
THE CONDITION OF PHILOSOPHY TODAY

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There is something peculiar and even strange in the situation of philosophy today. For, this situation is obviously characterized not so much by a specific emphasis on one or another properly philosophical problem, not by the predominance or by the recession of certain philosophical topics or questions; it is characterized much more decisively by *the position of philosophy in general* within the whole of society and especially within the whole of human search for truth, within *la recherche collective de la vérité*. This place, rank, and status of philosophy itself has become more and more problematic. Why philosophy at all? This question, most aggressively asked from outside, has become, as it seems, much more urgent than the specifically philosophical questions themselves—no matter whether formal logic is concerned or philosophical anthropology or linguistic analysis. Of course, the distinction between the “exterior” and the “interior” situation of philosophy is somewhat inexact and provisional. For, the question of what is the good and the use of philosophy itself and what it is for and what philosophy means with regard to the life of human society—this question itself is of course an eminently philosophical question. And nobody is able and competent to answer it or to try to give an answer—nobody but the philosophizing man himself. Like any other philosophical question, it forces us to take into consideration the whole of human existence; and whoever intends to discuss the question cannot avoid bringing into the play and declaring (like at the customs, at the border), his own ultimate convictions. The reason why this is unavoidable is that also *the objections against* philosophy as a whole are based on a “Weltanschauung,” which means, on a conviction which explicitly concerns the whole of reality and existence.

The questions to be discussed here are in fact countless. I should like to restrict myself to the discussion of *three points* which, I feel, have indeed a special topical interest. Perhaps those three points could be formulated in the following provisional way:

- (1) philosophy within the modern world of work;
- (2) philosophy and the ideal of scientific exactness; and
- (3) philosophy and theology.

Before I try to discuss these points one after the other I should like to say as clearly as possible, in which meaning the term *philosophy* shall be used here—whereby I explicitly resign any claim of originality. By philosophy I understand nothing else than that which the great tradition always has understood by it, namely: the consideration of (perhaps I should rather say: the attempt to take into consideration) the entirety of what we encounter and meet with. But I think it might be good to elucidate a bit more the three main elements of this description, which perhaps may be called even a definition of philosophy. These three elements are the terms *consideration*, *entirety* (totality) and *encounter*. All of them express something which seems to me to be a matter of rather great consequence.

First: “consideration” (or: to take into consideration) means something like this: that, with a kind of amazement and astonishment, I keep awake a question; consideration is at any rate rather the search after an answer than its discovery. This term *consideration* excludes from the beginning the opinion that philosophy could be something like a positive “doctrine” (for instance the doctrine or theory of being as such, of being as being). With this it is already clear, that this concept of philosophy is fighting in two directions: first against the idea of “scientific philosophy” which maintains or postulates that the philosophizing man ought to bring to bear the principles of the exact sciences within the field of philosophy; but it also stands against the claims of the speculative “system-philosophy,” which understands itself as “the comprehension of the Absolute” (as Hegel says) or as “the science of the eternal archetypes of things” (as Schelling puts it). Further, when I said, the philosophizing man should have to deal with the *entirety and the totality* (of what we encounter), this does not mean that a truly philosophical question would be asked only in that case, in which the totality of world and existence is formally made the topic and the theme of discussion; but it does mean that the topic of a philosophical question, however concrete or particular this topic may be, has to be viewed against the horizon of the whole of reality and that the object has to be considered under every possible aspect (whereby it may be left open and undetermined just what a “possible aspect” is).

