

Rudolf Langthaler / Michael Hofer (Hg.)



Existenzerhellung – Grenzbewusstsein – Sinn der Geschichte

Dem Andenken an Karl Jaspers
(1883–1969)

LI | 2019

Wiener Jahrbuch für Philosophie LI

Wiener Jahrbuch für Philosophie
begründet von Erich Heintel †
Herausgegeben von Rudolf Langthaler und Michael Hofer

Wissenschaftlicher Beirat:

Klaus Düsing (Köln), Volker Gerhardt (Berlin), Karen Gloy (Luzern),
Jens Halfwassen † (Heidelberg), Hans-Dieter Klein (Wien),
Christian Krijnen (Amsterdam), Erhard Oeser (Wien),
Johann Reikerstorfer (Wien), Wolfgang Schild (Bielefeld),
Wolfdietrich Schmied-Kowarzik (Wien),
Wilhelm Schwabe (Wien), Violetta L. Waibel (Wien)

Band LI / 2019

Rudolf Langthaler/Michael Hofer (Hg.)

**Existenzerhellung
Grenzbewusstsein
Sinn der Geschichte**

Dem Andenken an Karl Jaspers (1883–1969)

Wiener Jahrbuch für Philosophie, LI / 2019

Gedruckt mit Förderung der Universität Wien,
Fakultät für Philosophie und Bildungswissenschaft



universität
wien

Fakultät für Philosophie und
Bildungswissenschaft

Peer-Review: Eingesandte Manuskripte durchlaufen ein Begutachtungsverfahren und werden von Herausgebern und Beirat kritisch geprüft.

Bibliografische Information der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek

Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der Deutschen Nationalbibliografie; detaillierte bibliografische Daten sind im Internet über <http://dnb.de> abrufbar.

Alle Rechte, insbesondere das Recht der Vervielfältigung und Verbreitung sowie der Übersetzung, vorbehalten. Kein Teil des Werkes darf in irgendeiner Form (durch Fotokopie, Mikrofilm oder ein anderes Verfahren) ohne schriftliche Genehmigung des Verlages oder der Autoren/Autorinnen reproduziert oder unter Verwendung elektronischer Systeme gespeichert, verarbeitet, vervielfältigt oder verbreitet werden.

© 2020 by new academic press, Wien, Hamburg
www.newacademicpress.at

ISBN: 978-3-7003-2192-7

Umschlaggestaltung: www.b3k-design.de

Satz: Patric Kment

Druck: Prime Rate, Budapest

Inhalt

Rudolf Langthaler/Michael Hofer (Hg.)

Vorwort. 7

I. Thema: Existenzerhellung – Grenzbewusstsein – Sinn der Geschichte. Dem Andenken an Karl Jaspers (1883–1969)

Annemarie Pieper (Basel)

SELBSTWERDEN – Karl Jaspers im Kontext der Existenzphilosophie. 11

Anton Hügli (Basel)

**Unterscheiden können zwischen dem, was man wissen, und dem, was
man nicht wissen kann. Karl Jaspers über Grenzen und Grenzbewusstsein** . . . 25

Lina VIDAUSKYTĖ (Vilnius)

**On the Psychopathological Origin of Karl Jaspers' concept
of Limit Situations** 49

Thomas Rentsch (Dresden)

**Grenze und Sinn. Zur Aktualität der negativen Theologie bei Jaspers
und in der Gegenwartsdiskussion** 67

Hans Schelkshorn (Wien)

**Die Moderne als Zweite Achsenzeit. Zu einer globalen
Geschichtsphilosophie mit und gegen Jaspers** 79

Volker Gerhardt (Berlin)

Karl Jaspers über den Sinn der Geschichte 103

Burkhard Liebsch (Bochum)

**Verfehlte Ethik und politische Schuld
Zur systematischen Aktualität von Karl Jaspers' Abhandlung
Die Schuldfrage (1946) – mit Blick auf John K. Roths *The Failures
of Ethics* (2015/8)** 125

II. Freie Beiträge

Georg Geismann (Berlin)	
Anmerkungen zu Heidegger	157
Rolf Kühn (Freiburg i.Br.)	
Der Leib/Welt-Chiasmus bei Maurice Merleau-Ponty unter Berücksichtigung von Postmoderne und Lebensphänomenologie	187

III. Rezensionen

Georg Cavallar: Islam, Aufklärung und Moderne. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer Verlag 2017, 226 S. (Mohamed Turki)	211
Friedrich Voßkühler, Ich – Du – Wir. Liebe als zwischenmenschliche Wahrhaftigkeit? Eine philosophische Erkundung in elf Durchgängen, Königshausen & Neumann, Würzburg 2017, 491 S. (Wolfdietrich Schmied-Kowarzik) .	214
Hanna-Barbara Gerl-Falkovitz (Hg.), Jean-Luc Marion. Studien zum Werk, Dresden: Text & Dialog 2013, 364 S. (Christian Rößner)	219
Karl Marx, Das Kapital. Kritik der politischen Ökonomie. Erster Band. Mit einer Einleitung und einem Kommentar hrsg. v. Michael Quante (Philosophische Bibliothek 612), Hamburg: Meiner 2019, 892 S.	
Karl Marx, Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte. Mit einer Einleitung, Anmerkungen, Bibliographie und Register hrsg. v. Barbara Zehnpfennig (Philosophische Bibliothek 559), Hamburg: Meiner 2005, 210 S. (Wolfdietrich Schmied-Kowarzik)	226
Hinweise zu den Autorinnen und Autoren	231

Lina Vidauskytė (Vilnius)

On the Psychopathological Origin of Karl Jaspers' concept of Limit Situations

The aim of my essay is to demonstrate that Karl Jaspers approached the ideas of existentialism independently through activities of psychopathology and psychology. The seminal work *Allgemeine psychopathologie* is one of the best examples of understanding particular conditions of mental illness in theoretical (or philosophical) psychiatry, where the analysis of causal relations plays the minor role. The contribution circles on the ambiguity between the rational and non-rational and Jaspers' critical attitude to philosophers' efforts to change the non-rational into a form of reason. Special focus is led on the similarity between Jaspers' description of limit situations (*Grenzsituationen*) and phenomenological description of psychosis and paranoia. To understand the specificity of being in a limit situation, it seems to be useful to pay attention at Émile Benveniste's interpretation of Aristotle's table of categories. The confrontation between activity and passivity appears as the feature of the limit situation and the encounter with Being.

