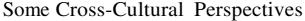*A conference was held in Prague, Czech Republic, in November 2002 that was entitled "Issues Confronting the Post-European World" and that was dedicated to Jan Patočka (1907-1977).* **The Organization of Phenomenological Organizations** *was founded on that occasion. The following essay is published in celebration of that event.*

Essay 36

Subject and Person as Two Self-Images of Modern Man:
Some Cross-Cultural Perspectives

© Tze-wan Kwan
Research Centre for Phenomenology & the Human Sciences
The Chinese University of Hong Kong
twkwan@cuhk.edu.hk

Abstract

The two concepts of "subject" and "person" represent two different ways how Western Man comes to an understanding of the nature of "Self." While "subject" tends to be self-centered, "person" signifies from the outset a "self-less" empathy for the others. After explicating these two key concepts, some further reflections on the problem of the "Self" as seen in Chinese philosophy will be introduce to show how the problem can be seen from a post-European perspective.

I. Introduction

"Know thyself (γνω8t o'atJT6v)!"[1] This short but original Greek dictum seems to have prescribed an important task, which remains one of the greatest intellectual challenges, not only for Western Man but for humanity at large. As a philosophical problem, the problem of self is unavoidably related to its counterpart, the problem of alterity. For in point of fact, the awareness of self is quite unthinkable without being related to the awareness of the other. And in point of issue, this relatedness between the self and the other is further complicated, since the divide between the self and the other can be placed on various levels, giving rise thus to the distinctions between one's own self and the

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[1] Delphic Oracle. Inscription on the Temple of Apollo at Delphi, Greece, 6th century B.C.

alter ego, between one's nation and other nationalities, between one's cultural tradition and other cultural heritages, and even between we the human species and the world that environs us.

From a psychological point of view, the understanding of the self is not a mere question of knowledge, for it affects one's behavior as well. Our social experience tells us that, as soon as we acquire some sort of self-image, this image will affect the way how we act, i.e., how we treat ourselves on the one hand and things and people around us on the other. Talking about self-images, the interesting thing is that it is not uncommon for a person to have more than one self-images at the same time. There are people who flatter their bosses but bully their subordinates; but luckily there are also people who take issues with the strong in order to defend the interests of the weak. People usually behave differently to various extents when situated in different social settings: in the family, in work, as a tourist, or in road traffic. In all such cases, one's behavior changes because one can have different (no matter how slightly different) expectations of what one should be, i.e., adopt different self-images. This observation applies not only to the individual level. A people, a nation, a cultural tradition can understand its "Self" differently in different settings, amounting thus to different collective behaviors.

In the following pages, I will spotlight on two concepts, that of "subject" and "person," and argue that they represent two characteristic self-images of Modern Man. Although originally two Western conceptions, subject and person contain some universal traits that allow them to be applied not only to the West, but to the rest of the world, as long as we are reflecting upon some representative self-images that Modern man can choose to adopt, especially in a world as irrevocably globalized as it is nowadays. After tracing the meaning of these two concepts in the West, we will bring in some Chinese (and Eastern) conceptions of the Self for comparison to show that, in a broadened context, both the concepts of subject and person, as conceptions of the self, can be conceived from very different angles. We then will show that a too one-sided emphasis of the "subject" or of the "person," in Western or in Chinese style, can bring along serious problems. Then we will conclude that what we might need is perhaps a more balanced understanding of the Self comprising both the subject and the person as its essential constituent elements.

II. Heidegger's Critique of the Notion of "Subject

The choice of "subject" as the first self-image of Western Man is a justifiable one. First of all, the word "subject" (or its linguistic variants) amounts in modern European languages indeed to the human agent. Thus, the word "subjective" always pertains to perspectives made from one's self. Secondly, the history of modern and contemporary Western philosophy is almost at once a history of the development of subjectivity theory. This subjectivistic tradition started with Descartes' epistemological discovery of the ego, continued through Leibniz' concepts of monads and force (conatus), Fichte's Ich, to Hegel's absolute subjectivity which engulfs or "overlaps" all of existence. Historically, the tradition of subjectivity continued into the twentieth century where it reached its final climax in Husserl. But from then on, it confronted waves and waves of challenges. Heidegger was the major herald to launch severe criticisms, which eventually led to stark anti-subjectivistic movements such as structuralism and post-modernism. For this reason, we will start with Heidegger's reflection (or in certain sense, deconstruction) on the notion of the subject, which was the turning point of the entire issue.

At this turning point of the tradition of subjectivity, Heidegger's critique of the theory of subjectivity has much to do with his distantiation from Husserl's transcendentalism, which aims at founding phenomenology on the "phenomenological residuum" of the "absolute region of independent subjectivity"[2]. This distantiation of Heidegger from Husserl can be seen in the former's preference of the latter's earlier work, the Logische Untersuchungen, rather than the Ideen, which was written after Husserl's turn to transcendental subjectivity.[3] In all this, Heidegger seems to be very cautious about the "subject" from the very outset. And it is from this point of departure that Heidegger's and Husserl's ways get further and further apart.

This discrepancy between Husserl and Heidegger has been incisively depicted by both Eugen Fink and Oskar Becker, who were in close contact with the two masters. In a festschrift article written in 1929, Becker pointed out

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[2] Husserl, Ideen I, §33.

[3] See Heidegger's Marburg lecture Prolegomena zur Geschichte des Zeitbegriffs, Gesamtausgabe Bd.20, hrsg.von Petra Jaeger (Frantfurt/Main: Klostermann, 1979). In this lecture, Heidegger shows much interest in Husserl's earlier notion of "categorial intuition," which according Heidegger would have led to a more promising path of handling the question of being and meaning, in a quasi Aristotelian manner, without relying on transcendentalism. See Richard Cobb-Stevens, "Being and Categorial Intuition," Review of Metaphysics, Vol. XLIV, No.1, 1990, pp.43ff. See also Malcolm Riddoch's web article, "Work and Dissolution: A phenomenological interpretation of practice and perception in the early works of Husserl and Heidegger" for Heidegger's understanding and critique of Husserl's problem of "categorial intuition." (URL: http://www.soca.ecu.edu.au/school/staff/members/riddoch/documents/Work_and_Dissolution.pdf)

clearly that the greatest difference between Husserl and Heidegger lies in the latter's steadfast conviction in finitude as the basic human condition.[4] In his conversation with Dorion Cairns in the thirties, Eugen Fink on his part also underlined that the question of infinitude or finitude is the great divide line between Husserl and Heidegger.[5] But why does this difference matter so much? Many years later, Fink further explains that it is because Heidegger wants to "avoid the danger of deifying (vergotten) humanity in any idealistic manner."[6]

This remark Fink brings out the true reason for Heidegger's dissatisfaction with the subjectivistic tradition of the West, which accounts not only for new directions in phenomenology, but also for the rise of many subsequent movements in cultural criticisms. Whether Heidegger's position is totally sound, we will have to wait to see. But before I make my own reflections on Heidegger's stance, let me follow his train of thought to its roots so as to explain his understanding of the "subject" on the one hand, and to expose the deeper meaning of his objection on the other. In the following, I will perform a reconstructive exposition of Heidegger's criticism of subjectivity on two different levels, namely the philosophical-theoretical and the cultural-political.

A. Philosophical-Theoretical Exposition:

1) Based on etymology, Heidegger maintains repeatedly that the concept of subject (or subiectum in Latin) is derived from the Aristotelian concept of VrrrOKEIIIEvOv, which means "the Under-Lying" (das Unterliegende). As such, it can be used logically to refer to the subject that underlies a predication, or ontologically to signify the substratum that underlies certain inhering accidents. So understood, VrrrOKEIIIEvOv can practically denote everything imaginable, an apple, a tree, a cup, a river, a city... In other words, it is co-extensive with the realm of "beings" at large, rather than just a name tag for human beings alone.

