

Elena Alessiato¹

Marginalia on *Politische Stimmungen*

Abstract

With reference to his first political text, Politische Stimmungen (1917), the paper illustrates the use Karl Jaspers made of the concept of Stimmung. By doing this, it pursues two goals: 1) it shows analogies between Stimmungen and Weltanschauungen in the frame of the tradition of studies challenging the strict subject-object dualism; 2) it develops critical remarks on the relationships between politics, feelings and faith, the status of political success, the power of manipulating affectly masses. In both cases, Jaspers' approach wins an unusual perspective of consideration.

Keywords

Karl Jaspers, Stimmung, Weltanschauung

1. Jaspers' Politische Stimmungen: an atmosphereological introduction

Politische Stimmungen is the title of a lecture that the German philosopher Karl Jaspers gave in 1917 at the meeting of an intellectual "club", of which he was a member, formed in Heidelberg during the First World War. In the *Philosophische Autobiographie*, speaking about the club, he said that it was made up of professors coming from different University Departments: they gathered periodically together in order to discuss cultural issues and political events (Jaspers 1977: 70). This text has remained quite unknown until 1999, when it was published as an appendix in a book discussing Jaspers' political thought (Wiehl, Kaegi 1999: 229-51).

The first part of the text analyses the peculiar autonomy of politics picked out in the relationship of power and forces among people. The second part deals with the historical and political situation of the war time with reference to the connection between politics and *Weltanschauung*. The heavy influence of Max Weber is clearly recognizable

¹ elena.alessiato@gmail.com.

both in the realistic approach to the political world and in the use of ideal type classification (Massimilla 2018).

Considered within its own historical and cultural background, the text *Politische Stimmungen* is relevant because it shows that Jaspers' interest in politics dates back to the time of the First World War. It opposes, therefore, the traditional image of Jaspers as an "apolitical" scholar with no sense of reality until 1945 (Alessiato 2005a: 79-93).

This is the acknowledged value of this text for Jaspers' scholars. What about the connection of it with the topic *Stimmung*?

First of all, I suggest to take into consideration a historical ground. This follows from the use that an authoritative thinker made of the word *Stimmung* in the time in which an incipient interest for this concept at the philosophical level developed.

The origin of philosophical reflection on the topic of *Stimmungen* is traditionally fixed in the German-speaking world at the beginning of the XX century. In particular, it dates back to the philosophical thought of Martin Heidegger, who thematized philosophically the word, and the corresponding object, by discussing the existential feeling of anxiety (*Angst*). Going critically this way, Otto Friedrich Bollnow disputed Heidegger's stances and enlarged the discussion field in his book *Das Wesen der Stimmungen* (1941). Since then, the topic has been deepened and expanded into a tradition of studies that has progressively assumed a specific terminology and profile. Thanks to the analyses of scholars like William Stern, Hermann Schmitz, Gernot Böhme, David E. Wellbery, the view has established to consider the concept of *Stimmung* in its confluence or crossing point with that of atmosphere meant as "modes in which the world shows up or coalesces into an indivisible and intensive situation or in which a group of bodies comes to exist as a felt collective" (Riedel 2019: 112-3). Once admitted – as Wellbery from a German-speaking perspective does – that "no foreign word is able to reproduce the entire range of meanings of the term *Stimmung*" (Wellbery 2003: 703), atmosphereology has become the area of the philosophical investigation in which the debate about *Stimmungen* is performed (Bulka 2015: 12; Krebs 2017). Assumed that *Stimmungen* count as "intersubjective atmospheres" (Griffero 2013: 54), both the body-related nature of *Stimmungen* (Schmitz 2009; Griffero 2016) and their peculiar condition of being "a third" challenging the dualistic scheme of subject-object opposition (Böhme 2017: 20) is in this perspective differently stressed. Sure,

these goals go far beyond Karl Jaspers' text. But the fact that he used the word *Stimmungen* with such resolution (as conference title) and, simultaneously, with such indeterminateness (without clearly defining the meaning of *Stimmung*) already in the year 1917 makes the text curious and at least interesting to remember.

Besides this, Jaspers' use of the word *Stimmung* can offer a critical contribution to the discussion of the main idea developed in the last years in the research community growing up around this topic and in the new frame of a feeling-based philosophy. This idea consists in what has been called a "desubjectification of feelings" (Griffero 2017: 12). Here Jaspers' contribution can be critical because the first impression is that Jaspers' use of the word goes in a pretty contrary direction to this idea. However, this can be only the first impression. At broader research also Jaspers' way of dealing with the topic reveals reasons for being put in connection with approaches in which the subject-centered nature of the *Stimmung* and a realistic (reality-related) viewpoint of its aura and impact converge. This is probably also due to the hybrid nature of the term itself, since – it has been validly observed – "*Stimmung* refers to both mood and atmosphere, while in English 'mood' belongs on the subjective side and 'atmosphere' refers to the state of the world, such as a landscape in spring or a candlelit room" (Krebs, Ben-Ze'ev 2017: 1396). Let try not to get discouraged by the difficulties due both to the traditionally acknowledged "untranslatability" of the term *Stimmung* and to its "multifaceted [...] historically dynamic" meaning (Moretti 2014: 30-1). Forcing metaphorically the view, one can say that also Karl Jaspers delivers useful hints to pull "emotions outside the box" (Schmitz 2011).

