

**Milan Uzelac**

**The World and Existenz**

By the late 19th and early 20th century the notions of the world and of human existence (*Dasein*) became the leading philosophical concepts; influenced by E. Husserl, a number of philosophers interpreted the world as a horizon, as a space for the play of possibilities (*Spielraum der Möglichkeiten*), within which we orient ourselves in relation to things. It could be said that two approaches to the phenomenon of the world dominated at that time: it was either interpreted by means of inner-worldly models or, starting out from its transcendence, as an existential.

In a world of which, as Kant already observed, we can have some notion but no image as such, since the world cannot be an object for us but only an idea, we encounter inner-worldly things among which perhaps the greatest ontic - and, considering their origin, also ontological - enigmas are works of art; if the nature and origin of works of art remains hidden from us, the nature of the world we inhabit is also dim; within the world (whose phenomenality cannot be something previously assumed), we have a knowledge of things in their accessibility (*Zuhandenheit*), we attempt to orient ourselves among them, we attempt to find some meaning significant to us, while, at the same time, we do not come to know the world itself.

We frequently speak of "worlds": we speak of the world of fashion, of the medieval world or the world of politics, and frequently we are unaware of the impropriety of use of the plural of this notion. No matter how problematic this notion may be, the world is one, and

no matter how inaccessible to matter-of-fact thought, the idea of the world remains one of the key problems of modern philosophy. Indicating that the world is the temporal place of existence, which as self-being refers to itself, K. Jaspers in his principal work entitled *Philosophie*, points out the linguistic origin of the word for world: according to Jaspers, if we follow the etymology of the notion of "world" in German, we find that it was formerly used to indicate a man's age, that is, his time, time measured by the human life-space (*Dasein*).<sup>1</sup> In this way (as opposed to Serbian, where the word for world [*svet*] has the same root as light [*svetlost*]), the interpretation of the notion of the world as posited by Jaspers, and which is close to the Judeo-Christian *saeculum*, also greatly resembles the one which we encounter in the philological interpretations of Heraclitus' *aion* (B 52) conceived as the time of human life. Supposedly, the *aion* is also a matter of a human lifetime, the time span of a human life, since it is considered that in the late 6th and early 5th century B. C. this notion lacked a cosmic dimension (just as in the case of the Stoics, several centuries later).

If we see the series of modern concepts of the world as a whole (as something that exists of itself) as still containing some part of what we find in the notion of *aion* as interpreted by the Stoic philosophers, who perceived time as the time of the world, or as the course of the world (*Weltlauf*), then the notion of world, as perceived in this way, remains close to the given world, which Jaspers understands as the technical world. The world perceived in this way could be seen as the paradigm of the world as interpreted in the early

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<sup>1</sup> Ph (1948), 71.

Hellenistic age - the world whose being (*Sein der Welt*) is created by man in knowledge without purpose and in artistic creation.<sup>2</sup> This creation is possible, among other things, because it is demarcated by a beginning and an end, which remain permanently inaccessible to real existence.

It is understandable in itself, and this should not be lost sight of, that Jaspers sees the world in its duality. On the one hand, he speaks of the world as something which possesses independent Being, while on the other hand, he considers it possible to understand the world as something which the subject produces for himself in knowledge without purpose and in artistic creation. The latter enables the world to manifest itself in its Being, and for Being to "become" present in some way. In this way, the world manifests itself in its worldliness and also in its Existenz, which is nothing else than the place of decision of Being of Existenz which is directed toward transcendence; in other words: the world is the predominance of the infinite in its finite form.

Since, in Jaspers's sense, 'situation' is the horizon in which we discover ourselves in the world that is to be understood as *our* world, and since man's being occurs only in a situation marked by a consciousness of Being, man as Existenz is open and incomplete within the world. Hence the essence of man cannot be determined since it lies in "the limitless task by whose fulfillment man would penetrate to the origin from which he came and to which he will return." Also, inasmuch as intentionality is a basic characteristic of Existenz, it is clear that it tends toward transcendence, just as

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

rational consciousness tends toward the world that surrounds it.

