

Some Thoughts on Philosophy & Scripture in an Age of Secularism

Lewis R. Gordon

Brown University

*"You may change the theology of a people,
but you cannot change their Religion."*

—Edward Blyden, *African Life and Custom*

*"God is dead; but given the ways of men,
there may still be caves for thousands of
years in which his shadow will be shown -
and we - we still have to vanquish his
shadow too."*

—Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Sciences*

Agnes Heller has observed, by way of Max Weber and Jürgen Habermas, that modernity's secularist path brings with it the hoped resolution of ethical life through the mechanisms of legal systems.¹ With such a goal emerges a formalism devoid of even "naturalistic" appeals since the societal, marked by rationalistic injunctions on behavior over the seemingly cryptic aspects of action, the dictates of which could make Hegel proud and Kant's practical notions of motives, maxims, and respect for moral law superfluous. Yet, although Heller may have identified the *telos* of modernity's march - paradoxically one that may, as in its Rawlsian liberal formulations, deny having teleological import - Blyden's and Nietzsche's admonitions suggest that we should wonder whether such a path does not lay over a different leitmotif.² Theology and the scriptures that provide the context for such inquiry, it is true, may have been pushed to the periphery of modernist organizations of knowledge, but it could well be possible that they remain the grammatical other side of modernity's story.

Antipathy to theology emerges in more than philosophical and sociological reflections. In concrete terms, it emerges in universities by virtue of contemporary expectations that universities function as secular institutions even when the historical founding of many academic institutions have been by religious ones with full-fledged theologies. This expectation affects the study of religion and theology itself as marked by the location of religious studies departments in schools of liberal arts or the arts and sciences. In this respect, such departments claim to espouse no theological position but are instead secular enterprises devoted to the study of or on religion. I cannot help thinking of Paul Ricoeur's astute criticism that such a project, at least when applied to the Bible, exemplifies a rather distorted hermeneutic since what is sought in the study of a text such as the Bible is the emergence of God in His Word.³ Ricoeur is in effect asking, however, for nonbelievers to be faithful to the tenets of believers. The project of the secularist approach to the study of religion is, however, premised upon a view that one can go through an act of suspended belief in the study of a phenomenon that one believes. Many believing Hindus, Jews, Christians, and Muslims do research on their religions, and it is simply expected that, in an act of scientific integrity, they are able to do so "objectively." This means that they must put to the side their prejudices or beliefs for the sake of producing rigorous knowledge claims about that religion. Oddly enough, for some scholars in religious studies, that means eliminating any vestige of subjectivity, which for them entails eliminating not only prescriptive claims (as one would find in religious ethics and theology) but also those tied to notions of consciousness of religious phenomena. For such individuals, this means eliminating also phenomenological treatments of religious life. Why do I say "oddly enough"? I say so because of the methodological move implicit in the notion of suspending one's religious beliefs. It stands akin to the phenomenological notion of bracketing,

parenthesizing, or ontological suspension of the natural attitude. Such scholars, in other words, make the mistake of looking at phenomenology purely at the level of subjective consciousness. They fail to see that the kind of scientific rigor they seek in the study of human phenomena such as one's own religion *requires* the possibility of a phenomenological reduction. Their act, then, is a performative contradiction; they want a phenomenology that dares not speak its name.

This aspect of secularist practice at the order of knowledge wrecks of what I have elsewhere discussed as bad faith.⁴ Bad faith in its simplest formulation is a lie to oneself in an effort to hide from one's freedom. At the doxological level, it means to make oneself believe what one does not believe. Belief, after all, carries a loaded underside. To believe, really to believe, is to have perfect belief, which means that one would be making a belief into something that it is not—namely, knowledge. For as a belief, its scope is limited by doubt. To make a belief “perfect,” one must make it transcend its limit. But for it to do so means it could no longer be belief.

