

Existential Loneliness

**A Jaspersian analysis with practical application to
human-robot interaction**

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Abstract:

In this thesis, I will discuss the conceptualization of existential loneliness in the early writings of the German psychiatrist and philosopher Karl Jaspers (1883-1969), especially his lecture “Einsamkeit” (1915/1916) and *Philosophie* (1932). I will try to elucidate the dynamics and processes involved in existential loneliness and its overcoming in existential communication. I will show that the shared objective world is the only medium for existential communication. The intersubjective encounter in the shared objective world is the occasion for the reciprocal taking/demanding responsibility, which will stimulate the inner dialectical movement of existential loneliness, i.e., between autonomy and authenticity. I will argue that existential loneliness is not something substantially negative or a disease that we must cure but a vital and creative process that makes us human. Blocking this process will have devastating consequences since it will impede the isolated person from being him/herself. Furthermore, I will discuss a few possible applications of the examined processes in human-robot interaction since the efficiency of the robots in helping humans overcome their existential loneliness will depend on their capacity to perform the processes discussed in this thesis.

Key words: Karl Jaspers, existential loneliness, existential communication, the self, existence, social robots, artificial intelligence.

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1. Introduction

The Swedish National Board of Health and Welfare (*Socialstyrelsen*) has been conducting the national survey “What do the elderly think about elderly care?” (Vad tycker de äldre om äldreomsorgen?) every year since 2013. The survey is aimed at people aged 65 and older who live in ordinary housing with the support of home care or in special housing for the elderly (SH).¹ This survey asks the elderly if they are sometimes bothered by loneliness. 53% of those living at home and 65% of those living in SH answered yes to the question in 2019. The result of the 2020 survey remained unchanged for those with home care, but 69% of those living in SH answered yes, an increase of 4%. The fact that the elderly surrounded by staff and other elderly in SH feel lonelier than those who live at home is puzzling. Some studies have also found that loneliness is more common in elderly living in SH than in the group of elderly still living at home.²

The increased awareness of the issue of loneliness and its consequences has led to many research projects, where the concept “existential loneliness” (EL) is often used by researchers as a deeper form of loneliness that is described as “one of the conditions of life and as part of being human.”³ Bolmsjö et al. analyzed the concept of EL and provided the following definition to be used as a tool for identifying EL and differentiating it from other forms of loneliness:

Existential loneliness can be understood as the immediate awareness of being fundamentally separated from other people and from the universe, primarily through experiencing oneself as mortal, or, and especially when in a crisis, experiencing not being met (communicated with) at a deep human (i.e., authentic) level, and typically therefore experiencing negative feelings, that is, emotions or moods, such as sadness, hopelessness, grief, meaninglessness or anguish.⁴

¹ “Vad tycker de äldre om äldreomsorgen?,” Socialstyrelsen, accessed March 19, 2022.

<https://www.socialstyrelsen.se/statistik-och-data/oppna-jamforelser/socialtjanst/aldreomsorg/vad-tycker-de-aldre-om-aldreomsorgen/>

² Cf. Martin Pinquart and Silvia Sorensen, “Influences on loneliness in older adults: A meta-analysis,” *Basic and Applied Social Psychology*, 23(4), 245–266. https://doi.org/10.1207/S15324834BASP2304_2.

³ Helena Larsson, *Existentiell ensamhet hos sköra äldre personer: ett närstående perspektiv* (Phd diss., Malmö University, 2020), 19, https://muep.mau.se/bitstream/handle/2043/30658/978-91-7877-061-8_Larsson_epub.pdf. From now on are all English translations are my own unless otherwise noted.

⁴ Ingrid Bolmsjö, Per-Anders Tengland and Margareta Rämgård, “Existential loneliness: An attempt at an analysis of the concept and the phenomenon,” *Nursing Ethics*, (2019) 26(5), 1322, Doi:10.1177/0969733017748480.

Although this definition might serve its purpose in nursing, it remains static. In medical terms, if EL were a disease, one could say that this definition describes the symptoms but is missing its processes. This thesis aims not to criticize Bolmsjö et al., who have made a tremendous and much-needed contribution in their field. However, their main question remains unanswered, i.e., “[t]o clarify what constitutes existential loneliness.”⁵ Furthermore, the definition gives the impression that EL is substantially negative, as if it were a disease, even though Bolmsjö et al. stress with reason the importance of the fact that meeting the patients with acceptance and allowing them to be authentic in the experience of EL, “might lead to a positive process of growth, creativity, meaning creation and human development.”^{6,7}

Additionally, the lack of nurses and the increase in the number of older people in society has led the Swedish National Board of Health and Welfare to encourage the use of so-called social robots employing advanced AI with communicative capacities to alleviate the EL of the elderly, especially in the public sector.⁸ Which raises two main questions: (i) “what is EL?” and (ii) “which kind of behaviors and processes must the robots perform to alleviate EL?” Instead of creating a taxonomy, I want to track the processes involved in EL, an essentially dynamic and relational phenomenon. Questions like, “How do I become lonely?”, “How do I overcome loneliness?” and “How do these movements of becoming and overcoming interconnect?” will be therefore decisive in this thesis.

1.1. Purpose and limitations

The purpose of this thesis is to shed light upon the dynamic and creative nature of EL in the existential philosophy of Karl Jaspers with special focus on the actual research on this concept in the field of elderly care. I will show that EL is not something substantially negative or a disease that we must cure but a vital and creative process that makes us human.

I have chosen to limit my deeper analysis to the development of the question of EL by the psychiatrist and philosopher Karl Jaspers (1883-1969) because I share Ronald D. Gordon’s belief that familiarity with Jaspers’ work could contribute to “(a) restoration of “heart” and

⁵ Ibid., 1310.

⁶ Cf. Theo G. van Tilburg, “Social, Emotional, and Existential Loneliness: A Test of the Multidimensional Concept,” *Gerontologist*, 2021, Vol. 61, No. 7: e336.

⁷ Cf. Bolmsjö et al., “Existential loneliness,” 1322.

⁸ “Sociala robotar i äldreården - hur ska man tänka kring utveckling, införande och utvärdering?” Digital vård och omsorg, Socialstyrelsen, accessed June 8, 2021, <https://www.digitalvardochomsorg.se/sociala-robotar-i-aldrevarden-hur-ska-man-tank-a-kring-utveckling-inforande-och-utvardering/>

“soul” to the field, (b) acceptance of the unfinalizability (the process nature) of our subject and research, and (c) expansion of our disciplinary thinking.”⁹

After a few methodical remarks I start chapter 2 by offering an overview of the most important definitions and discussions of loneliness in general. I will then move to the specific discussion of EL, ending with a short presentation of shortcoming in elderly care and the need for AI solutions and social robots. In chapter 3, I will discuss Karl Jaspers’ conceptualization of EL and its dialectical dynamics in the different levels of human life, which are *Dasein*, *Bewußtsein überhaupt*, and *Existenz*. In chapter 4, I will discuss the three main conditions of EL, i.e., the shared objective world, autonomy, and authenticity. In chapter 5 I will discuss a few aspects of possible applications of the discussed conditions and processes of EL in human-robot interaction (HRI). I end my thesis with a summary and final remarks.

I will use in this thesis research material focusing on the EL of the elderly in SH because the latter are in a well-defined and limited situation. The research material in that field is rich, nuanced, and multidisciplinary, including psychology, medicine, sociology, philosophy, and AI. The use of such multidisciplinary research does not make this thesis medical, sociological, or technological, as the use of philosophical material in the mentioned disciplines does not make them philosophical.

Regarding the design and use of social robots, I will focus mainly on a few current projects and solutions. Therefore, I will not touch on questions about the possibility of artificial general intelligence (AGI) or human-level AI, implying that “a machine should be able to learn to do anything a human can do.” I also want to stress that the ethical implications of HRI are immense and highly complex. I will therefore omit this discussion in this thesis. Furthermore, this thesis does not take any position on whether to use social robots in elderly care or not.

1.2. Methodical remarks

The material I will use in this thesis is produced using different methods, i.a., qualitative methods consisting in collecting and interpreting interviews, statistical studies, reports, etc. This is necessary given the subject’s empirical nature. Additionally, I am doing this with a certain attitude, which also characterizes Karl Jaspers’ philosophical method: to try to methodically penetrate all research activities without being caught in their web and avoiding seeing them as

⁹ Ronald D. Gordon, “Karl Jaspers: Existential philosopher of dialogical communication,” *Southern Journal of Communication*, 65:2-3, 107, DOI:10.1080/10417940009373161.

construction of thinking in its closed totality.¹⁰ It is about an openness that is aware of the constant development and changing of being.¹¹ It is not about lack of method but openness to all methods without being attached to them. After this brief description of Jaspers' method, I want to give a few indications of how it developed during his philosophical path.

Husserl's phenomenology had an essential impact on the young psychiatrist Jaspers, who published several texts using Husserl's phenomenological method and thus introducing the so-called descriptive phenomenological method in psychopathology that is still discussed today.¹² Jaspers main work in psychopathology remains *Allgemeine Psychopathologie. Ein Leitfaden für Studierende, Ärzte und Psychologe* (*General psychopathology: A guide for students, physicians and psychologists*) from 1913. Jaspers recognizes his debt to Husserl in several texts, of which I choose to quote the following:

After being confined to medicine for a long time I came in 1909 to know Husserl through reading him. His phenomenology provided a productive method which I applied in describing the experiences of the mentally ill. What was essential for me was to see how extraordinarily disciplined Husserl's thinking was. I then saw that he had overcome the psychologism which resolved all problems into their psychological motivations. Above all I appreciated his unceasing demand to clarify unnoticed presuppositions. In Husserl I found confirmed what was already working within me: the drive to press to the things themselves. And at that time--in a world full of prejudices, schematisms, and conventions--this was like a liberation.¹³

The influence of Husserl on Jaspers' phenomenology is however disputed. Chris Walker, i.a., argues that "Jaspers is not a Husserlian phenomenologist; he is a Kantian phenomenologist. Kant's phenomenology defines "the conditions of all appearances" (in consciousness), which is exactly Jaspers' point[.]"¹⁴

¹⁰Cf. Karl Jaspers, *Il Medico nell'Età della Tecnica*, Italian translation by Mauro Nobile (Milan: Raffaello Cortina Editore, 1991), 63.

¹¹ Cf. Ronny Miron, *Karl Jaspers: From Selfhood to Being* (Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi BV, 2012), 10-11.

¹² The widest explanation of this method can be found in "Die Phänomenologische Forschungsrichtung in der Psychopathologie," *Zeitschrift für die gesamte Neurologie und Psychiatrie*, 9 (1912), 391-408.

¹³ Karl Jaspers, *Rechenschaft und Ausblick* (München: R. Piper & Co. Verlag, 1951), 325, quoted and translated by Osborne P. Wiggins and Michael Alan Schwartz, "Edmund Husserl's Influence on Karl Jaspers' Phenomenology," *Philosophy, Psychiatry, and Psychology*, 1997:4(1): 17.

¹⁴ Chris Walker, "Karl Jaspers and Edmund Husserl—III: Jaspers as a Kantian Phenomenologist," *Philosophy, Psychiatry, & Psychology*, Volume 2, Number 1, March 1995: 81.

Despite the fame and status that he had received after the publication of *General psychopathology*, which in 1913 gave him a position as an unpaid lecturer in psychology at the faculty of philosophy at Heidelberg University, and that of an associate professor in 1916, Jaspers changed successively the focus of his research and teaching from psychology to philosophy, giving seminars on Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and Hegel. In 1922 Jaspers became a full professor in philosophy.

As a philosopher Jaspers is Kantian in his method, which both Jeanne Hersch and Ronny Miron point out.¹⁵ The most important grip at Kant is to see the possibilities and limits in each human activity, hence his fundamental three questions were: “1. What can I know? 2. What should I do? 3. What may I hope?”¹⁶ The negative formulation of these questions, i.e., “1. What can I not know? 2. What should I not do? 3. What may I not hope?,” are also present in Kant’s questions. Knowing what you can know you will touch the limits of your knowledge and by that, somehow, you will know negatively what you cannot know positively, and Jaspers’ methodological consciousness is directly linked to this concept of limit.¹⁷ Being aware of Jaspers’ way of thinking is essential to understand his idea of *Existenz*, which is not and can never be an object or an essence. Jaspers writes: “What I really am is the encompassing of self. Self is called *Existenz*. As such, I will not be an explorable object in any way, I cannot know [objectively] myself.”¹⁸ This is because *Existenz* is the human being as a whole for him/herself, a whole that is impossible to see or grasp, a horizon that moves all the time. What matters for Jaspers, as for Kant, is human freedom and to guarantee a space for this freedom.

A legitimate question here is why this discussion about methods is so important regarding EL and HRI. I argue that there might be a risk in SH of systematic reduction of the individual to a *what*, i.e., to an object between objects that are qualitatively the same, forgetting that the individual is a *who*, i.e., an open singularity that is restlessly evolving and always qualitatively different from everybody else. This thesis will hopefully elucidate the distinction between *what* and *who*. Regarding HRI it is obvious that the designers need to be aware of the freedom and uniqueness of the human that the social robot will interact with and build this attitude into the robot. John McCarthy, who coined the term “artificial intelligence” writes:

¹⁵ Jeanne Hersch, *L'étonnement philosophique: Une histoire de la philosophie* (Paris: Gallimard, 1993); Ronny Miron, *Karl Jaspers: From Selfhood to Being* (Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi BV, 2012).

¹⁶ “1. Was kann ich wissen? 2. Was soll ich tun? 3. Was darf ich hoffen?” Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, A805/B833.

¹⁷ Cf. Giorgio Penzo, *Il comprendere in Karl Jaspers e il problema dell'ermeneutica* (Roma: Armando Editore, 1985), 32.

¹⁸ “Was ich eigentlich bin, ist das Umgreifende des Selbstsein. Selbstsein heißt Existenz. Als solche werde ich mir auf keine Weise erforschbares Objekt, kann mich nicht wissen.” Karl Jaspers, *Von der Wahrheit, Philosophische Logik* (München: Piper Verlag, 1947), 76.

The program must have built into it a concept of what knowledge is and how it is obtained. If the program is to reason about what it can and cannot do, its designers will need an attitude to free will. If it is to do meta-level reasoning about what it can do, it needs an attitude of its own to free will. If the program is to be protected from performing unethical actions, its designers will have to build in an attitude about that.¹⁹

One needs simply to know the nature and the processes of the reality the robot will communicate with. Jaspers' method is about openness for the autonomy and authenticity of the human being, which is a necessary condition for fruitful and creative communication.

2. Research background

2.1. Loneliness in general and its definitions

The most influential researcher when it comes to the discussion of loneliness today is probably John Terrence Cacioppo.²⁰ He claims that the unpleasant and painful feeling of loneliness is “a stimulus to get humans to pay more attention to their social connections, and to reach out towards others, to renew frayed or broken bonds.”²¹ He believes that this pain defines us as a species.²² This is not a problem in itself, but it will be when the pain, instead of stimulating the use of our social skills, makes us less likely to use these skills.²³ It is when we choose to isolate ourselves and believe that our suffering will end that loneliness becomes a problem.²⁴ Cacioppo's research has shown that the chronic feelings of social isolation can have very large consequences for the sufferers health and can even cause premature death. He believes that it can be compared with e.g., high blood pressure and smoking, and it can even alter the DNA transcription in the cells of our immune system.^{25,26} Despite all these risks, Cacioppo is clear

¹⁹John McCarthy, “What has AI in Common with Philosophy?,” Stanford University, published April 25, 2006: 1, <http://www-formal.stanford.edu/jmc/aiphil.pdf>

²⁰ John T. Cacioppo had according to Scopus 7522 citations in 2021 only, which is an extremely high figure that not only reflects Cacioppo's greatness but also the topicality of the issue of loneliness during the pandemic. Cf. “John T. Cacioppo,” author details, Scopus Preview, accessed March 27, 2022, <https://www.scopus.com/authid/detail.uri?authorId=35480797500>

²¹ John Terrence Cacioppo & William Patrick, *Loneliness: Human Nature and the Need for Social Connection* (New York: WW Norton & Company, 2009), p 7.

²² Cf. *ibid.*

²³ Cf. *ibid.*, 14.

²⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, 4.

²⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, 5.

²⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, 12.

about loneliness not being a disease.²⁷ Instead of a cure, Cacioppo proposes a method, based on the philosopher and theologian Reinhold Niebuhr's concept of self-transcendence, to facilitate contact with others. The method is called EASE, which is an acronym where *E* stands for *Extend yourself*, *A* for *Action plan*, *S* for *Selection* and *E* for *Expect the best*.²⁸

The seriousness of the impact of loneliness on the elderly's quality of life and the large costs that result from all efforts required to alleviate psychosomatic suffering have led to large investments in loneliness research. In Sweden, research on loneliness among the elderly is conducted primarily at the Aging Research Center (ARC), a collaboration between Karolinska Institutet and Stockholm University, and at CALL (Causes and Actions of Longevity Loneliness) at Dalarna University. A project with broad international collaborations is the ALONE project in which researchers from Poland, Romania, Italy, Lithuania, and Sweden participate and have two main goals: 1) to train healthcare professionals about the different dimensions of loneliness, in order to be able to discover and recognize loneliness in its various forms among the elderly; 2) to support healthcare professionals and strengthen their ability to face loneliness in general and EL in particular.²⁹

For the Swedish part, the project has resulted in three PhD dissertations on EL in fragile elderly people from three different perspectives. Marina Sjöberg deals with the issue from the perspective of the elderly, Helena Larsson from the close relatives' perspective while Malin Sundström examines it from the perspective of care staff and volunteers. Sundström points out that "there is a need for knowledge regarding different types of loneliness, what EL is and how it can be expressed."³⁰ She also believes that "more than just an ability to converse is needed to meet EL and existential issues. There is a need for an understanding of verbal and non-verbal communication and when one or the other is most appropriate."³¹ Sjöberg also claims that the knowledge about EL is still limited, while Larsson demands more knowledge about the overlaps of EL with other forms of loneliness.^{32,33}

It is beyond my scope to list and try to summarize all different theories of loneliness here, as there is an enormous amount of research and literature on the issue. However, I believe it is

²⁷ Cf. Ibid., 228.

²⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, 236-242.

²⁹ "The project," ALONE project, accessed January 11, 2022, <https://aloneproject.eu/the-project/>

³⁰ Malin Sundström, *Existentiell ensamhet hos sköra äldre personer: Vårdpersonals och volontärers erfarenheter och behov av stöd* (PhD diss., Malmö University, 2020), 93.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 95.

³² Marina Sjöberg, *Existentiell ensamhet hos sköra äldre personer: äldre personers upplevelser samt dokumentation i patientjournalen* (PhD diss., Malmö University, 2020), 76.

³³ Larsson, *Existentiell ensamhet hos sköra äldre personer*, 80.

important to get a brief overview of the most common theories, since it will clarify the many disagreements within the field. Here I will profit from existing literature that has already gone through a significant part of the current state of the research. I will use mainly the above-mentioned Swedish ALONE researchers, Sjöberg, Larsson, and Sundström, Lars Fr. H. Svendsen's book *The Philosophy of Loneliness*, and Ben Lazare Mijuskovic's book *Feeling Lonesome: The Philosophy and Psychology of Loneliness*.

In research, we come across many different forms and denominations of loneliness. A common distinction is that between the English *solitude* (or *aloneness*), which is usually translated into Swedish as *avskildhet* (seclusion), and (involuntary) *loneliness*, which is translated into *ofrivillig ensamhet*.^{34,35} Solitude is then usually described in positive terms with a focus on voluntariness, while involuntary loneliness is described as something negative.

Besides EL, Sjöberg also mentions the conditions of *emotional loneliness*, defined as “the feeling of lacking close and intimate relationships, lack of someone to share thoughts and feelings with;” as well as *social loneliness* which implies “a lack of social network and engaging contacts.”^{36,37} These two forms of loneliness – emotional and social – are developed by the sociologist Robert Stuart Weiss, who argues that there are two kinds of relationships which we need to have, i.e., *emotional relationships*, based mainly on the need for attachment, and is typical for intimate or romantic relationships, and social relationships, based on the need for social integration and being a member of a group or social network. According to Weiss, each form of relationship involves different relational functions or provisions. He distinguishes six relational provisions, three of which are related to emotional loneliness, i.e., attachment (gives a sense of safety and security, typically with a romantic partner), opportunity of nurturance (gives an opportunity to be responsible for somebody and take care of him/her, typically with children), reliable alliance (gives a point of support that one can always count on, typically with family members), and three are related to social loneliness, i.e., social integration (gives a place in a group or network with common interests, typically with friends), reassurance of worth (gives a sense of being accepted and respected as a worthy individual, typically with coworkers), guidance in stressful situations (gives a point of reference that helps one to orientate

³⁴ Peter Strang, *Att höra till: om ensamhet och gemenskap* (Stockholm: Natur & Kultur, 2014), 29.

³⁵ Sundström, *Existentiell ensamhet hos sköra äldre personer*, 17.

³⁶ Sjöberg, *Existentiell ensamhet hos sköra äldre personer*, 15.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 16.

in life, typically with teachers and role models).³⁸ Provisions are clearly distinct, according to Weiss. He writes:

[...] Loneliness is a deficit condition, a response to the absence of specific relational provisions. The deficit is always one of a specific provision or provisions. It is not possible for an individual to compensate for the absence of one relational provision by increased acquisition of others.³⁹

Weiss argues that the differences between emotional and social relationships extend not only to their causes, i.e., the deficit in one or more of the above-mentioned provisions, but also to their respective subjective experiences, behavioral consequences and their possible remedies.

Furthermore, Larsson mentions *physical loneliness*, which “is about the longing for physical touch and closeness.”⁴⁰ When it comes to EL, which Larsson refers to as *isolation*, she identifies three different forms: *interpersonal isolation*, which “is about a general experience of feeling alone and outside;” *intrapersonal isolation*, which “is an inner loneliness whether there are people close by or not;” and finally *existential isolation*, which Larsson describes, on the one hand, as “an awareness that man is alone, separated from other people,” and, on the other hand, as a feeling that “no one understands or perceives the outside world in a similar way as myself.”⁴¹ In the vast literature on loneliness we find other definitions that are very similar to the ones just mentioned. The pair *Inter-* and *intrapersonal isolation* is similar to the pair *exogenous* and *endogenous* loneliness.⁴² There are also similarities between Larsson's double description of *existential isolation* and the concept of *metaphysical loneliness*, on the one hand, and *epistemic loneliness*, on the other.⁴³

Another important distinction is that made by Bengt Brülde and Filip Fors between what they see as two main types of loneliness, i.e., objective loneliness, which is an actual external lack of social relations, and subjective loneliness, which is the individual's own experience that he/she does not have the relations he/she wishes to have or thinks he/she needs.⁴⁴

³⁸ Cf. Robert Stuart Weiss, “The provisions of social relationships,” In *Doing unto others*, ed. Zick Rubin (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1974), 17-26.

³⁹ Robert Stuart Weiss, *Loneliness: The experience of emotional and social isolation* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1973), 228.

⁴⁰ Larsson, *Existentiell ensamhet hos sköra äldre personer*, 21.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁴² Lars Fr. H. Svendsen, *Ensamhetens filosofi* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 2020), 30.

⁴³ Cf. *ibid.*, 22.

⁴⁴ Bengt Brülde and Filip Fors, ”Den svenska ensamheten: om hur olika former av ensamhet påverkar vårt välbefinnande,” in *Fragment: SOM-undersökningen 2014*, ed. Annika Bergström, Bengt Johansson, Henrik Oscarsson and Maria Oskarson (Göteborg: SOM-institutet, 2015), 47-48.

There are, of course, more forms and denominations of loneliness, but for the time being, the above-mentioned forms and categories suffice. I will now proceed to the situation in research on existential loneliness specifically.

2.2. Existential loneliness

The ALONE project's website states that "loneliness in its existential form runs much deeper than social and physical loneliness and is described as an unavoidable condition of humanity," which is the most common description of EL.⁴⁵ Richard Booth is not content with this description and tries to give a clearer distinction between EL and all other negative forms that he calls *pathological loneliness*. He argues that "pathological loneliness derives from the unsuccessful resolution of existential loneliness."⁴⁶ Booth refers to Gabriel Marcel's distinction between *problème* (problem) and *mystère* (mystery) and he believes that pathological loneliness is a problem that could be solved through various measures, such as learning different social skills and adapting one's behavior and expectations, while the EL is a mystery that by definition can never be fully solved or understood. It stems from our nature as human beings, which according to Booth (influenced by Erich Fromm and Clark E. Moustakas) is "our thrownness, our being-in-the-world."⁴⁷ For Fromm and Moustakas, according to Booth, "true love is the closest human beings can come to transcending the existential dilemma of our 'thrownness.'"⁴⁸ Love and EL are two dimensions of the same commitment in life. Moustakas goes even further and argues that "love has no meaning without loneliness; loneliness becomes real only as a response to love."⁴⁹ Booth's distinction between pathological loneliness and EL is very important since it makes it clear that EL is not a disease that one should try to cure, but a condition that also enables our life as we know it. Trying to cure EL would be comparable to trying to get the heart to stop pumping blood or to make the lungs stop breathing in and out. Existential loneliness, according to Booth, "is to experience the deepest levels of insecurity and despair, but it is also the impetus to move beyond these to the creation of meaning."⁵⁰

The above view of the role of EL is also, in my opinion, shared by Ben Lazare Mijuskovic, who also claims that the phenomenon of loneliness is not a product of modern society but has

Fragment: SOM-undersökningen 2014

⁴⁵ "The background," ALONE-project, accessed January 11, 2022, <https://aloneproject.eu/>

⁴⁶ Richard Booth, "Existential loneliness: The other side of the void," *International Journal of Transpersonal Studies*, 16 (1), (1997), 23.

⁴⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, 29.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 28.

⁴⁹ Clark Moustakas, *Loneliness and Love* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1972), 146.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 26.

always been innate in human consciousness and constitutes the cornerstone of its activity.⁵¹ He is doubtlessly one of the most influential writers when it comes to the philosophical discussion of EL. Mijuskovic examines the philosophical roots of the issue of loneliness and believes that it is present in, e.g., Plato's discussion of thinking (*dianoia*) as the soul's dialogue with itself in *Theaetetus* 189e and in *The Sophist* 263d. Mijuskovic believes that self-awareness is active and reflexive. He gives a summary of the philosophical discussion from Plato to Plotinus that goes as follows:

What is important in Plato's definition of thinking as a unified selfcontainment; in Aristotle's proposition that in self-consciousness the self becomes its own conceptual object, thus forming a self-enclosed unity; and in Plotinus' argument that the reflexive mind 'knits,' unifies, binds all its sensations and concepts together in a thoroughgoing unity centered in the identity of the person in that they all agree in defining the reflexive nature of self-consciousness as actively circular.⁵²

Mijuskovic goes on to Augustine and his understanding of the activity of the mind and the subjective temporality. Augustine believes that the mind has three activities: it expects (*expectat*), pays attention (*attendit*) and remembers (*meminit*).⁵³ He points out that the mind relates and connects all three activities as a continuous flow within the same self.⁵⁴ In this way, subjective temporality, that Mijuskovic denominates as "lonely time," is created and takes place only within the individual's own consciousness.⁵⁵ The objective temporality is the one you share with others. One problem here is how the relationship between the self and the external world, including others, works. One who has asked himself the question and, like Augustine, has turned inward in his search for truth was, according to Mijuskovic, René Descartes.⁵⁶ In *the second meditation of first philosophy*, he finds a self-intuitive security through his doubt in the external world and other selves. Mijuskovic argues that Descartes follows Aristotle here, who believed that the substance must be able to exist separately and independently of all other substances.⁵⁷ The question of the relationship between the secure self and the outside world,

⁵¹ Ben Lazare Mijuskovic, *Feeling Lonesome: The Philosophy and Psychology of Loneliness* (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2015), 17.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 23-24.

⁵³ Augustine, *Confessions*, XI.xxviii.37.

⁵⁴ Cf. Mijuskovic, *Feeling Lonesome*, 25.

⁵⁵ Cf. *ibid.*

⁵⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, 35-36.

⁵⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, 37

which Descartes cannot stop believing exists, is develops through the experiment with the wax where he realizes that he cannot know if the piece of wax is the same piece after its changes, or if the hats and bodies he sees through the window are people like himself. Descartes believes that it is instead a matter of judgement. Mijuskovic argues that Descartes shows that the mind has “two synthetic *a priori* internally related but distinguishable acts,” which enable it “to ‘look within,’ reflexively, as well as to ‘look without,’ intentionally.”⁵⁸ Mijuskovic describes consciousness as a boomerang throw: I am first focused on something outside myself, where I lose myself, and then return to myself. He believes that Descartes thus paves the way for phenomenology. When it comes to the question of loneliness, he sees that Descartes offers us a paradigm that helps us understand the mechanisms of loneliness as the mentioned two movements constitute both the problem and its solution.⁵⁹

In the literature we find additionally the term *ethical loneliness*, which is described by Jill Stauffer (strongly influenced by Emanuel Levinas), as the experience of “being abandoned by those who have the power to help” and results in a loneliness that is deeper than isolation.⁶⁰ I want here to argue that ethical loneliness is not EL but its blocking and absence.

Ethical loneliness consists of the experience of not being heard.⁶¹ Stauffer talks about *hearing well* as the only way to let the other through and let him develop. Hearing well differs markedly from listening. When you listen, you are actively directed at what emerges and use your own interpretive apparatus to understand it. Hearing well, on the other hand, means an openness and receptivity to the unexpected and what you do not want to hear because it may not correspond to your worldview.⁶² It is about being aware that everything can never be fully heard.⁶³ This is, as I see it, related to Levinas’ distinction between saying (*le dir*) and the said (*le dit*). What makes hearing so important is the fact that the self is not an essence but “cooperatively authored achievements” and thus can be annihilated.⁶⁴ *Ethical loneliness* simply means the destruction of the self and the reduction of man to objects. Stauffer mentions several tragic stories of ethical loneliness, but I want to mention a few short examples with a connection to the care of the elderly in Sweden that are similar to the ones she describes. Sjöberg tells of an interviewee who said that “he felt he was treated like an object. “Nobody listened and took

⁵⁸ Ibid., 37-38.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 39.

⁶⁰ Cf. *ibid.*

⁶¹ Cf. *ibid.*, 9.

⁶² Cf. *ibid.*, 110.

⁶³ Cf. *ibid.*, 165.

⁶⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, 22.

me seriously anymore.””⁶⁵ Larsson tells of an elderly mother who has told of a visit from her daughter saying: “My relatives have left before I even started talking about mine.”⁶⁶

I argue that what Stauffer describes as ethical loneliness is nothing but the absence of EL because it is characterized by one-sided blocking of communication and love, which also applies in part to what is described as *intrapersonal loneliness*, *exogenous loneliness*, *social loneliness*, and *isolation*, depending on who is causing the blockage. The blockage can in fact be caused by the person who experiences loneliness by refusing to let others into one's life and building walls around oneself. It can also be because the victim is not open with their feelings. The others can know your needs and intentions only to the extent that you make them known.⁶⁷ A person has a responsibility to be open for the others and towards the others to make communication possible. The pain that is usually associated with EL is considered to be caused by insufficient recognition from others, which is a human need, but one that is governed by the individual's own expectations.⁶⁸ A person may have unrealistic expectations that make the communication feel meaningless and thus the pain continues on an unchanged scale. It is essential to understand that both loneliness and communication require reciprocity. It is like an oscillating dialectical movement between two poles. If a party refuses to participate, the process just stops. As there is a need for communication and fellowship in the individual, there is also a need for loneliness. Loneliness and communication go hand in hand, which we saw with Moustakas. In addition, it is not only the communication that can be blocked by the environment or by the individual himself, but this can also be the case with loneliness. Sjöberg writes:

It is important in the care and nursing of frail older people to be aware of the balance between their need to be alone and their need to be in community. There is a risk that healthcare professionals do not perceive older people's need to be sometimes by themselves.⁶⁹

The blocking of EL in our time is otherwise often caused by the individual itself by constantly engaging in various activities, such as work, games, social media, etc. Some are unable to be with themselves because they hate what they think they are. They simply run away from

⁶⁵ “Existentiell ensamhet – att vara ensam omgiven av många?,” Vetenskap & Hälsa, published December 5, 2019, <https://www.vetenskaphalsa.se/existentiell-ensamhet-att-vara-ensam-omgiven-av-manga/>

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Svendsen, *Ensamhetens filosofi*, 139.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 135.

