Public Service, Struggle, and Existenz

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ABSTRACT

The need to understand and conceptualize what it means to be an ‘individual’ remains for both Public Administration and related professions. The work of Karl Jaspers, when contextualized with the Japanese anime Series *Fullmetal Alchemist* provides a scheme to begin organizing and discussing the often-implicit assumptions that have existed and continue to exist. Additionally, considering Jaspers (1955, 1971) work creates the possibility to recognize, order, and potentially reconcile issues of perspective that tend to fracture contemporary scholarship in the profession.

Introduction

There is an old story that lurks just beneath the surface of many discussions of thought not just in Public Administration, but in political science (Inglehart, 1985), philosophy (Descartes, 1984) psychology (Fink, 1995, 1996), and host of other fields of inquiry. These questions about what is an individual and what are the roles underlie a significant portion of administrative theory, often leading to confusion, dogmatism, and polarization of the profession and its practices. Few, such as Marshall (2007), have begun to explore administrative theory using a Lacanian lens. Lacan (Fink, 1995, 1996) can offer one perspective for understanding the role of individuals in administrative thought. Others have embraced the process of life as a tool for understanding the individual. Often, this is grounded in the work of Heidegger (Hummel, 1991; 1994) and others. Occasionally, some have attempted to employ the work of Nietzsche (1964, 1966, 1974, 1978) as a tool to understand the processes of life.

More conventionally, though not a part of mainstream literature, people employ the work of critical theorists like Marcuse (1964, 1966) to understand the experience of life. Others such as Jacoby (1975) fused Marcuse with elements of psychology to try and understand group life. Of course, Foucault (1977, 1980b, 1985) has been used regularly to make sense of the experience of life within social constructs. Each perspective along with a host of others not mentioned have been employed and challenged for decades.

Few if any in Public Administration (Lowery, 2005) have attempted to employ the work of Jaspers’ (1955, 1971) at all, let alone as a tool to understand the experience of life in administrative thought. Specifically, Jaspers’ concepts of existence and existenz that underlie his discussion of “The Encompassing of Subjectivity” can provide administrative theorists with frameworks to understand individual and group life both generally, and specifically in the public sector. Jaspers’ (1955, 1971) work becomes clearer with the application of certain symbols, stories, and narratives.
It is likely that few people have attempted to work with Jaspers (1955, 1971) save in rudimentary ways due to the complexity and confusion associated with his work. Like Heidegger (1962), there is a longstanding tradition of readers leaving the texts confused—often more so than they were prior to the reading. Yet, a devoted few continue to see the potential in these texts. It would benefit scholarship in general, and Public Administration in particular, if there were some mechanism to aid our understanding of Jaspers (1955, 1971), preferably something from contemporary culture or media.

There is a media item within popular culture that can aid our understanding of Jaspers’ research. The Japanese anime series *Fullmetal Alchemist*, a story about two young brothers, the eldest who is employed by the government illustrate the differences within Jaspers’ (1955, 1971) research on the experience of life generally and how it fits within certain arguments about citizenship and critical theory. This paper, presents a careful explication of Jaspers’ research using the lens of the anime series *Fullmetal Alchemist* as a tool to understand how Jaspers’ work might or might not fit with other conceptions of administrative life, and illustrate how it might provide a fruitful area of study by relating aspects of power to Jaspers’ notions of existence.

**Jaspers: Basic Ideas**

The common understanding of what Jaspers’ intent is among philosophers coheres around the idea of understanding the human situation. As such it bears certain similarities to Heidegger’s (1962) notion of dasein. Unlike Heidegger (1962), Jaspers’ (1955) work tends to focus on the notion of “das Umgreifende,” or what we loosely translate as the encompassing. This encompassing refers to that which is “beyond the relativity of all our perspectives, horizons, and conceptual schemes.” (p. 10). The encompassing is basically a signifier for all of reality or possibly just everything. ¹ What makes this interesting, and simultaneously rather confusing is that Jaspers also attributes this encompassing to man himself, referring to how “man himself is always more than what he can know himself to be” (p.10).

The following figure is an illustration of the way Jaspers organizes the different modes of life.

