



Karl Jaspers and the Eastern Orthodox View of Transcendence: A Comparative Analysis

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Abstract

Karl Jaspers (1883–1969) was an important philosopher and thinker chiefly in the areas of epistemology, existentialism, the philosophy of religion, and also political theory amongst others. However, his ideas have to a very large degree become obscured over the years. This notwithstanding, among his important contributions, Jaspers articulated the notion that individuals do not cognize objects but explain and objectify their being as often unique thinkers and consequently they become themselves. It is a question of delineating and analysing the structure of Being, as such, which leads to ultimate illumination. Humanity may understand the mechanical operations of our corporeal world through science, but it is only philosophy that is proficient in giving insights into the human condition and the individual being who, in turn, has a capacity to exercise freedom. This article considers Jaspers' ideas on transcendence and how they differ from mainline Eastern Orthodoxy. It argues that only a person whose entire being has been transformed by faith has some access to truth. It is further advanced that, faith is *a priori* philosophical and not religious issue because it is ultimately a personal and thus subjective matter and has no support in authority. Faith is thus not to be viewed as an objective and communicable subjugator of reason. It is through suffering and a range of experiences and ultimately the reconning with death, that one encounters ultimate situations wherein the Transcendent God is encountered. God is not an object and can be known and described only through myths and symbols or ciphers. The Transcendent Being (God) is symbolically expressed in religion. Jaspers view of Being in its various facets is in opposition to Eastern Orthodox Christian views which is what this work interrogates to a limited extent. The Orthodox doctrine of God perceives God as a Transcendent Being in each of the material and immaterial domains of His Creation.

Keywords: Transcendence, Jaspers, Orthodoxy, faith, immanence, consciousness, ciphers, myths, truth, relationship.

Introduction

At the outset of this paper, it is essential to bear in mind that transcendence is essentially mystical since it is evidenced in religious experience. The paper interprets texts in an attempt to draw their meaning out and it is intended to *inter alia* generate conversation on the notion of transcendence as expressed by Karl Jaspers and the Eastern Orthodox Christian view which are in opposition.



Jaspers started off speaking about a philosophy of reason as opposed to a philosophy of existence, which he later introduced in his writings. He was of the view that scientific training is a critical preliminary step to philosophising even though philosophy is not accessible to science as such. However, in philosophy the idea of truth is highly personal and is apprehended by faith and communicated to other people by appealing to their freedom. Thus, one's own freedom plays an integral part in making the leap towards faith, and in the overcoming the condition of necessity. Such is the centrality of the notion of freedom in existential philosophy that both theistic and atheistic strands of existentialism regard it as central in their systems. Even an atheistic existentialist like Sartre for instance, believes that having been abandoned into a Godless world, the individual has no other recourse but choose himself; self-consciousness is on this basis *condemned to be free*. As a theistic existentialist, however, Jaspers considers transcendence normatively to be a subjective (and not objective) phenomenon for each individual to decide for itself in the world. For him, transcendence is within the world and denotes what is not empirically perceivable and it is beyond objectivity and inaccessible by Science. He thus highlights that we cannot speak of transcendence beyond this world.

Jaspers writings are loquacious and replete with aspects that are related to our primary focus, and he maintains that one's *weltanschauung* (world view) is invariably concentrated around untruthful certainties or inauthentic objectivized modes of rationality. People tend to withdraw into these with the intention of gaining a sense of security amidst the often dreadfully limitless potentials of human existence (Jaspers, 1951) in which existence hardens itself against contents and experiences which threaten to transcend or unbalance the defensive restrictions which it has placed upon its operations. Although some world views possess an unconditioned component, most world views exist as the limits of a formed mental apparatus. It is the task of psychological intervention, Jaspers thus argued, to guide human existence beyond the restricted antinomies around which it stabilizes itself, and to allow it decisively to confront the more authentic possibilities, of subjective and objective life, which it effaces through its normal rational dispositions and attitudes (Gadamer, 1976).

Jaspers considered the limits (*Grenze*) as habitual forms and attitudes of the human mental apparatus, and the experiences of the mind. He also speaks of limit situations (*Grenzsituationen*) as momentary experiences of trepidation, culpability or severe anxiety, in which one confronts the restrictions and unreasonable narrowness of its current forms, and this makes one abandon the securities of limitedness, and thus a new realm of self-consciousness is entered. Thus, in these limit situations we find unrestricted instants of human existence, where reason is attracted by penetrating impulses or necessities which induce it to expose itself to the limits of its consciousness and to pursue higher modes of knowledge (Schrag, 1971). Transcendence thus tells us about the limits of this empirical world and has nothing to do with spirituality or even mysticism.