⁶⁹ Sjöberg, *Existentiell ensamhet hos sköra äldre personer*, 74.

themselves and deal with everything else. It is important to note that without loneliness, no communication can occur. Communication takes place between two lonely individuals with the longing for each other for a joint creation of each other, as we will soon see in Jaspers. If the other has isolated himself from himself, who should I communicate with? What I see is nothing but a mask, which is a well-defined object and as such it does not have the ability to touch and change. Stauffer writes:

I may be able to find myself sovereign and unchanged in relation to objects in the world (there's a chair: I encounter it and nothing about me changes). But the encounter with other human beings is different. My relationships with others do change me, for better and for worse, and I can not say that the movement of that change necessarily accords with my desires or the reasoned choices I make.⁷⁰

2.3. The shortcomings in elderly care and the need for social robots

A large part of the literature I have read points to the negative effects of loneliness, which I mean instead is the result of the blocking of the dialectical movement between loneliness and communication, but there is too little written about the possibilities of development in communication. The discussion is often about minimum requirements, about a subsistence minimum. Unfortunately, the reality is very harsh for many, and not least for the fragile elderly. In the mentioned ALONE dissertations, the researchers find several shortcomings in elderly care. Lack of time is one of the biggest obstacles that affects not only the form of the relationship between staff and the elderly but the very possibility of the relationship. Sundström mentions a study that has identified several voices that nurses use depending on the situation and purpose. She writes:

In the event of a lack of time, e.g., the “power voice,” which was distanced and exclusionary, became prominent, otherwise the most common voice was the “medical” one, which was task-oriented and unilateral. At the same time, this meant that the other two voices, the “nurse voice” and the “pedagogical voice,” were left behind.⁷¹

⁷⁰ Jill Stauffer, *Ethical Loneliness: the injustice of not being heard* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), 171f.

⁷¹ Sundström, *Existentiell ensamhet hos sköra äldre personer*, 28.

The lack of time involves a risk that the elderly are not heard well, in the sense we saw with Stauffer, or that the nurses are forced to wear a mask and the result in both cases is the absence of communication. In this context, Sundström also mentions a PhD dissertation by Ingela Beck, which has the relevant title *Att fokusera på "varandet" i en värld av görande: stöd till personalen i ett palliativt förhållningssätt vid vård- och omsorgsboende för äldre* (To focus on “being” in a world of doing: support for staff in a palliative approach to care and nursing homes for the elderly).⁷² Beck argues that the lack of time meant that the staff had to prioritize practical tasks instead of the relationship with the elderly they care for. This has negative consequences not only for the elderly but also for the staff because they get feelings of guilt from not “working according to their beliefs.”⁷³ This lack of time exists in several stages in elderly care. Sundström argues that the lack of time in the organization is also an obstacle to supporting and talking to staff about existential issues.⁷⁴ Larsson believes that “Relatives' consultants want more time and more knowledge about existential support, among other things, to also be able to support relatives who have lost a life partner.”⁷⁵ Sjöberg, for her part, points out the importance of time and the shared world to alleviate the existential suffering of the elderly. She writes:

It is [...] important to be aware that it is the meaningful relationships and the meaningful exchange of thoughts and feelings that can alleviate existential loneliness, not social relationships with people with whom you have nothing in common or who do not take the time to listen.⁷⁶

The lack of time leads municipalities to invest in technical solutions, e.g., shower robots, feeding robots, transport robots, etc. a phenomenon that is expected to increase significantly in the coming years as the number of older people will increase notably. The Swedish Central Bureau of Statistics' (Statistikmyndigheten SCB) forecast is that between 2015 and 2035, the number of people aged 80 or older in Sweden is expected to increase by 76 percent, which will mean that there will be a shortage of 160,000 nursing graduates in 2035.⁷⁷ In March 2019, the Swedish government commissioned the National Board of Health and Welfare to survey the

⁷² Cf. *ibid.*

⁷³ Cf. *ibid.*

⁷⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, 73.

⁷⁵ Larsson, *Existentiell ensamhet hos sköra äldre personer*, 79.

⁷⁶ Sjöberg, *Existentiell ensamhet hos sköra äldre personer*, 74.

⁷⁷ "Stora insatser krävs för att klara 40-talisternas äldreomsorg," Statistikmyndigheten SCB, published March 7, 2016, <https://www.scb.se/hitta-statistik/artiklar/2016/Stora-insatser-kravs-for-att-klara-40-talisternas-aldreomsorg/>

use of AI in health care and the National Board of Health and Welfare's report show that there is a lot of research going on in the area, but that its use is still very limited. The National Board of Health and Welfare still concludes that “the quality of care can be improved with the help of AI.”⁷⁸ FORTE and JPI MYBL have funded the international research project ORIENT, which investigates how care robots can be used, how they should be introduced and what type of support and information the various stakeholders need.⁷⁹

Furthermore, there are many doubts and ethical concerns regarding the use of robots in SH, but it is essential to examine the issue thoroughly. The Swedish National Council on Medical Ethics (SMER) concludes its text “In brief – Artificial intelligence in healthcare” as follows:

AI in healthcare that is designed, introduced and monitored in a well thought-out way can bring benefits for patients and society. This presumes awareness of the opportunities and the risks that the technology involves. It is important to take the ethical challenges associated with AI seriously and not to see them as obstacles to innovation but as something that can stimulate and guide development towards applications that foster common goals and values.⁸⁰

I do not take a position in this thesis on the issue regarding the use of social robots in SH or their future development opportunities. However, I support the technical development of social robots in full awareness of the ethical challenges and respect for the human interactor.

3. Existential loneliness according to Karl Jaspers

In the previous chapter, I have listed and discussed several positions and definitions of, i.a., EL. I argued that EL is not to confused with isolation, which is the blocking of the processes of EL. I will now try to build my argument with the help of Karl Jaspers’ analysis of EL and EC, which, according to him, go hand in hand.

EL for Jaspers is a task and not something that is achieved automatically depending on the state of affairs. On the contrary, it is something pleasurable that one strives for and, at the

⁷⁸ ”Mycket forskning men begränsad användning av AI i hälso- och sjukvården,” Socialstyrelsen, published October 3, 2019, <https://www.socialstyrelsen.se/om-socialstyrelsen/pressrum/press/mycket-forskning-men-begransad-use-of-ai-i-halso-och-sjukvarden/>

⁷⁹ ORIENT project, accessed February 18, 2022, <https://www.robotorientation.eu>

⁸⁰ The Swedish National Council on Medical Ethics, *In brief – Artificial intelligence in healthcare* (2020:02), 13. <https://smer.se/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/smer-2020-2-in-brief-artificial-intelligence-in-healthcare.pdf>

same time, something painful that one wants to escape from. It is about an incessant oscillation between the longing for (*Drang in*) EL and the longing away from (*Drang aus*) EL.⁸¹

I have mentioned in passing a few aspects of Jaspers' philosophical method and how he changed track from psychopathology to philosophy in 1916. An important fact here is that Jaspers systematically started studying Søren Kierkegaard (a philosopher strongly influenced by Hegel and his dialectical method, but critical of some aspects of his thought) during the First World War, which had a significant impact on him and his existential philosophy.⁸² Jaspers was surprised that Kierkegaard was not mentioned in the philosophical textbooks at the universities nor in the books on the history of philosophy.⁸³ He writes explicitly that he takes the concept of *Existenz* from Kierkegaard and that he has been influenced by his method of *indirekt meddelelse* (*indirekte Mitteilung*), which is translated usually with *indirect communication*.⁸⁴ Jaspers gives the following definition of indirect communication in *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen* (1919):

Indirect communication (*Mitteilung*) does not mean that something is intentionally kept secret, that people put on a mask and initially keep quiet about what they already know. That would be fraud or pedagogical technique of superiority. Indirect communication means that when despite the strongest urge for clarity and despite all the searching efforts for forms and formulas, no expression is sufficient, and the human being becomes aware of this. It means the attitude that everything communicated that is directly there and can be said is ultimately the inessential, but at the same time indirectly is the carrier of the essential. No doctrine is life and no communication of a doctrine is a transmission of life.⁸⁵

Jaspers is not, however, a Kierkegaardian since he distances himself from his Christian elements and negative conclusions. However, during this period of intensive Kierkegaardian

⁸¹ Cf. Karl Jaspers, "Einsamkeit," *Revue Internationale de Philosophie*, 1983, Vol. 37, no. 147 (4), JASPERS (1883- 1983) (1983), 390.

⁸² Cf. Karl Jaspers, *Philosophie I: Philosophische Weltorientierung* (Berlin: Springer Verlag, 1973), xix.

⁸³ Cf. *ibid.*

⁸⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, xx.

⁸⁵ "Indirekte Mitteilung heißt nicht, daß etwas willentlich verschwiegen werde, daß der Mensch eine Maske vornehme und zunächst verschweige, was er schon weiß. Das wäre Betrug oder pädagogische Technik eines Überlegenen. Indirekte Mitteilung heißt, daß bei stärkstem Klarheitsdrange und allem Suchen nach Formen und Formeln kein Ausdruck zureichend ist und der Mensch sich dessen bewußt wird, heißt die Einstellung, daß alles Kommunizierte, das direkt da, sagbar ist, letztlich das Unwesentliche, aber zugleich indirekt Träger des Wesentlichen ist. Keine Lehre ist Leben und keine Mitteilung einer Lehre eine Übertragung von Leben." Karl Jaspers, *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen* (Berlin: Springer Verlag, 1971), 378.

studies, Jaspers wrote his lecture “Einsamkeit” in 1915/1916 at the University of Heidelberg. One can see clearly the connection between Jaspers’ existential philosophy and Kierkegaard in the thorough presentation Jaspers offers of the Danish philosopher in *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen* – only Kant and Hegel get more extensive presentations than Kierkegaard in this book.⁸⁶ Jaspers does not use the exact term “existential loneliness” in the lecture. However, his direct reference to Kierkegaard’s dialectics and terms like, i.a., *authentic I (eigentliche Ich)*, *authentic inwardness (eigentliche Innerlichkeit)* gives us a clear indication of the Kierkegaardian existential meaning. This lecture, which will be the starting point of my coming investigation, can be seen in retrospect as a fundamental step in the overall development of his thinking and a program for his later philosophical works. I want to warn the reader that I am using here an English translation of the lecture made by Mario Wenning, who translates the German term “Einsamkeit” into English “solitude,” which can be confusing after what we saw in chapter 2 and the dominating positive and voluntary character of this word. I will keep Wenning’s translation, but I will use “loneliness” when referring to “Einsamkeit.” Jaspers calls the voluntary form of loneliness, which is often translated into “solitude,” “gewollte, heroische Einsamkeit” (desired, heroic loneliness).⁸⁷ What interests me in this lecture is the dialectics between EL and EC, which Jaspers will retain throughout his philosophical journey but, according to Jaspers’ assistant and archive manager Hans Saner, with varying focus on the dialectical poles.⁸⁸ Parts of the lecture are indeed reproduced literally in Jaspers’ philosophical *magnum opus Philosophy* (3 volumes, 1932), where he thoroughly develops the themes of EL and EC, and will be used on a large scale in this thesis.

3.1. The dialectics between loneliness and communication in Jaspers

Jaspers begins his lecture “Einsamkeit” with the statement, “to be an “I” means to be solitary.”⁸⁹ He explains that it is about establishing a distance from the surroundings and drawing a circle around oneself.⁹⁰ Jaspers declares from the beginning that loneliness is about an activity performed by the individual himself in full consciousness. I am the one who establishes a distance, and I am the one who draws a circle around myself. However, this does not imply

⁸⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, 419-432.

⁸⁷ Cf. Jaspers, “Einsamkeit,” 391.

⁸⁸ Hans Saner, *Einsamkeit und Kommunikation* (Basel: Lenos Verlag, 1994), pp. 86-87.

⁸⁹ Jaspers, “Einsamkeit,” 390. (Jaspers, “The Individual and Solitude,” Translated by Mario Wenning, edited by Bettina Berge, *PhaenEx* 6, no. 2 (fall/winter 2011): 189). Please, note that the distinction between loneliness and solitude that we have in English is not present in German. *Einsamkeit* can mean both solitude and loneliness.

⁹⁰ Cf. *ibid.*

absolute independence from everything else. Jaspers argues that EL presupposes individuality, which is realized at the level of social *Dasein* (*gesellschaftliche Dasein*) – *Dasein* means literally “to be there,” and Jaspers uses it when referring to the empirical, concrete, and active aspect of human life, in contrast to the intellectual-contemplative aspect, which he will call later *consciousness at large* (*Bewußtsein überhaupt*) – but without automatically resulting from it. Individuality for Jaspers exists only in social life, where one meets contents, demands, truths, missions, etc. However, it is realized if and only if one consciously and responsibly confronts these contents, demands, truths, missions, etc.⁹¹

Nevertheless, what happens if society rejects a human being and takes back all his rights? Jaspers argues that he/she will feel “bereft of his material and spiritual nourishing ground, perhaps even dead, but not as a solitary individual.”⁹² Individuality presupposes belonging and participation. When isolated, this bond is broken, and no distance is possible anymore. I do not draw a circle around something self-generated or exclusively mine, but around something shared with others, something that has been created collectively and in communication, which I make my own in full consciousness, nevertheless temporarily, since new communication will erase the circle and change the ground, and by that change me. If I am isolated, the surface or ground that I could previously stand on and draw a circle around myself disappears. I have, in that case, nowhere to stand on, and thus I disappear, as an individual, into the void.

Similarly, EL itself implies awareness and responsibility, however, not of content but of the two extreme possibilities that exist within its own sphere, namely, on the one hand, the voluntary (*gewollte*) loneliness where the human being fulfills his/her capacity (*Leistung*) and his/her destiny (*Schicksal*) despite the objective conditions, society and God, and on the other hand an involuntary (*wider Willen*) loneliness where one can either flee backward (*rückwärts*) by giving up one's individuality and thus follow social or ecclesiastical organizations, or forwards (*vorwärts*) by forcing oneself to communicate with other individuals.⁹³ Jaspers explains the dialectical movement as follows:

A human being thus enters into a necessary and infinitely dialectical movement: he dissolves his isolation as an “I” through communication with others, but thereby the “I” itself undergoes a transformation process, a consequence of which is that the new “I” is solitary again—“only he who is transforming himself remains related to me”— this gives

⁹¹ Cf. *ibid.*, 390-91

⁹² *Ibid.*, 390. (Jaspers, “The Individual and Solitude,” 189.)

⁹³ Cf. *ibid.*, 390 and 408.

rise to a new reaching out to others, out of this new solitude of the “I” and so forth without halt.^{94,95}

Jaspers does not see EL as a form of seclusion but as a medium of many different types, where the main element is the awareness and understanding of these types as possibilities for a higher level of individuation which could be thought of as a continuous sculptural process. These possibilities change after the different levels of communication since the other could open our eyes to new horizons, changing the picture we have of ourselves by showing us what he thinks about us. The others' story about us does not just sculpt our selves, but the other's story about him/herself inspires us as a possible model and opens new doors for us. We have a reciprocal limitation and liberation at the same time, and this takes place at different levels depending on the type of communication. If we ignore this, individuality and EL become like tautology without vitality. Jaspers' main argument is that *Existenz* is paradoxical and contains both the desire to retain individuality and escape from it. In other words, one might say that man wants to eat the cake and keep it simultaneously. Jaspers writes:

[...] Solitude and communication; neither one of which is objectively what it can be existentially. Objectively, communication is merely the relationship of interchangeable subjects who understand each other, and solitude merely the isolation of an atomized individual. Objectively there is either one or the other; existentially, both are in one.⁹⁶

If we adhere to the objective view, we encounter either object or subject, either loneliness or communication, either truth or falsehood, either joy or sorrow. On the other hand, when we take the existential approach, we meet the opposites simultaneously in a paradoxical coexistence without being able to draw a sharp line between them. The truth remains bound to falsehood, freedom to necessity, temporality to eternity, loneliness to communication, which reminds of Kierkegaard's definition of the self (the self and *Existenz* are the same for Jaspers):

The self is a relation which relates to itself, or it is in the relation that the relation relates to itself; The self is not the Relation, but that the Relation relates to itself. Man is a

⁹⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche, “From High Mountains,” in *Beyond Good and Evil*, translated by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House, 1966), 240-41.

⁹⁵ Jaspers, “Einsamkeit,” 391. (Jaspers, “The Individual and Solitude,” 190).