2) As a derivative of the Greek word VrrrOKEIIIEvOv and the Latin word sub-iectum(a), the word subject (or Subjekt/sujet etc.) retains its original

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[4] Oskar Becker, "Die Philosophie Edmund Husserls," Kant-Studien, Vol. 35, 1930, pp.119-150. Also cited in Gadamer, "Phänomenologische Bewegung," Philosophische Rundschau, Vol.11, 1963, p.24.

[5] See the report by Dorion Cairns, Conversation with Husserl and Fink, (Den Haag: Nijhoff, 1976), p.25.

[6] Eugen Fink, "Welt und Geschichte," in Husserl et la Penseé moderne, Phaenomenologica 2. Den Haag, 1959, S. 155-157.

Aristotelian meaning throughout the middle ages, into the modern era and even until nowadays. John Locke, for example, uses the word "subject" extensively in the sense of substratum[7]; and in modern English, we still use the word in an Aristotelian sense as in "subject-predicate," in "subject matter" etc.

3) But since the rise of modern philosophy with Descartes, the concept of subject gradually assumes the new meaning of "human agent." The reason for this change, according to Heidegger, lies in philosophy's being tempted to imitate mathematics. Just as "axioms" (6:i;t6llaJTa, the adorable) being the incontestable foundation of all theorems, philosophy discovered that the ego should perform a similar task of being an "Archimedian point"[8] around which philosophy should revolve. Taking note of the original meaning of "subject" as the "underlying," modern philosophy so to speak gradually monopolized, or reserved this word as a characterization of man.

4) Once the word subject has acquired this new meaning, the concept of "object" (Objekt, Gegenstand etc.) was called into extensive use to fill up the denotative vacuum created by the narrowing down of the meaning of subject. This brings about the grave issue of subject-object bifurcation (Subjekt-Objekt-Gabelung). Everything besides the subject are then rendered "objects," which are defined and determined by the subject's representation (Vorstellung) of them, in such a way that the subject becomes the "relational center" (Bezugsmitte) of everything.[9]

5) After the formation of the tradition of subjectivity, Western philosophy step by step exalted the importance of the subject, with Hegel and Husserl, each in their own manner, being the most prominent advocates of this tradition. The theory that uses a highest being to explain being in general, Heidegger habitually describes as Onto-theo-logie. But for the theory, which resolves to place the subject at the summit of the whole realm of beings so as to handle the question of being, as in the case of the fully developed Hegel, Heidegger created the even more definitive term of Onto-theo-ego-logie, formulated of course in a pejorative sense.[10] As suggested by Fink, this way of thinking is for Heidegger precisely what can be called "deification of man." Following

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[7] See John Locke, An Essay concerning Human Understanding, Book II, Ch. 8, Sections 7, 8, 10, 25; Ch. 23, Sections 1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 14, and many more…

[8] See Rene Descartes, Meditations on First Philosophy, Med. 2; see The Philosophical Works of Descartes, transl. by Elizabeth Haldane and G.R.T. Ross, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1931), p. 149.

[9] Heidegger, Holzwege, (Frankfurt/Main: Klostermann, 1972), p.81

[10] Heidegger, Hegels Phänomenologie des Geistes. (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1980), p.183.

this same line of criticism, we discover in Heidegger similarly derogatory characterizations of subjectivism as "deification of reason" (Vergötterung der Vernunft), [11] "mythology of intellect" (Mythologie eines Intellekts), [12] "dominion of the subject" (Herrschaft des Subjekts),[13] etc. To put it in the words of Walter Schulz, the idea of subjectivity as expounded by German Idealism is nothing but a "boundless overestimation of thinking" (maßlose Überschätzung des Denkens).[14]

6) The discovery of the self and the theory of subjectivity represent no doubt Western Man's attempt to use man as the measuring rod to assess the meaning of being. But for Heidegger, the more developed such a theory has become, the more serious will be the concealment and distortion of the meaning of being. This excessive self-importance or hybris of mankind pushes humanity to the threshold of self-endangerment, which becomes particularly manifest in the cultural-political context.

B. Cultural-Political Exposition:

1) Seen from a cultural perspective, the emphasis of the subject leads to the emphasis of humanism in modern philosophy. But for Heidegger, this supposedly "humane" tradition leads very easily to some sense of "anthropocentrism."

2) In the first place, this anthropocentric stance disrupts the originally harmonious relation between man and other worldly beings. With the advent of modern civilization, man step by step materializes what Descartes has predicted in his Discours de la Méthode, namely, to become "the master and possessor of nature."[15] With the pretext of improvement of the condition of living, man unceasingly attempts to gain objective knowledge of and control over nature in order to manipulate and exploit it. This has been done to so extreme an extent that the course of nature is changed beyond various critical thresholds so that it will no longer be in a position to resume its equilibria. Within an incredibly short period of time, the human species created for

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[11] Heidegger, Grundbegriffe, (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1981), p.90.
[12] Heidegger, Prolegomena zur Geschichte des Zeitbegriffs, p.96.
[13] Heidegger, Nietzsche II, p.141ff.
[14] Walter Schulz, Die Vollendung des deutschen Idealismus in der Spätphilosophie Schellings. (Pfüllingen: Neske, 1975), p. 56, p.291.
[15] Descartes, Discourse on Method, Part VI, The Philosophical Works of Descartes, op.cit., p.119.

itself and for other beings on earth the gravest and unprecedented ecological disasters: pollution, acid rains, desertification, ozone holes, mass extinction of biological species etc.

3) If we look at the concept of subject more closely, we see that in the strictest and primordial sense, the subject does not cover humanity as a whole, but only the "very self," the very "I" who becomes self-conscious (consider the famous Cartesian doubt). Subsequently, all other human beings are for "me" nothing but objects, which, like all other natural objects, are meant to be known, controlled, manipulated and exploited by me the self-conscious and self-centered agent. As a result of this, the theory of subjectivity leads to serious socio-political crisis: the estrangement of human relationships in the contemporary society.

4) The above two tendencies, namely the natural ecological and the socio-political crises, instead of affecting the realm of objects alone, will recursively affect the subject(s) itself. For how can one's state-of-mind remain unchanged if one is totally absorbed in a "material" way of living?[16] On the level of social ontology, if I take other fellow human beings as mere objects for my manipulation and exploitation, my own state-of-mind will very likely be affected accordingly. Furthermore, if I treat others as mere objects, others can reciprocate us with the same attitude. If all members of the society look at each other with this same "calculative"[17] attitude, the society as a whole will be "reified" (Verdinglichung).

5) One might be of the opinion that in the modern era we have objectivism next to subjectivism, and collectivism next to individualism. Superficially speaking, this amounts to a limitation of the power and influence of the tradition of subjectivity. But Heidegger considers this to be only an illusion. He maintains that objectivity and subjectivity are in fact two sides of the same coin, as are also collectivism and individualism. He points out that in the modern era, objectivism and subjectivism are almost synchronized in development, as are also collectivism and individualism.[18] This observation of Heidegger might appear hard to understand, but his reasoning is in fact

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[16] This can best be explained with Laozi's dictum "五色令人目盲。五音令人耳聾。五味令人口爽。馳騁田獵、令人心發狂。" ("Through sight, the colours may be seen, but too much colour blinds us. Apprehending the tones of sound, too much sound might make us deaf, and too much flavour deadens taste. When hunting for sport, and chasing for pleasure, the mind easily becomes perplexed.") See Tao Teh Ching, Chapter 12. Stan Rosenthal's Translation.

