies, in the cordial atmosphere of home or countryside). But then came the moments of strangeness, as if human beings lived in different worlds. Steadily the consciousness of loneliness grew upon me in my youth, yet nothing seemed more pernicious to me than loneliness, especially the loneliness in the midst of social intercourse that deceives itself in a multitude of friendships. No urge seemed stronger to me than that for communication with others. If the never-completed movement of communication succeeds with but a single human being, everything is achieved. It is a criterion of this success that there be a readiness to
communicate with every human being encountered and that
grief is felt whenever communication fails. Not merely an
exchange of words, nor friendliness and sociability, but only the
constant urge towards total revelation reaches the path of
communication.

The painful stimulus that was philosophically decisive was the
question how I was myself to blame for the insufficiency of
communication. The insufficiency was indubitable fact. But the
fault could not lie only with the others. I, too, am human like
them. The same sources of inhibition of communication exist in
me as in them. The inner action, by which I train myself, had to
illumine my self-concealment, arbitrariness and obstinacy, and
to compel me to strive towards a revelation that can never be
completed. The philosophical insight became possible precisely
through my own failure. We can only recognise that evil which
is in ourselves. What we cannot be at all, we cannot understand
either.

The philosophical mood arose from the experience of
insufficiency in communication. Occupation with mere object
which does not lead somehow to communication seemed wrong
to me. Solitary devotion to nature this deep experience of the
universe in the landscape and in the physical nearness to its
shapes and elements, this source of strength for the soul- could
seem like a wrong done to other human beings, if it became a
means of avoiding them, and like a wrong done to myself, if it
tempted me to a secluded self-sufficiency in nature. Solitude in
nature can indeed be a wonderful source of self-being; but
whoever remains solitary in nature is liable to impoverish his
self-being and to lose it in the end. To be near to nature in the
beautiful world around me therefore became questionable when
it did not lead back to community with humanity and serve this
community as background and as language. Subsequently the
question "What do they mean for communication?" passed
through my philosophising with respect to all thought, all.
experience, and all subject-matters. Are they apt to promote
communication or to impede it? Are they tempters to solitude -
or heralds of communication?

This led to the basic philosophical questions: How is communication possible? What forms of communication can be accomplished? What is their relation to each other? In what sense are solitude and the strength to be able to be alone sources of communication? The answers are given, especially in the second volume of my Philosophy, in terms of concrete representations-by psychological means-and their principles will be treated in my Logic.

The thesis of my philosophising is: The individual cannot become human by himself. Self-being is only real in communication with another self-being. Alone, I sink into gloomy isolation-only in community with others can I be revealed! in the act of mutual discovery. My own freedom can only exist if the other is also free. Isolated or self-isolating Being remains mere potentiality or disappears into nothingness. In institutions that maintain soothing contact between men under unexpressed conditions and within unadmitted limits are certainly indispensable for communal existence; but beyond that they are pernicious, because they veil the truth in the manifestation of human Existenz with illusory contentment.

3. What is truth? The limits of science and the urge toward communication both point to a truth that is more than a possession of the intellect.

The cogent correctness of the sciences is but a small part of truth. This correctness, in its universal validity, does not unite us completely as real human beings, but only as intellectual beings. It unites w in the object that is understood, in the particular, but not in the totality. Admittedly, men can be true friends through scientific research, by means of the ideas that are realised in this process, and the impulses towards Existenz that make their appearance in it. But the correctness of scientific knowledge
unites all intellectual beings in their equality, as it were, as replaceable points, not, in its essence, as human beings.

To the intellect all else, in comparison with what is correct, counts only as feeling, subjectivity, instinct. In this division, apart from the bright world of the intellect, there is only the irrational, in which is lumped together, according to the point of view, what is despised or desired. The impulse which pursues real truth by thought springs from the dissatisfaction with what is merely correct. The division, spoken of previously, paralyses this impulse; it causes man to oscillate between the dogmatism of the intellect that transcends its limits and, as it were, the rapture of the vital, the chance of the moment, life. The soul becomes impoverished in all the multiplicity of disparate experience. Then truth disappears from the field of vision and is replaced by a variety of opinions which are hung on the skeleton of a supposedly rational pattern. Truth is infinitely more than scientific correctness.