Figure 1: The Encompassing (Jaspers, 1971 p. xvii)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Encompassing of Subjectivity</th>
<th>The Encompassing of Objectivity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Immanent modes: Existence</td>
<td>Immanent mode World</td>
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<tr>
<td>Consciousness in General</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Transcendent Mode: Existenz</td>
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It is interesting to note the combination of both objective and subjective elements. It is the encompassing of subjectivity, which is most important to understand the struggle of day-to-day

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¹ I am somewhat arbitrarily selecting the term reality since later in the argument, we will be looking at both being and existence, and it would become really confusing to the reader very quickly.
life. The manner in which people live or interact with the world helps identify the mode in which they operate. Unlike Heidegger (1962), Jaspers (1971) teases out two immanent modes of life possibly as a tool to separate ‘the blissfully ignorant’ from those educated in logic and in science though not in a transcendent mode of being.

Jaspers (1971) has a secondary, powerful use for this discussion. He articulates how this frame for lack of a better word can help break down dogmata that exist within science and quasi scientific disciplines, professions, and fields of study. Questioning and examining ideas within the encompassing can help scholars navigate intellectual cul-de-sac’s (p.8) by helping us break down specific sets of assumptions about philosophy in general as well as in specific circumstances. Critical self-investigation, as a process, can contribute to the development of knowledge by collapsing presuppositions along with notions of absolutism (p. 8). At one level, it represents an embrace of more relativistic notions of the self—yet in discussion and practice, one might argue it allows us to refocus our understanding on life and experience-- on being as a way to understand the individual.

It is important next to reassert the following: the encompassing, based on Jaspers’ (1955, 1971) is a signifier, or to borrow a quantitative term, a frame, or representation. Second, man/humanity/people can also represent this frame. Therefore, it is plausible to assert that the movement of people through life or some conception of ‘reality’ can be an effective unit for understanding the similarities and differences of perspective. Heidegger(1962) picked up a portion of this with his focus on the concept of *dasein*, which tends to be interpreted as being or existence. Jaspers differentiates his perspective from Heidegger by reconsidering this at three levels (Jaspers, 1955 p. 10-11) dasein (something that lives), Bewusstsein uberhaupt (consciousness), and Geist (spirit), which make up the modes of the encompassing.

What is most important for this argument is that the encompassing, as conceived by Jaspers highlights a combination of the relative and the tangible. This tangible self is included in the representation that Jaspers (1955, 1971) identifies as existenz. Existenz is understood to be both a transcendent mode and possibly unique. As such, it straddles and helps balance the wholly relativistic perception of individuals offered by Lacan (Fink, 1995, 1996), and the somewhat loose yet tangible elements of the Foucaultian (2001 p. 248) subject. Foucault (2001) at least implicitly assumes some understanding of a core, a tangible self, or individuality in his work. Subjects are *acted upon*, they are forced, they are molded, they are shaped,—yet to be molded, forced, and shaped, there is a requirement of being material.

Jaspers (1955) works around this by identifying this notion of existenz as something that is the root of the historical self. Similar to Foucault’s (2001) argument, this state of existenz can be altered (Jaspers, 1955). Alteration, in this case happens through a corruption of awareness, or the erosion of potential. This state of existenz is a possibility, like the philosophical notion of enlightenment. It is not a property that is necessarily tangible, measurable, or visible. We can however, understand the habituated processes of ‘life’ or possibly ‘reality’ by understanding
these modes of encompassing, and how they act and are acted upon. As a mechanism to clarify things, we must next reintroduce the concept of power into this discussion of ‘life’ to develop this argument further.

**Power**

It might seem like a diversion of effort to look at power here, yet one of the ‘things’ that consistently act on people in their day to day experiences of life involves power. To expedite this argument, let us focus on power as understood by Frankfurt style critical theorists (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1947; Marcuse, 1964, 1969b), and more contemporary social theorists like Foucault (1977,1980,1980b). The study of power has traditionally been an important research focus across disciplines including economics, literary thought, and political science. Power remains an important area of study within Public Administration (Abel & Sementelli, 2002; Long, 1949; Smith & Licari, 2006). Consequently, to understand ‘life’ in public service it becomes important to understand both power and the experiences of life.

Fortunately, this need not happen in a vacuum since life in organizations has been informed regularly by studies of power. Hummel (1994), for example, contextualizes the relationship between life in organizations and the power that shapes that life. By freely recognizing and reflecting upon the limiting factors imposed within bureaucratic structures, as Hummel (1994) articulated, the relationship between power and the life in organizations becomes apparent. Consider another level of abstraction. Within a societal framework, if we consider the work of Hampshire (1989) we find that the use of power is central to discussions of justice, negotiation, and fairness—though Hampshire (1989) emphasizes the positive use of power as a tool for justice. Foucault integrates the subject of power and related concepts such as domination (Foucault, 1977) into discussions of the maintenance of social order, distribution of resources, and even how perspectives on gender and sexuality can impact power relationships (Foucault, 1980b).