One requires a freedom of consciousness to overcome its innate limits; and antinomies can only be expounded via speech. In simple terms, consciousness can be raised beyond its limits through penetratingly engaged communication with other people. Such communication with others assists one to suspend the preconceptions and fixed attitudes of human consciousness. When one attains a higher level of consciousness, existence raises metaphysical questions about itself and its source which it cannot respond to without an awareness that existence is transcendent, and that its truth is ultimately metaphysical (Jaspers, 1938). Jaspers believed that philosophy could unite peoples and that it could eliminate diversity and even unite cultures as a revealed faith. He stated "...a thinking that prepares the philosophical ground on which philosophy may be realized by individual self-realization, is a goal of Revelation" (Jaspers, 1953).



In keeping with the notion of freedom it should be noted at this moment that the freedom of consciousness is central not only in overcoming the realm of necessity but also in understanding one's own dreaded condition. For, transcendence as such is a function of one's ability to realise his wretched state of despair to which he finds himself; and it is a free self-consciousness that possesses the capacity or apperception of realising this. This is why, despair is conceived of by existentialists like Jaspers and Kierkegaard and others, to be a problem of a 'free being', or a 'free entity' which Heidegger refers to as *Dasein*. For this reason, Kierkegaard views despair to be both excellence and a defect; defect because of the obvious state of ruination. But more importantly, it becomes a qualification of excellence because in it, one recognises his own freedom. This is why in *Sickness Unto Death*, he avers that:

The possibility of this sickness (despair) is man's superiority over the animal, and this superiority distinguishes him in quite another way than does his erect walk, for it indicates infinite erectness or sublimity, that he is spirit. The possibility of this sickness is man's superiority over the animal; to be aware of this sickness is the Christian's superiority over the natural man; to be cured of this sickness is the Christian's blessedness. (Kierkegaard 1980: 15).

The above underscores the centrality of freedom in the continuum of Being, as well as the dialectical aspects immanent in the categories of possibility and necessity. Faith in this regard, becomes a subjective choice towards infinity in lieu of dread and despair on the one hand; and in terms of this being towards death on the other hand.

Religion and Transcendence

Jaspers reasoned that only a religious hermeneutic based in unconditional open-mindedness, could be suitable in seeking to construe the transcendent aspects of human existence. Furthermore, he argued that Transcendence could not be put down to only one predetermined religious truth and doctrines as this negated a range of other cultural and religious standpoints. Jaspers claimed that mythical or symbolic forms were important in religious inquiry, since these helped one to understand residues of transcendence. He also suggested that the Trinitarian Godhead should be viewed as being merely symbolic ciphers of what is possible for humans to attain. He viewed Jesus Christ as a cipher for human existential prospects of inner transformation (Jaspers, 1967). Religious doctrine could guide people to find freedom and possibilities. The truth of religion, he intimated, only becomes true if it is interpreted as a human truth, not as a truth originally external or prior to humanity. In its orthodox form, however, religion normally prevents the knowledge of transcendence which it purports to offer (Jaspers, 1962).

Jaspers suggests revisions are required toward revealed faith for any possibility of a thoughtful collective religious life where all of humanity is respected as global citizens: "1. Jesus, to many believers, is no longer the God-Man, Christ; 2. Revelation turns into a cipher; 3. Dogmatic religious truth ceases to be exclusive. Christian revelation becomes one of the ciphers, Jesus and God are replaced with Transcendence, just as with the Encompassing concept" (Hara, 1985). He argued that ultimately true Transcendence is the Encompassing of all Encompassings (Jaspers, 1994; Hara, 1985). Encompassing designates all which exists beyond the subject - object contradiction and Jaspers alludes to this as Being itself. Encompassing is also referred to as the 'horizon' by him.