During the heyday of existential philosophy (1933), Gabriel Marcel, one of the most famous representatives of Christian existentialism, read Karl Jaspers' seminal work *Philosophie* and wrote his impressions.¹ At that time, he was aware that Jaspers' conception of limit situations was the result of the influence of the philosophies of Søren Kierkegaard and Martin Heidegger. Marcel was convinced that Jaspers said nothing new in that analysis. Furthermore, for him the increased emphasis on rationality in Jaspers' latest works appeared quite old-fashioned. Nevertheless, despite this first impression, Marcel recognized the value of *how* Jaspers explains limit situations: he does it brilliantly.

However, the essential question from the theme of limit situations can be seen in Jaspers' *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen* (1919). The date of publication proves that his approach to certain problems was developed long before deeper familiarity with Heidegger's works, which Marcel supposed as a significant factor to become an existentialist. Jaspers' attitude towards Kierkegaard, Nietzsche,

1 The first edition of Gabriel Marcel's work appeared under the title *Du refus à l'invocation* (Paris: Gallimard 1940). In the second edition (1967), the dates of texts and commentaries of the author appeared under the title *Essai de philosophie concrète*, Paris.

and their followers, the rational and non-rational, is probably best expressed in his public lecture *The Origin of the Contemporary Philosophical Situation: The Historical Meaning of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche*.² Jaspers saw in Nietzsche a pioneer of existential philosophy and tried to understand Nietzsche's works as the reflection of the experience of limit situations; only in such experience can humans encounter Being.³

The interpreters often ignore the fact that Jaspers was engaged in psychiatry in his youth, and his late philosophy is, in many cases, derived from psychopathology, so such attitude does not help to understand Jaspers as a philosopher. It is interesting to note that sometimes Jaspers in his philosophical works writes not as a philosopher but as a psychotherapist (*e. g.* existentially rational being in the limit situation, openness to the world is the essence of existential therapy). In general, his philosophy is particularly relevant to nowadays existential psychotherapists.

Usually for philosophy students, Jaspers' professional psychiatric past remains a simple biographical fact. However, Jaspers' philosophy is incomplete without his psychopathological works, especially when talking about his contribution to phenomenology. Jaspers' emphasis on rationality is not accidental, but a logical step after years of working in the field of psychiatry.

For Jaspers, reason is a mandatory condition for properly understanding human existence. Jaspers writes: 'Existenz-philosophy is not on the side of the chaotic and irrational movements, but rather should be seen as a counterblow to them'.⁴ Therefore, existential truth cannot be achieved without reason: 'Existenz only becomes clear through reason; reason only has content through Existenz'⁵; '[w]ithout reason, Existenz is inactive, sleeping, and as though not there'.⁶

Even before starting to work on his seminal *Allgemeine Psychopathologie* (1913), at the beginning of his professional career as a psychiatrist, Jaspers was aware that natural sciences and their concept of rationality were not enough to understand human consciousness; the boundaries of the scientific method are too narrow to acquire the truth about humans and their existence. Science gives preference to the complex of causal connections, not to the understanding of existence. A few years later, phenomenologist Max Scheler, when commenting on *Allgemeine Psychopathologie*, noted the importance of Jaspers' often pertinent

2 K. Jaspers, *Reason and Existence. Five Lectures by Karl Jaspers*, New York 1957 [1935], 19–50; K. Jaspers, *Vernunft und Existenz*, Groningen 1935.

3 K. Jaspers, *Nietzsche. Einführung in das Verständnis seines Philosophierens*, Berlin 1936; K. Jaspers, *Nietzsche und das Christentum*, Hameln 1938.

4 Jaspers, *Reason and Existence* (wie Anm. 2), 128.

5 Jaspers, *Reason and Existence* (wie Anm. 2), 67.

6 Jaspers, *Reason and Existence* (wie Anm. 2), 67–68.

remarks on the difference between causal connections (*Kausalzusammenhänge*) and understandable context (*Verständniszusammenhänge*) in mental life.⁷

In this respect, Jaspers' early work *Heimweh und Verbrechen* can be regarded as primarily 'doubt' about the epistemological abilities of scientific reason.⁸ The object of Jaspers' work speaks for itself, even if one does not see direct arguments against scientific rationality. A closer look at the work shows that Jaspers tried to express mystics (or mystery) of existence, which could be regarded as early germs of Jaspers' future theory of ciphers of transcendence. The immaterial idea but not the materiality, or brain pathology, appears as the main reason for the crime.

Jaspers' analysis has a 'metaphysical' aura: beyond a protocolled description of children's surroundings and well-being and a very careful analysis of the little patient's condition after the crime, one can feel a certain atmosphere of the mystery of life. What happened here? The psychiatrist Jaspers examines the mysterious collapse of the human being (*e.g.*, the crime of nostalgia) and draws the conclusion that the saddest aspect of this 'returning' is the fact that nobody waits at home: children only imagine that their family members are waiting for them. Nevertheless, the motive of *the return* home is the only thing that supports a child, because otherwise he would perish. Both an existential crisis and the limit situation are part of our lives, as Jaspers emphasises; only going through them can we acquire our true self. French philosopher Barbara Cassin wrote some interesting statements about nostalgia. Her essay 'La nostalgie. Quand donc est-on chez-soi?' focuses on the philosophical meaning of nostalgia, coming home, which reverberates the major theme of Jaspers' *Heimweh und Verbrechen*. Cassin emphasised the essential event that happened during Odysseus's trip home to Ithaca. The giant Cyclops asks Odysseus, 'What is your name?' Odysseus's answer is simple: 'Nothing' (Je m'appelle *Outis* [Personne]).⁹ Only at home does Odysseus become himself; the whole procedure of recognizing happens at home. According to Cassin, it means that the *Odyssey* is a poem of nostalgia and self-seeking. For comparison to Odysseus's adventures on the way back home, there is also inner journey, which is no less dangerous than a journey through the sea in reality. Probably not by accident, Jaspers in his work on Nietzsche distinguished the chapter *der Zirkel* in which he examines Nietzsche's metaphor of a labyrinth. A labyrinth is considered as a travel to the real self, the seeking for meaning, but such a journey might be dangerous. Jaspers paraphrases this famous statement of Nietzsche:

7 M. Scheler, *Vom Umsturz der Werte*, Bd. 1, Leipzig 1919, 45.

8 K. Jaspers, *Heimweh und Verbrechen*, München 1996 [1909].

9 B. Cassin, *La nostalgie. Quand donc est-on chez-soi? Ulysse, Énée, Arendt*, Paris 2015, 37.

Atadne, the Labyrinth, the Minotaur, Theseus, and Dionysus – this whole area of mythology is repeatedly alluded to with all its mysterious ambiguity when he wishes to suggest the last secret of the truth: that the truth is death, or that it is something else desired with the passion for truth that will, in turn, end in death: The Labyrinth, from whose devious windings there is no escape and within which annihilation by the Minotaur is imminent, is the goal and the fate of the knower. Hence anyone who seeks the complete independence of knowledge, without having to do so, proves thereby that he is daring to the point of wantonness. He enters a labyrinth, and he multiplies a thousandfold the dangers which life itself inevitably entails and among which must be counted, as by no means the least, the fact that no one can clearly see how and where he goes astray, isolates himself, and is consumed little by the cave-dwelling Minotaur of his conscience. Granted that a person of this ilk perishes, this occurrence is so incapable of being understood by others that no one has any pity or sympathy for it. And he can no longer turn back!¹⁰

Peter Sloterdijk, in his fascinating book on Nietzsche, explains the relation between a labyrinth and self-knowledge (*Selbsterkenntnis*): both are the path of experience, and thus the structure of a negative circle in that it returns to its beginnings – that is, to its pain and the gradual repulsion of disillusioned ideas and the burning away of the images of happiness it had sought.¹¹

Nevertheless, getting out of the labyrinth (this action can be considered as the overcoming of an existential crisis) leads to the experience of inner meaning. In the same spirit, Jaspers writes about limit situations: we cannot change limit situations. They are final, and we cannot see anything beyond them, but we should make them clear because we are unable to explain them; they exist alongside our being.¹²

In the motive of returning home, one can see what later Medard Boss together with Martin Heidegger will assume as a *particular living space* of a man.¹³ It is not neutral space, ‘nowhere’, but human existence. However, modern medicine ignores the specifics of living time and space, and that indicates the use of simple, neutral words like ‘sometime’ and ‘somewhere’. Usually, a space is treated as geometric, which is already the space of inanimate objects, but not the space of

10 K. Jaspers, *Nietzsche. An Introduction to the Understanding of His Philosophical Activity*, South Bend, Ind. 1969 [1935], 225–226.

11 P. Sloterdijk, *Thinker on Stage. Nietzsche's Materialism*, Minneapolis 1989 [1986], 34.

12 K. Jaspers, *Philosophie*, Berlin 1948 [1932], 469.

13 M. Boss, *Existential Foundations of Medicine and Psychology*, Northvale/New York 1979; M. Boss, *Grundriss der Medizin. Ansätze zu einer phänomenologischen Physiologie, Psychologie, Pathologie, Therapie und zu einer daseinsgemässen Präventiv-Medizin in der modernen Industrie-Gesellschaft*, Bern u. a. 1971.

M. Heidegger, *Zollikoner Seminare. Protokolle – Zwiegespräche – Briefe*, hg. von M. Boss, Frankfurt a. M. 1994 [1987].

human existence. I suppose that Jaspers showed the importance of specific existential living space for the development of mental illness. Considering that, Jaspers' notion of the limit situation sometimes can evoke a feeling of space, but it is a misconception. Later, I will discuss it in broader context.

It may look that Jaspers devoted himself to the creation of scientific psychiatry, because he was disappointed by the psychiatrist's inability to have a common foundation for a treatment of patients. Nevertheless, he was aware of the ambiguity of reason. Reason can pretend that knows the whole truth, but in fact this is merely so-called rational truth. In fact, Jaspers' *Allgemeine Psychopathologie* could be titled *Kritik der psychopathologischen Vernunft*, similarly to Kant's *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*.¹⁴

Jaspers' psychopathology is more a philosophical system than methodological programme: it encompassed all fields of a patient's being; that is the seeking of totality – philosophical psychopathology. At that time, the prevailing viewpoint was that all mental illnesses have material causes (*i. e.*, brain pathology); any other pathological explanations for mental illness were considered unscientific. Jaspers criticized abstract thinking and its absolutism in scientific knowledge. When introducing several basic concepts (§2), Jaspers struggles to describe the concept of psychic substance (a soul) and claims that it is not possible to have it because it is infinite and encompassing.¹⁵ We cannot know it as a whole, but rather we create it with the help of various methods. The same with the concept of human being – it is not objective reality; a human being cannot be reduced to something unified. The most we can do is to list various aspects in which realities of the psychic world reveal themselves.

In *Allgemeine Psychopathologie* Jaspers lays out the main questions, which are very similar to the main Kantian questions from *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*. As is well known, for Kant the most important question is: *was ist der Mensch?* But Jaspers puts it in a slightly different way: *was bedeutet für das Kranksein, daß der Mensch nicht Tier ist?*¹⁶ With this initial question of his psychopathology, Jaspers emphasised human existence that differentiates a man from an animal; in turn, such an attitude means that human treatment is not veterinary, human being is not just the body.