⁹⁶ Karl Jaspers, *Philosophie II: Existenzerhellung* (Berlin: Springer Verlag, 1973), 14. (Karl Jaspers, *Philosophy volume 2*, translated to English by E. B. Ashton (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1970), 14).

synthesis of infinity and finitude, of the temporal and the eternal, of freedom and necessity, in short a synthesis. A Synthesis is a Relationship Between Two. Viewed in this way, man is not yet himself.⁹⁷

We cannot talk about EL when EC is impossible, nor about EC when EL is excluded. Social isolation is not EL but pure destruction of the possibility of *Existenz*. Without social interaction, we cannot reach the level of individuation necessary to reach the level of self. You need the right timing to get an oak tree from acorns because acorns dry out fast and can become inviable. You also need water, good soil, and favorable conditions. If we put a newborn child in a cell without windows and feed it without any human interaction, we will not get a human being as we know it. The human-like creature we see, despite the isolation, is nothing but a ghost that haunts its prison guard and demands justice. Lisa Guenther writes that “there are many ways to destroy a person, but one of the simplest and most devastating is through prolonged solitary confinement.”⁹⁸

3.2. The different levels of loneliness and communication

To overcome EL we need communication, but communication can happen on many different levels and in many ways, but only EC can overcome EL. Jaspers distinguishes, on the one hand, an insufficient communication type, which takes place at the level of *Dasein* (the empirical social individual life), and *Bewußtsein überhaupt* (the intellectual-contemplative life), and on the other, a sufficient communication type, which takes place at the level of *Existenz*. I want to add that Jaspers distinguishes even several types of loneliness as counterparts of the above-mentioned different types of communication. We can then assume that the first types of loneliness are insufficient while the one at the level of *Existenz* is sufficient. One can here wonder what Jaspers means by sufficiency. I argue that considering the polarity of the dialectical movement, a type of loneliness is considered sufficient when leading to a sufficient type of communication, i.e., can overcome (*aufheben*) loneliness. More profound loneliness leads to deeper communication. The more I know and love myself, the more I will be able to

⁹⁷ “Selvet er et Forhold, der forholder sig til sig selv, eller er det i Forholdet, at Forholdet forholder sig til sig selv; Selvet er ikke Forholdet, men at Forholdet forholder sig til sig selv. Mennesket er en Synthese af Uendelighed og Endelighed, af det Timelige og det Evige, af Frihed og Nødvendighed, kort en Synthese. En Synthese er et Forhold mellem To. Saaledes betragtet er Mennesket endnu intet Selv.” Søren Kierkegaard, *Sygdommen til Døden* (Kjøbenhavn: Paa Universitetsboghandler C. A. Reitzels Forlag, 1849), 7, available at <http://www.sks.dk/forside/indhold.asp>.

⁹⁸ Lisa Guenther, *Solitary confinement: Social death and its afterlives* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), xi.

know and love the other. This process aims to reach the whole, a synthesis, but this is impossible and even less possible if the communication happens only on a specific level, ignoring the other levels. It is precisely this experience of insufficiency that is the engine that sets humans in the direction of existential communication. Jaspers write in *Philosophie II*:

The sense of shortcoming in communication is thus an origin of the breakthrough to Existenz, and of a philosophizing that tends to elucidate the breakthrough. As all philosophizing starts with wonder, and as mundane knowledge starts with doubt, the elucidation of Existenz starts with the experience of shortcoming in communication.⁹⁹

In “Einsamkeit,” Jaspers wants to “capture the potentialities of solitude and its overcoming within communication.”¹⁰⁰ He begins by proposing two concrete points of view with solid correlation:

- 1) With regard to the level of concrete facticity [konkreten Tatsächlichkeit], we can ask: which “I” is solitary? When we try to clarify what we mean when we say “I” and “thou”, when we ask ourselves: what is “I”?, who is “I”?, we look into an abyss: soon we realize that as “I”s we always have in mind a schema, a conception of ourselves, a part, a type.¹⁰¹
- 2) We can ask: in which sphere of objects does communication take place? For example, in the intellectual, the erotic, or the ethical sphere, etc.? Because communication takes place only within the medium of shared objects.¹⁰²

Based on these two questions, Hans Saner identifies different types of loneliness and communication depending on the different levels they take place in.

3.2.1. Loneliness and communication for *Dasein*

When we think of the “I” as *Dasein* we get an everyday type of communication focused on our own goals and interests where there is a master-servant power relationship (an issue discussed by Hegel in his *Phänomenologie des Geistes*).¹⁰³ This form of communication is naive because

⁹⁹ Jaspers, *Philosophie II*, 55. (Jaspers, *Philosophy volume 2*, 51).

¹⁰⁰ Jaspers, “Einsamkeit,” 391. (Jaspers, “The Individual and Solitude,” 191).

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 391f. (Jaspers, “The Individual and Solitude,” 191).

¹⁰² Ibid., 392. (Jaspers, “The Individual and Solitude,” 192).

¹⁰³ Cf. Saner, *Einsamkeit und Kommunikation*, 88-89.

it is incapable of dissolving the loneliness of either the master or the servant. The master wants to assimilate everyone and create a giant organism where everyone else is just a part. The master tries to escape loneliness by elevating it to world-loneliness (*Welteinsamkeit*).¹⁰⁴ The servant, in turn, escapes loneliness by submitting to someone else's authority and thus loses his/her own individuality.¹⁰⁵ The servant will sooner or later realize that the master is not eternal and absolute as he/she imagined. The master will also realize that in his/her quest for world-loneliness he/she will have to destroy that which can honor him/her, i.e., an equal. It is important to note that Hegel uses “Knecht” when he describes this dialectical relation, and Jaspers uses the same term when referring to it. “Knecht” means “servant” and not “slave.” Jaspers denies, in fact, the possibility of any master-slave (*Herr-Sklav*) relationship, where the slave is counted as some cattle (*Vieh*) or used as a tool (*Werkzeuge*). There is no power relationship in these cases but a complete lack of relationship and mere violence (*Gewalt*).¹⁰⁶ Jaspers argues that “power establishes an uneven hierarchy between human beings in communication.”¹⁰⁷ He sees two movements in the sphere of power: first, the kindness of the master (*Güte*) towards those who are subordinate, and second, the humility of the servant (*Demut*) towards those who are superior. In the first case, the master tolerates the servant to make it a *part* of himself and thus excludes an equal relationship. In contrast, the servant submits to the master, church, or some other authoritarian organization and thus becomes only a part, like a grain of sand, ceasing to be an individual, which is the precondition, as we saw above for loneliness.¹⁰⁸ The master will never be able to attain world loneliness, while the servant destroys himself.

3.2.2. Loneliness and communication of *Bewußtsein überhaupt*

When we think of the “I” as *consciousness at large*, dealing with logic and objective knowledge that is valid for every human being, we encounter a consciousness that is already with another consciousness, i.e., the consciousness of all the other human beings that share these same logical and exact knowledge with us – the statement “1+1 = 2” is true for every sane human being. There is no consciousness without objects as there is no self-consciousness without another self-consciousness, which is a prerequisite for self-communication and objectively understanding the world. However, the communication here is entirely interchangeable and is

¹⁰⁴ Cf. Jaspers, “Einsamkeit,” 395.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. *ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ Cf. *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.* (Jaspers, “The Individual and Solitude,” 195.)

¹⁰⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, 395-96.

on a formal level with no relation to my concrete *Dasein*. Jaspers believes that communication here is, in reality, only a medium and not the self's being (*Sein des Selbst*).¹⁰⁹ Jaspers means that “what I am in it [communication of *Bewußtsein überhaupt*] is everyone, the general I at large; and though I want to be this, I also want to be myself and not just everyone.”¹¹⁰ We see here what Kierkegaard meant was the main difference between him and Hegel, i.e., the distinction between quantitative and qualitative dialectics, where Kierkegaard argues that Hegel's dialectics is just quantitative, dealing with logic, containing elements of the same quality, i.e., thought, whereas Kierkegaard's dialectics is qualitative, i.e., is dealing with things of different qualities, like thought and being, a human being and the world, a human being and God, a human being and another human being.¹¹¹ Kierkegaard means that the transition in Hegel's dialectics is smooth because it treats things that are qualitatively the same and only quantitatively different. Douglas Steere writes:

Kierkegaard conducts a ruthless polemic against Hegel for obliterating the individual by swallowing him up either in society or in the historical world process; for slacking off the tensions and discontinuities in existence by the device of his treble collapses and smooth progressions, so that the individual no longer senses the breathless earnestness of his personal responsibility.¹¹²

Jaspers admires Hegel and uses his philosophy to model many of his ideas. For example, Jaspers writes: “Taken as a reflection, Hegel's philosophy is incomparably instructive.”¹¹³ However, only a few lines after this statement, he continues: “Hegel does not want the fixed and finite shell, but life. Nevertheless, for him, life is thinking.”¹¹⁴ Whether this criticism against Hegel is justified or not is a challenging question that is outside the scope of this thesis. It remains for me to conclude that loneliness in life as thinking is unthinkable because everybody is identical to everybody at this level.

¹⁰⁹ Jaspers, *Philosophie II*, 55.

¹¹⁰ “[j]edermann, d. h. das allgemeine Ich überhaupt; dieses will ich zwar sein, aber ich will auch ich selbst und nicht nur jedermann sein.” Ibid.

¹¹¹ Wayman Bernard McLaughlin, *The relation between Hegel and Kierkegaard* (PhD dissertation, Boston University, 1958), 89, <https://hdl.handle.net/2144/6219>.

¹¹² Douglas Steere, “Kierkegaard in English,” *Journal of Religion*, 24 (October 1944), 276, quoted in McLaughlin, *The relation between Hegel and Kierkegaard*, 2.

¹¹³ “HEGELS Philosophie als Betrachtung genommen ist uns unvergleichlich lehrreich”. Jaspers, *Psychologie der Weltanschauung*, 364.

¹¹⁴ “HEGEL will nicht das feste und endliche Gehäuse, sondern das Leben. Das Leben aber ist ihm Denken.” Ibid.

3.2.3. Loneliness and communication in *Existenz*

From *Existenz*' point of view, *Jaspers* argues that another movement is needed to overcome loneliness without destroying individuality, and this movement is love (*Liebe*). *Jaspers* writes, before referring extensively to *Kierkegaard's Philosophical Crumbs* (1844):

Love is a relationship between humans who reciprocally raise each other to the same level through love. It is an overcoming of solitude without destruction, but rather through the development of individuality. Lovers must be equal with regard to power relations, but unequal as individuals. Understanding is a precondition here, as in the case of the power relationship, albeit in a totally different way. Reciprocity is a universal condition everywhere.¹¹⁵

Society is a prerequisite for individuality, but individuality also means a challenge within the sphere of power in society. The tension in the sphere of power should not lead to the dissolution of individuality but its development because love strives to raise the other to the same level.

The struggle in love does not draw on all means. Its morality consists in letting the subject matter and the individual speak for him or herself. It does not subject them, but awakens. It does not use violence, but assessment, not deception and stratagems, but openness, truth and authenticity.¹¹⁶

Saner argues that this is a struggle "against each other, about each other, and for each other."¹¹⁷ *Paul Ricoeur* writes that this is "a struggle against oneself, against the other, for the truth."¹¹⁸ We encounter in this type of communication, according to *Bengt Kristensson Uggla*, a "paradoxical philosophy: struggle and love, time and eternity, effort and gift, plurality and unity, being and becoming."¹¹⁹ Communication is without a doubt the most essential movement in *Jaspers*' philosophy as it is the source not only of self-being, which exists only in communication but for everything that exists for us. *Jaspers* writes:

¹¹⁵ *Jaspers*, "Einsamkeit," 396. (*Jaspers*, "The Individual and Solitude," 197).

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 397. (*Jaspers*, "The Individual and Solitude," 198).

¹¹⁷ "Miteinander umeinander und auch füreinander". *Saner*, *Einsamkeit und Kommunikation*, 95.

¹¹⁸ "Un combat contre soi, contre l'autre, pour la vérité." *Paul Ricoeur*, *Gabriel Marcel et Karl Jaspers, philosophie du mystère et philosophie du paradoxe* (Paris: Temps present, 1948), 202. Quoted in *Bengt Kristensson Uggla, Kommunikation på bristningsgränsen, en studie i Paul Ricoeurs projekt* (Stockholm: Brutus Östlings Bokförlag Symposion, 1994), 89.

¹¹⁹ *Kristensson Uggla, Kommunikation på bristningsgränsen*, 90-91.

In fact, all that is for us is grown in communication, is directed towards communication, and even when we are in loneliness, we are communicating with ourselves. Not only actually, I am not alone when I am by myself, but I cannot even be myself as an “I” by myself without proceeding from being together with who is other for me, I cannot understand anything without understanding it in communication. The primordial phenomenon of the Encompassing that we are is, in all its forms, the communication in for-each-other-being, through which and in which I myself am. Alone-being would be not-being.¹²⁰

After reading this, we need to remember Jaspers’ dynamic way of philosophizing. For him, loneliness cannot be overcome definitively, only occasionally, so one falls back into loneliness as soon as communication ceases.¹²¹ Man is somehow left alone, and the moments of EC make him/her know what it is like not to be alone.¹²² Jaspers argues that “love is the substantial source of communicative self-being. It can produce self-being as the movement of its own manifestation; it cannot perfect a self-being that would be conclusive.”¹²³ To be sure, communication is always a dynamic action striving for unity, but it can never end up in communion, which is the static union of entities in a larger unity.

4. The conditions and processes of existential loneliness

Based on what we have seen so far, I propose to examine the following three conditions: 1) a shared objective world, as the medium in which EL and EC can take place, 2) autonomy, as the inward movement of EL (*Drang in*), 3) authenticity, as the outward movement of EL (*Drang aus*).

¹²⁰ “In der Tat ist alles, was für uns ist, in Kommunikation erwachsen, auf Kommunikation gerichtet und, wenn Einsamkeit ist, in der Kommunikation mit sich selbst. Ich bin nicht nur faktisch nicht für mich allein, sondern kann nicht einmal ich selbst als ich allein werden, ohne aus dem Sein mit Anderen für mich hervorzugehen, kann nichts begreifen, ohne es in Kommunikation zu begreifen. Das Urphänomen des Umgreifenden, das wir sind, ist in allen Gestalten die Mitteilung im Zueinandersein, durch das und in dem ich selbst bin. Alleinsein wäre Nichtsein.“ Jaspers, *Von der Wahrheit*, 374.

¹²¹ Cf. Jaspers, “Einsamkeit,” 407.

¹²² Cf. *Ibid.*

¹²³ Jaspers, *Philosophie II*, 73. (Jaspers, *Philosophy* volume 2, 66)

4.1. A shared objective world

A shared objective world with content, demands, truths, and efforts is a fundamental precondition for individuality.¹²⁴ EC cannot occur in a sphere of mere intellectual/contemplative level, which requires no response (*Widerhall*) from others, and where creativity can occur in complete loneliness.¹²⁵ On the other hand, the shared objective world is a necessary condition for action and a medium for communication.¹²⁶ Jaspers writes: “The active person depends on reactions and support of other humans in order even to initiate an action.”¹²⁷ Jaspers writes elsewhere: “Without mundane contents, existential communication has no phenomenal medium; without communication, such contents are senseless and void.”¹²⁸ In her book, *The Human Condition*, the importance of the “world of things” and shared interests for human action have been developed extensively by Jaspers student and lifelong friend Hannah Arendt. The world of things has, according to Arendt, an “intermediary, stabilizing, and solidifying influence” on the human affairs where “the manifestation of the “who” [which is what communication is for Jaspers] comes to pass in the same manner as the notoriously unreliable manifestations of ancient oracles, which, according to Heraclitus, “neither reveal nor hide in words, but give manifest signs.””¹²⁹ She also, like Jaspers, criticizes Christianity for putting *vita contemplativa* over all other human activities.¹³⁰ Despite Arendt’s disagreement with Jaspers when she insists on the need for a public realm to disclose the “who,” “the self-exhibited in Arendtian free action possesses many of the same attributes Jaspers ascribed to Existenz.”¹³¹ Another connection between Arendt and Jaspers concerns the role of the objective world in the relationship between lovers. Jaspers writes that “love between human beings grows empty. It dies out if they rob themselves of the sphere of objects and believe themselves able to exist in an immediate relation without anything further in common.”¹³² Arendt, in turn, writes:

Love, by reason of its passion, destroys the in-between which relates us to and separates us from others. As long as its spell lasts, the only in-between which can insert itself between two lovers is the child, love's own product. The child, this in-between to which

¹²⁴ Cf. Jaspers, “Einsamkeit,” 390.

