1. Expanding the Boundaries of Existence from “Situation Being” to “Boundary Situations”

The attempt to expand the framework of the discussion of selfhood, whether by new points of view or by clarifying the connection between it and additional topics accompanying it, was typical of Karl Jaspers’s approach to the issues of communication and historicity. The concept “boundary situations” is undoubtedly one of Jaspers’s most original and fruitful, and we will see that not for nothing did different scholars and philosophers argue that even this term alone could have established Jaspers’s status as a philosopher. On the face of it, we should not expect the discussion of boundary situations to indicate the continuation of the tendency to expand Existenz’s boundaries of existence, since in them people are exposed uncompromisingly to their finality and to their inadequacy in the face of the factuality to which they are subject in existence. These are not situations that a person can initiate, plan, or avoid, only “encounter.” Experiencing boundary situations, which shakes the foundations of a person’s existence, is not part of daily life or of what Jaspers termed the “situation Being” shared by all people; even Existenz does not experience boundary situations continuously. However, the interpretation I will present below shows that the attempt to expand the framework of philosophizing is expressed also in the discussion of boundary situations, although in a different way to those we have seen so far. In communication and in historicity, and more generally in the explication of selfhood, the expansion was “horizontal,” meaning that it exposed Existenz to new horizons that enabled it to refer to aspects of existence that had previously been hidden from it. In contrast, in boundary situations, the expansion of the limits of philosophizing is “vertical,” meaning that it deepens people’s ability to experience their familiar existence, which they have already identified as belonging to them, and enables them to become acquainted with some aspects that, Jaspers believed, contained the meaning of human existence.

As in the discussion of the concepts of communication and historicity, the interpretation presented here will also aim to express the role of the boundary situations in assisting the transition from the explication of selfhood to the explication of Being, and therefore the discussion will not detail the concrete contents of each of the individual boundary situations. In Psychology, Jaspers listed four boundary situations: struggle, death, chance, and guilt. In Elucidation
of *Existenz*, he proposed a different division and added a boundary situation of suffering. “Struggle” and “guilt” were presented in greater detail, and for the first time two more general boundary situations that exist in the background of all human experience appeared: “chance” and “particularity” (*Bestimmtheit*). For a detailed discussion of the specific boundary conditions, see Edwin Latzel. However, while communication and historicity were discussed mainly in *Elucidation of Existenz*, the boundary situations also appeared earlier, in *Psychology*. This not only provides us with a special opportunity to examine the development of Jaspers’s philosophical insights in the period between the two appearances of this concept in two different periods of his writing—the medical-psychological and the philosophical—but also enables a wider examination of the general conception of transition mechanisms that located them in *Elucidation of Existenz*.

2. Boundary Situations in *Psychology*

The starting point for the explication of selfhood, on which Jaspers’s discussion in *Psychology* was based, was anchored in observing world views as a phenomenon and especially as a framework for processing the subjective experiences of the individual. The world view the individual constituted served as a framework for the processing of these experiences, but at the same time also as a major tool through which the subjective Being is revealed in its uniqueness and fullness. In this context, Jaspers presented boundary situations as follows:

These situations, where we feel, experience, and think at the boundaries of our existences in general, we thus term “boundary situations.” What they have in common is that in the tangible world, always divided into subject-object, there is nothing stable and absolute that cannot be doubted, and there is no grasp point that could withstand every thought and every experience… These boundary situations, as such, are unbearable for life, and thus they almost never appear in complete clarity in our experiences of life, but indeed we almost always have a grasp point when facing boundary situations. Without it life would cease. As the experience of boundary situations sharpens people’s awareness of being, as a finite entity, bound to the split between objectivity and subjectivity, so the boundaries of the world view as a framework for elucidating their experiences and constituting themselves become more tangible to them. Indicating the permanent presence of the infinite aspect of human experience exposes the person to contradictions, or more precisely antonyms, which world views cannot solve. This discovery was capable of undermining the evidence of the wholeness of world