Jaspers was the first to apply Husserl's phenomenology in psychiatry. While working at Heidelberg Psychiatric Clinic, he used the phenomenological method for describing psychopathological phenomena. 'Phenomenological description'

14 K. Walker, Karl Jaspers as Kantian Psychopathologist. I. The Philosophical Origins of the Concept of Form and Content, in: *History of Psychiatry* Vol. 4. № 14 (1993), 214.

15 K. Jaspers, *Allgemeine Psychopathologie. Ein Leitfaden für Studierende, Ärzte und Psychologen*, 4. völlig neu bearbeitete Auflage: Berlin/Heidelberg 1946 [1913], 6.

16 Jaspers, *Allgemeine Psychopathologie* (wie Anm. 15), 6.

was understood as a description of human experiences, but not the interpretation of it from the viewpoint of one theory or another, or from the position of common sense. Contrary to Sigmund Freud's causal approach, which was focused on understanding hidden causes of human behavior, the existential approach argued that the descriptive method is very important, because it is focused on opening the way for certain experiences. Psychiatry and psychology tended to rely on objective (*i. e.*, sensory) symptoms, while subjective ones such as fear, anxiety, and sadness ought to be eliminated because they are unreliable. Therefore, psychiatrists analyzed, let's say, not the sense of fatigue, but fatigue as such – *i. e.*, an abstraction of fatigue. The phenomenological method allowed Jaspers to find a way to subjective symptoms.¹⁷

Famous existential psychotherapist Emmy van Deurzen writes about Jaspers' phenomenological method used in *Allgemeine Psychopathologie* as such:

As a psychiatrist, he has also made a considerable contribution to the practical application of such thinking. Of course it is his magnum opus, *A General Psychopathology* that is most relevant here. In it, Jaspers systematically describes all mental and psychological disorders known to psychiatry from a phenomenological perspective, in an attempt to understand rather than merely classify and treat. For the first time, the emphasis is on the subjective experience of patients as he tries to capture the states of consciousness which are often so mysterious that they are ignored.¹⁸

Phenomenology as a philosophical discipline is a variety of different approaches to its subject. Herbert Spiegelberg tried to single out features of phenomenology on a graduated scale:

Descriptive phenomenology is an attempt to intuit, analyze, and describe the data of direct experience in a fresh and systematic manner, guided especially by the patterns of intentionality. Essential or eidetic phenomenology explores the essential structures on the basis of imaginative variation of the data. The phenomenology of appearances pays special attention to the different perspectives and modes in which the phenomena are given. Constitutional phenomenology investigates the way in which the phenomena establish themselves in our consciousness. And hermeneutic phenomenology tries to interpret the meaning of the phenomena, especially that of human *Dasein*.¹⁹

17 More about subjective and objective symptoms: K. Jaspers, *Gesammelte Schriften zur Psychopathologie*, Berlin 1963, 314–328.

18 E. Van Deurzen, *Everyday Mysteries*, London/New York 2009 [1997], 181.

19 H. Spiegelberg, *Phenomenology in Psychology and Psychiatry. A Historical Introduction*, Evanston 1972, xxix.

What lies beyond this diversity? I would say it is the variety of philosophical temperaments, which may affect how phenomenologists seek results. Something very personal is implied in the philosophical approach to an object of research. Probably a good argument for this statement can be examples from Ancient philosophy, which was considered as a way of life: the choice of a particular philosophical way of life depends on personal characteristics and circumstances. Peter Sloterdijk, in his slightly ironic work on philosophical temperaments, put very well the essence of the writing style of Edmund Husserl:

Like hardly another thinker before him, Husserl brought the unity of thinking and writing into a gestural synthesis. To him, the desk, if we assume a true philosopher has sat down at it, is the window onto the world of essences; here, beholding and writing prove to be convergent activities. The written recording of the phenomenological observation reveals as its calligraphic core the tireless exercise of the writing hand. Philosophy, practiced as an act of descriptive reason, is thus unmasked as fundamentally an "office-osophy" [*Bürosophie*]; it enacts itself as the activity of an intellect that has taken a holiday from the natural attitude. The chair of the philosopher, who has immersed himself in arid ecstasy in his descriptions, is the bearer of a seated observer; out of the pen of the thinker flows the ink of the original evidence: his writings capture the living intuitions on the paper like congealed light. His own desk is the place where the contemplator deigns to let the world be present in its entirety. As the preferred setting for thematizing everything that appears, the philosopher's desk turns into a transcendental belvedere.²⁰

We can agree with Sloterdijk on this point, and as is well known, Jaspers was also disappointed with Husserl's late phenomenology as the science of essences. Nevertheless, initially Husserl's concept of *phenomenological reduction*, which plays a major role in phenomenology, was directed to acquiring experience of reality. This concept was applied in Husserl's lectures on *The Idea of Phenomenology* from 1907. Husserl writes, 'Only through a reduction, which we shall call the phenomenological reduction, do I acquire an absolute givens that no longer offers anything transcendent'.²¹ Husserl progressively became aware that the necessary condition of the authentic experience of evidence is the radical change of our attitude towards the world. Phenomenological reduction is a procedure that must completely change this attitude. Almost 30 years later, Husserl described this change as a 'complete conversion, which then, however, over and

20 P. Sloterdijk, *Philosophical Temperaments. From Plato to Foucault*, New York 2013 [2009], 84.

21 E. Husserl, *The Idea of Phenomenology*, übers. von L. Hardy, Dordrecht/Boston/London 1999, 34.

above this, bears within itself the significance of the greatest existential transformation which is assigned as a task to mankind as such'.²² Husserl emphatically stressed the extraordinary importance of phenomenological reduction for his project: 'Finally, all depends on the initial method of phenomenological reduction. If the sense of reduction (which is the only entrance gate to the new kingdom) is missed, so all is missed'.²³

In this respect, it is worth taking a short look at Husserl's relation with the phenomenological method. The story already became a cliché in biographies of the philosopher's life, but it also speaks of the philosophical temperament of Husserl.