¹²⁵ Ibid. 392.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Ibid. (Jaspers, “The Individual and Solitude,” 192).

¹²⁸ Jaspers, *Philosophie II*, 69. (Jaspers, *Philosophy* volume 2, 62-63).

¹²⁹ Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: The University of Chicago press, 1998), 182.

¹³⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, 318.

¹³¹ Cf. Lewis P. and Sandra K. Hinchman, “Existentialism Politicized: Arendt’s Debt to Jaspers,” *The Review of Politics*, Vol. 53, No. 3 (Summer, 1991), 443.

¹³² Jaspers, “Einsamkeit,” 404. (Jaspers, “The Individual and Solitude,” 207).

the lovers now are related and which they hold in common, is representative of the world in that it also separates them.¹³³

I have no intention of discussing all the differences and connections between Arendt and Jaspers. However, I believe that one can understand these two philosophers much better when reading them in the light of their creative and lifelong friendship.

A key distinction of Jaspers' is that between *Ichsein* (I-being) and *Selbstsein* (self-being). When Jaspers says "being" he means the dynamic manifestation and becoming, which must be understood analogically. As we saw above, this manifestation is not unilateral. However, it is like an oscillation between two poles, an immanent pole, and a transcendent pole, which is only possible thanks to a medium. In this section, I discuss the shared world, and it is the medium for communication, precisely as water is the medium for the water waves, and the air is the medium for sound waves. It is precarious to give examples from physics here. However, I believe that the notion of the necessity of a medium for mechanical waves is quite striking for Jaspers' understanding of *Existenz*. We cannot use light as an example here because it does not need any medium. In this way, Jaspers would disagree with the great dialogical thinker Martin Buber who writes:

"Every man has a light over him, and when the souls of two men meet, the two lights join each other and from them there goes forth one light. And this is called generation." To feel the universal generation as a sea and oneself as a wave, that is mystery of humility.¹³⁴

If we now look at the polarity in *Ichsein* and *Selbstsein*, we will see an "*Ich*" and a "*Selbst*," which are generated reciprocally with another "*Ich*," respectively another "*Selbst*." This distinction is comparable with Paul Ricoeur's distinction between *idem* and *ipse*, where *idem* corresponds to *Ich* and *ipse* corresponds to *Selbst*.¹³⁵ Jaspers argues, exactly like Arendt and Ricoeur after him, that there is a difference between the question "*what* am I?" and the question "*who* am I?" According to Jaspers, the *what* (*was*) is "the human species to whom I belong"

¹³³ Arendt, *The Human condition*, 242.

¹³⁴ Martin Buber, *Hasidism and Modern Man*, edited and translated by Maurice Friedman (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016) 53.

¹³⁵ For a concise discussion of Paul Ricoeur's discussion of *idem* and *ipse* see Paul Ricoeur, "Narrative Identity," *Philosophy Today*; Spring 1991; 35, 1; *Philosopher's Index*, pp.73-81.

while the *who* (*wer*) is “I myself” (*ich selbst*).^{136,137} *Ichsein* is in the world, knowable,¹³⁸ interchangeable, and the same as *we all* (*wir alle*), while *Selbstsein* is only in communication and is not objectively knowable.^{139,140,141} I mentioned the analogy of being above, and it is essential to know that even the “I” in Jaspers must be understood analogically. Jaspers writes: “[I]nstead of an unequivocally determined I, we have several meanings.”¹⁴² The critical meaning of the “I” is individuation. We have then, and I use a different order than Jaspers, first, an “I” with formal individuality, as subject to an object, and this is the “I” as consciousness at large (*Bewusstsein überhaupt*); second, we have an “I” as “this body,” “this individual,” “this empirical existence” (*empirische Dasein*); third, we have an “I” as “I myself” (*ich selbst*), as a *possible Existenz* (*mögliche Existenz*), to which we cannot point the finger at since as soon as we do that it vanishes and becomes a static object for us.¹⁴³ This *possible Existenz* is condition and *pol* in the *realized Existenz* (*wirkliche Existenz*). It is called “possible” because it is “ready for the leap [into communication], but not yet leaping.”¹⁴⁴ The idea of *possible Existenz* comes from Kierkegaard, who writes:

[T]o become oneself is to become concrete. However, to become concrete is neither to become finite nor to become infinite, for what is to become concrete is a synthesis. The development must therefore consist in infinitely getting away from oneself in Infinity of the self, and in infinitely coming back to oneself in the infinity. If, on the other hand, the self does not become itself, then it is despairing, whether it knows of it or not. Yet a self is in every moment, it exists, in becoming, for the self *κατα δύναμιν* [in potentiality] is not really existent, it is only that which is to come into being. Insofar as the self does not become itself, it is not itself; but not being oneself is just despair.¹⁴⁵

¹³⁶ Cf. Jaspers, “Einsamkeit,” 392, and *Philosophie II*, 24. (For Arendt see e.g. *The Human condition*, 179. For Ricoeur see e.g., “Narrative Identity,” 75).

¹³⁷ Cf. Jaspers, “Einsamkeit,” 392.

¹³⁸ Cf. *ibid.*

¹³⁹ Cf. Jaspers, *Philosophie II*, 30.

¹⁴⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, 50ff.

¹⁴¹ Jaspers, “Einsamkeit,” 392 and *Von der Wahrheit*, 76.

¹⁴² Jaspers, *Philosophie I*, 13. (Karl Jaspers, *Philosophy volume 1*, translation by E. B. Ashton (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1969), 55).

¹⁴³ Cf. *ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ “Nur in Sprungbereitschaft, nicht im Sprunge.” Jaspers, *Philosophie II*, 206. (Jaspers, *Philosophy volume 2*, 181).

¹⁴⁵ “[A]t vorde sig selv er at vorde concret. Men at vorde concret er hverken at blive endelig eller at blive uendelig, thi det der skal vorde concret er jo en Synthese. Udviklingen maa altsaa bestaae i uendeligt at komme bort fra sig selv i Uendeliggjørelse af Selvet, og i uendeligt at komme tilbage til sig selv i Endeliggjørelsen. Vorder derimod Selvet ikke sig selv, saa er det fortvivlet, enten det veed af det eller ikke. Dog er et Selv i ethvert Øieblik, det er til, i Vorden, thi Selvet *κατα δύναμιν* er ikke virkeligt til, er blot Det, der skal blive til. Forsaavidt

Even the idea of “leaping” comes from Kierkegaard and his way of thinking about the transition in qualitative dialectics. For Kierkegaard “there is no logical transition or rational explanation for the movement from one stage to another, but the “leap is the category of decision.””¹⁴⁶ For Jaspers, I myself (*ich selbst*) am awakened by “a jolt in the situation” that shocks me in my roots and makes me feel that something is decisively up to me.¹⁴⁷ We see here another element that makes our simile with the mechanical waves, created by a disturbance, quite striking. Understanding this stage is critical if one wants to follow Jaspers’ thinking movements. He explains this level of the “I” as follows:

I experience myself in potential unconditionality. I not only want to know what exists, reasoning pro and con; I want to know from a source beyond reasoning, and there are moments of action when I feel certain that what I want now, what I am now doing, is what I really want myself. I want to be so that this will and this action are mine. My very essence [*Wesen*] – which I do not know even though I am sure of it – comes over me in the way I want to know and to act. In this potential freedom of knowledge and action I am “*possible Existenz*.”¹⁴⁸

What Jaspers writes here is, as I see it, a combination of the Delphic maxim, “Know thyself” (*γνώθι σεαυτόν*), for what concerns knowledge, and the Platonic practical interpretation of it, i.e., temperance (*σωφροσύνη*), which is for Plato “doing what is one’s own” (*τὸ τὰ ἑαυτοῦ πράττειν*) and is the core of his politics.^{149,150} Temperance is in Plato’s State what is present in all the three classes, i.e., the producers, the auxiliaries, and the guardians, and constitutes the unity (*ὁμόνοιαν*) and the natural harmony (*κατὰ φύσιν συμφωνίαν*) of the State, despite all the contradictions that are in it.¹⁵¹ Let’s not forget that justice (*δικαιοσύνη*) in the State is defined by Plato as “to do what is one’s own (task, function, business etc.)” (*τὸ τὰ αὐτοῦ πράττειν*).

What I need to do in order to become an *I myself*, a *possible Existenz*, is an issue that I cannot develop here, so let suffice to say that Jaspers calls it “self-reflection” (*Selbstreflektion*),

da Selvet ikke vorder sig selv, er det ikke sig selv; men det ikke at være sig selv er just Fortvivlelse.” Kierkegaard, *Sygdommen til Døden*, 25.

¹⁴⁶ McLaughlin, *The relation between Hegel and Kierkegaard*, 88f.

¹⁴⁷ Cf. Jaspers, *Philosophie II*, 25.

¹⁴⁸ Jaspers, *Philosophie I*, 13. (Jaspers, *Philosophy volume I*, 55).

¹⁴⁹ Cf. Plato, *Alcibiades I*, 131b.

¹⁵⁰ Cf. Plato, *Charmides*, 161b.

¹⁵¹ Cf. Plato, *Republic*, 432a.

which he argues is “not a self-study but self-communication. I do not realize it as cognition but as self-creation.”¹⁵² EC is, in fact, possible only as a relation between two self-communicating human beings.

Self-creation must have its own Big bang, a beginning, just like any historical event. As I mentioned above, Jaspers speaks about “awakening” (*Erwachen*).¹⁵³ This awakening did not happen when I, as a lucky child, was taken care of and protected by my parents, who just let me enjoy life and spend time playing and running with my friends. Jaspers does not mean that the happy child lacks a self at all but that this self is opaque and dimly, in other words, not fully self-aware and living in a “naïve Dasein-consciousness” (*in naivem Daseinsbewußtsein*) and as a “possible I” that is yet without self-reflection.¹⁵⁴ It is when I, luckily as a grown up, start to create unconditional relationships and start jumping without safety nets that I myself awaken. The other needs me and is expecting my reply. My country needs me and is sending me to the battlefield where I can die. My girlfriend loves me and expects me to be faithful. My friend entrusts me his/her deepest secrets and is expecting me to keep them at any cost. But, what happens when I am too old to be sent to the battlefield? What shall I do when in old days my beloved wife dies? How can I keep myself awake when all my friends are gone, and I am here alone with strangers that would never entrust me with any secrets to keep? The people around me are very kind and take care of me and protect me. I can enjoy my life and drink coffee with the other elderly in the SH. Of course, nobody expects anything from me except to be kind to others. I do not know however why I keep thinking about my childhood! I miss my mom and dad a lot and wonder who I am! Everything seems so dully and opaque. Am I a kid again?

In the discussion of the shared world, we should not forget to mention the relation we have to all the dead that, in one way or another, formed our reality, including ourselves, to its actual shape. So, George Eliot beautifully writes at the very end of *Middlemarch*:

[T]he growing good of the world is partly dependent on unhistoric acts; and that things are not so ill with you and me as they might have been, is half owing to the number who lived faithfully a hidden life, and rest in unvisited tombs.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵² Jaspers, *Philosophie II*, 39. (Jaspers, Philosophy volume 2, 38).

¹⁵³ Cf. Jaspers, *Philosophie II*, 25.

¹⁵⁴ Cf. *ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ George Eliot, *Middlemarch* (Edinburgh and London, 1871-72; Project Gutenberg, 2021), finale, <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/145/145-h/145-h.htm>.

Jaspers is also very clear about the relationship with the dead when he writes: “To me even the dead are effectively existent – or nonexistent. Some of them live in me; it is as if they had approached me and were advising me as awe-inspiring figures.”¹⁵⁶ The responsibility task that we saw in the last section also applies to the dead with whom we share this world. Hans Ruin reminds us of our bonds with the dead in his book *Being with the dead*. Ruin writes: “There is no social space entirely outside the shared space with the dead. To learn to live is to learn to inhabit this space in a responsible way.”¹⁵⁷

4.2. Autonomy

Autonomy is an inward movement by freeing oneself from external pressure and control. It consists of protecting what is own and resisting what is extraneous. This relational movement continuously implies its opposite, i.e., heteronomy, without which autonomy is not thinkable. Furthermore, autonomy shows the power of heteronomy and gives it meaning. In other words, there is a ceaseless dialectical movement between autonomy and heteronomy. If I remove heteronomy, I simultaneously remove autonomy and vice versa. An example of the movement of autonomy taken to an extreme can be found in the following quote, where Descartes describes the independence of the soul:

[E]xamining attentively what I was, I saw that I could pretend that I had no body and that there was no world or place for me to be in, but that I could not for all that pretend that I did not exist; on the contrary, from the very fact that I thought of doubting the truth of other things, it followed incontrovertibly and certainly that I myself existed, whereas, if I had merely ceased thinking, I would have no reason to believe that I existed, even if everything else I had ever imagined had been true. I thereby concluded that I was a substance whose whole essence or nature resides only in thinking, and which, in order to exist, has no need of place and is not dependent on any material thing.¹⁵⁸

Descartes excludes any external influence and thereby abolishes heteronomy and empties the self. Jaspers writes: “I go to waste when I am nothing but I.”¹⁵⁹ Jaspers reminds us in

¹⁵⁶ Jaspers, *Philosophie II*, 405. (Jaspers, *Philosophy* volume 2, 352).

¹⁵⁷ Hans Ruin, *Being with the dead: burial, ancestral politics, and the roots of historical consciousness* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2018), 201.

¹⁵⁸ René Descartes, *A Discourse on the Method of Correctly Conducting One's Reason and Seeking Truth in the Sciences*, tr. Ian Maclean (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 29.

¹⁵⁹ Jaspers, *Philosophie II*, 56. (Jaspers, *Philosophy* volume 2, 52).

Philosophie that we have an innate urge (*Drang*) to be on our own, but sooner or later, we will understand that this way will lead us into nothingness (*Nichts*). This awareness of the risk of falling into the void leads us to the urge to communicate.¹⁶⁰ One can wonder why we do this. Why don't we follow this urge to loneliness and let ourselves vanish into nothingness? Why be rather than not be? To find out the answer, we have at first to take the path of autonomy, or even better, the path of loneliness.

Before starting the discussion of the autonomy movement, I want to clarify a few concepts related to it. First, I want to call the attention to the importance of the unity of the human being, which includes one's own body, passions, feelings, etc., in Jaspers' thought and its role in communication. Jaspers writes:

The man who abandons the resistance of his self-existence [*Eigendasein*], who wants nothing for himself, who does not want to live at all, has renounced the world. From metaphysical points of view he may be a saint, but he cannot longer enter into communication. Essentially without existence [*Dasein*], he can no longer be an independent Existenz with others.¹⁶¹

Dasein is, for Jaspers, like the anchor for a boat. It gives the self its phenomenality making its unfolding in time possible. As an immanent pole, it functions like a catapult towards transcendence.

Second, in our concrete life, we find ourselves constantly in an immanent and specific situation, and we know that we will inevitably find ourselves in situations that are so determined that there is no way to escape them, like death, guilt, sorrow, and in such situations we founder. Jaspers calls this experience *Grenzsituation*, which can be translated into a limit, boundary, or ultimate situation, and is one of the key concepts of Jaspers'. He writes that "experiencing limit situations and existing (*Existieren*) are the same. In the helplessness of *Dasein* there is the upswing of being within me."¹⁶² Jaspers is here in complete agreement with Kierkegaard's

¹⁶⁰ Cf. *ibid.*

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.* 84. (Jaspers, *Philosophy* volume 2, 75).