2. *Still around the subject*

In the text of 1917 Jaspers does not explain what a *Stimmung* is. He mentions the word in connection to *Gesinnungen* and *Weltanschauungen*. By explaining the purpose of his lecture he associates the *Stimmung* to *Urteilen*, *Wertungen*, *Wünschen*, *Einstellungen* (Jaspers 1917: 229), that is judgments, values, and evaluations, wishes, attitudes and outlooks. Therefore, *Stimmung* is made to belong to the ensemble of feelings which, marking the way a subject poses himself/herself in front of life situations, describe how he/she faces them

or reacts to them. What Jaspers in this lecture stresses is the subjective meaning of *Stimmungen* about which he is going to speak: "It is unavoidable that the general view always remains more or less subjective" (Jaspers 1917: 229)²; "It is not possible to measure objectively the influences [of historical events] on the political happenings but surely on dispositions (*Gesinnungen*) and feelings (*Stimmungen*)" (Jaspers 1917: 245).

A *Stimmung* denotes the emotional frame (frame of mind) by which a subject experiences and goes through life situations of all different kinds.

Since Jaspers' lecture focuses on *politische Stimmungen*, he analyses the spectrum of moods a subject can show toward politics. What ensues is a classification of *politische Stimmungen*, namely different types of political attitudes, according and consequently to which the subject acts (in the historical political world) and re-acts (to historical political situations and events).

In Jaspers' words, each of them expresses the way a subject combines together politics and *Weltanschauung*, that is, on one hand, the take-into-account of an objective condition implying power, power relations and resources (Jaspers 2017: 230) and, on the other hand, the whole of beliefs, values, principles making up the personal essence of the subject, the personality of each singular human being. In the word *Stimmung* both components are implicitly involved: the thought and the feeling, the emotional and the practical, the logic and the faith, the mental view, and the practical disposition. Inside the semantic area defined by Jaspers through the word *Stimmung* they converge and combine.

Jaspers' point of interest is expressed by the following question: "*Welche Rolle spielen Stimmungen, Weltanschauungen in der Politik?*", namely "what role do *Stimmungen*, *Weltanschauungen* play on politics?" (Jaspers 1917: 231).

In order to answer this question, he typifies a series of different political attitudes: the political and the apolitical man, the leader and the member of the public general opinion, the man considering politics as the final goal of action and the man considering politics only as the means for higher goals, the man living to believe in big ideas and

² Here the German original text: "*Es ist unvermeidlich, dass die Gesamtauffassung immer mehr oder weniger subjektiv bleibt*".

the man living to get the power to manage (Alessiato 2012: 9-68). Each type of *Stimmung*, corresponding to the typified political actor, is illustrated by Jaspers through examples and comparisons.

Beyond the descriptions that Jaspers gives of the different types of political feeling and corresponding behavior, what is interesting to bring out from the point of view of the present discussion is that, by wording the question, Jaspers puts together *Stimmungen* and *Weltanschauungen*, moods and world views, converging into the identification of attitudes which imply quite automatically also practical stances (*Haltungen*) in front of the world reality³. The detail becomes meaningful if we take account of the fact that Jaspers is an author who dedicated large attention to *Weltanschauungen* exactly in a time in which a wide debate around this topic was underway, receiving crucial impulses (Dilthey 1931; Magnano San Lio 2005).

The fact that *Stimmungen* and *Weltanschauungen* are brought together under the same issue enables to challenge the unilateral subjectification of the *Stimmung*.

3. *From Weltanschauungen back to Stimmungen*

What is *Weltanschauung*? “*Weltanschauungen* are not produced by thinking [...]. *Weltanschauungen* originate from individual’s attitude in life, from life experience, from the structure of our psychic totality. [...] Each genuine *Weltanschauung* is a form of intuition arising from the being-situated-in-the-life-itself” (Dilthey 1931: 86, 99). So, we see that by consideration of the world view two poles are co-implicated: the I and the reality, the subject and the life. The world view is the frame in which their connection is at most effective and vital because it ensues from the vibrant forces of life itself, turning into the personal life experience of the individual. Nevertheless, such a co-implication is fluid.

The way to that conscious intuition goes through a few steps, which Jaspers illustrates in his famous book *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen*. The leading idea of this investigation is the scission of subject and object. This idea plays a fundamental role not only in philosophy but also in psychological research. No surprise, thus, if this

³ This association of *Stimmungen*, *Haltungen* and *Weltanschauungen* has been firstly highlighted by Bollnow (2009: 147).

idea is at the center of a book considered as the turning point of Jaspers' thought from psychology and psychopathology to philosophy (Saner 1970: 76). According to Jaspers, what is characteristic for human life is the feeling of separateness: human beings are thrown-away in a world made up of things and subjects that they perceive as deeply separate from themselves. However, this feeling of distance is closely related to the will for adaptation and connection. Living means, in the end, reacting to a condition of separation in order to overcome the feeling of weakness and exclusion inherent in it. The reaction goes through the building of intellectual schemes and constructed synthesis giving the answer to the fundamental questions of human beings and so making the human life in the world possible. By writing a *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen* Karl Jaspers intends to describe the different ways in which the relation between the I and the world can be figured out.

The combinations of subject-object-relationship can be observed from different points of view. They can be considered from the side of the subject. Then, we have a series of attitudes corresponding to the manners through which people experience the individual world. They account for an active or a contemplative, an aesthetic or a rational, a mystic or a reflective, a hedonistic or an ascetic attitude. These make up the topic of the first chapter in Jaspers' essay.

Conversely, the relationship of the human being with the world can also be observed from the side of the object. This is the field where the world pictures (*Weltbilder*) ensue. So, there will be world pictures explaining the universe as finished or infinite, some of them will consider the nature as machinery, other as a living spiritual organism; there will be a scientific, a technological, a mythological, finally a metaphysical comprehension of the world. "In themselves, they are nothing mental but are conditions as well as consequences of mental experience" (Jaspers 1919: 122). In fact, they are like intellectual schemes enabling the comprehension of the way in which the objective world appears to the individual.