[17] Such an attitude has been depicted in the West as early as by Edmund Burke, "But the age of chivalry is gone; that of sophisters, economists, and calculators has succeeded, and the glory of Europe is extinguished forever." See Burke's speech of 1793, The Death of Marie Antoinette.

[18] Heidegger, "Die Zeit des Weltbildes" in: Holzwege. p.81.

quite straightforward: We only need to remind ourselves that the modern conception of "object" is the result of the metamorphosis of the modern conception of the "subject."

6) Heidegger's observation that individualism and collectivism are alike appears more difficult to understand. Simply expressed, although individualism and collectivism appear to be two utterly different social systems, they share in their cores the same trait of self-centeredness. As for the reason why they are eventually differentiated, Heidegger provided no answer, but we can go one step further to explain as follows: The reason why one nation adopts individualism and the other collectivism lies in pre-existing historical-social settings of the countries concerned. Imagine in Western countries, England in particular, where royal powers are checked and rights of individuals better safe-guarded, the self-centeredness of the majority will tend to result in individualism. But in countries like China and Russia, where powers of the "monarchs" are unrestricted and individuals' rights insufficiently protected, the self-centeredness of a small group of political activists, who manage to control the ruling machinery, will result in collectivism. One example would be the wanton political movement of the so-called "cultural revolution" in China during the sixties.

7) In Einführung in die Metaphysik, Heidegger put forward a highly provocative thought: "From the metaphysical point of view, Russia and America are one and the same thing." To elaborate this statement, Heidegger explains, "Russia and America … are metaphysically the same, namely in regard to their world character and their relation to the spirit," "the same dreary technological frenzy, the same unrestricted organization of the average man."[19] The greatest irony is that, while Heidegger was criticizing America and Russia in such a high-sounding tone, he himself, blinded by his great longing for a new social order other than America and Russia, has just taken part in a regime that has committed some of the greatest atrocities in human history. This kind of socio-political crises happen not only in areas ranging from Western Europe through Eastern Europe, Russia to China, but it arguably also accounts for the ever intensifying antagonism between the Western (predominantly the US) and the Islamic worlds.

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[19] Heidegger, Einführung in die Metaphysik. (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1953). Pp. 28, 34. Besides Heidegger, Immanuel Wallerstein of the State University of New York seems to have analyzed Russo-American relationship in a way similar to that of Heidegger.

In the above, we have expounded Heidegger's deconstruction of the "subject" deliberately on two levels. Whereas the first level affects philosophers only, it is the second level that directly affects our society, our way of living and our concrete existence.

III. Kant's Special Place in the Subjectivistic Tradition

As pointed out by Fink and Becker, the tradition of subjectivity here in question is in the eyes of Heidegger one which tries to render the subject as "infinite" and as powerful as possible. But is this the complete picture?

Before we go on to argue that besides the subject Western Man does have another equally important self-image, namely, the person, we shall in passing clarify if "infinite power" and "aggression" are the unanimously agreed principles within this subjectivistic tradition. To answer this question, one could easily mention the name of Kierkegaard, whose notion of "subjectivity is truth" is the loudest protest against the Hegelian subject which, when fully developed, is systematically infinite. If the voice of Kierkegaard is too weak to be heard in the midst of the subjectivistic tradition, let us at this point take a closer look at Kant, who is generally regarded as a propounder of the theory of the subject.

For Heidegger, the most reproachful thing about the theory of subjectivity lies, to the last analysis, in its inherent extravagance, in its hybris. Putting aside the fact that we will later dispute this point, we should point out immediately that this reproach does not apply to Kant at all. Indeed, Kant does emphasizes the subject, but for Kant the human subject is always finite. This basic attitude of Kant can be seen in many aspects of his philosophy, which we can briefly sketch as follows:

1) Kant makes a sharp distinction between philosophy and mathematics. While acknowledging that both philosophy and mathematics have to do with rational knowledge, Kant emphasizes clearly that unlike mathematics, which can construct its own realm of discourse, philosophy always has to deal with a world which is given, into which one is "thrown." For this reason, Kant points out clearly that it is unsound for philosophy to imitate mathematics.[20] This profound insight of philosophy and humanity was vividly brought to life when Patočka says to Havel, that "the real test of a man is not how well

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[20] Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, A727/B755, A730/B758.

he plays the role he has invented for himself, but how well he plays the role that destiny assigned to him."[21]

2) Kant maintains that human knowledge is always mediated and discursive. It means that human understanding has to rely on objective givenness and cannot out of its own accord determine the content of the object. As with man's power of intuition, Kant further maintains that human intuition is bound to be of "derivative" (intuitus derivativus) rather than of "originating" nature (intuitus originarius). In other words, human intuition qua intuition is also not exclusively determined by man.[22]

3) In regard of the sources of knowledge, Kant maintains a position we can describe as empirical realism and transcendental idealism all at once. This means that knowledge is real only as empirically given, and not in itself; and that, apart from providing the condition of the possibility for such experiences, the subjective conditions (mind) are nothing. This amounts to saying that man can arrive neither objectively at any absolute and ultimate grasp of "outward things" nor subjectively at an "inward mind."[23] To put it the words of Otto Pöggeler, "Kantian thinking has to find its position between the nothingness of the transcendent object and the nothingness of the transcendental subject."[24] Or in the words of Heidegger himself, human knowledge is to the last analysis a matter of "the middle" (das Zwischen).[25]

4) Kant points out that although the human mind does ascribe certain "meaning" to things in themselves (Dinge an sich), such "things" are to the last analysis without any real reference. The discourse of things in themselves is nothing but the mark of human finitude. It has only the negative use of providing a limiting concept (Grenzbegriff) or, in certain sense, a problematic concept (problematischer Begriff), the sole function is to negatively specify what human knowledge cannot be.[26]

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[21] Quoted by Václav Havel, Disturbing the Peace. A conversation with Karel Hvizdala, Ch. 2. (New York: Knopf, 1986, 1990).
[22] See Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, B72. See also Tze-wan Kwan, "On Kant's real/problematic distinction between phenomenon and noumenon," in From the Philosophical Point of View. Taipei: 1994. Pp.61-63.
[23] Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, B145.
[24] Otto Pöggeler, "Review of Jan van der Meulen's Hegel. Die gebrochene Mitte." In: Philosophischer Literaturanzeiger. Band XIII (1960), p. 348.
[25] Heidegger, Die Frage nach dem Ding: Zur Kants Lehre von den transzendentalen Grundsätzen (1935-36) (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1962), S. 188.
[26] For more detail discussion, see also Tze-wan Kwan, "On Kant's real/problematic distinction between phenomenon and noumenon," Tunghai Journal, 1986, pp.55-68. In this paper, I argued that Grenzbegriff and problematischer Begiff in Kant are theoretically equivalent.

5) Kant points out that the various ideas of the infinite are nothing but the results of man's drive to access the infinite. But these infinite ideas are not determinant (bestimmend) or constitutive (konstitutiv), but merely reflective (reflektierend) and regulative (regulativ) in nature. And again, such hunger for the infinite is precisely a characteristic of human finitude.

6) For Kant, besides being a knowing subject, man is also a moral and aesthetic subject. This implies that we should not limit ourselves to an exclusively epistemological position in our task of self-understanding. For example, when coming across other humans (alter ego), we definitely should avoid treating them as mere objects of our knowledge, but rather as our objects of affection and respect. In Kantian terms, we should take them as persons, who have the same dignity (Würde) as myself, and who deserves our respect (Achtung).[27]

7) Accordingly, the problem of self in Kant always involves the self in action. As such, the most important issue to be covered is that of duty (Pflicht). Seen from this angle, Kant has to be assigned a special status, even if we classify him as a subjectivist in the broadest sense. And as such, Kant sets the good example showing that subjectivism can be very different from what Heidegger has in mind. Unlike other mainstream subjectivists, subjectivism in the Kantian sense is unfolded within the bounds of human finitude, and is compatible with personalism, which we are going to discuss.