I am speaking here of exactly the same thing as Alfred North Whitehead had in view, when he said: that the specifically philosophical problem, which never will be solved definitely and once for all, consists in this: to conceive a *complete fact*; I could also say: to conceive a fact *completely*. Thirdly, I said that philosophizing means the consideration of all we *encounter and meet with*. By this I wish to emphasize the necessary relation of philosophy with experience, but at the same time I try to exclude any limitation and restriction to what usually is called the

empirical fact in the plain and compact sense. I can possibly encounter something, which I do not simply experience. That which I encounter is something which offers resistance; possibly it does not show itself, and I cannot simply observe or state it, but nevertheless I am not able to discuss it away. I can possibly ignore it for a while or I can misinterpret it—let us say out of some vital or ideological interest. But, in the long run, and if I do not completely turn away the eyes of my soul, it brings itself to my recollection if only with some scruples (as with fish hooks); uncompromisingly and stubbornly it presents itself to my look. And I should say whatever our cognition encounters in this manner is the subject-matter of philosophy, *only* this and *all* this.

These previous remarks have not only, as I hope, made it somewhat more conceivable how and why it could happen that the position of philosophy and its relation to the modern world of work, to the exact empirical sciences, and to theology became problematic at all; they have, moreover (which, I hope, shall become evident later on), paved the way a bit for an answer, which may show and advocate the *independence* of philosophy as well as its *necessity*.

I

The objection against philosophy from the side of the modern working world is, considered as a theoretical argument, not especially impressive; its weight lies in its practical, life-determining power. The objection, put into an abbreviating formula, goes like this: philosophizing is senseless and, above all, disadvantageous and detrimental, because it does not serve for anything and even hinders the active realization of the aims and needs of life. This argument has, so to speak, several different degrees of radicality and, of course, it does not at all need to be formulated always explicitly. Those degrees may reach from the naive involvement in the workaday practice to the deliberate claim, that the *bonum utile*, the mere utility should be something absolute and, what is the same, to the explicit indifference to truth. The most extreme case is the practitioner of power, resisting every “useless” knowledge.

First of all, one ought to see that the emergence of the modern working world cannot be attributed to mere human wantonness; on the contrary, it is something simply unavoidable and so far something legitimate. Mankind is indeed confronted, up to a quite new degree, with the task of securing the means of existence; and it is not only the fight against hunger which forces us to make the most intense use of all energies available, it is also the preservation of political freedom, which rightly requires all our capacities. Sometimes one may be tempted, quite

understandably, to ask oneself whether it is really right to insist on the claim that it nevertheless belongs to the elements of a truly human life to keep present and alive the question of the ultimate meaning of the whole of reality, which means: to philosophize.

On the other hand: the strangeness of the philosophical act within the modern working world is nothing but a sharper degree of that incommensurability that exists ever since between philosophy and the normal practice of everyday. Normally, man does not feel in the mood to ask for the ultimate meaning of reality as a whole. As long as our attention is absorbed by the active realization of purposes, we are *not* in the mood to consider philosophically the whole of existence. Whoever is conducting a case before the court, normally is not just interested in the philosophical question what justice in general *is*. There is needed, ever since, a shock, a violent push, a concussion of the normal average attitude to world and life—so that philosophizing, which means the consideration of the whole of reality may be put into motion at all. A concussion of this kind is for instance the experience of death, and also the other great power of existence, Eros, can possibly strike a man in such a way, that the pertinent occupation with the necessities and needs of daily life becomes suddenly unimportant to him or even impossible because the *whole* of existence comes into the picture. And indeed, man philosophizing has this in common with the other one, who has been shaken by the experience of death and also with that one who has been touched by the power of Eros and, by the way, also with the man in prayer and the poet, even with one who perceives and assimilates a poem in a poetical way, which means, in the only adequate way—like all these figures man philosophizing, too, does not unquestionably fit in with the functioning of the workaday practice. Man philosophizing, too, sees things “differently” in comparison with the man of practice, who is engaged in the realization of purposes.

This inadequacy and discrepancy has existed, as I said, *ever since*; and it will *never* disappear. There is, however, *something new* in the case of the contemporary working world. What is *new* is not only the sharper radicality of that quite natural incommensurability. *New* is the explicit theoretical (one might even say: philosophical!) argumentation, intended to show that philosophy, in the ancient sense, is something meaningless and even something unseemly; such argumentation is also intended to do away with that old incommensurability; but in fact it does away then with philosophy itself.