Jaspers is therefore right to point out the totality which never becomes an object, since it is a non-object; it cannot be conceived as object, but is always implied by what is objectively present. Thus it is possible for the totality in which Being (*Sein*) itself appears to be defined as a world but, at the same time, to be distinguished from totality as consciousness in general, as Existenz. If we accept this, we will not be surprised at the fact that Jaspers devotes a great deal of attention to the distinction between the world and Existenz, between the totality which we perceive as the world and the totality which is Being itself.

Since the object of Existenz manifests itself as a non-object, as something whose totality transcends all possible objectifying, and we consider the non-object to be an essential feature of transcendence, a characteristic of the world, there is reason to consider Jaspers's notion of the world to be very close to that put forward by his contemporary Fink. It seems that both of them attempt to understand the world as something opposed to man's finitude, so that the title of this essay could also be "translated" as: the world and man, or the infinite and the finite.

In this way we may come back to Kant, and we may continue to remain in the shadow of his way of posing problems, since we may come to think that all philosophy after Kant is only a helpless captive of his first *Critique*. The question remains open, even after we gain insight into Heidegger's effort (worthy of respect) to step outside of the philosophy of subjectivity by giving us a new definition of

existence as human being (Dasein).

The question arises whether the difference in the conception of the world, that is, between the world as (a) worldness devoid of foundation (*Weltlichkeit ohne Grund*), and the world as (b) appearance (*Erscheinung*) can be clarified by reference to already well-known relation: the world and nature. A satisfactory answer cannot be found if we rely on the distinctions which we encounter within the concept of nature; for nature, if we follow Heidegger, can have three meanings: it can be understood as (a) a borderline case of existence of all worldly inner Being; as (b) surrounding nature (*Umweltnatur*); and finally, (c) as that which encompasses us (and which in Heidegger's later writings is replaced by the term earth [*Erde*]).<sup>3</sup> It would seem that even if we make these distinctions, there still remains the elusive specific nature of some "artistic thing", that is, "some artistic object", until the category of time is also introduced into the game: only from the standpoint of temporality is it possible to determine the sense of Being of a work of art and its various modalities.

We cannot rid ourselves of the impression that difficulties always arise when the results of analyses of the notion of the world and its nature are applied to the interpretation of phenomena of art and its products. The reason for this lies, to a great extent, in the nature of these two "worlds"-the world and art. Perhaps the world of art is only a metaphor, the most suitable key for discerning the world in the world, for the inexpressible to manifest itself directly and make itself transparent.

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<sup>3</sup> E. Tugendhat, *Der Wahrheitsbegriff bei Husserl und Heidegger*, Berlin 1970, 283.

The world is not something given in advance, and therefore Heidegger, like both Kant and Husserl, supposes that in nature there is no established order of the universe. This is the assumption of his transcendental analysis of the world which, conceived as the whole of Being, is not an object among other objects perceptible to the senses. It is quite clear why, in critical reflection, the world manifests itself as thought which we, as thinking essences (*Wesen*), construct, so that the expectations are quite justified that the key to the "system of the world" as well as to the "understanding" of the world of art should be sought in transcendental philosophy. The world of art, as opposed to the world of things, comes to appear as knowledge-of-oneself-as-a-whole.

It is not by chance at all that the consideration of the constitutive problematics of the world and subjectivity appears before philosophy as an immanent task of crucial importance and that reference to the problematics of art is legitimated by this. It is only through the analysis of the presence (*Anwesenheit*) of the work of art, through the analysis of its temporal dimension, that we reach those characteristics which determine its transitory dimension as (a) a temporally unchanging structure and, at the same time, also as (b) a being (*Seiendes*) created in time (on the ground of history), as a being which then, by its existence, permanently transcends the forms of existence of other beings.