All in all, Kantian philosophy exhibits a strong determination to prevent itself from transgressing human finitude. All the features as indicated above are nothing but theoretical devices to consistently safeguard this basic position. However, these deliberations of Kant are not necessarily appreciated by his successors. For example: The idea of "things for themselves," which Kant insisted to be a mere limiting concept, was eventually criticized by both Hegel[28] and Husserl. And they criticize Kant precisely for his failing to show the contents of things in themselves in a more transparent manner. Like Hegel, Husserl is not satisfied with a subject with restricted power. In his late work Krisis, Husserl still complains about Kant's subject being too "anonymous"[29] and "mythical,"[30] and being left in total "darkness" and "incomprehension"

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[27] Kant, Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten. 2. Kapitel.
[28] See Hegel's "Lesser Logic," §40-60, §124, Suhrkamp-Edition, Band 8, pp. 112-147, 254-255; Wissenschaft der Logik II, Band 6, pp.135-136.
[29] Husserl, Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendentale Phänomeno-logie. Husserliana, Band VI, (den Haag: Nijhoff, 1962), S.115.
[30] Husserl, Krisis, S.116-117.

(Dunkelheiten, Unfassbarkeit).[31] In a word, Husserl thinks that Kant's subject is not "radical" enough[32], and is for this reason not in a position to constitute a "kingdom of the subjective" (Reich des Subjektiven), [33] or to assume the Cartesian vocation of providing for "the most rigorous … and ultimate foundation."[34] On the contrary, Husserl takes it as his own mission to bring about a "universal and ultimately functioning subjectivity" (universale letztfungierende Subjektivität), in order to establish a "universal and ultimately founding Science" (universal und letztbegründende Wissenschaft). [35]

At this point we should readily raise the query: Is this attempt of Hegel and Husserl to "upgrade" or "radicalize" subjectivity not too ambitious? Is this precisely what Kant would avoid? The most interesting thing is that, while Hegel and Husserl criticize Kant for not fully asserting the power of the subject, they are in return criticized by Heidegger for having overexerted the power of subjectivity. In an essay entitled "The end of philosophy and the task of thinking,"[36] Heidegger puts the ideas of subjectivity of both Hegel and Husserl on the same side of the balance and criticizes the extravagance of their conception of subject.

IV. From Subjectivism to Personalism

As suggested at the outset of this paper, subjectivism is only one of the many possible self-images of Western Man. Even if we agree with Heidegger's warning that subjectivism entails ecological and social-political crises, we can at least take a step backward to see if there are other comparably important self-images that might counterbalance the impact and crises of subjectivism. Following this line of thought, we have to embark upon the second of the two main self-images of Western Man—Man as person.

The concept of person is derived from the Latin term persona, which is possibly related to the Greek word rrrp6owrrrOv. While rrrp6owrrrOv means the face or countenance of man, persona in Latin, carries the etymological meaning of "through-sounding" or hindurchtönen, and is used to denote the mask used in

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[31] Husserl, Krisis, S.116.
[32] Husserl, Krisis, S. 118.
[33] Husserl, Krisis, S. 114
[34] Husserl, Krisis, S.101-102.
[35] Husserl, Krisis, S. 114-115.
[36] Heidegger, "Das Ende der Philosophie und die Aufgabe des Denkens," in Zur Sache des Denkens. (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1976). Pp. 67-70. Here Heidegger criticized Hegel and Husserl respectively for having absolutized Subjectivity.

ancient drama. A mask, through which the voice of the protagonist is transmitted, always signifies a dramatic role, which always stands for a human individual with a certain character, the character of love and hate, of yearning and aversion, of hope and fear etc.

As an alterative image in Western Man's understanding of the self, personalism differs from subjectivism in many important aspects:

As pointed out by Max Müller,[37] the concept of person as a philosophical concept was unknown in pagan antiquity, and was coined in Christian late antiquity only, particularly since Boethius' definition of persona as "human individual of rational (spiritual) nature." As a name for the individual, it differs from the subject in that it's emphasis of the spirituality and dignity. Although later on the Christian fathers related the concept of person to holy trinity of the Godhead, the word person acquired subsequently in the philosophical tradition from Pascal through Kant to Scheler the meaning of a human individual bestowed with spiritual existence, one who is an end-in-itself (Selbst-zwecklichkeit) and has dignity (Achtung, Würde).[38]

Whereas the concept of subject (as understood by Heidegger[39]) emphasizes objective observation within a cognitive framework, the concept of person emphasizes respectful listening and considerate empathy between man and man. Whereas the subject discovers it own self first and approaches the others only subsequently by relating them to one's own self, the discovery of the person is achieved in the first place through a selfless empathy of and care for the others. While subjectivism, as identified by Heidegger, is radically speaking anti-social, personalism makes room for interpersonal relationship at the very outset. In personalism, one reflects upon one's self only in conjunction with the role one can contribute to his relation with others. In other words, personalism puts the others before one's own self. A person can care for others to an extent that we can even describe it as a "selfless thou."[40]

In the tradition of subjectivism, solipsism has always been a theoretical challenge. This explains why philosophers including Husserl attempted repeatedly to solve the problem by raising the question of intersubjectivity. But

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[37] See Max Müller and Alois Halder, Kleines Philosophisches Wörterbuch. (Freiburg: Verlag Herder, 1971)

[38] Kant, Grundlegung der Metaphysik der Sitten. 2. Abschnitt. Kants Gesammelte Schriften, Band 4, S. 428.

[39] This explains why Heidegger is so unhappy about understanding Kant merely as an epistemologist.

[40] For the concept of "selfless thou," I am indebted to the reading of Bosco Lu S.J., "An Existential Interpretation of Gabriel Marcel's Play 'The Broken World'," in The Journal of the National Chengchi University. Vol. 49, Taipei, 1984, pp. 1-17.

given that intersubjectivity can, epistemologically speaking, never be as primordially evident as the experience of the subject, the whole program of intersubjectivity entails inherent difficulties, which are not easily solvable. In contrary, the theory of personalism, which makes room at the outset for the others and for selflessness, is not burdened by solipsism at all. Let us consider the following exemplary definition of the person proposed by Nicolai Hartmann: "Under person we understand human individuals, insofar as they … are connected with other similar human individuals through dwelling together, insofar as they have to experience each others' action, expression, wish and endeavor; insofar as they have to confront each others' opinions, insights and prejudices; and insofar as they have to take a position to each others' claims, convictions and evaluations."[41]

In other words, in personalism, the understanding of the self is definitely not limited to the discovery of the ego, but assumes the company of other fellow human beings at the outset. Scheler's idea of the "collective person" (Gesamtperson) or of "social person" (soziale Person) are exemplary formulations of the issue.[42] Even linguists such as Émile Benveniste touches upon this same topic when he talks about "diffused and amplified person."[43]

Unlike subjectivism, the emphasis of personalism lies not so much in objective, cognitive observation, than in empathetic listening. The main concern for personalism is not knowledge and cognitive power, but duty and personal commitment. This nature of personalism is best reflected in another definition provided by Rudolf Eisler of the person: as "… self-conscious, goal oriented, freely acting, and responsible self."[44]

The notion of duty in personalism covers both the duty to oneself and to the community. This important feature of person is very well explained by Nicolai Hartmann with the notion of "ethos": "The true ethos of personality is

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[41] See Nicolai Hartmann, Ethik. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1962), "Unter Personen verstehen wir die menschlichen Individuen, sofern sie … im Zusammenleben mit anderen ebensolchen menschlichen Individuen verbunden dastehen und deren Behandlung, Äußerung, Wolle und streben erfahren … ihren Meinungen, Einsichten, Vorurteilungen begegnen, zu ihren Ansprüchen, Gesinnungen und Wertungen irgendwie Stellung nehmen." Translation by the present author.