This attempt, which after all is quite conceivable, has been undertaken, as it seems, *at all times*, at the latest since the sophists. But again, the radicality of this attempt has become always sharper. Obviously the

sentence out of the Great Soviet Encyclopaedia, according to which the final objective of even the most abstract sciences consists in the satisfaction of the needs of society, this sentence, I think, is only a more radical formulation of Descartes' postulate, that the old theoretical philosophy, ought to be replaced by a new "practical" philosophy, which should enable us, to become the masters and owners of nature, *maîtres et possesseurs de la nature*. And whenever in the totalitarian working state not only the sciences but also philosophy (or what passes for philosophy) has come into the trying situation of being forced to answer constantly the inquisitorial question, what its contribution is to the Five-Year-Plan, then, I should think, this is nothing but the strictest consequences of that Cartesian demand for a practical philosophy; and the dictator of the utility-plans in nothing but the contemporary modern form of the *maître et possesseur de a nature*.

This position, untheoretical on principle and based on pure will to power, clearly cannot be shaken by theoretical arguments. There is, however, one argument, an *existential* argument, so to speak, to which the human being, precisely within the totalitarian working world, seems to be extremely sensitive. The argument is: freedom.

At this point it comes to light at the same time, that we ourselves have to think anew, at least to *formulate* anew one fundamental thought to the great philosophical tradition—a thought which has, as it seems, more or less disappeared out of our range of vision. I am speaking of the Aristotelian thesis: that of all human activities the philosophical alone has the quality of freedom. This idea which at first sight indeed sounds somewhat strange, shows its enormous timeliness precisely in the confrontation with the totalitarian claim of the modern working state. This idea itself, to be sure, includes a whole philosophy of life, which cannot be explained here. But I must speak of two elements of that philosophy. The *first* element is the conviction that cognition of truth and freedom belong together in a very definite way; the *second* element is the conviction that the will to truth nowhere manifests itself more radically than in the philosophical act.

Concerning point *one*, (freedom and cognition of truth), I should like to mention an experience I had some years ago in a discussion group with students from the totalitarian world. Almost incidentally one of the participants mentioned a Russian novel, at that time everywhere spoken of, today already more or less forgotten. The friends from the other side of the Iron Curtain said that this book could not be printed and published in their own country because the truth about the Russian Revolution allegedly had been grossly distorted. To this we replied: perhaps one could find out how things really are—or not? Therefore, it

is true, it would be indispensable to discuss the matter in question absolutely *independently*—independent of every official direction and instruction. Moreover, a “free room” in the midst of society would be needed—a range, in which such a discussion could take place without interference. This was the point at which several things suddenly became clear to *all* members of the group. First, it became clear what it means whether in a political community this “free room” does or does not exist—a room, *nota bene*, within which all practical purposes and interests (be they collective or private, political, ideological, economical) are explicitly suspended. Moreover, it was suddenly evident for everybody, that this asylum, this place of immunity (in the old juridical sense) had certainly to be protected and guaranteed from outside, by the political power, but that, above all, the freedom of this asylum had to be made possible and even constituted *from inside*: by nothing but the will to truth, which is, and be it perhaps only for this one moment, interested exclusively in one thing: to find out how things really stand. That and how much this (this: to be able not only to think, but also to *say*, how according to one’s own best knowledge things really are and stand)—how much this means: freedom, not the whole of freedom, but a very essential indispensable piece of freedom. On this point we needed not waste a single word, at that time, in Berlin. By the way; this freedom from any service of practical aimings and purposes, by this same freedom is meant the old concept of *liberal arts*; *artes liberales*, St. Thomas says (in his commentary on that same passage of the Aristotelian metaphysics), *artes liberales* are called only those human activities which are related to the knowledge of truth.

