

Reflections. Karl Jaspers and Josef Pieper

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Abstract: What can be said about the relationship between Karl Jaspers and Josef Pieper, who in fact never met? The metaphor of a mirror should prove helpful in defining their relationship in a symbolic way. A mirror does not make an active reference to an object, but it does present something real, namely, a certain view dependent on its own position. Two mirrors that are placed at different positions increase the views of an object, especially if the reflected image recurs in the other image. The relationship between Pieper and Jaspers seems to me to be of this kind of objectively existing references. Their status as academic philosophers reflects the problems of modern philosophy. The thinking of the one enlightens that of the other by resuming an original questioning which proved itself in the discussion with great philosophers and which was, at the same time, characterized by paying attention to the situation of a thinker of our time.

Keywords: Karl Jaspers. Josef Pieper. Contemporary Philosophers.

Zusammenfassung: Was ist zu sagen über die Beziehung zwischen Karl Jaspers und Josef Pieper, die einander nie begegnet sind? Die Spiegelmetapher soll helfen, das Verhältnis beider Philosophen zunächst bildhaft zu bestimmen. Ein Spiegel nimmt nicht aktiv Bezug auf ein Objekt, und doch gibt er jeweils Reales wieder, eine bestimmte Ansicht in Abhängigkeit von der eigenen Position. Zwei Spiegel auf verschiedenen Positionen vermehren die Ansichten des Gegenstandes, besonders dann, wenn sich das Spiegelbild noch einmal im anderen Bild wiederholt. Von dieser Art objektiv vorhandener Bezüge scheint mir auch das Verhältnis zwischen Jaspers und Pieper zu sein. Ihre Stellung als Philosophierende an der Universität spiegelt zugleich die Problematik der modernen Philosophie. Ihr Denken erhellt sich gegenseitig in der Wiederaufnahme eines ursprünglichen Fragens, das sich im Gespräch mit den großen Philosophen bewährt hat und das zugleich bestimmt war durch die Aufmerksamkeit auf die Situation des Denkenden in unserer Zeit.

Schlüsselwörter: Karl Jaspers. Josef Pieper.

I. A First Look at the Common Grounds

Karl Jaspers and Josef Pieper take an exceptional position among the philosophers of the 20th century. What they have in common is their success with readers, evidenced by a high circulation and numerous translations of their books. Hans Saner says of Karl Jaspers that he was “the most widely read contemporary German philosopher in this century in Germany and in the world.”¹ Josef Pieper’s success was most probably nothing short of Jaspers’.² Together with Martin Heidegger, they were among the first philosophers whose literary remains were acquired by the German Literature Archive in Marbach a. Neckar/Germany. With their numerous public lectures, both of them were strongly represented in the media, that is, in newspapers, radio and television. Pieper himself was the author of film adaptations of the Platonic dialogues *Gorgias*, *Symposium*, *Phaedo* and *Apology*, which were later available on video under the collective title *Do not Care about Socrates, Care about Truth* (*Kümmert euch nicht um Sokrates, kümmert euch um die Wahrheit*). To both Jaspers and Pieper, philosophy was something that was meant to take place in the public forum, remaining nevertheless in need of an intellectual rootedness at a university.

The closeness of the two philosophers is revealed not only by how they handled their philosophy in public, but also by its meaning and contents. However, the deliberate reference to the public is only the exterior and the consequence of the interior, which was the actual reason for its exceptional position in 20th century

¹ Hans Saner, *Karl Jaspers* (Hamburg 1970) 150.

² Cf. Berthold Wald, “Josef Pieper. Philosoph – katholisch und intellektuell,” *Katholische Intellektuelle des 20. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Hans-Rüdiger Schwab (Kevelar 2009).

philosophy. Both are concerned with personal selfhood, which is in danger in a way previously unknown, thus ultimately in need of being protected and defended. Below I will try to clarify this common but distinctive ground by means of three examples: firstly, by an analysis of their thinking in the context of their time; secondly, by overcoming the self-forgetfulness of philosophy; thirdly, by the presence of truth in time. However, the differences between Pieper and Jaspers are not peripheral. They are founded in the inner core of their personal faith: in the case of Pieper in the acceptance of God's incarnation as an actual fact that took place between God and man; in the case of Jaspers in the rejection of this doctrine. These differences also determine Jaspers' concept of philosophical faith, which is inseparably connected to his overall conception of philosophizing.

In spite of the difference in the ultimate reason for their relationship with God, positive and negative common grounds outweigh the self-concept and the interest of purely academic philosophy. What Jaspers and Pieper have in common is their care for the clarification and preservation of the persistently valid foundations of human existence. In the face of the changed living conditions after Hitler's takeover, Pieper considered it his "duty" as a philosopher "to reveal, protect, control and 'proclaim' the theoretical and universal – insofar as it is the foundation of action, [...] that is, the foundation for moral decisions."³ In an autobiographical retrospection of his life, Jaspers describes his understanding of the task of philosophy in a similar way: "He [the philosopher] wants to remind, pass on, adjure, appeal. [...] He does not demand an imitation, but should he succeed he is the reason for the other's awakening." And on the same page, marked strongly in Pieper's copy of Jaspers' writing *Philosophy and the World (Philosophie und Welt)*, he states: "His spiritual life, overarching and radical, takes place within the tension of philosophy and theology."⁴ Whoever has read only a single book of Pieper's is aware of the significance of this central point for his conception of philosophy. In Pieper's *What is the Meaning of Philosophizing? (Was heißt philosophieren?)*, developed from his first university lecture (1946), that is, at the same time as Jaspers' first post-war lecture *An Introduction into Philosophy (Einführung in die Philosophie)*, he asserts: "Philosophy gains its liveliness and its inner tension from being a counterpoint to theology."⁵ In his introduction to the English translation, *Leisure. The Basis of Culture*, T.S. Eliot regarded this relation of philosophy to theology as the distinctive and salutary element of Josef Pieper's philosophy. Conversely, he considered their "separation" "the root cause of the vagaries of modern philosophy."⁶

Moreover, the attitude towards life and the life path of these two philosophers were quite similar, although they were an entire generation apart and thus separated from each other by their respective experience of the world. Jaspers was born in 1883, witnessing both wars in his attentive middle age. Pieper was born in 1904. The breakdown of the 19th century certainties barely touched him, for they – together with the end of World War I – were a part of his childhood that was hardly reflected upon and that consequently did not influence his intellectual identity. Jaspers still believed in autonomous reason; to Pieper, the bad end of all things was more than a merely

³ In a letter to Heinz Raskop, which is among Pieper's literary remains in Marbach/Neckar and which was printed in Berthold Wald, "Aktualisierung durch Enthistorisierung." Zu einem Brief von Josef Pieper an Gustav Gundlach aus der Zeit der NS-Diktatur," *Philosophisches Jahrbuch* 104 (1997): 175-181; 179.