[42] See Max Scheler, Der Formalismus in der Ethik und die materiale Wertethik. Neuer Versuch der Grundlegung eines ethischen Personalismus. (Bern-München: Francke Verlag, 1980).

[43] See Émile Benveniste, "Relationships of Person in the Verb," in Problems in General Linguistics, trans. By Mary E. Meek, (Coral Gables: University of Miami Press, 1971), pp.195-204. For more discussion, see Tze-wan Kwan, "Emotional Apriori and the Tragic Sense in Philosophy," in Festschrift for Professor Lao Sze-kwang for his Seventieth Birthday. (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2003), pp. 177-218.

[44] Rudolf Eisler, Wörterbuch der philosophischen Begriffe, (Berlin: 1929), Band II, entry on "Person".

not the ethos of selfishness (Sichselbstsuchen) or self-insistence (Sich-durchsetzen), but one of self-sacrifice (Selbsthingabe) and self-forgetfulness (Selbstvergessenheit)." Hartmann also maintains that the ethos of personality does not lie in the acquisition of knowledge, but in the "distinctive creation of meaning of human life through the interaction between loving and being loved. [...] It is through this ethos of personality that creation of meaning is comprehensible."[45] For this reason, we see that the elements of emotion such as empathy, compassion, care and love become central themes in personalistic philosophy of Scheler and Marcel.

All in all, we may concede that notwithstanding the predominant influence of subjectivism, personalism proves itself to have played a counterbalancing role, both in philosophy and in everyday life. Since its institution by Boethius, personalism developed into a philosophical tradition with it own problem heritage. Among its advocates are Pascal, Kant, and in some sense Hume before him. In contemporary philosophy it is voiced out by Buber, Scheler, Nicolai Hartmann, Marcel, Plessner, and many more. In daily life, this self-image of Western Man as person also plays an indisputably important role. In contemporary society, even though the estrangement of human relationship has become a thrilling issue that affects everybody, interpersonal concern still remains a social virtue aspired and appreciated by the average man. As pointed out by Alvin Toffler in his book Future Shock, even for those people who are accustomed to work and live with a totally materialistic and calculative lifestyle, they particularly would need a core group of people who would really care for them in a non-materialistic and non-calculative manner.[46]

V. Modern Linguistics's Relevance to Personalism:

Outside of philosophical traditions, the relevance of linguistics for personalism should not be under-estimated. In passing, we would like to make some short remarks on Wilhelm von Humboldt and Émile Benveniste.

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[45] Nicolai Hartmann, "Das Ethos der Persönlichkeit," in Kleine Schriften, Band 1. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1955), S. 311-318. "Das wahre Ethos der Persönlichkeit ist kein Ethos des Sichselbstsuchens oder Sichdurchsetzens, sondern der Selbsthingabe und Selbstvergessenheit. […] daß in dem Widerspiel von Lieben und Geliebtsein eine einzigartige Sinngebung des Menschenlebens liegt. […] Am Ethos der Persönlichkeit wird die Sinngebung verständlich."
[46] See Alvin Toffler, Future Shock. 1971. Bantam Books 1971. In particular the chapter on "People: The Modular Man," pp. 95-123.

In respect of personalism, Humboldt has written a short but important paper Über den Dualis. This paper starts with a very small issue in historical linguistics, namely the original presence of the "dual" number (numerus) besides the singular and the plural in Indo-European languages. Humboldt's treatise shows that despite the fact that this dual number is now merged into the plural and is no longer identifiable, its original presence is still of philosophical significance. Humboldt maintains that duality can have linguistic relevance on two levels, one which is "visible in experience" and the other which is "invisible in the deep structure of thoughts." The first level of duality can be exemplified by the quantum "two" as in "two stones," the "two sexes," and the "two sides of the human body." The second level of duality reflects but the "principle of dialogue" (das dialogische Prinzip) which governs not only the way how human interaction takes place, but also the principle of human language at large. For Humboldt, the phenomenon of human speech is impossible without partners. Duality in the deep level always refers to the "I" and the "you," the linguistic partner. Even what we usually call thinking is in fact nothing but the dialogue between the "I" and a virtual "you."[47] Humboldt therefore concluded that, "There lies in the primordial essence of language an unalterable dualism, and the possibility of speech itself is determined by addressing and replying (Anrede und Erwiderung). Human thought is by nature accompanied by an inclination toward social existence. Besides all the bodily and sensational relations, man, for the sake of thought, longs for a 'thou' who corresponds to the 'I'. For man, the concept will acquire its clarity and certainty only through its reflection from a foreign intellect."[48]

This same issue was then resumed in the twentieth century by the French linguist Benveniste. In a paper entitled "Subjectivity in Language," Benveniste discussed the relation between subjectivity in philosophy and the linguistic problems such as "persona" and "pronouns." His main reckonings can be summarized as follows:[49]

The problem of subjectivity has its foundation in the linguistic use of the "person." Benveniste says, "Now we hold that 'subjectivity', whether it is placed in phenomenology or in psychology, as one may wish, is only the emergence in the being of a fundamental property of language. 'Ego' is he who says 'ego'.

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[47] See Plato's view of thinking as the mind's dialogue with itself. Theaetetus 189e-190a; Sophist 263e.

[48] Wilhelm von Humboldt, "Über den Dualis," in: Schriften zu Sprache, hrsg. Von Michael Böhler, (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1973), pp. 24-25.

[49] See Émile Benveniste, "Subjectivity in Language," Problems in General Linguistics. pp. 223-230.

That is where we see the foundation of 'subjectivity', which is determined by the status of the 'person.'"[50]

Self-consciousness is only possible through "contrast." I call myself "I" only when I am talking to someone I call "you." For Benveniste, this duality is more fundamental than a "solus ipse." And it is "illegitimate and erroneous to reduce" this duality to a single primordial term.[51]

The grammatical "person" presupposes the phenomenon of discourse or communication among members of a community. Pronouns (pronominal), are derived from the person, hence the expression "personal pronouns." The most interesting thing about pronouns is that "they do not refer to a concept or to an individual,"[52] but change their reference according to the situation of the discourse. Among the personal pronouns, pronouns of the first and second persons (the "I" and the "you") exhibit the clear feature of "reversibility," and they represent indisputably the two parties or personalities involved in the discourse. In contrast to this, pronouns of the third person are the only pronouns that can refer to "objects" of the first person "I." Third person pronouns do not necessarily point to persons, they could refer to impersonal things. This observation of Benveniste show a strong resemblance to the two utterly different relations of the "I–thou " and the "I–It" raised by Martin Buber.[53]

For Benveniste, subjectivity (as he calls it) is always communal, i.e., interpersonal. Besides personal pronouns, this communal character of subjectivity manifest itself also in other linguistic structures. Benveniste uses the verb as an example: In English, the expressions "I swear," "I promise" and "I guarantee," instead of just conveying a certain act content, entail within themselves "an act of social import," which means that they involves serious commitment to others.[54]

In this paper we argued that the concept of person can be considered as the second of the two self-images of Western Man. Through linguistic analysis, Benveniste shows us further that, as far as basic human relationship is concerned, man's self-image as person is more fundamental. And that the subject-object distinction, as a parallel of the relationship between the first and