Even though Jaspers appreciated what he called Biblical religion, he did not accept the claim made by the Christian faith to absolute and exclusive truth. He believed that dogmas such as the Incarnation and Atonement were totally incompatible with human freedom and the idea of personal responsibility (Walraff, 1970). Jaspers stressed the notion of human subjectivity as a locus of truthful transcendence and he considered philosophical claims to be expressions of fundamental mental disposition (Hartt, 1950). Human consciousness advances subjective-



existential questions about itself and truth which cannot be decided at a basic level of consciousness, and it is called upon to reflect existentially upon itself. Transcendence is critical and this includes one having Faith (*Glaube*), which includes an intuitive trepidation of a state of knowing or Being which surpasses commonplace knowledge (Jaspers, 1947a). There is Being-in-itself and also Being which we are (Hartt, 1950). Being comprises the World and the Transcendent. The World is being which one is not, and an unfathomable other that people are absorbed in includes space, time, substance and causality and far more (Jaspers, 1947a). The second mode of Being is Transcendence and a radical other. One can achieve a philosophical faith through the reception of concrete historical situations with all their various limitations and responsibilities while recognizing an unconditional obligation at certain high moments, and also when facing what he called ultimate situations, in which an entire person's being is at stake. This is where the Transcendent God is met (O'Connor, 1988).

The World in mythological language is a created being (Hartt,1950). There are also Spirit, Consciousness (*Dasein*) and *Existenz* which is a transcendental mode and the ultimate core of self being which is limited. Jaspers maintained that people are more than what they know or can even hope to know about themselves (Schrag,1971). Following Immanuel Kant, Jaspers suggested that any scientific assessments on people are invariably limited and incomplete. Søren Kierkegaard sought “a truth which is truth for me” (Kierkegaard 1996). Christianity is viewed as an attempt to offer one's life to the service of the divine. This cannot be argued, but only lived out daily. Christians will attempt to live life in the same manner as Jesus lived it. Gradually, Jaspers emulated Kierkegaard, and advanced a manner of describing what lies behind objective inquiries, namely the unique individual of or, as *Existenz*. People are reliant and inadequate beings and are thus open to a transcendence that helps them live from day to day and uphold their autonomy (Ehrlich,1975; Kane, 1981).

According to Jaspers, the notion of free will fundamentally makes all faith Existential. He thereby suggests that people have a choice to either adopt one or other faith or not (Ronny, 2012). He also viewed faith as being an irrational idea since one moves beyond reason and adopts irrational thoughts (Young-Bruehl, 1981). However, Existential philosophy contends that life does not make sense and death reduces existence to an absurd level. This is true as well of such thinkers as Kierkegaard and Sartre. For Kierkegaard in particular, life only makes sense and is meaningful when one finds unity with God. Consequently, when we confront the absurdity of life with absurd faith there is an absurd sagacity. Institutionalized Christianity is unable, in Jaspers understanding, to adequately express the relationship between *Existenz* and Transcendence (Peach, 2008).

Among the theistic existentialists, Kierkegaard is one who emphatically argues along this vein that life is fundamentally and primordially meaningless without God. Thus, self-consciousness for him, finds meaning when it rests completely in God. This means that one finds his freedom as being realised in and through God. Freedom lies in the individual taking a religious leap to faith. This is because “The self is healthy and free from despair only when, precisely by having despaired, its rests transparently in God” (Kierkegaard 1980: 60). This is why he marvelled at the Gotthold Lessing, the German philosopher for having insulated himself in his own subjectivity asserting that “in religious respects [Lessing] did not let himself be hoaxed into becoming world-historical and systematic” (1980: 55). For our purposes, it can be remarked that he attributes Lessing's genius to *finding* God. Accordingly, he views him as one who has truly made the religious leap as he further states that “Lessing has religious sensibility [and] has seized upon just that point of religious sensibility” (1980: 55). In the final analysis, Kierkegaard recognises in Lessing the epitome of inward subjectivity or creativity objectified onto the world.