¹⁶² "Grenzsituationen erfahren und Existieren ist dasselbe. In der Hilflosigkeit des Daseins ist es der Aufschwung des Seins in mir." Jaspers, *Philosophie II*, 204. I use here my own translation because I find Ashton's translation of this specific part very misleading and unacceptable. Ashton translates with "To experience boundary situations is the same as Existenz. We do not ask about them in existence; but when we are ourselves, they can make us aware of being." *Philosophy* volume 2, 179. Umberto Galimberti translates with "Sperimentare situazioni-limite ed esistere è la stessa cosa. Nello sconforto dell'esserci c'è in me lo slancio dell'essere." Jean Hersch translates with "Vivre les situations-limites et exister, c'est une seule et même chose. Dans l'impasse de la vie empirique, c'est l'élan de l'être en moi."

definition of becoming oneself, i.e., “to become oneself is to become concrete.”¹⁶³ For Jaspers, “the boundary thus plays its proper role of something immanent which already points to transcendence.”¹⁶⁴ The limit situation is in its same limitation an expansion. Note that the function of the limit situation is the same as Kant’s *sublime* and that Jaspers shares Kant’s understanding of limit. Edwin Latzel lifts out the leading points of view recurring in every particular limit/boundary/ultimate situation.

- 1) It is *existentially* disastrous to seek out the ultimate situation directly.
- 2) I inevitably find myself in ultimate situations.
- 3) Every ultimate situation has a dual aspect: a negative character with respect to my existence, and a potentially positive character for me as potential *Existenz*.
- 4) In the ultimate situation I achieve myself as *Existenz*.
- 5) I can illuminate for myself the ‘*existential*’ necessity of the ultimate situation.¹⁶⁵

Latzel reminds us that any drawn frame should not be considered a rigorous system.¹⁶⁶ Latzel writes: “Philosophizing, as he [Jaspers] understands it, cannot result in any fixed or coherent system of Knowledge.”¹⁶⁷ We need, of course, a fixed and coherent system of knowledge, which is offered by science, which Jaspers stresses is essential for philosophizing. Jaspers argues that philosophizing “requires science and gives it meaning.”¹⁶⁸

Moving now to the issue of motion itself, one can say that one of the first questions that pop up in our mind when we speak about a movement is “what is in motion?” If I say: “It is moving forward very fast,” you will directly wonder what the thing that is moving forward very fast is. We cannot, arguably, speak about a movement without thinking of something moving; we will at least draw a line in our minds. Another essential thing about motion is that it requires something that is not moving, as Aristotle tells us, both internally and externally.¹⁶⁹ Aristotle is talking about resistance (*ἀντίρροσις*). If I walk, a foot standstill when the other foot moves, which will not be possible if the surface that the fixed foot is standing on does not resist the weight of the foot. If you try to walk, e.g., on water, you will find out that it is impossible because your

¹⁶³ Kierkegaard, *Sygdommen til Døden*, 25.

¹⁶⁴ Jaspers, *Philosophie II*, 204. (Jaspers, *Philosophy* volume 2, 179).

¹⁶⁵ Edwin Latzel, “The concept of ‘ultimate situation’,” in *The philosophy of Karl Jaspers*, ed. Paul Arthur Schilpp (La Salle: Open Court Publishing Company, 1974), 197.

¹⁶⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, 202.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁸ “Wissenschaft fordert und ihr Sinn gibt.” Jaspers, *Philosophie I*, xxi.

¹⁶⁹ Cf. Aristotle, *De motu animalium*, 698b.

foot will sink in the water unless you are Jesus. When we speak about our sense of touch, we need something that resists our skin, which in turn resists reciprocally to the object; when we speak about sight, we need light coming to our retina, which can reciprocally resist the light. We see just light, but we presume that light has been reflected by external objects that could resist to some degree to light and thereby reflect it.

Correspondingly, when it comes to knowledge, extremely simplifying, we have data that is in some way stored and thereby can resist the hand of the mind that organizes it using categories. So, we have at this level what we call consciousness, but Jaspers distinguishes three types of consciousness:

[i] Consciousness is the reality of my individual existence [*Dasein*] as I *experience* it; [ii] as *consciousness at large* it is the one universal premise of all objective being for knowing subjects; [iii] and as *absolute consciousness* it is for Existenz the assurance of being.¹⁷⁰

Note here the influence of the Hegelian dialectics, as absolute consciousness is thought as a synthesis of the particular, i.e., the *individual experience*, and the universal, i.e., *consciousness at large*. This point is essential for Jaspers, who is clearly following Kierkegaard. In his presentation of Kierkegaard in *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen*, Jaspers writes:

What is the self? “The self means precisely the contradiction that the universal is posited as the individual”. Man does not exist if he does not exist as an “individual”. It cannot dissolve into anything general without losing existence; but insofar as he is merely an individual, he is not a self. Becoming oneself means that the general becomes the particular and neither is pushed aside.¹⁷¹

It is beyond my purpose to clarify these distinctions in detail. Suffice to mention that absolute consciousness is not an experience or a drive in the psychological sense. It is not a consciousness that grants objective knowledge valid for everybody. The reason for that is that there is a unilateral movement of intentionality in these mentioned cases. We have an observer and an

¹⁷⁰ Jaspers, *Philosophie II*, 255. (Jaspers, *Philosophy* volume 2, 223).

¹⁷¹ “Was ist das Selbst? “Selbst bedeutet eben den Widerspruch, daß das Allgemeine als das Einzelne gesetzt ist”. Der Mensch existiert nicht, wenn er nicht als “Einzelner” existiert. Er kann sich in kein Allgemeines auflösen, ohne die Existenz zu verlieren; sofern er aber bloß Einzelner ist, ist er kein Selbst. Selbstwerden heißt, daß das Allgemeine im Einzelnen wird und keines von beiden beiseite geschoben ist.” Jaspers, *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen*, 419f.

observed object that is within reach. This issue is strictly related to the subject-object dichotomy. The thing that would be the observed object in the case of absolute consciousness “is not for an observer but in the observer. It is his directive element and its own source, not to be understood by way of something else.”¹⁷² We are speaking here about *Existenz*, which shows itself in all that I experience and know and makes all experiences and all knowledge as mine, making me responsible for them.¹⁷³ *Existenz* is not present as an object but as freedom “that can have no being other than in its own doing.”¹⁷⁴ The attentive reader will remember here what I said in section 4.1. about *temperance* in Plato, i.e., “doing what is one’s own.”

Given the fact that *Existenz* is not an object in the world that I can reach and dominate, like an apple that I can take and eat or a memory that I can keep reminding myself of and enjoying, the movement that tries to reach it is wholly different and characterized by negativity. In other words, we could say that we are taking a *via negative*, and it originates in *not-knowing* (*Nichtwissen*) as a *turning point in the origin* (*Wendpunkt im Ursprung*), which is not the kind of not knowing that comes before knowing something.¹⁷⁵ Like when somebody knocks on the door, and I start wondering who it might be, but I know who it is when I open it. We are talking here about a *not knowing* that is acquired. You are so sure that you are you, but you know that you don’t know what makes you so sure about that. If you knew that, you would not be you anymore, but another. Here, we have what is known as *Jaspers’ theorem of incomprehensibility* (*Unverständlichkeitstheorem*) from *Allgemeine Psychopathologie* (1913), in which Jaspers asserts the insufficiency of empathy alone to understand the mentally sick.¹⁷⁶ Keep in mind here Kierkegaard’s indirect method’s influence on Jaspers, as we mentioned earlier. You understand the limitations of your understanding and its incapacity to objectively categorize and order what you are looking for, which is you as a whole, in other words, your *Existenz*.

Recapitulating the discussion of movement, Jaspers writes:

Yet acquired not-knowing is not a point of rest. It is the *turning point* of the motion. I no sooner reach it than I come back from it. I cannot linger at this point; instead, it spurs and inwardly originates the motion toward knowledge and certainty.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷² “[...] es ist nicht für den Betrachtenden, sondern im Betrachtenden als das, was Richtung gibt. Es ist nicht zu verstehen aus einem Anderen, weil der Ursprung in ihm ist.” Ibid.

¹⁷³ Cf. *ibid.*, 256.

¹⁷⁴ “[D]em kein anderes Sein als das in seinem eigenen Tun zukommt.” Ibid., 258.

¹⁷⁵ Jaspers, *Philosophie II*, 261.

¹⁷⁶ Cf. Sebastian Luft & Jann E. Schlimme, “The Phenomenology of Intersubjectivity in Jaspers and Husserl: On the Capacities and Limits of Empathy and Communication in Psychiatric Praxis,” *Psychopathology* 2013;46:345–354.

¹⁷⁷ Jaspers, *Philosophie II*, 262. (Jaspers, *Philosophy* volume 2, 229).

Jaspers does not say it openly, but, dialectically speaking, this not knowing has, as I see it, similar characteristics as the *unhappy consciousness* (*unglückliche Bewußtsein*) in Hegel's *Phenomenology*, as the synthesis of stoicism and skepticism.¹⁷⁸ For Jaspers, moreover, "what the existential movement of not knowing brings to my study of what I can possibly know is thus not an element of uncertainty but rather an enhanced acuteness of every firm way of knowing."¹⁷⁹ The latest quote leaves no doubt about Jaspers' intention, not only to keep in touch with reality during the journey inward, but also to reinforce it. This motion involves, in fact, not only the inner doing (*inneren Tun*) but also the outer action (*äußeren Handeln*).¹⁸⁰

Now we know that, in the movement of autonomy, the thing that is in motion is our absolute consciousness. Furthermore, we know that the inner resistance, which gives a point of support, consists of my body, the world of objects, scientific knowledge, etc. We need now to identify the outer resistance, knowing that it cannot be an object in the world. The answer is simple: the other. It is for Jaspers, "the impenetrable resistance of the other" that makes the mundane knowledge founder. The other is not an object free for me to place as I wish.¹⁸¹ He/she is resisting me and makes me accountable. As we saw earlier, it is the responsibility that wakes me up and causes the turning point. Without this resistance, "existence would become a puppet show, with those objectivities pulling the strings."¹⁸² Therefore, the role of the other is essential, and Jaspers is very clear about that when he writes:

I cannot be myself unless the other wants to be himself; I cannot be free unless he is free; I cannot be sure of myself unless I am sure of him. In communication I feel responsible not only for myself but for the other, as if he were I and I were he; I do not feel it set in until he meets me half-way. For I do not reach the point of communication by my own action alone; the other's action must match it.¹⁸³

Observe here the extreme similarity between the quote above and Hegel's description of the movement of self-consciousness in his *Phenomenology*:

¹⁷⁸ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, translated by Arnold Vincent Miller (Oxford: Oxford University press, 1977), §197-230.

¹⁷⁹ Jaspers, *Philosophie II*, 263. (Jaspers, Philosophy volume 2, 229).

¹⁸⁰ Cf. *ibid.*

¹⁸¹ Cf. *ibid.*

¹⁸² *Ibid.* (Jaspers, Philosophy volume 2, 230).

¹⁸³ Jaspers, *Philosophie II*, 57. (Jaspers, Philosophy volume 2, 52-53).

[T]he movement [of self-consciousness] is simply the double movement of the two self-consciousnesses. Each sees the other do the same as it does; each does itself what it demands of the other, and therefore also does what it does only in so far as the other does the same. Action by one-side only would be useless because what is to happen can only be brought about by both.¹⁸⁴

We can see in both Jaspers and Hegel that isolation will block the motion. For Jaspers, the isolation from the other, no matter if it is self-chosen or forced, will make the inward motion of autonomy, that is, in fact, the motion of EL, impossible, which will result in my death as possible *Existenz*. In other words, I will not be able to be myself.

Before moving to the next step, I want to mention that the movement of not-knowing might also be related to the motion of the so-called “learned ignorance,” in Latin “docta ignorantia” that we can find in Augustine, Bonaventura, Cusanus, and other mystics, where it is said to be the action of the Holy Spirit, that is also called The Paraclete, in the believer. It is outside my scope to compare the mentioned thinkers who have greatly influenced Jaspers. I only want to call the reader’s attention to the Platonic origin of the idea of this action than mainly results in an awakening. In book 7 of the *Republic*, Socrates says that “some things are stimulating [παρακλητικὰ] the thought [διανοίας], and some are not, and I defined, in fact, those things that present themselves simultaneously with their own opposites as stimulating, but those which do not, are not wakening [ἐγερτικὰ] the reason [νοήσεως].”¹⁸⁵ The most important thing here is Plato’s argument about the oppositions’ capacity to stimulate and waken. Even in Hegel’s *unhappy consciousness*, awareness of oppositions and contradictions is essential.

My reference to mystics is probably not entirely out of place. In the motion following the turning point, Jaspers uses the mystic’s distance from the mundane reality as a simile to describe the revolving motion in vertigo (*Schwindel*) and trepidation (*Schaudern*).¹⁸⁶ This motion is caused by abandoning the firm point of reference of objective knowledge and trying to overpass its limit. Jaspers writes:

It [vertigo] will have taken me to the limit where man wants to do the impossible, to jump across his own shadow—but in the motion it will have made me see what that motion alone

¹⁸⁴ Hegel, *Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit*, §182.

¹⁸⁵ “Τὰ μὲν παρακλητικὰ τῆς διανοίας ἐστί, τὰ δ’ οὐ, ἃ μὲν εἰς τὴν αἴσθησιν ἅμα τοῖς ἐναντίοις ἑαυτοῖς ἐπίπτει, παρακλητικὰ ὀριζόμενος, ὅσα δὲ μή, οὐκ ἐγερτικὰ τῆς νοήσεως.” Plato, *Republic*, 524d.

¹⁸⁶ Cf. Jaspers, *Philosophie II*, 264.

can reveal, what I cannot see without it, and what on my return will now guide my distinct philosophical thinking.¹⁸⁷

The return is nevertheless not granted since there are different forces involved in vertigo. First, a dark, seductive force invites me “to hurl myself down,” aimlessly and in desperation.¹⁸⁸ Second, an opposing force against this destructive urge comes from two sides, the order of superficial life, on the one hand, and love and faith on the other. Finally, this opposition opens a possibility of a decision. The choice is between returning to myself sure of being, or fleeing, guilt-ridden, which “can end in nothingness alone.”¹⁸⁹

The next step is anxiety (*Angst*) which Jaspers introduces as follows:

The frightening movement, present in vertigo and trepidation, becomes the turning point in anxiety as the consciousness of the possibility of being annihilated. Anxiety is the vertigo and trepidation of freedom facing the choice. The decisiveness of absolute consciousness can only be achieved by overcoming anxiety.¹⁹⁰

Existential anxiety, according to Jaspers, must not be confused with *Dasein-anxiety*. It is not my scope to discuss this distinction in detail, but I want to mention a few differences.

First, all anxiety in *Dasein* originates from death-anxiety, while existential anxiety originates from awareness of the danger of absolute nothingness, which can depend on my guilt.¹⁹¹

Second, *Dasein-anxiety* has a precautionary function that results in calculating risks and appealing to objective securities. In contrast, there are no calculations, no prevention, and external threats in existential anxiety, since it is about the possibility of not-being that I cannot control.¹⁹² It is important to remember that EC is about unveiling oneself to the other. Now we do not know objectively ourselves or the other; we cannot control our *Existenz* nor that of the other, which involves a risk from the beginning of the communication. Jaspers writes:

¹⁸⁷ “Ich trat zwar in ihm an die Grenze, wo der Mensch das Unmögliche will, über seinen eigenen Schatten zu springen, aber in der Bewegung wurde sichtbar, was nur in ihr, nicht ohne sie, für mich offenbar wird und nun in der Rückkehr das bestimmte philosophische Denken lenkt.” Jaspers, *Philosophie II*, 264-265.

¹⁸⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, 265.

¹⁸⁹ Cf. *ibid.*

¹⁹⁰ “Die Bewegung des Erschreckens in Schwindel und Schaudern wird in der Angst der Wendepunkt als Bewußtsein des Vertilgtwerdenkönnens. Angst ist das Schwindligwerden und Schaudern der Freiheit, die vor der Wahl steht. Nur über die Angst, in ihrer Überwindung, ist die Entschiedenheit des absoluten Bewußtseins zu erreichen.” *Ibid.*

¹⁹¹ Cf. *ibid.*, 266.

¹⁹² Cf. *ibid.*, 266-267.