But now we have to discuss the *second* element of that Aristotelian conception: Why and how should “*theoria*,” how should this will to truth and nothing but truth be a distinguishing mark of *philosophy*? Does not *every science* aim at exactly this: to see things as they really are? Do not therefore science and freedom belong together in exactly the same way as freedom and philosophy?

(As you see, at this point the topic “Philosophy and Science” comes already into the play; and it is indeed *not* a mere chance, that the demand to nullify the distinction between philosophy and science has been proclaimed just on the basis of the modern *working* world.)

We said, “*theoria*” in the old sense means that attitude toward reality, in which there is only one thing that matters: that man gets sight of reality and that things are seen as they really are. But since this manifestation of reality means exactly the same as *truth* (for truth is nothing but reality’s coming to man’s sight), therefore one can say also: the theoretical attitude to the world is directed to truth and nothing else.

This will to truth, further on, manifests itself *by silence*; for, only the silent is able to listen. And in *this* consists the *difference* between *philosophy* and *science*: to philosophize means to listen so completely and totally, that this listening silence is disturbed or interrupted by nothing, not even by a question. Science, on the other hand, is *not* silent, it *does* ask a question. And it is precisely this question, explicitly formulated under a specific particular aspect, by which science *constitutes* itself as *this* special science. The scientist explicitly wants to hear something quite definite, which lies within a formally limited range; and also his silence is only *partly* a silence; it is, in this sense, a *particular* silence. But the silence which has to be realized in the philosophical "theoria" (and the empirical individual never will succeed in realizing it *perfectly*), this silence should fill the soul entirely. This presupposes an unbiased openness, which is much more than the famous "scientific objectivity." It might rather be characterized by Goethe's formulation "complete renunciation of any pretension." Even more to the point would be the biblical phrase of the simplicity (or: singleness) of the eye: "If thy eye is single, the whole of thy body will be lit up" (Matt. 6. 22). The scientist, even if he would be hunting ever so passionately after a solution of a problem, the scientist need not be engaged to *such* a degree and not in the *existential* center of his person. That is to say, science is not to such an extreme degree "theoria" as philosophy is. A scientific physician, for instance, may conduct excellent investigations of what happens physiologically when a man dies (regarding respiration, circulation, brain function), and he may nevertheless, at the same time, close his mind to the question, what else happens whenever a man dies, what on the whole and altogether is taking place there, not only physiologically, but in *every* possible respect. Here that openness on the whole is necessary, which alone could possibly enable him, to get sight at all of the dimensions of the subject-matter of philosophy. Not only the very special kind of "critical attitude" is here coming to light, which makes all the difference between scientist and philosopher and which means not so much to refuse everything that cannot be exactly verified, but rather to be anxious that not one single aspect of reality be suppressed or forgotten. Not only this comes to light here, but also the other fact (as John Henry Newman puts it): "knowledge . . . is then especially liberal or sufficient for itself . . . when and so far it is philosophical." This is so because philosophy alone (although the sciences, of course, also have to *deal with truth*)—because philosophy alone, as Aristotle says, is *science of truth* in the strict sense, *maxime scientia veritatis*.

In fact, science, compared with philosophy has a specifically different relation to *freedom*. There exists not only a special kind of intellectual

unfreedom, which, as it seems, can only befall the scientist (I am speaking of the self-restriction to what is exactly knowable). But moreover science, because of the essential *practicability* of its results, quite legitimately *serves* and can be *taken into service* of purposes which lie outside of science. And the modernity of all those old truths becomes evident as soon as one tries to defend the right of pure "theoria" and philosophical contemplation against the totalitarian claim of the contemporary working world.

II

When Karl Jaspers said in 1960 (in an academic address) that philosophy had become an embarrassment for all, he had in view the situation of philosophy not within the working world but within the *University* of today, which clearly subordinates itself more and more to the standard and measure of the exact sciences. Again, this discord cannot be put out of the world—unless philosophy itself would be put out of the world. In philosophy something happens which is, considered scientifically, indeed scandalous and even impossible, provided that you understand by philosophy the same as Plato and Aristotle and the great tradition up to Karl Jaspers have understood by it.