Similarly, Jaspers states there is an invisible religion in the spirit, the secret kingdom of manifestation of being where souls live in harmony (Jaspers, 1962). Nevertheless, he maintained that Myths are used by people who seek truth and reality. He argued that it is



pointless for theology to seek God in metaphysics and that it was also futile to suggest that Transcendence was possible through any dogmatic prescriptions since these tend to degrade faith. He thus asserted that faith needs philosophy. Jaspers accepted that a philosophical faith incorporates a revelation based on an inner pursuit of Being. In a similar vein, Descartes had argued in the *Meditations* that God did not implant in the individual a faculty that would lead one to error. On the contrary, God as the benevolent, the omniscient and omnipotent, bestows upon the individual the possibility to discover not only the existence of God Himself, but also, the true discovery of the objects of the world. With this understanding in mind, Jaspers began to draw comparison between churches and revelatory truth residing under their authority. Consequently, he promoted the notion that churches should not be exclusive holders of revelatory faith (Jaspers, 1967). Empirical truths cannot be discarded and one can only internally comprehend one's interaction with infinity and such understanding can never be considered to be objective. Self-illumination and dealing with other beings is a very personal issue on the path to Transcendence and death cannot have meaning ascribed to it (Peach, 2008; Ehrlich & Wisser, 1988).

There are limit situations, like the death of a person one knows and then also one's predictable death, grief, failures, etc., which lead one to the edge of Transcendence so that faith 'kicks-in' as it were. There are antinomies so that the constructs of reason are continuously a misrepresentation of the character of truth. Our experiences create the limit and people become conscious of the limits of objective thought (Jaspers, 1955). The being of all people lies between objective thought and existential ambitions and only in this manner can one transcend mysticism and positivism and discover deliverance (Jaspers, 1954). He believed that religion prevents one from attaining Transcendence since a purely religious *weltanschauung* limits human possibilities through the imposition of rigid dogmas. Orthodox religion was essentially considered an impediment to communication, as it imposed dogmatic limits on one's innate capacity for truthfulness and transcendence (Olson, 1979).

It should be noted that however that the conception of transcendence does vary in existential philosophy largely between theistic and atheistic strands. What they have in common however is the centrality of the notion of freedom in the quest towards finding meaning to existence. Marjorie Grene (1952) sees this as the problem of 'authenticity', the desire to achieve authentic existence. She concurs that for the Christian existentialist, the meaning to life is achieved by way of reckoning with death and the choices that we make in relation to a time horizon that death brings about. In this regard she has in mind Heidegger's notion of being towards death. For the atheist however, the objective still concerns finding meaning amidst the compulsion of existential abandonment. Accordingly, in the absence of God man must make something out of himself and by himself. Thus, for the atheist, man is *a priori* a 'nothingness' and he will be nothing until he makes something of himself, what Sartre calls a 'product of his product'. Grene remarks of existentialism, that "genuine existence is conceived of as free, not in facing death so much as in facing the meaninglessness ground of its transcendence, that is, the fact that the values by which I live depend not on divine fiat or metaphysical necessity but on myself alone" (1952: 266). So, everything that humanity creates, the values that one lives by are the product of a person's own agency. The self-acting in this speaks to the notion of freedom as being at the heart of human reality which both strands of existential thought share irrespective of how meaning to life is attached to each of them.

On the notion of transcendence, Jaspers argues that God has manifested a Transcendence and has thus not appeared yet and cannot be known as a person, thus denying the dual nature of Jesus Christ as the God-man the *Theanthropos* (Nicolaidis, 2021; 2019), since this is a mere limited relative truth (Jaspers, 1947b). In his work *The Great Philosophers* (1957), Jaspers studied numerous figures such as Confucius and Buddha and this demonstrated that in both the East and the West, the highly progressive minds of important figures considered issues on human existence irrespective of religions and their dogmatic approaches. He thus



appraised Jesus from his ethical and existential characteristics, not as the Son of God, and God Himself, but rather as an exemplary person who was, “a teacher of a way of life...devoted only to God’s will and the ethos of love” (Hara, 1985).

God as a Transcendent Being is only encountered in one’s freedom and through faith. He is not hypothesized to exist by faith or the desire to believe in something- it is rather acknowledging Being from a free to decide perspective (Jaspers, 1951). The transcendent Other is referred to as Transcendence as the One, the all-encompassing, and Transcendence as the Encompassing (*das Allumgreifende*), of all the Encompassings (Hara, 1985). To Jaspers, neither God nor the human soul are conceivable positive objects of metaphysical conjecture. Their place is assumed by the ‘all-encompassing’ (*das Allumgreifende*), or Transcendence, and *Existenz*. *Das Allumgreifende* is not be understood as God as in mythological tradition but it is linked to the human soul and Transcendence allows one to exist and permits one to experience freedom. Jaspers viewed Being as the *Allumgreifende*, in both the objective and subjective self-being sense.