Blyden raises the question of religion as a more binding force than theology. In this respect, he is faithful to the Latin etymology of religion in *re* (back) and *ligare* (to bind). That religion involves being “bound back” signals its normative significance. For norms, from the Latin word *norma*, are rules. To be bound in this way is akin to being subject to a rule, and such subjection brings forth, of course, processes that we find both in existentialism and Nietzschean and later Foucauldian genealogies of self formation. In effect, to rid oneself of such dimensions is to destroy oneself. Thus, Blyden is right in more than a sociologically astute way. One cannot change the religion of a people and expect the *people* to continue. But one could change their theology the result of which is the appearance of the new atop the continuation of the old. The existential dimension of this thesis is particularly acute when we recall that theology is a reflective enterprise in

search of God's (*Theos*) *logos* (discourse, speech), which could be read not only as the study of God but also as the study of God's words, speech, or thought—in a word, scripture. Since the existential perspective renders the reflective *post facto*, the normative or embedded dimensions of reality stand as a preceding, transphenomenal force. Put in different terms, one must *decide* or go through a process of assessing theological claims, which renders them more malleable than religious ones to which one finds oneself already bound, not by fiat but by virtue of what or “who” one considers oneself to be. This being so, one could easily discover that one could believe *in* that which one simultaneously does not believe exists.

Thus, although modernity's march may demand expunging God from the scene, it may find itself simultaneously incapable of shaking God as what the later Wittgenstein called a language game, as a form of practice through which meaningful phenomena are made manifest.⁵ Secularism, e.g., may demand eliminating theology, but it may exemplify, in so doing, its own religiosity. The point is familiar when couched in another theological language - namely, *theodicy*. In its traditional form, theodicy refers to God's justice (*dike*). Where God is omniscient, omnipotent, and benevolent, whether in Christian theology in Europe or Akanian theology in Africa among the Asante, the problem of accounting for evil emerges. For God, under such views, is a complete entity or system, which raises the question of why God's “potency” isn't extended to the point of intervention—even in the face of much prayer. The familiar retort - “God knows” - translates into God's knowledge is beyond our comprehension, so what God *knows* as just may appear to us as unjust. In effect, we are asked to have faith “in” God for the sake of God. But what if, as Nietzsche observed, God has died in our heart? Or what if we are in open war against God because we perceive Him to be an obstacle to the march of rationality and reason? In other words, what if we only want the *logos* to which we

could add many prefixes in our effort to unlock the laws of reality and with them the mechanisms by which rules can become isomorphic with human actions and collapse them into laws? For which sake would or should we make such efforts?

The evidence does not show the elimination of theodicy in the modern world, and this is because the *grammar* of legitimating practices have not changed. So long as that grammar is there, there will always be something to fill the vacuum of a lost god even if that something is the system itself. And that's often what we find, that the system of organizing knowledge, of exemplifying the conditions of knowledge, emerges itself as the bounding force by which all things negative or contradictory stand as *external* exemplars of evil. Instances abound. In Africana philosophical and religious thought, there is the critique of the tendency of modern thought to construct itself on the basis of a false universality the consequence of which is idolatry at best and God as racist at worst.⁶ The result of this is the notion of "problem people," people who disrupt the system. Under this view, the system ultimately works, which means that the people who suffer within it ultimately don't.⁷ This problem can also be extended to orders of knowledge such as science. Radical scientism carries within it the notion that science is ontological and limitless in its scope. Thus, that which resists scientific explanation must be a problem in its own right and should either be eliminated or ignored. In the study of religion and scripture, one could imagine the problems this attitude creates. It requires the sovereignty of what Kierkegaard has called the universal. Or to return to Ricoeur, it demands the appearance of religious phenomena in nonreligious terms.

The relationship of religion to science is a much discussed question in modern thought, although many moderns take different positions on the theological and religion question. That religion can exist without God suggests that one could have a religion without a theology, but the advocacy of a particular religious

perspective, including the one that rejects a deity or deities, often finds itself in theological terrain if but through the resources of negative instead of positive critique. But more, if we think through at least the two main strands of Western modern thought in Descartes and Hobbes, this question becomes slippery when we observe that Descartes' *method* was such that it did not require the elimination of God in his exploration of the mathematically thematized order of essential features of physical reality.⁸ What his argument required was for him not to be bound by any rules without a process of scrutiny, which would make him critical of the religious and scriptural more than the theological. Hobbes, and much of the subsequent British empirical approach, especially as exemplified by David Hume, on the other hand, took more seriously mechanisms by which one is bound in the process of thought but are more dubious on what one cannot observe, which makes the theological suspect but the religious more compelling.⁹ The matter is made worse, however, by the rootedness of Western thought in processes and practices with theological foundations. Take, for example, the notion of *theory*. From the Greek word *theorein*, it means both to view and God's point of view. The obvious impact of such a point of view is that theory is wedded to truth because there can be no perspective more truthful than God's point of view. If, however, God is taken out of the picture, we then face the question of ordering knowledge with our own resources. The highest perspective on knowledge and truth becomes, as Kant observed, the rational mind, which for us boils down to the human one transcendently understood. By transcendently understood, I mean the conditions by which such understanding and concepts could emerge and be meaningful. The study of religious phenomena from this perspective would involve their understanding as a function of the limits of human comprehension.