Within this brief discussion, the deep relationship between power and the lived experiences should be apparent. The nature of that relationship has been debated, critiqued, and discussed across disciplines placing it outside the primary focus of this piece. The goal for this section was merely to illustrate the presence of such a relationship rather than flesh out the nuances and minutia of it. Consequently, this brief explication is sufficient given time and space constraints. Later, there will be an attempt made to integrate Jaspers broadly with a perspective on power as a tool to reconsider life in public service, similarly to the manner in which Hummel (1994) used the concept of bureaucracy as an organizational tool.

**The Encompassing**

Jaspers’(1971) concept of the encompassing (das Umgreifende) is the key for understanding this argument regarding life in public service. Each aspect of this encompassing (life, consciousness, and spirit) frame and create the possibility for a core state of being which is neither wholly
subjective nor wholly objective. Focusing on the experiences of life, Jaspers (1955, 1971) allows for the examination and consideration of the residues (Jameson, 2005; Miller & Sementelli, 2009) left by the experience of life. As this experience of life is complex, it becomes important to distinguish it from the work of Heidegger (1962) and others.

Most readers already understand that Heidegger (1962) did not coin the notion of dasein. However, given the impact Heidegger’s work has had across multiple disciplines, it is one of the ideas most explicitly attributed to him. We commonly understand dasein as meaning “existence” or ‘presence’ (Feuerbach, 1986; 1989), though it is translated often simply as ‘being there.’ Similar to Jaspers (1955, 1971), Heidegger describes dasein as a way to better understand and interpret how someone interacts with the world. Since dasein is a vernacular term for existence in German, it makes sense that Heidegger’s (1962) would mirror Jaspers’ (1955, 1971) notion of ‘life’ understood as one of the three modes of the encompassing (Jaspers, 1955 p. 10-11).

One controversial difference between applications of the term dasein emerges from how scholars treat the issue of consciousness in general. Some interpret Heidegger’s understanding of dasein as having some sort of awareness, but within Jaspers (1955) work the two modes are distinct from each other with dasein referring simply to ‘that which lives’ and consciousness or awareness teased out in the term ‘Bewusstsein überhaupt.’ For the purposes of this argument, and hopefully as a tool for clarity, let us understand dasein as simply ‘living.’ Then it is possible to disaggregate the muddied discussion of awareness from dasein by instead tying it to ‘Bewusstsein überhaupt’ (Jaspers, 1955).

These choices let us shape an understanding of life in the world as a multifaceted, complex, and changing dynamic among people and their environment. This complex encompasses both the objective and subjective elements of how we understand individuality. Using Jaspers (1955, 1971) we find that individuals can have some tangible element that makes up the ‘core’ of the self-ala Foucault (2001) —yet in other cases they can, in certain circumstances, be wholly shaped by interactions and the environment ala Lacan (Fink, 1995, 1996). The difference could be attributed to some combination of awareness along with the influence of power in their environment.

If such an assertion, that power and awareness can help us understand individuality is believed to be reasonable, it becomes possible to understand and frame other aspects of individuality as presented by other theorists. Some, such as Nietzsche (1978) discuss the possibility of one who exists above or outside the norm (Übermensch). Examining such a concept through Jaspers’ (1971) notion of the encompassing, the possibility of an ubermensch, in practice would only be possible within Jaspers (1955, 1971) concept of existenz, a transcendent mode of life, with both awareness and a seemingly limitless freedom to act. The transcendent mode existenz, expressed by Jaspers (1955, 1971) allows for the possibility of both awareness (Bewusstsein überhaupt) and spirit (Geist) creating a space for Nietzsche’s (1978) ubermensch.
There is also a possibility of awareness without freedom. This experience of life is not quite immanent, since there is more happening than the sort of minimalist notion of dasein presented by Jaspers (1955, 1971). This includes the potential for ‘known reality without possibility (Jaspers, 1971 p. 71). A specific case might be understanding the possibility of freedom or democracy, etc. without the capacity to experience it. In this specific case, Jaspers frames the possibilities typically examined in the realm of critical theory—the concepts of domination (Lukacs, 2005; Marcuse, 1969) and resistance (Marcuse, 1941; 1964).