Conversely, it is the transcendental Other, such as Yahweh, the Christian God, or Buddha, etc. from the perspective of the philosophical faith, as meeting the revealed one. “Jaspers thinks that “one world of mankind on the earth”, where one can be tolerant toward other religions or other cultures, becomes possible, when people in various traditions meaningfully meet each other on the common ground for human beings” (Hara, 1985). Transcendence is not able to described metaphysically such that a person does not hear the word of God in empirical words but rather through ciphers (Olson, 1979). It is thus pointless to try to grasp God via religious dogmas or metaphysical doctrines, and mythology is then a way people try to converse with Transcendence. Jaspers rejected all positivist or scientific attempts to reduce religious phenomena to anthropological, social, or psychological needs. He also did not trust that a cogent theological or metaphysical analysis could explain them (Schilpp,1957). The idea of truth cannot be understood as a solitary unique truth and so to Jaspers, Transcendence emanates reading of various ciphers. In this context then, myths, religions, and also philosophies are explanations prototypical ciphers including the natural world, events in history such as the Holocaust etc., and one’s ultimate being (Schrag,1971). While these do not offer any conclusive truth around transcendence they serve as the vehicles through which one attains an individual conviction about the eventual meaning of life (Jaspers, 1933). Jaspers states that the world requires a collective ground for the diversity of faith that will permit lucid thinking, truthfulness, and a collective basic knowledge (Hara, 1985). We should un-forget and recall using philosophy, to remember things are important to us but still keep forgetting.

Karl Barth criticized Jaspers for the lack of objective religious content in his idea of Transcendence. The latter attacked Bultmann’s approach of scriptural *de-mythologization*. and the his endeavours to elucidate the truth-contents of the scriptures by eradicating the mythological and even historical rudiments of the New Testament. Jaspers sought to intrinsically unshackle the notion of Transcendence from Theology (Jaspers, 1962).

An Orthodox riposte

Mysticism, or a believer’s personal experience of the mysteries of faith, is distinctive in Orthodoxy. No one can ever claim to know God, because God is of course unknowable. We may know some things about God, e.g. His wisdom, goodness, etc., but such traits do not pronounce on God’s inner nature, because it is transcendent and beyond human understanding (Ware, 1963). Such qualities are immanently intelligible, but cannot be entirely perceived, possessed or known and they are thus transcendent. God’s immanence and his transcendence are exactly why He is to be adored. We adore the immanence of God because



He has made Himself knowable to humanity through His Logos. Orthodox theologians stress that the Christian faith is mainly a direct experience of the kingdom of God, and it is sacramentally present in the church.

The Church

The tradition of the Church is the very life of the Church and includes the dogmatical and all doctrinal tradition and this speaks to the notion of Transcendence. Tradition, as the life of the Spirit in the Church, additionally bears witness to God's presence and His workings. In Orthodoxy we accept fully that God is Transcendent since he is the Creator of creation. In reciting the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed the 'symbol of our faith' we say: "We believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible" (St. Gregory of Nazianzus, Oratio 39). This aligns with the notion of "Heaven and earth" (Genesis 1:1) and also "visible and invisible" (Hebrews 11:1-3). God is Transcendent over all of His Creation. Through *theoria*, the knowledge of God in Jesus Christ, people get to know and understand what it means to be fully human (the created image of God). It is through our communion with Jesus Christ that God shares Himself with humanity, so as to conform them to all that God is in virtue, holiness and knowledge. God's nature and *dynamis* (power) is absolutely independent of the material universe, and beyond all physical laws. Immanence, differs in that God is said to be fully present in the physical world and thus accessible to people in numerous ways which is of course what Jesus did as the God-man. Orthodoxy thus distinguishes between God's essence and God's energies (Spidlik, 1986). The former is unknowable, but God also sends divine energies to infuse creation and act in tangible situations. In this way, Orthodoxy worships the God of history.

The faithful can experience God through the divine energies which are come across as divine light and God's deifying grace (Ware, 1963). God is All-present but thus far we do not know how. St Paul therefore wrote: "For we know in part and we prophesy in part." (1 Corinthians 13:9). God is Holy and also a Just Being (Genesis 18:19; Isaiah 56:1). God is totally unalterable and unchangeable in His Transcendent Being and cannot be contained by any creation and yet He is the perfect, ever-present, invisible and unintelligible. The Holy Fathers of the Orthodox Church describe God as being the Absolute Infinite Being and He is impossible to see or comprehended. The only perception of Him is His infinity and incomprehensibility because as God He is unlimited by nature (St Gregory of Nazianzus, P.G., 36, 317).