The Kantian Copernican revolution had much consequence whose epistemic

genealogy is familiar to many scholars of Western religious thought. The Hegelian shift to the historic movement of Reason promised an isomorphic relationship between it and the Absolute reality of which is a breakdown of the divide between philosophy and religion in a higher, concrete unity. The existential wing rejected such a super-structural movement of both reason and religion, especially scripture, through reasserting the contingent, unmediated risk of faith (Kierkegaard) and critical responsibility for value and life (Nietzsche). Although it is fashionable to push this wing into a direction that culminates in Heideggerianism and his influence on the development of hermeneutics, much can be done for the study of the relationship between philosophical and religious thought through a renewed study of the thought of Husserl and Jaspers.

The importance of Husserl's thought is evident in his prescient critique of historicism and naturalism in his reflections on rigor in philosophy.¹⁰ Philosophy has to transcend both because a failure to do so would place philosophy under the yoke of relativism. This move, marked by the dependence on "facts," whether historical or "natural," the result of which is the subordination of the kind of thinking needed to assess such facts. The implications of this critique are manifold for religious *thought*. Returning to religious studies, many departments of religion consider themselves to be more rigorous and earning their keep in the contemporary academy if their research is "grounded" in either history or natural science with as little thought as possible.¹¹ Unfortunately, this is an illness that seems also to afflict many philosophy departments as well.¹² One could imagine, then, the situation for the conjunction of the two as we find in this journal, *The Journal of Philosophy and Scripture*. But for Husserl, this would be more than a disciplinary mistake. There is simply always a danger in any discipline or field when thought is treated as either "resolved" or that which is to be pushed to the wayside. The problem is that "history" and "science" are

not resolved matters, for even within those terrain there are tendencies both interpretive and positivist that render them incapable of grounding themselves. To continue forth in willful ignorance of such circumstances is, for Husserl, irresponsible and indicative of what can be called a *crisis of reason*. To put it differently, the study of philosophy and religion under such circumstances could be considered a kind of unreasoned rationality. It is rational in that it has a logical order or method or process, but it is unreasonable because it has taken genuine thinking, where unsettled questions are brought to the fore, out of that process through the subordination or ontologizing of history and natural science.

To Husserl's observation I have added the term *disciplinary decadence* to describe this phenomenon.¹³ This form of decadence involves the ontologizing of one's discipline the consequence of which is the measurement of other disciplines according to their ability to exemplify one's own. Thus, the historian criticizes other disciplines for not being history; the literary theorist rejects others for not being textual; the sociologist criticizes others' lack of sociological analysis; and so forth. In terms of philosophy's relationship with religious thought, the question is particularly acute when one tries to assess the other in its terms. A philosophy of religion is one thing, but religious thought need not be philosophical; and philosophical thought, we already know, need not be religious. Yet, as Josiah Royce observed more than a century ago, something happens to the integrity of philosophy when it limits its reach while asserting its dominance in the terrain of reason.¹⁴ Husserlian phenomenology demands at least a twofold consideration on this question. On the one hand, there is the examination of religious phenomena and thought about such phenomena as understood through a suspension of one's ontological commitments with regard to either. At that point, that is a phenomenology proper of religion and religious thought. In this sphere, we could proceed with the understanding of religion

as a human practice and we could draw upon a variety of resources developed for the study of human phenomena. For instance, we could look through the types of actions and beliefs manifested by religious practices and their mythopoetics. Here, Alfred Schutz's work could prove useful since we would need not only to describe such phenomena, but also build a convincing case for what counts as ordinary instances of such cases.¹⁵ But, as Schutz pointed out, such investigations would not be *philosophical* investigations proper, and thus not a phenomenological philosophy of religion. For that, we would need to move a step inward into the sphere of transcendental reflection on the meaning of such phenomena and the set of problematics posed by our radically accompanying egological understanding that haunts such investigations. There, we find ourselves dealing with the more complex questions of concepts marked by "ultimate concern" such as the struggle against nihilism or the question of meaning and the ultimate reach of things that should matter in our lives such as community and the ultimate value of living in a world of "others."