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[50] Benveniste, Ibid., p. 224.
[51] Benveniste, Ibid., p. 225.
[52] Benveniste, Ibid., p. 226.
[53] See Martin Buber, Ich und Du. (I and Thou).
[54] Benveniste, op. cit., p. 229.

the third person, is nothing but a derivative of the very concept of the "person" itself. [55]

VI. Characteristics of the Self in Chinese Culture

Being myself nurtured by a different culture than the West, I cannot help but raise the query: How can the above analysis be migrated across cultural borders to throw light on the problem of self in other cultural realms, say the Chinese? Instead of mapping philosophical terms directly, which is unrealistic and dangerous, what we can do preliminary is as follows: I will sort out a number of Chinese characters which bear the meaning of "self," that of ji–己, zi–自, and wo–我 in particular. Then I will look through some classical Chinese corpora (philosophic as well as literary) to see how these characters have been used. In this way we might be able to figure out some basic Chinese life attitudes, which could in turn refer to distinctive self-images of the Chinese. Only then shall we try to compare these life attitudes to those represented by the subject and by the person.

After doing this extensively, we discover that a number of characteristic life attitudes can indeed be identified when the Chinese are talking about the "Self." These basic life attitudes are listed as follows: [56]

A. Self-control, Self-discipline, or Autonomy

「克己復禮」	(論語・顏淵)
「恭己」	(論語・衛靈公)
「其行己也恭」	(論語・公冶長)
「言內盡於己，而外順於道」	(禮記・祭統)
「克己反禮，壯莫甚焉，故易於大壯見之」	(張載・橫渠易說・大壯)

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[55] This point is hinted at also by Habermas, who considers the ego as basically "standing within an interpersonal relationship." Habermas also depicts the object as "frozen … under the gaze of the third person." See Jürgen Habermas, The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1987), p. 297.

[56] In the preparation of this listing, the following sources have been used: 1. Electronic corpora of Chinese classics prepared by the Institute of History and Linguistics, Academia Sinica; 2. Electronic version of the Guoyu Cidian prepared by the Ministry of Education of the Republic of China; 3. Electronic corpora of Confucians of the North Sung Dynasty, prepared by the Research Centre for Humanities Computing, the Chinese University of Hong Kong; and 4. Lao Sze-kwang's History of Chinese Philosophy, Hong Kong, 1968-81.

「正心之始，當以己心為嚴師」　　　　　(張載・經學理窟・學大原上)
「反躬自責」　　　　　　　　　　　　　(元史・泰定帝本紀)

B. Self-Reflection, Self-Responsibility, and Self-Reproval

「吾日三省吾身，為人謀而不忠乎？與朋友交而不信乎？傳不習乎？」
　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　(論語・學而)
「反求諸己」　　　　　　　　　　　　　(孟子・公孫丑上)
「行有不得者皆反求諸己」　　　　　　　(孟子・離婁上)
「善惡在於己。己不能故耳，道何狹之有哉！」(鹽鐵論・除狹)
「知物之害而能自反，則知善者乃吾性之固有……復，德之本也」
　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　(陸象山全集・卷三十四)

C. Considerateness and Tolerance for Others

「不患人之不己知，患不知人也」　　　　(論語・學而)
「己欲立而立人」　　　　　　　　　　　(論語・雍也)
「躬自厚而薄責於人，則遠怨矣」　　　　(論語・衛靈公)
「善則稱人，過則稱己」　　　　　　　　(禮記・坊記)
「無諸己，而後非諸人」　　　　　　　　(禮記・大學)
「君子以虛受人」　　　　　　　　　　　(周易・咸・象傳)
「君子盛德而卑，虛己以受人」　　　　　(韓詩外傳)
「舍己從人」　　　　　　　　　　　　　(尚書・虞書・大禹謨)
「舍己從人…與人為善」　　　　　　　　(孟子・公孫丑上)
「君子求諸己，小人求諸人」　　　　　　(論語・衛靈公)
「己所不欲，勿施於人」　　　　　　　　(論語・顏淵)
「民吾同胞，物吾與也」　　　　　　　　(張載・西銘)
「責己者當知天下國家無皆非之理，故學至於不尤人」
　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　(張載・正蒙・中正)
「修己安人」、「修己安百姓」　　　　　(張載、二程)
「以己及物，仁也。推己及物，恕也。」　(程顥・師訓)
「學者之于忠恕，未免參校彼己，推己及人則宜」
　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　(朱熹・與范直閣)
「外寬而內正，自極於隱括之中，直己而不直人」
　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　(孔子家語・弟子行)
「將心比心」　　　　　　　　　　(湯顯祖・紫釵記・三十八齣)

「南畝耕，東山臥，世態人情經歷多。閒將往事思量過。賢的是他，愚的
是我，爭甚麼！」　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　(關漢卿‧四塊玉)

D. Selflessness, Self-forgetfulness and Self-sacrifice

「舍生而取義」　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　(孟子‧告子上)
「以物待物，不以己待物，則無我也」　　　　(程顥‧師訓)
「無我然後得正己之盡」　　　　　　　　　　　(張載‧正蒙‧神化)
「能通天下之志者為能感人心，聖人同乎人而無我，故和平天下，莫盛於
感人心」　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　(張載‧正蒙‧至當)
「以自然為宗，以忘己為大，以無欲為至」
　　　　　　　　　　　　　(陳白沙集/明史‧儒林傳‧陳獻章－張詡)
「由反己而修己，由修己而忘己，則庶幾哉」　(明儒學案‧甘泉學案)
「聖人之學莫大於無我。性之本體無我也，梏形體而生私欲，作聰明而生
私智，於是始有我爾。去二者之累，無我之體復矣」
　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　(明儒學案‧江右王門學案)
「克己者，無我也。無我則渾然天下一體矣，故曰天下歸仁」
　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　(明儒學案‧泰州學案)
「殺身成仁，舍生取義，是忘軀求道之意」　(明儒學案‧粵閩王門學案)
「犧牲小我，完成大我」　　　　　　　　　(諺語)
「我不入地獄，誰入地獄」　　　　　　　　(諺語)

E. Self-detachment, and Aesthetic Contemplation

「致虛極，守靜篤，萬物並作，吾以觀復」　　(老子‧十六章)
「知人者智，自知者明。勝人者力，自勝者強」(老子‧三十三章)
「我無為而民自化」　　　　　　　　　　　　(老子‧五十七章)
「為者敗之，執者失之，是以聖人無為故無敗，無執故無失」
　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　(老子‧六十四章)
「夫大塊載我以形，勞我以生，佚我以老，息我以死」
　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　(莊子‧大宗師)
「視喪其足，如遺土也」　　　　　　　　　　(莊子‧德充符)
「天地與我並生，萬物與我為一」　　　　　　(莊子‧齊物論)
「吾生也有涯，而知也無涯，以有涯隨無涯，殆矣」
　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　(莊子‧養生主)
「人皆求福，己獨曲全」　　　　　　　　　　(莊子‧天下)

「人能虛己以遊世，其孰能害之」　　　　　(莊子・山木)

F. Non-engagement, Releasement

「念軀為我，念我為軀」　　　　　　　　(奧義書)
「受諸因緣故，輪轉生死中；不受諸因緣，是名為涅槃」
　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　(龍樹・中論・觀涅槃品)
「一切最勝故，與此相應故，二所現影故，三位差別故，四所顯示故」
　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　(世親・百法明門論)
「無我者即生死，我者即如來。無常者，聲聞緣覺；常者，如來法身」
　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　(大般涅槃經)
「依一心法有二種門。云何為二？一者心真如門，二者心生滅門」
　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　(大乘起信論)
「依般若波羅密多故，心無罣礙；無罣礙故，無有恐怖……」
　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　(心經)
「發菩提心即是觀，邪僻心息即是止」　　(智顗・摩訶止觀)
「當知己心，具一切佛法矣」　　　　　　(智顗・摩訶止觀)
「性空唯名，虛妄唯識，真常唯心」　　　(印順)