On the other hand, scientific research and philosophy have never been an obstacle to each other; strictly speaking, not the sciences themselves are the adversaries of philosophy, but those who maintain that exact science is the only binding and norm-giving model of all occupation with reality and truth. However, debates like this in the history of ideas (*Geistesgeschichte*) usually do not come about by a mere chance or by sheer frivolity. And it may be good from time to time to check up and to formulate anew the position of both parties. I have to limit myself here to a kind of catalogue of complaints and differences, from which the controversy usually catches fire.

The first point is: the philosophizing man and the scientist are in a radically different sense "on the way" to the answer they are searching for. Whoever undertakes to consider world and existence as a whole has set his foot on a way, on which he never will come to an end; he will *remain* "on the way"; his question will never be answered completely, nor his hope satisfied and stilled. The physicist on the other hand, who tackles a special problem, does not enter upon an unfinishable way; one moment he will have accomplished his way and his question will be answered. Of course, immediately new questions arise, but then this will be a new story again. In the manifesto of the Vienna Circle (entitled: "Wissenschaftliche Weltanschauung"—Scientific Worldview) it has been

said: we do not know any insoluble mysteries; questions whose unanswerability is clear are no longer scientific questions; they will be immediately put aside. Why ask questions which cannot be answered? The reply from the side of philosophy will be: couldn't it be that as long as you are really asking the question, and perhaps only then, you keep yourself open to your infinite object; could not this be perhaps the only way to remain, so to speak, at its heels? And the philosopher will be inclined to add that the centric existence of the earthly historical man also means "being on the way"; and his existence, too, not unlike philosophy, has the structure of hope. Probably this conviction of the nonperfectibility of the historical man and of human society belongs to the existential presuppositions of a conception of philosophy which includes in its very definition the impossibility of an adequate and final answer to the philosophical question.

A *second* conflict between science and philosophy, again not easily to be settled, is the basically different idea of the greater or smaller perfection of human knowledge in general. From the viewpoint of science, it will be said: knowledge is perfect to the same degree as it is possible to grasp a reality or a fact with clear concepts and to express it in a precise formulation. The view of the philosophizing man is quite different.

It is, I think, not only a humanly moving event, but also a highly characteristic one, that Alfred North Whitehead, whose career had begun under the sign of the *Principia Mathematica*, at the end of his life as a philosopher in the great style of the occidental tradition had to confess: "The exactness is a fake." (Professor Nathaniel Lawrence, who wrote a well-founded book on Whitehead's philosophical development and who attended that famous farewell-lecture, which the eighty-year-old Whitehead finishes with that same sentence—Lawrence told me, that "he spoke it with all the vigour that he was able to put into his high, frail voice; and with a benign radiance that made you think he was about to say 'The Lord is my shepherd'; and maybe he was.") There can be not a shade of the suspicion that the former cofounder of modern mathematical logic could have proclaimed here or even conceded any kind of irrationalism. No, what comes to light here is a *changed* idea, namely, the *philosophical* and not any longer a scientific idea of the perfection of human knowledge. This idea means that not the *modus* of perceiving is decisive but the rank of *what* you perceive; wherefore, as Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas say, "the least insight one can obtain into sublime things is more desirable than the most certain knowledge of lower things."

A *third* point of quarrel: All results of science have the character of discovery, that is to say, of the disclosure of something that up-to-then

