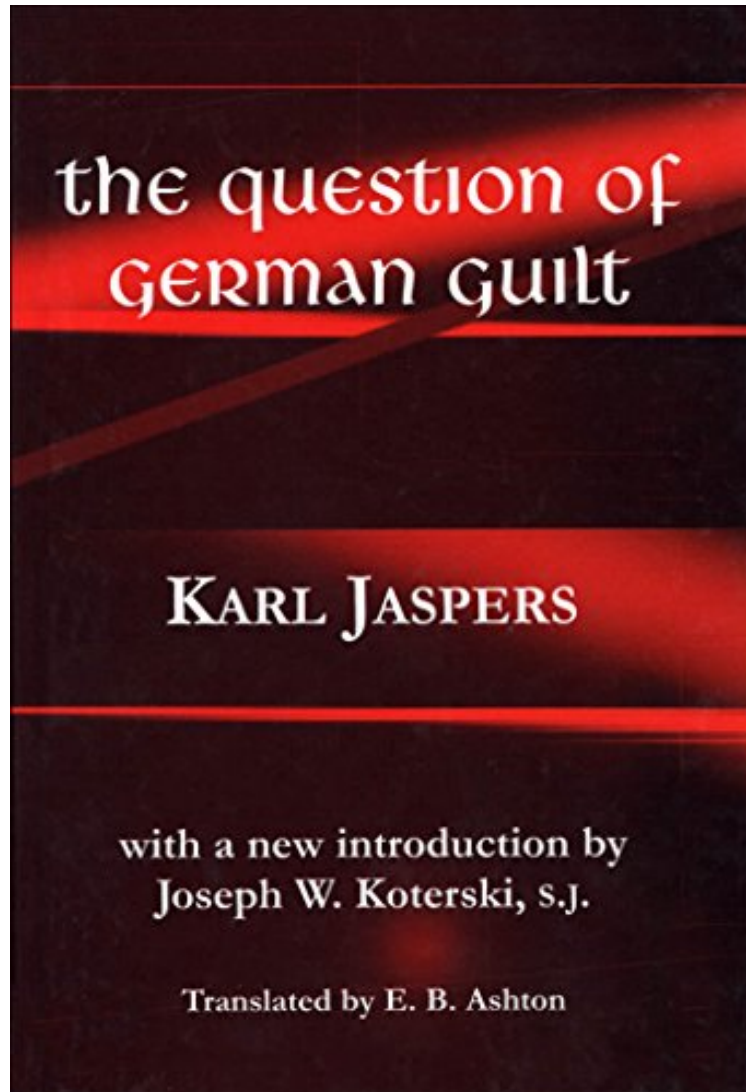


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The Question of German Guilt (Perspectives in Continental Philosophy)

Karl Jaspers

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Karl Jaspers : The Question of German Guilt (Perspectives in Continental Philosophy) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Question of German Guilt (Perspectives in Continental Philosophy):

8 of 8 people found the following review helpful. A Must-read for GermanophilesBy taugThis book was written not long after the end of WW2, but is still considered a classic among the 100's of books on the Germanpsyche of the first half of the 20th c. I am a cultural historian, specializing, for nearly 50 yrs, in the art/culture of Nazi Germany. There are

so many 1000's of books on every aspect of that era in Germany (probably 1000's more to be written) that of course one can possibly read them all. But the really outstanding works on the subject deserve a read by anyone really devoted to the subject, I wanted to add Jaspers' contribution. It is not just well-written, but, considering the post-war publication date, a book that endeavors to deal with German participation (physically or psychologically) in the "Third Reich" quite objectively--not an easy task back then. Recommended. 20 of 21 people found the following review helpful.

Collective Liability but No Collective Guilt, According to Jaspers By Jan Peczkis The following review is based on the original (1947) English-language edition. What Karl Jaspers means by guilt, in all of its types (see pp. 31-32), has already been discussed by another reviewer, and will not be repeated here. Jaspers has, correctly or incorrectly, been considered an existentialist. In either case, his work includes a considerable emphasis on personal moral reflection. Oddly enough, Jaspers has been accused of advocating collective German guilt. This is manifestly incorrect. He writes: "It is nonsensical, however, to charge a whole people with a crime. The criminal is always only an individual. It is nonsensical, too, to lay moral guilt to a people as a whole. There is no such thing as a national character extending to every single member of a nation...Morally one can judge the individual only, never a group...A people cannot perish heroically, cannot be a criminal, cannot act morally or immorally; only its individuals can do so. A people as a whole can be neither guilty nor innocent..." (pp. 40-41) Going further, Jaspers comments: "Lastly, the phrase [You are the guilty] may mean: 'You are inferior as a nation, ignoble, criminal, the scum of the earth, different from all other nations.' This is the collective type of thought and appraisal, classifying every individual under these generalizations. It is radically false and itself inhuman, whether done for good or evil ends." (p. 50) Valid "collective guilt", according to Jaspers, is actually collective liability: "Every German is made to share in the blame for the crimes committed in the name of the Reich. We are collectively liable. The question is in what sense each of us must feel co-responsible." (p. 61) Notions of collective liability also originate from within: "We feel something like a co-responsibility for the acts of members of our family...because of our consanguinity we are inclined to feel concerned whenever something wrong is done by someone in the family...Thus the German--that is, the German speaking individual--feels concerned by everything growing from German roots." (p. 79) 25 of 26 people found the following review helpful.

Karl Jaspers Returns to his Homeland By PhiloX Most philosophy books deal with trying to find the axiom of uniting reality thought. To Plato the axiom was the "Good" or "Ideal", to Descartes the "Thinking Self", to Kant the "Categories of Thought" etc...this book is completely different. Karl Jaspers started out with a psychiatry degree but after World War I became Professor of Philosophy at Heidelberg, but during the mid 1930's with the raise of Hitler Nazi Germany, he had to leave his post due to his Jewish wife anti-Nazi stand. After World War II, he returned to Heidelberg to give a series of lectures dealing with "The Question of German Guilt", this book being a written version of those lectures. Karl Jaspers writes very clean precise while not using the difficult words like Kant's "Transcendental Manifold" or Heidegger's "Dasein" etc...therefore sit back, get a cup of coffee enjoy another very well written, easy to read philosophy book. Within these lectures Karl Jaspers tries to help his fellow German people to struggle through their current defeat the Nuremberg trials by giving the reasons behind the raise of Nazi Germany, the dates when certain people either left or were trapped within the new social system, the defeat, current responsibility of certain individuals or the German people as a whole. Karl Jaspers then lists 4 categories of guilt degrees of responsibility: Criminal guilt (the commitment of certain acts judgment by trial), Political guilt (how involved one is within one's government), moral guilt (your own private or circle of friends consciences), metaphysical guilt (an universally shared responsibility to choose to live rather than protest evil). Each category is then explain in great detail of its pros cons of legality, which categories have more of a proof of guilt. I enjoyed the book, I hope you will too.

Shortly after the Nazi government fell, a philosophy professor at Heidelberg University lectured on a subject that burned the consciousness and conscience of thinking Germans. Are the German people guilty? These lectures by Karl Jaspers, an outstanding European philosopher, attracted wide attention among German intellectuals and students; they seemed to offer a path to sanity and morality in a disordered world. Jaspers, a life-long liberal, attempted in this book to discuss rationally a problem that had thus far evoked only heat and fury. Neither an evasive apology nor a wholesome condemnation, his book distinguished between types of guilt and degrees of responsibility. He listed four categories of guilt: criminal guilt (the commitment of overt acts), political guilt (the degree of political acquiescence in the Nazi regime), moral guilt (a matter of private judgment among ones friends), and metaphysical guilt (a universally shared responsibility of those who chose to remain alive rather than die in protest against Nazi atrocities). Karl Jaspers (1883-1969) took his degree in medicine but soon became interested in psychiatry. He is the author of a standard work of psychopathology, as well as special studies on Strindberg, Van Gogh and Nietzsche. After World War I he became Professor of Philosophy at Heidelberg, where he achieved fame as a brilliant teacher and an early exponent of existentialism. He was among the first to acquaint German readers with the works of Kierkegaard. Jaspers had to resign from his post in 1935. From the total isolation into which the Hitler regime forced him, Jaspers returned in 1945 to a position of central intellectual leadership of the younger liberal elements of Germany. In his first lecture in 1945, he forcefully reminded his audience of the fate of the German Jews. Jaspers' unblemished record as an anti-Nazi, as well as his sentient mind, have made him a rallying point center for those of his compatriots who wish to reconstruct a

free and democratic Germany.

One must respect the profundity of [Jaspers] approach to the problem and his freedom from all evasions.

(Nation)Language NotesText: English, German (translation)About the AuthorKarl Jasper (1883-1969) took his degree in medicine but soon became interested in psychiatry. He is the author of a standard work of psychopathology, as well as special studies on Strindberg, Van Gogh, and Nietzsche. After World War I he became Professor of Philosophy at Heidelberg, where he achieved fame as a brilliant teacher and an early exponent of existentialism. He Was among the first to acquaint German readers with the works of Kierkegaard. Jasper had to resign from his post in 1935. From the total isolation into which the Hitler regiem forced him, Jasper returned in 1945 to a position of central intellectual leadership of the younger liberal elements of Germany. In his First Lecture in 1945, he forcefully reminded his audience of the fate of the German Jews. Jaspers's unblemished record as an anti-Nazi as well as his sentient mind, made him a rallying point for those of his compatriots who wished to reconstruct a free and democratic Germany.