

# Epistemological and ontological dualities as a challenge for a holistic modernity

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## ABSTRACT

This paper explores the philosophical, scientific, and artistic dimensions of home, alienation, and the slow return home as a framework for understanding the crises of modern knowledge and existence. It critiques the dominance of reductionist objectivism in science and the fragmentation of meaning in contemporary culture, arguing that both subjective and relational perspectives have been undervalued. Drawing on thinkers such as Karl Jaspers, Martin Heidegger, and Wilhelm Dilthey, the study examines how unresolved epistemological and ontological dualities—such as subjectivism versus objectivism and materialism versus idealism—have shaped intellectual and cultural developments since the Enlightenment. The concept of the border situation, introduced by Jaspers, is central to this analysis, describing moments of existential rupture that force individuals and societies to confront fundamental contradictions. The slow return home is presented not as a simple restoration of tradition but as a dynamic process of integration, where insights gained through alienation enable a deeper, reconstructed sense of belonging. By maintaining a dialectical balance between objectivity and subjectivity, science and art, rationality and intuition, this paper advocates for an approach to knowledge that transcends ideological rigidity and fosters existential illumination.

## Introduction

Wherever we look, we encounter meaningless and empty symbols, be it in film, telenovela or fashion, which promise mere emotion and sensation as meaning, and not enough, an insecure science that seeks to regain its lost footing in an absolutized, methodical reductionism and objectifying rationalism. It is not realised that this is a science that excludes ‘half’ of reality. Of

course, it is brashly claimed to offer, make accessible and master the complete repertoire of knowledge for safe political and successful scientific-technical decisions. Is this arrogant objectivism the reason for the inability of the smart political elites to overlook wounds and traumatising of society that cannot be objectified throughout and thus to fail to develop compassion for the plight of the people and the poorest in the country and to seek help at their own sacrifice? Before any political concept, before any therapy, there is a diagnosis and before any diagnosis, before any approach to the truth as knowledge, there is a relationship of trust that has a history in which trust is founded. Only this trust encourages us to show the wound and make it perceptible. Contemporary philosophers point out that we need ‘worldview therapy’ (Ferguson, 2011). In his books and lectures, the historian of science Niall Ferguson never tires of calling for a vital vision and defence of the values of Western culture that have been achieved through much effort, sacrifice and suffering. These values include constitutional personal rights, freedom and security, equality and justice. The constitutional lawyer Udo Di Fabio (2015) encourages the fulfilment of a still ‘open design mandate’ for the Western world, based on the achievements in art, science, economics, ethics and the concept of humanity. Why have these calls not been heeded long ago? The answer, to be explained below, is: because the diagnosis has not been made precisely, the wound has not been recognised, because the return home has not yet been completed after the departure to a foreign land (Figure 1).

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## An uncertain homeland

Throughout the twentieth century, and basically to this day, we are confronted with the scientific and artistic problem areas that abruptly erupted at the beginning of the nineteenth century with the Enlightenment and the French Revolution.

Over the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, scientific tensions had