Even if we accept the idea that one possible approach to a work could be based on an analysis of the manner of its constitution in the open space of a play of events which is already applied in his *Sein und Zeit*, one should not lose sight of Jaspers's warning that the

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question of the unique essence of art leads to problems.<sup>4</sup> If one attempts to avoid these problems by introducing the difference between the existential and the cosmic notions of the world, it becomes even more evident that this difference is more easily introduced than consistently realized as an idea;<sup>5</sup> for if the first notion appears to be understandable, the second already aims at the whole (*Allheit*) which is independent of man, at the totality. The world can be thought by starting from the world of things, but it can also be thought by starting from its worldliness (*Weltlichkeit der Welt*).

If everything that is within the world is finite, the very essence of finite things remains unelucidated, since finitude itself cannot be elucidated by the world; it is not something transparent surrounding things, some phenomenal characteristic of theirs (such as hardness, color, or the outlines of some shape)-the finitude of finite things has a worldly character.<sup>6</sup>

Every Being, Fink points out, belongs to the world which, in the final instance, is not the real subject of metaphysics. Thus the reality or unreality of the world can be grasped only by the opposition of thought to traditional metaphysics, which, for the greatest part of its history, substantializes Being (*Sein, esse*) and thereby remains on the level of objective thought.

A new thinking of the world is possible only by a questioning of the cosmological meaning of Being (*Sein*) and Nothing (*Nichts*), by a consideration of the basic notions, such as life and death, from whose

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<sup>4</sup> Ph (1948), 283.

<sup>5</sup> Eugen Fink, *Welt und Endlichkeit*, Würzburg 1990, 193.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

relationship the meaning of the world can be understood. It is not by chance that both Jaspers and Fink place the meaning of life and death at the heart of their philosophical studies, and that both, in the final instance, make an attempt to construct a philosophical anthropology. The difference between them can be seen in their different points of departure: while Jaspers attempts to incorporate into his presentation a series of empirical findings offered by the psychology of his time, Fink, basing himself on the results of Husserl's critical attitude toward empirical psychology which cannot be raised to the level of transcendental phenomenology, tries to solve the problem by starting out from the fundamental phenomena of human being (*Dasein*), which he sees as the metaphor of essential cosmic relations.

The fact that every notion of the whole need not also be a cosmological one is best confirmed by contrasting the philosophical views of Jaspers and Fink. While the former, though remaining always on the level of basic philosophical questions, considers being-whole as being-thing, as an inner-worldly oriented concept to which the term 'world' is usually applied, the latter tries to go outside the framework of metaphysics, to proceed from the level of ontology to that of cosmology, which is possible only by transcending the worldly inner character of metaphysics. The problem is not whether the world is interpreted as a substantiality or something like it. The basic difficulty, as Fink sees it, lies in not relying on the subjectivistic interpretation of the world, since "the metaphysics of substantiality finds its final and highest form in the metaphysics of subjectivity."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 194.



This is the point of divergence between Jaspers's existential philosophy and Fink's effort to transcend subjectivism and to interpret the world cosmologically by relying on the model of a game.

If we speak of the world as the sure ground on which our life occurs, it is easy to see that the world is not an object (*Gegenstand*) like other things in it, but that it determines man's essence. The world cannot be understood as something subjective or as something simply objective, but as a space-time (*Zeitraum*) within which each being appears.<sup>8</sup> However, as we have already observed, when we attempt to understand the way in which objects such as those created by artists exist, it becomes evident that we are dealing with something which has a quite specific relation to the world and inner-worldly things. Works of art come into being by at the same time creating simultaneously the ground (*Boden*) on which they subsequently rest. Philosophy has never managed to offer an adequate explanation of the way this happens.

The way out of the labyrinth in which we find ourselves each time we try to think the world and existence should perhaps be sought along Jaspers's lines. He correctly observes that art is essentially different from philosophy: while Being is accessible to philosophy as something conceivable, art reaches Being as something depictable. The world and its fundamental forms cannot be considered through concepts only but also through images. Our permanent task remains the consideration of thought itself in which concepts and images are infinitely intertwined.

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 170.