Once, Husserl himself reflected his attitude towards phenomenology through his reminiscence about a gift (pocket knife) he had received in childhood. Considering that the blade was not sharp enough, he ground it again and again until it became smaller and smaller and finally disappeared. Emmanuel Levinas, the witness, adds that Husserl told this story in a depressed manner.²⁴ Husserl spent more energy and time to sharpen his method instead of using it. For comparison to Husserl, Jaspers does not care so much about his method, but the fact that *Allgemeine Psychopathologie* had seven revised editions suggests that for Jaspers, this work was important. But assuming Husserl's requirement for phenomenological reduction as the most important initial procedure of phenomenological description, we can agree with van Deurzen that Jaspers did not question the notion of pathology itself, did not bracket his own medical assumptions about patients' experience.²⁵ Nevertheless, Jaspers' philosophical temperament is completely different from Husserl's temperament.

In Jaspers' case, the relationship within experience is inverted: the psychiatrist listens to the patient's narrative as an authentic 'description' of experience, instead of seeking for this experience in Husserlian style, with the help of a 'writing gesture' behind the desk. Jaspers admits that formulations invented by a psychiatrist cannot replace a patient's authentic description of his experience.²⁶ In sum, Jaspers' phenomenological temperament in no way resembles Husserlian 'office-osophy'. Jaspers felt himself as an attentive and empathetic listener of patients' stories. He writes that the psychotherapist, while being in the position of

22 E. Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, übers. von D. Carr, Evanston 1970, 137.

23 E. Husserl, *Gesammelte Werke. Husserliana* Vol. 27: *Aufsätze und Vorträge. 1922–1937*, hg. von T. Nenon/H. R. Sepp, Den Haag 1987, 172–173.

24 K. Schuhmann, Husserl Chronik. Denk- und Lebensweg Edmund Husserls, in: *Husserliana. Dokumente* Bd. 1, Dordrecht 1977, 2.

25 Van Deurzen, *Everyday Mysteries* (wie Anm. 18), 181.

26 Jaspers, *Gesammelte Schriften zur Psychopathologie* (wie Anm. 17), 317.

the listener, depends on the 'psychological decision' of the patient, who tells his life story.²⁷

At the beginning of his career as a psychiatrist, Jaspers required his patients to remember and clearly express what they experienced during the psychosis. Based on the words of patients, Jaspers described the experience of psychosis as follows: nothing exists anymore; everything is an absolute illusion and artificially created in order to deceive; all people are dead; relatives and physicians are just ghosts. Jaspers admits that the patient is forced to exist in solitude; the reality for him does not exist anymore, and the patient feels that he is only the appearance, but not a living being; nothing has value. Although the patient cannot feel senses, he is no longer the human being he was before – he is just *the point* (emphasis mine). The patient's feelings and hallucinations prove to him that his body is rotted; he is empty – swallowed food falls through empty space; the sun went down; and so on. In addition to this description, Jaspers writes that such melancholic conditions have strongly expressed a tendency to commit suicide, but this tendency is suppressed artificially, from the outside. In such conditions, the patient exists in absolute despair.²⁸

It is easy to see that the phenomenological description of psychotic experience, which was summarized by Jaspers, resembles the famous condition *cogito ergo sum* described by the philosopher René Descartes, the father of rationalism. Now we are faced with an interesting situation: the pathological mind turns out to be similar to the common rational mind, represented in the case of Descartes. Let's take a brief look into his famous *Second Meditation*, where we read:

I will therefore suppose that, not God, who is perfectly good and the source of truth, but some evil spirit, supremely powerful and cunning, has devoted all his efforts to deceiving me. I will think that the sky, the air, the earth, colors, shapes, sounds, and all external things are no different from the illusions of our dreams, and that they are traps he has laid for my credulity; I will consider myself as having no hands, no eyes, no flesh, no blood, and no senses, but yet as falsely believing that I have all these; I will obstinately cling to these thoughts, and in this way, if indeed it is not in my power to discover any truth, yet certainly to the best of my ability and determination I will take care not to give my assent to anything false, or to allow this deceiver, however powerful and cunning he may be, to impose upon me in any way.²⁹

27 Jaspers, *Allgemeine Psychopathologie* (wie Anm. 15), 47–48.

28 K. Jaspers, *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen*, München/Zürich 1985 [1919], 300; see more similar descriptions: Jaspers, *Allgemeine Psychopathologie* (wie Anm. 15), 345–346.

29 R. Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Oxford 2008, 16–17.

This meditation requires that all sentences should be experienced as actions, the same way that meditation was practiced among Jesuits: Descartes was a Jesuit student at La Flech College. It would be interesting to see how often this meditation is repeated when studying the philosophy of Descartes today. In general, such an experience requires considerable effort. At the beginning of his meditations, Descartes assures that he is not a mad man:

Unless perhaps I were to compare myself to one of those madmen, whose little brains have been so befuddled by a pestilential vapour arising from the black bile, that they swear blind that they are kings, though they are beggars, or that they are clad in purple, when they are naked, or that their head is made of clay, or that their whole body is a jug, or made entirely of glass. But they are lunatics, and I should seem no less of a madman myself if I should follow their example in any way.³⁰

Descartes' position reinforces the feeling that the psychotic experience was perhaps known to him; nevertheless, it was not necessarily his own personal experience, because it could also have been narrated to him by someone else with such experience. Ralph Flores, in careful deconstruction analysis of Descartes' texts, argues that it in no way can be called a meditation but rather a rhetorical striptease.³¹ Even if we agree that Descartes³² simply plays a linguistic game, or the language plays with him, we are in an ambiguous situation: mental illness opens up the problem of rationality not in the usual sense but in the sense of difficulties to make a clear division between what is sane and what is insane. The requirement of absolute clarity emerges equally in mental illness and in the rational mind.

A narrow boundary divides a psychotic condition and rational meditation if we concentrate our attention on the language of description. However, Jaspers' patient's experience of psychosis doubtfully can be called a rhetorical striptease. The one feature clearly makes the difference between two descriptions of experience. Jaspers observes that the patient feels very unhappy about this condition: he was suffering and afraid. In a condition in which everything is illusory and doubtful, a human being no longer has the world, the body, senses. Such a state is despair in its pure form. In addition, the prevention of a patient from committing suicide requires extreme effort.

30 Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy* (wie Anm. 29), 14.

31 R. Flores, *The Rhetoric of Doubtful Authority. Deconstructive Readings of Self-questioning Narratives, St. Augustine to Faulkner*, Ithaca/London 1984, 66–87.

32 See, for instance, Jaspers' argumentation on this question: *Allgemeine Psychopathologie* (wie Anm. 15), 79.

Jaspers' description of the limit situation closely resembles the description of the psychotic condition in which the person feels like a point. It looks like an inverted condition of *cogito ergo sum*, which means not absolute clarity, but helplessness ('In jeder Grenzsituation wird mir gleichsam der Boden unter der Füßen weggezogen. Ich kann das Sein als Dasein nicht greifen in bestehender Festigkeit. In der Welt ist keine Vollendung, wenn Selbst die liebende Kommunikation als Kämpfen in Erscheinung treten muß. Welches Dasein auch immer als das eigentliche Sein sich geben möchte, es versinkt vor der das Absolute suchenden Frage. Die Fragwürdigkeit allen Daseins bedeutet die Unmöglichkeit, in ihm als solchem Ruhe zu finden. Die Weise, wie das Dasein überall in den Grenzsituationen als in sich brüchig erscheint, ist seine antinomische Struktur').³³

Considering Descartes' meditation, we can see that the beginning of rationalism appears a little ambiguous. Jaspers himself in his public lecture on the historical meaning of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche emphasised that 'it is appropriate for philosophizing to strive to absorb the non-rational and counter rational, to form it through reason, to change it into a form of reason, indeed finally to show it as identical with reason; all Being should become law and order'.³⁴

The pathological state of mind never was taboo in philosophy. Perhaps the most prominent is melancholy. Aristotle already noted that 'all those who have become eminent in philosophy or politics or poetry or the arts are clearly of an atrabilious temperament, and some of them to such an extent as to be affected by diseases caused by black bile (*melas kholē*)' (*Problemata* 954a11–1498). It seems that nowadays the concept of *depression* belongs to modern medicine and explains the struggle with illness. But the traditional concept of *melancholy* has more intersections with the living atmosphere and acceptance of this condition. However, in the past, a melancholic mood never was an indication of pathology to be treated. The absorption of the non-rational by the rational started with Descartes. Later, Immanuel Kant (*Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht*, 1798) and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (*Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse*, 1817) focused their attention on pathology of the mind, and all their insights move strictly inside the frames of common sense. In his *Anthropologie*, Kant analyses the diseases of the soul from the viewpoint of rationality. In a similar spirit, in the third volume of his *Enzyklopädie*, Hegel builds a philosophical system. Hegel's analysis of mental illness is very broad. He writes that in the case of mental illness, spiritual life (the interior sphere of human mental life) separates itself from rationality, the healthy consciousness, and attributes the activity of rationality (the highest sphere of the psyche) to itself (§406); men-

33 Jaspers, *Philosophie* (wie Anm. 12), 508.

34 Jaspers, *Reason and Existence* (wie Anm. 2), 19.

tal illness occurs when a person's self-image does not fit with his or her real life (§408). Hegel uses the reference to 18th-century French psychiatrist Philippe Pines (1745–1826) and his statement that 'madness is the contradiction to still visible rationality on a face'. With this, Hegel reinforces his view of mental illness as a kind of existence on the lower level as the opposition to common sense (§408). Yet Hegel writes that only a human being has this privilege to insanity and madness (§408). He submits a systematic overview of mental illness, highlighting the link between mental illness and bodily ailments. He also notes that there is still a specific link between mental illness and the breakdown of the nervous system, which has yet to slip through the eyes of a physician and anatomist, and he even recommends cure for a madness – namely, that the remnant of the mind that remains in madness must be the basis for healing (§408); he also recommends humane treatment methods. Interestingly, Hegel's analysis is similar to Kantian anthropology, but Hegel emphasises that madness is a necessary and essential step in the development of the spirit.

So, resuming philosophical reflections on madness, one can say that Jaspers formulates the opposite statement. In the preface to the second edition (1925) of the work on Strindberg and Van Gogh, he writes that philosophy does not have its own field; at the same time, various studies that deliberately go beyond the limits and origins of our being become philosophical. Jaspers' work was born out of the question of the possible boundaries of understanding human life and creativity. Jaspers here allows to see a mental illness in a certain light, but it does not mean that an illness can be seen through. The philosophical approach does not satisfy with a simple understanding of the connections among life, changes in style, and the logic of its manifestation. Jaspers emphasises that it is impossible to understand the causal relationship between creation and mental illness. Here we are simply confronted with the truth of the enigma.³⁵ In general, for Jaspers, time, reality, and the self are mysteries in every moment.³⁶

In his radio lectures, which later were published under the title *Einführung in die Philosophie* (1953), Jaspers distinguishes three sources (*Ursprung*) under which we start to ask philosophical questions: wonder (das Erstaunen), doubt (der Zweifel), and helplessness (Der Stoiker Epiktet sagte: 'Der Ursprung der Philosophie ist das *Gewahrwerden der eigenen Schwäche und Ohnmacht*').³⁷ Undoubtedly, the distinction between the different origins of philosophy is conditional; because in life situations they overlap (we can see it very clear in Jaspers'

35 K. Jaspers, *Strindberg und van Gogh. Versuch einer pathographischen Analyse unter vergleichender Heranziehung von Swedenborg und Hölderlin*, Leipzig 1922.

36 Jaspers, *Allgemeine Psychopathologie* (wie Anm. 15), 78.

37 K. Jaspers, *Einführung in die Philosophie. Zwölf Radiovorträge*, München/Zürich 1989 [1953], 16–17.

analysis). Existence is the border, an experience of limit situations, a doubt of the world and my own being.³⁸ Regarding doubt, Jaspers argues that the crucial question is *how* and *where* (emphasis mine) has a foundation for certainty been gained through doubt itself?³⁹ It does not matter the rhetorical shape of the phenomenological description of psychosis, and philosophical doubt has no differences. More important is the existential condition under which truth reveals itself. Jaspers admits that Descartes doubted under different conditions; suffering and helplessness open up the truth of the world.