The hazard lies in the instant when the first spark is struck, when one of the two will often quietly draw back again as if nothing had happened. Or that moment will face men with a challenge that requires truth and candor.¹⁹³

It is not a simple choice, i.e., to move on or act as if nothing has happened. I need to understand what is at stake. For communication to be existential, I need to be aware of what I can win if I open myself to the other and what I can lose if I build high walls around myself and isolate myself.¹⁹⁴ Jaspers writes:

Here lies the turning point of all communication. It is here that I either take the risk of vanishing from the other as a reality so as to reemerge out of my true potential, or that I hide because I do not want to be naked, not before the other and not before myself. I will either realize my potential with the other or relapse, alone, into mere existence [*bloßes Dasein*].¹⁹⁵

When I bet on a football match, I know in advance what I can win if I get it right and what I will lose if I get it wrong, which is not the case when it comes to EC. The risk of misunderstanding is always imminent in EC because *Existenz* cannot be objectified and known precisely, which is the case even for one's own *Existenz*.¹⁹⁶ Despite this insecurity, the autonomy movement must still be kept in one's own origin. Any reliance on objective securities here will lead to religious life and theology, which will mark a self-isolation from the own origin, making the fulfillment of the self out of reach.¹⁹⁷

Third, Dasein-anxiety is impossible to overcome since all evil remains possible. Dasein-anxiety can, however, be dominated by the assurance of self-being (*Gewißheit des Selbstseins*) that results from existential anxiety.¹⁹⁸ Without this assurance, I would not be able to orientate my life. Jaspers writes:

¹⁹³ Ibid., 95. (Jaspers, Philosophy volume 2, 85).

¹⁹⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, 82.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid. (Jaspers, Philosophy volume 2, 74).

¹⁹⁶ Cf. Jaspers, *Von der Wahrheit*, 76.

¹⁹⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, 267-268.

¹⁹⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, 266-267.

I do not know what my will ought to be, because I would like to take up all possibilities, would not like to miss any, yet can tell of none whether or not it matters. No longer able to choose, I yield passively to the mere occurrence of events or escape from my sense of existential nonbeing into mere bustle, blindly doing things at random.¹⁹⁹

The function of the assurance of self-being has some affinities to the concepts of self-esteem and self-love. It marks the return point of autonomy movement into that of authenticity, the return of the movement of EL into the movement of EC. I will discuss this in more detail in the next section. It is essential here to note that the possibility of overcoming existential anxiety is even slighter than in Dasein-anxiety. There is, in fact, no way to control or dominate existential anxiety, as we saw above. Jaspers thinks of existential anxiety as the source of freedom of the self. He argues that “absolute consciousness must always repeat itself originally and remains bound to factual anxiety in its assurance. Therefore, overcoming does not mean abolition. It is possible to want anxiety out of empty indifference in order to come to oneself again.”²⁰⁰ Jaspers argues that “without the threat of possible despair there is no freedom.”²⁰¹ Jaspers thinks of this source dialectically, where freedom springs up by unceasingly winning against despair by an act of love, in which I emerge as a gift to myself. From here starts the movement of authenticity.

4.3. Authenticity

If we take a quick look at some of the definitions of autonomy and authenticity. We will find concepts such as trueness, reality, and identity which are often thought of substantively, i.e., correspondence between action and a static agent, as an object, a substance, or an essence. I argue that Jaspers’ is, instead, procedural, and relational. It is not my scope to give an overview of this vast issue, so I will give an example that has many affinities to Jaspers but is still far away from it. According to Justin Fred White, “autonomy is a matter of acting in conformity with one’s practical identity and authenticity is a matter of the agent taking ownership and responsibility for her practical identity.”²⁰² Practical identity here is a concept drawn by Christine Korsgaard and is defined by her as “a description under which you value yourself, a

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 266. (Jaspers, *Philosophy* volume 2, 233).

²⁰⁰ “Das absolute Bewußtsein muß sich [...] stets ursprünglich wiederholen und bleibt in seiner Vergewisserung gebunden an faktische Angst. Daher heißt Überwindung nicht Aufhebung. Es ist möglich, aus der leeren Indifferenz heraus die Angst gradezu zu wollen, um wieder zu sich zu kommen.”Ibid., 267.

²⁰¹ Ibid., 267. (Jaspers, *Philosophy* volume 2, 233).

²⁰² Justin Fred White, *Autonomy and Authenticity as Ideals of Agency* (PhD diss., University of California Riverside, 2015), vii.

description under which you find your life to be worth living and your actions to be worth undertaking.”²⁰³ Even if this conception, which is related to John Rawls’s concept of self-respect, is drawn, like Jaspers’, in Kantian spirit, it is not compatible with Jaspers’ view, since it is static and seems to refer to some ownership. I let this question be open since it needs a deeper investigation. However, my main concern is the use of the concept of identity when talking about the self. Jaspers’ understanding of the self is relational and dynamic, as in Kierkegaard, who writes: “The self is a relation which relates to itself, or it is in the relation that the relation relates to itself; The self is not the Relation, but that the Relation relates to itself.”²⁰⁴ Jaspers’ paramount attitude is to abandon, like Kierkegaard, the style of identity since it consists of systematization, domination, and isolation. Any attempt to form an identity theory, synchronic or diachronic, is doomed to fail.

Jaspers understands the moral challenges when arguing that the self is unobjectifiable. However, he barely uses the word authenticity, and when he does that, he wants to remind us of its unobjectifiability and inaccessibility for knowledge. One of these occasions is when he discusses the injunction “you shall not lie,” he assures that “if I lie, I cannot justify it,”²⁰⁵ but he continues:

The only question is whether there can be true, existential action that is not understood as true from a general law, so its authenticity [*Eigentlichkeit*] cannot be stated, so it does not become a model. This question must remain in limbo. Objectively, it can only be denied. But the question does not want to know objectively, but to cast a glance at an existing [*Ezistieren*—using the verb here probably to highlight *Ezistenz* as an activity and not as substance] that, moving in subjectivity and objectivity, in both, cannot appear adequately through either one and yet takes place for itself in the certainty of the ought [*Sollen*] in such a way that it is not amenable to generalization. One can only discuss without determining.²⁰⁶

²⁰³ Christine Marion Korsgaard, *The Sources of Normativity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 101.

²⁰⁴ “Selvet er et Forhold, der forholder sig til sig selv, eller er det i Forholdet, at Forholdet forholder sig til sig selv; Selvet er ikke Forholdet, men at Forholdet forholder sig til sig selv.” Kierkegaard, *Sygdommen til Døden*, 7.

²⁰⁵ “Wenn ich lüge, so kann ich es nicht rechtfertigen.” Jaspers, *Philosophie II*, 357.

²⁰⁶ “Es ist nur die Frage, ob es wahres, existentielles Handeln geben könne, das nicht aus allgemeinem Gesetz als Wahres begriffen werde, darum in seiner Eigentlichkeit nicht ausgesagt werden kann, also kein Vorbild wird. Diese Frage muß in der Schwebe bleiben. Objektiv kann sie nur verneint werden. Aber sie will ja nicht objektiv wissen, sondern den Blick in ein Existieren werfen, das in Subjektivität und Objektivität, in beiden sich bewegend, durch keines adäquat zur Erscheinung kommen kann und doch für sich in der Gewißheit des Sollens sich so vollzieht, daß es einer Verallgemeinerung nicht zugänglich ist. Man kann nur erörtern, ohne zu bestimmen.” Ibid.

Jaspers is clear about the necessity of lying in our lives since always telling the truth to everybody can have devastating consequences. He stresses—however, the necessity of truth-telling in EC at the same level. The moral implications of Jaspers’ thought need deeper investigation, which is out of my scope in this thesis.

In order to move ahead to the discussion of the motion of authenticity, I want to quote Jaspers’ summary of the movements hitherto described by him. Jaspers writes:

If the not-knowing is the turning point, from which all possibilities originate, if vertigo and trepidation urge the movement, if anxiety, as the consciousness of being able to be exterminated in confused freedom, lets myself emerge as a gift to me, then conscience is the voice at the turning point, that in the movement urges me to distinguish and to decide.²⁰⁷

At the end of the quote above, we have an apparent reference to Plato’s understanding of dialectics, i.e., distinguishing (*διαγιγνώσκω*) and reckoning (*λογίζομαι*).²⁰⁸ It is a movement of something that is possibly myself coming from the origin “to lead me into the motion.”²⁰⁹ Furthermore, following me as resistance, by urging and sometimes by forbidding, it keeps its “character of negativity.”²¹⁰ Jaspers writes, “It is like being in a split of my being, the communication of myself with myself, addressing my empirical existence [*Dasein*] through the origin of my self-being.”²¹¹ For Jaspers, conscience is “as a voice in held fragmentation, it is essentially the no. The Daimonion of Socrates that could only advise against him.”²¹² As in all autonomy movements, there must always be negativity and resistance in the authenticity movement since we deal with dialectical movements. Jaspers insists that placing the normative source of action in the self depends on his understanding that lawfulness for Kant presupposes only itself.

²⁰⁷ “Wenn das Nichtwissen der Wendepunkt ist, aus dem der Ursprung aller Möglichkeit wirkt, wenn Schwindel und Schauern zur Bewegung drängen, wenn Angst, als das Bewußtsein möglichen Vertilgtwerdenkönnens in verwirrter Freiheit, aus sich mich selbst als mir geschenkt hervorgehen läßt, so ist das Gewissen die Stimme am Wendepunkt, die in der Bewegung zu unterscheiden und zu entscheiden fordert.” Ibid., 268.

²⁰⁸ Cf. Plato, *Republic*, 524c.

²⁰⁹ “[M]ich in der Bewegung zu führen.” Jaspers, *Philosophie II*, 268.

²¹⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, 268-269.

²¹¹ “Es ist wie in einer Zerspaltenheit meines Seins die Kommunikation meiner mit mir selbst, Ansprechen meines empirischen Daseins durch den Ursprung meines Selbstseins.” Ibid.

²¹² “Daher ist es als Stimme in festgehaltener Zerspaltenheit wesentlich das Nein. Das Daimonion des Sokrates konnte nur abraten.” Ibid., 269.

During the discussion of the movement of autonomy, we saw that resistance is needed and that I should not lie flat for what is extraneous; the same must be done by the other in reciprocity. I want to introduce another danger that can make EC impossible, i.e., to rule out my own influence on myself. I must avoid saying: “one cannot change me,” or “I have to be taken as I am!”²¹³ If the most significant risk in the movement of autonomy is the exclusion of heteronomy, in other words, the exclusion of objectivity, and falling back into what Karl Marx called *commodity fetish*, the most significant risk in the movement of authenticity is, according to Jaspers, the exclusion of myself as a possibility, as a free human being, by “turning myself into an unfree thing [*unfreien Ding*].”²¹⁴ I think then that I am as I am and that there is no way for me to change myself. One could say, simplifying a lot, that in the inward movement of autonomy made possible and pushed by the social environment, I forget about this reality and falsely start believing that I am independent of it. In contrast, in the outward movement of authenticity, I forget myself and believe falsely to be just an unfree object. This attitude excludes even heteronomy. Jaspers says that I become unchangeable, not only by myself but also by others. One can wonder if autonomy and authenticity are not anyway the same things. I argue that this cannot be the case if we consider the movement of both. In the inward movement of autonomy, I am not trying to change the other but to find myself, while in the outward movement of authenticity, I am trying to disclose what I found out at the end of the inward movement to the other and by that realizing myself in time as a phenomenon. For example, if I decide to build a new house, I do not just grab a spade and start digging for the foundations anywhere at random. I first move inward and try to understand my taste and what I really like in a house, my dreams, most essential wishes, etc. I keep the contact with reality simultaneously and adjust my plans along the way. I must think about my limitations when it comes to financing the project; I must accept that I need to choose a plot from those on the market right now. I must respect the municipality’s regulations and many other rules and limitations. When I have a clear idea about the house of my dreams, I start drawing or ask a professional architect to help me with that. The house is starting to find its place in the world. It is now something concrete and palpable, even if it is just a drawing – everybody knows how important it is to follow the drawing after being approved by the municipality. The most crucial thing in this process is to keep the contact between myself and reality all the time.

²¹³ “[M]ich kann man nicht mehr ändern, [...] ich muß nun mal so hingenommen werden. Jaspers, *Philosophie II*, 87.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 88. (Jaspers, *Philosophy* volume 2, 79).

The house example shows a balanced and inconclusive dialectics between me and the reality, both in the inward and outward movements. However, we can find an example of the dialectical movements taken to their extremes in Adorno's *Philosophie der neuen Musik* (1949). Adorno uses Arnold Schoenberg as an extreme example of autonomy and Igor Stravinsky as an extreme example of authenticity. Schoenberg's *Pierrot lunaire*, op. 21, from 1912, represents the extreme pole of autonomy, as the protagonist is making, according to Adorno, a long inward journey back to himself. Adorno writes:

In Schoenberg, everything rests on the solitary subjectivity, withdrawn into itself. The entire third part of *Pierrot* sketches a "journey home" to a vitreous no-man's-land in whose crystalline and lifeless air the quasi-transcendental subject, liberated from the ensnarements of the empirical, recovers himself on an imaginary plane.²¹⁵

Adorno is very clear about the fetishism of *Pierrot's* absolute autonomy in this work of art, which has the function of mirroring the fetishism of the autonomy of commodity, and with that showing the truth of its falsity. When it comes to the extreme polarity of authenticity, Adorno uses Stravinsky's *Petrushka* (1911) as a paradigm, where "the music identifies not with the victim [*Petrushka*] but with the annihilating authority. Through the liquidation of the victim, it rids itself of intentions, those of its own proper subjectivity."²¹⁶ It is not within the scope of this thesis to go into a deeper discussion of Adorno's position. I just want to mention it because it clearly illustrates the movement of autonomy and authenticity. Simplifying it a little, one could say that Schoenberg and Stravinsky are not building houses but creating works of art. The first, according to Adorno, is taking his autonomy from the cultural and social environment to the extreme, using atonality and focusing on breaking the bonds with what was before him and the trends of the time. Stravinsky, on the contrary, according to Adorno, is using a "neoromantic mask" liquidating his own subjectivity and composing what the masses want to have and are ready to pay big money for.²¹⁷ The first is liquidating the object while the second is liquidating the subject, but both are liquidating the totality and unity of themselves. Adorno is decisive in the inconclusiveness of the dialectical relation between the subject and object, distancing himself from identity-thinking, which is pretty much also Kierkegaard's and Jaspers' position.

²¹⁵ Theodor W. Adorno, *Philosophy of New Music*, translated and edited by Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis: Minnesota Press, 2006), 109.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 110.

²¹⁷ Cf. *ibid.*

5. Some remarks on HRI

5.1. A shared objective world in HRI

From the perspective of the shared world, we can discuss the HRI from two points of view depending on the kind of social robot the SH-resident is interacting with, i.e., if they are direct or indirect social robots. Indirect social robots, such as assistive walkers, exoskeletons, and robot wheelchairs, could help the resident keep the contact with the real world by making, e.g., walks in SH's garden possible. Some other indirect robots, e.g., telepresence robots such as Double or Giraff, could help the resident keep in touch with meaningful people outside the SH by facilitating video calls.²¹⁸ Pirhonen et al. argue that “a robot that could enable a video call to a friend or family member (or a professional helper) by a simple voice command might relieve emotional loneliness and contribute to a sense of reliable alliance and guidance in stressful situations.”²¹⁹

On the other hand, direct social robots have another much more sophisticated role, i.e., to be a shareholder of the same world. The robot should have contact with the same objective world, which can be, in the limited space of the SH, as simple as reacting to temperature change, e.g., when the resident opens the window on a cold or hot day, or photosensitivity, that is also something relatively easy to program in. The most important signal from the robot's side is to show the resident that it feels and reacts to the same conditions as he/she. Let me give you an example from everyday life outside the SH's walls! Imagine walking in your new neighborhood and meeting a neighbor you have never talked to before! The specific starting point for a friendly conversation is probably small talk about the weather. If the sun is shining and the temperature is around 24° Celsius, you will know that your neighbor is enjoying the weather as much as you are. The same is highly probable if the weather is terrible and the temperature is around -20°. The neighbor will probably be as frustrated as you are. This sensibility to the weather constitutes a common positive/negative subject to start talking about. When that is done, one confirms that this world and its experience are real and common between you and your neighbor.

Similarly, going back to the social robot, we must be aware of the need to make it interactive, not only with the resident and his/her commands and needs but also with the

²¹⁸ Cf. Jari Pirhonen, Elisa Tiilikainen, Satu Pekkarinen, Marjut Lemivaara, Helinä Melkas, “Can robots tackle late-life loneliness? Scanning of future opportunities and challenges in assisted living facilities,” *Futures: the journal of policy, planning and futures studies*, 2020-12, Vol.124:102640, 5.