⁴ Karl Jaspers, *Philosophie und Welt. Reden und Aufsätze* (München 1958) 382.

⁵ Josef Pieper, "Was heißt Philosophieren?" (1948), *Werke in acht Bänden*, ed. Berthold Wald, volume 3 (Hamburg 1995) 62 (henceforth Pieper's works will be cited as Pieper, *Werke*, volume, page).

⁶ "Nachwort T.S. Eliot," Pieper, *Werke*, volume 3, 73 f.

theoretical possibility.⁷ This difference between Jaspers and Pieper can be fortified by a sentence of Hannah Arendt's, written to Gertrud Jaspers: "We can no longer be knocked out of the great productive developments of occidental modern times – through no murder and not even through any ink slingers, whom we still produce abundantly."⁸ Pieper was not sure about this at all, although the cause for this uncertainty was first conceptualized by Horkheimer and Adorno, namely, with the term *dialectics of the Enlightenment*.⁹

Despite the difference in their ultimate attitude, there are striking similarities that are not at all self-evident. What they have in common is a general appreciation of existence, that is in Jaspers' case, an "innocent yes to life"¹⁰ in spite of diseases and uncertainties – or, in Pieper's words, an unimpairable "approval of the world," whose religious root was analyzed by him in his theory of the feast, where he examines the non-European culture of the feast of India among others.¹¹ Jaspers and Pieper also shared an interest in "existentially relevant" knowledge and despised the empty speculation of merely academic philosophy for its lack of a reference to reality. Jaspers is almost recklessly clear in his attitude towards the rationalism of contemporary movements in philosophy.¹² He speaks of "intellectual baubler" (neopositivism), of the mere "gesture of seeing" (Husserl's phenomenology), of "philosophy as a physicist" does it – he, at least, has some actual insight in contrast to the criticized philosophers – (Rickert's neo-Kantianism), of a "publicly perceptible aura of the prophetic [...] without being prophets" (Ernst Bloch and Georg Lukács). Pieper speaks of "pseudo-philosophy," which, by restricting itself to the useful,¹³ tries to legitimize itself as a science that claims to possess the "theory of everything."¹⁴ Furthermore, he speaks of "formalistic baubler," the "vanity of opinions" and the "dominion of sophistry." According to Pieper, philosophy is no "reservation for specialists"¹⁵ as is continuously suggested "in formidable mock-superiority by every kind of rationalism."¹⁶

Nonetheless both of them started their academic career as specialists outside of their subject area: Karl Jaspers in medicine and Josef Pieper in sociology. An interesting detail of their emphasis of the concretely real is their common interest in graphology. Like Jaspers, Pieper engaged himself in its means of insight and paid close attention to people's handwriting throughout his life. Neither of them found anything of interest in the university lectures in philosophy. Hence, they did not have a teacher at the university. Despite his course of studies in philosophy, Pieper called himself an "autodidact" who received his essential incitements outside of the university. Consequently, after their university appointment both of them regarded themselves as "premature" (Jaspers). As a private lecturer, Pieper decided not to offer any courses and rigorously rejected any appointments to other universities, even to prominent ones. It is not surprising that their relationship to colleagues was never plain sailing. In spite of his remarkable success in teaching, Pieper was considered eccentric, if not arrogant, owing to his refusal to accept the recognition connected to

⁷ Pieper critically quotes Jaspers' phrase of the "hope of reason" for its inaccuracy and unrealistic coloring. His own position of a supernatural hope that cannot be destroyed even by death is consistent with a bad end of all things. (Cf. Pieper, "Über die Hoffnung des Kranken," *Werke*, vol. 7, 357-368; 358.)

⁸ "Letter of May 30, 1946," *Hannah Arendt Karl Jaspers Briefwechsel 1926-1969*, ed. Lotte Köhler, Hans Saner (München/Zürich 1985) no. 39, 78.

⁹ Pieper incidentally mentioned a "highly inspiring nocturnal conversation" with these two social philosophers from Frankfurt (cf. Pieper, *Werke*, 2nd additional volume, 261), while Jaspers and Hannah Arendt shared their dislike, above all, of Adorno.

¹⁰ Jaspers, *Philosophie und Welt*, 284.

¹¹ Cf. Pieper, "Zustimmung zur Welt," *Werke*, volume 6, 217-285.

¹² Cf. the assertions that were collected in Saner, *Karl Jaspers*, 30 ff; 140 ff.

¹³ Cf. Pieper, *Werke*, volume 3, 22 f.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, 56.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, 322 f.

¹⁶ Pieper, *Werke*, volume 2, 132.

his appointment. Jaspers described his own position in the professional circle of professors of philosophy as “artificial” and “unreal.”¹⁷ In the course of time, he “was turning all of the important contemporaries among the philosophers against himself – or they turned him against themselves. In later years, he read parts of their works, but did not study any of them with the exception of Heidegger.”¹⁸

Apart from these similarities it is thus not surprising that there seems to have been no direct connection between Jaspers and Pieper. Neither did they meet, nor did they correspond with one another, although both of them were almost excessive letter writers, as can be seen in their literary remains in Marbach, and could have been acquainted with each other at least indirectly, for example, through Waldemar Gurian, a Jew converted to Catholicism and pupil of Carl Schmitt’s. For Gurian was on a friendly basis with both Hannah Arendt, that is, a pupil of Jaspers’, as well as with Josef Pieper. In his American exile, Gurian took care of persecuted Jewish intellectuals, supporting them in making a new beginning. After the war, he also tried to convince Pieper to move to the USA.¹⁹ In any case, there was no communication between Pieper and Jaspers even by way of friends or acquaintances. There are only two indirect connections: Both of them are represented in the time-critical manifest of the intellectual notables of that time called *Where are we Standing Today? (Wo stehen wir heute?)*²⁰, edited by Walter Bähr in 1960 – and both of them expressed their connection to Gerhard Krüger in a contribution to his 60th birthday.²¹

Hence, a mutual relationship did not exist, but there was a distinctly intensive though not simultaneous perception of literary production. Since Pieper usually made a note of the acquisition date in his new books and differentiated between approval and disapproval through the manner of underlining, we have a relatively reliable idea of his reading. He began reading Jaspers in 1931, namely, the much acclaimed Göschen-volume no. 1000: *The Intellectual Situation of our Time (Die geistige Situation unserer Zeit)*, whose second part on “modern sophistry” and the abuse of language directly influenced Pieper’s up-to-date interpretation of ancient sophistry. There are direct references in two of Pieper’s pertinent texts: in “The Character of the Sophist in the Platonic Dialogues” (“Die Figur des Sophisten in den platonischen Dialogen”)²² (1956) and in his testimonial lecture on the annual meeting of the German Research Foundation (DFG) in Berlin (1964) with the title “Abuse of Language – Abuse of Power. Plato’s Fight against Sophistry.”²³ The next work among his early acquisitions of Jaspers is *General Psychopathology* in its third edition from 1923. However, it cannot be said for sure whether Pieper read it or not.²⁴ After Jaspers’ *Philosophy of Existence* in its edition of 1937, which Pieper had certainly

¹⁷ The references to Jaspers can be found in his “Philosophical Autobiography,” *Philosophie und Welt*, 280; 312 f., 316 f.; the references to Pieper can be found in his autobiographical works (Pieper, *Werke*, 2nd additional volume, 3 ff., 239 f., 257 ff.).