In an Orthodox *weltanschauung* God is Truth and absolute goodness in its fullest form. Humankind must consider historicity and is free to make choices in life. Within the choices one can make is the idea of communication with other unique present and past beings and this leads to self-fulfilment. God is totally Transcendent and immanent in the Cosmos (Lossky, 1957). God is a personal God, in a Triune Godhead of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. They share one essence and energy (Karmiris, 1960). The Transcendence of God as the Creator Being expresses the truth that God is infinitely loftier than the whole of creation (Wierenga, 1989). Immanence is the complement of transcendence. God exists before creation (Psalm 90:2) and needs to unveil Himself to be acknowledged. Christ the Incarnate Son of God became a human being so that we too may be sanctified (Spidlik, 1986).

As the Creator, God is distinct from creation and has transcendent sovereignty (Romans 1:25). He lives in His own infinite realm and is the Transcendent Lord of All. Human reason is incapable of comprehending the Transcendent kingdom of God. God is higher, superior, and more than what humanity can ever hope to recognize. Humanity has many limitation but God transcends all boundaries (Lossky, 1957; Ware, 1963). Being or existence from an Orthodox viewpoint, denotes certain characteristics which distinguish one from other beings. It is that of which the being comprises (Lampadarios, 2006) The terms used to label God are His



attributes, virtues or the perfections of His Divine Nature, which allow His Essence to be distinguished from the world and is revealed to us as the absolute and infinite “BEING.” We must note that God’s essence is unapproachable and unimaginable and no words can describe His Divine Nature (St John of Damascus, Migne, P.G., 94, 801). “God is distinct from and independent of both nature and humankind. God is not simply attached to, or involved in, his creation. He is also superior to it in several significant ways” (Erickson, 1985). God is flawless and beyond any limitation and want and He possesses all perfection in His self-existence since He created everything that exists (St Gregory of Nyssa, P.G., 45, 953, 957).

Using the Abductive approach

To determine some of God’s attributes Orthodoxy uses the abductive method according to which one selects one of God’s basic attributes such as inter alia self-existence or self-essence, and based on this one can progressively come to some knowledge of the rest. The second method the Inductive method is one according to which one constantly seeks the divine attributes in sequence through the perceptible world, as they are revealed through the Cosmos (Lampadarios, 2006). There are also inter alia relative attributes which signify that there is some type of relationship between the Creator and His Creation, whereas there are also absolute attributes which can be characterized as transcendental. Nonetheless, the relative attributes (creativity) are eternal and exist in the essence of God. There are then also internal and hypostatic attributes of the Transcendent God including the Fatherhood of God the Father, the Son being a Son and the Procession of the Holy Spirit only from the Father (Lampadarios, 2006). Personal attributes are those that denote the Triune Godhead. Thus, God the Father as a Person cannot be God the Son, nor can the Holy Spirit as a Person be the Father or the Son. Each Person of the Holy Trinity differs from the other two according to their various hypostases (Karmiris, 1960). God also has essential attributes that denote that each Being of the Holy Trinity is the One True God who is without beginning, interminable, having goodness and compassion (Theodoretus of Cyrus, Migne, P.G., 83, 856). God is Transcendent as the ultimate reality and is omnipotence, omniscient, omnipresent and totally Indescribable and uncontainable (St John of Damascus, P.G., 94, 852). The Prophets had not seen the Lord Himself apart from what God had exposed to them, which was a small glimmer of His Divine Transcendent Glory (see Isaiah 6:1-3; Ezekiel 1:4-28; 2:10; 44:1-3; Daniel 7:9-10; Amos 9:1; Zachariah 3:1; 4:1-3).

God as Creator, is beyond the limits that humanity experiences. God is beyond humanity’s full understanding and is immanent in that he is knowable and perceivable and intelligible. He is incomprehensible in Holy Scriptures but He reaches out to humanity to reveal Himself and He gives His Word a finite form comprehensible by human nature. Jesus Christ is God incarnate and he was immanent amongst those who encountered Him and experienced him one way or another – He is nonetheless beyond the scope of human comprehension (Lossky, 1957). God is immanent and is the Holy One who exists in a high and holy place but also resides with individuals of contrite and lowly spirit (Isaiah 57:15). In Jesus, humanity and divinity are hypostatically linked and Christ’s two natures exist in the one person, the Logos who became flesh incarnate (Nicolaidis, 2010).