²¹⁹ Ibid. 8.

objective world in which they are both. The resident needs some indication that he/she and the robot are in the same boat, at least physically. When I say “boat,” I also mean vulnerability in terms of changing weather conditions. The objective world is changing, and the robot needs to have continuous contact with it. The Existential Robotics Laboratory (ERL), which is a part of the Contextual Robotics Institute (CRI) at the University of California, San Diego (UCSD), is one of the research communities working on bringing the robots to the same world that we human beings experience and live in. The engineers at ERL describe their project as follows:

Our goal is to move away from the task-oriented view of robotics in which one specific robot performs one specific task in one specific environment for a short duration and create robots that have skills, experience, and generalization ability to exist in the real, unstructured, and dynamically changing world. An existential robot needs rich understanding of its surroundings, curiosity to acquire new information or reduce uncertainty, and ability to co-exist, learn from, and teach other robots.²²⁰

The most challenging part of the project is the question of autonomy, which I will discuss in the next section. As far as I can see, the ERL is not working on social robots and is focused on the robots’ “utility in transportation, disaster response, environmental monitoring, agriculture, mining, construction, and security.”²²¹ In the CRI, with the slogan “Robots in the real world working with humans,” there are, however, other teams working on social robots specialized in health care that will benefit from the results reached by ERL. It is important to remember that it is not enough to make the robot understand the real world in my discussion here. The robot must be able to share this experience with the resident. I understand that the resilience that robots can have can be of great use in many fields, e.g., firefighting, and armed combat. However, I want to emphasize the importance of vulnerability in the process of creating a bond between the robot and the resident. We need to think differently when designing social robots. We need to make them vulnerable, not only to sunlight and temperature changes, but even for other social risks.

Regarding emotional and social loneliness, there have been several studies with animal robots, one of which checked the social interaction of the participants and the level of their

²²⁰ “Home,” The Existential Robotics Laboratory (ERL), University of California, San Diego (UCSD), accessed April 2, 2022, <http://erl.ucsd.edu/index.html>.

²²¹ Ibid.

stress hormones.²²² It was found that the participants social interaction increased both with the robot and other residents after the introduction of the robot. The participants were also found to benefit from physical interaction with the robot, with the cortisol level decreasing and benefitting vital organs. Pirhonen et al. scanned actual and possible outcomes of social robots in SH and found that pet like robots could provide an opportunity for nurturance. Pirhonen et al. write:

The residents' reassurance of worth could be strengthened by both direct and indirect social robots. Direct social robots could address people using their favorite "titles" (whether from their previous profession or private life) and by their name (reassurance of worth) and ask questions about daily life in the old times or recent history, thus eliciting positive reminiscence.²²³

I cannot entirely agree with Pirhonen et al. because reassurance of worth needs to have a structural and functional context, like the workplace, sports association, or the like. Most of all, it must come from a peer. A robot is not a human being and could never provide reassurance of worth. However, I agree with Pirhonen et al. on the importance and the benefit that the activities mentioned in the quote above can provide. For example, the consulting firm Accenture developed with the Swedish energy giant Stockholm Exergi a smart speaker specially designed to address elderly loneliness.²²⁴ The speaker asks the participant about his/her life story, which is essential for self-reflection. There could also be significant benefits when it comes to the contact with the real world when handling actual events and news and a form of sharing one's own life story with others since the conversations are converted afterward into both a podcast and a physical book, and with this can pass on to future generations. We can see here the significant role technology plays in bridging the gaps between generations and conserving and forming collective memory.

²²² Cf. Wada, Kazuyoshi, and Shibata, Takanori, "Living with seal robots—Its sociopsychological and physiological influences on the elderly at a care house," *IEEE Transactions on Robotics*, 23(5), 972–980, (2007), <https://doi.org/10.1109/TRO.2007.906261>.

²²³ Pirhonen et al., "Can robots tackle late-life loneliness?" 8.

²²⁴ Cf. "Accenture Interactive Launches Groundbreaking Artificial Intelligence Solution to Tackle Elderly Loneliness," Accenture, published April 30, 2019, <https://newsroom.accenture.com/news/accenture-interactive-launches-groundbreaking-artificial-intelligence-solution-to-tackle-elderly-loneliness.htm>.

5.2. Autonomy and authenticity in HRI

We saw earlier how Jaspers decisively eliminated the possibility of any relationship with a slave when treated as a tool or some cattle.²²⁵ The EC with a robot can never happen if it is not autonomous. It is, in fact, not possible to communicate with a tool. Borrett et al., who apply Hegel's dialectics from his *Phenomenology* in robotics, write:

Unless a particular behavior is meaningful to a robot and not just the programmer, the robot will never function in a truly autonomous fashion nor be able to make decisions through mechanisms that even remotely resemble the mechanisms by which we make decisions.²²⁶

The Google car, for example, is not autonomous, as suggested by David J. Gunkel.²²⁷ Gunkel considers the Marxian claim that the machine is not just a tool because it uses its own tools to do what the human worker used to do, and consequently takes the place of the human worker. The Google car takes, in fact, the place of the human worker, but it is still under control and is just a tool in the hand of other human beings, such as the Google shareholders who desire higher profit. No particular behavior is thus meaningful for the car itself. Regarding the dialectical discussion on autonomy, we can think about what Marx calls in *Das Kapital* for *Warenfetischismus* (commodity fetishism), where he argues that commodity, after the initial constitution, is believed falsely to have its own natural value apart from the production work and the social ties. Likewise, we could say that the belief of the Google car being completely independent of human heteronomy is *machine fetishism*. The car is just programmed to orientate safely and transport the google camera throughout cities without the intervention of an external controller. The human controller is built inside the machine by employing programs and algorithms. Borrett et al. argue that they demonstrate the following:

[H]ow a dialectic, similar to that proposed in Hegel's phenomenology, can arise in the agent's experience and why the presence of a dialectic can be used as a constraint in the

²²⁵ Cf. Jaspers, "Einsamkeit," 395.

²²⁶ Donald S. Borrett, David Shih, Michael Tomko, Sarah Borrett, and Hon C. Kwan, "Hegelian Phenomenology and Robotics," *International Journal of Machine Consciousness* Vol. 3, No. 1 (2011): 219.

²²⁷ David J. Gunkel, *An Introduction to Communication and Artificial Intelligence* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2020), 264.

development of agents whose experience becomes meaningfully organized by the agent itself and not through an external framework imposed by the programmer.²²⁸

As I see it, Borrett et al. show here that the robot needs authenticity, its own source, and self-love. It reminds us of Kant, who argues that lawfulness comes from the agent itself. The risks of falling in extreme positions regarding autonomy and authenticity when designing robots are apparent. Making the robot absolutely independent is just an illusion, but doing it fixed and unchangeable will exclude any internal and external relations. Autonomy remains the only solution since it relates to the inner source keeping the contact with outer world and heteronomy. On the other hand, an unchangeable or slave robot could be seen as an automatic robot. So, let us look at the etymology of the words *autonomous* and *automatic* to make this distinction even more transparent. In both words we find *auto-*, from the Greek *αὐτο-* (self), while we have on the hand *-nomous*, from the Greek *νόμος* (usage, custom, law), derived from *νέμω* (to distribute; to pasture), from the Proto-Indo-European root *nem-* (to nim, take, give, count, apportion), and on the other hand we have *-matic*, from the Greek *μέμαα* (to wish eagerly, strive), from the Proto-Indo-European root *men-* (to think; mind, spiritual activity).²²⁹

Autonomy, in ancient Greece, is mainly said of a city-state (*πόλις*) that could distribute goods, rights, liberties, etc., without the interference from another state.²³⁰ Automatic, however, refers to the complete independence from external agency or control, and is said of humans, animals, plants, and inanimate objects.²³¹ For example, the stranger in Plato's *Statesman* says that humankind had an *automatic life* (*αὐτόματος βίος*) originally because God was their shepherd.²³² He also says that at that stage, humans did not eat each other, and there was no war between them, nor any political or social position (*στάσις*). In other words, one could say that autonomy implies relationality, whereas automacy excludes it. We can find a similar example in Jaspers, who addresses the issue of the control of the mass by technology, which he means occurs in a "spectral invisibility," in his book *Die geistige Situation der Zeit*, written in 1930

²²⁸ Borrett et al., "Hegelian Phenomenology and Robotics," 219-220.

²²⁹ "3. men-," Indo-European Lexicon, Master index, Linguistics Research Center, The University of Texas at Austin, accessed April 20, 2022, <https://lrc.la.utexas.edu/lex/master>.

²³⁰ Henry Liddell & Robert Scott, completed by Henry Jones (LSJ), "Αὐτόνομος," Greek word study tool, Perseus Digital Library, accessed April 20, 2022, [http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/morph?l=au%29to%2Fnomos&la=greek#Perseus:text:1999.04.0057:entry=au\)to/nomos-contents](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/morph?l=au%29to%2Fnomos&la=greek#Perseus:text:1999.04.0057:entry=au)to/nomos-contents).

²³¹ Henry Liddell & Robert Scott, completed by Henry Jones (LSJ), "αὐτόματος," Greek word study tool, Perseus Digital Library, accessed April 20, 2022, [http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/morph?l=au%29to%2Fmatos&la=greek#Perseus:text:1999.04.0057:entry=a\)to/matos-contents](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/morph?l=au%29to%2Fmatos&la=greek#Perseus:text:1999.04.0057:entry=a)to/matos-contents)

²³² Plato, *Statesman*, 271e.

but published together with *Philosophie* in 1932.²³³ Jaspers argues that there is a risk of ending up in a situation where the individual (der *Einzelne*) is reduced to a function, released from the substantial aspect of life that embraced him/her previously in the form of tradition.²³⁴ When this reduction occurs, “people are thrown around like sand.”²³⁵ Life in such a situation could be thought of as *automatic life*.

There are many challenging issues and risks regarding autonomy and authenticity. One of them is the confusion between autonomy and the freedom of will. Paul Formosa, for example, in his paper “Robot Autonomy vs. Human Autonomy: Social Robots, Artificial Intelligence (AI), and the Nature of Autonomy,” seems to use Harry G. Frankfurt’s theory of free will as a theory of personal autonomy.²³⁶ I see a problem with that because autonomy, as a relational phenomenon, involves, as I believe I have shown in this thesis, not only the freedom of will but also the freedom of action, as described by Frankfurt.²³⁷ Additionally, if we consider the use of the word *ἐλεύθερος* (free) in Plato’s texts, we find that it has a strictly relational meaning. Plato writes:

What is becoming, what unbecoming a gentleman [free man] it is not easy to fix by law; it shall, however, be decided by those persons who have achieved public distinction for their aversion to the one [unbecoming a free man] and their devotion to the other [becoming a free man].²³⁸

The translator of the quote above, R.G. Bury, writes in a footnote to this passage that the word *ἐλεύθερος* means literally *free man*, but the Greek word is “connoting generosity, culture and dignity, like our “gentle.””²³⁹ One does not, in fact, according to Plato, become a free man by birth but by winning a reputation for virtue.²⁴⁰

²³³ “[V]on einer Gespenstlichen Unsichtbarkeit.” Karl Jaspers, *Die geistige Situation der Zeit* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1933), 45.

²³⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, 40.

²³⁵ “[D]ie Menschen werden wie Sand durcheinander geschüttet.” *Ibid.*

²³⁶ Cf. Paul Formosa, “Robot Autonomy vs. Human Autonomy: Social Robots, Artificial Intelligence (AI), and the Nature of Autonomy,” *Minds and machines* (Dordrecht), 2021-10-25, Vol.31 (4), p.595-616.

²³⁷ Cf. Harry G. Frankfurt, “Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person,” *The Journal of Philosophy*, Jan. 14, 1971, Vol. 68, No. 1 (Jan. 14, 1971): 5- 20.

²³⁸ “Τὸ δ’ ἐλευθερικὸν καὶ ἀνελεύθερον ἀκριβῶς μὲν οὐ ῥάδιον νομοθετεῖν, κρινέσθω γε μὴν ὑπὸ τῶν τὰ ἀριστεία εἰληφότων τῶ ἐκείνων μίσει τε καὶ ἀσπασμῶ.” Plato, *Laws*, 919e. (Plato. Plato in Twelve Volumes, Vols. 10 & 11 translated by R.G. Bury. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967 & 1968), Perseus Digital Library, accessed April 24, 2022, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Plat.+Laws+919&fromdoc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0166>).

²³⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁰ Cf. Plato, *Laws*, 914a.

The discussion of the problem of freedom in detail is outside the scope of this thesis. I only want to clarify the importance of the external world, society, and interpersonal responsible relations in autonomy and freedom. For example, suppose we, as Formosa suggests, respect only the autonomy of the human and ignore that of the robot. In that case, we remove all possibility of autonomy for the robot and thereby the very possibility of communication in HRI.

In conclusion I want to argue that autonomous robots – not automatic robots – can become a possibility if and only if the robot has at least a desire that matters for the robot itself – not for the programmers or their employers – and the robot is respected as an equal by the human interacting partner. If these two conditions are not fulfilled at some level, we will just have robots that are nothing but tools, toys, or slaves.

Conclusion

This thesis aimed to bring forward the dynamic and relational nature of EL. I argued that EL and isolation are not the same. On the contrary, isolation makes EL impossible. I started this thesis by showing how researchers in different fields argue that loneliness is an essential process that makes us who we are. As for John Cacioppo, loneliness is a signal that stimulates us to use our social skills and develop our relations with significant others. Robert Wiess, in turn, presents a broad spectrum of relational needs that he calls provisions, dividable into two main groups: emotional and social. Wiess argues that loneliness is a deficit that responds to the absence of one or more of the provisions he mentions. Both Cacioppo and Weiss argue that meaningful relations are essential for personal development. However, the debate, which considers their findings, often focuses on their negative aspect, i.e., the pain and the deficit. I referred after that to Richard Booth, who offers a clear distinction between, on the one hand, pathological loneliness, which is a problem we could alleviate and understand, and existential loneliness, on the other hand, which is a mystery that we can never understand. Booth sees EL in a processual manner and as deep despair that stimulates the creation of meaning. Ben Lazare Mijuskovic also sees loneliness in a processual manner and argues that loneliness is the cornerstone of the activity of the human consciousness. He tracks the conceptualization of the process of loneliness in, i.a., Plato, Augustine, and Descartes. Furthermore, I presented Jill Stauffer's concept of ethical loneliness, which is the experience of being abandoned by those from whom you expected help. Stauffer, inspired by Levinas, develops the concept of hearing well, which in contrast to listening implies an openness that makes the growth of the self possible. She argues that the self is cooperatively created and developed.

After the broad overview, I started my analysis of the question of EL in Karl Jaspers, who understands EL in dialectical terms and as a dynamic process of creation. Jaspers is so clear about the dual direction of the process of EL. We do not only try to overcome EL, but we also simultaneously long for it. According to Jaspers, there is a continuous movement between an inner pole and an outer pole in consciousness. We are talking here about the subject-object dichotomy. Consciousness is always a consciousness of an object. Now, this movement occurs on different levels. When it occurs on the intellectual/universal level (*Bewußtsein überhaupt*), the movement starts and ends by reaching the concept. This kind of movement is the same for every thinking being. At the level of concrete life (*Dasein*), we have concrete poles common to the human species. We get hungry; we see an apple, grab it and eat it. In contrast, the situation is entirely different at the level of the self (*Existenz*), i.e., me as the singular person I am. My consciousness longs for myself and wants to grab it as if it were a flower or an apple, but this is impossible because I am always in the object I want to grab, i.e., myself. I can grab the apple because I am other to it. An apple cannot grab itself. So, when I think about myself, I only get some facts, habits, political position, sexual orientation, etc., but the totality of all these is nevertheless not all of me. I am still something more. In a few words, my self (*Existenz*) is not accessible as an object for my consciousness, which, simplifying, makes consciousness run back and forth incessantly. I always need to go to my own source, as far as possible, in my efforts to individuate myself and distinguish it from everything else. I want to know who I am, not only what I am, and the reason for this endless task is the other and his/her resistance to my attempt to treat him/her as an object that I could do with it whatever I want. The other stops me and makes me accountable. The responsibility towards the other is the motor of the inward movement of EL that I called autonomy, which turns back into the movement that I called authenticity when it reaches the boundary of absolute nothingness and one realizes to be given to oneself by an act of self-love. Jaspers calls this conscience, which is the self-given source of lawfulness as for Kant. Conscience is the motor of the movement back to the external world in the attempt to realize the self by making it concrete in the world together with the other, who started the whole process for me. Isolated from the other, I would be nowhere; I would be nothing.

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