Mirroring Jaspers’ (1955) arguably simplest, immanent view of the experience of life, we have the notion of dasein. One of the simplest links that can be made based on Jaspers’ (1955, 1971) understanding of immanent experience with its minimalist descriptors is the concept of a Lumpenproletariat (Marx & Engels, 1998). Another example could be the ‘blindly faithful’ (Safranski, 2002), docile bodies (Foucault, 1977), or even passive citizens (Lippmann, 1965). In psychology, such people make up individuals who seek conformity (Crutchfield, 1955).

In essence, the three modes of the encompassing presented by Jaspers (1955) appear to address an underlying need to frame and understand individuals and their lived experience. It is interesting to note that they tend to map closely to the ideas of mind, body, and spirit, but without the new age hokum often attached to it. Instead, Jaspers lays out different perspectives, different forms of life (Wittgenstein, 1953), with specific agreed upon meanings that are contextually defined—not wholly objective. It is primarily a relativistic, process or developmental2 approach for understanding individuals and lived experiences, yet it is not wholly relativistic as these modes point to a quality.

By understanding these modes of the encompassing as having a specific quality, while remaining subjective, each can be examined, analyzed, and understood. It is the social relationships, interactions with the environment writ large provide the key. In many respects, this metaphorical mirroring process (Levy, 2003) is what allows these two seemingly incompatible aspects to coexist. Implicit within this discussion by Jaspers and others, as well as within the supporting information is an underlying critique or at least some consideration of how one might wrestle with notions of a transcendental life. Understanding the anime Fullmetal Alchemist as a sort of existential morality play can aid the understanding of Jaspers work in the context of both life and public service.

Fullmetal Alchemist Basics

Fullmetal Alchemist also known as the ‘Alchemist of Steel’ is both a Japanese manga (written) and anime (video) series originally written by Hiromu Arakawa. This fictional world is a hybrid of industrial revolution Europe and pre enlightenment alchemy. The twist is that within the world of Fullmetal Alchemist, alchemy is one of the most advanced scientific techniques of all, and is governed by scientific laws (akin to the law of gravity). The story follows two young

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2 I am calling this developmental, since it is not quite progress, nor is it strictly evolutionary in nature, though it does bear some resemblance to the notion of unfolding presented by Leibniz (Deleuze, 1993).
brothers (Edward and Alphonse Elric) who yearn to restore their bodies after a disastrous alchemic experiment.

The story unfolds much like a peculiar existential morality play. The brothers’ disastrous experiment was an attempt to bring back their dead mother. The boys, who violated an alchemic taboo, end up paying for their decision on multiple occasions. The younger brother Alphonse completely loses his body during the attempt to revive their mother and exists only as an animated set of armor from that moment on. The older brother Edward simultaneously loses an arm and leg during the event. Later in the story, the two brothers continue to ‘pay’ for their indiscretion as they eventually meet and defeat a diabolical, soulless simulacrum that resembles their mother. Continually through the story, the brothers are tempted and confront the consequences of their actions along with possible solutions for their plight.

Yet the most intriguing aspect of this anime are the representations of Jaspers’ (1955, 1971) concepts in practice. When contextualized within an underlying dimension of power, each mode (existence, consciousness, and transcendence) maps to groups of characters within the anime’s storyline. As such, Fullmetal Alchemist is an ideal media vehicle for understanding at least some of the complexities of Jaspers work. As the protagonist of the anime is a public servant (Edward is a state alchemist), it becomes easier to link Jaspers to PA through the selection of this media vehicle.

Existence in Fullmetal Alchemist

Most of the residents of the world in Fullmetal Alchemist are operating in a state of immanent existence. These people are characterized often as refugees and peasants attempting to scratch out a base life. They fall prey to the whims of the powerful, of charlatans, and the often obscured primary antagonist of the series. In practice, the ‘common folk’ probably best described as a peasant class, are treated as such, and often appear to be seen as subhuman. On a variety of occasions, this ‘peasant class’ is understood to be a resource, like wood, minerals or fuel. Most of these peasants are not named, illustrating their relative importance in the storyline, while nearly all of the military/state characters are named, and at least partially developed.