There are three Hypostases of the Transcendent God from the beginning of time is considered as being the only Father Who is “not born”. He is the only entity that exists short of any cause or reason. “He did not pre-exist before the Son in order to become the Father afterwards, as it is with humanity. He existed before all time and He forever is Father to His co-eternal and inseparable Only Begotten Son” (Lampadarios, 2006). Jesus existed in human form, but the Triune Godhead is superior, grander and far more magnificent than anything that human beings can grasp with their limited minds. The Son is by Nature the Son of God, “not made” and He existed before all time, is infinite in nature like the Father and “of the same Essence” (homoousios) with the Father. The Son knows the Father and is known by the Father. Being



equal to the Father and being His identical and living Image, He is worshipped equally with the Father, having the same honour as the Father. The Son is the Creator of all things cooperating with the Father through Whom all things were made (Lampadarios, 2006). The Holy Spirit is a helper (John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7), and proceeds only from the Father and is directed into the world by the Father in the Name of the Son (John 14:26). He speaks not on His own Authority but whatever He hears from the Father, He speaks and tells of things to come.

The theological clarification of the Orthodox tradition concerning God's immanence and Transcendence is elementary. God presents Himself to us through His energies (activity) which descend toward us, but He is wholly Transcendent and unapproachable in His divine essence (Hussey, 1974). The basis of the faith and doctrine of the Orthodox Church is its Sacred Tradition which is its life. God is totally uncontainable (1 Kings 8:27). His name Yahweh describes both His personal presence and transcendent power. God is immanent, and intimately close and present all the time in the essence of the Trinity. The councils of 1341CE and 1351CE in Constantinople established a real distinction in God, between the incomprehensible essence and the energies which make conceivable a real communion with God. The deification of man, realized in Christ once and for all, was thus achieved through the communion of divine energy with humanity in Christ's glorified humanity (Karmiris, 1960). The observable cosmos was created by the Word of God, which is imperceptible. Thus our faith entails believing in the imperceptible, inventive power of the Creation.

Unity in Christ

The Church is the Body of Christ and it has both internal and external eyes. The internal eye is that which speaks to our faith. The external eye bears witness to history. There is thus an inner force which directs that history and a spirit which stimulates it, the Holy Spirit of God, and the peripheral, human manifestations of the life of the Spirit within the Church. The Church is without sin as the body of Christ, but its adherents are of course fallible and sinful. The Church is considered to be the mystical body of Christ because there is in reality a mystical union with Christ in his Church. The Church is then a unity in Christ, the closest union with Christ of all who adherents who rightly believe on Him and love Him, and all their union is through Christ and pervades humanity in a spirit of love (Ware, 1963). In Ephesians 4: 6, we read God is "...overall and through all and in all". He is omnipresent (Psalm 139:1-10). He created and sustains the Cosmos and everything else and He exists beyond time and space. Nonetheless, God condescended to enter into a private fellowship and live with all those who atone for their sins and trust in Jesus for their salvation. Jesus Christ was a Theanthropos God Man, the Son of God as evidenced in a profusion of passages (Matthew. 16:15-17; Luke 3:22; John 10:36). He is also denoted as Lord in many passages such as 1 Corinthians 12:3 and Phillipians 2:11 (Nicolaidis, 2019). The teachings of the Jesus the God-man, declared by the Apostles or those following them, were handed down to the apostolic community. This faith, once handed down to the Saints, continued to live in the Christian community of faith that succeeded them. Consequently, the same faith, teachings, doctrine, and aspects of Christian life endure and disseminate themselves throughout the history of the Church (Nicolaidis, 2019). Thus the Church remains apostolic, that is, in living continuity with the early Christian apostolic Community (Ware, 1963). Tradition, then is the life of the Church in terms of a living community with historical Judaeo-Christian origins. The Christian Church is consequently an assembly of God's elect people called to keep His word and to do His bidding and His work in the world and in the heavenly kingdom to come. God gives huge significance to even the most insignificant life (Karmiris, 1960).