From the above sources, my observation is as follows: We discover that for the Chinese mind the awareness of the self is seldom connected with objective cognition, but mainly with practical principles and life wisdoms. In saying this, I of course do not mean that the Chinese mind fails to cognize natural objects, for Joseph Needham has explained so much about the contributions of the Chinese mind in science and technology. What I mean is that the Chinese mind very seldom puts the issue of objective cognition on to the level of serious and systematic philosophical reflection. And for this very reason, the sort of hegemony and aggression as revealed by the epistemological "subject" (as understood by Heidegger) is totally irrelevant for Chinese philosophy. On the contrary, the Chinese self-awareness revealed a deep acknowledgement of the finiteness of the self.[57] Among the various Chinese philosophical schools, the Confucian tradition in particular conveyed the life attitudes of restraint and reproval of the self, and that of tolerance and considerateness for the other, which has so much in common with the Western

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[57] For an East-West comparison of the reflections on the self, see: Douglas Allen (ed.) Culture and Self. Philosophical and Religious Perspectives, East and West. (Boulder/Oxford: Westview Press, 1997).

ideal of personalism. The Taoist tradition conveys a detached and quasi-aesthetic appreciation of nature and life, whereas the Buddhist tradition conveys the teachings of freeing one's self from worldly bondage so as to attain the state of asamskrta or nirvana.

But in contemporary cultural China, after the introduction of Western philosophy, this situation has seen many new developments.

Interestingly, while Heidegger is so negative about subjectivity, nearly all major philosophers of contemporary China have shown great interest in this concept. [58] When they do this, they don't follow Heidegger's skeptical interpretation of the subject as an epistemologically self-centered agent. On the contrary, they understand and value subjectivity mainly as a spontaneous intellectual principle, to which all the classical Chinese mental traits or life attitudes (such as self-control, tolerance, self-forgetfulness, self-sacrifice etc.) as explicated above can be ascribed. [59] Lao Sze-kwang, for example, has used the degree of the awareness or manifestation of such a principle of subjectivity to be the measuring rod to judge the success or failure of the various schools of Confucianism, Taoism as well as Buddhism. Here, manifestation of subjectivity is understood as the manifestation of the freedom of man as a moral, aesthetical and self-transcending being. [60]

While reformulating the principle of subjectivity to handle traditional Chinese philosophy, Chinese philosophers are not losing sight of the fact that subjectivity in the West is predominantly an epistemological principle. Lao, for example, has written a book on Kant's epistemology. He painstakingly points out that, it is precisely in the element of epistemology that traditional Chinese culture is weak. Heidegger is indeed right in pointing out that subjectivity and objectivity are just two sides of the same coin. But in stead of blaming the knowing self for antagonizing objectivity, as did Heidegger, Lao instead emphasizes that it is the knowing self which can bring about objective judgments and result in objective standards, which are precisely what is wanting in Chinese culture, in Chinese society and in Chinese politics. To render objective standards publicly discussable and debatable, Lao further advocates the concept of "multi-subjectivity" etc.

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[58] Towards the end of another paper, I have given a more detail analysis of this scenario. See Tze-wan Kwan, "Kant and the Phenomenological Tradition: Some Reflections on the Philosophy of Subjectivity," Chinese Phenomenology and Philosophical Review, Vol. 4, Shanghai, 2001, pp. 141-184; the paper is in Chinese.

[59] The interesting thing is that contemporary Chinese philosophers very seldom ascribe these traditional life attitudes to "personalism," although the ethical contents of these attitudes are more akin to the "person."

[60] See Lao Sze-kwang, History of Chinese Philosophy. 4 Volumes, Hong Kong, 1968-81.

This preference for subjectivity and the reasons behind it explain perhaps why contemporary Chinese philosophers (including Lao) are in general not too interested in the term "personalism." For history has taught us that one of the main socio-political shortcomings of Chinese culture lies precisely in its having made everything "too personal," to the extent that objective standards could be sacrificed.[61] Of course, most Chinese philosophers are not against the spirit of Western personalism, but they would normally prefer expressions like "humanity" or "humanism" (literally jenwen 人文), if they have to express its values.

This unexpected feedback of the Chinese mind on the problem of subjectivity and personality again leads us back to an issue that I keep on anticipating in the course of writing this paper: the possibility and the urgent need for us to redefine the nature of the subject and the person on the one hand, and to rethink their possible complementarity to arrive at a better understanding of the self on the other.

VII. Coming to terms with Heidegger's Critique of Subjectivity

Heidegger's attitude to subjectivism is well known to be highly skeptical. Our two-fold deconstruction has shown that the true reason for this skepticism of Heidegger lies not so much in pure philosophy than in his perception that subjectivism entails cultural aggression. Or as Patočka puts it, subjectivism as a doctrine is for Heidegger basically a "threatening" (drohende) one.[62]

To pay tribute to the Aristotelian origin of the concept of subject but to keep a distance from modern subjectivism, Heidegger occasionally used a self-coined word "subjectity" (Subiectität) in place of subjectivity. [63] As for personalism, Heidegger's position is a much more sympathetic one. This can be

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[61] In this regard, Rescher's fairly recent work on objectivity proves to be of much relevance. See Nicholas Rescher, Objectivity: The Obligations of Impersonal Reason. (Notre Dame and London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997). In similar manner, Thomas Nagel raised the query as to how the personal, subjective view can be reconciled with the impersonal and more or less objective realms. See Thomas Nagel, The View From Nowhere. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), especially the section on "Personal Values and Impartiality," pp.171f.

[62] See Jan Patočka, "Der Subjektivismus der Husserlschen und die Möglichkeit einer 'asubjektiven' Phänomenologie," in Die Bewegung der menschlichen Existenz. (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1991), p. 269.

[63] Heidegger's term Subiectität can be found in the following: Holzwege, p.302; Schellings Abhandlung über die menschliche Freiheit, p.225; Zur Seinsfrage, p.224; Nietzsche-II p.450.

told from his remarks on Scheler[64] and from his conceptions of the Mitwelt and Mitsein, and from his accusation of Husserl's alleged depersonalisation (Entpersonalisierung).[65] Yet his basic philosophical program of the Question of Being prevents him from simply committing himself to personalism.

As is well known, Heidegger was unable to bring to completion the program of Sein und Zeit. With hindsight, Heidegger gave us some reasons for this failure or "shipwreck." On the one hand he says that the metaphysical language he used prevented him even from raising the Question of Being correctly. But in his Brief über den Humanismus, he gave another reason for his failure, which I think is the truly underlying one, namely that in Sein und Zeit the role of man was still overstated or made too important, to the extent that he has himself surpassed the bounds of human finitude, which was what he has all the time been trying to avoid. [66]

After the "shipwreck" of Sein und Zeit, and a phase of seeking refuge (Zuflucht) in Kant,[67] Heidegger gradually entered a new phase of thinking which he subsequently called "tautological thinking" (tautologisches Denken). [68] In this stage, the human Self still remains an important issue for Heidegger, yet this self is not one that "represents," but one that merely "apprehends" (ver-nehmen) [69] the groundless (abgründig) happenings of Being. As the "shepherd of Being," what man can do is nothing but to point out (erörtern) tautologically the groundless advent of the tautological Faktum or Sach-Verhalt of Being as such: Das Sein west. Die Welt weltet. Das Ding dingt. Die Sprache spricht. Das Ereignis er-eignet…

The role of man turns from one of self-centeredness and hybris into its total opposite, one of simplistic resignation. Indeed, Heidegger's late thought could embrace much wisdom in it, especially his reassignment of man's place from the central to an eccentric (ekzentrisch) position[70]. But the question is:

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[64] See Heidegger's Nachruf in his lecture course for SS-1928: Metaphysisiche Anfangsgründe der Logik im Ausgang von Leibniz, Gesamtausgabe, Band. 26, hrsg. von Klaus Held. (Frankfurt/Main: Klostermann, 1978).