At one point in the story, we discover that these unnamed masses are valuable primarily as the source material for the creation of a philosopher’s stone. More generally, the Elric’s often discover that any number of antagonists in the story frequently use these infantilized, often unaware people including prisoners, thieves, and other members of the Lumpenproletariat (Marx & Engels, 1998) to achieve specific ends.

Central to the plot of Fullmetal Alchemist, these peasant classes have a specific value—live people are the key source material or ingredient for creating a philosopher’s stone. Within the context of the story, these Lumpenproletariat (Marx & Engels, 1998) and other infantilized groups (Berlant, 1993), lack any real power or influence (political or alchemical), leading to their

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3 The assumption is that creating a philosopher’s stone would allow the Elric brothers to regain their bodies, childhood, and possibly their innocence.
regular exploitation, reinforcing their lives as resources rather than as citizens clients or customers, just faceless masses of people being used as ingredients.

One named character that is the exception to the rule is Dante. She is the main antagonist, and former love interest of the Elric brothers’ father. She leads her minions (named for the seven deadly sins), creating some, and collecting others. Given her position, her lifespan, and her power, Dante should be in a transcendental state—yet her obsession with eternal life has degenerated her body and spirit to the point where she exists at the most basic level, simply yearning to consume and survive at all costs. Such an odd pairing of a complex plot scheme with base goals helps richly illustrate the nuances of rudimentary life expressed by Jaspers (1971).

Another main character living in a state of immanent existence (Jaspers, 1971) is Rose. Rose is a young peasant, and devout follower of the local religion. The Elric brothers expose the leader of this local religion as a charlatan, and they believe this created a stable community. Instead, the community descends into chaos shortly after the boys leave, and the state military is called to suppress the uprising. In the anime, Rose loses her voice after an implied assault/rape that happened during the military occupation. Near the end of the series, Dante tries to use Rose’s body to extend her life, and uses Rose’s infant (a product of her attack during the occupation) to destroy Hohenheim (the father of the Elrics). The character Rose embodies the idea of person as source material, as ingredient, and as a consumable resource discussed earlier.

Consciousness in Fullmetal Alchemist

Consciousness in general, according to Jaspers (1971) is another immanent mode. It differs from immanent existence, since there is an associated understanding of science and logic. There are concepts and methods applied. Knowledge is public and verifiable—universal and objective. Those in the conscious mode within the anime include most of the state alchemists the Elric brothers meet, as well as most of the ‘skilled’ professionals, including the auto-mail mechanics that employ their engineering, electronic, and metallurgical expertise to the design of the prosthetic limbs worn by many, including Edward.

This mode is both abstract and rational, with associated beliefs and held truths. The most obvious example of this in the anime is the alchemic law of equivalent exchange, quoted at the beginning of each episode:

“Humankind cannot gain anything without first giving something in return. To obtain, something of equal value must be lost. That is alchemy’s first Law of Equivalent Exchange.”
~ Alphonse Elric, Full Metal Alchemist
In the series, this is represented as if were a scientific law. You have to give something before you can receive some benefit. Everything is transactional. Everything has an associated cost, and it must be paid in full before delivery.

Almost from the beginning, the brothers truly believe in this abstract concept, as do most of the others at the same level. At one point in the storyline, things change, and the brothers move to a more comprehensive more expansive understanding of life, of their environment, and of their state of being in the world. They ultimately shift into a state of transcendence, of existenz (Jaspers, 1971), which tends to confuse people living at this immanent – conscious level including their mechanic, Winry.

There are however, remarkably few people living in the state of existenz. Most of the time during the stories reasonably informed alchemists and some others simply appear awestruck by Edward Elric’s ability to use alchemy without a circle –yet they accept the possibility that such a skill is possible. It is often assumed by the masses that this merely reflects the talent and training of the prodigy (Edward Elric). As long as something can be explained within the context of time and talent, it remains accepted by those in immanent modes.

Transcendence in Fullmetal Alchemist

“But the world isn’t perfect, and the law is incomplete. Equivalent Exchange doesn’t encompass everything that goes on here. But I still choose to believe in its principle: that all things do come at a price. That there’s an ebb, a flow, and a cycle. ~ Alphonse Elric, Full Metal Alchemist”

When the quote shifts away from a total acceptance of the law of equivalent exchange, the viewer can notice not simply the shared traditions and expressions of universals, but also an implicit awareness of the limitations that exist within the conscious frame of understanding. Rather than accepting on faith, or accepting based on the principle that things can work/might work within situations, there is recognition of the boundaries, of the limits that frame consciousness in general. The recognition is what allows for freedom, creativity, and limitless possibilities.