Communication, too, points to this more. Communication is the path to truth in all its forms. Thus the intellect finds clarity only in discussion. How man as an existent, as spirit, as Existenz, is or can be in communication—that is what allows all other truth to appear. The truth that makes itself felt at the boundary of science is the same that is felt in this movement of communication. The question arises what kind of truth it is.

We call the source of this truth the Encompassing, to distinguish it from the objective, the determinate, and particular forms in which beings confront us. This concept is by no means familiar and by no means self-evident. We may clarify the Encompassing philosophically, but we cannot know it objectively.

At this point the decision is made whether we can attain philosophising or whether we fall back again at the boundary where the leap to transcending thinking must be made. If such words as feeling, instinct, heart, drives, and affections, which
are suggestive of psychological analysis, are claimed as sources of truth, then we merely name the basis of our life, but it remains in darkness, causing us to slip down into supposedly comprehensible psychology, while actually everything depends on reaching the bright region of truly philosophical thought.

The methods of transcending are the bases of all philosophy. It is impossible to anticipate briefly what they accomplish. Perhaps a few words may suggest, even if not explain, what is meant.

Everything that becomes an object to me approaches me, as it were, from the dark background of Being. Every object is a determinate being (as this confronting me in a subject-object division), but never all Being. No being known as an object is the Being.

Does not the sum of all objects form the totality of Being? No. As the horizon encompasses all things in a landscape, so all objects are encompassed by that in which they are. As we move towards the horizon in the world of space without ever reaching it, because the horizon moves with us and re-establishes itself ever anew as the Encompassing at each moment, so objective research moves towards totalities at each moment which never become total and real Being, but must be passed through towards new vistas. Only if all horizons met in one closed whole, so that they formed a finite multiplicity, could we attain, by moving through all the horizons, the one closed Being. Being, however, is not closed for us and the horizons are not finite. On all sides we are impelled towards the Infinite.

We inquire after the Being which, with the manifestation of all encountered appearance in object and horizon, yet recedes itself. This Being we call the Encompassing. The Encompassing, then, is that which always makes its presence known, which does not appear itself, but from which everything comes to us.
With this fundamental philosophical thought we must think beyond all determinate beings to the Encompassing in which we are and to the Encompassing which we are ourselves. It is a thought turns us round, as it were, because it frees us from the shackles of determinate. Being; yet the thought of the Encompassing is only a first approach. In its brevity it is still a purely formal concept. With further elaboration, modes of the Encompassing soon emerge (the Being of the Encompassing as such is world and Transcendence; the Being of the Encompassing that we are is an existent, a consciousness in general, spirit, Existenz). Thus arises the task of clarifying all modes of the Encompassing. We become aware of truth in its total possibilities, its extent, its width and depth, only with the modes of the Encompassing.

The clarification of all the Encompassing derives its motive from our Reason and Existenz.

The impulses in which we open ourselves without limit, in which we want to give language to everything that is, embrace, as it were, all that is most strange and most distant, seeking a relation with everything, denying communication to nothing, these we call reason. This word, to be distinguished radically from intellect, meets the condition of truth as it can emerge from all modes of the Encompassing. Philosophical logic is the self-comprehension of reason.

Truth in this comprehensive sense, in which the truth of the intellect (and that of the sciences with it) is but an element, is founded in the Existenz that we can become. What matters is that our life is guided by something unconditional which can only spring from the decision. Decision makes Existenz real, forms life and changes it in inner action, which, through clarification, keeps us soaring upward. When it is founded on decision, love is no longer an unreliably moving passion, but the fulfilment to which alone real Being reveals itself.
What must be done in thinking of life is to be served by a philosophising that discovers truth by retrospection and by anticipation. This philosophising has no meaning unless a reality of the thinker complements the thought. This reality is not profession or-application of a doctrine, but the practice of being human which propels itself forward in the echo of the thought. It is a movement, an upward soaring on two wings as it were. Both wings, the thinking and the reality must support the flight. Mere thinking would be an empty moving of possibilities, mere reality would remain a dull unconsciousness without self-comprehension, and therefore without unfolding.

This philosophising emerged for me from psychology, which had to change and became Existenz Clarification. Existenz Clarification in its turn pointed to Philosophical World Orientation and to Metaphysics. Finally, the sense of this thinking is understands itself in a Philosophical Logic this considers not only the intellect and its products (judgment and conclusion), but discovers the foundation of truth, in its complete range, in the Encompassing. Being is not the sum of objects; rather objects extend, as it were, towards our intellect in the subject-object division, from the Encompassing of Being itself, which is beyond objective comprehension, but from which nevertheless all separate, determinate objective knowledge derives its limits and its meaning and from which it derives the mood that comes out of the totality in which it has significance.

4. What is man? As a living being among others man is the subject of anthropology. In his inner aspect he is a subject for psychology, in his objective structures, that is in communal life, a subject for sociology. Man, in his empirical reality, can be a subject of research in many directions; but man is always more than he knows or can know about himself.

As something knowable man appears in his manifold empirical aspects. As a being that is known he is always divided up into whatever he will reveal himself to be according to the methods
of research employed. He is never a unity and a whole, never man himself, once he has become the subject of knowledge.

If I want to reassure myself philosophically about being human I cannot, therefore, stop at the knowable aspects of empirical man in the world. Man, in a way, is everything (as Aristotle says about the soul). Becoming aware of man's being means becoming aware of Being in time as a whole. Man is the Encompassing that we are; yet even as the Encompassing, man is split. As I said before, we become aware of the Encompassing that we are in a number of ways: as an existent, as consciousness generally, as spirit, as Existenz. Man lives in his world as an existent. As thinking consciousness generally he is searchingly oriented towards objects. As spirit he shapes the idea of a whole in his world existence. As possible Existenz he is related to Transcendence through which he knows himself as given to himself in his freedom How man achieves unity is a problem, infinite in time and insoluble; but it is nevertheless the path to his search. Man is less certain of himself than ever.

In philosophising man is not a species of particular existent beside other existents, but he becomes clear to himself as something unique, something all-enclosing, something completely open, as the greatest potentiality and the greatest danger in the world, as being the exception of Being, as the communication of scattered Being, which in him reveals itself to itself.

5. What is Transcendence? Man is for us the most interesting being in the world. We, as human beings ourselves, want to know what we are and can be; but a constant occupation with man causes surfeit. It seems as if, in that occupation, the essential was missed. For man cannot be comprehended on the basis of himself, and as we confront man's being there is disclosed the other through which he exists. For man as possible Existenz that is Transcendence but while man is in the world as a perceptive reality, Transcendence is, as if it were not there. Nor is it fathomable. Its being itself is doubtful And yet all
philosophising is directed towards the goal of achieving
certainty about Transcendence.

It may be objected that philosophy is mistakenly trying to
achieve what only religion can achieve. In the cult religion
offers the bodily presence, or at least experience, of
Transcendence. It founds man on God's revelation. It points
paths of faith in revealed reality, in mercy and salvation, and it
gives guarantees. Philosophy am achieve none of that.

If philosophising is a revolving round Transcendence, it must
therefore have a relation to religion. The manner in which
philosophy and religion react to each other is indeed an
expression of their self comprehension and of the depth of their
realisation. Historically we see this relation in the form of
struggle, of subordination, of exclusion. A final and unchanging
relation is not possible. Here a boundary shows itself. Where the
problem is not merely grasped by insight but is actually solved,
man has become narrow. When religion is excluded by
philosophy or philosophy by religion; when one side asserts
dominance over the other, by claiming to be the sole and most
exalted authority, then man loses his openness to Being and his
own potentiality in order to obtain a final closing of knowledge,
but even this remains closed to him. He becomes,, whether he
limits himself to religion or to philosophy, dogmatic, fanatical
and, finally, with failure, nihilistic. To remain truthful religion
needs the cot science of philosophy. To retain a significant
content philosophy needs the substance of religion; yet any
formula, such as this, is too simple; for it obscures the fact that
there is more than one original truth in man. All that is possible
is to avoid mistaking one for the other. Philosophy, from it side,
cannot wish to fight religion. It must acknowledge it, albeit as
its polar opposite, yet related to it through this polarity. Religion
must always interest it because philosophy is constantly stirred
up, prodded, and addressed by its Philosophy cannot wish to
replace religion, compete with it, nor make propaganda on its
own behalf against it. On the contrary: philosophy will have to
affirm religion at least as the reality to which it, too, owes in
existence. If religion were not the life of mankind, there would be no philosophy either.

Philosophy as such, however, cannot look for Transcendence in the guarantee of revelation, but must approach Being in the self-disclosures of the Encompassing that are present in man as man (not in the proofs of the intellect or in the insights which the intellect, as such, might obtain) and through the historicity of the language of Transcendence.

The question "What is Transcendence?" is not answered, therefore, by a knowledge of Transcendence. The answer comes indirectly by a clarification of the incompleteness of the world, the imperfectibility of man, the impossibility of a permanently valid world order, the universal failure bearing in mind at the same time that there is not nothing, but that in nature, history, and human existence, the magnificent is as real as the terrible. The decisive alternative in all philosophising is whether my thinking leads me to the point where I am certain that the "from outside" of Transcendence is the source of the "from inside", or whether I remain in Immanence with the negative certainty that there is no outside that is the basis and goal of everything the world as well as what I am myself.

No proof of God succeeds in philosophy if it attempts to provide compelling knowledge; but it is possible for "proofs" of God to succeed as ways of transcending thought. Rational thinking can transcend the categories of all that is thinkable to the point where opposites coincide; it can go beyond them in the individual category, e.g. that of sufficient cause or purpose-to the, in fact, untenable thought of a last cause and a final purpose. In that way, the necessity of seeking is understood in the baselessness of our merely factual existence and our soul is kept open to the Origin. The representation of the fragmentation of Being and the radical contradictoriness present in every form demonstrates that nothing we can know endures through itself.
Part of the externality of Transcendence is its unknowability; its internality is the code message of all things. In view of the fact that the limit and the basis of all things can be made tangible, it is possible to perceive everywhere the thread of light which connects them with Transcendence. Even though Transcendence is thus immanent, it is so only in an unlimited ambiguity and cannot be grasped with any finality. Philosophising merely establishes the general right to trust in that which seems to speak to me as the light of Transcendence.

How I understand this language, however, is based on what I really am myself. What I am myself is based on my original relations to Transcendence: in defiance and in surrender, in falling away and in soaring up, in obedience to the law of day and in the passion of night. When I philosophise I clarify and remember and prepare how, through these relations, I can experience Eternity in Time. The experience itself cannot be forced and cannot be proved: it is the fulfilled historicity of my Existenz.

Philosophy can further demonstrate the consequences that appear when the interpretation of Being wishes to restrict itself to pure immanence. It can lift the veils that threaten at all times to wrap man in untruth. It accomplishes this with unprovable propositions of the intellect, with supposed knowledge of the world as a whole, and with results seemingly scientific. But in doing away with pseudo-knowledge philosophy does not establish a positive knowledge of Transcendence comparable to scientific knowledge.

Philosophy can clarify our conscience; it can show how we experience the demand of a universal law that we recognise as inevitable. At the boundary it can show the real failure even of obedience to this law, and cause the individual to feel anew the demand for unconditional obedience which addresses him in his historicity - though without universality or universal validity; and here again philosophy can show the boundary and the failure in Time.
On all paths it is essential to reach the Source where the highest consciousness the demand becomes audible in the world which, in spite of failing to be realised in the world, yet produces the true Being through obedience to it.

Philosophy can clarify that such a Source is possible; yet what the Source is and what it speaks it cannot anticipate. For reality is historical and awaits every individual that arises anew in this world. Everything that philosophy says in substance and remembers in history remains relative, insofar as it is utterable, and has to be translated and appropriated in order to become a path to one's own original comprehension of the Unconditional.

In thinking along these lines, philosophy employs a two-fold presupposition that is objectively unprovable but accomplishable in practice. First, man is autonomous in the face of all the authorities of the world: the individual, reared by authority, at the end of the process of his maturation decides in his immediacy and responsibility before Transcendence what is unconditionally true. Second, man is a datum of Transcendence: to obey Transcendence in that unconditional decision leads man to his own Being.

How I can succeed in reading the code message in the fullness of beings, in existing concretely in my relations with Transcendence, in gaining my own Being in historically formed obedience to Transcendence, all this is conjoined to the fundamental question how the One is in the many, what it is, and how I can become certain of the One.