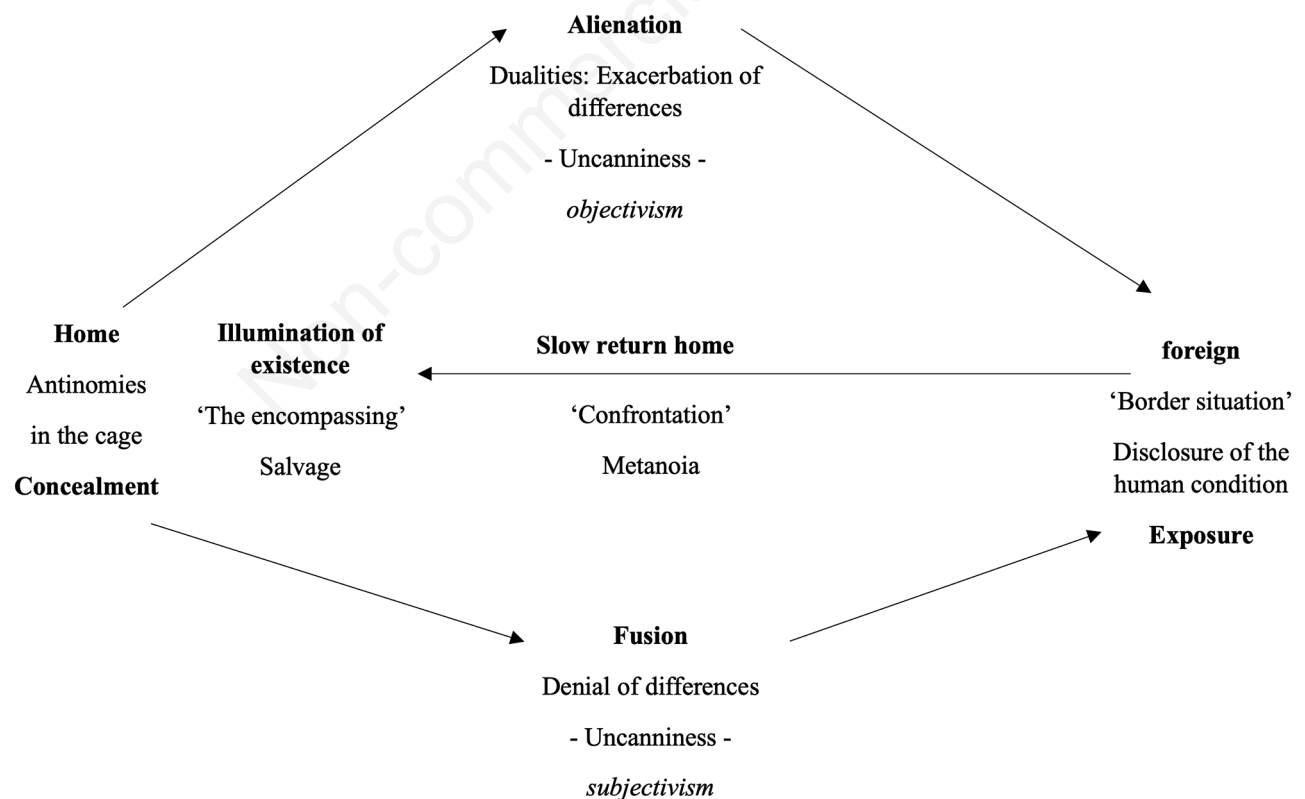
steadily increased due to the painful epistemological and ontological dualities and rifts. Overall conceptual solutions occupied the great minds but could not overcome the epistemological polarity of subjectivism and objectivism and the ontological duality of materialism and idealism, which had once again come to the fore. Rather, with a view to the desired theoretical consistency, materialistic one-sidedness and even ideological fixations occurred or attempts were made in the tradition (Schleiermacher, 1838) of an idealistic approach (Droysen, 1868) to the cognitive understanding and understanding cognition of the human being, which, however, could not bridge the hiatus between understanding and explanation, but only stylised it methodologically. The problem was subsequently taken up by the phenomenologists, such as Wilhelm Dilthey (1990), and finally worked on and shaped by Martin Heidegger (1978) and Karl Jaspers (1965) in terms of fundamental ontology and existentialism. This still took place from the “topos of the *foreign*” and as such from *border situation*. The *slow return home* was still to come as a hope of survival.

*Home* is one of the key concepts for understanding oneself, the world and being in the world (Jaspers, 1965). Home is a spatial and temporal space of encounter in which people gain stability and life-serving orientation. Through familiarity, home offers a situation for personal development in which the *resistance of the concrete* (Janzarik, 1988) challenges confrontation, which is indispensable for gaining familiarity and trust. This primary (primal) trust is the prerequisite for overcoming the alienation that occurs later after leaving home. Home, both a spiritual

home and a materially tangible concretion, is the basis of enduring identity and life-serving solidarity. The foreign, on the other hand, is the extraordinary, that which we find outside the familiar order of things and is therefore not immediately comprehensible, literally unfamiliar, uncanny.

On the one hand, home is a situation of origin, primarily a spatial and temporal space of encounter and experience, which as a mythical formula also corresponds to the individual development of a ‘paradise situation’: everything seems to be taken care of. However, this harmonious situation is called into question by an anthropological peculiarity, the inner restlessness of man as an expression of his mental dynamics. This concept of ‘*thymós*’, which goes back to Aristotle as an expression of mental or emotional energy, is ideally captured and realised in art and poetry. However, *thymós* and the ‘dynamic surpluses’ (Kick, 2015; Janzarik, 1959) that emerge from this emotional reservoir are deeply ambivalent, at the same time as the basis of every cultural development (Rilke, 1923) and a potential source of danger, the impression of no longer being at home, in primary harmony, but of being confronted with unbearable problems, tensions and unresolved questions along the way, the very dualities that have been revealed!

Since the Enlightenment at the latest, things have once again become increasingly uncomfortable in our original occidental homeland in the midst of a certain epistemological and ontological pampering. Thanks to the Enlightenment and the ‘promising’ combination of rationalism and empiricism that it



**Figure 1.** With the breaking - at first glance destructive - of the cage in which the antinomies of existence are hidden, the opportunity and risk of the path into the unknown begins, starting at home, alienation or fusion as a path to the foreign as a border situation. In the border situation, the human condition is revealed, which enables the slow return home as a confrontation and metanoia, a prerequisite for the illumination of existence as the *salvaging of the encompassing*.

propagated, the experimental and so-called experiential scientific method made its breakthrough in physics, biology and medicine under the guiding principle of objectification. It demonstrated the accuracy of the findings essentially through the replicability of the results in experimental arrangements. The results objectified in this way could become techniques or therapeutic procedures with predictable success. This led to unprecedented successes in the natural sciences in general and in therapy and pathology in particular in the large clinics and research institutes newly founded in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the European metropolises. However, this was only possible at the cost of a methodological restriction, i.e., a separation or dissection of the facts from their context. For medicine, this meant a division into either biological or psychological naturalism, which led to fierce controversy among clinical empiricists or existed side by side without resolution.

The narrowing of the sciences to the guiding principle of objectification and the empirical rationalism that accompanied it had led to a counter-movement as an outcry of the subject in Romantic medicine and natural science. Here, artistic, literary, pictorial and musical endeavours in particular were to be found under the guiding idea of subjectivity as an access to knowledge of the whole person. However, as time went on, it had to be recognised that the guiding principle of mere subjectivity, with the simultaneous neglect or non-recognition of methodically objectifiable, generalisable areas of knowledge, could not lead to a grasp of the whole person, the person *and* his situation, but rather threatened to spiral into arbitrariness. In the context of this uncertainty, an ontological polarisation between mystical-spiritualist and, in contrast, materialist interpretations of man and the world emerged under subjectivist auspices. Over the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there were constant attempts to overcome reductionist objectivism and one-sided subjectivism, to actually bring them together into integrative concepts (Charcot, 1877; Charcot, 1888-1889). However, these syntheses at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century were too improvised in terms of scientific theory and philosophy, despite their clinical, pragmatic success.

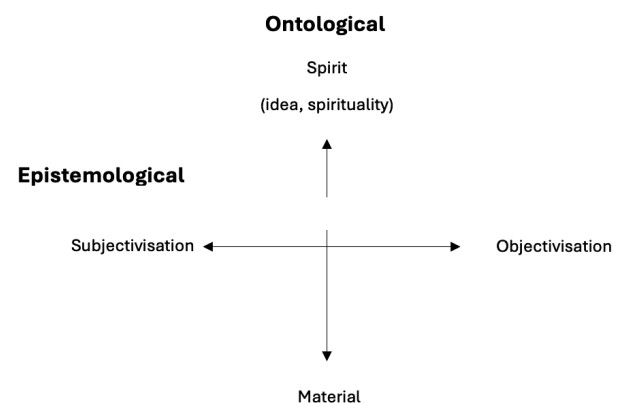
## Alienation

At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it was clear that the dualisms emerging in the scientific landscape were becoming even more pronounced. These dualisms made the approach to the truth more difficult. However, it was undisputed that it was primarily the task of science to search for truth, whatever that might be. Science therefore had to emphasise and defend its special credibility. If, in the spirit of the Enlightenment, one relied on reason, rationality and strictly comprehensible experience, one arrived at the conclusion that this approach to the truth must naturally lead to the same results under the same, controllable and repeatable conditions under the guiding principle of objectification. However, as the nature of human beings too obviously comprised mental-spiritual and material-physical components, research into life was methodically divided into objectifying-biological or somatic and objectifying-psychological research. This was particularly evident in clinical-medical research, where the results could only be very vaguely related to each other and therefore ran side by side for a long time in a practically unconnected manner. Under the motto of objectivization, a methodological dualism of psychological and biological naturalism developed. In the clinic, which demanded action, pragmatic approaches and decisions were taken which left the

basic problem, namely the question of ‘how’ the bodily-biological and psychological processes interact, the mind-body problem, not just unresolved - which is of course not reprehensible – but undiscussed (Figure 2).

Meanwhile, researchers, including doctors and clinicians, who were influenced by Romantic currents, attempted to propagate *subjectivity*, i.e., emotion and introspection, as an essential approach to understanding the nature of human beings and their conditions. In most cases, this was done in a harsh rejection of an objectivising-empirical approach, which often led to combative disputes between the guiding ideas of subjectivity versus objectivity. It was always about the question of truth, the question of a valid approach to understanding the whole person. In the context of the Romantic natural sciences, or natural philosophy, there were remarkable expansions and insights into the individual, the individual human being, his uniqueness, his speciality, his shortcomings or limitations and his genius. In contrast to epistemological questions, ontological questions about the nature of the human being have come to the fore. With the question of the essence of nature and man, a split emerged between mystical-spiritualistic and materialistic interpretations and world views. Linked to this was the question of how subjective psychological events could be influenced, i.e., whether and how mystical-spiritualistic or materialistic substances could have an effect on people.

However, it had to be recognised that this ontological question about the being of the world and of human as a philosophical one, which it is, could not be decided empirically. The sciences were always burdened and dominated by a double polarity, epistemologically that of *objectivization versus subjectivization* and ontologically that of *materialism versus idealism* or a spiritual understanding of the world. With regard to the all-important *question of truth*, which science stood up for, it found itself in an unresolved situation. The status of the subject in answering the question of recognising truth remained unsatisfactory. If objectification was regarded as the only way to recognise truth, this led to a certain halving of the world, to the elimination of subjective experiences and subjectivity in the question of existence. From an ontological perspective, at the latest since the debate with the left-wing Hegelians and Marxists, there was clear uncertainty as to whether the material substrate, matter or the determinism to be assigned to it, did not after all say the essentials about the whole of the world and



**Figure 2.** Polarities of the nature and mode of cognition of self and world.

whether the assumption of mystical-spiritual forces should then be dispensed with.

Alienation and homecoming are dynamic terms describing a movement between a whence and a whither. The direction of movement of *alienation* and *homecoming* is in opposite directions and is situated between places that are initially to be grasped, topoi that we call *home* on the one hand and *foreign* on the other. The arts and sciences both move along these paths, partly autonomously, partly interdependently, partly actively cooperatively, in the field of tension between the two polarities.

The journey from home to a foreign country leads through areas of existence that can be described as states of emergency. Alienation is such a dangerous state of emergency, caused by unresolved personal or scientific problems. The pressure of problems leads to the release of unbound dynamics, the personality involved in the paradigm and integrated in the system of the scientific community, that have not yet found their place and stability-promoting direction in a new structure, in a new order (Kick, 2020a). The dynamic ‘derailments’ of the thymós that enter consciousness and are not fully realised make themselves felt as anxiety and a ‘feeling of alienation’. The latter tends to tip over into the opposite, accompanied by an unrealistic feeling of over-familiarity, a fusion (Kick, 2006) of self and the alien other. Both exceptional states, alienation and fusion, require resolution, a new form.

In human’s endeavour to find an alternative to survival in these uncertainties, to quickly find security and orientation, which means overcoming the fear of alienation, he is drawn into the temptation to take refuge in illusory solutions (Habermas, 1968; Kick, 1974). In terms of *individual psychology*, these are repressions or neurotic conditions; in *terms of society*, they are ideologies. In the approach used here, both neuroses and ideologies are characterised by the absolutisation of certain values that are not absolute e.g., freedom (!), equality or security (Kick, 2015). The result is not stability but, on the contrary, a distortion of perception. The abolition of alienation is urgent, but cannot be achieved by simply returning, ‘fleeing’ to one’s homeland, but only by taking a diversion - a path of maturation - via a “foreign territory”. In terms of *process dynamics* (Kick, 2020a), foreignness offers the desirable position of an operative distance (Kick, 2016), allows home to be seen anew and then enables a way back, in the sense of the thematised slow return home (Hörisch, 2016; Handke 1984). This homecoming does not mean a return to the original myth, but rather to a broken or reflected myth (Tillich, 1975). This means the beginning of a dialectical approach to the original myth, which opens up a new home as a cultural achievement (Kick, 2020b): It presents itself as a balance between home as familiarity and rootedness on the one hand and a never-ending, intermediate synthesis in the approach to the truth from the field of tension of the eternally unresolved dualities, which can always be won anew from the perspective of the foreign.

Once we have taken a look at the polarity of home and foreign, new, remarkable points of view for a holistic perspective on the theory of science emerge. There can be no final syntheses as a solution to the classical dualisms. However, in an unfamiliar landscape between home and abroad, on the path of scientific cognition, in the struggle with the question of truth, we can constantly endeavour to achieve *subtle balances* that are epistemologically, ontologically and ethically justifiable. Since our dynamic surpluses, i.e. curiosity, hunger for knowledge, for power, but also drive constellations as Eros, longing for unity and fusion, also egoism and narcissism, have driven us away or torn us out of the original situation of home, we are endangered human beings in an alien landscape and after the loss of our original home and

order. The ontological and epistemological uniformity of the original situation is transformed into a balance that is constantly jeopardised by the divergent forces of dualities (polarity), in whose sphere of action human beings must constantly strive to find viable forms and new balances. The exceptional state of alienation in consciousness corresponds to an imbalance between the spiritual sphere and the material sphere and between the need for objectification and subjectivity.

This imbalance is based on an overemphasis, in extreme cases an absolutisation, of either spiritual or material values, of objectivity or subjectivity. Establishing values as absolute that are not absolute results in a false or *untrue consciousness* (Kick, 1974). The question of the liveable form also arises on an epistemological level in the polarity between the tendency towards subjectivation and the urge towards objectivity (Jaspers, 1956).

In the history of science and philosophy, this was exemplified in the 19th century by the sharp polarisation of viewpoints between the Enlightenment and the Romantic countermovement (Kick, 2019). If we are aware of the danger of polarisation along the way, we can best counteract the danger of ideological alienation, which can be attributed to a sub-dialectical consciousness (Gabel, 1967).

In the individual, the ideological or neurotic fixation is less spectacular than in social and political forms but is paid for with a more or less painful distortion of reality, ultimately by blocking further personal development. This can be observed analogously in the political fixation of the major ideological systems, socialism and also ideologized capitalism or neoliberalism. These concepts have already been largely refuted by history. Nevertheless, they still have a considerable politically suggestive effect, accompanied by the hope of quick solutions. However, even values that are ethically highly valued, such as health, life in freedom and security, form gateways to totalitarian and therefore inhumane enforcement if they are absolutized. Lasting truthful stability is not achieved in this way, neither individually nor socially.

What applies to the key question of political concept formation also applies to the positioning of scientific theory. They are either materialistically narrow, corresponding to the conventional, methodologically reductionist, natural-scientific research direction, or ‘spiritualistically’ characterised and idealistically formulated. Methodologically, a narrowing down to objectifiable characteristics omits the *relational perspective* based on subjectivity, which nevertheless belongs to the *whole* of reality as truth. Relational circumstances can often not, or not sufficiently, be captured using objectifying methods. The results, which are actually empirically incomplete or uncertain, become the basis for objectivist results (Agamben, 2021) in the face of an obvious lack of integrative competence or a lack of acceptance of responsibility on the part of the scientists. However, anyone who loses sight of the objectivising perspective is at risk of falling into the trap of subjectivism by referring to the mere relational perspective. The question here is therefore how, after leaving home, the path to the foreign territory, as a position of ‘operative distance’, can be achieved unscathed without falling into an ideological aberration. Then the path would be clear for a slow return home.

## Foreign - border situation - slow return home

Karl Jaspers takes up this dual problem of ontological and epistemological uncertainty in his early work ‘Psychology of Worldview’ (1919). Using the key term ‘cage’, he attempts to grasp the antinomies, the incompatibilities of existence, which



were also evident in the epistemological polarisation of subjectivity and objectivity: He assigns them to the cage. These antinomies are by no means resolved in the cage. Rather, they find a merely temporary, unstable order that leaves the antinomies and contradictions in the cage, with the consequence of a braking of the dynamic, stagnation, inhibition of development and helplessness. This immediately raises the question of how the symbol of stagnation and inhibition of development, namely the cage, can be broken open to take on a new form. It is still the case that the dualities of an epistemological, ontological and being-related nature exist unconnected in the cage. However, because it is about the whole person, about a conscientious approach to the truth, everything must be dared. The cage is broken open by the pressure of unresolved dualities. The battle between genius and demon, which aims at essential encounters, as Jaspers (1973) says, must be fought. The 'law of the day' and the 'passion for the night' must come together, work together, in order to reach the final encounter, i.e., the reconciliatory illumination that includes the darkness. This reconciliation enables a gradual approach to the truth in order to serve life. Life is served by both the passion for the night, which breaks through all orders, and the law of the day, which orders our existence by binding it to reason and ideas.

Karl Jaspers recognised the tensions associated with the unresolved dualities and provided possible solutions in his new, framing concept. The double duality had to be kept in balance, in whose sphere of influence the human being had to constantly endeavour to find viable forms and a new balance. The exceptional state of alienation in consciousness that prevailed in art and science at that time corresponded to an imbalance, an opposition between the spiritual sphere and the material realm, between subjectivity and objectivity, which Karl Jaspers attempted to reconcile. 'Existence in the decision pushes towards two sides: It seeks the objective as the form and shape of life, wants to be suspended in an objective. In the same way, existence pushes towards the subjective; the objective as such remains empty, an alien other. Only where objectivity becomes present in subjectivity through personal realisations of each individual existence does existence appear as the respective totality of objectivity and subjectivity (Jaspers, 1973). The existence that appears in being as possibility, whose being is still being decided, shows itself to be in danger of slipping into mere objectivity or into mere subjectivity, but it does not build itself up from both as its elements, which would only have to find themselves together. Possible existence, guarding against untrue solutions, seeks the path alternately into the objectivities that are fixed for themselves and then into the most decisive subjectivity'. Karl Jaspers then takes up the meaning of the traditional metaphor of day and night, of light and darkness. He brings the symbolism of day and night into an *innovative* processual context with two key concepts: 'border situation' and 'cage'.

The term 'cage' has a historically remarkable history. In cultural history, the scholars' parlour is occasionally referred to as a cage. In Goethe's *Urfaust*, Faust condemns his hermitage as a dungeon. Dürer's copperplate engraving (1514) 'St Jerome in his study' also comes to mind. The cage and the outside world are juxtaposed: Protected scholarship on the inside and vibrant life on the outside are contrasted (Gerigk and Engelhardt, 2009) and, at best, creatively connected. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger (1978) referred to Karl Jaspers' "Psychology of Worldviews" (1985). Heidegger explains that existence as a concern is based on both and on the relationship between housing and border situation. The forces of the night, the passion for the night, destroy

the enclosure, tear man out of the appearance of his order, which is de facto full of contradictions. Man, together with the antinomies of existence that surround and determine him, is defenceless and under extreme pressure. This marks the beginning, the transition to the border situation.