The tradition of the Church is the milieu in which one can comprehend the Holy Bible but it is also a living commentary, amplification and completion of its meaning. In the Scriptures the Church is referred to as the Body of Christ (Romans 12; 1 Corinthians 10, 12; Colossians 1)



and the Bride of Christ (Ephesians 5; Revelation 21). She is also God's living Temple (Ephesians 2; 1 Peter 2). Over and above this the Church is a support and bulwark of Truth (1 Timothy 3.15). Tradition teaches us that God reveals Himself to us in the person of Jesus Christ. Thus, the revealed Trinitarian Godhead is the transcendent Creator of all things. (Nicolaidis, 2019; Meyendorff, 1974; Ware, 1963). The Orthodox Church is subjected to the authority of the Bible and Holy Scriptures and tradition, and these are the product and the epiphenomenon of the life of the Church, and the work of the Holy Spirit of God and humanity, working in the life of the Church. It accepts that Jesus is fully God and Transcendent since He is God the Son incarnate (Nicolaidis, 2021; 2019; 2010). Jesus is not merely part of God or one-third of God but He is totally God. "For in him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form" (Colossians 2:9).

In Orthodoxy the unity of the Church is man's unrestricted unity in the truth and love of God. This unity is brought about by God alone. If people live in the truth and love of God, they are members of His Church. Within the unity of the Church man is what he is created to be and can grow for eternity in divine life by being in communion with God through Jesus Christ and the Paraclete (Holy Spirit). The Trinitarian doctrine developed as the Church sought to protect the biblical truths of the Transcendent Lord who is Lord of all and yet also gives of Himself to act in human history and the unity of His Church is the unity of the Holy Trinity and of all of those who are living with Him (Karmiris, 1960). God's nature is mysterious and cannot be reduced to logic or mere words, and has to be experienced through atonement and revelation. The mystery of God can be experienced by all since God is equally a personal, a God who believers can approach directly. In Isaiah 55:8-9 God says, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways...For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts."

The Son of God became personified to make people partakers of the divine nature (II Peter-1:4), and to free us from sin and death, and to make us immortal. The ultimate goal for Orthodox believers is union with God. To attain this one requires *apatheia* (dispassion) and it requires that one should detach oneself from the senses and all passions. *Hesychia* (stillness) is also needed which means detaching oneself from one's imagination and conversational intellect. Finally, one should seek to attain an enduring state of illumination or a flawless union with God akin to deification (*Theosis*).

The Orthodox Christian God, is not the God of Jaspers. He is definitely not a supreme being like others are believed to be. God is completely different from all created existence. Mankind is created in the image of God and called to likeness with God. Basically, God's immortality is reflected in man while the latter endures in communion with God through God's image in him. God the Father sent His Son Jesus to us out of love for us and in order to bring salvation to a troubled world (John 3:16). We need to gain spiritual knowledge attained via the *nous* and not from the ego which is natural knowledge or theoretical knowledge. "Spiritual knowledge unites knower and known, while (natural knowledge) is always a cause of change and self-division" (Palmer, Sherrard & Ware, 1983). We can only see divine light with the eyes of the body, in conjunction with and the eye of the soul (the *nous*) and this is the way to *agape* love and eternity.

Conclusion

To recapture, it was argued that although humanity has the capacity through science, to uncover an understand the 'truth' as it were about our physical world, it is philosophy that is proficient in giving insight into the human condition and the individual being. In his interlocution with others, Jaspers argues that the individual has the capacity to discover and manifest eternal truth for himself/herself. On this basis, Faith becomes a deeply subjective as opposed to an objective experience. On this basis, the paper deems Faith to be an existential and thus



philosophical phenomenon. Thus, against the dogma of Christian Orthodoxy, it is moreover, deemed inconsequential to preach objective truth about the all encompassing if such truth is not apprehended first by the individual in his freedom. On this basis, the freedom of each self-consciousness is considered central in the transcendent process. Transcendence itself, can be viewed as a personal 'thing' in lieu of life and death and the reason (*logos*) for one's religious and moral behaviour and the search for the essence of things ontologically is also personal. One strives to comprehend the relationships between faith and truth. Faith is not to be regarded as an objective and communicable subjugator of reason. It is ultimately through suffering and a variety of other experiences and ultimately the reckoning with death, that one encounters ultimate situations wherein the Transcendent God is encountered.

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