was simply unknown. Under this aspect, it must appear as a kind of scandal that philosophy in fact does not only not satisfy this claim, but that it explicitly does not even make such a contention or pretense. Philosophy aims at something absolutely different—different from the extension of our knowledge of the external world. Of course, whoever views, in a philosophical way, a phenomenon like “guilt” or “freedom” or “death”—of course does intend to obtain a deeper insight into that phenomenon. Yet what in fact happens is that the philosophizing mind, in its deeper understanding, would not get sight of something absolutely *new*, of something which it simply did not know before at all. So far Wittgenstein’s sentence, at least in its negative part, is quite correct: “The result of philosophy is not a number of ‘philosophical propositions’”; but Wittgenstein is *not* right when he continues that this result should consist in clearing up the propositions of science. What happens in philosophy, or better, in the *philosophical act*, is rather that something that we did already know becomes more perspicuous and evident; what happens is that *reconquest* of something forgotten, which we call “remembrance.” Even the great so-called discoveries in the history of philosophy have *au fond* the structure of a *recognition*. And this, of course, is scarcely an impressive thing, if you consider it from the viewpoint of sciences, which every day triumphantly bring something new before the eyes of men—before their eyes and into their hands.

“Progress”—the glory of sciences—is indeed in the sphere of philosophy a rather problematic category; if “progress” means that the total sum of knowledge should become *eo ipso* greater and richer—*eo ipso*, that is to say: in a direct proportion to the passing of time.

Nevertheless, the philosopher ought to accept the scientific criticism at least in two points, even if this criticism should not be completely justified. The two points are: the philosophical language and the relation to experience.

Often enough, on the side of science, the criticism of philosophical language is taken all too easy. The reason is, I think, that the scientist just does not know the demand with which the philosopher always is confronted: namely, to speak of something which he undeniably encounters, but which at the same time, he is not able to voice or describe exactly; and to make perceivable in his philosophical utterance and together with his positive statement the ultimate incomprehensibility of his object. However, it is not just a little that philosophy may learn from the language of science. Even in the most complicated scientific treatise, it is, strictly speaking, not the language which makes the understanding difficult; whereas, as everybody knows the difficulty of reading a philosophical book is not too rarely caused by its language and by

nothing else; language itself is the obstacle; perhaps I should rather say: the obstacle is the misuse of language. But this not only violates the spirit of science; it is likewise in contradiction to the style of the great occidental philosophy itself. Wherever the common linguistic usage is replaced by terminological arbitrariness, there has been left the realm of the *recherche collective de la vérité* (which does certainly not exclude, but rather even promotes the formation of followings).

Thus, clarity of speech is demanded not only from science but also from philosophy. But clarity is not the same as preciseness. At any rate, there is a special kind of precision, which philosophy in fact not only *has* never reached, but which philosophy cannot even *wish* to reach. This is the reason (*one* of the reasons) why philosophy can never accept the suggestion to renounce the use of natural historical language and to produce instead of it an artificial formalized terminology as the exact sciences did. "Precise" means: "cut off." The precision of the artificial term consists in this: under a certain, clearly defined aspect it cuts and snips a special partial phenomenon out of a complex fact; and the technical term offers this partial phenomenon like an isolated specimen for observation purposes. But just by this procedure, the complex fact, the "whole," with which philosophy by definition is concerned, is more or less obscured; whereas, on the other hand, the natural, historical, naturally grown language is just keeping present this complex whole. An example: the term *exitus*, used sometimes by physicians, in order to designate the physiological fact of death, the mere ceasing of the vital functions of the body—this term is "precise"; the word of natural language corresponding to this term *exitus*, is *death*. This word is much less "precise," but it is much more "clear" because "death" means and designates the whole of what really happens, when a man dies. What is important in the philosophical utterance is this: to make audible the full power of designation which is contained in the natural language and which *au fond* is known to everybody, to make it audible in such a way that, beyond all precision, the great object of human search for wisdom, concerning everybody, becomes and remains conspicuous.