In the case of Fullmetal Alchemist, this transcendent state is thought to be achievable with the aid of a philosopher’s stone. Within the storyline, the philosopher’s stone is understood to behave similarly to the common accounts that existed throughout the medieval times. It was purported to transmute lead to gold, to add value, to heal, and even grant eternal life. Within the anime, it has the capacity to ignore the law of equivalent exchange. Furthermore, as the brothers find out later in the series, the stone can grant immortality of a sort. They also discover much to their dismay what the price is for the creation of such a wonder—a sacrifice that might only be understood as genocide.

The brothers also learn there are powerful forces acting upon both the citizens and society. Ultimately, these protagonists have come full circle, existing only to sate their basest desire—to continue to live. Their minions are named for the seven deadly sins, and each embodies their
name explicitly. Interaction with the minions is interspersed throughout the series, but it is not until the end where their true role is revealed.

Edward Elric in particular, decides to use the freedom gained from his insights into life and alchemy by setting a goal, challenging and defeating these seven minions, potentially correcting/balancing/ or addressing the consequences of their creation and continued life. In practice, he manages to defeat two of them (greed and sloth), three are destroyed by infighting among the remaining minions, and two are destroyed later.

It is at this point where we can recognize Edward’s movement toward being self actualized, to begin identifying him as living in a state of existenz. The choice to find and defeat these minions manifests itself in practice as a path of atonement, allowing for the possibility of life as an authentic being (Jaspers, 1971). By defeating sloth, the minion created as a consequence of the Elric brothers’ failed actions at the beginning of the series, Edward gains an awareness of himself, his actions, and how he ‘fits’ within the broader schemes of life. It is at this point, where the boy reaches a state of existenz (Jaspers, 1971) similar to his father (Hohenheim).

The difference between father and son is best understood by the experience of life each has. The father, like Dante, lived for centuries in this state of near immortality. At the end of the series, the father understands the consequences of his actions, realizing that he does not fit within the natural order anymore, and takes actions to begin addressing his past actions. The son, Edward, has a life that takes a much sharper arc. The son comes to the realization of how life, experience, and environments are related much more rapidly (Edward is roughly 15, while the father is about 400).

Figure 2: Mapping Jaspers and Fullmetal Alchemist

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jaspers Encompassing of Subjectivity</th>
<th>Fullmetal Alchemist Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Immanent – Existence</td>
<td>Most background characters, Dante</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immanent – Consciousness in general</td>
<td>Automail Mechanics, Winry, most state alchemists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transcendent - Existenz</td>
<td>Edward Elric, Hohenheim</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Focusing on the encompassing of subjectivity, which would be the left side of figure 1 presented earlier, allows us to emphasize the role of people, individuals, or in some cases subjects of these modes of life. Within the context of the series it becomes apparent that many/ most of the characters in the series are operating within the immanent modes and few operate within transcendent modes.

It would be tempting to argue at this point that all those in a state of existenz become archetypes for Nietzsche’s (1978) Übermensch, but that would not fit perfectly. Like many anime series, it had the typical unfinished ending, where Edward ends up in a parallel reality. He finds himself in the Weimar republic, without the ability to use alchemy anymore, and Alphonse regains his physical form in their ‘home’ albeit without his memory. This sets up the movie, which finally provides a more satisfying ending, while continuing the logic of the series and addressing what happens when someone achieves this mode of existenz.
Such observations reinforce the logic for pairing *Fullmetal Alchemist* and Jaspers. Jaspers (1955, 1971) argued that people depend on society at some level for a definition of self. This plays out in the character of Alphonse Elric who lives as the conscience for Edward throughout much of the anime series. In the parallel reality of the Weimar republic, Alphonse is a terminally ill rocket scientist who happens to get his research funding from wealthy members of the National Socialist German Workers' Party (the Nazi party).

Such differences illustrate the power and influence of society. No one really gets to be separate from society, even one who rejects social structures. The act of defining oneself as a hermit is a way to contrast your life as being different from life within. It is an act of rejection—yet the conflict with societal ideals aids in act of self definition. Within these parallel worlds of the *Fullmetal Alchemist*, we get to see how characters interact with what Jaspers (1971) calls the ‘encompassing of objectivity.’ The tool for expressing how this ‘encompassing of objectivity’ asserts itself is simply power and how it is wielded for good or ill.