Jaspers noted that usually we are inclined to avoid unpleasant limit situations. As he writes, happiness prevent us from thinking, from encounter with the real self.⁴⁰ Probably for the majority of us, the contemplation of an old Stoic philosophical exercise, which can be treated as preparation for limit situations (negative visualisation: *What's the worst that can happen?*) is simply unacceptable.

Jaspers argues that the main reason why a person can survive being overwhelmed by deep despair is the tendency to form a certain worldview that resembles a 'shell'. Such a worldview becomes so constant that a human develops a sense of inner peace. However, the choice to live quietly has the price of existential blindness and spiritual downfall; absolute concentration on inner life leads to the loss of the world, and *vice versa*.⁴¹ Jaspers insists that we become ourselves only in limit situations.⁴² When the existential crisis becomes clear for us, we experience the meaning of our life, the meaning of suffering. Only in the face of limit situations (*e.g.*, struggle, death, guilt, helplessness) when we lose inner peace and comfort, we start to question why our shell emerged. Psychological nihilism is an inevitable step of life, if we want to achieve self-expression. Precisely at that moment, the patients of a psychiatrist start to ask questions about the worldview, and, as a consequence, they turn to philosophy. Jaspers recounts the story of a young man who, when the symptoms of schizophrenia got worse, turned to philosophy by looking for absolute clarity. Finally, a young man switched to a pure logic.⁴³

The limit situation appears as exclusive being at the point of return to reality. It is quite interesting that practically at the same time, Jaspers and Husserl elaborated a philosophical 'method', which would help to reach reality. For Husserl, the role of such a 'method' plays phenomenological reduction as religious conversion, while for Jaspers, rational and conscious being in limit situations. The

38 Jaspers, *Philosophie* (wie Anm. 12), 474.

39 Jaspers, *Philosophie* (wie Anm. 12), 17.

40 Jaspers, *Philosophie* (wie Anm. 12), 18.

41 Jaspers, *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen* (wie Anm. 28), 301

42 Jaspers, *Philosophie* (wie Anm. 12), 469.

43 Jaspers, *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen* (wie Anm. 28), 301.

return to the world, to reality, should be an authentic event – rational and at the same time spontaneous. When Jaspers writes that spontaneous philosophy is found in children and also in the insane, one can hear the echo of his early practice of psychiatry.⁴⁴

Before moving further to the analysis of limit situations, it is worth mentioning again an important aspect, which was emphasised by Jaspers: being mentally ill means *suffering* and *helplessness*. In Jaspers' analysis, one can see many interesting and important questions, such as secularization of guilt, or Jaspers' personal turning point in the overcoming of existentialism, but one aspect is very important: the *phenomenology* of the specific being in the limit situation.

Let's approach this issue from the philosophy of dialogue, because communication was essential for Jaspers too. During the famous discussion with Carl Rogers, an American psychologist and a founder of the humanistic (or client centered) approach in psychotherapy,

Martin Buber noted the specific being during the paranoia: the patient is *shut*. Buber says:

But if, in the moment when he shuts himself, I cannot go on. And the same, only in terrible, terribly, stronger manner, is the case with the paranoiac. He does not shut himself. He is *shut*. There is something else being done to him that shuts him. And this, the terribility of this fate, I am feeling very strongly because in the world of *normal* men, there are just analogous cases, when sane man behaves, not to everyone, but behaves to some people *just so*, being shut. And the problem is if he can be opened, if he can open himself and so on. And this is a problem for human in general.⁴⁵

For Buber, such attunement means the impossibility of dialogue. In the discussion between Rogers and Buber, we can see clearly that the question of 'being shut' does not belong exclusively to the sphere of mental illness; it is the usual problem of the majority of human beings. That experience resembles Jaspers' description of a 'shell'. But what does the statement 'he is shut' mean? How can we understand the experience of 'being as a point'? At the beginning of this article, I emphasised that the notion of limit situations can evoke a misleading feeling of a space. But if not a spatial feeling, what kind of experience does this notion indicate? And what makes this condition so exceptional?

To understand the specificity of being in a limit situation, we will now look more closely at Aristotle's table of categories, precisely through the interesting

44 Jaspers, *Einführung in die Philosophie* (wie Anm. 37), 12.

45 *The Martin Buber – Carl Rogers Dialogue. A New Transcription with Commentary*, New York 1997, 55.

interpretation of Émile Benveniste, who considers categories simply as an inventory of properties that the Greek philosopher thought could be predicated of a subject and, consequently, as the list of *a priori* concepts that, according to him, organize experience.⁴⁶ Benveniste writes: 'Aristotle thus posits the totality of predications that may be made about a being, and he aims to define the logical status of each one of them'.⁴⁷ According to Benveniste, the first six categories from the table in their nature and in their grouping are predications that do not refer to attributes discovered in things, but to a classification arising from the language itself.⁴⁸ Such relation of the first six categories does not look strange, especially if we take into account that the ancient Greeks distinguished only two forms of language: *onoma* and *rhēma*. Further in his analysis, Benveniste questions the traditional understanding of the last four categories, that they are just predications, and emphasises that the last two categories from the table are the most interesting:

But what about the first two categories, *κεῖσθαι* and *ἔχειν*? The translation does not even seem certain: some take *ἔχειν* as to 'have.' What interest could a category like "position" *κεῖσθαι* possibly have? Is it a predication as general as the "active" or "the passive"? Is it even of the same nature? And what can be said of *ἔχειν* with examples like "he is shod", and "he is armed"? The interpreters of Aristotle seem to consider that these two categories are episodic; the philosopher only expressed them to exhaust all the predications applicable to a man.⁴⁹

According to Benveniste, *keisthai* and *echein* are not predications; these two categories have the same status as the last two categories from Aristotle's table: *poiein* and *paschein*. Benveniste writes that *keisthai* has the specific form of the Greek verb – the middle:

Let us first take the *κεῖσθαι*. What could a logical category of *κεῖσθαι* answer to? The answer is in the examples cited: *ἀνάκειτ* 'he is lying down' and *κάθηται* 'he is seated.' These are two specimens of *middle* verbs. From the standpoint of the Greek language, that is an essential notion. Contrary to the way it appears to us, the middle voice is more important than the passive, which is derived from it. In the verbal system of ancient Greek, such as it still existed in the classic period, the real distinction was between the active and the middle. A Greek thinker could with good reason set up

46 É. Benveniste, *Categories of Thought and Language*, in: *Problems in General Linguistics*, übers. von Mary E. Meek, University of Miami Press 1971, 57.