Besides the allegedly lacking precision of language, the most objectionable peculiarity of philosophy seems to be its questionable relation to *experience*. And, I think, it is indeed hopeless, but also not worthwhile to try to defend as "philosophy" the countless essayistic or systematizing forms of a merely constructive-speculating thinking. The proposition of the manifesto of the Vienna Circle, "There is no way to substantial knowledge beside the way of experience" (which, after all, by no means is an empirical finding), this statement is, in the main, absolutely correct. Of course, it depends upon what you understand by

experience. My suggestion would be to define experience as knowledge that comes about through an immediate contact with reality. But the organ and the infinitely sensitive and differentiated reflector of such a contact is the whole man alive. And if really our purpose is to come, on the way of experience, to a deeper and more universal knowledge of that which is, nothing of which this reflector registers must be left out of account; again I am quoting Whitehead: nothing can be omitted, experience sleeping and experience waking, experience happy and experience grieving, experience in the light and experience in the dark, etc.

Therefore, if I accept altogether the critical demand that philosophy should legitimize itself by going back to experience, I insist at the same time on the "de-dogmatization" of the concept "experience," to whose contents everything belongs that Whitehead spoke of, and perhaps even something more.

III

The most "problematic" problem I have saved for the conclusion. There is not much controversy about the necessity, that whoever nowadays is dealing with the "essence" of man is not allowed to take no account of evolution (for instance). But there certainly will come up much controversy, if somebody would maintain (as I do): that a philosophical consideration of man is not allowed either to ignore the statement of sacred tradition which says that, in the earliest beginning of human history, something extremely fateful happened to man—something the consequences of which determine the existence of historical mankind up to this day. The general question is the following: Does it belong or not to the strictly philosophical business of man philosophizing to include into his consideration informations about world and existence which come out of a region, that could be designated by names like "revelation," "sacred tradition," "faith," "theology"? My answer to this question would clearly be: *yes*, the inclusion of such informations into the philosophical discussion is not only legitimate, but it is indispensable and necessary.

But first I should say more expressly, what to understand by those names revelation, tradition, faith, theology. *Revelation* means here the primary, absolutely incomprehensible act of communication, in which a divine speech, a *theios logos*, becomes audible; it is what Plato has called "the bringing down of a divine message by an unknown Prometheus." *Sacred Tradition*: this is the process of handing down and receiving, by which that revelation, once given, is kept historically present through the generations. *Faith* is the personal act of assent by which man accepts

the divine speech as truth, for the sake of his superhuman origin. *Theology* is the attempt to interpret the documents of revelation and sacred tradition and to grasp their real meaning.

But my thesis is still exposed to so many misunderstandings that I should like to begin by saying what it does *not* mean. First, I am *not* speaking here of the general phenomenon, that whoever tries to make up his mind about the ultimate meaning of world and existence goes actually and unavoidably back to informations which have the character of a statement of belief (even if the negation of "sacred tradition" and "revelation" has been explicitly formulated as a principle). Always again it is surprising how little, for instance, J.-P. Sartre seems to notice this. Apparently he is not at all aware of how uncritically he presupposed the nonexistence of God, much more "believingly" at any rate, than the traditional occidental philosophy has ever presupposed that the world is creation. Nevertheless, Sartre's thinking, because he "declares" expressly his own preceding fundamental "convictions of faith," possesses that immediate existential relevance, which always is the distinguishing mark of a seriously performed philosophizing.

Further, I do *not* speak here of "the" philosophy, but of the philosophical *act* and of the philosophizing *person*. I do not deal here with the question, whether, in a systematic exposition of the problems of philosophy, theological statements ought to be included or not in the discussion. What I maintain is only this: *if* the philosophizing person in fact considers certain super-rational statements on world and existence to be *really informations*, that is to say, if he actually does not doubt their truth, he would cease philosophizing seriously in the very moment in which he would leave them out of account *because* he would, from that moment on, no longer consider his object under every possible aspect! What I have in view is only the case of a philosophizing person, who is expressly at the same time a believer, which in our Western civilization normally means: one who is a Christian. But I explicitly *disregard* here the problem whether there can be or not a Christian philosophy. What I maintain is, once more, only this: insofar as a Christian philosophizes in existential seriousness, to that extent he is neither able nor allowed to leave the truth of revelation out of his consideration.