¹⁸ “Vorwort,” *Hannah Arendt Karl Jaspers Briefwechsel 1926-1969*, 28.

¹⁹ In 1950 Gurian invited Pieper to give a visiting lecture at Notre Dame University, thus paving the way for an appointment which Pieper rejected (cf. Pieper, *Werke*, 2nd additional volume, 271 f.; 320). A note in Pieper’s pocket calendar proves that he met Hannah Arendt in June 1950 at the end of his visiting semester. Arendt herself had also been invited to Notre Dame by Gurian (November 1950) (cf. *Hannah Arendt Karl Jaspers Briefwechsel 1926-1969*, no. 106, 196).

²⁰ Gütersloh 1960, with contributions by Albert Schweizer, Martin Buber, Arnold Toynbee, Max Picard, Ernst Jünger, Helmuth Schelski, Adolf Portmann, Max Born and others.

²¹ Cf. *Einsichten. Gerhard Krüger zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. Klaus Oehler, Richard Scheffler (Frankfurt/Main, 1962), with contributions by Rudolf Bultmann, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Karl Löwith, Leo Strauss, Carl Friedrich von Weizsäcker and others (on the relationship Pieper – Krüger cf. Pieper, *Werke*, 2nd additional volume, 14 ff., 239 f., 255 ff.).

²² Pieper, *Werke*, volume 1, 132-194.

²³ Pieper, *Werke*, volume 6, 132-151.

²⁴ There are certain letters among Pieper’s literary remains in Marbach to Alfred Adler, Rudolf Allers and Fritz Künkel which indicate that Pieper dealt with questions on individual psychology and psychopathology in a more or less intensive way at that time.

worked through, he interrupted his reading of Jaspers owing to prevailing political circumstances. In 1946, he restarted his reading with the works *On the European Spirit (Vom Europäischen Glauben)*, *Reason and Existence*, *On Truth (Von der Wahrheit)*, *Philosophical Faith (Der philosophische Glaube)* and *Philosophy (Philosophie)* (in its second edition from 1948).²⁵ These are the works that contain the core of Jaspers' philosophy. Pieper referred to them in his books no sooner than from 1962 onwards, but from then on he did so continuously. His philosophical treatise *On Faith* (1962) includes an entire chapter on Jaspers' concept of faith.²⁶ In *In Defense of Philosophy* (1966) the last chapter on the relation between faith and reason deals with Jaspers and, what is more, with Martin Heidegger's criticism of the possibility of Christian philosophizing.²⁷ Pieper was particularly interested in the discussion of *The Question of De-Mythologization* (1954) between Karl Jaspers and Rudolf Bultmann. Jaspers' warnings of a "seriousness that will become empty" and the spirit of the "average enlightenment of all times" that operates in the seriousness were later quoted by Pieper several times in the context of the foundational relationship between philosophy, theology and tradition.²⁸ With much interest he also read Jaspers' *Philosophical Autobiography (Philosophische Autobiographie)* from 1958, biographies and contemporary literature being a focal point in his reading. Therefore, he took special notice of Jaspers' contribution to the serial program "The Hopes of our Time" and of his article "Where are we Standing Today?" ("Wo stehen wir heute?") in an anthology of the same title from 1960. As already mentioned above, the book also contains a contribution by Pieper. This is the end of Pieper's detectable reading of Jaspers. Later purchases, such as the posthumous volume *Great Philosophers (Die großen Philosophen)* (1981), do not reveal any indications of having been read.

As far as Karl Jaspers' reading of Pieper is concerned, it began relatively late.²⁹ It could have started no sooner than 1952, and must have ended by 1966 at the latest with the last purchase. Among the 13 books of Pieper's there are three which are thoroughly worked through in certain passages, as can be seen from bold markings of different intensity that fill several pages as well as from the consecutive numbering in the margin. What is more, these writings directly reveal Jaspers' philosophical interests. Assuming that Jaspers read *What does Academic Mean? (Was heißt akademisch?)* in the year in which it appeared, his Pieper-reading began in 1952. In this book, Pieper fights the destruction of the occidental idea of the university in the same way as Jaspers did, yet without referring to him.³⁰ Jaspers studied Pieper's book *The End of Time* in its second edition in 1953 with the same intensity. The reason for his interest might have been his non-theological concept of history (theory of axis time rather than belief in the incarnation). Jaspers' reading of Pieper's *St. Thomas Aquinas* (1956), a paperback edition of Pieper's *Thomas-Breviary (Thomas-Brevier)*, suggests a connection to his plan of a *World History of Philosophy (Weltgeschichte der Philosophie)*, in which Thomas, Aristotle and Hegel were supposed to be presented in the same

²⁵ In December 1946, Pieper purchased Jaspers' *Nietzsche and Christianity (Nietzsche und das Christentum)* from 1938, but there are no indications that he actually read it. Although not part of his library, he repeatedly quoted *The Psychology of Worldviews (Psychologie der Weltanschauungen)* (1919), *Descartes and Philosophy (Descartes und die Philosophie)* (1939), *The Origin and Goal of History* (1949) and *Truth and Science (Wahrheit und Wissenschaft)* (1960).

²⁶ Cf. Pieper, *Werke*, volume 4, chapter VII, 239-245.

²⁷ Cf. Pieper, *Werke*, volume 3, chapter XI, 144-154.

²⁸ Cf. *ibidem*, 298; 323; volume 7, 140; 527.

²⁹ I owe all information on this matter to Hans Saner, who was so nice as to show me Jaspers' library on February 23, 2009 in Basel and told me his view of the situation.

³⁰ As the reactions (up and foremost numerous letters to Pieper) collected in Pieper's literary remains show, *What does Academic Mean? (Was heißt akademisch?)* attracted much attention in the public in the context of the debate on the foundation of new universities.

passage as “creating regulators.”³¹ Further purchases of ten works of Pieper’s, partly antiquarian, prove that he was no longer just interested in individual topics but in the author himself.³² It is hard to say what Jaspers expected from reading these books, which cannot be attributed to a certain thematic focus. It might have been an interest in anthropology and social philosophy, to which the titles could be attributed.³³

II. Thinking in the Spiritual Context of One’s Time: the Self-Being of the Person

All topics of Jaspers’ and Pieper’s philosophizing include a reference to the self-being of a person. “Everybody should become himself even in the face of the greatest,”³⁴ Jaspers writes in retrospective in his philosophical autobiography. The task of “becoming oneself” can also be found in Pieper as early as in his dissertation in moral philosophy, in which he quotes the ancient saying, “become what you are,”³⁵ seeing that there is a tension for man in his condition of not-yet-being.

The central question about a person’s being determines his thinking in two ways: as the question about the reasons for the cultural endangerment of self-being today and as the question about the existential conditions for the actualization of a person’s self-being. How must somebody be in order for him to be truly himself? However, the expression “self-being” – mediated via Kierkegaard – is more characteristic of Jaspers’ language than of Pieper’s, who speaks of the “ultimate” thing “somebody can be” in the tradition of Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas.³⁶ What the two philosophers mean is not absolutely identical, for Jaspers’ emphasis is on the will to exist out of truth, while Pieper is of the opinion that the question of truth must have been answered – prior to the will to exist in truth – before a true actualization of the capability to be is possible.

With attentive thinking, Jaspers and Pieper both regard the philosopher’s question to be man’s question about himself, when looking for orientation. Whoever tries to orientate himself must know the place in which he finds himself. And this place is life or, in Jaspers’ formulation, the spiritual context of one’s time. He considers the “origin of the current situation” determined by a cultural power that determines the situation of the existence of the individual: the loss of faith, not in terms of “faithlessness of single people” but in the sense of a “de-divinization of the world” (in the tradition of Nietzsche and Max Weber). Jaspers interprets this as a development leading “towards nothingness” and generating “a bygone waste of existence.”³⁷ Being a social philosopher, Pieper had to agree to this diagnosis, as prominent underlining in his text shows. Although his reading of Jaspers became tangible in direct quotations no sooner than 1956, one can assume that Pieper’s view of the situation of the existence of modern man was influenced by his early reading of Jaspers. This can be shown by two examples, to which I must restrict myself. The

³¹ Cf. Jaspers, *Die großen Philosophen. Nachlaß 1 und Nachlaß 2*, ed. Hans Saner (München/Zürich 1981) volume 1, 497-503; 529-540; volume 2, 941-949; 1100-1104.

³² Together with two texts of other authors, Pieper’s lecture “Justice Today” (“Gerechtigkeit heute”) can be found in a booklet, edited by the German embassy in Bern but not available on the book market, that must have been sent to Jaspers in 1968.

³³ In order of appearance (not of the first editions), these purchased books were: *Temperance (Zucht und Maß)* (1939), *Prudence* (1940), *Theses on Social Politics (Thesen zur sozialen Politik)* (1946), *What is the Meaning of Philosophizing? (Was heißt Philosophieren?)* (1948), *Justice* (1953), *Wisdom – Poetry – Sacrament (Weistum – Dichtung – Sakrament)* (1954), *Fortitude (Vom Sinn der Tapferkeit)* (1954), *Belief and Faith* (1962), *In Tune with the World* (1963), *Do not Care about Socrates (Kümmert euch nicht um Sokrates)* (1966). Sent to him: “Justice Today” (“Gerechtigkeit heute”) (1968).

³⁴ Jaspers, *Philosophie und Welt*, 389.

³⁵ Pieper, *Werke*, volume 2, 86.

³⁶ Cf. Jaspers, *Die geistige Situation der Zeit* (Berlin/Leipzig 1931) 11 ff. (Kierkegaard); Pieper, *Die Aktualität der Kardinaltugenden*, *Werke*, volume 8.1, 295 (cf. also *Tugendlehre als Aussage über den Menschen*, *ibidem*, 245).

³⁷ Jaspers, *Die geistige Situation der Zeit*, 17.

earliest context – influenced by Jaspers’ idea of the “waste of existence” – is Pieper’s “social criticism” and its “existential turn.” The actual and not merely aesthetic overcoming of this waste on the conditions of the present time will later become the center of Pieper’s philosophizing.³⁸ The other context – instigated by Jaspers’ criticism of “modern sophistry” – is Pieper’s “criticism of language,” developed in the tradition of Plato and Thomas, and its meaning for the reconstitution of existential communication.

(1) Mental Poverty and De-Proletarianization

The consequences of the nearness of Pieper’s early works of social philosophy to Jaspers’ thinking are hardly known. In the beginning, his relation to the spiritual context of his time was mainly influenced by two factors, namely, by the socio-political challenge of growing “proletarianization”³⁹ and by the socio-philosophical degrading of society as opposed to community⁴⁰. By insisting on the indispensability of the social life form, Pieper defends a person’s individual being against the social romanticism of Catholicism. To be a person means “not only ‘not to be the other,’ but [...] also to be ‘different from the other;’”⁴¹ to be “a ‘world of its own,’ totus in se et sibi, ‘totally in oneself and towards oneself.’”⁴² According to Pieper, it is the main duty of an educator “to make society’s ideal of socializing comprehensible to the youth and to educate” the youth in such a way that this ideal is attained,⁴³ rather than “deriving a distorted form of the notion of society [...] from the distorted forms of natural and legitimate self-preservation.”⁴⁴ In opposition to social romanticism and its latent propensity to violence, the “healthy core” of “individualistic liberalism”⁴⁵ must again be made visible, for “‘xenophobia’ [...] is the downside of every kind of exclusive ‘patriotism’ [...]. In contrast, ‘society’ is more or less cosmopolitan, being based precisely on the acknowledgment of a partner who lives beyond the border [...] of one’s own house, tribe and home country, a partner who is affirmed as a real ‘thou.’”⁴⁶

From the perspective of culture sociology, the flight towards the concept of community received its motivation from the increasing tendency to crowd. At this point, Pieper’s thinking meets Jaspers’ analysis of the spiritual context of their time. In an open correspondence with the contemporary historian and publisher Karl Thieme on the topic of “Leisure and De-Proletarianization,” Pieper resumed the redefinition of the socio-political central idea of de-proletarianization that had already been expounded in 1948 in an article.⁴⁷ There, he defends and clarifies his suggestion to extend the meaning of de-proletarianization, because it denotes “a process [...] that concerns the whole human being,” since the opposing diagnosis is also given, “when there is no lack of property” – “in the case of mental poverty.” Thus, the “full actualization of a non-proletarian existence” can “no longer be reached through mere ‘social policy,’ nor through ‘Christian social policy.’”⁴⁸ In the same year of 1948, two

³⁸ Above all, this is true for: Pieper, *Glück und Kontemplation; Zustimmung zur Welt. Eine Theorie des Festes*, *Werke*, volume 6, 152-216; 217-285.

³⁹ In Pieper’s introduction to the basic ideas of the encyclical “Quadragesimo Anno” (1931) “de-proletarianization” is the central idea. (Pieper, “Die Neuordnung der menschlichen Gesellschaft,” *Werke*, 1st additional volume, 61-141).

⁴⁰ Cf. Ferdinand Tönnies, *Gesellschaft und Gemeinschaft* (date of the first publication: 1887). Pieper’s examination of Tönnies can be found in *Grundformen sozialer Spielregeln*, *Werke*, 1st additional volume 196-309. (Cf. also Berthold Wald, “Der ‘linke Pieper’ und das Dritte Reich,” *Die Neue Ordnung* 59 (2004): 278-293).

⁴¹ Pieper, *Grundformen sozialer Spielregeln*, 218.

⁴² *Ibidem*, 251.

⁴³ Cf. *ibidem*, 272.

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*, 252.

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, 247.

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*, 270.

⁴⁷ Cf. Pieper, “Philosophische Gedanken zum sozialen Problem,” *Werke*, 1st additional volume, 416-430.

⁴⁸ Pieper, “Muße und Entproletarisierung,” *Pädagogische Rundschau* 23 (1948): 509.

writings appeared which tried to answer positively to the problem of mental poverty: *Leisure and Cult (Muße und Kult)* and *What is the Meaning of Philosophizing? (Was heißt Philosophieren?)*. A simultaneous article in the *Frankfurter Hefte* emphasizes the turning away from the restriction to the, in a narrow sense, socio-political problem in its title: “Philosophizing in the Sense of Transgressing the Working World.”⁴⁹ This not only opens up connections to his later works. It also shows that, by the culture sociological notion of proletarianism in the sense of mental poverty, Pieper had the same problem of the present time in mind which Jaspers had described as early as in 1931.

(2) Modern Sophistry and the Destruction of Communication

According to both Jaspers and Pieper, sophistry is not solely a historical phenomenon of ancient times but a possibility of endangering humanity that exists at all times. The phenomenon itself can hardly be specified, since it occurs in a number of totally different contexts. “Every defined version is too simple,”⁵⁰ Jaspers writes. In an interpretation of Plato in a concreteness that has hardly been reached by anybody else, Pieper considers mainly three fields of social life endangered through the power of sophistry: literature, journalism and politics. What these three fields of activity have in common is the “public use of words.” Detached from the will for truth, it becomes an instrument of power, destroying the foundation of human communication.⁵¹ Although Pieper does not quote Jaspers’ phrase “truth, which connects us,”⁵² it is obvious that the interrelation of truth and human communication is of central significance to him. In his early readings of Jaspers, there is some particularly strong underlining: “the language of disguise and revolt,”⁵³ and “the spirit as means” which “knows that it is not serious,” thus connecting “this secret knowledge with the pathos of a pretended convincedness.”⁵⁴

Furthermore, Pieper and Jaspers were of the opinion that philosophy is in danger of “freeing itself from the standard of philosophizing” when turning into a mere “linguistic entity that has become independent.”⁵⁵ The following assertion by Jaspers seems to refer not only to Hegel but rather to Heidegger’s language: “The intentional occupation with language can quickly become a *meander*. [...] Language becomes an illusion, if there is talk without really saying anything.” The “blind alley of a mere linguistic entity” is so dangerous because “language remains the indispensable medium of our entire thinking and knowledge.”⁵⁶ Heidegger’s handling of language was a reason for Pieper for mistrusting him. What is “actually bad” in this is neither the “lack of results [...] of Heidegger’s de-mythologizations”⁵⁷ nor “the indistinctness of what is meant;” what is even worse is the “gesture of rejection that can hardly be misunderstood and that refuses to tolerate any clarifying question.”⁵⁸ Language ceases to be a means of communication. Instead of making connections, it creates circles of devotees who refuse to take in uninitiated people – for instance, through the “darkness of canorous sound patterns that are considered philosophical.” As an example Pieper mentions Heidegger’s definition of language “as the peal of silence.”⁵⁹ Like Jaspers, he insists on the unity of language, truth and communication. “A truly philosophical statement depends on revealing the significance of a naturally

⁴⁹ *Frankfurter Hefte* 3 (1948): 1013-1022.

⁵⁰ Jaspers, *Die geistige Situation der Zeit*, 152 (underlined by Pieper).

⁵¹ Cf. chiefly Pieper, *Mißbrauch der Sprache*, *Werke*, volume 6, 132-151.

⁵² It appears that he did not know the phrase.

⁵³ Jaspers, *Die geistige Situation der Zeit*, 41 f.

⁵⁴ *Ibidem*, 45.

⁵⁵ Jaspers, *Philosophie und Welt*, 288 (underlined by Pieper).

⁵⁶ Jaspers, *Von der Wahrheit*, 438 f. (emphasis by the author).

⁵⁷ Pieper, *Der Philosophierende und die Sprache. Bemerkungen eines Thomas-Lesers*, *Werke*, vol. 3, 202.

⁵⁸ Pieper, *Verteidigungsrede für die Philosophie*, *Werke*, volume 3, 139.

⁵⁹ Pieper, *Der Philosophierende und die Sprache*, 211.

grown word – a significance that is in principle familiar to everybody – through a very exact handling of language in a way that the object of one’s search for wisdom, which also concerns everybody, comes to and remains in the center of attention.”⁶⁰

(3) The Primacy of Technology and the Necessity for Reflection

In contrast to Pieper, Jaspers also took up a stance on political questions in public, for example, with regard to the rearmament of Germany or the use of nuclear power. However, the implicit reason for his contribution was his worry that the concept of the global political reason was interpreted as purely functionalistic. Pieper shared this worry, for both philosophers regarded this interpretation as a naïve misapprehension which restoratively omits the change of circumstances necessary after the experience of calamity, concentrating its trust on technological solutions alone. By founding the magazine *The Transformation (Die Wandlung)* in 1945, Jaspers tried to support the necessary change of consciousness together with colleagues from Heidelberg. As far as the connection to Pieper is concerned, there is an underlying interrelation at this point, too. A few references should be sufficient.

In the year 1946, Pieper wrote a critical review of Arnold Gehlen’s book *Man (Der Mensch)*, which had already appeared in 1940. This criticism mainly refers to an “ergologically” reduced concept of the human spirit, which Gehlen understands purely instrumentally from the perspective of mastering one’s existence. Pieper juxtaposed this with a notion of spirit that can already be found in Aristotle: Spirit means the infinite ability to be by nature related to reality, an ability that is not functionalistically reduced to the cognition of means-ends relations.⁶¹ In the same year in his inaugural lecture “Philosophical Education and Intellectual Work” (“Philosophische Bildung und geistige Arbeit”), Pieper turned against the devaluation of a theoretical-contemplative relation to the world, which had been superseded by a programmatic will for the domination and repression of nature ever since Bacon and Descartes.⁶² The most radical objection to the technological reduction of human reason can be found in Pieper’s work *Leisure and Cult (Muße und Kult)* from 1948. This book, which is the most successful one on an international basis, was motivated by Pieper’s worry, comparable to one of the concerns in *The Transformation (Die Wandlung)*, in the field of the unreasonable connection of restorative narrow-mindedness and the overestimation of one’s technological capabilities.⁶³ Later Jaspers and Pieper had to acknowledge their disappointment about the fact that the change they had hoped for did not take place, and that the period of serious public communication, that is, the “unregulated-spontaneous development of one’s spiritual vitality” had again ended.⁶⁴

III. Overcoming the Self-Forgetfulness of Philosophy: Philosophical Faith

Josef Pieper’s view of philosophizing both corresponds to and differs from Karl Jaspers’ view. The matching points can be found in those cases where Pieper rejects a concept of philosophizing that assumes the methodological self-limitation of the scientific attitude towards knowledge. For in this concept, the actual object of

⁶⁰ Ibidem.

⁶¹ Cf. Pieper, “‘Anthropo-Biologie.’ Über Arnold Gehlens *Der Mensch*,” *Werke*, volume 8.2, 604-612.

⁶² Cf. Pieper, *Werke*, volume 3, 1-14.

⁶³ Cf. Pieper, *Werke*, volume 6, 1-44.

⁶⁴ Cf. Pieper’s autobiography in *Werke*, 2nd additional volume, 345. This is the time to draw attention to Pieper’s scepticism towards a conception of justice which believed that it could eliminate the ever possible threat accompanying an unjust exertion of power by institutional interference alone, that is, without any consideration of the personal justice of the moral agent, which means, once again, technologically. (Cf. Pieper, *Über die Gerechtigkeit* (1953), *Werke*, volume 4, 87 ff.; “Das Recht des Anderen” (1973) and “Grundrechte. Diskussionsbeitrag” (1957), both to be found in *Werke*, vol. 8.1, 266-278; 374-376). The fact that Pieper insisted on the necessity of virtues finds its time-critical reason here.

philosophizing, namely, an individual's existence in the entirety of existence and the world, disappears from the center of attention. In this point, Pieper does not differ from Kant, whose concept of human reason is decisive for Jaspers. Kant is also of the opinion that the task of philosophizing must not be determined from the perspective of the "academic notion" of philosophy, which "is pursued only as a science." Rather, when philosophizing one has to presume a "cosmic concept" (*conceptus cosmicus*) "that this [academic] notion is based on at all times."⁶⁵ To Kant, the "cosmic concept" of philosophy can only be a concept "affecting that which interests everybody by necessity."⁶⁶

The matter to which such a necessary interest is related cannot be defined within the methodologically secured borders of a discipline. Its starting point is the human subject which becomes interested in its own existence in the process of existing. What is essential for philosophizing is not a historical knowledge of everything that has been regarded as philosophy, but the "development of concrete experiences."⁶⁷ True philosophizing affects both the expert and the "man in the street"⁶⁸ – or in front of the screen.⁶⁹ In this context, Jaspers speaks of "borderline situations" which draw the individual's attention to himself and through which philosophizing actually starts. Pieper has the same in mind when he sees the root of philosophizing to be in the jolting through the two extreme powers of existence: the experience of Eros and death. According to both Pieper and Jaspers, philosophizing directly accrues from the "repose of contemplation."⁷⁰ This happens in its highest possibility – "in capturing the existential references to transcendence" – "an analogy to religious activity, without purposeful activity in the world." Consequently, "active contemplation" is the "apex of philosophizing" not only to Pieper but already to Jaspers.⁷¹ Pieper distinctly marked these sentences in his copy of Jaspers' *Philosophy (Philosophie)*. It had been his aim ever since his inaugural lecture to "emphasize the contemplative element in philosophizing and to regain the old notion of leisure (*schole*) by means of new arguments – *against* the overestimation of the rational-discursive activity and an understanding of thinking that is reduced to its social function."⁷²

According to Jaspers and Pieper, philosophizing beyond the self-limitation of scientific reason does not exclude a matter-of-fact objectiveness of thinking. As is known from its criticism of rationalistic movements in modern philosophy, the alternative cannot be: either academic philosophy or popular philosophy. Nor can the philosophical question about the ultimate meaning of reality as a whole be restricted to the field of subjective experience of the individual, if one searches for an answer with existential seriousness. True philosophy, that is, philosophy which faces the inquisitive search for truth, is never of the form of "one-man philosophy,"⁷³ as T.S. Eliot expresses it in his introduction to Pieper's *Leisure. The Basis of Culture*, not lacking irony. Maybe all serious philosophizing takes place in a context of conversation that must include tradition. Not only contemporaries but also the "great philosophers" are serious dialog partners, which primarily means Plato, in the case of Jaspers and Pieper, and, what is more, "the ancients," as Pieper puts it with reference to Plato. Three short remarks should concretize what is meant here.

⁶⁵ Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, B 876.

⁶⁶ Ibidem, annotation to B 868.

⁶⁷ Jaspers, *Philosophie und Welt*, 317.

⁶⁸ Ibidem, 390.

⁶⁹ This is why Pieper dared to work on contemporary film adaptations of Plato.

⁷⁰ Jaspers, *Philosophie und Welt*, 318.

⁷¹ Cf. Jaspers, *Philosophie*, 575.

⁷² Pieper's autobiography in *Werke*, 2nd additional volume, 246.

⁷³ Pieper, *Werke*, volume 3, 74.

(1) The Concept of the University: Philosophy and Theology

A conception of philosophizing that neither understands itself as a part of the historical humanities nor is capable of directly legitimizing itself by means of some social usefulness has become “an embarrassment to everybody,”⁷⁴ as Jaspers claimed in an academic commemorative address. Pieper explicitly quoted this statement appreciatingly and added, “provided that philosophy be understood in the same way as Plato and Aristotle and the great philosophical tradition, up to Karl Jaspers, did.”⁷⁵ Therefore, Jaspers’ philosophizing was closely connected to his support for the occidental spirit of the university in the face of the coordination policy of National Socialism and the reestablishment of the University of Heidelberg after 1945. His work *The Concept of the University (Die Idee der Universität)*, which had first appeared in 1923, was updated in 1946 and 1961. In Jaspers’ eyes, the distinctive element of a university is that it is a “place independent of the state” in which science is done for the sake of knowledge “alone” and in which the students can depend on their “academic freedom.”⁷⁶ Since the university deals with truth in its entirety, its spiritual life not only includes the sciences but primarily the “polarity religion – philosophy.” Jaspers explicitly calls the university a “philosophical university,” which is based on a “comprising faith”: “faith in the path of truth, on which everyone can meet everyone else.”⁷⁷

These points should be enough to show the common grounds of Pieper’s writing *What does Academic Mean? (Was heißt akademisch?)* and Jaspers’ view. In the context of the reestablishment of the Ruhr-University Bochum in 1962/63, Pieper comments on the programmatic claim that, at a modern school of higher education, “exact science alone determine the image of the university.”⁷⁸ His arguments against this claim are partly similar to those that were brought forth by Jaspers: firstly, pure focusing on the cognition of truth or “destruction through instrumentalizing” the university; secondly, the philosophical character of the university in its “openness for the totality;” and thus thirdly, the “inclusion of theology.”⁷⁹ Both Pieper and Jaspers had a skeptical attitude towards curricula, defending the freedom of learning and teaching.⁸⁰ When Pieper taught at the university, he consciously violated academic discretion, which intended to remain silent on “ultimate questions,” or, in Jaspers’ words, one’s personal “philosophical faith.” In answer to Karl Löwith, Pieper took up Löwith’s diagnosis of the “dumbness and lack of discussion in Germany” and referred it to the “atmosphere at the university,” which is also “characterized by this silence – with which I do not actually mean the lack of communication between colleagues, but rather the ignorance towards any kind of ‘metaphysical’ subjects with the consequence that it becomes more and more impossible for students to recognize what their teachers consider to be true.”⁸¹

⁷⁴ Jaspers, *Wahrheit und Wissenschaft* (Basel 1960) 20.

⁷⁵ Pieper, *Verteidigungsrede für die Philosophie*, *Werke*, volume 3, 126 f.

⁷⁶ Cf. Jaspers, *Philosophie und Welt*, chapter 7, 329-340 (Universität).

⁷⁷ *Ibidem*, 382.

⁷⁸ Pieper (autobiography), *Werke*, 2nd additional volume, 465.

⁷⁹ Cf. Pieper, *Was heißt Akademisch?*, *Werke*, volume 6, 72-131. As indicated above, Jaspers studied this work intensely.

⁸⁰ In an article for a magazine of the pedagogical academy in Essen, Pieper discussed the issue of “whether it would be right to eliminate the final exam in philosophy.” He chose the form of an “apocryphal scholastic articulus” for his half-seriously, half-jokingly meant discussion. (Cf. Pieper, *Werke*, 2nd additional volume, 345.)

⁸¹ “Letter from July 1st, 1957,” *Europäische Werte denken. Josef Pieper – Philosoph, Lehrer, Autor*, ed. Holger Flachmann, William J. Hoye, Matthias Kayß (Münster 2004) 28 f.

(2) The Acquiring of the Great Traditions

According to Jaspers and Pieper, universities are not threatened solely from the outside. It is already caused by the self-forgetfulness in which academic philosophy abdicates from the duty which Jaspers called the “elucidation of existence,” a duty that the spiritual powers of all cultures have always supported. Since the “spiritual world” and the world of “academic philosophy” is “devoid of philosophy” by now, Jaspers encouraged “focusing again on the great philosophers,” thus revealing the value for true philosophy in the student’s youth.⁸² However, the “old philosophy” cannot “be the same for us as it used to be”⁸³ at its time. Turning to the great philosophers nevertheless offers the opportunity to “re-enter the realm of origins,”⁸⁴ on which every kind of philosophizing lives and which must, therefore, be preserved in all its aspects of truth. In *On Truth (Von der Wahrheit)*, Jaspers presented an outline of his ambitious plan of a “philosophical logics” that was supposed to adapt the great traditions to our time as well as to systematize them. Unfortunately, he was not able to work out his plan in detail, namely, in a way that should have included the origins and figures of Asian and Indian philosophy.⁸⁵ Jaspers wanted not only to emphasize the “new matters” of philosophy, maybe because he, along with Pieper, assumed that “being new” is quite frequently opposed to “being true.”⁸⁶ He was in favor of acquiring truth wherever truth can be found. With this position he was opposed to a concept of philosophizing that Pieper, under reference to Jaspers, called the “historical point of view.” Both of them considered it a root of the “modern ‘loss of tradition.’”⁸⁷

Pieper’s occupation with Jaspers served him as a confirmation of the fact that the concept of a philosophizing interpretation, as pragmatically realized by his “mentor” Thomas Aquinas, has preserved its convincing power up until the present day.⁸⁸ According to Pieper, acquiring truth through listening and philosophical interpretation presupposes two things: “Firstly, it demands that the listener be interested in the respective fact by himself and, if possible, already at a previous time. Secondly and more importantly, he must reflect upon what he hears, that is, he must compare it with what he himself knows and considers true.”⁸⁹ Moreover, by Jaspers’ worry about the disappearance of the great tradition in contemporary philosophy, Pieper was reassured that “human existence can be harmed not only by missing new matters of learning but also by forgetting and losing something indispensable.”⁹⁰

(3) Reason and Faith: Philosophical Faith

There is no other aspect in which Jaspers and Pieper both agree and disagree with one another as in the conviction that reason and faith mutually refer to each other. “That which must truly be preserved,”⁹¹ as Pieper puts it, is for Jaspers given solely “on the grounds of a religious substance.” Philosophy “dies off to empty thinking if

⁸² Cf. Jaspers, *Philosophie und Welt*, 313.

⁸³ Jaspers, *Existenzphilosophie* (Berlin 1937) 10.

⁸⁴ Jaspers, *Philosophie und Welt*, 370.

⁸⁵ Parts and outlines of it are included in the posthumous volumes edited by Hans Saner: *Die großen Philosophen*, volume 1 and 2 (München 1981); *Nachlaß zur Philosophischen Logik* (München 1991).

⁸⁶ Jaspers, *Von der Wahrheit*, 192; cited in Pieper, *Überlieferung. Begriff und Anspruch, Werke*, vol. 3, 291.

⁸⁷ Pieper, *Überlieferung. Begriff und Anspruch, Werke*, volume 3, 251. Pieper refers to Jaspers here: “Tradition might vanish, while all of the documents are still there.” Hence, it is not surprising that Pieper and Jaspers were sceptical towards a reference to tradition that does not differentiate between reality and statement, as is the case in Hans Georg Gadamer’s philosophy.

⁸⁸ In his copy of Pieper’s book *St. Thomas Aquinas*, Jaspers highlighted the following sentence of Thomas’ that Pieper quoted in the introduction: “The goal of studying philosophy is not to learn what others have thought but to learn what the truth of realites is.”

⁸⁹ Pieper, *Gottgeschichte Entrückung. Eine Platon-Interpretation* (1994), *Werke*, volume 8.1, 15.

⁹⁰ Pieper, *Überlieferung. Begriff und Anspruch, Werke*, volume 3, 257.