But now the question arises as to why the dualities in the order of the cage are not stabilised. Here, the antinomies of existence are actually given by the constitutive distinction between light and darkness since the creation of the world. However, the order is problematic, jeopardised by the unresolved dualities, destructible and only temporary. It is constantly being called into question. In the awareness of constantly new 'antimonies', the question of truth becomes ever more pressing and never comes to rest. New questions that do not fit into the previous ones shake the cage. The polarities, the irreconcilable contradictions of the structure of the world (ontology) and the possibilities of cognition (epistemology) of the world are revealed all the more when the cage is broken open. If the tensions associated with polarisation continue to increase, they lead to outward confusion and inward to an awareness that things cannot go on like this, and situationally to the despair of the border situation. Such ruptures occur regularly in the history of culture and science, but also in socio-political and individual developments, and were particularly severe during and at the end of the 19th century. Using the philosophical tools of Karl Jaspers, we can recognise these ruptures as caesuras. By breaking open the cage, the dynamics of the border situation are released, revealing the incompatibility of the antinomies. In the despair and helplessness of the border situation, the fear of missing the meaning inherent in the human condition becomes obvious. But it is also true that 'what man actually is and can become has its ultimate origin in the experience, appropriation and overcoming of border situations' (Jaspers, 1965). By revealing the border situations, deeper insights into the human condition are gained. In the fear of death, transgression and guilt, in the threat of nothingness, i.e., in disorientation and the worrying chaos of losing everything, new forces come into play. They correspond to the unavailable, the fascinating power of the demonic and the sacred, the influence of the numinosum, which, in Rudolf Otto's sense, is composed of two emotional qualities, the *tremendum* and the *fascinatum* (Otto, 1963). Man is not aware of the actually always existing human condition as a danger, pre-critically, in the pre-critical order of the enclosure, or only as an exceptional situation. After crossing the boundary, after breaking open the cage, it becomes an unavoidable confrontation. The previously maintained concealment of the antinomies is uncovered. This is the prerequisite for the illumination of existence (Jaspers, 1965) and, at the same time, the opportunity that leads to a further 'shaping of the work' as a communicative symbol and opportunity for encounter, in other words, to new creativity.

After crossing the border into the border situation, after breaking open the cage, after leaving conventions, including scientific conventions, the call to make a decision sound in order to achieve realisation. 'But the rupture in selfhood that freedom dares to create is the pathos of independent actual being. In the rift is the origin of existence as the possibility of its unconditionality' (Jaspers, 1973). The antinomies are revealed in the border situation, increasing the tension. 'To think this tension is the way of transcending existential illumination as metaphysics' (Jaspers, 1973). Now a decision is necessary, *for* illumination and enlightenment, for 'the law of the day'. In the brightness, following the law of the day, intuition, vision and thus a further approach to the truth is possible. Resolutely following the

brightness, resolutely following the law of the day, becomes the motto in the border situation, in the border situation in which ‘all deception ceases’, which means that the night side, the ‘passion for the night’, which breaks through all orders, must be included. ‘That I, however, in my unreserved will to truth, cannot help but recognise reality as it is, since I never know it completely and finally, forging ahead in incessant questioning (Jaspers, 1973). ‘The world is the battleground’ (Jaspers, 1973) for the exchange of unsolvable dualities. ‘The world process [is] full of suffering and meaninglessness’ (Jaspers, 1973). But in breaking open the cage and enduring and surviving the borderline situation, the opportunity for ‘existential communication’ (Jaspers, 1965) opens up. The symbol is given new meaning. ‘The genius leads into the light, is the source of my fidelity, of that in me which wants realisation and permanence. He knows law and order in the bright space of a created world’ (Jaspers, 1965). In contrast: ‘The demon shows a depth that puts me in fear. He wants to lead me into a world-less existence, can advise destruction, not only makes me understand failure, but fulfils it straight away’ (Jaspers, 1965). Jaspers describes the relationship between genius and demon in his chosen ‘poetic’ language as follows: ‘Genius and demon are like divisions of one and the same thing: the wholeness of myself, which in my existence speaks to me imperfectly only in its mythical objectification’ (Jaspers, 1965). If we follow Karl Jaspers’ argumentation in dealing with the antinomy of day and night, the obvious solution would be a “conjunctio oppositorum”. But Jaspers does not take this path of harmonisation, as we find it in C.G. Jung (1985), for example. He sees the polarity, wants to maintain the dialectic of day and night, of light and darkness, because he trusts in his philosophical understanding of the illumination of existence, which corresponds to the ‘encompassing’. ‘I allow my fate to be wrested from me, whether I step into the day or surrender to the night’ (Jaspers, 1973). ‘If I grasp the boundary of day at night, then I can neither realise the content of historical existence in a mere order of legality and formal fidelity nor plunge into the world of night, at whose boundary standing is the condition of the experience of transcendence’ (Jaspers, 1973).