Against this, there are in modern philosophy two weighty "cons," both of high typical value: I am speaking of Martin Heidegger and Karl Jaspers.

Heidegger's counterargument goes thus: to philosophize means to ask a question: the question, in the asking of which, according to Heidegger, the philosophizing consists, is: why is there being at all instead of nothing? Now, whoever considers the biblical myth of

creation to be true, Heidegger says, is *eo ipso* unable to ask seriously this question, since he is claiming to know the answer, which means, he is unable to philosophize.

Jaspers, on his part, does not say that the believer should be unable to philosophize but, quite inversely, that the philosophizing man should be unable to believe. For belief means to rely on someone else, who is acknowledged as authority; but authority is, as Jaspers says, the proper enemy of philosophizing.

If one investigates a bit closer the concept of philosophy, which is behind those two statements, it becomes clear that Heidegger as well as Jaspers both emphasize an aspect which in the traditional conception of philosophy from Plato to Kant is of almost no importance, if it is mentioned at all.

Heidegger with provoking radicality insists on the postulate that philosophizing essentially be *asking a question*. It is true that also in the great philosophical tradition it has been said always again that the philosophical question after the ultimate meaning of world and existence will never be quieted or satisfied by a final absolute answer. But: to ask a question means *here*, to *aim at an answer* and to remain open to an answer. Whereas, in the case of Heidegger, to ask a question seems to mean rather: to refuse on principle every possible answer and to close the mind against it because of the question's remaining a question.

Jaspers, on the other hand, emphasizes especially the independence of philosophy. The philosophizing man certainly is longing for an answer, but not that unconditionally, that he would be willing to accept it from someone else. This idea is, to be sure, not altogether foreign to the old concept of philosophy; but it never has had by far such an importance.

Both points of view, that of Heidegger and that of Jaspers, have one thing in common: the almost jealous vigilance to prevent any possible contamination of the formal property of the philosophical act; the methodical "purity" of philosophy seems to be more important than the solution of the philosophical question. And this marks the difference of the attitude of the great occidental philosophy which never considered itself to be a special, cleanly limited academic discipline and which, paradoxically speaking, never was interested in "philosophy" at all. Instead, it was interested, with an energy of mind which completely consumed its attention, only in this: to bring before the eyes and to keep in view what it ultimately means to be real, to be a man, to be just, to be free, and so on. The great figures of the philosophical tradition are concerned with nothing but an answer to questions like these—the answer may be ever so "unprotected" and may even come from somewhere else (be it even from a superhuman sphere).

Socrates never hesitates to confess that he does not know by his own the last truths on which human life is based, but that he got to know them only "ex akoos," by virtue of hearing; and the neighborhood of rational argumentation and mythical tradition, characteristic for almost all Platonic dialogues, means the same. In Aristotle's much more "scientific" philosophy, it is not so evident; Werner Jaeger, however, has shown, that (as he says) the *credo ut intelligam* stands also behind his (Aristotle's) *Metaphysics*. Even with Immanuel Kant the same tradition is still in force, which again is not immediately evident. But how surprising it is, eight years after the *Critique of Pure Reason*, he calls the New Testament an "imperishable guide of true wisdom," wherefrom reason gets "a new light with regard to all, that always remains in darkness but about which nevertheless it needs instruction."

How exactly this connection of what we know and of what we believe could be described—this is a new and a very difficult question which cannot be discussed here and now. Moreover, it is nowhere written that it possibly could be answered at all in a handy theoretical formula. What is in question here is not only a difficulty of thinking. But above all, this combination has to be realized under the conditions of concrete existence. Conflicts are not only likely but simply unavoidable; they are the natural companions of intellectual progress.

It could be called even the criterion of a true philosophical education, to be prepared for those discords and to be ready to sustain them and to resist hasty harmonies as well as premature resignation—which is quite in conformity with the great sentence: that the superiority of a philosophy which incorporates every attainable information does not so much consist in smoother solutions, but in showing more evidently, that reality is a mystery.