⁹¹ Cf. Pieper, *Werke*, volume 8.1, 156-176.

the conveyed content from which [philosophy] is formed is used up; however, this content is the common historical ground for theology and philosophy.”⁹² Pieper tried to clarify this connection several times in explicit reference to Jaspers. The end of an article from 1957 on “The Possible Future of Philosophy” (“Die mögliche Zukunft der Philosophie”) recalls Jaspers’ words of a “seriousness that will become empty,” if the substance of the great tradition is abandoned. Pieper ends with the sentence: “It could happen that at the end of history the root of all things and the ultimate meaning of existence – which means: the peculiar matter of philosophizing – will be reflected upon only by those who *believe*.”⁹³

The only point in which Pieper differs fundamentally from Jaspers is the notion of faith, insofar as a truth is given in it which is indispensable for existence and, at the same time, not verifiable.⁹⁴ Jaspers refuses to regard something as true in faith on the basis of an authority, since, according to him, this is a limitation that a philosophizer cannot accept. Rather, he wants reason to be the ultimate means of decision. Along with Kant, he considers philosophizing to be an activity which uses one’s own reason without outer guidance. In contrast, it is a weakness to Pieper to trust in one’s own reason alone, especially since the content of what is believed is by principle beyond that which can be known. Thus, it must necessarily be without a criterion of truth. To his mind, the “deep inconsistency of Jaspers’ conception” lies in the fact that a justifiable assumption of truth in faith can only exist if it is evident “who is actually being believed.”⁹⁵ With his attitude that wants to possess that which is believed in other ways than in the mode of faith, “Jaspers represents a type of thinking” which, on the one hand, hesitates “to merely abandon the contents of conveyed faith, that is, ‘irreplaceable truth’ [as Jaspers puts it],” and, on the other hand, is incapable of “accepting these contents by way of believing in revelation.”⁹⁶ In respect of the possibility for Christians to philosophize, Pieper refers to an unsuspecting – pre-Christian – witness. It is the Platonic Socrates who includes the religious tradition accessible to him into his philosophizing, accepting it as true, because he trusted in the nameless “ancients” in the sense of primordial receivers of a divine message about the beginning and end of things.⁹⁷ In Plato’s works, it is obvious that those who philosophize in existential seriousness cannot ignore the possible outcome of salvation or calamity beyond the border of death when they treat, for example, questions of justice. If this is true, then Plato has definitely decided against Jaspers’ mutually exclusive pair of “either surrender of independence [...] or surrender of [...] revelation.”⁹⁸ Plato did not choose the independence of philosophy rather than accepting religious revelation in faith. Ultimately, Jaspers could only regard the truth claim of all religions as a request to existential seriousness which not only leaves the question on truth open, but rejects the truth claim of every religion, insofar as it is a claim of exclusive possession.⁹⁹

⁹² Jaspers, *Philosophie*, 269; quoted among other passages by Pieper in *Überlieferung. Begriff und Anspruch, Werke*, volume 3, 298. Inside the back of the book jacket of Pieper’s copy, there is a reference to the pages on which Jaspers treats the relation between philosophy and religion. In his copy of Jaspers’ book *Reason and Existence*, he put down page numbers to the keywords ‘tradition’ (Überlieferung) and ‘revelation’ (Offenbarung).

⁹³ Pieper, *Werke*, volume 3, 323 (emphasis by Pieper).

⁹⁴ Cf. Pieper, *Über den Glauben, Werke*, volume 4, 239 ff. (cf. also notes 25; 26).

⁹⁵ *Ibidem*, 241.

⁹⁶ *Ibidem*, 243.

⁹⁷ Cf. Pieper, *Über die platonischen Mythen, Werke*, volume 1, chapter V and VI, 359-374; *Über den Philosophiebegriff Platons, Werke*, volume 3, 156-172.

⁹⁸ Jaspers, *Philosophie*, 258; cited in Pieper, *Verteidigungsrede für die Philosophie, Werke*, vol. 3, 150.

⁹⁹ With regard to Christianity, this is true for Catholicism in particular. As a consequence, one can only choose “between Catholicism and reason” according to Jaspers. (Cf. Jaspers, *Von der Wahrheit*, 857 ff.).

IV. The Presence of Truth in Time: Historical Limitation and Openness for the Totality

Towards the end of his last lecture, that is, shortly before the forced end of his teaching in Heidelberg, Jaspers spoke about the “unfinishableness of philosophy” in allusion to his own situation. To him, this remains true “despite successful philosophizing.”¹⁰⁰ He considers this a consequence of the incapability of existence to embrace the realm of transcendence. The mystery of the all-embracing, which can appear in the affiliation of existence to transcendence, can at best be touched in the *ciphers of transcendence*, which conceal to the same degree as they reveal. Pieper did not use any of Jaspers’ expressions to describe the same incident and would never have done so owing to the bond of his thinking to the personal incarnation of truth, which had stepped out of the blur of transcendence. However, he agreed with Jaspers in respect of the true “accomplishment” of philosophy, which ought to be the awakening of the philosophical question about the totality as well as the effort of keeping it awake. Because of its existential indispensability, he defended this accomplishment against the optimism of (neo-scholastic) academic philosophy¹⁰¹ and against the plain rationalism of the philosophy of Enlightenment¹⁰². Maybe there is no modern philosopher – except for Karl Jaspers – who always combined the perceptibility of reality together with its incomprehensibility as consistently as Pieper did. Jaspers would have accepted Pieper’s reasons only to a certain extent. For certain, he would never have supported the thesis, ingeniously simple and yet bearing many theological premises, that the fact that things were created is at the same time the reason for their perceptibility.¹⁰³ However, he might probably have agreed with Pieper on the fact that historicity belongs to the nature of the finite spirit, revealing itself in the phenomenon of an unlimited actuality of cognition. Human perception is always concealing to the same extent as it is revealing, since it will never be able to have an ultimate overview of the totality.¹⁰⁴

The reason for the singular philosophical connection of Jaspers and Pieper, and the grounds on which their special position in modern philosophy is based are outlined in a sentence of Pieper’s that successfully formulates their insight into the nature of philosophy, which is, at the same time, imperfect and yet transcends man, that is, their indispensable contribution to a truly human existence: “And this is the ‘accomplishment’ of philosophy: when man performs his highest ability, [philosophy] renders it possible for him to find out again and again: the world is a mystery; I know that I do not know that which really is, not yet. It is the accomplishment of real philosophizing to constantly remind man of the incompleteness of his nature, the state of not yet, the structure of hope in his existence – and this amidst the skillfulness and perfection of educational knowledge characterizing the master and possessor of nature – which necessarily exposes him to the danger of deeply misconceiving himself and the world.”¹⁰⁵

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¹⁰⁰ Cf. his literary legacy cited in Hans Saner, *Karl Jaspers*, 44 f.

¹⁰¹ Cf. Pieper, *Unastrinkbares Licht. Über das negative Element in der Weltansicht des Thomas von Aquin* (the title of the first edition of 1953 being *Philosophia Negativa*), *Werke*, volume 2, 112-152.

¹⁰² Cf. Pieper, *Wahrheit der Dinge. Eine Untersuchung zur Anthropologie des Hochmittelalters*, *Werke*, volume 5, 99-179, in particular chapter I, 101-116.

¹⁰³ Cf. *ibidem*, 140 ff.; cf. also Pieper, “Kreatürlichkeit. Bemerkungen über die Elemente eines Begriffs,” *Werke*, volume 2, 440-464.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. Pieper, “Was heißt Aktualität?,” *Werke*, volume 8.1, 230-234.

¹⁰⁵ Pieper, *Die Philosophie in der modernen Welt*, *Werke*, volume 8.1, 136.