[65] Heidegger, Prolegomena zur Geschichte des Zeitbegriffs, Gesamtausgabe Band 20, pp.171-176.

[66] Heidegger, Brief über den Humanismus. In: Platons Lehre von der Wahrheit. Mit einem Brief über den Humanismus. (Bern-München: Francke, 1975), p. 75, 90.

[67] See Heidegger's Vorwort to the fourth edition of his Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik.

[68] For detail discussion, see Tze-wan Kwan, Die hermeneutische Phänomenologie und das tautologische Denken Heideggers. (Bonn: Bouvier, 1982).

[69] Heidegger, Identität und Differenz, Zur Seinsfrage etc.[…]

[70] Heidegger's "eccentricism" is first expressed in a lecture on Heraclitus in 1943/44 and is repeated in many subsequent works. See Heidegger, Heraklit, Gesamtausgabe, Band 55, hrsg. von Manfred S. Frings. (Frankfurt/main: Klostermann, 1979). In passing I consider worthy of note that this rethinking of man's place in the world and in nature as an "eccentric" one is further

Given the complexity of the world and the endless problems that we have to encounter from day to day, can this tautological stance of Heidegger provide any solutions?

As is obvious, Heidegger's thought contains a fundamental distrust and phobia of subjectivity. But I think that this distrust of the subject is really unnecessary and has by all means gone too far.[71] My own view is that: generally speaking, Heidegger's understanding and accusation of subjectivity are too one-sided. Indeed, Heidegger is right about the implicit danger of the subject-image. But given other more positive sides of the notion of the subject (which Heidegger very much neglected), and given that this danger is brought to man's own awareness, correctives can always be made. Instead of disqualifying the subject completely, why should we not allow or require the subject to criticize and redefine itself? Has Kant not written enough Critiques, which are nothing but reason's criticism of itself? Have we not shown that all the values of traditional Chinese philosophies can be ascribed to a redefined principle of subjectivity?

Subject as such, is a principle of spontaneity. As such a principle, subjectivity is not necessarily or exclusively epistemological, for we do can talk about moral subjects, aesthetical subjects, political subjects etc. Furthermore, unlike what Heidegger has thought, even the epistemological subject is not necessarily aggressive or threatening, if well balanced by other subjective and even personalistic elements! In fact, the epistemological element of the subject can be the foundation of other spontaneous, non-cognitive acts, so that we can never afford to do without it. Accordingly, the notion of objectivity called forth by subjectivity is not limited to a domain of mere cogitatum either. John Rawls has in this regard correctly related the notion of objectivity to a number of essential elements including a public framework of thought and reflection, reasonableness of judgment made from a certain point of view, order of reasoning, individual and institutional impartiality, and agreement in judgment among reasonable agents etc.[72]

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developed and deepened by Jan Patočka, the namesake for this conference. In fact, Patočka's reflections on the so-called "asubjective phenomenology" and his program of the "natural world" as a philosophical problem can be understood in this light.

[71] For this point, we should mention the work of Hans Ebeling, who pleads for a "rehabilitation" of the subject in face of its "liquidation" by Heidegger. See Ebeling's Das Subjekt in der Moderne. Rekonstruktion der Philosophie im Zeitalter der Zerstörung. (Hamburg: Rowohl, 1993).

[72] See John Rawls, Political Liberalism, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), particularly Lecture 3, §5 on "Three Conceptions of Objectivity," pp. 110-116.

As for the notion of the person, although Chinese philosophers (except Christians) are not too excited about the very term itself, they in fact do subscribe to all its humanistic values. For the West as well as for the East, the personalistic ideal is philosophically so basic (cf. Benveniste!) and socially so endearing that human existence is simply unthinkable without it. However, as we have also shown, personalism alone, if not checked by objective standards (which are derived from the epistemological subject), can result in "personal" favoritism, which can lead to unwanted evils. Subject and person are like our left and right brains, which can function normally only in mutual collaboration (synergy), but not in disjunction.[73]

To cope with the manifold problems of the world, an "apprehending" self as suggested by the late Heidegger is insightful but obviously inadequate. What we need is a self that is capable of self-reflection; a self that can criticize itself; a self that guards itself against possible illusions; a self that is able to look into "objective" states of affairs; a self that appreciates beauty; a self that at times enjoys leisure; a self that handles our situations in a reasonable manner; a self that respect objective rules; a self that is responsible for what has been done; a self that tells the right from the wrong; a self that does justice to oneself and to others; a self that at times is prepared even to sacrifice itself for a heavenly cause; a self that cares for the meaning of existence; a self that apprehends human finitude; and a self that bears the fate of humanity[74]…

In this new millennium, the world has become irrevocably globalized, humanity in general is undeniably facing dangers within and without national borders. In view of these dangers, no nation in particular can afford to be ethnocentric. If there are open, useful intellectual elements, whether they are from the East, the West or the South, why should not we mobilize them so that they might help us figure out a better self-image. In this new age, we all need to rethink our roles. What we need is a better way of life that brings more peace, and renders us more human.

In our plea for a restitution and redefinition of the self, we see again the timelessness of Kant's insight. In Critique of Pure Reason, Kant comes to terms with Plato's distrust of experience with an ironic parable. Kant tells the story that

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[73] For more discussions, see Tze-wan Kwan, "Cerebral Functions: Asymmetry or Integration?" In: System Perspectives on Universe and Life, edited by Tien-chi Chen, Cho-yun Hsu and Tze-wan Kwan, (Hong Kong: Commercial Press, 1999, 2nd edition 2002), pp. 173-192. (Article written in Chinese)

[74] For this motif I find Karl Jaspers' concept of the "subjectivity of the tragic" particularly instructive. See his Tragedy is not Enough. Transl. By Harald A. T. Reiche et al. (Beacon Press, 1952). Chapter 4.

"a light dove, cleaving the air in her free flight, and feeling its resistance, might imagine that its flight would be still easier in empty space."[75] It seems to me that this parable of Kant is applicable to Heidegger as well. The theory of subjectivity as expounded by Heidegger might indeed invoke problems that worry us. But banding the subject altogether is obviously not beneficial for mankind. If the subject, with all its beneficial elements, is removed, "who" will be there to look into objective state of affairs and to take care of our problems? Who will be there to be responsible or to fight for reasonableness? Of course, there is no guarantee that for all problems there will be solutions. But if no spontaneous attempt is ever made, what else can we rely on? What hope do we still have? Heidegger seems to have overemphasized the danger of the subject. He might not have considered that renouncing the subject completely might bring about intellectual anarchy, which can cause even greater harm to humanity![76]

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[75] Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, A5/B9.

[76] This paper is revised from an earlier script presented at the OPO Conference, held in November 2002, in Prague. In the revision of this paper I was able to benefit from questions raised and comments made by participants of the conference, particularly those of Professors Steven Crowell, John Drummond, Klaus Held, Dermot Moran, Jürgen Trinks etc.