In the comprehension of world pictures, the close connection between subject and object is to point out. In fact, world pictures are not interesting for themselves: they become important for the psychological analysis only because of their intentional character, directing them towards a subject and, at the same time, appealing for a corresponding reaction from the subject. In so far that they are al-

ways “an object for a subject” (Jaspers 1919: 25), they are manifestations of subjectivity, so offering new perspectives for understanding it and its own world. “*Weltbilder* are subjective, since they are forces and creations carried out by the subject, but they are objective too since through each of these creations the human being enters the world of the universal being, which is ruled by its own laws. The human being, in fact, gets soon dominated by what he has created by himself” (Jaspers 1919: 124). The connection can be so close to coming to the point of fostering a counter-reactional power of the objects upon the subject so that this becomes all the same with its world picture.

As consequence of the tight correspondence between the subject and the objective world picture (objective because it is an object-for-a-subject) Jaspers indicates two sources for the formation of a world picture: on the one hand, the natural character of the individual, the inner disposition of her/his soul, and on the other hand there is what is due to the individual from the outside, from her/his world and life experience (Jaspers 1919: 125). At the end this subject-object correspondence is dynamic: a world picture is not an artificial scheme extraneous to the nature of the individual. On the contrary, it arises with the human being and grows up through her/his actual life experience, progressively and continuously offering to the subject knowledge and corresponding attitudes.

From a methodological point of view, this has as an implication the ethical neutrality of world pictures. The comprehensive analysis of the ways the human being relates herself/himself to the surrounding world, making it *her/his own* world, is, in fact, all the same with the comprehension of the meanings the world assumes for the human being. In this interpretative context, there is no distinction between what is right or wrong, healthy or unhealthy, valid or not. There are only as many different ways of looking at the world and of taking spiritually or mentally possession of it as there are many human beings. That means that the scientific value of a *Weltbild* lies exclusively in the fact that it is what it is, that is to say, it is a way the objective world manifests itself to the subject, “even if it is a mythical world picture, the illusion of a lunatic, the utopia of a dreamer” (Jaspers 1919: 21). The object is always real for the subject.

At this step, however, the connection between subject and object develops only intellectually. The world picture can be understood as an

intellectual medium by which the individual gets a comprehensive system of meaning, according to which she/he can adapt herself/himself to the world – and, conversely, also adapt the world to herself/himself, creating by herself/himself her/his own world. The result of this mutual process is that she/he becomes able to live *in* the world with other human beings. In this frame a world picture is something more than a sign of the human desire for knowledge: it is the expression of the human quest for totality. It displays the impossibility for the human being to be satisfied with the only mechanical addition of facts and with the only logical interpretation of experiences.

This is anyway the point in which the elaboration of a world picture shows its efficacy and its limit as well. Then, on the one hand, the *Weltbild* represents indubitably an answer to the unconscious demand of the human being for possible connections and interpretative framework: it puts together the knowledge of the world as a fact with the interpretation of it as a source of meaning. In so far that a world picture expresses “the whole objective contents of a person” (Jaspers 1919: 122), it is to consider like the outcome of the effort made by the human being for achieving a personal point of view upon her/his way of being-in-the-world. On the other hand, however, the constructed connection remains at this level only an act of knowledge, construction of and by knowledge – no matter if this knowledge is still precarious, incomplete or uncertain. Each world picture is, in fact, the result of a psychic-gnoseological process aiming at providing the subject with an intellectual apparatus for the orientation in the world. What at this level is still missing is the connection with life that immediately turns into a commitment to life. This is yet the final step that, after attitude and world picture, is gained through world views.

The *Weltanschauung* represents a more effective way of complication between subject and object because, as Jaspers writes, “it is something total and universal at the same time. [...] The world views are forces and ideas, anyway, they are the highest and total manifestations of the human being” (Jaspers 1919: 1). Arising not only from facts but also from values, not only by intellectual attitudes but also by ethical beliefs, the world views represent the whole possibilities frame for human experience. “A world view”, Jaspers remarks, “is not a mere form of knowledge, but it shows itself through evaluation, through the hierarchical order of values which one chooses” (Jaspers 1919: 1). A hierarchical order of values: the world view

brings order in the world of the subject by separating what is a life worthy for her/him and what is irrelevant, what is life fitting and what is not. And it does this not only on the basis of an intellectualistic evaluation of phenomena but in the frame given by beliefs, resolutions, assumed valued, ultimately faith. "Faith (*Glaube*) is the nucleus of each world view" (Jaspers 1932: 246).

The world view is so few only an intellectual order that it has the power to re-shape the world of the subject: by framing peculiar beliefs and thoughts, the world view provides the individual with forces mobilizing for life, consequently mobilizing her/him for action (or no-action). These "forces of life" make of a human being the person she/he actually is. Even more precisely, the world view is not something exterior falling from outside over the subject and fixing her/his life: it develops together with the subject and its emergence and growth are conditioned through the tuned correspondence between the interior and the exterior world of the subject. This "to-be-tuned" accounts for the frame conditioning the disclosure both of the subject and of the world. At the final step, the world view acquires so much validity and objectivity that becomes the solid reality of the subject, who gains in this way a real basis for her/his life, her/his life experience and her/his action in the world.

"Each existence has a concrete content, in the same way, all the corresponding *Weltanschauungen* are concrete, and have a content" (Jaspers 1919: 25). It is this "content" that gets evident through those objective manifestations by which a historical subject expresses in the world her/his personal way of being, of viewing, of believing. That is the way by which theoretical systems, political, religious and ethical doctrines, past interpretations and theories arise. Examples of world views, each of them corresponding to a particular "hierarchical order of values", are according to Jaspers nihilism and skepticism, authoritarianism, liberalism and absolutism of values, rationalism and vitalism, organicism, mysticism, realism, and romanticism. All these are outcomes of a process of objectification by which the inner life of the human being comes outside, in the world and, therefore, into reality. Without exterior, objective and communicable manifestations, it is as if that life and that being do not exist. The co-implication between subject and object gets here into a higher, deeper and closer level: the validity of the world view stands for the reality of the subject, given that the world view is what the subject has performed for her-

self/himself. To sum up: no reality without a subject, yet no subjectivity without a world order given by thought and belief.

These distinguishing traits of the *Weltanschauung* reveal analogies with the *Stimmung*. In fact, both describe the experience the subject makes of the world, defining the way in which the world and the life appear to the human being (Bollnow 2009: 49). They imply a dual mechanism of call and answer, action and reaction according to which the subject stands up in and ahead of the world provided with a set of feelings, attitudes, views, thoughts, beliefs, and emotions which make up both her/his subjectivity and her/his place-in-the-world. From this place, the world calls the subject for a stance on life and existence, which is one together with her/his world experience and which is as much real as the subject is ready to give it to the world. That is why Jaspers placed his discourse about political stances (*Stimmungen*) in the broader frame of the relationship between the world of politics (the world as a political sphere) and the world view as faith-motivated attitude. The world view is both the manifestation of subjectivity and the conditional frame for the exhibition of it. In this sense, it is all the same with the holder and consequent performer of it. The subject of a world view gives her/his personal touch to it, getting back from this all-encompassing view the shape of her/his own personality (Bollnow 2009: 31).

This point has been sharply spotlighted by Heidegger when he wrote: “The *Stimmung* disclosed its being-in-the-world as a whole, making each direction-towards [...] very first possible. The condition of ‘being-tuned’ [...] is not an interior status”⁴: it ensues from the “*gleichursprünglichen Erschlossenheit von Welt, Mitdasein und Existenz*”, that is to say, the “equiprimordial disclosedness of world, being-with, and existence” (Heidegger 1993: 134, 137). Bollnow will make of this co-emergence one of the assumptions of his own argumentation: “The world of *Stimmungen* has not yet been objectified, as in the further forms of the conscience, first of all, the knowledge, but the *Stimmungen* are still completely in the undivided unity of the I and the world, both pervaded by a commonly tuned tonality (*Gemeinsame Stimmungsfärbung*)” (Bollnow 2009: 32).

⁴ Here the German original: “Die Stimmung hat je schon das In-der-Welt-Sein als Ganzes erschlossen und macht ein Sichrichten auf [...] allererst möglich. Das Gestimmtsein [...] ist selbst kein Zustand drinnen”.

Some years later, Ludwig Binswanger, bringing this intuition on the medical field, conceived the idea of a *gestimmter Raum*, a tuned space, in which there is no distinct separation between the subject and the space around her/him, rather a continuous in-tonation, an “in tune” modality, uniformly pervading both things and persons (Binswanger 1955: 174). Jaspers, we will see, will be influenced by Binswanger’s intuition.

This mutual connection between subjectivity and world (view), between interior and exterior world, throws light on a further similar aspect between *Stimmung* and *Weltanschauung*: the all-embracing indeterminateness of both. “Each *Stimmung* is the frame for psychic events inside of which only some groups of feeling and only some directions of feeling are possible” (Schröder 1930: 11) The selective nature of the *Stimmung* is all the same with its performative power for the psychic life of the human being (Krüger 2013: 15-6).

In his reconsideration of Heidegger’s approach, Bollnow stands for the point:

The level of these always present *Stimmungen* makes up the fundamental substrate on which all the psychic life develops and from which this is constantly ruled in its essence. Through a specific basic *Stimmung* (*Grundstimmung*) some experiences become possible, whereas others are prevented from the very beginning because they are inconsistent with this *Stimmung*. All particular experiences are oriented into a certain direction by this *Grundstimmung*. (Bollnow 2009: 48)

In comparison to the feelings, which are tied to a certainly defined ground, the *Stimmungen*, like the so-called vital feelings (*Lebensgefühle*, Scheler 1916: 346), have no in-tension towards a specific object: they do not have a cause-object but on grounds of their vagueness they represent the background of every intellectual and emotional objectivation. No matter which role the intellectual resolution may have played by making a subject assume a world view or another, perform a *Stimmung* or another: once assumed, it turns into the enfolding frame conditioning all the feelings, attitudes and reactions which enter the influence sphere of that world view, which *qua* world view is nothing less than the whole world experienced – the world experience. This is not much different from what has been called “the condition of all psychic life” (Bollnow 2009: 48). “Enfolding frame” of the world experience means also that a continuity line and a correspondence dynamic develop between the theoretical and the practi-

cal life, the mental and the emotional level. Taken this into account, it appears coherent that Jaspers, by using the word *Stimmung*, has stressed the encompassing character of a world view assumed by an individual as an orientation scheme for life and action.

Finally, a further similar character to highlight by both *Weltanschauungen* and *Stimmungen* is the emotional component of them. Faith is the core of world views; the core of the *Stimmung* is the adherence between world image and feeling, displaying itself in the world through decisions, opinions, and hierarchical order of values. This core, emotional and not logical, is what puts the subject “on the way”, mobilizing her/him for action and giving her/him the motivation for reacting to the world. Thoughts and interests are not convincing enough if they lack the warm power of connection. The presence of this connection makes the world intonated, that is, tuned with feelings and desires of the subject, even before the elaboration of theorems and argumentations. As Bollow stated: “The high philosophical meaning of the *Stimmung* lies precisely in the fact that it, passing beyond the subject-object-distinction, which is considered obvious by the theoretical conscience, stems from a level of original unity among them. It makes visible a substrate which by the theoretical attitude has become invisible (even if not ineffective) and which could not be discovered through only theoretical ways” (Bollnow 2009: 33). In front of *Stimmungen* and vital basic feelings, the reason is only a secondary instrument for exploration and corroboration, not at all the ground power of subjectivity nor the rescuing force of life. At bottom what Marcel Merleau-Ponty has concisely observed remains true: “The world is not what I think but what I experience-by-life” (in the sense the german *Erleben*, Merleau-Ponty 1945: 23).

4. Subjects, and still around

We have pointed out the precocious use Jaspers made of the word *Stimmung* in the philosophical context of the early 20th century. Nevertheless, neither the word nor the topic has been invented by philosophers: it had emerged already in the medical field. For our perspective, this is a significant point. What makes the text *Politische Stimmungen* more interesting also in the perspective of a *Stimmung*-debate is the chronological position of it that is to consider with ref-

erence to the intellectual evolution of Karl Jaspers. In fact, it is well known that Jaspers made medical studies and by means of his pioneer researches on the ground of psychopathology achieved exceptional results, gaining the status of real authority in the field.

The text *Politische Stimmungen* dates back to the time between *Allgemeine Psychopathologie* (1913) and *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen* (1919). The first is the work in which Jaspers collected thoughts about psychopathological issues, marking the beginning of a new innovative methodological approach; the second is traditionally considered as the work starting Jaspers' way as existential philosopher. By considering *Politische Stimmungen* in the wider frame given by Jaspers' peculiar intellectual development, a remark concerning the use and the meaning of the word "*Stimmung*" is to make.

In the *Allgemeine Psychopathologie*, the word *Stimmung* denotes mood. A few attention is paid by Jaspers to the concept. In only very few passages of the work he speaks of *Stimmung* as a "permanent emotional mood", giving the "tone to the whole psychic life" (Jaspers 2000: 118). That is why it influences perceptions and representations (*Wahrnehmungen* and *Vorstellungen*).

In this frame, *Stimmung* is mentioned together with *Sensationen*, *Lebensgefühlen*, *Bewußtheiten*, namely sensations, vital feelings, consciousness. In another passage Jaspers describes the *Stimmung* in connection to "the whole constitution of the soul, its drive or its despair, its cheery or depressive mood, its disposition to activity or to resignation"⁵ (Jaspers 2000: 266). Also, by these descriptions and remarks, the subjective character of the *Stimmung* is reconfirmed.

Nevertheless, such a view could be still partial.

In *Allgemeine Psychopathologie* Jaspers already recognizes that the emotional constitution of the subject is closely connected to the external situation in which she/he is placed and to the sensory experiences she/he makes of it. In fact, he observes, "The objects are not only perceived by the senses, an emotional charge is attached to

⁵ Here the German original text: "Die gesamte innere Verfassung der Seele, ihr Schwung oder ihre Hoffnungslosigkeit, ihre heitere oder depressive Art, ihre Neigung zur Aktivität oder zum Preisgeben".

them [...]. In what is sensible there is not only the sensible to see, but also the psychic”⁶ (Jaspers 2000: 68).

Das Seelische, that is to say, in a broader meaning, the psychic and emotional attitude of the subject is already implied by sensibility and by the sensual experience of the objective word. This means that the experience that the subject has of the world grows up through the combination of subjective moods and sensorial perceptions, where also the role of the body becomes obviously crucial. We can figure out this combination of impulses as if the interior mood would assume an exterior corporal and even extra-corporal extension. This extra corporal dimension arises from the world going towards the subject.

Consequently, the building of the word comes from the meeting of *Gefülscharaktere und Wahrnehmungsveränderungen*, feelings and alterations in the perception, so that the world experience corresponds in the end to the emotional correspondence arising between the subject as sentient subject and the world around her/him as open to sensitivity. The degree of correspondence between the two components produces a scale of good and bad intonations charging the subject and the world of differently tempered *Stimmungen*.

Jaspers describes different types of perception, including cases of distortion or perturbation in diseased subjects. In the frame of our discourse it is interesting to remember that in the later edition of *Allgemeine Psychopathologie* (1946) Jaspers quotes Binswanger’s *gestimmten Raum* in order to refer to emotional conditions of subjects who perceived “in the space” “essential psychic features [...] which have for them a threatening or reassuring reality”⁷ (Jaspers 2000: 88).

The interdependence between the “in” and the “out” of the subject, the modification of perception and the alteration by feeling is so close that it is no more possible to distinguish them. It is one thing for the subject – where the intentional character both of the perception and of the mood becomes clear.

The emotional intonation describes the accordance between the perception of the external objective world and the subjective mood,

⁶ “Die Gegenstände werden nicht nur Sinnlich wahrgenommen, sondern ihnen ein Stimmungscharakter anhängt. [...] Im Sinnlichen wird nicht bloß Sinnliches gesehen, sondern Seelisches verstanden”.

⁷ “Seelische Wesenzüge am Raum sind, die als bedrohende oder beglückende Wirklichkeit da sein können”.

even if it does not necessarily correspond to a feeling of ease or comfort. This intonation simply implies the emotional component inherent in the perception, which the medician limits herself/himself to report. He knows that the world reality is all the same with the ways by which it is perceived and with the sensations generated by it in the subject. And what is valid for the allegedly normal or healthy individual counts also for the subject suffering from alterations in perception. Reality is simply what it is: this motto accounts for a methodological assumption which Jaspers transferred from medical to psychological and finally to the philosophical field.

As we have seen, the interdependence between subject and object is at the core of Jaspers' treatment of world image and world view in the *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen*. Between Karl Jaspers' psychopathological studies and his philosophical works, a lodestar orienting all his intellectual activity is to recognize: namely the attempt to think of the human being over the split existing between subject and object, and then over the division between what is scientific and what is not (Achella 2011). This, in Jaspers' view, means to consider the human being from the point of view of the existential totality she/he is.

This intuition challenges the original idea which figures out the relationship between subject and object like a confrontation, a *vis à vis*. Against this idea Jaspers makes clear that the relationship between subject and object has not to be thought in terms of a "straight line" but rather of an "infinite reticulate" (Jaspers 1919: 23-4). The way from the one to the other goes through networks of a different kind, which are, as such, out of space and time, neither subject nor object. These networks build up forms and intellectual schemes shaping the variety of possible or real relations existing between subject and object. They belong to the "existential a priori" of the human being and are as such not only properly subjective: they are in so far objective as they permit the world to be perceived, ordered, interpreted and understood. They have both validities by themselves and value for the subject in so far that they make its human life in the world possible. The idea again occurs according to which the human being needs a set of adaptation tools for living and this set is given by a mix of rational and emotional, subjective and objective elements, merging together into an interiorized stage which accounts for the "background of the whole psychic life".

Finally, by writing a *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen* Karl Jaspers intends to describe the different ways the relation between subject and object can be, and has historically been, worked out. Consequently, by illustrating in a systematic way the positions the human mind can hold by facing the world, Jaspers both offered a classification of world attitudes and made the internal structures of the psychic life psychologically clear.

How does it meet all this issue with our *Stimmungen*? The *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen* has been published in 1919. The text *Politische Stimmungen* dates back to 1917. That means that it dates back to the elaboration time of *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen*, to the time in which Jaspers was going to reflect upon the mental conditions of world comprehension. Consequently, it seems more than plausible to believe that *Politische Stimmungen* stand for a case of application of the psychological intuitions underlying the *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen* to the political sphere (Alessiato 2017).

5. Conclusion: a critical attempt

We focused previously on the difference between *Weltbilder* and *Weltanschauungen*. This difference concerns not only a growth or an extension of knowledge: a change of perspective and of consciousness emerges from the one to the other. This change should be put in connection with the fact that a *Weltanschauung* is not only a more complex *Weltbild*. Rather, a *Weltanschauung* is an all-embracing life structure motivated by existential forces, whose activation depends on the choices made by the individual, on her/his life orientation, and on the values selected and taken over by her/him (Alessiato 2011). Compared with world pictures, world views have a stronger practical and therefore ethical connotation and efficacy: they “have been chosen through the life existence, through experience and action, but not as theories. [...] All that is theoretical is not other than the objectification of something which was already actual, otherwise, it is something merely intellectual and therefore without essence. Life is all” (Jaspers 1919: 277).

This perspective assumed, it appears manifest why Jaspers, discussing political issues, takes *Weltanschauungen*, and not *Weltbilder*, into account. Not because of the intrinsically political essence of

world views, but because of the capability of each belief to turn easily into a – at least potentially – political tool. Politics and *Weltanschauung* share the same will for faith and the same need for believed validity.

At the core of a world view, there are vital forces from which – we have seen – a world order ensues. A world view is a form of world comprehension motivated by faith, therefore able to influence the way of acting of the human being. The faith, however, is not a “thing in itself” (*Ding an sich*): it ensues from the combination of *Sinnliches und Seelisches*, perception and mental life, external impulses, mental mood, and emotional attitude. It is a whole, and only for this reason it can be so powerful and effective. This is one side.

On the other side, what is politics if not the activity which takes charge of making different subjects, having different perspectives, beliefs and interests, live together in the world in the most possible pacific, orderly, and just way? This is even why in the political sphere the facts take the importance of practiced values, and the believed values are – whatever they may be: the peace or the war, the power or the justice, the liberty or the equality – the essential matter of politics.

The relationship between politics and *Weltanschauung* is determined not by the type of value assumed as leading value either in the political activities or in the philosophical belief, but by the intensity this value is believed, pursued and concretely promoted. So, the kind of relationship between faith and world view will originate different possibilities of political attitude, with corresponding political behaviors, each of them corresponding to a gradation of faith. Conversely, the gradation of faith engenders a scale of political behaviors. The name Jaspers gave to these is *politische Stimmungen*.

Beyond the different types detected by Jaspers (Alessiato 2005b), what is to point out is that the attitude of a subject has not in itself an absolute value or impact: since the individual is indubitably placed in a world frame, it “creates by itself a world”, a sphere of influence around itself, which can be more or less ready to welcome, accept, or answer impulses and efforts exerted by the acting subject. Each human can choose her/his place in the political sphere (general public opinion or leader, political or apolitical status) according to her/his own attitude. However, each human should be conscious of the unavoidable interdependence existing between her/his personal attitude

and the world – a world which, considered from the political point of view, is always historical: a world of human beings, a web of relationships.

Consequently, the successful politician is 1) either the human who is able to tune the world to her/his mood, that is to create the mostly perceived natural or inevitable accordance between her/his own interest and the mass mood, her/his personal emotional attitude, on one side, and the “shared feelings” (Schmid 2008) of her/his time, on the other; 2) or the human who, in spite of the general mass mood, is able to set up or, in extreme cases, even impose her/his own will and vision for higher or further goals. In this way she/he will be able to create a new wave of moods which will mobilize people into her/his strategy, incorporating their feelings into her/his own political tale: a performative story-telling (Ventura 2019). In order to designate this performing actor, political science and political history have used the word “leader”.

Schematically one can notice that in both cases the outcome of that creative process comprises both a subjective and an objective component, an active not less than a reflective ingredient: on the one hand, to achieve that type of success means to be able to assert herself/himself, her/his own mood and personal will in the world, against any resistance or competitive project. Politics is, in the end, the stage on which the Weberian “polytheism of values” performs her/his fight. On the other hand, winning the fight means to be able to catch the mood of the people and to grasp the spiritual climate (atmosphere) of the time in order to suit and accommodate the action to them (or to contrast them in order to replace them with something new).

Such a consideration of the *politische Stimmungen* allows us (going far beyond Karl Jaspers) to rephrase the question about political success: what is this success if not the result of a strategically sophisticated synthesis between personal world view and “collective mood” (Trcka 2017)? “Strategically sophisticated” refers to the constructive, and necessarily manipulative, nature of this process, conducted by politicians and leaders, aiming at building, shaping and forging the social world meant as the “stage” of their own performance (Böhme 2001). A process which goes nowadays through an all-embracing, pervasive and intricate web of mass media, communication system, social networkability, opinion pool, web strategy.

By all these “immersive media” (IIM 2013) the emotional impact is claimed, pursued, improved. The goal is mobilizing masses (Ferraris 2015). But a paradoxical effect of such a pervading and ubiquitous system of “political marketing” (Harris, Lock 2010) is the difficulty, witnessed at the social and political level, to create persistent, stable and lasting ties between people in order to develop the shared mood of truthfulness and mutual trust between them. We live in a time – that of the “electronic” (Gibson *et al.* 2004) or “digital democracy” (De Blasio 2017) – and in a society – that of the “aesthetic capitalism” (Böhme 2017) – in which the “arts” of reproducing issue-oriented moods and apparently “shared emotions” (Thonhauser 2018) are engineeringly carried out and strategically enhanced. And yet, in the compelling storm aroused by new technologies, the risk is growing that shared atmospheres become empty, each *Stimmung* fictitious and only functional to power or market-oriented goals. In this situation, by the extreme individualization of moods and sensations which is nowadays magnified, it is likely that the common world – as Hannah Arendt already warned (Arendt 1958) – disappears, becoming itself imaginary, transformed into the sheer stage of digital marionettes, consumer society members, “narcissistic democracies” (Orsina 2018). One could interpret also in this way the actual crisis of our democracies, condensed in the successful formula “post democracy” (Crouch 2004).

Already in 1917, Karl Jaspers reported with concern the extremization of individualism, on the one hand, and the divorce between politics and beliefs, on the other hand. In both cases, politics reduced itself to a bare practice and procedure, each world view turned to a fictional finally lifeless self-projection, and the shared world goes, in the end, disrupted and lost. An alarming fulfilling prophecy?

Without willing to deliver implausible diagnoses, what is rather to emphasize is that by his conference Karl Jaspers was able to condense in an experimental and discursive way issues and questions which would have later engaged the dramatic 20th century and which still engage our troubled time.

Bibliography

Achella, S., *Das Subjekt-Objekt-Spaltung. Aktualität der Jaspers'schen Erkenntnistheorie*, "Jahrbuch der Oesterreichischen Karl Jaspers Gesellschaft", n. 24 (2011), pp. 111-31.

Alessiato, E., *Das politische Interesse eines Unpolitischen: Karl Jaspers und die Politische Stimmungen*, "Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Karl-Jaspers-Gesellschaft", n. 18 (2005a), pp. 79-93.

Alessiato, E., *Le origini del pensiero politico di Karl Jaspers*, "Teoria politica", n. 21/3 (2005b), pp. 89-114.

Alessiato, E., *Human being, world, and philosophy in Karl Jaspers*, "Humana.Mente", n. 18 (2011), pp. 69-86.

Alessiato, E., *Karl Jaspers e la politica. Dalle origini alla questione della colpa*, Napoli, Orthotes, 2012.

Alessiato, E., *Weltanschauungen e politica*, "Discipline filosofiche", n. 27/1 (2017), pp. 111-29.

Arendt, H., *The human condition*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press 1958.

Binswanger, L., *Das Raumproblem in der Psychopathologie*, in *Ausgewählte Vorträge und Aufsätze*, Bern, Francke, 1955.

Böhme, G., *Asthetik. Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik als allgemeine Wahrnehmungslehre*, Paderborn, Fink, 2001.

Böhme, G., *Atmosphäre. Essays zur neuen Ästhetik* (1995), Frankfurt a.M., Suhrkamp, 2013.

Böhme, G., *The aesthetics of atmospheres. Ambiances, atmospheres and sensory experiences of spaces*, ed. by J.-P. Thibaud, London, Routledge, 2017.

Bollnow, O.F., *Das Wesen der Stimmungen* (1941), in *Schriften*, Würzburg, Königshausen and Neumann, 2009.

Bruzzone, D., *La vita emotiva e la comprensione dell'esistenza. Il contributo di Otto F. Bollnow*, in O.F. Bollnow, *Le tonalità emotive*, Milano, Vita e pensiero, 2009, pp. XIII-XXXI.

Bulka, T., *Stimmung, Emotion, Atmosphäre. Phänomenologische Untersuchungen zur Struktur der menschlichen Affektivität*, Paderborn, Mentis, 2015.

Cantillo, G., *Introduzione a Karl Jaspers*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 2006.

Crouch, C., *Post democracy*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2004.

De Blasio, E., *Democrazia digitale. Una piccola introduzione*, Roma, Luiss University Press, 2014.

Dilthey, W., *Die Typen der Weltanschauung und ihre Ausbildung in den metaphysischen Systemen* (1911), in *Gesammelte Schriften*, Leipzig-Berlin, Teubner, 1931, pp. 73-118.

Gibson, R.K., Römmele, A., Ward, S.J., *Electronic democracy. Mobilisation, organisation and participation via new ICTs*, London-New York, Routledge, 2004.

Goetz, R., Graupner, S. (eds.), *Atmosphäre(n). Interdisziplinäre Annäherungen an einen unscharfen Begriff*, München, Kopaed, 2007.

Griffero, T., *Atmosferologia. Estetica degli spazi emozionali*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 2010; rev. ed. Milano-Udine, Mimesis, 2017; Engl. tr. *Atmospheres. Aesthetics of emotional spaces*, Farnham, Ashgate, 2014.

Griffero, T., *Atmospheres and felt-bodily resonances*, "Studi di estetica", n. 1 (2016), pp. 1-41.

Griffero, T., *Quasi-cose. La realtà dei sentimenti*, Milano-Torino, Bruno Mondadori, 2013; Engl. tr. *Quasi-things. The paradigm of atmospheres*, New York, Suny Press, 2017.

Griffero, T., Moretti, G., *Atmosphere/atmospheres. Testing a new paradigm*, Milano-Udine, Mimesis International, 2018.

Harris, P., Lock, A., "Mind the gap". *The rise of political marketing and a perspective on its future agenda*, "European Journal of Marketing", n. 3-4 (2010), pp. 297-307.

Heidegger, M., *Sein und Zeit* (1927), Tübingen, Niemeyer, 1993.

IIM (Institut für immersive Medien), *Jahrbuch immersiver Medien 2013. Atmosphären: Gestimmte Räume und sinnliche Wahrnehmung*, Marburg, Schüren, 2013.

Jaspers, K., *Allgemeine Psychopathologie* (1913, 1946), Berlin, Springer, 1965; It. tr. by R. Priori, *Psicopatologia generale*, Roma, Il Pensiero Scientifico Editore, 2000.

Jaspers, K., *Politische Stimmungen* (1917), in R. Wiehl, D. Kaegi (eds.), *Karl Jaspers. Philosophie und Politik*, Heidelberg, Winter Verlag, 1999, pp. 229-51.

Jaspers, K., *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen*, München, Piper, 1919.

Jaspers, K., *Philosophie I: Philosophische Weltorientierung*, Berlin, Springer, 1932.

Jaspers, K., *Philosophische Autobiographie*, München, Piper, 1977.

Krebs, A., Ben-Ze'ev, A., *Preface to The meaning of moods*, "Philosophia" n. 45/4, (2017), pp. 1395-7.

Krebs, A., *Stimmung: from mood to atmosphere*, "Philosophia" n. 45/4, (2017), pp. 1419-36.

Krüger, H.P., *Stimmungen. Im Anschluss an Otto Friedrich Bollnow Das Wesen der Stimmungen* (1941), "Aesthetica Preprint. Supplementa", n. 29 (2013), pp. 11-24.

Magnano San Lio, G., *Forme del sapere e struttura della vita. Per una storia del concetto di Weltanschauung. Tra Kant e Dilthey*, Soveria Mannelli, Rubbettino, 2005.

Massimilla, E., *Sulla vocazione per la politica. Max Weber e le Politische Stimmungen di Karl Jaspers*, Napoli, Giannini Editore, 2018.

Merleau-Ponty, M., *Phénoménologie de la perception*, Paris, Gallimard, 1945.

Moretti, G., Stimmung – Bild. *Riflessioni su due parole mondo*, “Tropos. Rivista di ermeneutica e critica filosofica”, n. 7/1 (2014), pp. 29-38.

Orsina, G., *La democrazia del narcisismo. Breve storia dell'antipolitica*, Venezia, Marsilio, 2018.

Riedel, F., *Atmosphere*, in J. Slaby, C. von Scheve (eds.), *Affective societies: key concepts*, London-New York, Routledge, 2019, pp. 112-39.

Saner, H., *Karl Jaspers in Selbstzeugnissen und Bilddokumenten*, Reinbek b. Hamburg, Rowohlt, 1970.

Scheler, M., *Der Formalismus in der Ethik und die materiale Wertethik. Neuer Versuch der Grundlegung eines ethischen Personalismus*, Halle, Niemeyer, 1916.

Schmid, H.B., *Shared feelings. Towards a phenomenology of collective affective intentionality*, in N. Psarros, H.B. Schmid, K. Schulte-Otsermann (eds.), *Concepts of sharedness. Essays on collective intentionality*, Frankfurt a.M., Ontos, 2008, pp. 59-86.

Schmitz, H., *System der Philosophie*, Bd. III. Der Raum, 2. Teil: *Der Gefühlsraum*, Bonn, Bouvier, 1969.

Schmitz, H., *Der Leib, der Raum und die Gefühle*, Bielefeld-Basel, Aisthesis Verlag, 2009.

Schmitz, H., *Emotions outside the box – the new phenomenology of feeling and corporeality*, “Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences”, ed. by R. Owen Müllan, J. Slaby, n. 10/2 (2011), pp. 241-59.

Schmitz, H., *Atmosphären*, Freiburg, Karl Alber, 2014.

Schröder, P., *Stimmungen und Verstimmungen*, Leipzig, Barth, 1930.

Stern, W., *Allgemeine Psychologie auf personalistischer Grundlage*, Den Haag, Nijhoff, 1935.

Thonhauser, G., *Shared emotions and collective affective intentionality*, “Quaderni della ginestra”, n. 22 (2018), pp. 100-13.

Trcka, N., *Collective moods. A contribution to the phenomenology and interpersonality of shared affectivity*, “Philosophia” n. 45/4 (2017), pp. 1647-62.

Ventura, S., *I leader e le loro storie. Narrazione, comunicazione politica e crisi della democrazia*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2019.

Wellbery, D.E., *Stimmung*, in *Ästhetische Grundbegriffe. Historisches Wörterbuch in sieben Bänden*, Bd. V: *Postmoderne – Synästhesie*, ed. by K. Barck et al., Stuttgart, Metzler, 2003, pp. 703-33.