JASPERS, Karl (23 February, 1883 − 26 February, 1969)

Karl Jaspers was a German psychiatrist and existential philosopher. After graduating from medical school in 1908, Jaspers took up a research position in a psychiatric clinic in Heidelberg but soon became dissatisfied with both the theory and practice of contemporary psychiatry. The result was the landmark two-volume *General Psychopathology* (1913), which attempted to provide psychiatry with a systematic epistemological foundation. There followed a period of slow realignment as Jaspers moved in the direction of academic philosophy: 1919’s *Psychology of World Views* provided an early glimpse of his philosophical orientation and by 1921 he had been appointed Professor of Philosophy in Heidelberg. Jaspers’s early philosophy was deeply influenced by Kant, but he rejected the legalistic interpretation of contemporary neo-Kantians such as Heinrich Rickert in favor of an emphasis on freedom and authenticity. It was not until his three-volume *Philosophy* (1932), however, that Jaspers fully developed his existential philosophy. Deeply influenced by Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and Heidegger, Jaspers outlined a philosophy of personal transcendence in which individuals confront and ultimately accept the radical freedom inherent in human being. Jaspers’s postwar work was largely focused on a moral and political reckoning with Germany’s National Socialist past.

Bibliography: Christian Rabanus, *Primärbibliographie der Schriften Karl Jaspers'* (Tübingen: Franke, 2000).

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