47 Benveniste, *Categories of Thought and Language* (wie Anm. 46), 58.

48 Benveniste, *Categories of Thought and Language* (wie Anm. 46), 58.

49 Benveniste, *Categories of Thought and Language* (wie Anm. 46), 59.

in the absolute a predication expressed by means of a specific class of verbs, those which are only middles (the *media tantum*) and mean, among other things, “position” or “attitude.” Equally divided from either the active or the passive, the middle denotes a manner of being just as specific as the two others.⁵⁰

These are categories related to what the Greeks called *rhema* (*i. e.*, verb form). The middle is a form that is most commonly translated in the modern living languages as reflexive verb. But for our analysis of limit situations, it is worth noting that precisely the middle verb form is the form that Aristotle uses when writing on ontology. Benveniste emphasises that in ancient Greek, the middle form of the verb was as important as the active form.

As said above, Jaspers always emphasised that only in a limit situation do we encounter real being. At the very beginning of his *Metaphysik* (the third volume of *Philosophie*), he writes that categories only show to consciousness the ways of being, but they cannot express being as such.⁵¹ Nevertheless, Jaspers’ ‘description’ of limit situations perfectly illuminates Benveniste’s analysis of the middle form of the verb. Jaspers’ conception of limit situations covers the feeling of the real self and, at the same time, the encounter with being. Only existence or, better to say, various attunements (*e. g.* guilt) to the world can arrange the way to experience being: metaphysics is possible only as phenomenology.

The patient⁵² in the limit situation finds himself in the condition, which cannot be treated as geometric space, especially considering all above-mentioned metaphors that describe a patient’s feelings during psychosis, or paranoia. Feeling as a point, or being shut, phenomenologically speaking, means the condition that cannot be treated either *passively* or *actively*. Both ‘notions’ describe the specific being in the middle of the process. As Benveniste writes, ‘the subject is the center as well as the agent of the process; he achieves something which is being achieved in him – being born, sleeping, lying, imagining, growing, etc. He is in-

50 Benveniste, *Categories of Thought and Language* (wie Anm. 46), 59.

51 Jaspers, *Philosophie* (wie Anm. 12), 675.

52 I prefer to use the word ‘patient’, not ‘client’, which is used nowadays in psychotherapies in order to avoid connotations of illness. Such a change of words indicates that we are losing something very important: with the word ‘client’, it is difficult to express the existential truth of limit situations. The Latin word *patiēns, entis* means ‘one who is suffering’. In the Lithuanian language, which is one of the most archaic languages like old Greek, we can see the same meaning as in Aristotle’s table of categories: *kenčiantysis* (*i. e.*, the patient), *kęšmas* (Lith.) = *keisthai* (Greek). By the way, I don’t want to say that such experience of mentally ill is the paradigm of being in limit situations; my intention was to show that Jaspers’ analysis of this existential question likely has its origin in his psychiatric practice; the phenomenology of doubt, suffering and the juxtaposition of category *keisthai* and suffering in a metaphorical sense is the attempt to show the importance of being in limit situations.

deed inside the process of which he is the agent'.⁵³ Similarities to this specific being one can find in the antinomian structure of limit situations.⁵⁴

Suffering, doubt and helplessness are indicators of the specificity of the limit situation. In his description of such situation, Jaspers wrote about the ground slipping from under one's feet, or being as a point; these metaphors do not have spatial connotations, but rather indicate attunement of the subject. When we are suffering, feel guilty or helpless, or even in fighting, we cannot say that our being is active, but it is not passive either.⁵⁵ Something is going on inside of me, in my life without 'my permission' and I need to find the right way to escape such an unpleasant situation. Jaspers emphasized, that we should outlast that experience only rationally, not overwhelmed with chaotic emotions. Being in the middle of the process means that the subject is not a substance but a relation, and consciousness in the world.⁵⁶

Discussing the variety of suffering, Jaspers again emphasizes psychic illnesses which push a patient into a situation hardly understandable to another person, although a patient does not die and does not lose himself.⁵⁷ Undoubtedly, based on his experience in psychiatric practice, Jaspers showed very consistently and reasonably that limit situations are the issue that deserves attention from philosophers and perhaps all 'ordinary' people.⁵⁸ As Jaspers writes, everyone ultimately must bear his portion of suffering, and no one can escape it.

Funding:

This project has received funding from the European Social Fund (project No 09.3.3-LMT-K-712-01-0085) under a grant agreement with the Research Council of Lithuania (LMTLT).

53 É. Benveniste, Active and Middle Voice in the Verb, in: *Problems in General Linguistics* (wie Anm. 46), 149.

54 Jaspers, *Philosophie* (wie Anm. 12), 508–510.

55 Jaspers, *Philosophie* (wie Anm. 12), 493.

56 See more: Jaspers, *Philosophie* (wie Anm. 12), 467. Usually, in existential therapy, the patient's first step is the perception that he is not a substance but a relation to the world.

57 Jaspers, *Philosophie* (wie Anm. 12), 492.

58 With this statement on 'ordinary people', I allude to Jaspers' autobiographical note that he intended to speak 'als Mann auf der Strasse mit dem Mann von der Strasse' (K. Jaspers, *Philosophische Autobiographie*, München 1977, 126).