We return here to some thoughts on philosophy and religion through our initial considerations of religion and scripture. A clear limitation in our earlier discussion is its effort to situate religious life in a "third-person" or impersonal perspective marked by secularist prejudices. In effect, such an approach renders religious phenomena as not much more than a set of lifeless tales and rules governing conduct in a way that would render it no different from formal codes of conduct. As Royce observed, "A religion may teach the men of one tribe to torture and kill men of another tribe. But even such a religion would pretend to teach right conduct. Religion, however, gives us more than a moral code. A moral code alone, with its "Thou shalt," would be no more religious than is the civil code. And what it adds is, first, enthusiasm. Somehow it makes the faithful regard the moral law with devotion, reverence, love. By history, by parable, by myth, by ceremony, by song,

by whatever means you will, the religion gives to the mere code life and warmth. A religion not only commands the faithful, but gives them something that they are glad to live for, and if need be to die for."¹⁶

Recall my remarks on disciplinary decadence. How does one go beyond such a quagmire? This passage from Royce is premised upon keeping sight of what is important about the *questions* we are pursuing. For Royce, the worry was not on whether he was somehow violating the bounds of philosophical or religious "disciplinary" concerns when he takes heed of the questions animating his inquiry. This move can be considered a *teleological suspension of disciplinarity*. By this is meant, following Kierkegaard's move of teleologically suspending the universal/ethical through a leap of faith to the Absolute.¹⁷ That which is absolute is greater than that which is universal. The teleological suspension in the case of the ethical is, however, as Calvin Schrag observed, paradoxical in that it does not lead to the unethical.¹⁸ God is, after all, good. In similar kind, when one initiates a teleological suspension of one's discipline, it could initiate a new relationship to that discipline; one of a higher level of understanding. In philosophical thought, e.g., its suspension paradoxically *is* philosophical, but not in philosophy as previously understood. The same for religious thought. In effect, the philosopher or religious thinker is saying that there are some questions that need to be addressed in spite of disciplinary dictates.

Karl Jaspers offers some insight into this development. Like Husserl, he regards science as pertaining properly to things factual. In stream with Kant, he agrees that this means that science pertains to laws, and what this means is that it is governed by repeatability, as a function of experimentation and prediction. To have no exception means to cover the entire scope of a domain, which means that prediction works beyond the present to the future - in fact, for all time; and in stream with our discussion thus far, Jaspers reminds us that

the scientific perspective is not the entire story of reality because it is not the entire story of truth.¹⁹ Thus, a study of philosophy or religion premised upon science is destined to meet the folly of its own limitations.

For Jaspers, truth has several manifestations. The first is pragmatic truth, where a judgment either works or it doesn't. "Eat this; it's good for you. Don't eat that; it'll kill you. Don't explore the wilderness alone." Then there is truth that emerges as a function of consciousness. This is the truth from which science and many social activities are born. This truth is not functionalist, as in pragmatic truth, but is instead guided by correctness and correspondence and publicity. "It proves itself," writes Jaspers, "by evidence."²⁰ Next is truth "at the level of *spirit*," which is governed by thought, ideas, or concepts. But beyond this truth is the truth about the self, where we are critical and self-questioning, where we go through the critical, existential move of standing out, of dealing with the implications of our not only being in the world, but being capable of evaluating how we live it. This move draws us to the realization of a reality greater than ourselves, what Jaspers calls *the Encompassing*. This truth he calls *Existenz*. Here, we go beyond laws of nature and concerns of the self and turn to the grandeur of Reality, in the sense of Absolute Reality, of that which is infinitely bigger than us. We face this, as Kierkegaard would say, without mediating resources. We experience "truth in *faith*" (*ibid*). But since we share with this search the ever-transcending movement from completion, we face a paradox: We existentially transcend natural laws while Reality always transcends us. This is possible, Jaspers argues, through engagements with the symbolic or what he calls *cyphers*. "The cypher," he writes, "is neither object nor subject. It is objectivity which is permeated by subjectivity and in such a way that Being becomes present in the whole."²¹ The "whole" is, however, never completely ours. It stands as the mysterious in reality that reminds us of our

limits. Thus, "The Symbol is *infinite*. In pursuing the symbol, and with it the experience of essential reality, thought stands still. No thought is adequate to the symbol. The symbol opens us up for Being and shows us all Being."²² The symbolic, then, by virtue of being infinite, is the indeterminate revelation of reality. Its indeterminacy is its message of mystery.

We might wonder what Jaspers means by "reality." Reality is all that transcends thought without loss. "Authentic reality is the being that *cannot be thought in terms of possibility*. . . . Where what I know is one of many possibilities, I am dealing with an appearance, not with reality itself. I can think about an object only if I think of it as a possibility. Reality is therefore what resists all thought"²³ And more: "A completely thinkable reality would not be reality any longer, but only an *addendum* to what is possible. It would not be an origin, and therefore the real thing, but something derivative and *secondary*. And indeed, we are overcome by a feeling of nothingness the moment we imagine that we have transformed all of reality into conceivability; that is to say that we have not put this total conceivability in the place of reality."²⁴

The search for Truth is a philosophical one through which we encounter a struggle with religion as well. Religion, whose province is myth and faith, has the luxury of taking on this task without the encumbrance of the limits faced by philosophy.²⁵ Its media can therefore be poetic, mythic, and mystical. Philosophy, after all, seems to stop where the mystical and the faithful would both leap, although, as Jaspers correctly points out, "Reason is 'mysticism for the understanding'" and that "Philosophy through the millennia is like one great hymn to reason—though it continually misunderstands itself as finished knowledge, and declines continually into reasonless understanding."²⁶ Thus, the study of the encounter with such leaps stands at the level of the symbolic. The symbolic, exemplified by the effort to understand that which simultaneously points to and away from that which signifies, points us to transcendence.

It thus resists our efforts at its domestication. Jaspers concludes:

“The symbol is the complete presentness of Being. In it is the strongest, most penetrating mode of being present of whatever is. Essential reality is more, is inwardly more gripping, than the empirical reality which only dominates my daily life. If someone says, “God is more real than this table here,” it is a distorted expression. In no way is God real like the table; it is a difference not of degree but of kind. Being bound by the absolutism of empirical existence closes one off from the essential reality of the Divinity. The assertion of God’s existence as an existence greater than that of this table is a tyrannical form of the will to believe which, as a matter of fact, still clings to empirical reality as the absolute.”²⁷

The human being’s ability to live and construct meaning at the level of consciousness, spirit, and faith stands as a limit to physical reductionism, what Jasper’s means by empirical existence, and reveals a dimension of human reality manifested by the symbolic. Indeed, the human being *is* symbolic in the sense that the determinate features of human beings always stand as a “part” of human reality, which renders the human being an indeterminate feature, always, of a greater story.

Concluding remarks

Much of what is discussed above has a familiar resonance in contemporary thought through the impact of postmodernism in the humanities and social sciences on the one hand and a renewed obsession with the quantifiable on the other. These two poles are not as far apart as one would think since the historicism and textualism that often accompanies the former appeals ultimately to something at which one could point or present methodically as “science” on a par with the measurements of the latter. I have witnessed an alliance of these two currents in many academic institutions, and I have come to the conclusion that they work well together because of an underlying affinity. They both rely on the absence of thought.

Theory, properly understood, is in jeopardy because truth is so. And with the declining significance of truth, what is left is the performance of technique and the nihilism exemplified in the subordination of thought to criticism. This is not to say that there is no room for criticism. It is to say that the absence of faith in truth brings with it an absence of teleological risk-taking by which more than criticism and interpretation can be offered by intellectual forays into grand matters or those of ultimate concern. This leads to a perilous situation for philosophy of religion, especially with regard to its relationship to, for what would be left are mere acts of professional virtuosity or what William Barret has described as illusions of technique. I see philosophy of religion as facing a situation akin to philosophy of education today in that both occupy peripheral places in the location of thought while the conditions that occasion their emergence continue to be particularly acute.²⁸ I thank the editors of this journal for allowing me some space to outline some considerations in this regard.

Notes

1. Agnes Heller, *A Theory of Modernity* (Malden: Blackwell Publishers, 1999), 200–220.
2. I mean here Rawls’s rejection on focusing on questions of the good and his favoring of determining principles of rightful conduct and the organization of social institutions; see John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971).
3. See Paul Ricoeur’s essay “Philosophical Hermeneutics and Biblical Hermeneutics,” in his *From Text to Action: Essays in Hermeneutics, II*, Trans. Kathleen Blamey and John B. Thompson (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1991), 89–101.
4. Lewis R. Gordon, *Bad Faith and Antiracist Racism* (Amherst: Humanity Books, 1995).
5. See, of course, Ludwig Wittgenstein’s *Philosophical Investigations*, Trans. G.E.M. Anscombe (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997).

6. See, e.g., Josiah Young, III, *A Pan-African Theology: Providence and the Legacies of the Ancestors* (Trenton: Africa World Press, 1992); Victor Anderson, *Beyond Ontological Blackness: An Essay on African American Religious and Cultural Criticism* (New York: Continuum, 1995); *Is God a White Racist?: A Preamble to Black Theology* (Boston: Beacon, 1998); Lewis R. Gordon, *Bad Faith and Antiracist Racism and Fanon and the Crisis of European Man: An Essay on Philosophy and the Human Sciences* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

7. W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: New American Library, 1982); see also Lewis R. Gordon, *Existential Africana: Understanding Africana Existential Thought* (New York: Routledge, 2000), chapter 4.

8. See, of course, René Descartes's *Meditations on First Philosophy* in *Descartes' Philosophical Writings*, Trans. and Ed. Norman Kemp Smith (London: MacMillan, 1952). Spinoza, following Descartes's path, shares the view of being more critical of scripture than of God, as noted by his theological-political writing versus his metaphysics see for the former his *Theological-political Treatise*, Trans. Samuel Shirley (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2001) and for the latter see his *Ethics*, Ed. and Trans. G.H.R. Parkinson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

9. See Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan*, Ed. by Richard Tuck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991) and David Hume's *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion and the Posthumous Essays*, "Of the Immortality of the Soul" and "Of Suicide," Ed. Richard H. Popkin (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1980).

10. Edmund Husserl, "Philosophie als strenge Wissenschaft," *Logos* I (1910–1911): 289–341. This work appears in English as "Philosophy as Rigorous Science," in Edmund Husserl, *Phenomenology and the Crisis of Philosophy*, Trans. and Ed. Quentin Lauer (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), 71–147.

11. I say this as a former member of the thought division of a religious studies program. Evidence for this claim can easily be found in the catalogs of many universities and data from the American Academy of Religion.

12. I say this also from my experience in

philosophy departments. Data can easily be found in the American Philosophy Association and the Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy.

13. A developed discussion of this theory of decadence is in my forthcoming book *Disciplinary Decadence*. In the interim, see also Lewis R. Gordon, "The Human Condition in an Age of Disciplinary Decadence: Thoughts on Knowing and Learning," *Philosophical Studies in Education* (forthcoming 2003).

14. Josiah Royce, *The Religious Aspects of Philosophy: A Critique of the Bases of Conduct and Faith* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1958), originally published by Houghton Mifflin in 1885.

15. See Alfred Schutz, *The Collected Papers*, vol. 1, *The Problem of Social Reality*, Ed. Maurice Natanson (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1962), Part II.; and Lewis R. Gordon, *Fanon and the Crisis of European Man*, chapter 3.

16. *The Religious Aspect of Philosophy*, 2–3.

17. For Kierkegaard's classic formulation, see Problema I in *Fear and Trembling*, Ed. Howard and Edna Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983).

18. Calvin Schrag, "Note on Kierkegaard's Teleological Suspension of the Ethical," in his *Collected Papers: Betwixt and Between* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 27–32.

19. Jaspers has three main criticisms against natural science as the model for philosophical inquiry: (1) it is particular and thus concerned with determinate objects instead of being itself; (2) it can provide no goals for life; and (3) it cannot ground itself on its own terms. See his *Philosophy of Existence*, Trans. Richard F. Grabay (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1971), 10. These criticisms do not exemplify a rejection of science but its *limits*. On the more constructive side, science, in Jaspers' view, offers philosophy a sense of what limits from which to begin, as well as philosophy's own limits. Philosophical work should not, in other words, be confused with the exactitude of scientific work (10–11).

20. *Philosophy of Existence*, 39.

21. Karl Jaspers, *Truth and Symbol*, Trans. Jean T. Wilde, William Kluback, and William Kimmel (Albany: New College and University Press, 1959), 35.

22. *Truth and Symbol*, 40.

23. *Philosophy of Existence*, 69.

24. *Philosophy of Existence*, 70.

25. For a similar view, see Keiji Nishitani, *Religion and Nothingness*, Trans. Jan Van Bragt, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1982).

26. *Philosophy of Existence*, 60.

27. *Truth and Symbol*, 41.

28. For more on my view of education, see “The Human Condition in an Age of Disciplinary Decadence.”