Genius and demon remain at war. The polarity of day and night, of light and darkness remains. Both spheres are necessary as a means of cognition for approaching the truth, as something further that is not conjunctio oppositorum. ‘As a daytime being, I trust my God, but with fear of foreign powers that are incomprehensible to me, addicted to the night, I surrender to the depths in which it transforms itself in my destruction into the consuming, but also fulfilling truth’ (Jaspers, 1973).

This says something very central about the incompleteness of man in his being and in his ways of knowing. ‘Even philosophical illumination does not succeed in creating a clear outline of human existence. Rather, in the transcending realisation of embracing, man always shows himself in several origins, therefore he remains in the urge to the one thing that he is not and does not have. Karl Jaspers embraces the duality of subject and object, of matter and spirit, in the encompassing (Jaspers, 1965). The encompassing points to ‘the encompassing that we ourselves are’ (Jaspers, 1965).

This refers to the finiteness of man and the limits and possibilities of his cognition and self-knowledge. ‘Nowhere is man by himself alone. He is dependent on others’ (Jaspers, 1965). What Karl Jaspers courageously upholds in the light of his thinking, the endurance of dualities for the sake of truth, for the sake of knowledge, calls for transcendence, the realisation of the infinite in the finite (Jaspers, 1965). This is to be read as a call for

truth. None other than Martin Heidegger (1982) provides a clue: truth means unconcealment, i.e., uncovering and unveiling. However, this is not the only thing to strive for, but rather a place between concealment and unconcealment in a new ‘mountain’.

This recovery of truth also opens up an ‘expansion of the world’, which results from this very ‘service to the truth’ (Zoborowski, 2021). In this expansion of the world lies a hope of survival in difficult times, in times of hardship, conflict and war, as Karl Jaspers experienced them. We can go beyond this if we know how to grasp and utilise light and darkness, the law of the day and the passion of the night.

Let us prepare ourselves for the slow journey home. The original home could not hold us; the pressure of the dualities was too great for that. In stepping out and through the confrontation with the dualities and the antinomies of existence, alienation and uncanniness emerged. Uncanniness emerged, an expression of ontological and epistemological destabilisation as inevitability. After the beginning of the border situation, we increasingly gained the foreign as a reflected position. The *border situation* had to be endured by revealing the human condition as a position of *existential fear*. This created an operative distance and at the same time an incentive to return home. The foreignness is thus shown to be necessary in order to gain the *tropological sense* (Gerigk, 2002) of a turn and transformation. *Metanoia* will protect us on the way home from the danger of fusion as a denial of dualities, of differences. It will protect us from the temptation of false harmony.

After our return, our home is not the same as when we left it. But we have gained a *new* home in the perspective of transcending existential illumination. What we have gained in the end is not paradise, but in the light of the illumination of existence, endurable tensions and differences, dualities (Kick, 2019a) The poetry derived from these dualities then becomes a complement to the world (Kick, 2015), an extension of the world, a blessing that accompanies us. In the emergence of the border situation, the *conditio humana* becomes conscious, accompanied by fear, amazement and doubt, and yet in the hope of reconnecting the fragments - dualities - of reality on the slow return home in a way that is useful to life.

## Conclusions

The journey between home and alienation, as explored in this work, is not merely a personal or cultural movement but a fundamental process of human existence. Modern science and art have often become trapped in rigid frameworks—either reductionist objectivism or ungrounded subjectivism—leading to an epistemological and ontological crisis. This document argues that true knowledge and meaning arise not from the dominance of one perspective over the other, but from an ongoing dialectical process that integrates both.

Karl Jaspers’ concept of the border situation serves as a crucial metaphor for this struggle. It is in moments of existential rupture—where familiar structures break down—that deeper insights can emerge. However, the way forward is not a simple retreat to past traditions or an uncritical embrace of novelty, but a slow, reflective journey home—one that transforms both the individual and collective understanding of reality.

Ultimately, homecoming is not about returning to a lost paradise but about reconstructing a meaningful foundation in light of new experiences. By balancing objectivity and subjectivity, rationality and intuition, science and art, humanity can move be-

yond alienation and cultivate a world in which knowledge serves both truth and life itself. The slow return home is, therefore, not an endpoint but an ongoing process—one that continually redefines what it means to belong.

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