**Fitting Jaspers**

The third part of this argument involves taking the elements of Jaspers (1955, 1971) work that we have examined using the anime series, *Fullmetal Alchemist* and finally tie it to public service and theory in Public Administration more generally. Throughout this paper, the modes of life and descriptors associated with each have been presented and illustrated. If we next construct a tool to organize these experiences, it becomes possible to understand the experience of life in the face of power.

To begin, assume that the horizontal axis represents the encompassing of subjectivity, and the vertical axis represents power. The horizontal axis, the encompassing of subjectivity moves from existence to existenz, left to right. The vertical axis is the presence of power, loosely understood as ‘in group’ (Lewin, 1947; Tajfel, 1974) power at the top, and at the bottom we see artifacts of the use of power on ‘out group’ (Judd & Park, 1988) or what is sometimes referred to as ‘the others’ (Dean, 1997) in critical theory and related fields. The bottom expresses reactions to power, while the top refers to applications of power.

Pairing an immanent state of being with high ‘in group’ power can lead to domination (by the people in charge). Those being dominated and are in an immanent mode can become infantilized. They are turned into docile bodies as they remain a part of a social system. In the transcendent mode, there is a nuanced awareness the application of power and the underlying values, beliefs, assumptions, and consequences associated with it. Within immanent modes, the effects of power typically are accepted as part of some natural order. At the bottom of the figure, the powerless living in a state of existenz can react to the expression of power by experiencing alienation (disconnecting). Those who are powerful can transform, lead, inspire, or otherwise change social systems (Nietzsche, 1978) as an outsider, or potentially from within (Alvesson & Willmott, 1992). Figure 3 provides a visual representation of these four possibilities.
Notice that if you move from the top left square to the bottom right, it reveals the set of all possibilities for individual development or arguably, ‘maturation,’ moving from an infantilized state to the Nietzscheian (1964, 1968, 1978) state of being. Moving from the bottom left square to the top right one sees the range of possibilities for engagement in society. Each square in turn briefly encapsulates theoretical perspectives informing key ideas within critical theory (Marcuse 1941, 1964, 1969, 1969b; Horkheimer and Adorno, 1947), social theory (Marx, 1867/1984; Marx & Engels, 1998), and contemporary social theory (Foucault 1977, 1980, 1985). This construct allows Jaspers (1955, 1971) conceptions to become a powerful tool to help organize and understand social theories from the context of individual people.

It is particularly interesting to note that the movement toward existenz creates a certain awareness of possibilities. One recognizes that power, understood from the position and processes involved is in motion, temporary, and potentially insubstantial. As such, much can be done to alter the environment and processes. Some might explore processes of resistance. Others might attempt to dominate or overcome the system itself (Nietzsche, 1978).

When considering such movement from the position of a lack of power (or at least the lack of understanding), the first options are limited to acceptance and possible infantilization (Berlant, 1993; Lippmann, 1965) or conformity (Foucault, 1977) and transformation into a docile body. The second set of possibilities or options involve alienation (Dean, 1997; Judd & Park, 1988). The alienation quadrant represents an acceptance of being the other, one who lives or exists, yet
not a part of a group or social order, they are the outcasts including the Lumpenproletariat (Marx & Engels 1998).

The infantilized (Berlant, 1993) represent the conformists, the docile bodies of society. As such, their day-to-day experiences often are shaped by power and the powerful, often without their awareness. In its best case, this group is made of conforming individuals, but in some cases can represent not simply conformity, but overall dependence upon the structures of power and their environment. In certain cases, this can make individuals somewhat less than human in practice as their minds and lives have become so controlled and simplified that they might no longer participate in political/social processes. They merely exist, eating, sleeping, reproducing, and following the directives of the powerful—often without question. Such citizens are more automaton than person, living without reflection or awareness—yet docile.

How to use this in Public Service.

Discussions of public service tend to emphasize what to do with the “people” in question. These people, understood as citizens (Box, 1998, King & Stivers, 1998), clients (O’Loughlin, 2005; Steiner, 1974; Korten, 1989), customers (Wagenheim & Reurink, 1991; Korunka et al, 2007; Yu, Wang, & Shen, 2010), etc. have specific needs, wants, and demands relative to the quadrant they happen to exist within. How the public sector responds to these people, their wants and their needs is a function of how the people are perceived by their elected officials, administrators, and other officers.

This interaction among people and their government tends to vary widely. Some identify with the work of Dewey (1927) and advocate for an educated, egalitarian approach to governance. Others identify with Lippmann (1965, 2008) and take a decidedly less positive view of people as a whole. Still others seek to develop docile bodies (Foucault, 1977), infantilized (Berlant, 1993), or sick (Fukuyama, 1998; Polsky, 1991; Scott, 2001; Szasz, 2001) people who can be treated less as people and more as patients (Sementelli, 2006).

To understand how these different options play out in practice you can employ the framework presented in figure 3 as a tool for reflection. Considering the power relationships simultaneously with the state of being of the individuals participating in these public processes helps us to better understand and explain the underlying preconceptions, choices, and actions as applied to the question of what to do with people. The fluid, process driven nature of Jaspers (1955, 1971) work helps us to better understand the complexity of lived experiences.

Yet, at the core, being aware, living in a transcendent state of being can be a ‘game changer’ for helping one to understand the relationship between people and government. It can help explain what drives someone to challenge authority, even in the face of danger (1985). This construct also helps describe and explain the sort of conditions that trigger someone to begin to question authority and governmental institutions as well as possibly crafting strategies for resistance (Ackerman & Duvall, 2000; Marcuse, 1969). Finally, this construct helps provide a basis to
explain why someone might attempt to game (Rieley, 2001) or possibly opt to dominate governmental systems (Nietzsche, 1978).

This construct also provides a basis and helps frame discussions, debates, and research about why others might not choose to question, to challenge, or to resist. Considering these questions from the perspective of Jaspers (1955, 1971) as used in this piece, one might justify why those living in an *immanent* mode of life (existence) tend to make different choices. Given their environment, it appears rational to maintain the status quo and focus on day-to-day life. Additionally, an *immanent* existence reflecting Jaspers’ (1955, 1971) understanding of ‘consciousness in general’ helps us to understand some of the overarching abstractions that serve to limit the desire to question, challenge, or resist.

More generally, this construct provides a starting point to begin considering the multiplicity of approaches to understanding the individual in the context of the public sector. Jaspers (1955, 1971) perspective adds to the discussion of individuality by helping to bridge, or at least reflect on how the seemingly broad differences in the understanding of individuals—ranging from the wholly constructed views ala Lacan (Fink, 1995, 1996) to notions of an autonomous individual (Rawls, 1971). Moreover, it helps us understand those ideas that exist between Lacan and Rawls such as subjects (Foucault, 1994, Heidegger, 1962; Dreyfus, 1990) and the self (Gergen, 1971, 1991).

**Concluding Remarks**

Sometimes life imitates art (Wilde, 2010), and in the case of Jaspers (1955, 1971) there is a strong, descriptive link from his conception of life as existence, as consciousness in general, and as existenz and the anime *Fullmetal Alchemist*. Consequently, it becomes easier to apprehend some of the nuances of Jaspers ideas by visualizing them through the lens of this anime.

Additionally, the construct developed in this paper can inform theory and practice in Public Administration in several ways. Future research might use it to consider emergent issues such as the widespread drive toward commodification nationally and internationally, some of the longstanding debates regarding how we as scholars and professionals understand people and their associated roles within Public Administration, governance, and society. More generally, this piece can help bridge the collective works of Heidegger, Lacan, and Foucault as a tool for alternative theorizing and to reflect on our understanding of contemporary modes of inquiry.

There is always a need to provide tools, methods, and heuristics to aid in our understanding of theory. This need becomes prominent as we bridge theories, practices, and instruction. Given the longstanding application of media tools as part of broader pedagogical processes, it is justified to use symbols, stories, and narratives to aid us. Contemporary, popular symbols, stories, and narratives can provide us with opportunities to understand the often-confusing nuanced approaches to theory and theorizing typically employed. With an increasingly interconnected world, with access to literature, theory, and philosophy often written in
languages other than English contextual cues about meaning become increasingly important. Alternative expressions of an idea become essential, and the visual representation of these complex themes becomes quite valuable. In this piece, a portion of the work of Karl Jaspers was mapped to power to create a tool. Unlike the philosopher’s stone in Fullmetal Alchemist, the creation of this tool did not require the sort of sacrifices expressed in the manga or the anime, but hopefully it has some value to Public Administration theory and praxis.
References:


